Towards an Ethical Historiography of Atrocity:

Moral Discourse in Histories of the Holocaust and Stalinism

Rebekah Moore

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the interaction between past atrocity, morality, and historical practice, arguing that there is an irreducible connection between these three factors. Traditionally, however, moral concerns have been regarded with suspicion, contempt or indifference by most historians. In line with the ideal of 'objectivity', the prevailing disciplinary orthodoxy of impartiality has discouraged historians' explicit engagement with moral reflection and judgement. In practice, however, historians have long demonstrated a genuine concern for and awareness of such issues, particularly when addressing the historical experience of atrocity. Nonetheless, this interest has not translated into a developed or systematic ethical discourse within historiography. A clear discrepancy has existed between historians' moralistic practices and their objectivist rhetoric.

Inspired by the opportunities presented by the current 'turn' to ethics across a variety of disciplines, this study seeks to highlight this general lack of self-aware discussion amongst historians of their moral relationship to and engagement with the past, and suggests ways in which an 'ethical historiography' might help to redress this absence. It analyses the moral undercurrents in a series of controversies and debates within the historiographies of the Holocaust and Stalinism, namely the response to Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*; the furore which greeted Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*; the controversy occasioned by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*; the debate surrounding the 'historical necessity' or 'inevitability' of both Stalin and Stalinism; the discussion concerning the genocidal nature of the Ukrainian *Holodomor*; the revisionist historiography of the Great Terror; and the phenomenon of Holocaust denial, focusing on the career of David Irving and his unsuccessful 2000 libel suit against Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt. This study considers the questions each of these examples raise about historians' moral engagement with atrocity, and what insights they offer into how such questions might be adequately answered.

By seeking to bring these moral undercurrents to the surface and by highlighting the 'implicit' morality which has always accompanied historians' approaches to atrocity, this study calls for greater self-reflexivity, awareness and discussion of these issues within the discipline. Overall, it suggests that the invitation to moral reflection and moral judgement offered by the historical experience of atrocity is something for historians to accept and embrace, rather than avoid.

Preface

Completing this dissertation brings to a close my time as a university student, which began almost eight years ago in Hobart at the University of Tasmania. During this time, I have been blessed with many fruitful experiences and opportunities, and have had the pleasure of encountering many wonderful people. Reflecting on my time at university and all the various influences which led to me embarking upon and completing this project, it is Margaret Lindley, who taught me during my undergraduate years and supervised my Honours dissertation at UTAS, who deserves first thanks. Without her guidance and support, along with a healthy dose of prodding, I would never have commenced postgraduate study. I therefore remain very grateful to Margaret, for opening my eyes to the variety of uses to which I could put my talents, and for therefore changing the course of my life.

If Margaret pushed me in the right direction, the careful guidance of Rob Stuart and Mark Edele at the University of Western Australia has ensured that I have not strayed from its path. Both have contributed immeasurably to my development as a historian and a writer, but they have also provided a great deal of personal encouragement and assistance during the course of completing this project. Rob has worked tirelessly in support of me and my dissertation, and his unwavering kindness and the fatherly concern he has shown towards me have been a source of much comfort throughout my candidature. Mark's supervision style has proved slightly different, with his own admission that his guiding principle is the Bavarian adage, "*Nicht geschimpft ist genug gelobt*." Nonetheless, he has always made sure that I know he cares, and has been an indefatigable champion of my cause. Additionally, he was a wonderful teaching supervisor during 2009, graciously enduring my inexperience, anxieties, and unrelenting questions. In Rob and Mark I could not have wished for a better pair of dissertation supervisors, and I will always remain sincerely grateful to them both.

The research process has been aided by the contributions and assistance of many different groups and individuals. I wish to thank Professor Richard Evans of the University of Cambridge and David Irving for their generosity in granting me interviews. I am also grateful to the staff at the Manuscript Reading Room at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the Wiener Library in London, and Special Collections of Bailey-Howe Library at the University of Vermont for their assistance with resources. My research trip overseas to work in these libraries and undertake interviews would not have been possible without generous funding from both the School of Humanities and the Graduate Research School of the University of Western Australia, and I remain very grateful to both for its provision.

Of course, thanks are also due to those outside of the bubble of thesis writing and university life, as I have been sustained and bolstered by many people over the last few years. It is with an overflowing heart that I thank my beloved parents, sisters, and brothers-in-law, along with the wonderful 'second family' I have acquired courtesy of my fiancé, for their unwavering encouragement, love or comic relief, as the situation may have determined. My beautiful nephews and niece, two of whom arrived during the course of completing this project, constantly remind me of the joy and innocence of childhood, and have allowed me much-welcomed opportunities to escape the seriousness of thesis research and writing. To many dear friends, both old and new, I am grateful for much love and support which has enriched my life in Perth immeasurably, and helped to make my hometown of Hobart the delightful place it is to return to.

My greatest debt, however, is to my fiancé Andrew, who obligingly followed me not only to the other side of the country but literally around the world as I have desperately fought to "get it done." He has listened patiently to countless hours of talk about atrocity, history writing and morality, and counselled me through several 'threat level midnight' crises, not once wavering in his love and support, or in his faith in me. I could not have completed this project without him, and would never have wanted to try.

In *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, Stephanie Dowrick writes, "[t]o tolerate listening, even when the hairs on our backs stand on end, our mouths dry, our stomachs heave, is the least we owe to those who suffer."[1] I have been reminded of this sentiment many, many times throughout the course of writing this dissertation. I can only hope that this work may prove to be of some use as historians continue to seek ways to best record and render accounts of past atrocity, in the hope that they will never be repeated again.

[1] S. Dowrick, *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, Ringwood, Viking, 1997, p. 242.

Introduction

In the 1968 edition of *The Anatomy of the SS State*, historian Helmut Krausnick and his fellow authors made the following observation regarding the moral dimension of confronting the Nazi past:

> Since Hitler's dictatorship is so obviously to be condemned from all points of view, people are tempted to think too little about it. That is why, although we possess an immense mass of literature about the Third Reich, so little intelligent use has been made of it.[1]

This sentiment is equally applicable to other historical atrocities, from the mass death and suffering that resulted from various aspects of Stalinist rule through to the more recent Rwandan genocide.[2] Many historians, as part of a discipline which has generally lacked moral self-reflexivity, have regarded past atrocities to be so clearly condemnable that they have avoided actually doing so themselves.[3]

The present study takes as its point of departure the challenge inherent in Krausnick's observation. Seeking to move away from 'thinking too little' about the profound moral questions which are raised in addressing atrocity, it proposes to examine how such questions have shaped and informed historical writing about the Holocaust and Stalinism. By analysing the moral undercurrents in a series of debates and controversies within these historiographies, the dissertation aims to move away from the general lack of self-aware discussion on these issues, and in doing so, to go some way towards an elucidation of certain tenets or principles which might help guide historians' moral engagement with the historical experience of atrocity.

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[1] H. Krausnick, H. Buchheim, M. Broszat and H. Jacobsen, 'Foreword to the Original Edition,' in H. Krausnick, H. Buchheim, M. Broszat and H. Jacobsen, *The Anatomy of the SS State*, trans. R. Barry, M. Jackson and D. Long, London, Collins, 1968, p. xv.

[2] The term 'atrocity', it is clear, is potentially contentious due to the degree of subjectivity involved in any definition, and thus the large scope of its possible applicability. What one person deems 'atrocious' may not warrant this appellation from another. Additionally, it also possesses undeniable moral connotations which terms such as 'killing' or 'shooting' do not to the same degree. In the present study, 'atrocity' is understood and employed in terms of its commonly accepted definition, stated by the *New Oxford American Dictionary* to be "an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving physical violence or injury." From the history of the twentieth century alone, it is clear that countless events and phenomena fall under this broad definition, including, in addition to genocide, "civil war, deportation, disease-related death, ethnic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, ethnocide, human rights abuse, lynching, mass expulsion, mass murder, massacre, pogrom, riot, slavery, starvation, terrorism, and war crimes." See S. Straus, 'Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2001, p. 363. While this study will largely be addressing itself to the specific examples of atrocity presented by the Holocaust, collectivisation and the Great Terror, all general references made to 'atrocity' are used to reflect this general cultural understanding of the term. In a similar vein, it should be noted that this thesis reflects and engages with the assumptions inherent in the general morality of the culture of which it is a part.

[3] A frequently voiced argument in favour of this 'self-evident' nature of the immorality of past atrocity is that the facts clearly 'speak for themselves' and if the reader cannot figure out from the facts alone the immorality of such actions, ideas or events there is little the historian can do to convince them otherwise. For example, when asked his views on morality and writing about past atrocity, Richard Evans, one of the most eminent historians of the Third Reich, responded, "there are subtler ways of doing it than using words like 'right,' 'wrong,' 'wicked,' 'evil,' and so on. I don't say anywhere that Hitler was evil. I mean, God, if people can't see that after reading my book there's something wrong with them!" Richard J. Evans, interview with author, 1 March 2010. Evans' response is a good encapsulation of an attitude shared by, I would argue, many historians.

Such an examination of the moral dimension of historical scholarship on atrocity is certainly timely. In more recent years questions of ethics and morality have returned to the forefront of both scholarly and popular discourse, and across fields as diverse as nursing, literary criticism, business, architecture, political science, geography and information technology an 'ethical turn' has been proclaimed.[4]

This 'turn' to ethics has resulted from an interaction of political, cultural and intellectual factors. In 1981, philosopher Alasdair Macintyre lamented that "we have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality."[5] More recently, however, several commentators have suggested that developments within the current global political climate have fostered a re-emergence of both moral concerns and moral language. They believe that the impact of recent world events, particularly 9/11 and the ensuing 'war on terror', has prompted "a return to the language of 'good and evil.'"[6] Yet away from the forums of international politics and foreign relations, modern society and culture is itself characterised by what have been

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[4] See, for example, T. Fischer, *Architectural Design and Ethics: Tools for Survival*, Oxford, Architectural Press, 2008; B. Henricksen, '"The Real Thing": Criticism and the Ethical Turn,' *Papers on Language and Literature*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1991, pp. 473-495; J. Rancière, 'The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics,' *Critical Horizons*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1-20; P. Shipley, 'The Ethical Turn and the Workplace,' *Ergonomics*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, pp. 1-19; D. M. Smith, 'Geography and Ethics: A Moral Turn?,' *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1997, pp. 583-590; and R. Swierstra, 'From Critique to Responsibility: The Ethical Turn in the Technology Debate,' *Philosophy and Technology*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1997, pp. 68-74. The phrase 'ethical turn' is intended to be analogous to 'linguistic turn'. See P. Baker, *Deconstruction and the Ethical Turn*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1995, p. ix.

[5] A. Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), London, Duckworth, 1984, p. 2. This concern regarding a decline in moral literacy in modern society has found repeated expression. For example, in 1998 one critic argued that "modern peoples, at least of the Western world, have lost moral certainty, conviction and value." See W. Bell, Review of K. Tester, *Moral Culture*, *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1998, p. 174. This view was echoed two years later with the suggestion of another commentator that "the evacuation of depth, stability, and substance of culture" had resulted in "the death of [moral] character." See J. D. Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil*, New York, Basic Books, 2000, p. xiv. For other studies which address similar issues, or seek to offer guidance through modern moral confusion, see, for example, A. Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost Their Sense of Evil*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995; A. Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, New York, Basic Books, 1996; A. C. Grayling, *What is Good? The Search for the Best Way to Live Life*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003; N. Haan, E. Aerts and B. A. B. Cooper, *On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality*, New York, New York University Press, 1985; W. Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992; A. Kleinman, *What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life Amidst Uncertainty and Danger*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2006; P. Kreeft, *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1992; S. Neiman, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, Orlando, Harcourt, 2008; K. Tester, *Moral Culture*, London, Sage, 1997; and J. Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, New York, The Free Press, 1993. Of course, concern regarding the decline of morality has been expressed periodically for centuries. However, while modern writers arguing along these lines may not be demonstrating a new tendency, their writings are nonetheless important in the context of the current 'turn' to ethics.

[6] R. Schafer-Landau, *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. vii. See also G. Cotkin, 'Illuminating Evil: Hannah Arendt and Moral History,' *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, p. 465; and G. Cotkin, 'History's Moral Turn,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2008, pp. 293-294, 301. For comment on this tendency in the context of the current political climate, see, for example, R. J. Bernstein, *The Abuse of Evil: The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11*, Malden, Polity Press, 2005; and P. Singer, *The President of Good and Evil: The Ethics of George W. Bush*, New York, Dutton, 2004.

described as "especially deep moral fissures and challenges."[7] Rapid technological changes and the experience of globalisation, along with the demise of older traditions and certainties, have seen moral questions and dilemmas endlessly proliferate, promoting confusion, fear and apathy.[8] Against such a background, ethical concerns have risen anew.

Intellectual trends have also been influential in the revival of ethics, as scholars have become increasingly concerned with ethical issues. In particular, the broad influence of postmodern philosophy has often been singled out as a key factor in these recent developments. On a practical level, postmodern theory has enabled ethics to return to the forefront of discussion in many academic disciplines by challenging concepts which privileged adherence to value neutrality. It has, however, also been vastly influential on a conceptual level, promoting an intense questioning of the ideas and processes which underpinned traditional moral philosophy. As a result, it has been argued, traditional ethics has been swept away by the advent of postmodern thinking.[9] Many postmodernist scholars have suggested that this demise has been a positive development in the sense that it has raised new questions and widened the scope of philosophical consideration, addressing the need to redefine ethics in the postmodern world. For example, it has been claimed that "[i]n postmodernity, the question of the *good* has preempted that of the *true*," meaning that "[f]or the first time since the advent of modern philosophy, ethics has become the dominant issue for philosophical reflection."[10]

However, it has also been suggested that arguments against the inherent moral relativism of postmodern theory have been instrumental in prompting the turn to ethics. Postmodernism denies any moral certainties or absolutes, which by extension seemingly negates the capacity to either condemn immoralities or endorse favourable moral behaviour. As a result, this relativism is often invoked as a leading factor in explaining the intense moral confusion believed to characterise modern society, in that people have lost an ability to confidently or emphatically determine right and wrong.[11] Against the moral landscape of the present age, the desire for certainty appears to have increased, prompting academics and others to address and engage with various moral questions and dilemmas. It

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[7] Cotkin, 'History's Moral Turn,' p. 293.

[8] See Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, pp. 1-2, 20-21; and D. O'Hara, 'The Return to Ethics: A Report From The Front,' *Boundary 2*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1997, pp. 145-146. For a discussion of the 'ethics of globalisation' see W. M. Sullivan and W. Kymlicka (eds.), *The Globalization of Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

[9] K. Jenkins, *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity*, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 2, 19-28. See also G. B. Madison and M. Fairbain, 'Introduction,' in G. B. Madison and M. Fairbain (eds.), *The Ethics of Postmodernity: Current Trends in Continental Thought*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1999, pp. 2-3.

[10] Madison and Fairbain, 'Introduction,' p. 1. It has also been claimed that postmodern theory has offered new and innovative approaches in order to address current moral problems and concerns. See Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, pp. 3-4.

[11] See, for example, A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (1987) New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988, pp. 25-26, 34, 39, 142.

can be seen, then, that intellectual trends both influence and are themselves influenced by the broader political and cultural climate. It is this site of interaction which has propelled the current ethical turn.

It has been argued that the ethical turn first emerged from within the humanities and social sciences, and it is these fields of study which have most keenly felt its influence.[12] A clear shift to concern with ethics and morality within discussion and debate can be witnessed from the early 1980s. For example, in 1983 the collected edition of essays *Social Science as Moral Inquiry* was published, in which its contributors stressed the irreducible moral element of the social sciences, and called for a recognition and development of this particular facet of theory and practice.[13] In that same year, *New Literary History* published a special issue on the subject of "Literature and/as Moral Philosophy."[14] The expansion of this dimension of the humanities and social sciences has continued apace since the 1980s, and has been influential in shaping the broader turn to ethics.

The subject matter of the humanities and social sciences—human life, thought and behaviour—naturally lends itself to ethical and moral inquiry. It appears, however, that the current ethical turn grew from a sense, accelerated by postmodern theory, that prevailing positivist and empiricist methods were limited in their applications to such subject matter, as well as a wider recognition of the inherent ethical nature of these fields of study.[15] From this recognition, some disciplines within the humanities and social sciences have subsequently developed a remarkable degree of ethical awareness. A particularly apt example is the growth of 'ethical criticism' within literary theory. Largely concerned with the ethical structures and effects of various texts, ethical criticism initially struggled to find acceptance within mainstream academia when it first emerged during the 1980s. In 1988, Wayne C. Booth, an early proponent of the approach, lamented that "we have so little talk about why it [ethical criticism] matters, what purposes it serves and how it might be done well."[16] However, by 2004 ethical criticism was being described as "a burgeoning subdiscipline, an academic venture yielding ever-increasing intellectual dividends."[17] At once an exploration of authorship, readership, and the ethical bonds which exist between

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[12] See K. Orbán, *Ethical Diversions: The Post-Holocaust Narratives of Pynchon, Abish, DeLillo and Spiegelman*, New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 1.
[13] See N. Haan, R. N. Bellah, P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan (eds.), *Social Science as Moral Inquiry*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983.
[14] See *New Literary History*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1983. See also M. Eskin, 'Introduction: The Double "Turn" to Ethics and Literature?,' *Poetics Today*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2004, p. 557.
[15] See, for example, R. N. Bellah, N. Haan, P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan, 'Introduction,' in N. Haan, R. N. Bellah, P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan (eds.), *Social Science as Moral Inquiry*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 6-7.
[16] W. C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 19.
[17] Eskin, 'The Double "Turn,"' p. 557.

them, ethical criticism reflects a desire to use the literary text as a means to develop values, provide admirable moral examples and to further explore the role which literature plays in the development of individual and collective morality.[18] In doing so, it has opened up new and important avenues of study, and represents the possibilities which can result from a decidedly ethical line of scholarly inquiry.

In marked contrast to ethical criticism's self-conscious and enthusiastic engagement with morality, conventional historiography lacks a like degree of ethical self-reflexivity. Historians have certainly not been morally obtuse; rather, they have long shown a deep interest in moral issues, particularly when confronting the history of atrocity.[19] This interest, however, has not translated into a developed or systematic ethical discourse within historiography. A clear discrepancy has existed between historians' moralistic practices and their objectivist rhetoric.

Nonetheless, it appears that the discipline of history has not been immune to the influence of the ethical turn, and in recent times moral concerns have begun to feature more heavily in writings about historical theory and method.[20] What remains to be seen,

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[18] T. F. Davis and K. Womack, 'Preface: Reading Literature and the Ethics of Criticism,' in T. F. Davis and K. Womack (eds.), *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 2001, p. x. For further discussion about ethical criticism and examples of it in practice, see, for example, W. C. Booth, 'Why Banning Ethical Criticism Is a Serious Mistake,' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 366-393; W. C. Booth, 'Why Ethical Criticism Can Never Be Simple,' *Style*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 351-364; L. Buell, 'In Pursuit of Ethics,' *PMLA*, vol. 114, no. 1, 1999, pp. 7-19; T. F. Davis and K. Womack, 'Introduction: Reading Literature and the Ethics of Criticism,' *Style*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 184-193; R. Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism: Reading After Levinas*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997; M. Gregory, 'Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters,' *Style*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 194-220; G. G. Harpham, *Getting It Right: Language, Literature and Ethics*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992; M. C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990; M. C. Nussbaum, 'Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism,' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 343-365; R A. Posner, 'Against Ethical Criticism,' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1997, pp. 1-27; R. A. Posner, 'Against Ethical Criticism: Part Two,' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 394-412; and T. Siebers, *The Ethics of Criticism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988.

[19] On this point, see, for example, G. Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters: Ethical Quandaries in Modern America*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, pp. 2-3.

[20] See, for example, J. Leerssen and A. Rigney (eds.), *Historians and Social Values*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2000; D. Carr, T. R. Flynn and R. A. Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2004; S. Macintyre (ed.), *The Historian's Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History*, Carlton, University of Melbourne Press, 2004; and A. de Baets, *Responsible History*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2009. Additionally, the 2004 Theme Issue of *History and Theory* was devoted to the question, "[d]o historians *as historians* have an ethical responsibility, and if so, to whom?" See B. Fay, 'Historians and Ethics: A Short Introduction to the Theme Issue,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, p. 1. Brian Fay, editor of *History and Theory*, noted that "the journal received more submissions for this Theme Issue than for any other in our history, and the intensity with which writers expressed their views was palpable." See Fay, 'Historians and Ethics,' p. 1. Earlier, *Rethinking History* (vol. 2, no. 3, 1998) had also run a special issue addressing the theme of ethics and history. More recently, the journal *Studies in Western Australian History* has also published a special issue addressing this same theme. See *Studies in Western Australian History*, vol. 26, 2010. Furthermore, George Cotkin's article 'History's Moral Turn' sparked a discussion in the pages of *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, with commentators expressing varying degrees of support for his cause. For the responses, see N. Jumonville, 'The Complexity of Moral History: Response to Cotkin,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2008, pp. 317-322; J. Livingston, 'The Return of the Self-Made Man: Response to Cotkin,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2008, pp. 327-331; M. O'Brien, 'Amoralities Not For

however, is the ultimate influence such ideas can wield within a discipline whose self-image has long been directed by the concept of 'objectivity', favouring detachment and impartiality over engagement with the 'subjective' concerns of morality.[21] Indeed, the fact that it has largely been moral philosophers who have led the call for the ethical turn in historiography speaks volumes in this regard.[22]

Part of the problem appears to stem from a confusion regarding what 'moral history', or an 'ethical historiography', might actually mean in practice. Many historians, it seems, immediately equate 'moral' with 'moralising', and understandably have been loathe to see historical narratives descend into crude tales of right and wrong or good and evil. True moral history, however, is more concerned to engage with confusions rather than simply reassert certainties.[23] As George Cotkin, one historian who has been at the forefront of encouraging a "moral turn" in historiography, suggests, "the impetus behind moral history should be to trouble issues, to make palatable the pain and necessity of the moral imagination. The hope is that, in the process, historical work widens vision and cultivates virtues."[24] In this sense, Cotkin believes, "morality becomes a process of thinking rather than a predigested set of answers."[25]

It is precisely this "process of thinking" with which the present study seeks to engage. It is not especially concerned with declaring certain past actors or actions to be immoral, nor does it wish to pass moral judgement on how other historians have approached these particular episodes of history. Instead, it proposes a thoroughgoing and much-needed examination of the 'how' of the moral dimension of the historiography of atrocity. How have notions of morality been reflected in the writings of historians about atrocity? What opinions have historians expressed about how such notions should inform their writing? When they engage in debates with other historians about interpretative issues pertaining to these examples of atrocity, what moral impulses inform their arguments? Where certain publications or schools of thought within the historiographies of atrocities have proved controversial, have reasons of morality determined why this is so? And, most importantly, what does it mean when historians criticise each other for interpreting,

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Turning: Response to Cotkin,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2008, pp. 323-326; and L. Perry, 'Turn, Turn, Turn: Response to Cotkin,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2008, pp. 332-337. For Cotkin's reply, see G. Cotkin, 'A Conversation About Morals and History,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2008, pp. 493-497.

[21] For a discussion of the emergence of this image and the importance of the concept of 'objectivity', see Chapter One, 'A History of Morality in Historical Practice', pp. 15-18.

[22] One such example is J. Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1999.

[23] On this point, see, for example, Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters*, pp. 2-3, 4.

[24] Cotkin, 'History's Moral Turn,' p. 298.

[25] Cotkin, 'History's Moral Turn,' p. 294.

representing or explaining an example of historical atrocity in an immoral or unethical manner?

In seeking answers to these questions, this study contends that moral concerns—acknowledged or otherwise—lie at the heart of almost all historiographical debate and discussion regarding atrocity. When historians confront this history, there are two simultaneous 'moralities' at work. The first is the elucidation of moral choices and concerns in the past itself, as demonstrated by the perpetrators, victims and bystanders of atrocity. In this sense, historians are required to address the 'morality' of the past. The second, which lies at the heart of the present study, is the 'morality' of the historiography. It addresses how *historians* make moral choices in their approach to the moralities or immoralities of the past, and the concerns or agendas reflected in these choices. Of course, such debates also contain the usual disagreements regarding the use and interpretation of sources, or arguments over scholarly standards and approach. A closer examination of such discourse, however, reveals that it is also strongly permeated by a piercing sense of moral failure, suggesting the transgressor's perceived offences are not merely scholarly in nature. In this sense, we can begin to understand and interpret such controversies as ethical commentaries about writing on atrocity, as debates about 'best practice' when it comes to the appropriate means of telling such stories. By seeking to bring these moral undercurrents to the surface, the present study aims to challenge the general lack of self-aware discourse about these issues, and to begin discussion about which directions historical writing and discourse about atrocity might take as a result.

In thinking about examples of atrocity, it is an unfortunate fact that the span of human history offers a large number of choices. Discussion within this dissertation, however, will be limited to the Holocaust, the Great Terror and Soviet collectivisation. There are several reasons for choosing these examples. In many ways, they have come to represent the greatest crimes of the twentieth century, and thus form a natural starting point for considering the moral dimensions of historical writing about atrocity.[26] Additionally, research into the Holocaust and Stalinism has spawned massive historiographies, and thus offers plentiful material for consideration. These historiographies also share many links and parallels, and their developments and

[26] Of course, there is a strong precedent of comparative study of Nazism and Stalinism. See, for example, A. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, London, HarperCollins, 1991; R. Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007; M. Geyer and S. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009; I. Kershaw and M. Lewin (eds.), *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; H. Russo (ed.), *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared*, trans. L. B. Golson, T. C. Hilde and P. S. Rogers, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2004; and T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Basic Books, 2010.

trajectories inform and reflect each other. Finally, both the Holocaust and the crimes of Stalin are thematically similar in that they both involve 'totalitarian' regimes, mass death and human suffering, and thus present serious moral challenges to historians who wish to confront them.

A further restriction of the present study is its engagement with only the English-language discourse produced by these two historiographies. Clearly, the problems and dilemmas of writing about and coming to terms with atrocity are faced by historians everywhere, and the various debates and controversies which will be examined here have attracted attention from the international scholarly community. Restriction to the English-language response, however, is necessary because an adequate engagement with these additional discourses—and the different cultural and academic contexts from which they emanate—is impossible within the confines of the present study. In a sense, this restriction is not problematic as all the major texts and 'schools' which form the basis of the controversies we will be examining have their origins in the Anglo academic sphere, and their authors and protagonists are thus clearly situated within this particular community.[27] While others may have joined the conversation over time, this study will focus on where these discourses began, and their trajectories within their original contexts.

The dissertation begins with an exploration of the history of disciplinary attitudes towards moral engagement and judgement in historical practice. This chapter addresses the different factors which have shaped the discipline's traditional aversion to moral rhetoric, tracing the emergence and ultimate consolidation of the ideal of 'objectivity' along with the various challenges to this prevailing consensus. Overall, this examination reveals that almost all discourse about the place of morality within historical method and practice has hinged upon engagement with atrocity. Where debate has occurred on these issues, questions regarding whether the moral magnitude of such atrocities can be adequately accommodated within the confines of conventional historiography have proved the driving force of discussion.

However, this argument is also true in reverse, as the historiographies of past atrocity have clearly developed in the wake of moral concerns. With this idea in mind, this study will then consider its seven historiographical 'case studies', beginning with Raul

[27] This observation is not to suggest, of course, that these scholars were not themselves products of different academic and cultural communities, or that these experiences had no impact upon their ideas and writing. Hannah Arendt, for example, was German-born and educated, Jewish, and had lived in Switzerland and France before arriving in America as a refugee during the Second World War. Such experiences cannot be discounted when attempting to make sense of her work and thought. Nonetheless, her major studies were all originally published in English, and the controversy which surrounded them began within this particular context.

Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. These two texts and the response they occasioned address the fundamental 'actors' of atrocity, namely its victims and its perpetrators. How to adequately conceptualise both groups has proved a difficult undertaking, raising complicated questions regarding judgement, empathy and sympathy, as well as collaboration and cooperation. Despite claiming in his introduction that "this is not a book about the Jews,"[28] it was Hilberg's observations about the behaviour of the victims of the Holocaust, which in turn inspired Arendt's musings on the subject, that sparked the greatest criticism and debate. However, *Destruction* and *Eichmann* also reveal how morally fraught writing about perpetrators can be. Arendt came under particular fire for her notion of 'the banality of evil' in her analysis of Adolf Eichmann, and her conclusion that he had been "terribly and terrifyingly normal" and, as a result, "[i]t was sheer thoughtlessness…that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period."[29] In this sense, the arguments and reception of both *Destruction* and *Eichmann* provide us with ethical commentaries concerning how best to write about the victims and the perpetrators of atrocity.

We will then shift attention to the more recent debate surrounding Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. An intense controversy was generated by Goldhagen's argument that German society during the Nazi era was "an assenting genocidal community" enthralled by an "eliminationist" anti-Semitism which was "the central causal agent of the Holocaust."[30] While one commentator has suggested a consensus exists among academic historians that "*Hitler's Willing Executioners* is a bad book," it was nonetheless an international bestseller, and was awarded several prestigious prizes.[31] Goldhagen's arguments about "the Germans" and his presentation of graphic and detailed descriptions of the torturing and killing of Jews raised profound questions regarding the moral representation of atrocity, and the dynamics between generalisation and demonisation. Furthermore, the strange discrepancies between the academic and popular reception of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* provides insight into the importance of appropriate public understandings of events such as the Holocaust.

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[28] R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1967, p. v.

[29] H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965), New York, Penguin, 2006, pp. 276, 287-288 respectively.

[30] D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), New York, Knopf, 2002, pp. 406, 456, 9 respectively.

[31] F. H. Littell, 'Introduction: Hype and the Holocaust,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. x. In addition to receiving the American Political Science Association's 1994 Gabriel A. Almond Award for the doctoral thesis upon which *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was based, Goldhagen was awarded the Democracy Prize from the *Blätter für deutsche und internationale politik* on 10 March 1997. See R. R. Shandley, 'Introduction,' in R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 1.

The dissertation will then consider in turn its three debates from the historiography of Stalinism, beginning with the controversy surrounding the notion of the 'historical necessity' or 'inevitability' of both Stalin and his methods of rule. This discussion has focused upon the question of possible leadership alternatives to the *vozhd'* in the late 1920s and the necessity of policies such as forced collectivisation, and provides insight into how notions of determinism and agency, as well as counterfactual historical methods, might best fit into moral engagement with atrocity. The following chapter on the *Holodomor*, the name given to the mass famine in Ukraine which is widely agreed to have resulted from the policy of collectivisation, goes beyond such concerns to consider how notions of victimhood shape and inform understandings of atrocity. The ongoing debate regarding the genocidal status of the *Holodomor* raises the distasteful but nonetheless important idea of comparative suffering and an ensuing 'competition' amongst victims.

The final case study from the historiography of Stalinism concerns the impact of 'revisionism' during the 1970s and 1980s. The revisionist project challenged many aspects of the conventional historical account of Stalinism, as its adherents sought to move away from the state-focused 'totalitarian' model and embrace a social history approach of writing history 'from below'. In particular, the Great Terror emerged as a serious point of contention, as revisionist historians were accused of downplaying its horrors and attempting to 'whitewash' Stalin and his regime by suggesting that various individuals and institutions shared responsibility. While further highlighting the potential complexities and ambiguities in the perpetrator-victim distinction, the debate regarding revisionism and the terror also invites reflection upon the 'politics' of moral responsibility—of both historical actors and the historians who study them—in making sense of and writing about atrocity.

Finally, we conclude with an examination of what might be described as 'pseudohistory', tracing the career of David Irving and the phenomenon of Holocaust denial with a particular focus upon the former's unsuccessful 2000 libel suit against Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books. It may be tempting to simply relegate Irving and others like him to the 'lunatic fringe', but Holocaust denial has not remained an insular or insignificant phenomenon, and professional historians have engaged with the discourses surrounding it. The case of Irving and the general practice of Holocaust denial invites us to consider the notion of 'bad' history in both a scholarly and moral sense, and how such history might best be addressed and combated.

There are past atrocities which, perhaps more than any other historical phenomenon, truly exemplify the notion of the "past that will not pass away."[32] Instead, it is an unending dialogue between past and present; between local, national and international stakeholders; between competing claims of victimhood, memory and commemoration; and between historians and the general public. Clearly, at its heart lie profound moral concerns. All historians who wish to confront the history of atrocity work in the shadow of this dialogue; they are unavoidably subject to its trajectories and influence. This dissertation aims not only to demonstrate how this dynamic has functioned in existing discourse about atrocity, but, by making explicit the moral dimension of these debates and controversies, encourage other historians to move towards self-conscious engagement with these issues and to reflect upon how the history of atrocity might best be written. Adequately coming to terms with this past demands no less from us.

[32] R. J. B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War* (1993), London, Routledge, 1994, p. 73. Of course, much of the past has a habit of 'passing away'. In order to 'stay alive', a past requires champions who seek to memorialise it in the present. There are, sadly, atrocities which have 'passed away' because there are no such persons to carry out this memorialisation in the present. Historian Allan Megill has pointed to many of these issues, noting that "[t]ime alone, bringing with it irrelevance and even oblivion, is likely to dampen the conflict [of interpretation amongst historians and others]. Those who care deeply about the massacre of French Protestants on Saint Bartholomew's Day 1572 are today fewer than they once were. Further, much depends on the political configuration prevailing in the present, especially among those who are willing and able to take the past seriously. In part as a result of the political configuration, some atrocities are accorded a great deal of attention (for example, the destruction of the European Jews, among many Americans today); some atrocities are on occasion accorded semi-justifications (the murders perpetrated under the authority of Lenin and Stalin, among some members of the sentimental left); and others are largely ignored (when 'we' do not see the victims as having much in common with 'us')." See A. Megill, 'Two Para-Historical Approaches to Atrocity,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2002, p. 105.

Chapter One

A History of Morality in Historical Practice

The history of historiography in recent times is a story of drama, upheaval, and drastic change. Various forces from within and outside of the discipline have produced a fundamental impact upon both the historical profession and historical practice. By contrast, the history of historians' engagement with moral concerns and moral judgements is one characterised by general continuity, where attitudes and approaches have proved remarkably enduring. With the recent emergence of the 'ethical turn', however, it appears that change may well be taking place. For the first time since the professionalisation of the discipline in the mid-nineteenth century, morality has become a serious matter for discussion within historiographical discourse.[1] These tentative beginnings of an ethical turn in historiography become even more significant when one considers how strongly entrenched the disciplinary tradition of eschewing explicit engagement with morality in favour of 'impartial' and 'objective' analysis has proved to be.

Indeed, until the emergence of this recent discourse, the historiographical question of whether or not historians should morally engage with the past and make moral judgements had been largely regarded as "either solved or forgotten."[2] An assessment of the existing literature on this topic leaves one underwhelmed—with the exception of the last decade or so—by the scope of available material. Books or articles devoted to the subject of morality and the practice of history written by *historians* are difficult to find.[3] More generally, many books on historical method and theory, including recent publications, fail to make any mention of morality, ethics or moral judgement.[4] Where these issues are explicitly addressed, comment has generally taken the form of a warning regarding the difficulties of engaging with morality, as well as a questioning of the necessity of historians doing so. More generous authors may not completely condemn subjective moral influences in the writing of history, but they offer no further guidance or advice to

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[1] See 'Introduction,' p. 7.

[2] R. T. Vann, 'Historians and Moral Evaluations,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, p. 4. Indeed, another historian has recently pointed out an ongoing consensus on this issue, noting that "overt moral judgments still labor, on the whole, under the profession's official disapproval." See R. T. McKenzie, 'To Judge or Not to Judge?,' *Historically Speaking: The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, November-December 2006, p. 30.

[3] Historian Richard Vann, commenting on a search for texts which specifically dealt with the issue of moral judgements and historical method, noted that "I was able to find only nine articles and one book in English that directly addressed this topic in the years from 1959 to 1994." See Vann, 'Historians and Moral Evaluations,' p. 4. My own research into this topic confirms Vann's limited results.

[4] Examples include, but are not limited to, M. Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography*, London, Routledge, 1997; M. Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction*, London, Routledge, 1999; P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing,* Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001; P. Gay, *Style in History*, London, Cape, 1975; A. Green and K. Troup (eds.), *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, New York, New York University Press, 1999; P. Lambert and P. Schofield (eds.), *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline*, London, Routledge, 2004; J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (1984), Harlow, Pearson Longman, 2006; D. Thompson, *The Aims of History: Values of the Historical Attitude*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1969; and R. C. Williams, *The Historian's Toolbox: A Student's Guide to the Theory and Craft of History*, Armonk, M. E. Sharpe, 2003. For similar criticism, see J. Cracraft, 'Implicit Morality,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, p. 34, n. 8.

historians as to how they should employ notions of morality in their work.[5] Others have been far more explicit in their condemnation. Moral judgements have been variously described by historians as "deadly enemies of true historical insight," the "satanic enemy of true history," and "the most useless and unproductive of all forms of reflection."[6] Morality itself remains something that "most serious historians try to avoid."[7]

A major contention of the present study is that, despite this disciplinary rhetoric of 'objectivity' and 'impartiality', addressing moral concerns and making moral judgements are unavoidable elements of the historical enterprise, particularly that which addresses past atrocity. The beginnings of an ethical turn in historiography provide an opportunity for self-reflexivity, and a chance to enhance awareness of the manner in which such concerns have shaped, and might shape, historical scholarship. When one considers the overall history of attitudes towards moral judgements within historical practice, engagement with atrocity emerges time and again as the key determinant in the course of discussion. Repeatedly, where challenges have been made against the prevailing disciplinary orthodoxy of 'objectivity' and detachment, discourse has focused around the question of whether or not 'objective' historical method can adequately accommodate the gravity of an event like the Holocaust. This interaction between past atrocity, morality and historiography demands greater analysis and consideration, and is therefore where the present study begins.

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Our history of attitudes towards moral engagement in historical practice starts with the professionalisation of the discipline, a process which began in continental Europe in the early nineteenth century before spreading to both America and Britain by 1900.[8] Prior to that time, history writing had long been imagined as a form of moral instruction and guidance, a conceptualisation reflected in the work of Ancient Greek historians such as

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[5] See, for example, A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, London, Macmillan, 1970, pp. 101-102, 151.
[6] J. Burckhardt, 'Fortune and Misfortune in History' (1871), in H. Meyerhoff (ed.), *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*, Garden City, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959, p. 276; M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (1953), trans. P. Putnam, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992, p. 31; and H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), London, G. Bell and Sons, 1951, p. 108, respectively.
[7] R. J. Evans, personal communication, 19 May 2008.
[8] See E. A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 13-17; J. Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England Since the Renaissance*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, pp. 144-145; P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 21-46; and C. Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1990, pp. 87-88. See also J. Higham, 'Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 3, 1962, p. 617.

Herodotus and Thucydides, as well as more modern writers such as Thomas Hobbes.[9] The 'new' history ushered in by professionalisation, however, was 'scientific' in its aims and practices, and sought, in the oft-cited phrase of Leopold von Ranke, to simply recreate the past "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*."[10] In this sense, the discipline had redefined itself in a manner which did not support historians' explicit engagement with their own morality and other 'subjective' influences, and until the late 1960s this self-image remained generally unchallenged. Ranke, often credited as the 'father' of this new conception of history, wrote of moral judgements that:

> It is not up to us [historians] to judge about error and truth as such. We merely observe one figure (*Gestalt*) arising side by side with another figure; life, side by side with life; effect, side by side with countereffect. Our task is to penetrate them to the bottom of their existence and portray them with complete objectivity.[11]

This notion of 'objectivity' lies at the core of the conventional conception of history, and is perhaps the single most important factor in explaining why the discipline has traditionally shunned explicit engagement with moral concerns. Indeed, in many ways the history of attitudes towards morality in historical practice can simultaneously be viewed as the history of 'objectivity'. Over time, the ideal of 'objectivity' became so pervasive and entrenched that one historian has described it as a "cult" within the discipline.[12]

The concept of 'objectivity' is multifaceted and complex, referring both to guidelines which shape historical practice as well as certain beliefs about the past and our ability to comprehend and represent it. As one historian has noted, "[t]o 'be objective' you have to believe in the reality of the object *and* the possibility of knowing it for what it was *and* still is."[13] In terms of how 'objectivity' has influenced the discipline's stance towards moral issues, however, it has most commonly been understood as akin to 'detachment',

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[9] See, for example, N. F. Partner, 'Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions,' in F. Ankersmit and H. Kellner (eds.), *A New Philosophy of History*, London, Reaktion Books, 1995, pp. 27-28; B. Southgate, *History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp. 30-31; and C. Thomas, 'History as Moral Commentary: Ideology and the Ethical Responsibilities of the Historian,' *Nebula*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2004-2005, pp. 179-180.

[10] See D. Carr, 'History, Fiction, and Human Time: Historical Imagination and Historical Responsibility,' in D. Carr, T. R. Flynn and R. A. Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2004, p. 249; and G. G. Iggers, 'The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought,' *History and Theory*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1962, p. 18. The phrase '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*' is commonly translated into English as "as it actually was." See, for example, Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 28. Some historians, however, have questioned the accuracy of this translation, claiming that it should instead be understood to mean "as it essentially was." See G. G. Iggers and K. von Moltke, 'Introduction,' in G. G. Iggers and K. von Moltke (eds.), *Leopold von Ranke: The Theory and Practice of History*, Indianapolis, Bobbs Merrill, 1973, pp. xix-xx.

[11] L. von Ranke, 'On The Character of Historical Science' (1830s), trans. W. A. Iggers and K. von Moltke, in G. G. Iggers and K. von Moltke (eds.), *Leopold von Ranke: The Theory and Practice of History*, Indianapolis, Bobbs Merrill, 1973, p. 42.

[12] P. Joyce, 'The Return of History: Postmodernism and the Politics of Academic History in Britain,' *Past and Present*, no. 158, 1998, p. 218.

[13] A. Munslow, *The New History*, Harlow, Pearson Longman, 2003, p. 83. Emphasis in original. See also C. A. Beard, 'That Noble Dream,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1935, p. 76; and D. Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1997, p. 76.

'impartiality' or 'neutrality'.[14] Such an understanding finds expression in the writings of historians during this period between professionalisation and the late 1960s. For example, Henry Lea argued in 1904 that "to inject modern ethical theories into the judgment of men and things of bygone times is to introduce subjectivity into what should be purely objective."[15] This view was echoed by Gilbert J. Garraghan in 1940, who claimed that "[b]y objectivity (or the virtually equivalent term, impartiality) is meant such a detached and neutral attitude in the historian as enables him to deal with his material in light of the evidence alone."[16] With objectivity as its ideal, conventional historical method thus strongly discouraged historians' explicit engagement with their own morality.

Nonetheless, even as it was becoming entrenched as the profession's ideal, the notion of objectivity was not immune from criticism during this same period. Foreshadowing the more dramatic critique of the concept which was to emerge from the late 1960s onward, there were some who questioned the ability of historians to achieve 'objectivity' in their work, pointing to the inevitable influence of subjective factors. Perhaps the most notable of these challenges was that provided by the 'Progressive Historians' led by figures such as Charles Beard and Carl Becker during the interwar years in America.[17] In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in December 1933, Beard argued that:

> [A]ny selection and arrangement of facts pertaining to any large area of history, either local or world, race or class, is controlled inexorably by the frame of reference in the mind of the selector and arranger. This frame of reference includes things deemed necessary, things deemed possible, and things deemed desirable.[18]

Becker had alluded to a similar conception of history two years earlier, when he declared that "[e]veryman [is] his own historian."[19] In pointing to the subjective factors which invariably influence historical interpretation and writing, the Progressive Historians

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[14] For comment on this tendency, see F. A. Ankersmit, 'The Ethics of History: From the Double Binds of (Moral) Meaning to Experience,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, pp. 87-88.
[15] H. C. Lea, 'Ethical Values in History,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1904, p. 237.
[16] G. J. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method* (1940), New York, Fordham University Press, 1957, pp. 46-47.
[17] See Novick, *That Noble Dream*, chs. 6-9. See also J. Appleby, L. Hunt and M. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1994, pp. 137-142; and R. J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (1997), New York, W. W. Norton, 1999, pp. 23-24. For studies of Beard, Becker and the 'Progressive Historians' see, for example, R. Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1969, especially Part III, 'Charles A. Beard,' pp. 167-346; E. Nore, *Charles A. Beard: An Intellectual Biography*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983, especially ch. 12; C. W Smith, *Carl Becker: On History and the Climate of Opinion*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1956, especially chs. 2-3, 6; C. Strout, *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl Becker and Charles Beard*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958, especially Part I, 'The Revolt of Relativism,' pp. 13-61; and B. T. Wilkins, *Carl Becker: A Biographical Study in American Intellectual History*, Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1961, especially chs. 7-9.
[18] C. A. Beard, 'Written History as an Act of Faith,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1934, p. 227. Peter Novick notes that "[n]o presidential addresses to the American Historical Association ever occasioned as much discussion as Becker's 'Everyman' and Beard's 'Act of Faith.'" See Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 258.
[19] C. Becker, 'Everyman His Own Historian,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1932, p. 221.

emphasised the unavoidable relativity of history.[20] This absence of absolutes, Beard ultimately concluded, meant that "[t]he historian's powers are limited. He may search for, but he cannot find, the 'objective truth' of history, or write it, 'as it actually was.'"[21]

Despite the boldness of their claims, these challenges ultimately did not seriously undermine the overall rule of objectivity within the discipline.[22] During this period between professionalisation and the late 1960s, many historians appear to have become comfortable with the suggestion that they would invariably be liable to influence from subjective factors, but nonetheless continued to view 'objectivity' as an ideal to strive for. This attitude is reflected in various works on historical method and theory published during this time, such as E. H. Carr's *What is History?* (1961) and W. H. Walsh's *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1951).[23] By 1967, Geoffrey Elton regarded questions concerning the attainability of objectivity and the subjectivity and bias of the historian to be "somewhat tired."[24] Even as historians became more flexible about the notion of objectivity, however, the same was not true on questions of morality and moral judgements. Morality remained "irrelevant" and a "hindrance"[25] to historical enquiry, and so objectivity persisted as the profession's "*raison d'être*."[26]

The ideal of objectivity was instrumental in shaping what the 'aim' or 'purpose' of history was understood to be, as well as the 'duties' of the historian. As we have seen, prior to the professionalisation of the discipline, the notion that written histories could provide moral instruction and guidance was accepted as legitimate. Once 'objectivity' became its guiding principle, however, history could no longer aim to provide what Lea had described in 1904 as "a Sunday-school tale for children of larger growth."[27] Instead, professionalisation had fostered an understanding that the study of history was akin to that of a science, meaning that its aims and purposes had to be defined accordingly.[28] As such, the overall 'aim' of history, as it came to be understood during this period prior to the late

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[20] See Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth*, p. 216; and G. Himmelfarb, 'Postmodernist History,' in *idem*., *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society*, New York, Knopf, 1994, p. 137.
[21] Beard, 'That Noble Dream,' p. 84.
[22] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 321.
[23] E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (1961), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964; and W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1951. Historian Geoffrey Elton was still promoting such a view in 1991. See G. R. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 67-68.
[24] G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1967, p. 131.
[25] H. Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, London, Collins, 1951, p. 103.
[26] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 1.
[27] Lea, 'Ethical Values in History,' p. 237.
[28] This understanding is perhaps best encapsulated by J. B. Bury's famous declaration that "history is a science, no less and no more." See J. B. Bury, 'The Science of History' (1902), in F. Stern (ed.), *Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, London, Macmillan, 1970, p. 210.

1960s, was to study the past with scientific and objective methods in order to reveal "the severest truth" about the past.[29]

Underpinning this view was the notion that the past should be studied for its own sake, avoiding any overt influence from present concerns or considerations. In *The Practice of History*, Elton had argued in favour of "the first principle of historical understanding, namely that the past must be studied in its own right, for its own sake, and on its own terms," believing that "the study of history is legitimate in itself, and any use of it for another purpose is secondary."[30] Such a conception of history clearly discouraged historians from engaging with moral concerns, and resisted trying to draw any 'lessons' for the present from moral judgements about the past.

As the aim of history was largely understood to be simply an "impersonal search for truth," it was inevitable that the historian's 'duties' and 'responsibilities' would be conceived in a similarly neutral fashion.[31] While, as outlined previously, there was a general recognition of the potential influence of subjective factors both within and upon historians, it was expected that they moderate these impulses and work towards being as 'objective' as possible. According to such a conception, then, making any explicit moral judgements fell well outside the realm of the historian's responsibilities.

The prevailing view of the duties of the historian during this period between professionalisation and the late 1960s is perhaps best summarised by the famous maxim, "the historian is not a judge, much less a hanging judge."[32] Indeed, this attitude was expressed and endorsed by many different scholars. Henry Commager, for example, believed that historians employing moral judgement in their analysis was indicative of "vanity" and "intellectual arrogance," a view echoed by Marc Bloch who asked, "[a]re we so sure of ourselves and our age as to divide the company of our forefathers into the just and the damned?"[33] Instead, historians were, as one commentator put it, to function as "detective[s]," not judging but merely explaining what they believed had occurred after careful consideration of the facts.[34]

Those who subscribed to these views believed that factual historical narratives contained inherent moral messages, leaving the reader free to draw their own moral

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[29] Lea, 'Ethical Values,' p. 256.
[30] Elton, *The Practice of History*, pp. 86, 66 respectively.
[31] T. C. Smith, 'The Writing of American History in America,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1935, p. 448.
[32] D. Knowles, *The Historian and Character*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1955, p. 13.
[33] H. S. Commager, *The Search for a Usable Past, and Other Essays in Historiography*, New York, Knopf, 1967, p. 316; and Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, p. 140.
[34] I. Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 51. Berlin was, of course, critical of such a neutral conception of the historian's responsibilities, and argued that historians could be guided by moral concerns.

conclusions.[35] Commager provided a typically sharp insight into what lay behind this reasoning:

> The assumption behind this expectation [that the historian make moral judgements] is that the reader has no mind of his own, no moral standards, no capacity to exercise judgment; that he is incapable of distinguishing between slavery and freedom, persecution and tolerance, but depends upon the historian to do this for him. Are those who are mature enough to read serious histories really so obtuse that they cannot draw conclusions from the facts that are submitted to them?[36]

If the reader did not require the moral lessons of history to be made explicit, it was not necessary that the historian go to the trouble of pointing them out. Instead, the historian was simply required to explain and describe, and be, as one scholar argued, "committed to an attempt to learn all that can be learned by the scientific study of just the observable interconnections of events."[37]

While this view of history which eschewed explicit engagement with moral concerns continued to be reinforced throughout this period between professionalisation and the late 1960s, it did not go unchallenged. Although not particularly significant in number or ultimate influence, there were some historians who questioned the profession's prevailing observance of strict moral impartiality. Such questioning can be observed during the nineteenth century, even during the period when the Rankean conception of historical method and practice was achieving and consolidating its authority. Perhaps the best-known of these dissenters is Lord Acton, who continually emphasised and defended his belief that "it is the office of historical science to maintain morality as the sole criterion of men and things, and the only one on which honest minds can be made to agree," most famously in his dispute over the issue with Mandell Creighton during the 1880s.[38] By the end of the nineteenth century, however, it became evident even to Acton himself that his views were rapidly moving out of vogue. In 1895, in his inaugural address at the University of Cambridge, Acton recognised that:

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[35] See G. Wright, 'History as a Moral Science,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 1, 1976, p. 6. There are, as we saw in the Introduction with the example of Richard Evans, historians today who also subscribe to this view. See 'Introduction,' p. 2, n. 3.

[36] Commager, *The Search for A Usable Past*, p. 320. For other discussions and expressions of this view see, for example, Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 51; and Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, pp. 122-123. For a contemporary critique of this same tendency, see Higham, 'Beyond Consensus,' p. 620.

[37] Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, p. 103.

[38] J. E. E. Acton, 'Review of Creighton's History of the Papacy' (1887), in J. R. Fears (ed.), *Selected Writings of Lord Acton Volume II: Essays in the Study and Writing of History*, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 1985, p. 374. For further examples of the correspondence between Acton and Creighton, see J. R. Fears (ed.), *Selected Writings of Lord Acton Volume II: Essays in the Study and Writing of History*, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 1985, pp. 378-391. For comment on their debate, see, for example, A. Fish, 'Acton, Creighton and Lea: A Study in History and Ethics,' *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1947, pp. 59-69; Kenyon, *The History Men*, pp. 133-136; McKenzie, 'To Judge or Not to Judge?,' p. 29; and Parker, *The English Historical Tradition*, p. 57.

> The weight of opinion is against me when I exhort you never to debase the moral currency or lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong.[39]

Challenges to the prevailing consensus concerning morality continued into the twentieth century. Significantly, these disputes generally occurred during periods of widespread social, political and cultural change, which lends some credence to the suggestion that "the discipline of history is inseparable from the history of the society and culture of which it is a part."[40] As we have seen, following the First World War the 'Progressive Historians' questioned and disparaged the profession's ideal of 'objectivity'. However, it was in the wake of the Second World War—and, in particular, the atrocities that took place during its course—that questions of moral engagement and its application to the study of history began to be raised with a new urgency.

The aftermath of the war led many historians to question the observation of strict impartiality in their work. Their writings reveal a sense that the atrocities of the recent past presented intense moral challenges which demanded something more than neutral explanation and analysis. Even those historians avowedly committed to the ideal of objectivity and the observance of impartiality could not help but feel a sense of unease following the war. For example, writing in 1967, George Kitson Clark observed that:

> The critical review of accepted history will by no means eliminate, or modify, the statements of fact and the opinions about history which create hatred. If it is honest, and it is of no use to anyone if it is not, it will confirm the fact that there are transactions in the human record quite as horrible as they were reported to be and that men and women have been inspired by motives, or cultivated habits of mind, which must be called evil, if the word evil is ever to be used by one human being of another. If anyone doubts this he had better consider the case of those who were guilty for the murder, largely in cold blood, often after humiliation and torture, of about six million Jews, men, women *and* children, between 1939-1945. History cannot be silent about this, and, unless the tribunal of history is a phantasy and a myth, it must pass judgement.[41]

Fellow historian Herbert Butterfield was also troubled by the events of the recent past, and believed that "[o]ne of the great needs of the twentieth century is a scientific study of

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[39] J. E. E. Acton, 'The Study of History,' lecture delivered 11 June 1895, in J. R. Fears (ed.), *Selected Writings of Lord Acton Volume II: Essays in the Study and Writing of History*; Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 1985, p. 546. See also Kenyon, *The History Men*, p. 137.

[40] G. G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1975, p. 11. This suggestion can also go some way towards explaining the current 'ethical turn' in historiography.

[41] G. K. Clark, *The Critical Historian*, London, Heinemann, 1967, p. 208. Emphasis in original. See also Vann, 'Historians and Moral Evaluations,' pp. 9-10.

atrocity, and of the moral issues involved."[42] Despite their acute unease, however, neither Clark nor Butterfield believed that these tasks were the responsibility of the historian. Clark went on to argue that "[f]ortunately, these problems can perhaps be left with propriety to people who are not primarily historians, to jurists, to philosophers, to theologians or perhaps to psychologists." He maintained that "the historian's task is completed when he has described what he thinks happened, and, as far as history can reveal this, why it happened."[43]

Other commentators, however, were of the opinion that the historian had no choice but to address these moral problems which seemed to cut at the heart of the traditional conception of the historical enterprise. In their view, the methods of conventional historiography appeared unable to adequately address the full moral import of the events of the recent past. Writing in 1947, historian Andrew Fish recognised some of the problems involved:

> How are we to write the history of Hitlerism? By suspending judgment? Merely to record the facts according to the tenets of the "things as they actually happened" school is too menial a task for the historian. At its best, history is reflection on human problems; it makes value judgments and has affinities with philosophy. It is not only a record of civilization; it is a contribution to man's spiritual culture. In that culture are not ethical principles, whatever their origin, an essential element? In a world distraught as perhaps never before, in which power is not yet subject to any law beyond itself, there is still need for Acton's trumpet call: "Suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong."[44]

These dilemmas outlined by Fish formed part of a growing sense that the atrocities of the war had complicated the process of writing history. As one commentator noted, "in time of acute public anxiety, when great issues of right and wrong are in the balance, the writer of contemporary history is bound to find his task very difficult."[45] Clearly, the experience of the war and its atrocities—and the ensuing problem of how best to address them historically—was driving discussion of the place of moral engagement in historical practice.

In addition to this sense of unease regarding the capacity of conventional historical method to adequately accommodate such atrocities, there were other concerns being raised by those who were questioning the prevailing consensus against explicit moral judgements about past actors and actions. First, there was a general belief that recent events had given

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[42] Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, p. 125. For an interesting examination of Butterfield's attitudes to moral judgements in history, see M. Bentley, 'Herbert Butterfield and the Ethics of Historiography,' *History and Theory*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2005, pp. 55-71.
[43] Clark, *The Critical Historian*, p. 208.
[44] Fish, 'Acton, Creighton and Lea,' p. 69.
[45] A. Toynbee, 'The Writing of Contemporary History for Chatham House,' *International Affairs*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1953, p. 139.

the study—and thus the content—of history an increased importance in public affairs. Historical study was being presented as a means of coming to terms with the challenges and dilemmas raised in the wake of the war. Geoffrey Barraclough was one historian who recognised that "[e]very thinking man and woman to-day…who seeks an answer to the dilemmas of the modern world, turns inevitably to the past, hoping to discover in history a clue to modern trends and tendencies."[46] This perceived increase in the status and importance of history rather naturally brought about a questioning of how it should be written and what it should include in order to adequately provide guidance for these "dilemmas of the modern world."

This embrace of a public use for history itself marked an important shift in consciousness for historians. One of the side effects of professionalisation had been that historians became more isolated within universities, producing work which was increasingly designed for consumption by their colleagues and not by a general reading public, thus limiting any debate and discussion to a small forum of professionals.[47] In the wake of the war and the various challenges it presented across society, however, the historian was being increasingly called upon to leave the cloister of the university and answer to public concerns. As a general rule, this shift was seen as a welcome change by those historians critical of the prevailing stance towards moral judgements in historical practice.

Additionally, many of these critiques reiterated earlier criticisms regarding the inevitability of subjectivity in historical writing and interpretation. What changed in the wake of the Second World War, however, was that many commentators were suggesting that the historian need not be so strict in taming the influences of various subjective forces, including moral impulses.[48] G. M. Trevelyan, for example, was a proponent of this view, noting that "I will not ask the question, 'Is bias in history permissible?' Because clearly it is inevitable. I will ask the more fruitful questions, 'What sort of bias is permissible?' and 'What are its limits?'"[49] For Trevelyan, morality was a permissible bias, arguing that "[m]oral disapproval should, I think, be part of the historian's bias, indeed it is a part of his duty."[50]

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[46] G. Barraclough, *History In a Changing World* (1955), Oxford, Blackwell, 1957, p. 168. Barraclough is a somewhat curious figure on the subject of morality and historical practice. He appeared to have changed his mind about these issues to endorse a more traditional approach of eschewing moral judgement just a few years after *History in a Changing World* was first published. See G. Barraclough, 'History, Morals and Politics,' *International Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1958, pp. 1-15.
[47] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 52.
[48] See, for example, Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, pp. 48-53; G. M. Trevelyan, 'Bias in History,' *History*, vol. 32, 1947, pp. 1, 3, 12, 14; and C. V. Wedgwood, *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays*, London, Collins, 1960, pp. 43-46.
[49] Trevelyan, 'Bias in History,' p. 3.
[50] Trevelyan, 'Bias in History,' p. 12.

Among the most developed and sustained critiques of the prevailing stance towards engagement with morality during this period came from John Higham's 1962 essay 'Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic'. Higham urged historians to free themselves from "academic primness" and self-consciously respond to the multitude of moral challenges which had resulted from the events and particularly the atrocities of the recent past.[51] The historian, he believed, should adopt the role of mediator between the past and the present, believing that "today's historians can exercise a morally critical function with tentativeness and humility, with a minimum of self-righteousness, and with a willingness to meet the past on equal terms."[52] While disapproving of moral judgements by historians, Higham endorsed what has been described as "moral criticism."[53] Being a moral critic was not to a license to moralise or preach, but to provide nuanced analysis of the complexities of past moral choices and actions for the benefit of the present. In this sense, Higham proposed a morality for history that was inquisitive in nature, in contrast to Acton's earlier, more condemning and domineering, approach. Expressing a sentiment equally applicable to the current ethical turn, Higham suggested that "[w]e have today a major opportunity for revitalizing the moral relevance of historical scholarship."[54]

In 1962, however, this opportunity was not fully realised. Despite the acute sense that the atrocities of the recent past strained the limits of 'objective' historical method, challenges to the prevailing consensus regarding historians and their approach to moral issues during this period were limited in their impact, and the dominant stance remained intact. Significantly, while many were beginning to question the attainability of absolute objectivity and recognised the unavoidable subjective element of historical interpretation, it did not translate into any marked revision of the stance towards historians' engagement with moral concerns. For example, while E. H. Carr recognised that "history is shot through and through with relativity," he also maintained that "Stalin is said to have behaved cruelly and callously to his second wife; but, as a historian of Soviet affairs I do not feel myself much concerned."[55] Instead, Carr argued, the historian had "other things to do" than be overly concerned with morality.[56]

This attitude appears to have been shared by many others. By and large, it seems, moral issues were not viewed as being particularly pressing by a majority of historians, and thus did not warrant frequent or serious discussion and debate. Nonetheless, the challenges to the 'traditional' practice and theory of history, including its stance towards morality,

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[51] Higham, 'Beyond Consensus,' p. 625.
[52] Higham, 'Beyond Consensus,' p. 619.
[53] See P. E. Tillinghast, *The Specious Past: Historians and Others*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1972, p. 167.
[54] Higham, 'Beyond Consensus,' p. 617.
[55] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 75.
[56] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 76.

which appeared from the late 1960s in the form of postmodernist theory and various other forces would prove to be impossible to ignore. Once again, it was anxiety regarding past atrocity which emerged as the driving force of debate regarding what place moral judgements might have within historical practice.

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In an address to the Washington Meeting of the American Historical Association in 1934, Theodore Clarke Smith made the following observations regarding the future of the discipline of history:

> It may be that another fifty years will see the end of an era in historiography, the final extinction of a noble dream, and history, save as an instrument of entertainment, or of social control, will not be permitted to exist. In that case, it will be time for the American Historical Association to disband, for the intellectual assumptions on which it is founded will have been taken away from beneath it. My hope is, none the less, that those of us who date from what may then seem an age of quaint beliefs and forgotten loyalties, may go down with our flags flying.[60]

Smith's fears would prove to be founded when, from the late 1960s onwards, a complex variety of factors served to undermine many key concepts and values of 'traditional' history. Much of this impact resulted from an onslaught of various '-isms', commonly grouped under the banner of 'postmodernism', whose origins lay outside the discipline of history in the fields of literary and cultural criticism. In addition to these external forces, however, significant changes were also emanating from within the discipline itself which challenged both the old certainty of 'objectivity' and strict adherence to moral impartiality.

To begin with, the manner in which many historians actually practiced history began to rapidly change from the 1960s, due to a proliferation of different approaches and methodologies. The rise of feminist, 'black', Marxist and social histories involved coming to the past from a particular ideological position, and produced what one commentator has termed "the politicization of history."[61] While many of these approaches had long existed in one form or another, the most significant change which occurred from the 1960s onwards was their movement into the universities. Significantly, these approaches shared a clear resonance with wider social and political movements occurring at the time, such as

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[60] Smith, 'The Writing of American History,' p. 449.

[61] M. S. Roth, *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 27. See also Novick, *That Noble Dream*, chs. 13-15. For a discussion of this same phenomenon in the field of literary studies, see Eskin, 'The "Double Turn,'" p. 558. It is worth noting, however, that earlier historical writing had also been politicised. By subscribing to the 'Great Man' theory of history and focusing their studies on the nation-state, earlier historians had been equally motivated by political concerns. It was not until this consensus was challenged by those writing Marxist, feminist and other such histories that this fact became obvious.

the campaigns for civil rights and women's liberation, which helped to legitimate their new status within the academic history profession.[62]

Perhaps the most important impact of these new historical methodologies was their exposure of how flawed the concept of 'objectivity' had actually been, and how the profession's claim to have hitherto been objective was in many ways false. By revealing the extent to which women, non-whites and the poor had been largely excluded from written history, historians engaging with these new approaches demonstrated how selective and biased their predecessors, despite their claims of 'objectivity', had actually been.

New methods of research were also being employed by historians during this period, many of which challenged traditional understandings of historical evidence and the historian's relation to it, as well as the ideal of 'objectivity'. A particularly illustrative example of these changes is provided by the dramatic increase in the practice of oral history during the 1960s.[63] In the oral history interview, historians are directly involved in the production of their evidence, and in many ways can help to shape the nature of the 'facts' they uncover.[64] This malleability further highlighted the problematic nature of the notion of 'objectivity', and underlined the pervasiveness of subjective forces in historical writing and research.

These dramatic shifts in the scope of methods and approaches which could be applied to the study of the past developed alongside important changes to the structure and makeup of the history profession itself. With the rise of feminist, 'black' and postcolonial history, the profession ceased to be largely the domain of white males, and became much more diverse.[65] Additionally, a dwindling academic job market in the 1970s saw many historians move out of their relative isolation in the universities and into the public domain in order to find employment. This movement gave rise to 'public history', which challenged existing ideals of historical practice while raising a plethora of new ethical questions for

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[62] These connections to contemporary social, political and cultural issues once again reinforces the notion that the history of history itself is a reflection of the broader culture and society in which it is written.

[63] For comment on the rise of oral history methods during the 1960s, see, for example, L. Douglas, A. Roberts and R. Thompson, *Oral History: A Handbook*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988, p. 8; P. Hamilton, 'The Knife's Edge: Debates About Memory and History,' in K. Darian-Smith and P. Hamilton (eds.), *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 14; and R. Sharpless, 'The History of Oral History,' in T. L. Charlton, L. E. Myers and R. Sharpless (eds.), *Handbook of Oral History*, Lanham, Altamira Press, 2006, p. 27.

[64] For comment on this aspect of oral history practice, see, for example, K. Borland, '"That's Not What I Said": Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research,' in S. B. Gluck and D. Patai (eds.), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 63-76; L. Douglas and P. Spearitt, 'Talking History: The Use of Oral Sources,' in G. Osbourne and W. F. Mande (eds.), *New History: Studying Australia Today*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1982, p. 55; D. Potts, *The Myth of the Great Depression*, Carlton, Scribe, 2006, pp. 204-205, 207; and J. Scott and K. Saunders, 'Happy Days Are Here Again? A Reply to David Potts,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 36, 1993, p. 13.

[65] Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, p. 21.

historians.[66] In light of this increasing public presence, many of these questions were concerned with the public 'use' and understandings of history, and a reassessment of the historian's responsibility to this public.

Such concerns about historians and social responsibilities during this period produced what has been described as the "activist-scholar," referring to those who were dedicated to using the study of the past to improve the present.[67] One such example of this 'scholarly activism' is Howard Zinn's 1970 study *The Politics of History*, in which he argued for a 'presentist' conception of history which reflected and responded to the needs of the present while helping to shape the future. Advocating what he termed "value-laden historiography," Zinn believed historians had a responsibility to contribute towards addressing and solving social problems.[68] He argued that:

> In a world where children are still not safe from starvation or bombs, should not the historian thrust himself and his writing into history, on behalf of goals in which he deeply believes? Are we historians not humans first, and scholars because of that?[69]

Such a conception of the duties of the historian is markedly different from the earlier orthodoxy which demanded neutral explanation and analysis, and an adherence to moral impartiality. In a nod to the increasing public presence of the historian, Zinn's approach suggested that historians write 'conscious' history, be a clear presence within their own writing, and be motivated by concerns which were distinctly moral in nature—all of which challenged the traditional conception of the roles and responsibilities of the historian.

However, Zinn nonetheless remained committed to using objective historical methods in order to produce such history. He was at pains to point out that his desire for "value-laden historiography" did not equal an attempt "to disengage history from the classical effort to be scientific, but rather to reaffirm the ancient humanist aims of the scientists."[70] Zinn's concerns reflect the limits of the changes which emerged from within the history profession during the 1960s and 1970s. While some historians engaging with the new approaches wrote consciously partisan histories and adopted an explicit moral stance, it appears that many others did not relinquish a belief in the possibility of

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[66] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, pp. 512-520.
[67] Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 431. For a contemporary discussion about the social function of history, see, for example, Tillinghast, *The Specious Past*, pp. 57-58, 102-103.
[68] H. Zinn, *The Politics of History* (1970), Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1990, p. 36. For an unfavourable contemporary analysis of such an approach to history, see I. Unger, 'The "New Left" and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 72, no. 4, 1967, pp. 1262-1263. Unger noted with disdain that "Clio at their [historians' such as Zinn] behest has donned a uniform and does battle for social virtue," and instead endorsed "a political neutrality which, however inadequate for citizenship, is surely useful for scholarship." See Unger, 'The "New Left" and American History,' p. 1263.
[69] Zinn, *The Politics of History*, p. 1.
[70] Zinn, *The Politics of History*, p. 2.

objectivity, even as they exposed their predecessors failings' in this regard.[71] Instead, they saw themselves, by balancing the historical record through a rediscovery of the forgotten and oppressed, to be truly 'objective' in their efforts. Even those historians who were urging engagement with moral problems and social issues still retained a belief that this could be done in a largely objective fashion. While dramatic changes were clearly afoot within the profession, historians were nonetheless practicing and writing history in essentially the same fashion, and still within the objectivist paradigm. The various new approaches did not inherently question a "belief in a fixed and determinable past," or whether or not 'objective' or 'true' knowledge about this past was actually possible.[72] Such questioning, however, came in the form of postmodern theory, which posed a further, and potentially far more serious, threat to the discipline of history as it had been traditionally understood.

The various '-isms' often grouped under the banner of 'postmodernism' have raised many serious questions regarding conventional conceptions of history. While these ideas began to emerge from the 1960s onwards, it was not until the 1980s that the postmodern challenge to history became a pressing matter of concern amongst a significant number of historians.[73] In terms of its specific application to the practice of history, postmodern theory has meant, to borrow from one critic, "a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past."[74]

Postmodern theory is largely concerned with language, emerging from what one historian has termed "the return of literature" which occurred during the 1960s.[75] This 'linguistic turn' produced a new questioning of the language and techniques used by historians to construct their narratives, and how these narratives related to the 'reality' of the past they purported to represent.[76] Theorist Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay 'The Discourse of History', recognised the central question which was at stake:

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[71] Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, p. 3. See also Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, pp. 25, 63.
[72] See B. Southgate, *Postmodernism and History: Fear or Freedom?*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 46.
[73] W. Thompson, *Postmodernism and History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 97.
[74] G. Himmelfarb, 'Telling It As You Like It: Postmodernist History and the Flight From Fact,' in K. Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 158.
[75] D. Harlan, 'Intellectual History and the Return of Literature,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, 1989, p. 581. See also A. Green and K. Troup, 'The Challenge of Poststructuralism/ Postmodernism,' in A. Green and K. Troup (eds.), *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, New York, New York University Press, 1999, p. 300; and Thompson, *Postmodernism and History*, p. 2.
[76] See B. Fay, 'The Linguistic Turn and Beyond in Contemporary Theory of History,' in B. Fay, P. Pomper and R. T. Vann (eds.), *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings*, Malden, Blackwell, 1998, pp. 2-3. For comment on the linguistic turn and its impact on history and historians, see, for example, Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, *passim*; and G. M. Spiegel (ed.), *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing After the Linguistic Turn*, New York, Routledge, 2005.

> Does the narration of past events, which, in our culture from the time of the Greeks onwards, has generally been subject to the sanction of historical 'science', bound to the unbending standard of the 'real', and justified by the principles of 'rational' exposition—does this form of narration really differ, in some specific trait, in some indubitably distinctive feature, from imaginary narration, as we find in the epic, the novel, and the drama?[77]

The increased tendency to emphasise the literary or fictive aspects of historical writing led to renewed claims that history was a branch of literature as opposed to a science, effectively reversing the process which had been initiated with professionalisation in the early nineteenth century.[78] This notion of 'history as literature' has subsequently formed an important element of the postmodern challenge to historical theory and practice.

The application of these ideas to the actual process of historical writing and interpretation was pioneered by Hayden White, most notably in his seminal 1973 study *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*.[79] Although rejecting the label 'postmodern' for his own work, White's ideas have been instrumental in shaping much of the postmodern challenge to traditional history.[80] In *Metahistory*, he argued that all historical accounts ultimately amounted to linguistic constructions which revealed as much about the historian writing them as the actual 'reality' of the past. Referring to "linguistic protocols," strategies of "emplotment" and "archetypal plot structures," White exposed the manner in which historians "prefigure" their data in order to form a "story" about the events of the past.[81] In the conclusion to *Metahistory*, White declared that:

> The late R. G. Collingwood was fond of saying that the kind of history one wrote, or the way one thought about history, was ultimately a function of the kind of man one was. But the reverse is also the case. Placed before the

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[77] R. Barthes, 'The Discourse of History' (1967), trans. S. Bann, *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, vol. 3, 1981, p. 7.

[78] See Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, p. 86.

[79] H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973. For comment on White, his work and its application to history, see, for example, F. R. Ankersmit, 'Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians,' *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1998, pp. 182-193; Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, pp. 105-129; G. G. Iggers, 'Historiography Between Scholarship and Poetry: Reflections on Hayden White's Approach to Historiography,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2000, pp. 373-390; K. Jenkins, *On 'What is History?': From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White*, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 134-179; K. Jenkins, *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity*, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 115-132; W. Kansteiner, 'Hayden White's Critique of the Writing of History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1993, pp. 273-295; A. Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 140-162; N. Partner, 'Hayden White (and the Content of the Form of Everyone Else) at the AHA,' *History and Theory*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1997, pp. 102-110; Roth, *The Ironist's Cage*, pp. 137-147; and R. T. Vann, 'The Reception of Hayden White,' *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1998, pp. 143-161. Additionally, the 1980 Theme Issue of *History and Theory* was devoted to a discussion of *Metahistory*. See *History and Theory*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1980.

[80] See E. Domañska, Interview with Hayden White, 5 February 1993, in E. Domañska (ed.), *Encounters: Philosophy of History After Postmodernism*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1998, pp. 26-27; and H. White, 'Response to Arthur Marwick,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1995, p. 233. The importance of White in relation to postmodernism and history is recognised by Richard Evans, who describes White as "the most influential single figure" in the debates and discussion. See Evans, *In Defense of History*, p. 260.

[81] See White, *Metahistory*, p. 426. See also Kansteiner, 'Hayden White's Critique,' p. 277; and Thomas, 'History as Moral Commentary,' pp. 186-188.

> alternative visions that history's interpreters offer for our consideration, and without any apodictically provided theoretical grounds for preferring one over another, we are driven back to moral and aesthetic reasons for the choice of one vision over another as the more "realistic." The aged Kant was right, in short; we are free to conceive "history" as we please, just as we are free to make of it what we will.[82]

Flouting the earlier orthodoxy of historians being, as Elton had argued, "firmly bound by the authority of our sources,"[83] White's arguments granted them the power to shape the past as they saw fit, in accordance with their own view of the world and in service of their own ends. For White personally, this 'freedom' has often translated into a desire to emphasise history's moral power, arguing that "the past could be used to effect an ethically responsible transition from present to future."[84]

Metahistory did not receive significant attention from historians at the time it was published, and White became, as one commentator recognises, "something close to a *bête noire* within the discipline."[85] As mentioned previously, it was not until the 1980s that postmodernism really entered the consciousness of a large number of historians. Once this shift occurred, however, it unleashed what would later be described as "the battle…between postmodernists and traditionalists in the dust-disturbed discipline of history," and provoked an extended and thoroughgoing sense of crisis.[86] Indeed, by 1989, historian Franklin Ankersmit believed that "autumn has come to Western historiography."[87] Comparing the study of history to a tree, he argued that the underpinnings of traditional historiography could be represented by the trunk and branches, while postmodernist historiography was represented by the leaves.[88] Now that "autumn" had seen these leaves fall away from the tree, Ankersmit suggested that "when we collect the leaves of the past…what is important is no longer the place they had on the tree, but the pattern we can form from them *now*."[89]

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[82] White, *Metahistory*, p. 433.
[83] Elton, *Return to Essentials*, p. 49.
[84] H. White, 'The Burden of History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1966, p. 132. For specific comment on this ethical impulse which underpins much of White's work, see, for example, Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, pp. 105-106, 123; and Kansteiner, 'Hayden White's Critique,' p. 278.
[85] A. Megill, 'The Reception of Foucault by Historians,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1987, p. 127.
[86] 'Things Ain't What They Used To Be,' *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 16 May 1997, as cited in Joyce, 'The Return of History,' p. 207. For examples of the invocation of the term "crisis" in relation to the postmodern challenge, see, for example, J. Appleby, 'The Power of History,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 1, 1998, pp. 2-3; R. F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1995, p. 3; R. J. Evans, 'Prologue: *What is History?*—Now,' in D. Cannadine (ed.) *What is History Now?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 14; Harlan, 'Intellectual History and the Return of Literature,' p. 581; L. Stone, 'History and Postmodernism,' *Past and Present*, no. 131, 1991, pp. 217-218; and N. J. Wilson, *History in Crisis? Recent Directions in Historiography*, Upper Saddle River, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
[87] F. R. Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism,' *History and Theory*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1989, p. 149.
[88] Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism,' pp 149-150.
[89] Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism,' p. 150. Emphasis in original.

In many ways this allegory provides an apt description of the impact which postmodernism has had upon the practice and theory of history. The removal of the certainty and stability seemingly provided by the trunk and branches of the 'tree' produced a widespread questioning of the protocols that underpinned traditional historiography. Above all, postmodernism has underscored and emphasised the problematic nature of historical knowledge, questioning how historians can know the past, how they can know the facts, and how they can know the 'truth'. From this questioning, the old certainty of 'objectivity' emerged particularly battered. In 1990 one historian declared that "[o]bjectivity, that dull-witted monarch which despotically ruled the discipline of history since the late nineteenth century, lies dethroned."[90] The attacks continued well into the 1990s and beyond, with objectivity being variously derided as a "chimera," a "paradox," an "ideologically freighted sham," and even "as useful to a historian as antlers would be to a duck."[91]

Despite the chaos and uncertainty it seemingly promoted, the postmodern challenge has nonetheless helped to foster new developments in historiography. Those in favour of postmodernist history have long emphasised the liberation and freedom which it presents to historians, and the proliferation of new topics of investigation and new interpretative frameworks is in some ways testament to this freedom.[92] Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, historians have increasingly turned their attention to subjects such as discourses and structures of power in history, as well as the history of the body.[93] Additionally, the explosion of cultural history has celebrated the marginal and obscure in history through an exploration of the concepts, structures and symbols which underpin cultures within a variety of historical contexts.[94]

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[90] K. Cmiel, 'After Objectivity: What Comes Next in History?,' *American Literary History*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990, p. 170. For further comment on postmodernism's impact on the notion of 'objectivity', see, for example, Joyce, 'The Return of History,' pp. 208-209.

[91] See Jenkins, *Rethinking History*, p. 56; Ankersmit, 'The Ethics of History,' p. 87; Southgate, *Postmodernism and History*, p. 6; and Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, p. 75 respectively.

[92] See, for example, Southgate, *Postmodernism in History*, p. 143.

[93] See also J. Goldstein (ed.), *Foucault and the Writing of History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994; Green and Troup, 'The Challenge of Poststructuralism/Postmodernism,' pp. 301-305; M. Rubin, 'What is Cultural History Now?,' in D. Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 83; and J. W. Scott, 'History in Crisis: The Others' Side of the Story,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, 1989, pp. 680-681.

[94] Evans, 'Prologue,' p. 8. Some examples of written histories which reflect such ideas and practices include R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1985), New York, Basic Books, 1999; N. Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985; G. Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1992; J. R. Grillis, *A World of Their Own Making: A History of Myth and Ritual in Family Life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; P. Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; D. Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations*, London, Routledge, 1996; S. Schama, *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)*, London, Granta, 1991; G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; C. Steedman, *Landscape For a Good Woman*, London, Virago,

Unsurprisingly, the assault on traditional historiography from proponents of postmodern theory produced equally strident responses defending the conventional view of history. As Smith had hoped back in 1934, once the challenge became apparent many historians did indeed fly the 'traditionalist' flag. Polemical writings sprung from everywhere—Richard Evans produced *In Defence of History* in 1997; Keith Windschuttle the more provocatively titled *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered By Literary Critics and Social Theorists* in 1994.[95] Even the 'old guard' of conventional historians were lending a hand in the effort to repudiate postmodernism, such as Geoffrey Elton's 1991 volume *Return to Essentials*.

As they went about defending a view of history which strove for 'objectivity' and observed moral impartiality, the historians who argued against postmodernism actively appealed to morality in both their language and professed intent.[96] For example, claiming he merely desired "to rescue history from being mauled by its molesters," Elton believed the situation to be so dire that "we are fighting for the lives of innocent young people beset by devilish tempters who claim to offer higher forms of thought and deeper truths and insights—the intellectual equivalent of crack."[97] Evans' language was also decidedly loaded, lashing out at "some of the intellectual barbarians at the disciplinary gates," whom he believed "to be loitering there with distinctly hostile intent."[98]

Those arguing against postmodernist history shared an objection to its apparent denial of certainty and the "anarchy" and "chaos" which it both encouraged and celebrated.[99] For these historians, postmodernism represented, to borrow from Elton, "a frivolous nihilism which allows any historian to say whatever he likes."[100] Postmodern theory was deemed to be rich in promises but lacking in substance. It gave comfort to those who would fabricate or deny the truth of the past. It was "anti-humanistic" and

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1986; and J. R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992. Of course, much of 'postmodernist' history can be seen as still operating from within the 'objectivist' paradigm. Often the greatest difference between 'postmodernist' history and more 'traditional' accounts is not epistemological, but one of subject matter. For more on this point, see below, p. 34.

[95] See K. Windscuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists*, Sydney, Macleay Press, 1994. For Marxist critiques of postmodernist history, see, for example, E. Hobsbawm, 'Identity History is not Enough' and 'Postmodernism in the Forest,' both in *idem.*, *On History*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997, pp. 266-277, 192-200 respectively.

[96] See also R. Eaglestone and S. Pitt, 'The Good of History: Ethics, Post-Structuralism and the Representation of the Past,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1998, p. 309.

[97] Elton, *Return to Essentials*, pp. 24, 41.

[98] Evans, *In Defense of History*, p. 7. Not shy in naming these "barbarians," Evans goes on to specifically refer to Frank Ankersmit, Keith Jenkins and Patrick Joyce.

[99] Himmelfarb, 'Postmodernist History,' p. 155.

[100] Elton, *Return to Essentials*, p. 49.

"anti-historical."[101] It amounted to little more than, as one critic argued, "an invitation to moral and intellectual suicide."[102]

Between the vocal minority of postmodernist and anti-postmodernist historians, a gaping space of indifference yawned. Many historians, including those engaging with subjects and ideas usually linked with postmodernism, continued to practice history in much the same way they always had. This indifference is perhaps symptomatic of a much-discussed and much-maligned condition afflicting historians which has been described as "theoretical naivety."[103] As late as 2005, one commentator was still finding cause to complain about "the widespread reluctance of historians to engage constructively with postmodern philosophy," which has meant, it has been argued, that postmodernism has been less influential within history than it has been within other disciplines.[104] The postmodern challenge has posed particularly serious challenges to the discipline of history, which may go some way towards explaining the vehemence of the attacks against it by historians, as well as the desire of many others to simply avoid explicit engagement with it.

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In many ways, the beginnings of the ethical turn in historiography has emerged from the postmodern challenge. The question of ethics has been somewhat slow to become a focus of discussion, as the debate about postmodernism and its applications to history has largely focused upon epistemological questions concerning truth and an ability to know the prior reality of the past.[105] More scholars, however, are beginning to address the issue of morality in the wake of the postmodern critique of the old certainties of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' in historical practice. It has been both arguments in favour of postmodern theory and arguments against it which have, wittingly or otherwise, worked to facilitate the emergence of history's ethical turn. Furthermore, it has once again been

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[101] Himmelfarb, 'Telling It As You Like It,' p. 173.
[102] Himmelfarb, 'Postmodernist History,' p. 160.
[103] Windschuttle, *The Killing of History*, p. 4. For further comment on this tendency amongst historians, see, for example, E. Breisach, *On The Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 6-7; Evans, *In Defense of History,* pp. 8-10; Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, p. xxi; C. Lloyd, 'For Realism and Against the Inadequacies of Commonsense: A Response to Arthur Marwick,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1996, p. 192; E. Somekawa and E. A. Smith, 'Theorizing the Writing of History or, "I Can't Think Why It Should Be So Dull, For a Great Deal of It Must Be Invention,"' *Journal of Social History*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1988, p. 150; and G. Spiegel, 'Revising the Past/Revisiting the Present: How Change Happens in Historiography,' *History and Theory*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2007, p. 4, n. 6.
[104] O. J. Daddow, 'The Ideology of Apathy: Historians and Postmodernism,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2004, p. 432. See also Himmelfarb, 'Postmodernist History,' pp. 155-156; Joyce, 'The Return of History,' pp. 207-208; and Thompson, *Postmodernism and History*, p. 1.
[105] Eaglestone and Pitt, 'The Good of History,' p. 309. As Eaglestone and Pitt point out, concerns of ethics are themselves "necessarily woven together" with epistemological questions. See Eaglestone and Pitt, 'The Good of History,' p. 309.

concerns surrounding past atrocity which have proved to be the driving force of discussion.

As we have seen, the postmodern challenge cuts across concepts which were central to the traditional understanding of history, particularly 'objectivity' and 'truth', and led to a widespread questioning of the purpose and aims of the discipline. If history could no longer be said to present 'objective' accounts of the past, what was it able to offer?[106] What were the duties of historians, if they were not objectively searching for and accurately presenting historical 'truth'? Some historians sympathetic to postmodern theory have viewed this questioning as an opportunity to revive a strong moral impulse in history writing, specifically advocating recognition and exploration of the various moral choices historians make as they construct their narratives.[107] Historian David Harlan, a particularly vocal advocate for the moral purpose of history, has argued that the discipline should now "drop the whole shop-worn subject" of objectivity, and instead embrace "the possibility that we could go all the way with contemporary theory and come out the other end with a reinvigorated but nevertheless traditional vision of history, that is, history as a form of moral reflection."[108]

Broader developments within 'postmodern ethics' have also been influential in the development of historiography's ethical turn. The new prominence of theorists such as Emmanuel Levinas and the application of his thought, particularly that concerning 'the other', has been a strong feature of the literature which has emerged on the subject of ethics and history.[109] What can be observed is an interaction between the postmodern challenge to traditional moral philosophy and the postmodern challenge to traditional history.[110] If postmodernism has brought about a reassessment of traditional ethics, it has

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[106] See Thomas, 'History as Moral Commentary,' pp. 181-182.

[107] A. Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (2000), London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 95-98.

[108] Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, pp. xxxi, 210. For a similar view arguing for the moral power of narrative, see, for example, W. Cronon, 'A Place for Stories: History, Nature and Narrative,' *Journal of American History*, vol. 78, no. 4, 1992, pp. 1347-1376.

[109] See, for example, J. D. Caputo, 'No Tear Shall Be Lost: The History of Prayers and Tears,' in D. Carr, T. R. Flynn and R. A. Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2004, pp. 91-117; M. Jackson, 'The Ethical Space of Historiography,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2001, pp. 467-480; A. Megill, 'Some Aspects of the Ethics of History-Writing: Reflections on Edith Wyschogrod's *An Ethics of Remembering*,' in D. Carr, T. R. Flynn and R. A. Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2004, pp. 45-75; and K. Ziarek, 'The Ethos of History,' in H. Marchitello (ed.), *What Happens to History? The Renewal of Ethics in Contemporary Thought*, New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 67-94.

[110] The postmodern challenge to moral philosophy has been summarised by Jenkins as "the collapse of ethical certainties." See Jenkins, *Why History?*, p. 19. In this vein, others have argued that "[w]hatever form it came in—deontological, consequentialist, or what have you—traditional (Western) ethics always assumed that, given the right philosophical *method* or calculus (adhesion ot the categorical imperative, the maximization of utility, etc.), *the* single correct answer to any ethical dilemma could in principle always be determined in a quasi-algorithmic fashion. For modern philosophers, ethics was indeed nothing more than applied general theory (applied metaphysics). But as postmoderns are now acutely aware, all theory is, to one degree or another, 'culture-laden'…. No theory, purely as such, can claim unconditional univer[s]al validity (all theories are, in some sense, culture-relative)." See G. B. Madison and M. Fairbain, 'Introduction,' in G. B. Madison

also facilitated a reassessment of the traditional role of ethics within the theory and practice of history, which is itself testament to how interrelated history and ethics actually are.[112]

It has also been suggested, however, that the beginnings of an ethical turn in historiography has been brought about by those historians who were hostile to postmodern theory, due to the invocation of moral arguments which characterised many of their responses.[113] In particular, those inveighing against postmodernist history frequently demonstrated an acute dissatisfaction with its inherent moral relativism. Although these defenders of traditional history undoubtedly subscribed to the orthodoxy of avoiding explicit moral engagement and judgement, they appeared deeply troubled when confronted by this relativism which would deny them the ability to unequivocally privilege one moral position over another. The issue at stake was essentially the same one which had perturbed many historians in the wake of the Second World War, namely the capacity of a theory of historiography to accommodate moral concerns, particularly those surrounding past atrocities. The moral relativism of postmodern theory proved to be a stumbling block in this regard for many historians. As Gertrude Himmelfarb, a particularly strident critic of postmodernist history, noted of this relativism, "[t]he effect in each case is to mute the drama of history, to void it of moral content, to mitigate evil and belittle greatness."[114]

The relativism of postmodern theory became such a controversial point that many historians felt compelled to revise their views on the subject, perhaps the most notable of whom was Hayden White. In his 1987 study *The Content of the Form*, White had argued that "no given set or sequence of true events is intrinsically tragic, comic, farcical, and so on."[115] The meaning of historical events was produced by the figuration of their emplotment, and was not inherent within the events themselves. When confronted by the Holocaust and other examples of historical atrocity, however, such a claim seems decidedly flawed and unsatisfactory.[116] Many of White's critics agreed, accusing him of being a nihilist and sceptic whose arguments could be used by Holocaust deniers to support their claims.[117] Seemingly

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and M. Fairbain (eds.), *The Ethics of Postmodernity: Current Trends in Continental Thought*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1999, p. 3. Emphasis in original.

[112] See Cracraft, 'Implicit Morality,' p. 34.

[113] M. Dintenfass, 'Truth's Other: Ethics, the History of the Holocaust, and Historiographical Theory After the Linguistic Turn,' *History and Theory*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2000, *passim*.

[114] Himmelfarb, 'On Looking into the Abyss,' p. 18.

[115] H. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1987, p. 44.

[116] See also Cmiel, 'After Objectivity,' p. 173.

[117] See, for example, C. Ginzburg, 'Just One Witness,' in S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 88-94. For comment on these criticisms, see Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, p. 124. On the issue of moral relativism, postmodernism and Holocaust denial, see, for example, Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, pp. 7-8; A. Callinicos, *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History*, Cambridge, Polity

eager to disassociate his work from such criticisms, in 1992 White published 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth', in which he directly addressed the issue of Holocaust representation in historical writing.[118] Steering away from his earlier claim that historical events were void of any inherent meaning, White wrote of representing atrocity that:

> It seems to be a matter of distinguishing between a specific body of factual "contents" and a specific "form" of narrative and applying the kind of rule which stipulates that a serious theme—such as mass murder or genocide—demands a noble genre—such as epic or tragedy—for its proper representation.[119]

White's change of heart is further testament to how past atrocity, in this instance the Holocaust, has directed, informed and constrained discussion of moral engagement and judgement in historical practice.

Historian Saul Friedländer has recognised that "[t]he extermination of the Jews of Europe, as the most extreme case of mass criminality, must challenge theoreticians of historical relativism to face the corollaries of positions otherwise too easily dealt with on an abstract level."[120] In many ways, the Holocaust has become the unavoidable stumbling block for moral relativism in history, and has repeatedly been invoked as a means of refuting postmodern theory. The effects of this use of the Holocaust are alluded to by Michael Dintenfass, in a perceptive essay addressing the role of such atrocities in historians' arguments against postmodernism:

> The unacknowledged resort to a moral discourse in historiographical polemics against the linguistic turn is symptomatic of the equivocation between the epistemological and the ethical that has characterized history since its translation from a moral to a social science. The enunciation of a terminology

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Press, 1995, pp. 65-94; R. Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial*, Cambridge, Icon Books, 2001; Evans, *In Defense of History*, pp. 206-210; Green and Troup, 'The Challenge of Poststructuralism/Postmodernism,' p. 300; G. Himmelfarb, 'On Looking Into the Abyss,' in *idem.*, *On Looking Into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society*, New York, Knopf, 1994, p. 19; Himmelfarb, 'Postmodernist History,' pp. 142-146; D. E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, New York, The Free Press, 1993, pp. 19-20; A. B. Spitzer, *Historical Truth and Lies About the Past: Reflections on Dewey, Dreyfus, de Man, and Reagan*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996, pp. 3-5; and L. Trilling, *Between History and Literature*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 303. For a discussion of the issues involved, and an argument that relativism need not be conducive to Holocaust denial, see P. Finney, 'Ethics, Historical Relativism and Holocaust Denial,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1998, pp. 359-369.

[118] H. White, 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth,' in S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 37-53. White also addressed these same issues in 'The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1982, pp. 113-137.

[119] White, 'Historical Emplotment,' p. 41. See also Harlan, *The Degradation of American History*, p. 125.

[120] S. Friedländer, 'Introduction,' in S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 2. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob also reinforce how the debate about moral relativism in history is dominated by the Holocaust, arguing that "the killing of Jews seemed to show that absolute moral standards were necessary, that cultural relativism had reached its limits in the death camps." See Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, p. 8. See also, for example, J. Varon, 'Probing the Limits of the Politics of Representation,' *New German Critique*, no. 72, 1997, pp. 84, 89-90.

> of integrity, responsibilities, and absolute moral standards in defense of a historiography of accurate reconstruction cannot be read but as the return of the repressed ethical to a discipline that has long fantasized that the confinement of the moral exclusively to the plane of method freed its findings from any taint of the normative.[121]

The result of this "resort," Dintenfass believes, is that these historians have "unwittingly effected" the ethical turn in historiography.[122]

In many ways, this invocation of the Holocaust as the "limit case that any tenable account of historical representation must accommodate" is unsurprising.[123] As we have seen, the Holocaust has proved morally troubling to historians since the end of the Second World War, and, along with other examples of past atrocity, has become the hinge around which discussions of moral engagement, moral judgements, and their place in historical practice have turned. It represents the ultimate site at which the concerns of ethics and history collide, and any engagement with the Holocaust is constrained by these two forces. Any historian who wishes to confront the Holocaust must also confront ethics; any ethicist who wishes to confront the Holocaust must also confront history. Discussion concerning the problems of interpreting, explaining and representing the Holocaust has been so fraught that it has produced a large and interdisciplinary body of literature which specifically addresses these questions.[124] The mere existence of this meta-literature

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[121] Dintenfass, 'Truth's Other,' pp. 19-20.
[122] Dintenfass, 'Truth's Other,' p. 20.
[123] Dintenfass, 'Truth's Other,' p. 2.
[124] See, for example, R. Braun, 'The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation,' *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1994, pp. 172-190; M. Burleigh, *Ethics and Extermination: Reflections on the Nazi Genocide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; I. Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 1998; L. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981; S. Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992; B. Lang (ed.), *Writing and the Holocaust*, New York, Holmes and Meier, 1988; B. Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1990; B. Lang, *Post-Holocaust: Interpretation, Misinterpretation and the Claims of History*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005; V. E. Mattson and B. Wood, 'Bland Neutrality in the Face of Evil,' *Halcyone*, vol. 17, 1995, pp. 251-264; J. Petropoulos and J. K. Roth (eds.), *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, New York, Berghahn, 2005; M. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000; and J. E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988. Although devoted to the exploration of the most appropriate manner in which to write about and represent the Holocaust, this literature is also dogged by the same ethical questions which dominate any engagement with this subject matter. As Franklin Ankersmit has pointed out, "[i]s there not an immoral tactlessness in all this writing and theorizing about the Holocaust (all these theorists exploiting the sufferings of the Jews in order to make their own little theoretical point)?" See Ankersmit, 'The Ethics of History,' p. 96. This view echoes that of Elie Wiesel, who has repeatedly argued for the moral position of silence in the face of the Holocaust. He has written, for example, that "I prefer to take my place on the side of Job, who chose questions and not answers, silence and not speeches…. Confronted with Job, our silence should extend beyond the centuries to come. And we dare speak on behalf of our knowledge? We dare say: *I know*? This is how and why victims were victims and executioners executioners? We dare interpret the agony and anguish, the self-sacrifice before the faith and the faith itself of six millions human beings, all named Job? Who are we to judge them?" See E. Wiesel, 'A Plea for the Dead,' in *idem.*, *Legends of Our Time*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 181. Emphasis in original. Elsewhere, Wiesel has argued in a similar vein that "[a]s for the scholars and philosophers of every genre who

concerning the Holocaust is a strong testament to how it, as well as other examples of historical atrocity, poses serious challenges to the practice and writing of history.

Nowhere do issues of morality and the ideas raised by the ethical turn in historiography seem more pertinent than when confronted by the history of atrocity. Even though it is only the Holocaust which has produced a meta-literature devoted to the ethics of its representation, all examples of historical atrocity share similar interpretative problems, and historians have continued to grapple with questions concerning how such histories should be written, and what moral relationship they, as historians, have to this past.[125] As common sense and good taste would suggest, historians do appear to have been granted a degree of flexibility in their adoption of a moral stance when writing about historical atrocity. It seems to be broadly accepted that historians working on events such as the Holocaust or the Great Terror have a duty to engage with the compelling moral concerns presented by these events. As Ankersmit has argued, "such histories would fail to meet even the most elementary standards of taste and appropriateness if they were to observe a complete moral neutrality and impartiality."[126]

For the most part, historians have shown an acute moral sensitivity in their portrayal of these events, and demonstrated a keen awareness of themselves as moral agents in their writing about them. Clearly, historians have been emphatically correct in their insistence that certain degrees of moral engagement be reflected in the writing and interpretation of events such as the Holocaust. It appears, however, to have largely been carried out in manner which lacks ethical self-reflexivity—a condition which, as we have seen, generally afflicts the discipline as a whole. The central contention of this study is that, whether it is acknowledged or not, the entire enterprise of addressing past atrocity is unavoidably infused with moral concerns. In *Metahistory,* White claimed that "[h]istoriographical disputes on the level of 'interpretation' are in reality disputes over the 'true' nature of the historian's enterprise."[127] As the following chapters will demonstrate,

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have had the opportunity to observe the tragedy, they will—if they are capable of sincerity and humility—withdraw without daring to enter into the heart of the matter; and if they are not, well, who cares about their grandiloquent conclusions? Auschwitz, by definition, is beyond their vocabulary." See E. Wiesel, 'The Death of My Father,' in *idem.*, *Legends of Our Time*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 6. Emphasis in original.

[125] For an interesting argument against the 'moral ghettoising' of the Holocaust, see H. Zinn, *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2007, pp. 105-110.

[126] F. R. Ankersmit, 'In Praise of Subjectivity,' in D. Carr, T. R. Flynn and R. A. Makkreel (eds.), *The Ethics of History*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2004, p. 17. See also, for example, I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (1985), London, Arnold, 2000, pp. 17-18; and A. Mitzman, 'Monk or Courtier? Social Values and the Future of the Humanities,' in J. Leerssen and A. Rigney (eds.), *Historians and Social Values*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2000, p. 113.

[127] White, *Metahistory*, p. 13.

when these disputes concern past atrocity, they are disputes regarding the moral dimension of the historical enterprise.

Chapter Two

Writing About Victims:
Lessons from Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt

Representing the victim experience is a cornerstone of the processes of writing about and coming to terms with atrocity. Indeed, commemoration and memorialisation of the victims and their suffering is the key impulse which drives much of the discourse about these events. Telling their story, however, has not been without controversy, and scholars have engaged in heated debates regarding how best to approach and present their experiences. A particularly illustrative example is the reception of two books published in the early 1960s—Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. These texts and the debate they engendered raise fundamental questions regarding how to write about the victims of atrocity, while highlighting the centrality of moral concerns in the development of this discourse. This chapter is an exploration of the arguments of *Destruction* and *Eichmann*, the ensuing controversy, and what they reveal about how, in line with the aims of an 'ethical historiography' of atrocity, historians might address the victims' story.

* * *

On 4 August 2007, the eminent Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg passed away in Williston, Vermont. His death was met with an outpouring of tributes from his colleagues, who were quick to recognise his outstanding contributions to the field and to mourn his loss.[1] Historian Christopher Browning, a long-time admirer and later friend of Hilberg, lamented in his obituary that "[w]ith his passing we have lost one of the 'founding fathers' in the field of Holocaust studies and the author of its single most important and formative book."[2]

During the later years of Hilberg's life, such praise was customary. However, the book upon which his entire scholarly reputation came to be based, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, had taken some time to afford him such recognition. Struggling to find a publisher after being rejected by several university presses, the book eventually appeared under the imprint of the obscure Chicago publishing house Quadrangle Books in 1961. Since the time of its appearance, however, *Destruction* has endured a rather chequered career—from being largely ignored by the scholarly community, then appropriated by others and subsequently caught up in separate academic controversies, before continuing

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[1] See, for example, D. Cesarani, 'Obituary: Raul Hilberg, 1926-2007,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2007, pp. 517-520; J. M. Cox, 'Raul Hilberg: In Memoriam,' *Journal of Jewish Identities*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2008, pp. 1-6; N. Finkelstein, 'There Went a Man: Remembering Raul Hilberg,' *Counter Punch*, 22 August 2007, http://www.counterpunch.org/finkelstein08222007.html, accessed 14 July 2010; L. Joffe, 'Raul Hilberg,' *The Guardian*, 25 September 2007; and J. Matthäus, 'Obituary,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2007, pp. 565-570.

[2] C. R. Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2007, p. 7.

to be often misunderstood and misinterpreted. It was only slowly and with subsequent editions that the book came to be appreciated and lauded, even if certain points of Hilberg's argument remained controversial.

Isolation and alienation are frequent motifs in Hilberg's own reflections about his lifelong pursuit of understanding the processes through which the Nazis' genocidal programme came into being and ultimately functioned.[3] He began working on the subject in 1948, at a time when the Holocaust was not a focus of public or scholarly attention, and there was no historiography to speak of.[4] In his memoir, Hilberg noted that "[w]hen I first embarked on my self-imposed task at the age of twenty-two, I was working alone, trying to grapple with my enormous topic which stood for the epitome of human destruction in our time."[5] Hilberg's own life had been shaped by this destruction. Born the only child of Jewish parents in Vienna in 1926, his family was forced to emigrate following the violence of *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, when Hilberg's father was among those Jews rounded up and briefly imprisoned.[6] Hilberg and his parents left Austria for the United States, arriving in New York in September 1939 following a brief stay in Cuba. Several members of his extended family were eventually murdered by the Nazis.[7]

When he turned eighteen, Hilberg was called up for military service in the United States Army, which saw him return to Europe as the Third Reich was collapsing. After hostilities had ceased, Hilberg's division remained in Germany working with captured documents and other records of the Nazi regime, exposing him to the material which would become the foundation of his later work.[8] Upon his return to America, Hilberg pursued studies in political science at Columbia University, while becoming increasingly preoccupied by the subject of the Nazis' annihilation of Europe's Jews. Taught by Franz Neumann, Hans Rosenberg and Salo Baron, it was Neumann whom Hilberg asked to

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[3] See, for example, R. Hilberg, 'Working on the Holocaust,' *The Psychohistory Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1986, pp. 7-12; and R. Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 1996, *passim*. Hilberg also touched on these issues in several interviews. See, for example, H. Flender, '"I Am Trying to Understand It": An Interview with Raul Hilberg on the Holocaust,' *Present Tense: The Magazine of World Jewish Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1973, pp. 45-49; K. Goddard, 'After 30 Years, "They" Are Listening to Holocaust Historian,' *The Times Argus*, Barre-Montpelier, VT, 13 October 1987, pp. 1, 7; A. Ages, 'Hilberg Has Spent a Lifetime Studying the Holocaust,' *Canadian Jewish News*, 12 May 1994; and A. Chambers, 'The Holocaust: Understanding the Unimaginable,' *The Edmonton Journal*, 1 November 1997, pp. H1-H2.

[4] For discussion of the dramatic evolution of Holocaust consciousness from the immediate postwar period and beyond, see, for example, P. Novick, 'Holocaust Memory in America,' in J. E. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, Munich and New York, Prestel-Verlag, 1994, pp. 159-161.

[5] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 17.

[6] Cesarani, 'Obituary,' p. 517. Despite his familial Jewish identity, Hilberg described himself as an atheist from an early age. See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 36-39.

[7] See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 24-25, 29-30.

[8] See Flender, '"I Am Trying to Understand It,"' p. 45; Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 55-56; and Matthäus, 'Obituary,' p. 565.

supervise his masters and later his PhD theses. Recalling the conversation with Neumann regarding his choice of topic, Hilberg noted that:

> Neumann said yes, but he knew that at that moment I was separating myself from the mainstream of academic research to tread in territory that had been avoided by the academic world and the public alike. What he said to me in three words was, "It's your funeral."[9]

Undeterred, Hilberg pressed ahead with his doctoral dissertation, which would go on to form the basis of his *magnum opus*.

When it was finally published, *Destruction* failed to create a sensation or provoke an outpouring of critical reflection or debate. In light of the magnitude and scope of the book, the initial response can be characterised as subdued. This situation, however, was dramatically altered by two separate but equally important factors. The first was a review by the British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper in the April 1962 edition of *Commentary*, in which the author noted approvingly and discussed at length Hilberg's arguments regarding the behaviour of the victims during the Holocaust.[10] The second was the storm of controversy which attended the publication of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in May 1963.[11] Arendt had relied heavily on *Destruction* in formulating her arguments, particularly those about the behaviour of the Jews, but had expressed them in far stronger language than Hilberg. Unwillingly, Hilberg became drawn into the maelstrom surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, as critics took aim at him in addition to their ferocious attacks on Arendt. It was an unwelcome association which Hilberg proved unable to shake for the remainder of his life, and continued to cloud the reception of his own work.

Both *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* were early landmarks in the historiography of the Holocaust. In this sense, they are illustrative of the notion of 'timing', demonstrating how matters of academic controversy and debate are often determined by the wider cultural and political context, but also how they shift accordingly. Comparing the reactions to the first and then subsequent editions of *Destruction*, and the changing reception of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, enables us to observe this process. However, while it is certainly instructive to consider the changes which occur in historiographical discourse, it is equally important to consider what does not change.

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[9] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 66.
[10] See H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats and Jewish Leaders,' *Commentary*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1962, pp. 351-356.
[11] New York, Viking, 1963.

In this regard, both texts and the response they engendered are revealing of how the victims of atrocity have been written about. Even though Hilberg and Arendt came to their subject with few predecessors, it seems that definite moral 'rules' already existed regarding how it should be approached, the most pressing of which were that any study must place the victims and their suffering at its centre, and adopt only a sympathetic and non-critical attitude towards them. Perpetrators, by contrast, were to be characterised as monstrous, demonic, or in some other way perverted, and the idea of approaching them with empathy was deemed impossible. It is interesting to note that while the manner in which the perpetrators are conceptualised and understood has changed dramatically over time, approaches to the victims largely have not. Clearly, the latter group form an integral part of the history of atrocity. A consideration of why, at least within writing about the Holocaust, the terms of this discussion have remained largely static provides a starting point for reflection regarding how the victims might best be written about.

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The Destruction of the European Jews is, as Trevor-Roper noted in his 1962 review, "a forbidding book."[12] The first edition ran to over 760 pages of small, doubled-columned text with almost one hundred tables and several appendices, while the second and third editions saw the book evolve into three volumes which totalled more than one thousand pages. Many commentators have noted the simple and unadorned style of Hilberg's prose, some praising it as "austere…without literary grace or emotion,"[13] while others have been less impressed, deeming it "clipped and sometimes jargon-laden"[14] and "coldly detached."[15] Like many of his colleagues both at the time of his original writing and in later years, Hilberg was not a scholar particularly concerned with moral issues and how they might impact his work. Instead, he might be best described as a traditional empiricist, believing in the primacy of the archive and the historical source and their ability to bring the historian to an objective understanding of the past.[16] In his memoir, Hilberg noted of his academic

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[12] Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats,' p. 351.
[13] Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats,' p. 351.
[14] F. Raphael, 'It's All in the Book,' *Time and Tide*, 1 March 1962.
[15] M. Lerner, 'A Study in Nazi Evil,' *New York Post*, 13 December 1961, p. 45. For a similar view, see R. Koster, 'History's Greatest Crime,' *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, 3-4 February 1973, p. 1C. For later commentary on Hilberg's prose and writing style, see, for example, I. Deák, 'Holocaust Views: The Goldhagen Controversy in Retrospect,' *Central European History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1997, p. 299; Finkelstein, 'There Went a Man'; M. Marrus, 'Acts That Speak For Themselves,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 20 September 1992; and Matthäus, 'Obituary,' p. 565.
[16] Hilberg was, of course, not a historian by training, having completed his degrees in political science. Nonetheless, his commitment to 'objectivity' and 'value-free' scholarship are values certainly shared by the discipline of history, both at the time of his initial writing and after.

training that "[t]he methodological literature I read emphasized objectivity and neutral or value-free words. I was an observer, and it was most important to me to write accordingly."[17]

Destruction was presented as a study of the perpetrators of the Holocaust and the processes through which they were able to carry out their murderous task, a focus which was unique at the time when the book first appeared. In the preface to the first edition, Hilberg declared the book to be "concerned with the storm that caused the wreckage," noting that "it is not enough to know that the Jews have been destroyed; one must also grasp how the deed was done."[18] In seeking to achieve this clarity regarding the 'how' of the 'Final Solution', Hilberg employed the phrases "destruction process" and "machinery of destruction." His use of these terms, he explained, "enable us to see the destruction of the Jews not merely as a monolithic, non-transparent, and impenetrable event, but as a series of operations which fall into a definite pattern."[19] Hilberg characterised this pattern as having four sequential phases. First, there was the "definition" of the victims, such as the legal definition of 'Jew' provided by the Nuremberg Laws; then their "expropriation," such as the forced 'Aryanisation' of Jewish businesses and the imposition of various other taxes on Jews; then "concentration," as evidenced in the formation of ghettos; and finally "annihilation," either by mass shooting or in the death camps.[20] For Hilberg, therefore, the most important characteristics of the entire "destruction process" were its administrative and bureaucratic nature, and, echoing his former *Doktorvater* Neumann, that it was "decentralized."[21]

Ostensibly, then, Hilberg was largely unconcerned with the victims of the Holocaust. Indeed, elsewhere in the preface to the first edition of *Destruction* he explicitly

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[17] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 87. For a discussion by Hilberg about the nature of Holocaust sources, see R. Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2001.

[18] R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1967, p. v. Many years later, Hilberg reiterated his belief in the importance of understanding the perpetrators, writing in his memoir that "I was convinced from the very beginning of my work that without an insight into the actions of the perpetrators, one could not grasp this history in its full dimensions. The perpetrator had the overview. He alone was the key. It was through his eyes that I had to view the happening, from its genesis to its culmination. That the perpetrator perspective was the primary path to be followed became a doctrine for me, which I never abandoned." See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 61-62.

[19] R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1961, p. 31.

[20] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), pp. 31-32. For Hilberg's in-depth exploration of each of these stages in turn, see his chapters, 'Definition,' pp. 43-105; 'Concentration,' pp. 106-174; and his three chapters which deal with the 'annihilation' stage of the destruction process, namely 'Mobile Killing Operations,' 'Deportations,' and 'Killing Center Operations,' pp. 177-635.

[21] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 32. Neumann's own study of Nazi Germany emphasised the decentralised nature of the entire system of rule, invoking his famous 'four pillars' argument to illustrate this point. See F. L. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1942; and a later second edition, F. L. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (1942), New York, Harper and Row, 1966.

indicated that "this is not a book about the Jews. It is a book about the people who destroyed the Jews." He continued:

> We shall not dwell on Jewish suffering, nor shall we explore the social characteristics of ghetto life or camp existence. Insofar as we may examine Jewish institutions, we will do so primarily through the eyes of the Germans: as tools which were used in the destruction process.[22]

Hilberg expanded on this last point early in the book, claiming that "[t]he success of [the] destruction process depended…not only on its perpetrators but also on its victims."[23] It would be these arguments about the behaviour of the Jews during the Holocaust, and how their actions may have aided or at the very least not impeded the destruction process, which proved to be an enduring matter of controversy, even as time passed and the importance of *Destruction* came to be widely acknowledged.

To the extent that he did analyse the behaviour of the victims, Hilberg was almost solely concerned with their reactions to the Nazi threat. How had the Jews responded to their impending destruction? Hilberg's conclusion was that "[t]he reaction pattern of the Jews is characterized by an almost complete lack of resistance."[24] Instead, he deemed the dominant reactions of the Jews to the disaster to be "alleviation and compliance."[25] Hilberg sought to explain this pattern by what he termed "a two-thousand-year-old lesson," believing that over time Jews had learned to appease and comply with anti-Jewish measures and regimes. Expanding on this point, Hilberg argued:

> [O]ver a period of centuries, the Jews had learned that in order to survive they had to refrain from resistance. Time and again they were attacked; they endured the Crusades, the Cossack uprisings, and the Czarist persecution. There were many casualties in these times of stress, but always the Jewish community emerged once again like a rock from a receding tidal wave. The Jews had never really been annihilated. After surveying the damage, the survivors had always proclaimed in affirmation of their strategy the triumphant slogan "The Jewish people lives [*Am Yisrael Chaj*]."[26]

The victims realised all too late, Hilberg believed, that the Nazis' persecution represented a very different and terribly lethal threat, one which no amount of appeasement or compliance could abate.

Throughout the book, Hilberg repeatedly questioned why the victims did not resist, and drew attention to their compliance. For example, when discussing the mass shootings by the *Einsatzgruppen* in eastern Europe, he observed that "[i]n almost every major action the victims outnumbered their captors 10 to 1, 20 to 1, or even 50 to 1; but the Jews could

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[22] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1967 ed.), p. v.
[23] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 14.
[24] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 662.
[25] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 16.
[26] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 666.

never turn their numbers into an advantage."[27] Elsewhere, Hilberg noted that "[t]hroughout Poland the great bulk of the Jews presented themselves voluntarily at the collection points and boarded the trains to killing centers."[28] He also drew attention to the cooperative actions of the *Judenräte*, something which particularly inspired Arendt in her own discussion of the victims in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.[29] Employing his dual arguments about the nature of the destruction process and the "two-thousand-year-old lesson" which determined the victims' response, Hilberg viewed the *Judenräte* as indispensable tools for the Nazis in their pursuit of the 'Final Solution'. He argued that "[t]he Germans controlled the Jewish leadership, and that leadership, in turn, controlled the Jewish community. This system was foolproof. Truly, the Jewish communal organizations had become a self-destruction machine."[30]

It was this notion of "self-destruction" which became the logical conclusion of Hilberg's arguments about Jewish non-resistance. Late in the book, Hilberg made clear how the various measures of alleviation and compliance had impacted the overall thrust of the Nazi assault:

> [W]e have to see the destruction process as a composite of two kinds of German measures: those which perpetrated something upon the Jews and involved only action by Germans, such as the drafting of decrees, the running of deportation trains, shooting, or gassing, and those which required the Jews to do something, for instance, the decrees or orders requiring them to register their property, obtain identification papers, report at a designated place for labor or deportation or shooting, submit lists of persons, pay fines, deliver up property, publish German instructions, dig their own graves, and so on. The successful execution of these latter measures depended upon action by the Jews. Only when one realizes how large a part of the destruction process consisted of a fulfilment of these measures can one begin to appraise the role of the Jews in their own destruction.[31]

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[27] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), pp. 208-209.

[28] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 316.

[29] The *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils, were bodies of Jewish leaders set up the Nazis in occupied territories to administer ghetto life and community affairs. Their duties included overseeing the provision of food, housing and amenities, drawing up inventories and censuses, managing labour, and, perhaps most notoriously, preparing lists for deportation to the death camps. As one commentator has noted, "[t]he role played by the *Judenräte* in Jewish public life during the Holocaust is one of the most controversial issues relating to the period." See A. Weiss, 'Judenrat,' in I. Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2, New York, Macmillan, 1990, p. 762. For more on the *Judenräte*, see, for example, D. Diner, 'Historical Experience and Cognition: Perspectives on National Socialism,' trans. B. Templer, *History and Memory*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990, pp. 102-105; M. Friedberg, 'Observations: The Question of the *Judenräte*,' *Commentary*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1973, pp. 61-63; R. Steinhardt Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust: From Ideology to Annihilation* (1996), Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 2010, pp. 151-161; I. Trunk, 'The Organizational Structure of the Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe,' *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance*, vol. 7, 1968, pp. 147-164; I. Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation*, New York, Macmillan, 1972; A. Weiss, 'Jewish Leadership in Occupied Poland: Postures and Attitudes,' *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 12, 1977, pp. 335-336; and Weiss, 'Judenrat,' pp. 762-771.

[30] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 125.

[31] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 666. It is interesting to note the changes to this particular passage which Hilberg made in subsequent editions of the book. Specifically, the last two sentences of this passage were replaced with "[a] large component of the entire process depended on Jewish participation—the simple acts

The "two-thousand-year-old" pattern of Jewish response, which dictated how the Jews reacted to the Nazis, ultimately meant, Hilberg concluded, that the Jews had "plunged themselves physically and psychologically into catastrophe." They had, therefore, "hasten[ed] their own destruction."[32]

Destruction was, as outlined previously, originally published in July 1961, although the road to publication had not been smooth. In order to complete his dissertation, which had begun to assume "truly gigantic proportions,"[33] Hilberg had to quit his job as a researcher with the United States' Government War Documentation Project, and move in with his parents.[34] It is unsurprising that in a November 1954 letter to William Fox, who had taken over as his thesis supervisor following the death of Neumann earlier that year, Hilberg noted that "[t]he job of writing this book has been physically and spiritually exhausting."[35]

Finally awarded his doctorate in 1955, it took Hilberg several more years to complete the book manuscript and then secure a publisher. He had been the recipient of the 1955 Clarke Fisher Ansley Award which granted him a contract for a portion of his work to be published by Columbia University Press. In order to finance publication for the entire work, however, outside funding was necessary. Hilberg recounted what happened next in a letter to an Israeli friend sent in early 1961:

> [T]o publish the entire work, Columbia wanted to go into partnership with Yad Vashem in Israel. The historians at Yad Vashem decided that my conclusions (particularly with respect to Jewish resistance) did not agree with theirs, and hence they refused the offer. Columbia Press thereupon dropped me, and I was without a publisher for about two years.[36]

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of individuals as well as organized activity in councils" in the 1985 revised edition. See R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), New York, Holmes and Meier, 1985, p. 1036.

[32] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), pp. 669, 17.

[33] Letter from Raul Hilberg to Dr. Weil, 23 April 1952, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 2.

[34] See Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 8; and Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 82-83.

[35] Letter from Raul Hilberg to William Fox, 12 November 1954, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 14.

[36] Letter from Raul Hilberg to Dr. Ruth Ludwig, 31 January 1961, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 12. In his memoir, Hilberg quoted from the letter sent to him by Yad Vashem. The letter, written by the General Manger of Yad Vashem, Dr. J. Melkman, and dated 24 August 1958, reads in part, "[t]he Jewish historians here make reservations concerning the historical conclusions which you draw, both in respect of the comparison with former periods, and in respect of your appraisal of the Jewish resistance (active and passive)—during the Nazi occupation." See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 110. I did not come across this letter while working with the Hilberg papers at the University of Vermont. In fact, the folders of correspondence in Hilberg's papers for the years between receiving his doctorate and *Destruction* finally being published (1955-1961) were rather sparse, and contained almost no communication with publishers, which seems strange given the important negotiations which were occurring during this period.

Hilberg did not mention in this letter that the book had also been rejected by Princeton University Press, who had in fact turned to Hannah Arendt for advice in evaluating the manuscript.[37] These difficulties in securing a publisher, particularly the ominous warning that his arguments about Jewish resistance had not been favourably received, were among the first indications of the controversy that the book ultimately provoked.[38] Reflecting on the eventual publication of the book in his memoir, however, Hilberg noted that "[i]n the days when the first edition appeared…I could sense a general unpreparedness for my subject…. What I had not anticipated was the *nature* of the reactions I received, what it was that reviewers accepted as a matter of course, and what aroused controversy."[39]

Destruction was not initially reviewed in many major scholarly journals, although those which did appear were generally positive in their assessment of the book.[40] One reviewer described it as "written in excellent style and with scientific precision,"[41] while another commended it as a "monumental, impressive, and instructive work."[42] Another commentator expressed the view that the rest of the field would eventually come to share, namely that "Hilberg's volume is definitive."[43]

Interestingly, the question of Jewish resistance or lack thereof was hardly mentioned in these early reviews of *Destruction*, and it was only amongst a few Jewish

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[37] See Letter from Gordon Hubel to Hannah Arendt, Princeton University Press, 8 April 1959, Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Correspondence File 1938-1976 -- Publishers 1944-1975 -- Princeton University Press -- 1956-1969, Item 3, Image 3. Many years later Hilberg himself discovered this same letter while working with Arendt's papers at the Library of Congress, and wrote in his memoir that "[i]n that letter I discovered that the press had turned to *her* for an evaluation of my argument. Thanking her, Hubel enclosed a check. Here then was the source of Hubel's argument—which he invoked in rejecting my work—that for all practical purposes Reitlinger, Poliakov and Adler had exhausted the subject." See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 156. Emphasis in original. Of course, in light of the extent to which Arendt ultimately relied upon *Destruction* for the arguments she made in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, such a discovery was particularly galling. See below, p. 54, n. 66.

[38] Perhaps the first indication that Hilberg's arguments about the victims would be unpopular came from his *Doktorvater* Neumann, who, Hilberg recalled in his memoir, had the following reaction to his master's essay, in which he had begun to formulate the ideas which would inform his later work: "After he read my trial run of two hundred pages, he objected only to one passage in the conclusion. It was my statement that administratively the Germans had relied on the Jews to follow directives, that the Jews had cooperated in their own destruction. Neumann did not say that this finding was contradicted by any facts; he did not say that it was underresearched. He said, 'This is too much to take—cut it out.' I deleted the passage, silently determined to restore it to my larger work." Later in his memoir, recalling the controversy which eventually enveloped *Destruction*, Hilberg conceded that "I had not reminded myself enough of Franz Neumann's words: 'This is too much to take.'" See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 66, 128 respectively.

[39] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 124. Emphasis in original.

[40] See Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 9; and D. S. Wyman, 'Managing the Death Machine,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 August 1985, p. 3.

[41] T. N. Lewis, 'The Pattern of Mass Murder,' *Congress Bi-Weekly*, 25 June 1962, p. 11.

[42] J. Gartenhaus, 'Nightmare in Retrospect,' *Christianity Today*, 27 October 1961, p. 36.

[43] M. Rosenthal, 'The Murdered Are Not Guilty!,' *The Jewish Spectator*, March 1962, p. 24. For other generally positive early reviews of *The Destruction of the European Jews*, see, for example, U. Ra'anan, 'Mass Murder Took Shelter in a Deadly Bureaucracy,' *The Washington Post*, 6 August 1961; J. Cohen, '5,000,000 Deaths: A History,' *New York Post*, 6 August 1961; and M. A. Musmanno, 'The Imperishable Record of an Infamy,' *The Chicago Jewish Forum*, Winter 1961-1962, pp. 110-112.

publications that the matter was raised at all.[44] Even when it was discussed, however, it did not preclude reviewers from speaking favourably about other aspects or reaching an overall positive conclusion about the book. For example, historian Oscar Handlin, who would soon emerge as a far more vocal critic, believed of Hilberg's argument that "he draws upon a far-fetched conception of historic Jewish attitudes to account for their unwillingness to resist. Out of this misconception spring serious errors in his interpretation," but still declared that "Professor Hilberg's volume is enormously helpful as an approach to the problem."[45] Similarly, another reviewer noted that "[h]e turns a rather glassy eye on the human problems behind the large question 'Why didn't they fight back?'" and suggested that "Mr. Hilberg seems to come near to the view of the bureaucracy he is describing: the Jews are not individuals, they are a bunch, a commodity, a problem." This reviewer could still suggest, however, "when all is said and done, this is a massively important document, written with patience and erudition."[46] It is important to note the general attitude that participants brought to these discussions—even when a reviewer disagreed with Hilberg and questioned his reasoning or argument, the tone was always respectful, and no shrill invective was employed. Such was the atmosphere of general acceptance that Hilberg could write to a friend in October 1961 that "[t]he press reviews in this country have been surprisingly generous; I had not expected such a reception."[47]

This state of affairs prevailed until the appearance of Trevor-Roper's review in the April 1962 edition of *Commentary*. Trevor-Roper was clearly impressed with the book, describing it as "a careful, analytic, three-dimensional study of a social and political experience unique in history."[48] It was, however, the following observation which drew critical attention to an important aspect of Hilberg's argument:

> For when the Germans had done their worst, we cannot escape the fact that the Jews of Europe, obedient to their leaders and to their own habits of mind, collaborated in their own destruction. Again and again this fact emerges from Mr. Hilberg's narrative. It is his most surprising revelation, and it will probably be the least welcome to his readers. But it is inescapable.[49]

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[44] See, for example, the discussions in *Jewish Currents*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1962; vol. 16, no. 4, 1962; and vol. 16, no. 5, 1962. Even while discussing this aspect of Hilberg's work, the publication was still anxious to emphasise that "[t]he monumental character of Dr. Hilberg's description and documentation of the destruction process is not in question." See the prefacing remarks to S. D. Kaplan, 'A Discussion Continued: Jews, Tradition and Resistance—3,' *Jewish Currents*, vol. 16, no. 5, 1962, p. 28.

[45] O. Handlin, Review of R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 68, no. 1, 1962, pp. 148, 147 respectively.

[46] Raphael, 'It's All in the Book'.

[47] Letter from Raul Hilberg to Dr. Ruth Ludwig, 3 October 1961, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 12.

[48] Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats,' p. 351. This review was not the first occasion where Trevor-Roper had spoken favourably of *Destruction*, having earlier described it as "a great book, a book that provokes thought far beyond its own frontiers." See H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'A Question of Nationality,' *New Statesman*, 2 March 1962, p. 303.

[49] Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats,' p. 354.

The Jewish victims, Trevor-Roper ultimately believed, "went like sheep to the slaughter."[50] The impact of this simple observation and, in particular, the turn of phrase 'sheep to the slaughter' which was often erroneously attributed to Hilberg himself, was dramatic.[51] As one journalist, in an unimaginatively titled 1975 article 'Epic on Holocaust Won Widespread Acclaim Until Review Said it Claimed Jews Share Guilt', later observed, it was the contents of this review which "catapulted the taciturn Hilberg into notoriety."[52]

The first manifestation of the impact of the Trevor-Roper review came in a series of letters to the editor of *Commentary*. Readers such as Isaiah Trunk, who would go on to write an important study of the *Judenräte*, argued that "the notion of appeasement and docility as a typically Jewish response to non-Jews has no universal validity,"[53] while another declared that such generalisations about the behaviour of the victims "are untrue and are based on selected evidence, on half-truths, and on a simplification of a very complex phenomenon."[54] Ironically, however, it seems many respondents were attacking Trevor-Roper for his expression of what were actually Hilberg's arguments.

The attention to Hilberg himself became more direct when Handlin published a lengthy response to the Trevor-Roper review in the November issue of *Commentary*. While maintaining a respectful tone and insisting that *Destruction* was "an excellent work in other respects," Handlin nonetheless sharpened his earlier criticisms of Hilberg's arguments about the Jews, and gave some indication of the negative attitudes which would come to dominate discussion of the book over the next few years. Accusing Hilberg of "defaming the dead and their culture," Handlin declared his arguments to be "dangerous," due to "the false assurance it offers that good fighters can never become victims."[55] He also raised, as

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[50] Trevor-Roper, 'Nazi Bureaucrats,' p. 354.

[51] It seems that Hilberg remained distressed by the charge that he had used this phrase. In a 1994 article, a journalist noted that: "Three decades later Hilberg is still sensitive to these criticisms, especially to the allegation that he used the phrase 'like sheep to slaughter' in referring to Jewish responses to Nazi crimes. 'I never, ever used that phrase—nowhere. People ask me how I would have behaved during the Holocaust. I cannot say with absolute certainty how but I would not have been compliant; it is not in my nature. I would be dead. It's that simple.'" See Ages, 'Hilberg Has Spent a Lifetime Studying the Holocaust'.

[52] S. Kirshner, 'Epic on Holocaust Won Widespread Acclaim Until Review Said it Claimed Jews Share Guilt,' *The Canadian-Jewish News*, 28 November 1975, p. 16.

[53] I. Trunk, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1962, p. 159.

[54] S. L. Goodman, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1962, p. 161.

[55] O. Handlin, 'Jewish Resistance to the Nazis,' *Commentary*, vol. 34, no. 5, 1962, p. 399. Indeed, some of Hilberg's arguments regarding Jewish 'passivity' seemingly suggest an endorsement of Zionist ideals. However, philosopher Berel Lang believes that "Hilberg…extends this argument with his notion of the 'anticipatory compliance' which led the Jews (allegedly) to do to themselves what was threatened from the outside, to include Zionism itself; the latter also appears for him as a form of sublimation, a refusal by the Jews to face directly the conditions of their present." See B. Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 210, n. 2. Indeed, Hilberg indicated in *Destruction* that the Jewish "reaction pattern" to threat "was born in the ghetto and it will die there. It is part and parcel of ghetto life. It applies to *all* ghetto Jews, assimilationists and Zionists, the capitalists and the socialists, the unorthodox and the religious ones." See Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 17. Emphasis in original. For Hilberg's discussion of Israel and Zionism, see *Destruction* (1961 ed.), pp. 674-676.

others had done in response to Trevor-Roper's original article, the obvious counterpoint to Hilberg's argument: that there actually had been some armed Jewish resistance to the Nazis, including those fighting in partisan brigades, camp revolts and ghetto uprisings, most famously at the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.[56] Furthermore, he argued that seeking to preserve one's faith and identity and accepting a "dignified death" itself represented a legitimate form of resistance.[57] Ultimately, Handlin concluded that "the holocaust…was a product not of the Jewish response or of the Jewish situation, but rather of the powerful engine of destruction the Germans controlled."[58]

The interest originally generated by Trevor-Roper's review continued with another spate of letters following Handlin's article. These letters were generally favourable to Handlin's arguments, with one reader congratulating him for having "undone the calumnies cast by Raul Hilberg and Professor H. R. Trevor-Roper upon Jewish courage,"[59] while another declared that "Oscar Handlin's essay should serve as a final and definitive answer to all the confused and bedevilled arguments on this issue."[60] Nonetheless, amongst these condemnations was some support for Hilberg from the historian Frederic S. Burin. While he suggested that "[n]o one who is not himself a survivor of concentration camps or *Einsatzgruppen* 'actions' has a right to say that the Jewish victims could or should have resisted," Burin ultimately came down in favour of Hilberg, arguing that:

> [W]hen Hilberg comments on Jewish non-resistance, he is *not* 'blaming the catastrophe on the victims'…. What Hilberg has done is to state an historical

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[56] See Handlin, 'Jewish Resistance,' pp. 402-403, 404. For earlier arguments to this effect in response to Trevor-Roper, see Trunk, 'Letters From Readers,' pp. 160-161; Goodman, 'Letters From Readers,' p. 162; and B. D. Weinryb, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1962, pp. 162-163. Hilberg, for his part, had never denied the fact that such resistance existed; however, he saw it as extremely limited, disjointed, and highly ineffectual. In a letter published in *Jewish Currents*, Hilberg made clear his thoughts on this issue: "I do not wish to minimize that which under trying circumstances was actually done. Therefore, I have taken all the care to record every incidence of true resistance that I was able to find. In my index, there are 15 references to such resistance activities. Allow me to add, with particular reference to the eastern sector, that I have probably seen more documents on the partisan war than any man in this country. What that documentation discloses is no spiritual impetus and no central movement, only half-armed desperate people in the woods avoiding combat so far as possible. Again, let us not cast blame. Let us, however, recognize the facts." See R. Hilberg, 'A Discussion Continued: Jews, Tradition and Resistance—2,' *Jewish Currents*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1962, p. 31.

[57] Handlin, 'Jewish Resistance,' p. 405. Others also made this argument regarding the legitimacy of 'spiritual' resistance. For example, one scholar argued that the Jews' behaviour during the period of the Holocaust (and, for Jews in Germany, from 1933) demonstrated the principle of "*Kiddush ha-hayyim*, the sanctification of survival," whereby the persecuted sought to maintain their identity, traditions and faith in the face of the Nazi threat. See S. Esh, 'The Dignity of the Destroyed: Towards Definition of the Period of the Holocaust,' *Judaism*, vol. 2, no. 11, 1962, pp. 107-108, 111. Curiously, given the time of its publication and its subject matter, Esh's article did not engage with Hilberg's work. For other expressions of the argument for the importance of 'spiritual' resistance, see, for example, J. Rothenberg, 'The Destruction of European Jewry,' *Jewish Frontier*, March 1963, p. 30. For a historiographical assessment of the behaviour of the Jews during the Holocaust, Hilberg's arguments in this regard, and the meaning of 'resistance', see T. Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 249-255.

[58] Handlin, 'Jewish Resistance,' p. 401.

[59] M. H. Levine, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1963, p. 254.

[60] M. Steinberg, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1963, p. 256.

> fact: that the Jews, except for a relatively small number of persons in very few instances, did not resist their murderers. And a fact does not become an 'unfact' merely because it hurts.[61]

Despite his review sharpening the attention of critics to this "unwelcome" element of the book, it appears Hilberg was nonetheless grateful to Trevor-Roper. In the preface to the revised edition of *Destruction*, published in 1985, Hilberg noted that "[t]o H. R. Trevor-Roper, who wrote several essays about the book when it first appeared, I owe most of the recognition that it received."[62]

Far less welcome was the intense critical attention which came in the aftermath of Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The impact which this book inflicted upon the reception of *Destruction* sees the effects of the Trevor-Roper review pale in comparison, as it transformed the existing tentative discussion about the behaviour of the victims into a shrill and polemical maelstrom. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was itself an extended version of a series of articles Arendt had written for *The New Yorker*, with which she had struck a deal to travel to Jerusalem and report on the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann.[63] The articles were originally serialised by the magazine between February and March 1963, and the book followed in May of the same year.[64]

Read alongside *Destruction*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is a highly instructive text regarding how historical discussion of the victims of atrocity has evolved, and to what extent moral concerns have proved a driving force of its development. While, as the following chapter will demonstrate, it is also a text which illustrates the moral discourses surrounding the perpetrators of atrocity, for the purposes of the present chapter it is Arendt's argument about the victims, the response it provoked, and the relationship of both to Hilberg's work which require further examination.

The ties between the work of Arendt and Hilberg became so strong in the wake of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that the latter believed that "Hannah Arendt and I were coupled so often that I could even act as her stand-in."[65] Certainly, there were many similarities

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[61] F. S. Burin, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1963, p. 255. Emphasis in original.
[62] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1985 ed.), p. xii.
[63] See Chapter Three, 'Writing About Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary,' pp. 82-83, 85-86, 92.
[64] For the original serialisation, see H. Arendt, 'A Reporter at Large: Eichmann in Jerusalem,' *The New Yorker*, 16 February 1963, pp. 40-113; 23 February 1963, pp. 40-111; 2 March 1963, pp. 40-91; 9 March 1963, pp. 48-113; and 16 March 1963, pp. 58-134.
[65] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 152. During the question time at a conference in Israel in 1977, Hilberg recounted an interesting story which demonstrates how entrenched the connections between Arendt and himself had become in the wake of the *Eichmann* controversy, and also gives some indication of his negative feelings about this strong association. Hilberg told the audience, "[y]ou may be amused, at this grim gathering, that when I came to Israel nine years ago, a gentleman from the Israeli police came to see me. He

between their arguments which undoubtedly resulted from Arendt's extensive use of Hilberg's work in her own writing. As she noted in the 1965 revised paperback edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, "I have relied…heavily on Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which appeared after the trial and constitutes the most exhaustive and the most soundly documented account of the Third Reich's Jewish policies."[66] In drawing so heavily upon Hilberg's work, Arendt appeared to share his general assessment of the behaviour of the victims, writing herself of the "submissive weakness with which Jews went to their death."[67] She was, perhaps, more charitable than Hilberg on this matter, later suggesting that for the Jews there was "no possibility of resistance, but there existed the possibility of *doing nothing*."[68]

The arguments and general presentation of Hilberg's and Arendt's work were different in several additional aspects. Perhaps the greatest and most obvious difference concerns the format of their work—Hilberg's was a massive, detailed and scholarly study, while Arendt's was a trial report based on articles which had originally appeared in a relatively mainstream, albeit rather highbrow, magazine. As a result, Arendt's ideas were circulating in a far more public forum than Hilberg's, and thus experienced far greater exposure. Additionally, the tone and approach of their writing was markedly dissimilar. Hilberg wrote with a dispassionate and detached air of 'objectivity', but Arendt's tone was accusatory and itself a major cause of the outrage her work provoked.[69]

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was not angry with me, and he said he was surprised at my youth, and I said: 'Well, I'm not really all that young.' 'No, no, it is not that,' he said, 'but I somehow assumed that Hannah Arendt was your student.' No, not at all, Hannah Arendt did not consult me. And I never said a word to her in writing nor in speech, and I never met her. Further, I never had any desire to meet her. I know that more than once I have been a stand-in when she would refuse to appear, and now that she cannot appear, I have to answer for her and I cannot. She wrote her own book, although unfortunately she relied on the facts that I labored to assemble." See 'Debate,' in Y. Gutman and C. J. Haft (eds.), *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1977, pp. 61-62.

[66] See H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965), New York, Penguin, 2006, p. 282. Whether or not this 'heavy reliance' was actually plagiarism is a subject of continuing debate. Some contemporary reviewers believed that Arendt had plagiarised Hilberg. See, for example, J. Prinz, 'A Reply to Hannah Arendt,' *The Jewish News*, 12 July 1963, p. 18. Hilberg himself touched on the issue in his memoir, and made very clear his own feelings when he wrote, "[h]er reliance on my book had already been noticed by several reviewers before the publication of her second edition. Given the extent of her dependence on me, such a discovery was not difficult." Elsewhere in his memoir, Hilberg indicated his belief that Arendt had "exploited" his work. See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 149, 157 respectively. Recent scholars have continued to discuss this issue. Examples of those who believe that Arendt's use of Hilberg's work overstepped appropriate scholarly boundaries include historian David Cesarani, who wrote that "Arendt had plundered his study, hot off the press, to give substance to her own reportage from the trial while barely acknowledging the debt she owed him." See Cesarani, 'Obituary: Raul Hilberg,' p. 519. For a similar, if more cautiously argued view, see, for example, Finkelstein, 'There Went a Man'.

[67] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 11.

[68] H. Arendt, '*Eichmann in Jerusalem*: An Exchange of Letters Between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt,' *Encounter*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1964, p. 55. Emphasis in original. See also S. Dossa, 'Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: The Public, the Private, and the Evil,' *The Review of Politics*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1984, p. 176.

[69] For examples of contemporary responses to Arendt's tone in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see below, pp. 58-59. For more recent commentary about the issue of tone in the book, see, for example, R. J. Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' in *idem.*, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996, p. 159;

To the extent that both Arendt and Hilberg dealt with the question of the victims and their responses to the Holocaust, their focus was also different. While Hilberg claimed to be less interested in the "collaborators" of the Jewish leadership than in "the masses of Jews who reacted to every German order by complying with it automatically,"[70] Arendt disagreed that focusing on the reactions of the masses was an appropriate or useful exercise. She considered questioning why the Jews as a whole had not resisted to be "cruel and silly."[71] There was nothing unique about how the Jews had responded to their imminent annihilation, Arendt noted, because "no non-Jewish group or people had behaved differently,"[72] thus demonstrating her deviation from Hilberg's idea of a "two-thousand-year-old" ingrained Jewish response to threat. Instead, as outlined previously, Arendt was particularly preoccupied with the role and function of the *Judenräte*, and her own discussion of the victims thus centred upon this particular issue.

In many ways, Arendt took what had been implied by Hilberg's arguments about the Jewish leaders and rendered it concrete in strong and direct language. In her view, the real questions to be asked concerning the behaviour of the victims during the Holocaust should be directed not towards the masses but to the *Judenräte*, most pressingly, "'[w]hy did you cooperate in the destruction of your own people and, eventually, in your own ruin?'"[73] She thus viewed the *Judenräte* as clearly cooperating with the Nazis, and suggested that in doing so they had accelerated and enabled the destruction process. Of course, this

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A. Elon, 'Introduction: The Excommunication of Hannah Arendt,' in H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965), New York, Penguin Books, 2006, p. xvii; W. Laqueur, 'Re-Reading Hannah Arendt,' *Encounter*, vol. 52, no. 3, 1979, pp. 74, 77; H. Mommsen, 'Hannah Arendt and the Eichmann Trial,' in *idem.*, *From Weimar to Auschwitz: Essays in German History*, trans. P. O'Connor, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, pp. 270-271; S. Muller, 'The Origins of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Jewish History,' *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1981, p. 240; D. Nelson, 'Suffering and Thinking: The Scandal of Tone in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' in L. Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, New York, Routledge, 2004, pp. 219-244; A. Rabinbach, 'Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy,' *October*, no. 108, 2004, p. 105; and B. Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment: Hannah Arendt's* Eichmann in Jerusalem, Westport, Praeger, 1999, pp. 70-71, 75. See also Chapter Three, 'Writing About Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary,' pp. 93, 101-102.

[70] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 666. This particular sentence was omitted in subsequent editions of the book. For a more complete treatment of the *Judenräte* by Hilberg, see R. Hilberg, 'The Judenrat: Conscious or Unconscious "Tool,"' in Y. Gutman and C. J. Haft (eds.), *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1979, pp. 31-44.

[71] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 12. Arendt had made this suggestion not in response to Hilberg, but rather to the Israeli prosecutor at the Eichmann trial, who had directly put this question of 'why did you not resist?' to survivors who were witnesses. She returned to this "cruel and silly" claim in the Postscript to the 1965 revised edition of *Eichmann*, specifically responding to the suggestions from her critics that she blamed the victims as a whole for their destruction. Arendt noted, "[t]he controversy began by calling attention to the conduct of the Jewish people during the years of the Final Solution, thus following up the question, first raised by the Israeli prosecutor, of whether the Jews could or should have defended themselves. I had dismissed that question as silly and cruel, since it testified to a fatal ignorance of the conditions at the time." See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 283.

[72] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 11.

[73] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 124. Indeed, as one sympathetic critic later summarised Arendt's attitudes towards the victims, "Hannah Arendt is quite clear: compassion for the Jewish masses, contempt for the Jewish collaborators." See J. Suhl, 'Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann,"' *Contemporary Issues*, no. 48, 1964, p. 12.

argument was very similar to Hilberg's in *Destruction*, the important distinction being that Arendt couched her version in direct accusatory terms against the Jewish leadership. Overall, she offered the following oft-repeated conclusion concerning the impact of the actions of the *Judenräte* upon the course of the 'Final Solution':

> [T]he whole truth was that there existed Jewish community organizations and Jewish party and welfare organizations on both the local and international level. Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people.[74]

For Arendt, and, she thought, all Jews, "this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story."[75] Unhelpfully for Hilberg, in light of the controversy that was to erupt over *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt also noted of this "darkest chapter" that "it has now been exposed for the first time in all its pathetic and sordid detail by Raul Hilberg."[76]

Arendt's sense of outrage at the actions of the *Judenräte* was sharpened by what she deemed the failure of the Jerusalem court to adequately discuss their role during the course of Eichmann's trial. However, in an observation that hints at the moral complexities which attend discussion of this particular element of past atrocity, Arendt recognised that with the inclusion of such evidence, "the prosecution's general picture of a clear-cut division between persecutors and victims would have suffered greatly."[77] Nonetheless, Arendt used her own discussion of the *Judenräte* to make an explicitly moral argument, namely that "it offers the most striking insight into the totality of the moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society—not only in Germany but in almost all countries, not only among the persecutors but also among the victims."[78] For Arendt, then, the failure of the *Judenräte* was decidedly moral in nature, a judgement that Hilberg never made explicit in his own writings. As Browning later noted, "[w]hat Hilberg portrayed as a catastrophic and tragic failure of perception, Arendt, in contrast, painted it in the stark colors of seduction by apparent power, self-serving corruption, and, ultimately, betrayal—in short, a searing accusation of moral failure."[79]

Regardless of these observations, however, Arendt was ostensibly not particularly concerned with the Jewish victims. Like Hilberg, her major theme was the perpetration of

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[74] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 125.
[75] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 117.
[76] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 117-118.
[77] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 120.
[78] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 125-126.
[79] Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 10.

the Holocaust—in Arendt's case, a discussion largely restricted to the solitary figure of Eichmann, and the question of his character and conscience. Her discussion of the victims was limited, comprising a dozen pages in a book which ran to more than three hundred.[80] It would be her reflections in this regard, however, which would provoke a tremendous outcry, and at the same time draw negative critical attention to Hilberg's similar arguments.

The response to Arendt's observations about the victims in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was remarkable in terms of its volume, nature, and scope. In many ways, it can be read as the controversy that might have erupted over *Destruction*, had Hilberg's book possessed a greater presence in more public forums. The discourse produced by the controversy is marked by strong passions, moral outrage, and, perhaps consequently, critical confusion. The separate issues of the supposed passivity of the mass of Jewish victims and the alleged collaboration of the Jewish leadership were often not separated by Arendt's (and Hilberg's) critics, despite the fact that the moral and historiographical questions raised in each instance are very different. Therefore, while Arendt had largely focused her arguments upon the former and, as we have seen, rejected the idea of the 'passivity' of the masses, the spectre of the 'six million murdered' was frequently invoked against her by her critics. Nonetheless, this confusion is itself illustrative of the many questions which have confronted historians as they have sought to morally address the victims of atrocity, and warrants further examination.

The controversy began with a review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Justice Michael Musmanno in *The New York Times Book Review* of 19 May 1963.[81] Musmanno's reflections on the book are notable for the strong sense of moral outrage which pervades them. Invoking loaded imagery, he wrote of "the screams of horror-stricken women and terrorized children as they saw the tornado of death sweeping towards them," and depicted the perpetrators "pressing candy upon a little boy to induce him to enter a gas chamber of death."[82] Displaying the critical confusion which plagued much of the discussion of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Musmanno fiercely declared that "none of the author's arguments [about the Jews]…can dim the luster of martyrdom of the defenseless millions who

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[80] See Elon, 'Introduction,' p. xviii.

[81] As the biographical note accompanying his review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* indicated, "Justice Michael Musmanno, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, was a witness at the Eichmann trial. From 1946 to 1948 he was a judge at Nuremberg and presided over the Einsatzgruppen trial." See *The New York Times Book Review*, 19 May 1963, p. 1.

[82] M. A. Musmanno, 'Man With an Unspotted Conscience,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 19 May 1963, p. 1.

marched bravely to their doom under the guns of the most satanic force that ever defiled the earth."[83]

Despite this misunderstanding of the nature of Arendt's arguments about the victims, Musmanno's review exemplifies the strong moral current which informed the controversy. For many critics, Arendt had violated an unspoken but nonetheless firmly entrenched moral code by casting a critical eye upon the actions of the *Judenräte*, and passing judgement upon them. As a result, accusations of Arendt's immorality, or, at best, her moral failing, were a common feature of the debate. For example, one commentator accused Arendt of "display[ing] an insensitivity that is both astounding and tragic," in "making such callous judgments of a martyred people."[84] Similarly, others decried "the complete absence of compassion, sympathy, of understanding for the slaughtered Jews,"[85] and "the sheer nastiness of tone…the shocking lack of charity for people subjected to moral pressures no human being should have to endure."[86] Perhaps the general attitude was best summarised by the reviewer who noted of Arendt that "she dares to forget the admonition, 'judge not, lest ye be judged.'"[87]

Those critics who focused upon Arendt's engagement with the *Judenräte* also decried her lack of compassion and empathy for the terrible situation that their members had been placed in. One commentator declared that "[s]he makes no obvious effort to put herself in their place, to share their hideous dilemmas, to understand the delusory hopes which beguiled them or the bitter choices which were forced upon them."[88] Others suggested that her blanket condemnation obscured the fact that the *Judenräte* had acted, however despairingly, with good intentions and did try to alleviate the suffering of their people. One critic, for example, wrote of "the European Jewish leaders who, in the descending darkness, tried desperately, sometimes with gruesome obsequiousness, to save some lives."[89] Overall, the general view seemed to be that few, if any, had the right to judge the members' actions. Marie Syrkin, one of Arendt's fiercest critics, declared on this point, "[w]hatever the sins of the Jewish Councils, let those certain that they would have first

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[83] Musmanno, 'Man With an Unspotted Conscience,' p. 41.
[84] J. Cahn, 'The *New Yorker* Series on Eichmann,' *The Reconstructionist*, 22 March 1963, p. 4.
[85] P. S. Bernstein, 'Distortion of Guilt Presented in Book,' *The Jewish Ledger*, 7 June 1963, p. 5.
[86] D. Boroff, 'Eichmann and Miss Arendt,' *New York Post Sunday Magazine*, 21 July 1963, p. 13.
[87] J. A. Wechsler, 'Re Eichmann,' *New York Post*, 30 July 1963, p. 22.
[88] C. Welch, 'Eichmann and the Jews,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1963. Similarly, historian George Mosse believed that "[w]riting from Mount Olympus rather than putting herself into the inferno, Miss Arendt expects the Jewish leaders to rise dramatically above a historical situation for which they were entirely unprepared." See G. L. Mosse, 'Captive Eichmann,' *The Progressive*, July 1963.
[89] Wechsler, 'Re Eichmann,' p. 22.

chosen death for themselves and their families judge them…. The implications of guilt and innocence become incalculable, and few are morally entitled to pass judgment."[90]

The attacks upon Arendt took on a decidedly personal tone, something which Hilberg did not endure even as his own work came under increased critical attention in the wake of the *Eichmann* controversy. She was accused of "Jewish self-hatred" in the infamous article 'Self-hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series for *New Yorker* Magazine,'[91] while another critic crudely psychologised about Arendt's own past, claiming that through her approach of 'blaming' the victims, "apparently the sick soul gains surcease from the feeling of having fled and betrayed her loved ones."[92] She also received what can only be described as hate mail from members of the public, such as a J. Baron who declared, having seen a picture of Arendt in a newspaper, that she had "a face hard as rock and cold as ice" and "an iron brutality…in the eyes." He vaguely threatened that "the souls of our six million martyrs whom you desecrated will swarm about you day and night; they will give you no rest."[93]

What can explain the aggression which accompanied discussion of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, something from which Hilberg remained relatively immune? Why were the attacks on Arendt more personal, strident and impassioned? Political scientist Jennifer Ring has pointed to Arendt's relative celebrity and the far more public forum in which her work was disseminated and debated as being crucial reasons for this difference, noting that "[p]eople knew who she was, in contrast to…Hilberg, who was a respected but bookish academic."[94] Additionally, Ring has advanced interesting arguments concerning the role which gender may have played in the reception of Arendt's work compared to that of Hilberg's, focusing particularly on the impact of the former's identity as a Jewish woman. She argues:

> Arendt's high public profile and her access to the "mass-market" *New Yorker* were a source of jealousy among members of the male New York Jewish intellectual community. She was an intellectual with a major reputation: a privileged position more traditionally reserved, within the Jewish community, for men. Thus, far from keeping to the more traditional Jewish female role of

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[90] M. Syrkin, 'Miss Arendt Surveys the Holocaust,' *Jewish Frontier*, May 1963, pp. 16-17. A few years after *Eichmann in Jerusalem* first appeared, historian Walter Laqueur similarly argued of the *Judenräte* that "[t]hey may have failed, they may have to be condemned; and yet who does not feel that there but for the grace of God, go I?" See W. Laqueur, 'A Reply to Hannah Arendt,' *The New York Review of Books*, 3 February 1966, p. 24.

[91] See T. Weiss Rosmarin, 'Self-hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series for *New Yorker* Magazine,' *Tx Jewish News*, 18 April 1963.

[92] See Bernstein, 'Distortion of Guilt,' p. 5. For a fuller discussion of Arendt's personal history, see Chapter Three, 'Writing About Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary,' pp. 86-87.

[93] See Letter from J. Baron to Hannah Arendt, 25 May 1963, Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Adolf Eichmann File 1938-1968 -- Correspondence -- Miscellaneous -- English Language -- A-C.

[94] J. Ring, *The Political Consequences of Thinking: Gender and Judaism in the Work of Hannah Arendt*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 151.

> wife and mother, Arendt was practically "cross-dressing" with her public voice as an intellectual. Even more provocative, however, was her inability diplomatically to hide her anger when she wrote which gave rise to accusations of a "snide," "flippant," or "harsh" tone, deemed particularly inappropriate when addressing the sensitive issue of the behavior of the European Jewish leadership during the Holocaust.[95]

How these factors translate to the reception of Hilberg's work as opposed to Arendt's is, Ring believes, an issue of respect. Even in critical reviews of his work, the pattern of response was such that "Hilberg is applauded for his scholarship while Arendt, who makes a similar argument…is excoriated for betraying the Jews, and for relying on Hilberg's 'superior' scholarship to do it."[96]

Nonetheless, Arendt was not without her defenders, even if they were seriously outnumbered by her critics. It is curious, however, that the majority of positive reviewers tended to focus their praise upon her portrayal of Eichmann and her notion of 'the banality of evil' as opposed to her remarks about the victims. Where the latter was mentioned, some commentators, such as Hans Zeisel, did suggest that "she should have been more gentle, more aware of open wounds, and more charitable to those who, in retrospect, can be charged with error and guilt."[97] It is interesting to note, then, that Arendt's supporters agreed such judgement of the victims was legitimate, cautioning her only for the manner in which she had judged. Others saw no issue at all, such as her close friend Mary McCarthy, who made the rather feeble defence that Arendt's comments about the members of the *Judenräte* were inconsequential because such people "are dead and beyond being hurt by it."[98] Occasionally, Arendt was explicitly praised for the manner in which she had broached the subject, most notably by the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim. Bettelheim, who had himself earlier courted controversy for his arguments concerning the 'passivity' of the victims, noted approvingly that "Arendt is right not to grant the murdered Jews the sainthood of martyrs, and to view them simply as men."[99]

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[95] J. Ring, 'Hannah Arendt and the *Eichmann* Controversy: Cultural Taboos Against Female Anger,' *Women and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1998, pp. 58-59.
[96] Ring, *The Political Consequences of Thinking*, p. 27.
[97] H. Zeisel, Review of H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *The Annals of the American Academy*, vol. 353, 1964, p. 197.
[98] M. McCarthy, 'The Hue and Cry,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1964, p. 83.
[99] B. Bettelheim, 'Eichmann; the System; the Victims,' *The New Republic*, 15 June 1963, pp. 24-25. Bettelheim, was, like Arendt and Hilberg, a refugee of Nazi Germany, although he had experienced the force of the regime in a far more direct way, having been imprisoned in Buchenwald in 1939. In 1960, Bettelheim had published *The Informed Heart*, in which he offered his own theory concerning Jewish behaviour during the Holocaust. See B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in the Mass Age*, Glencoe, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960. See also B. Bettelheim, *Surviving and Other Essays*, New York, Knopf, 1979.

Hilberg became inadvertently and unavoidably caught up in this maelstrom surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. As we have seen, Arendt had relied heavily on Hilberg's work in her own writing, and had spoken favourably about aspects of *Destruction* throughout the book, which invariably gave rise to a comparison and linkage between their ideas and arguments. In many ways, however, it seems the *Eichmann* controversy only amplified the critical discussion of Hilberg's work which had begun in the wake of the Trevor-Roper review, as commentators continued to engage with Hilberg's views about the victims well into 1963, quite independent of any discussion of Arendt. For example, an April 1963 essay declared Hilberg to be "completely ignorant…of Jewish history," and claimed that as a result of his arguments "the struggle and martyrdom of tens of thousands of Jewish resisters is blanketed in silence and mocked."[100] Nonetheless, it is clear that the controversy concerning *Eichmann in Jerusalem* only worsened this already tense situation for Hilberg.

It should be noted, however, that Hilberg was not unanimously condemned along with Arendt. Many reviewers continued to highlight the merits of his work while simultaneously attacking Arendt's, lending some credence to Ring's argument concerning the possible gendered aspects of the controversy. Trevor-Roper again emerged as a champion of Hilberg's cause, arguing in his own negative review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that:

> In July 1961 there was published at Chicago a very important book which had gone to press just at the time of Eichmann's capture in Argentina. This was *The Destruction of the European Jews* by Raul Hilberg—a massive work of exact scholarship, the result of twelve years' systematic research. Coinciding as it did with the trial of Eichmann and the flood of pot-boilers thereby released, Mr Hilberg's book did not secure the public attention which it deserved; but its significance is nonetheless enormous…. [B]ehind the whole of Miss Arendt's book stands the overshadowing bulk of Mr Hilberg's book.[101]

Trevor-Roper continued that "it remains difficult to conceive of her book without his, and I myself have no doubt which of the two will last longer."[102] Another such example is Lionel Abel's polemical article 'The Aesthetics of Evil', in which he was unflinching in his attacks on Arendt but spoke approvingly of "Raul Hilberg's careful, massive, and valuable study."[103]

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[100] B. Mark, 'Falsifying the Jewish Resistance: Historian Refutes Hilberg's Thesis on Jewish Passivity,' *Jewish Currents*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1963, pp. 5, 17 respectively. For a similar review from this period, see, for example, Rothenberg, 'The Destruction of European Jewry,' pp. 25-30.
[101] H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'How Innocent Was Eichmann?,' *The Times*, 13 October 1963.
[102] Trevor-Roper, 'How Innocent Was Eichmann?'
[103] L. Abel, 'The Aesthetics of Evil,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1963, p. 212, n. 1. Interestingly, the Editor's Note prefacing Abel's article notes that "Lionel Abel's piece…is not intended as a review: it was submitted as a frank polemic."

Others, such as the historian Walter Laqueur, remained critical of both Arendt and Hilberg. Writing of the *Eichmann* controversy in late 1963, Laqueur bemoaned the general lack of research and scholarship on the period, and noted dismissively that "[b]oth Miss Arendt and most of her critics base themselves on one single book, Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of European Jews* [sic], which cannot be regarded as a definitive work on the subject."[104] Perhaps more worrying for Hilberg, however, was the apparent shift in opinion of those who had praised his book before *Eichmann in Jerusalem* had appeared. A striking example of this phenomenon comes from the reviews of Justice Musmanno. He had reviewed *Destruction* in 1961, and reached the following conclusion about the book's value:

> If Hilberg should never write another book, or never achieve another noteworthy objective, civilization will still be in his debt for the toil, effort, and pain he expended in giving to sorrowing humanity (in organized and highly readable form) the imperishable record of an infamy which can only be redeemed by a thousand years of good works on the part of all segments of society which permitted this unbearable, heart-shattering hecatomb to occur.[105]

By 1963, however, Musmanno clearly thought differently. A few months after his initial review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* he again raged against Arendt's book in a similarly moralistic fashion, invoking such images as "the screaming children torn from their parents and thrown into the flaming inferno in Auschwitz." What had changed this time, however, was the target of Musmanno's outrage. He now argued that "Hannah Arendt, Professor Bettelheim of the University of Chicago, and Raul Hilberg have added to that horror by giving enthusiastic currency to Eichmann's mad claim that the Jews cooperated in their own destruction."[106]

Speaking many years later about his pairing with Arendt and Bettelheim, Hilberg described himself as "the third person in this trio of devils."[107] Indeed, over the next several years it was Hilberg's views about the actions of the victims—itself a peripheral element of his study—which dominated a largely negative discussion of *Destruction*. Among the most extensive critiques of this period was Nathan Eck's lengthy 1967 article 'Historical Research or Slander?,' published in *Yad Vashem Studies*. Early in the article Eck referred to and condemned the so-called "trio of devils," but also made the following observation:

> [T]he charges made by Hilberg are even more serious than those of Arendt and Bettelheim. Hilberg's heavy tome is plentifully equipped with notes,

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[104] W. Laqueur, 'The Shortcomings of Hannah Arendt,' *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 October 1963, p. 7.
[105] Musmanno, 'The Imperishable Record of an Infamy,' p. 112.
[106] M. A. Musmanno, 'Did the 6,000,000 Kill Themselves?,' *National Jewish Monthly*, September 1963, p. 11.
[107] Hilberg, 'Working on the Holocaust,' p. 10.

> diagrams and other scientific apparatus, all designed to evoke respect for the research invested and the apparent accuracy of the facts rendered.[108]

Following from this charge, Eck proceeded to attack the veracity of all of Hilberg's arguments about the victims, from the extent of Jewish resistance to the Nazis through to his theory of passivity as a traditional response to threat. In keeping with the urgent moral tone which had pervaded all previous discussion of the issue, Eck also criticised Hilberg's "crude language" and "the satire and disdain in which he finds it necessary to indulge,"[109] accusing him of being "venomous" towards the victims and their plight.[110] Ultimately, Eck declared *Destruction* to be "not a serious study seeking out the truth, but an outlet for feelings of disappointment and frustration, resentment and anger, perhaps even pain."[111]

As the heat from the *Eichmann* controversy eventually cooled, *Destruction* began to be more widely recognised as a monumental and definitive work on the Holocaust throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As we shall see, however, the question of the victims remained a point of controversy. Many years after the fierce debate over Arendt's book, Hilberg would joke that of the "trio of devils" caught up in the maelstrom, "I think I am the only survivor of the three…. I'm the only one who somehow, though not entirely, has been accepted."[112] Nonetheless, it seems Hilberg remained angry about the influence of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* upon the reception of his own work, and the posthumous fame Arendt came to enjoy. In a 1983 interview with Hilberg, a journalist noted that:

> When told that his book's theories sound similar to those of Hannah Arendt, the political scientist who wrote about the 1963 [sic] trial of Adolf Eichmann, Hilberg became livid. "Her theories followed mine, not mine hers," Hilberg said, raising his voice…. Hilberg is still bitter for what seems to him a kind of intellectual plagiarism. "I don't like people in a rush. I don't like people who

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[108] N. Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 6, 1967, p. 386. Eck's suggestion that scholarly apparatuses can be used to convey authority and thus conceal decidedly unscholarly arguments has come to be levelled at sophisticated Holocaust deniers. See Chapter Eight, '"Bad" History: Holocaust Denial and the David Irving Libel Case,' pp. 262-263.

[109] Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' pp. 407, 430 respectively.

[110] Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' p. 430.

[111] Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' p. 430. Eck also came very close to charging Hilberg with 'Jewish self-hatred', something which, as we have seen, was frequently voiced against Arendt. In making this claim that *Destruction* represented an outlet for Hilberg's feelings, Eck continued that "I am not sure whether because of hate (of himself or of the whole people) or of love." See Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' p. 430. This 'self-hatred' was an accusation which Hilberg had also faced in the earlier furore which accompanied Trevor-Roper and Handlin's articles about *Destruction* in *Commentary*, where one respondent suggested that "[i]t has been my observation that the question of Jewish resistance (or passivity) has more often than not been posed in accusatory tones…and that the accusation generally comes from Jews who harbor a not too deeply concealed anti-Jewishness of their own." See J. Mann, 'Letters From Readers,' *Commentary*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1963, p. 255. For other critiques of Hilberg from this period, see, for example, C. E. Shulman, 'Calumny in Paperback: An Exploded Canard is Republished,' *The American Zionist*, May 1967, pp. 13-15; and Y. Suhl, 'Is This Responsible Scholarship, Dr. Hilberg?,' *Jewish Currents*, vol. 18, no. 6, 1964, pp. 16-18.

[112] Hilberg, 'Working on the Holocaust,' p. 10.

> engage too much of themselves in their work. I don't like the shrill tone that pervades her book. I don't like her conclusions," Hilberg said.[113]

Hilberg's 1996 memoir *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* provides further insight into his feelings on the matter. He made clear his belief that Arendt had been extremely uncharitable in acknowledging the extent to which she had depended on *Destruction*, and expressed his dismay that critics, both at the time when *Eichmann in Jerusalem* had first appeared and after, had "attributed her opinions to mine."[114]

Most prominent in Hilberg's discussion of Arendt, however, is his attempt to reconcile the paradox of her heavy reliance on *Destruction* in writing *Eichmann in Jerusalem* with his later knowledge of her attempts to undermine his work, both before and after she had drawn upon it herself. In particular, Hilberg singled out his discovery that Arendt had advised Princeton University Press in 1959 to reject *Destruction* for publication, and also her remarks in a 1964 letter to her friend and mentor Karl Jaspers that Hilberg's first chapter, in which he had outlined his theory about Jewish passivity being a two-thousand-year-old response to threat, "would not pass muster in a pig pen."[115] Unsurprisingly, Hilberg reached no firm answers, and concluded his discussion of the matter with the same tone of bitter melancholy that pervaded his entire memoir, asking, "[w]ho was I, after all? She, the thinker, and I, the laborer who wrote a simple report, albeit one which was indispensable once she had exploited it: that was the natural order of her universe."[116]

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[113] L. Brown, 'Destruction of the European Jews,' *The Burlington Free Press*, Living Section, 16 October 1983, p. 3D.

[114] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 149. For Hilberg, Arendt's opinions, especially those about Eichmann, were wrong. He noted that "[s]he did not grasp the dimensions of his deed. There was no 'banality' in this 'evil.'" See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 150.

[115] See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 155-156. For the offending letter to Jaspers, see Letter 351, Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, New York, 20 April 1964, in L. Kohler and H. Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, trans. R. Kimber and R. Kimber, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 550. Hilberg later wrote to the publishers of this edition of the Jaspers-Arendt correspondence with regard to a further offensive sentence about himself which had appeared in the earlier German-language edition, but not the English version. He wrote, "[e]nclosed in page 550 of the Arendt-Jaspers correspondence, which you published last year, with a circled paragraph that deals with me. After I read it I wanted to be sure that the translation is accurate. When I checked it against the original in the Piper edition, I discovered to my astonishment that in your version a sentence had been left out. I enclose a German-language page with the omitted sentence circled in red. In plain English, it means: 'He is pretty stupid and crazy.' Would you be good enough to tell me why and how the sentence was dropped in the book under your imprint?" See Letter from Raul Hilberg to Harcourt Brace, 8 February 1993, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 1. Lotte Kohler, trustee of the Hannah Arendt Blücher Literary Trust and an editor of the Jaspers volume, replied to Hilberg: "I am sorry to see that I overlooked an offensive sentence about you in the German edition. It had been our policy to omit certain comments out of consideration for living persons. The American editor then struck this sentence on legal advice. Hannah Arendt could be quite rash and harsh in her judgments in conversation as well as on paper, as her remarks on Eisenhower and Nixon show. Please, forgive my oversight." See Letter from Lotte Kohler to Raul Hilberg, 20 February 1993, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 1.

[116] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 157.

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In 1985, a revised edition of *The Destruction of the European Jews* was published, and the ensuing reception proved very different to the subdued response which had greeted the original. Even if critics quibbled about aspects of Hilberg's argument or presentation, *Destruction* was now being lauded as "the standard work"[117] in the field, and even "one of the greatest historical works of our time."[118] It is interesting to note, however, that Hilberg's arguments about the behaviour of the victims had barely altered in the twenty-four years which had passed between the two editions of the book.[119] A few passages had been deleted and some sentences had been reworded, but the essence remained the same—Hilberg maintained that the Jews had drawn on a "2,000-year-old lesson" in their response to the Nazis, and as a result, "[t]he Jewish community, unable to switch to resistance, increased its cooperation with the tempo of the German measures, thus hastening its own destruction."[120]

Indeed, it is remarkable how little did change with regard to Hilberg's arguments about the victims between the 1961 and 1985 editions of *Destruction*. For example, statements such as "without a doubt, the Jews were not preparing for armed resistance. They were preparing for automatic compliance with German orders,"[121] and "[i]n a destruction process the perpetrators do not play the only role; the process is shaped by the victims, too…. We must therefore discuss the reactions of the Jewish community and analyze the role of the Jews in their own destruction,"[122] remained completely unaltered. Nonetheless, critics rightfully detected the slight softening in Hilberg's expression of his views about the victims, even if little had changed in his fundamental argument. For example, one reviewer noted that "Hilberg has come to better appreciate the circumstances of the victims,"[123] while another believed his stance had "mellowed somewhat"[124] since the 1961 edition. A similar view was echoed by Browning, who suggested that in regard to Hilberg's attitude towards the victims, "the shift is not one of interpretation but of tone."[125]

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[117] R. I. Cohen, Review of R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, *Polin: A Journal of Polish Jewish Studies*, vol. 1, November 1986, p. 391.
[118] M. Marrus, 'The Administration of Murder,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 March 1985, p. 248.
[119] See Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 14; E. L. Fackenheim, 'Raul Hilberg and the Uniqueness of the Holocaust,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1988, p. 491; M. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, New York, Meridian, 1987, p. 109; Matthäus, 'Obituary,' p. 566; and Wyman, 'Managing the Death Machine'.
[120] See Hilberg, *Destruction* (1985 ed.), pp. 1039, 28 respectively; and Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), pp. 666, 17 respectively.
[121] See Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 315; and Hilberg, *Destruction* (1985 ed.), p. 495.
[122] See Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 662; and Hilberg, *Destruction* (1985 ed.), p. 1030.
[123] M. Berenbaum, 'The Inner and Outer World of Hell,' *Tikkun*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1985, p. 113.
[124] Y. Bauer, 'New Challenges to Holocaust History,' *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 25 October 1985, p. 19.
[125] C. R. Browning, 'The Revised Hilberg,' *The Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, vol. 3, 1986, p. 296.

However, while the passing of time appeared to have slightly "mellowed" Hilberg's views and the critics' reaction to them, there still existed some dissatisfaction with how *Destruction* dealt with the victims, even amongst those who praised the book more generally. Historian Michael Marrus, for example, deemed the book to be "a landmark in the history of the Holocaust," but also noted that "Hilberg is unsparing in his portrayal of Jewish passivity," and "on…his assessment of Jewish reactions, Hilberg will face sharp disagreement."[126] Even Lucy Dawidowicz, who only a few years earlier had savaged Hilberg in her 1981 study *The Holocaust and the Historians*,[127] could declare that *Destruction* was "a major achievement," but also attacked him for "hold[ing] fast to his notions of Jewish passivity, retaining every wrong-headed pronouncement he originally made." She noted disapprovingly, "[n]one of the criticisms leveled against his work in this regard for the last 24 years have led him to reconsider his ideas and correct his misreadings of Jewish history."[128]

Additionally, a small controversy erupted in the pages of *Midstream*, where psychoanalyst Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson accused Hilberg of "an alarming tendency to 'blame the victim,'" and attacked the lack of change in this regard between the 1961 and 1985 editions of *Destruction*.[129] "The tragedy of the destruction of the European Jews demands from Hilberg," Masson insisted, "more than a purely factual command of the material, it demands sensitivity to human issues of far greater import and complexity than railroad timetables or the production of poison gas."[130] This article prompted a spate of letters which largely supported Masson's views. To be sure, some scholars disagreed that Hilberg lacked compassion for the victims, but nonetheless suggested that he made "unjustified accusations" about them.[131] The sensitive nature of this matter, it therefore seems, had not dulled with the passing of time.

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[126] Marrus, 'The Administration of Murder,' pp. 247, 248 respectively. A similar view was echoed by David Wyman, who suggested of this issue that "[t]he dispute will certainly continue, at least until a comprehensive, careful, objective study of the Jewish resistance is available." See Wyman, 'Managing the Death Machine'.

[127] In this book, Dawidowicz, whose own study of the Holocaust, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* had appeared in 1975, charged Hilberg with ignorance of "the historian's craft in terms of critical analysis of sources and exploration of complex interacting causal factors," and claimed that he had "savagely charged the European Jews with passivity and, in profound ignorance of Jewish history, blamed 'Jewish ghetto history,' that is, Diaspora history, for that passivity." See L. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 178, n. 16. Dawidowicz also attacked Arendt and Bettelheim as she attacked Hilberg, which reiterated the negative associations which the *Eichmann* controversy had formed between these three scholars.

[128] L. Dawidowicz, 'The Holocaust and How to Explain It,' *The Washington Times Magazine*, 19 August 1985, p. 5M.

[129] J. M. Masson, 'Hilberg's Holocaust,' *Midstream*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1986, pp. 51, 52.

[130] Masson, 'Hilberg's Holocaust,' p. 51.

[131] See Y. Bauer, 'An Exchange: Hilberg's Silence—Replies to Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson,' *Midstream*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1987, p. 50. Other notable contributors to this discussion included Emil Fackenheim and Nora Levin. For the full exchange, see 'An Exchange: Hilberg's Silence—Replies to Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson,' *Midstream*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1987, pp. 50-53. For his part, Hilberg remained untroubled by Masson and did not write a

In 2003, a third edition of *Destruction* was published by Yale University Press. Between the second and third editions of the book there had been little change, apart from the inclusion of a new chapter entitled 'Neighbors' in addition to those on the perpetrators and victims, which followed on from Hilberg's 1992 study *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945*.[132] From the critics, the response remained much the same. Questions regarding Hilberg's treatment of the victims continued to be raised, and, increasingly, his lack of engagement with the mass of scholarship on the Holocaust which had appeared in the wake of *Destruction's* original 1961 publication.[133] For one critic, at least, in his later years Hilberg "seems less a pathfinder than a conscience" for the field of Holocaust studies.[134]

Attitudes in Israel to Hilberg's work (and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) remained an ongoing source of tension. In his obituary, historian David Cesarani argued that the furore over Hilberg's conclusions about the victims had "permanently embittered his relations" with scholars in Israel, and particularly with the research institute Yad Vashem.[135] The direct cause of this embitterment was, according to one commentator, "a serious ideological confrontation…between Hilberg and Yad Vashem on the issue of the Jewish response to the Nazi policy of destruction."[136] Its first manifestations can be traced back to 1958, when, as outlined previously, the institute declined to collaborate with Columbia University Press in publishing Hilberg's manuscript, citing his arguments about the Jews as one of their primary reasons for the refusal. Later, when the book had eventually appeared in the United States, scholars associated with Yad Vashem, such as Joseph Melkman and Eck, wrote highly critical reviews.[137]

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response to the review. In correspondence with Peter Swales, who had earlier shared with Hilberg an angry letter he had sent to Masson regarding his *Midstream* article, Hilberg wrote, "Masson wrote to me last September, indicating an interest in the 'phenomenon' of 'blaming the victim'. His tone was hostile enough to convince me that he was looking for a controversy." See Letter from Raul Hilberg to Peter Swales, 1 July 1986, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 42.

[132] New York, Aaron Asher Books, 1992.

[133] See, for example, Bauer, 'New Challenges to Holocaust History,' p. 19; and Marrus, 'Acts That Speak For Themselves'. The latter review, which focused upon Hilberg's *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders*, is in fact the subject of the opening chapter of Hilberg's memoir. As he recounts it, Hilberg found this review deeply disturbing, and it plunged him into something of an existential crisis. Recalling his reaction to the review, he asked, "[w]hat had I done in the last thirty-one years? What had happened to me?," and "[p]erhaps my creative potential had been exhausted three decades ago. Conceivably I had lingered on this earth since then." See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 17.

[134] Marrus, 'Acts That Speak For Themselves'.

[135] Cesarani, 'Obituary,' p. 518.

[136] R. Stauber, 'Confronting the Jewish Response During the Holocaust: Yad Vashem—A Commemorative and a Research Institute in the 1950s,' *Modern Judaism*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2000, p. 283.

[137] See Eck, 'Historical Research or Slander?,' pp. 385-430; and J. Melkman, Review of R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, *Kinat Sepher*, vol. 39, 1963, pp. 212-213. See also Stauber, 'Confronting the Jewish Response,' pp. 288-289. For more on the development of Holocaust research within Israel and the

These problems came to a head, however, when Hilberg was barred from accessing Yad Vashem's archives during a visit to Israel in 1968. It was only after a month of trying, and with the good fortune of meeting a staff member at Yad Vashem named Bronia Klibanski, that he was allowed somewhat clandestine access to the archives, which ultimately did not yield a great deal of material.[138] Recalling the experience in his memoir, Hilberg reflected that "[c]learly I was a persona non grata."[139] He would return to Israel for conferences in 1977 and 2004, but, according to Cesarani, "always felt that he got a frosty reception."[140] It was not until the early 2000s that, along with *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, plans were set in motion for a Hebrew translation of *Destruction*. By the time of Hilberg's death in 2007, however, this translation had still not appeared.[141]

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Destruction and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* are clearly illustrative texts for thinking about how moral concerns shape and inform historical discussion of atrocity. Both Hilberg and Arendt engaged with the fundamental actors of these events in the perpetrators and the victims, and thereby raised important questions regarding how best to conceptualise and represent these groups. The response to their work demonstrated, however, that the morally 'permissible' narratives surrounding the victims were—and have remained—a flashpoint for controversy. As we have seen, the sense that Hilberg and Arendt had violated moral standards in their arguments was a driving force of this discussion, and, even with the passing of time and the remarkable expansion of what we now recognise as 'Holocaust Studies', many of these same issues have remained controversial. At the heart of this questioning of how best to morally address the victims of atrocity are the dilemmas of

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role of Yad Vashem, see, for example, B. Cohen, 'The Birth Pangs of Holocaust Research in Israel,' trans. N. Greenwood, *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 33, 2005, pp. 203-243.

[138] See Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 165-166. In a 1970 letter to Dawidowicz, Hilberg noted of his time at Yad Vashem that "I am somewhat anguished as I recall the four months and thousands of dollars that I spent there and the meager yield for my investment." See Letter from Raul Hilberg to Lucy Dawidowicz, 25 May 1970, Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 11.

[139] Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory*, p. 165.

[140] Cesarani, 'Obituary,' p. 518. See also Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 19. This "frosty reception" is evident in the published proceedings of Hilberg's panel presentation at the 1977 conference held at Yad Vashem. See 'Debate,' in Y. Gutman and C. J. Haft (eds.), *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945: Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1979, pp. 59-64. A possible indication of some lingering bitterness and distrust was also evident in an obituary for Hilberg published in *Ha'aretz*. See D. Michman, 'The Holocaust Scholar Who Was Hard on the Jews,' *Ha'aretz*, 28 August 2007.

[141] See Browning, 'Raul Hilberg,' p. 19; and Cesarani, 'Obituary,' p. 519. For more on the Hebrew translation of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see S. Aschheim, 'Introduction: Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem,' in S. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 1; and Elon, 'Introduction,' pp. viii, xxi. For more on the non-translation of both works, see, for example, Ring, *The Political Consequences of Thinking*, p. 109; and T. Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. H. Watzman, New York, Hill and Wang, 1993, p. 465.

judgement, namely whether one passes judgement or chooses to abstain, and, if one proceeds, the manner in which one does so.

Before considering these ideas about judgement, victimhood and past atrocity more generally, it is important to first recognise the importance of the specific circumstances in which the critical discussion surrounding *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* took place. As alluded to earlier, the concept of 'timing' is fundamental in any attempt to make sense of the response to these two texts. Prior to *Destruction*, no study of the Holocaust of a similar scope existed, and the book was less than two years old when *Eichmann in Jerusalem* appeared. Both scholars and the general public had had limited exposure to the events and questions which the texts addressed, and it was inevitable that these first tentative discussions would provoke critical debate and reflection.

Additionally, for many survivors and others with direct links to the Holocaust, these events were still terribly raw in the early 1960s. Irving Howe, a member of the New York intellectual circles frequented by Arendt and himself an active participant in the debate over her book, noted in his memoir that "[m]any of us were still reeling from the delayed impact of the Holocaust."[142] As a result, Howe believed, Arendt's arguments about the *Judenräte* were "painful" to read, and "really rubbed raw against Jewish nerves."[143] The following chapter will examine in greater detail the concept of 'timing', particularly how the trial of Eichmann in 1961 was an important catalyst for changing public and academic perceptions of the Holocaust, and for encouraging survivors to speak openly about their experiences.[144] For the purposes of the present chapter, however, it is important to note that what was at stake in these initial debates was the terms of Holocaust historiography, the manner in which it would be deemed morally appropriate to broach such matters, and the 'rules' which would come to govern such writing—factors which were, and remain, themselves influenced by the wider moral climate. Holocaust historiography was thus born under a cloud of debate about moral concerns, and has never escaped their shadow.

Nonetheless, the wider social and academic climate of the early 1960s cannot alone account for the impassioned and morally charged response to *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. We are forced to return to the question of judgement, specifically the moral propriety of critically judging the actions of the victims of atrocity. Indeed, it was this dilemma which lay at the heart of the discourse surrounding Hilberg and Arendt's work,

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[142] I. Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982, p. 271.
[143] Howe, *A Margin of Hope*, pp. 272, 273 respectively.
[144] See Chapter Three, 'Writing About Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary,' pp. 108-109.

with critics debating the appropriateness of turning a critical eye on the victims' behaviour, speculating on their actions and even, particularly in the case of *Judenräte* members, suggesting that they had 'collaborated' in their destruction. Overall, it seems that the majority of the participants in this discussion endorsed a stance of sympathetic and non-critical judgement as being the correct approach to the victims. As one of Arendt's critics argued:

> To sit in judgment on those who lived during the period of the Nazi terror while we enjoy the security of another age is to besmirch the men and women whose memories are most dear and precious to our people. Many of them were unwilling martyrs, many others were unsung heroes. From this distance, honor and human sympathy demand that we do not use the measuring rod of judgment in such a punctilious and unsympathetic fashion.[145]

While far more vociferous in the response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, similar claims can also be found in the critical discussion of Hilberg's work. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, later responsible for the infamous 'Self-Hating Jewess' headline concerning Arendt, noted in a 1962 review of *Destruction* that "[i]t is time for us to heed the admonitions: 'Do not judge your fellow man until you are in his situation,' and 'do not be overly righteous,' that is to say, do not search for the hypothetical eventualities of every 'if' and every 'provided.'"[146] These dilemmas did not disappear with the passing of time, as the merits and morality of Hilberg's critical judgements of the victims continued to be debated with later editions of the book.

While Hilberg did not offer an explanation or even an opinion regarding the question of judgement, Arendt was a fierce proponent of its importance and necessity, and repeatedly pointed to the dangers which resulted from the individual's failure to do so. Indeed, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* itself can be read as an impassioned call to judgement.[147] One of the more famous exchanges during the controversy was the correspondence between Arendt and philosopher Gershom Scholem, which had originally been sent privately but was later published in *Encounter* in 1964. At the core of this exchange was the same question which had pervaded the entire discussion of Arendt's book, namely the moral propriety of critically judging the victims. In his letter, Scholem famously accused Arendt

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[145] Cahn, 'The *New Yorker* Series on Eichmann,' p. 6. For similar views, see, for example, Mosse, 'Captive Eichmann'; J. Robinson, 'Miss Arendt's Eichmann,' *Hadassah Magazine*, June 1963; and Syrkin, 'Miss Arendt Surveys the Holocaust,' pp. 16-17.

[146] T. Weiss-Rosmarin, 'Comments and Opinions: Survival and Guilt,' *The Jewish Spectator*, January 1962, p. 4. Such an observation begs an uncomfortable yet nonetheless unavoidable question, namely do we apply this same protocol of 'do not judge your fellow man until you are in his situation' to the perpetrators? If only victims can judge other victims, are genocidal murderers alone permitted to judge other genocidal murderers? To the best of my knowledge, this dilemma was not taken up by any participants in the discussion of *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

[147] Young-Bruehl writes of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that "[i]nability to judge and refusal to judge were [Arendt's] themes." See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 338.

of lacking "*Abbath Israel* [*sic*]: 'Love of the Jewish people,'" but also weighed in on the issue of judgement, claiming of the *Judenräte* that "I do not know whether they were right or wrong. Nor do I presume to judge. I was not there."[148] In response, Arendt argued that "although you may be right that it is too early for a 'balanced judgment' (though I doubt this), I do believe that we shall only come to terms with this past if we begin to judge and to be frank about it."[149]

Arendt returned to this matter in the postscript of the 1965 edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where she suggested that:

> The argument that we cannot judge if we were not present and involved ourselves seems to convince everyone everywhere, although it seems obvious that if it were true, neither the administration of justice nor the writing of history would ever be possible. In contrast to these conclusions, the reproach of self-righteousness raised against those who do judge is age-old; but that does not make it any the more valid.[150]

As the following chapter will examine in greater detail, Arendt equated both Eichmann's actions and the failure of more people to resist the Nazis with "the almost universal breakdown, not of personal responsibility, but of personal *judgment*," and deplored the 'modesty' inherent in the question 'who am I to judge?'[151] In her view, this suspension of judgement was particularly dangerous. As she noted in preparatory material for a lecture delivered at Wesleyan University in 1962, "[f]or conscience to work: either very strong religious belief—extremely rare. Or: pride, even arrogance. If you say to yourself in such matters: who am I to judge?—you are already lost."[152]

Despite Arendt's impassioned defence of the importance of judging all actors and actions of the past, it has been the approach championed by her (and Hilberg's) critics—namely to engage only in sympathetic and non-critical judgement of the victims—which has proved remarkably enduring within Holocaust historiography. Indeed, the most striking feature of the debate surrounding *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is how the terms of the discussion on this particular point never fundamentally changed. Even as critics were more forthcoming in recognising Hilberg's achievements and the groundbreaking nature of his work with its subsequent editions, there still existed degrees

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[148] G. Scholem, '*Eichmann in Jerusalem*: An Exchange of Letters Between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt,' *Encounter*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1964, pp. 51, 52 respectively.
[149] Arendt, 'Exchange of Letters,' p. 55. For interesting commentary on this exchange and the questions it raises regarding judgement, see D. Kaposi, 'To Judge or Not To Judge: The Clash of Perspectives in the Scholem-Arendt Exchange,' *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2008, pp. 93-116.
[150] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 295-296.
[151] H. Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship' (1964), in H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. J. Kohn, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, p. 24. Emphasis in original.
[152] Notes for a lecture given at Wesleyan University, 11 January 1962, as cited in E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 339.

of resistance and hostility to his views on the victims that had at their root the same causes, namely his decision to critically judge their actions and for doing so with what was perceived as an unsympathetic attitude. Clearly, as we have seen, with the passing of time the discussion lost its ferocity and intensity, but it could never entirely shake these criticisms. The same is true of Arendt and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. While critical opinion of the book eventually became more favourable, she too has remained vulnerable to admonishment from more recent scholars regarding her treatment of the victims. Marrus, for example, has argued that "Arendt touched many exposed nerves…and to some degree invited the intense polemic that appeared in response to her book."[153]

We shall see in the following chapter how conceptualisations and understandings of the perpetrators have changed dramatically, and what was the source of outrageous controversy in the early 1960s is today accepted as a standard argument. Clearly, the permissible moral narratives about the perpetrators have fundamentally altered over time, but those surrounding the victims have not. Of course, different moral impulses are at work when a historian seeks to understand the perpetrators, with less at stake in being 'experimental' with one's interpretation. It is not necessary to morally 'protect' a perpetrator, and an attempt to abstain from judging such people would be deemed more morally outrageous than a possible overzealous judgement. Nonetheless, the question still remains as to why the discourse on the victims within Holocaust historiography has remained relatively static. Explaining this phenomenon is difficult, yet necessary for understanding how moral concerns have shaped historical narratives about atrocity, and specifically those about its victims.

What is unresolved, it seems, is the controversy over the kind of history of the victims which is desired. What purposes is this history designed to serve? What is at stake in particular historical interpretations of this group? Certainly, the 'politics' of victimhood and the encouragement of particular victim-centric narratives can play a role in the writing of this history, as Chapter Six will explore in greater detail.[154] Within Holocaust historiography, however, it seems the issue is slightly different. A tension clearly exists

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[153] M. R. Marrus, '*Eichmann in Jerusalem*: Justice and History,' in S. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 212. Similarly, philosopher Richard Bernstein has declared that "I believe Arendt herself bears some of the responsibility for how her book was read (and even misread), and why it caused so much pain and anger." See Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' p. 159. A more forcefully argued view comes from historian Richard Wolin, who characterises Arendt's arguments about the *Judenräte* as "represent[ing] a tasteless equation of victims and executioners." Wolin continues, "her account neglected to convey the unspeakable duress under which the Jewish leaders were required to function—by any standard, a grave omission." See R. Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 52.

[154] See Chapter Six, '"A Holocaust the West Forgot"?: The Politics of Victimhood and the Ukrainian *Holodomor*,' pp. 184-219.

between the demands of commemorative versus rigorous analytical history, further complicated by unresolved questions regarding who has the right to speak, and both the possibility and propriety of trying to explain and represent the victims' experience historically.

In seeking a commemorative history of the victims of the Holocaust, many commentators have sought to fit their experiences into the mould of a 'redemptive' or 'heroic' narrative. The literary scholar Lawrence Langer has been deeply critical of this tendency, and suggests that "the pretense that from the wreckage of mass murder we can salvage a tribute to the victory of the human spirit is a version of Holocaust reality more necessary than true."[155] Telling the story in this way is "necessary," he believes, because of a desire "to protect the idea that the Nazi assault on the body and spirit of its victims did no fundamental damage to our cherished belief that, even in the most adverse circumstances, character is instinctively allied to the good."[156] If we accept Langer's formulations, it becomes clear why *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* touched so many nerves, and also why the attitude of sympathetic and non-critical judgement has proved so enduring within Holocaust historiography. Hilberg's notion of Jewish 'passivity' and Arendt's indictment of the *Judenräte* clearly did not fit into a 'heroic' or 'redemptive' narrative of these events.

Nonetheless, as we are concerned with interrogating the moral undercurrents of this discourse about the victims, such conceptualisations of their experience demand further scrutiny. Clearly, the decision to frame their story in these terms is informed by a moral impulse. As Langer's observation suggests, it is tied to fundamental conceptions of human morality and character, and reflects the desire for certain moral 'lessons' from the Holocaust. Nonetheless, how accurate is this narrative of events? Does it actually do the victims a disservice by continuing to tell their story along these lines? Langer has strongly criticised the 'redemptive' and 'heroic' conceptualisation and suggested that it may itself be

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[155] L. L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991, p. 165.
[156] Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, p. 162. Historian Omer Bartov has made a similar observation, noting that "[t]here is a common tendency to view the Holocaust as a well-ordered plot, in which antisemitism led to Nazism, Nazism practiced genocide, and both were destroyed in spectacular, 'happy' end. This is a tale most people would like to believe, university students and filmgoers, book readers and television viewers. It breeds complacency about our own world. It refuses to acknowledge that this is a story without a clear beginning and with no resolution. For this reason one finds it such a difficult period to teach; we strive to provide our students with a more comforting, rational, logical, palatable explanation for an event that would otherwise threaten to undermine our civilization's fundamental values and beliefs. And yet we know that would be false; the story has not been resolved, its plot has not been revealed. Ultimately, the world we live in is the same world that produced (and keeps producing) genocide." See O. Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 53. For a discussion on how concepts such as the 'happy ending' informed early American Holocaust narratives, see, for example, D. E. Lipstadt, 'America and the Memory of the Holocaust, 1950-1965,' *Modern Judaism*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1996, pp. 197-198.

immoral, as it reflects only the concerns of the present and therefore ignores the true reality of the victim experience.[157] From the story of the Holocaust, he declares, "[t]here is no final solace, no redeeming truth, no hope that so many millions may not have died in vain. They have."[158] Langer asks, "[h]ow much darkness must we acknowledge before we will be able to confess that the Holocaust story cannot be told in terms of heroic dignity, moral courage, and the triumph of the human spirit in adversity?"[159]

A counterpoint to the desire for 'redemptive' and 'heroic' narratives is the arguments of those who suggest that the Holocaust is fundamentally incomprehensible, and trying to conceptualise and understand the victim experience in scholarly terms is itself immoral. Perhaps the most famous proponent of this view is Elie Wiesel, who has passionately argued in favour of silence in the face of such suffering:

> We can only lower our heads and be silent. And end this sickening posthumous trial which intellectual acrobats everywhere are carrying on against those whose death numbs the mind. Do we want to understand? There is no longer anything to understand. Do we want to know? There is nothing to know anymore. It is not by playing with words and the dead that we will understand and know. Quite the contrary. As the ancients said: "Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know."[160]

From such a view, any speculation upon and judgement of the actions of the victims is automatically immoral, and both *Destruction* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* would be condemned accordingly. While many historians would disagree that the Holocaust is unknowable, these notions of boundaries, distance and respect have nonetheless proved influential in the development of discourse about the victims within its historiography, and can go some way towards explaining the continuity in how their experiences have been conceptualised.[161]

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[157] For an interesting examination of Langer's arguments from a historiographical perspective, see T. Lawson, 'The Ruins of Memory and Holocaust Historiography,' in *idem.*, *Debates on the Holocaust*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 270-304.

[158] L. L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 158.

[159] Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, p. 158. In a similar vein, one historian has argued that "some of the most nuanced Holocaust representation is anti-sentimental, refusing affective identification in order to undermine the restoration of the wholeness or 'feel-good' qualities of redemptive narratives that often encourage sentimental over-identification with victims or the narcissistic appropriation of their experience." See C. J. Dean, 'Minimalism and Victim Testimony,' *History and Theory*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2010, p. 87.

[160] E. Wiesel, 'A Plea for the Dead,' in *idem.*, *Legends of Our Time*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 197. Elsewhere, Wiesel has declared, "[a]s for the scholars and philosophers of every genre who have had the opportunity to observe the tragedy, they will—if they are capable of sincerity and humility—withdraw without daring to enter into the heart of the matter; and if they are not, well, who cares about their grandiloquent conclusions? Auschwitz, by definition, is beyond their vocabulary." See E. Wiesel, 'The Death of My Father,' in *idem.*, *Legends of Our Time*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p. 6.

[161] Richard Evans, for example, when asked whether he thought the history of atrocity resisted confinement within the boundaries of conventional historical method, responded that: "I don't use the word 'Holocaust', you wont find it in a single place in my three volumes [of a history of the Third Reich] because I think it's a theological term and not a historical term. It's not an event—in a sense, it's a concept basically. So I do very strongly believe that events or that processes or collections of events such as the Nazi extermination of the Jews are comprehensible in historical terms. I don't believe that they are outside history. If you're a theologian you might want to say so, but as a historian I think all of these things are susceptible to historical

The desire for commemorative history—whether it takes the form of 'redemptive' and 'heroic' narratives or the observance of silence—is further complicated by the moral complexities which accompany the notion of 'compromised' victims. Such figures are found in almost all instances of atrocity, and can be described as those who played, with varying degrees of involvement, some part in the destruction process while also being subjected to it. In the specific instance of the Holocaust, such an example would be the members of the *Judenräte*. Coming to terms with these 'compromised' victims sees the questions of judgement become far more difficult. Few would question the propriety of being sympathetic and non-critical towards helpless men, women and children being systematically gunned down into pits or driven into gas chambers. But is this stance also appropriate for the 'compromised'? Were they acting merely out of self-interest, or did they have good intentions to try and salvage something from a terrible and lethal situation? How can, and should, we judge their actions? Arendt, as we have seen, believed the members of the *Judenräte* should be subject to critical judgement, and accordingly excoriated their role in the unfolding catastrophe. The response to her work, however, clearly showed that many others disagreed.

These complex issues of judgement have certainly not been ignored by scholars, and sophisticated discussions have emerged regarding the moral dilemmas involved in coming to terms with 'compromised' victims, and understanding the nature of the moral environment they were operating within.[162] Perhaps the most famous of these is Primo Levi's 1986 essay 'The Grey Zone'.[163] In this essay, Levi recognises the desire to draw moral certainties from the events of the Holocaust, noting that "[i]n anyone who today reads (or writes) the history of the Lager is evident the tendency, indeed the need, to separate evil from good, to be able to take sides, to repeat Christ's gesture on Judgement

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understanding. If you don't think they are, then they're outside history, and in a sense you're saying, 'well, they're not human, they're not part of human history, they're not human beings who are perpetrating them or are involved in them.' So I do think you can, you have a duty as a historian to try and approach, reconstruct, understand, interpret and convey the meaning of things like the Rwandan genocide or the extermination of the Jews, definitely." Richard Evans, interview with author, 1 March 2010. While I appreciate Evans' misgivings about the term 'Holocaust', I nonetheless find it preferable to his use of the phrase 'extermination of the Jews'. Undoubtedly it is not Evans' intention, but this phrase does reiterate the Nazis' own language about and attitude towards their victims. Vermin are 'exterminated'; human beings are murdered. For more on these issues of terminology and the various meanings and significance implied by different terms, see, for example, Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst*, pp. 57-60; and G. M. Kren and L. Rappoport, *The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behavior*, New York, Holmes and Meier, 1980, p. 93.

[162] See, for example, Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, *passim*; and J. Petropoulos and J. K. Roth (eds.), *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, New York, Berghahn, 2005.

[163] See P. Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' in *idem.*, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989), trans. R. Rosenthal, London, Abacus, 2008, pp. 22-51.

Day: here the righteous, over there the reprobates."[164] In terms of these questions of responsibility and judgement, Levi suggests—and few would disagree—that the real blame lies with the genocidal system, and the insidiousness of a system such as Nazism resides in its ability to corrupt the victims by drawing them into the net of its criminality so that they are "deprived of even the solace of innocence."[165] He acknowledges, however, that beyond this meta-responsibility which belongs to the system and its executors, there are other levels of lesser accountability which may fall to the victims, highlighting the incredible moral complexities and uncertainties inherent in the nature of the concentration camp and the Nazi system. Attempting to make sense of this uncertainty, Levi proposes the notion of the "grey zone," which is, as one commentator has recognised, "essentially a metaphor for moral ambiguity."[166]

The "grey zone" refers to what Levi describes as "the space which separates…the victims from the persecutors," one "studded with obscene or pathetic figures."[167] Within its parameters, questions of guilt, choice and responsibility become complicated and confused. Levi writes:

> It remains true that in the Lager and outside, there exist grey, ambiguous persons, ready to compromise. The extreme pressure of the Lager tends to increase their ranks; they are the rightful owners of a quota of guilt (which grows apace with their freedom of choice), and besides this they are the vectors and instruments of the system's guilt.[168]

The notion of "compromise" is bred from and shaped by the experience of 'privilege', whereby some prisoners in the camps, such as the *Kapos* or the *Sonderkommandos*, or outside, such as members of the *Judenräte*, could marginally increase their leverage or chances of survival, although often at the expense of others.

The metaphor of the "grey zone" thus encapsulates the dilemmas of judging those who fall outside the clear-cut categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'.[169] It presents a space for critical reflection upon the actions of some victims whose power of choice was greater, and who may have had opportunities to behave differently. Nonetheless, Levi concludes that any such judgement must be extremely cautious, and suggests that "I believe that no

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[164] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 23.
[165] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 37. This idea echoes Arendt's observation in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of "the totality of the moral collapse the Nazis caused in respectable European society—not only in Germany but in almost all countries, not only among the persecutors but also among the victims." See Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (2006 ed.), pp. 125-126.
[166] A. Brown, 'Marginalising the Marginal in Holocaust Films: Fictional Representations of Jewish Policemen,' *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, 2009, p. 2, http://www.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/previous/vol11to15/vol15/ibpcommended?f=252874, accessed 22 August 2010.
[167] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 25.
[168] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 33.
[169] For an interesting examination of these issues in relation to a perpetrator, see S. Friedländer, *Counterfeit Nazi: The Ambiguity of Good*, trans. C. Fullman, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969.

one is authorised to judge…those who lived through the experience of the Lager and even less those who did not live through it."[170] Even in such instances as Chaim Rumkowski, the highly flawed leader of the Lodz ghetto *Judenrat*, where Levi notes that "no tribunal would have absolved him, nor certainly can we absolve him on the moral plane," he nonetheless concludes, "[h]ow would each of us behave if driven by necessity and at the same time lured by seduction?"[171] Overall, Levi maintains that the most appropriate stance towards the victims is to "meditate…with pity and rigour."[172]

While Levi's invocation of the "grey zone" is a powerful metaphor for conceptualising 'compromised' victims, the Holocaust could also be viewed as an atrocity in which the distinction between perpetrator and victim is actually quite clear. Of course, as we have seen, the members of the *Judenräte* and others inside the ghettos and camps do raise moral quandaries, and fall within the boundaries of the "grey zone." Overall, however, it is relatively easy to distinguish between the persecuted and persecutors in the Holocaust. As a result, what we have uncovered in this chapter as the normative approach of sympathetic and non-critical judgement seems appropriate for the vast majority of Holocaust victims. After all, how else could one address the mass suffering of innocent men, women and children slated for death simply because of their ethnic or religious identity?

To varying degrees, however, many other atrocities resist these clear-cut distinctions, and render the "grey zone" greyer still. A particularly illustrative case in point, which will be explored further in Chapter Seven, is the Great Terror.[173] Throughout the course of these events, denouncers were themselves denounced, and even the NKVD chief himself fell victim to the mechanisms of terror he had created and sustained. Other such examples of ambiguity abound. Are Ernst Röhm and the other members of the SA purged in the 'Night of Long Knives' victims of Nazism?[174] Former US President Ronald Reagan,

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[170] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 42. Levi continues, "I would invite anyone who dares pass judgement to carry out upon himself, with sincerity, a conceptual experiment: let him imagine, if he can, that he has lived for months or years in a ghetto, tormented by chronic hunger, fatigue, promiscuity and humiliation; that he has seen die around him, one by one, his beloved; that he is cut off from the world, unable to receive or transmit news; that, finally, he is loaded on to a train, eighty or a hundred persons to a boxcar; that he travels towards the unknown, blindly, for sleepless days and nights; and that he is at last flung inside the walls of an indecipherable inferno." See Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 42.
[171] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' pp. 49, 50.
[172] Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' p. 43.
[173] See Chapter Seven, 'Rehabilitation and Responsibility: Revising the Great Terror,' pp. 220-257.
[174] Of course, after the war several high-ranking Nazis tried to present themselves as 'victims' of the system, with their 'obedience' and 'duty' having being abused by their superiors. In his response to the guilty verdict at his trial in Jerusalem, Eichmann argued in this vein: "I should thus be permitted to ask that consideration be given to the fact that I was obedient and not the fact that I obeyed particular people. They were responsible for the victims…. Those given the orders were themselves victims…. I was such a victim." See

speaking in connection to his controversial 1985 visit to Bitburg Cemetery, highlighted another potential category of 'compromised' victims:

> [T]his cemetery—we only found out later, someone dug up the fact that there are about 30 graves of SS troops. These were the villains, as we know, that conducted the persecutions and all. But there are 2,000 graves there. And most of those—the average age is about 18. These were those young teenagers that were conscripted, forced into military service in the closing days of the Third Reich…. I think that there's nothing wrong with visiting that cemetery where those young men are victims of Nazism also, even though they were fighting in the German uniform, drafted into service to carry out the hateful wishes of the Nazis. They were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.[175]

Clearly, there exist very thorny and complicated questions concerning how the concept of 'victim' might be defined, and the normative approach within Holocaust historiography of non-critical sympathy is not applicable in all instances. Not all atrocities share the clarity of the Holocaust when it comes to making distinctions between victims and perpetrators, and reaching any firm answers on these matters may well prove impossible. Nonetheless, adequately addressing past atrocity demands that we, at the very least, ask the questions.

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This chapter has explored how it has been deemed morally appropriate to historically address the experience of victimhood, using the specific example of Holocaust historiography. As the critical response to the work of Hilberg and Arendt demonstrated, this discourse has possessed a remarkable degree of consensus and continuity, and a clearly dominant 'acceptable' method has emerged. However, this normative approach—namely to engage only in sympathetic and non-critical judgement of the victims and their actions—has itself raised a plethora of additional moral questions, and in turn burdened all critical reflection on this issue with an inescapable degree of complexity and ambiguity.

H. Gouri, 'No Reply,' 15 December 1961, in *idem.*, *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, trans. M. Swirsky, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004, p. 293. Ellipses in original.

[175] 'Remarks of President Ronald Reagan to Regional Editors, White House, April 18, 1985,' in G. G. Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 240. See also P. J. Buchanan, 'Letters to the Editor: Free At Last,' *The Wall Street Journal* (Eastern ed.), 5 November 1999, p. A19. For a collection of essays, media coverage and other material relating to Reagan's visit to Bitburg, see G. H. Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986. See also, for example, P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1999, pp. 226-227. For an interesting discussion of Bitburg (and the Reagan administration's attitudes towards the Armenian genocide) in the context of "post-Holocaust political morality," see V. Guroian, 'Post-Holocaust Political Morality: The Litmus of Bitburg and the Armenian Genocide Resolution,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1988, pp. 305-322.

Nonetheless, if "the point of history is to muddy the waters of easy moral clarity,"[176] it is a complexity and ambiguity historians must engage with. As we have seen, writing about victims is clearly a difficult undertaking, one which is simultaneously informed by desire for commemoration, shaped by present interests, and complicated by the confusions which can accompany definitions of victimhood. It is a process inescapably influenced by moral concerns, as rendering historical accounts of the victim experience represent an attempt to salvage something from the wreckage of atrocity, be it to construct heroes and martyrs, draw lessons for the present and future, fight the threat of obscurity presented by the passing of time, or simply to affirm—however naïvely—the maxim 'Never Again'.

Overall, it seems that writing about the victims of atrocity is an unending dialogue between the claims of a history that is commemorative and one that is critical. It is from this site of tension that the various complexities and ambiguities, which the present chapter has highlighted as inherent within the process of morally addressing the victim experience, have emerged. Do we judge critically, or strictly sympathetically? Should our approach be the same for different 'categories' of victims? How are such categories formulated? Firm answers to these questions remain, and may always be, elusive. Nonetheless, there exists a certain wisdom in Arendt's observation that "we shall only come to terms with this past if we begin to judge and to be frank about it."[177] Levi, we have seen, asks that we "mediate…with pity and rigour" on the victim experience. He does not ask that we refrain from any mediation at all, and it is this invitation which historians who seek to come to terms with atrocity must accept. The moral complexities may not be unravelled; the moral ambiguities may remain. The more we engage with them, however, the closer we will come to an approach to the victims which meets the demands of both historiography and morality.

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[176] G. Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters: Ethical Quandaries in Modern America*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, p. 4.
[177] Arendt, 'Exchange of Letters,' p. 55.

Chapter Three

Writing about Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary

Adequately coming to terms with past atrocity requires historians to not only address the victim experience, but also engage with their persecutors. Unsurprisingly, however, writing about the perpetrators of atrocity has proved a complex and difficult undertaking, and is, in many ways, more morally fraught than approaching their victims. This observation is certainly true of Holocaust historiography, where it is the perpetrators who have presented the greatest ethical challenges to historians, and been the subject of some of the most heated interpretative controversies. A particularly illustrative case in point is the reception of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. We saw in the previous chapter the storm of debate which greeted Arendt's arguments about the victims, particularly the members of the *Judenräte*. Her portrayal of Adolf Eichmann, however, and her invocation of the notion of 'the banality of evil' also raised many thorny moral questions, and proved equally problematic for the critics. This chapter will examine these arguments, the ensuing response, and the changing reception of Arendt's ideas, before reflecting on what all three suggest about how historians' moral engagement with the perpetrators has developed. Focusing particularly on the importance of empathetic engagement, it will also suggest in what future directions this discourse might profitably proceed.

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In the postscript to the 1965 paperback edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt insisted that "[t]he present report deals with nothing but the extent to which the court in Jerusalem succeeded in fulfilling the demands of justice."[1] Despite these protestations, however, the response to Arendt's observations about Eichmann, his victims and his trial in Israel suggested that her work raised questions of far greater import and significance. Indeed, the controversy which accompanied *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was remarkable in its scope and volume, and has overshadowed discussion about it ever since—one cannot confront the text without also confronting the intense reaction to it. Writing some twenty years after the book's initial 1963 publication, Arendt's biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl noted that:

> The controversy precipitated by Hannah Arendt's series in the *New Yorker* raged for nearly three years, and it continues to simmer even now when the book made from the articles is in its twentieth reprinting. Almost every study of the Holocaust published since 1963 has explicitly or implicitly

[1] H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965), New York, Penguin, 2006, p. 298.

> acknowledged the controversy and the fierce emotions that flowed through it.[2]

Certainly, as Young-Bruehl recognises, many of the questions raised by Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* are still subject to debate almost fifty years after the book first appeared. This state of affairs has led some scholars to suggest that the controversy was never satisfactorily resolved, and, as a result, discussion about the book has never really closed.[3]

Even though points of controversy may persist, however, the general reception of Arendt's arguments has clearly changed over time. From almost total rejection when it was first published, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is now recognised as a landmark text within Holocaust historiography and Arendt has bequeathed many influential ideas and concepts for characterising and comprehending the perpetrators of atrocity. Furthermore, the book and the ensuing response can be read as the beginnings of a 'perpetrator discourse' within this historiography, as it was the first instance where such questions—and moral challenges—were widely discussed and debated.[4] Arendt's influence on the field has been so substantial that one historian has suggested, "[a]nyone writing on the subject [of perpetrators] today works in the shadow of Hannah Arendt."[5]

This positive 'afterlife' of Arendt's ideas in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* begs the question of why the book was the subject of such violent criticism when it was first published. Ostensibly, it was simply a report about the trial of Eichmann which had taken place in Jerusalem in 1961, a portion of which Arendt had attended as a correspondent for *The New*

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[2] E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 339. For further comment on the nature of the controversy, see, for example, R. I. Cohen, 'Breaking the Code: Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the Public Polemic—Myth, Memory and Historical Imagination,' *Mikhael*, vol. 13, 1993, pp. 29-85.

[3] A particularly illustrative example of this 'unclosed' nature of the debate is the response generated by a 1995 review of a collected edition of Arendt's essays and the volume of correspondence between Arendt and Mary McCarthy, which appeared in *The New York Review of Books*. Lionel Abel, a fierce protagonist in the original debate, demonstrated in a letter to the editor that the thirty years which had passed since *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was first published had not dulled his feelings about the matter. See L. Abel, 'Eichmann in Jerusalem,' *The New York Review of Books*, 11 May 1995, p. 60. For the original review, see T. Judt, 'At Home in This Century,' *The New York Review of Books*, 6 April 1995, pp. 9-14. For further suggestions about the unclosed nature of the debate over *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see, for example, R. I. Cohen, 'A Generation's Response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' in S. E. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 253; A. Elon, 'Introduction: The Excommunication of Hannah Arendt,' in H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965), New York, Penguin Books, 2006, p. vii; S. Felman, 'Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust,' *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000, p. 467; and S. Neiman, 'Theodicy in Jerusalem,' in S. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 65. In light of this continued emphasis on the 'unclosed' nature of the discussion surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Walter Laqueur's 1979 observation that "fifteen years after the 'Arendt controversy' we are no nearer to a consensus than before, and it is quite likely that there never will be agreement" shows remarkable foresight. See W. Laqueur, 'Re-Reading Hannah Arendt,' *Encounter*, vol. 52, no. 3, 1979, p. 78.

[4] Anson Rabinbach has gone so far as to declare the controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* to be "certainly the most bitter public dispute among intellectuals and scholars concerning the Holocaust that has ever taken place." See A. Rabinbach, 'Eichmann in New York: The New York Intellectuals and the Hannah Arendt Controversy,' *October*, no. 108, 2004, p. 97.

[5] D. Cesarani, *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes*, London, William Heinemann, 2004, p. 15.

Yorker. The trial itself, however, was far from simple, and Arendt's attempts to deal with its complexities resulted in conclusions which contradicted both scholarly and public conceptions of the Nazi period, its perpetrators, and its victims. As one historian has observed, "Arendt's picture of Eichmann upset long-standing and deeply rooted assumptions—never a recipe for popularity."[6]

The book addressed three major themes, namely the character and conscience of Eichmann, the behaviour of the victims and their leaders in the face of the catastrophe, and the conduct and nature of the trial itself. As we saw in the previous chapter, Arendt's observations about the actions of the Jews, particularly the *Judenräte*, informed much of the critical response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. However, if the critics had been dissatisfied with her treatment of the victims, they were equally incensed by her portrayal of this particular perpetrator, and Arendt's characterisation of Eichmann and invocation of 'the banality of evil' generated a separate and equally vitriolic reaction.

Her theses about Eichmann are well-known. Arendt's central contention was that despite the magnitude of his crimes, he was an ordinary, unimpressive bureaucrat whose criminality resulted from "an inability to *think*" beyond his own narrow circumstances and to connect his activities with the wider process of destruction occurring around him.[7] In other words, he completely lacked empathy. Indeed, Arendt believed that the "decisive flaw in Eichmann's character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view."[8] She ultimately concluded of Eichmann that "the trouble…was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted or sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal."[9] While today widely accepted and even commonplace, at the time the book was published such claims about a Nazi perpetrator were extraordinary.[10] The controversy thus resided in the alleged 'ordinariness' or 'banality' of the accused, and others like him.

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[6] P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1999, p. 136. A similar view can be found in R. J. Bernstein, 'Is Evil Banal? A Misleading Question,' in R. Berkowtiz, J. Katz and T. Keenan (eds.), *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 134.

[7] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 49. Emphasis in original.

[8] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 47-48.

[9] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 276.

[10] The prevailing consensus of the Nazi perpetrator as being demonic, sadistic or in some other way perverted resulted from the largely psychological studies of the perpetrators which were available by the early 1960s, such as social theorist Erich Fromm's notion of the "authoritarian personality," which he had outlined in *The Fear of Freedom*. See E. Fromm, 'The Psychology of Nazism,' in *idem*., *The Fear of Freedom*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1942, pp. 179-206. See also, for example, T. W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswik, D. Levinson and N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York, Harper and Row, 1950; G. M. Gilbert, 'The Mentality of SS Murderous Robots,' *Yad Vashem Studies on the Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance*, vol. 5, 1963, pp. 35-41; E. Kogon, 'The Psychology of the SS,' in *idem*., *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* (1950), trans. H. Norden, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006, pp. 283-298; and W. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1946), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970. Another leading

The boldness of Arendt's arguments about Eichmann and the intense furore they generated make *Eichmann in Jerusalem* a particularly appropriate lens through which to frame a discussion of how moral concerns have shaped history-writing about the perpetrators of atrocity. To begin with, the book itself differs from most others within Holocaust historiography in that it can be described as a self-consciously 'ethical' text. Arendt did not shy away from addressing questions of morality as she sought to make sense of Eichmann and his behaviour, and she was willing to engage with and employ terms like 'evil' in doing so.[11] In turn, the ensuing debate mirrored this element of the text, and many critics were explicit in condemning what they regarded as Arendt's 'immoral' arguments. Overall, the *Eichmann* controversy and the changing reception of Arendt's ideas reveals how the question of empathy has emerged as the most pressing moral dilemma—and moral obligation—for historians wishing to understand the perpetrators of atrocity.

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At this point, it is worth considering what 'empathy' actually means in practice for historians trying to make sense of those responsible for terrible atrocities. To be sure, a sophisticated philosophical discussion has emerged concerning the meaning of empathy and its application to history, although this discourse has been more focused upon the victim experience.[12] In the preface to his groundbreaking 1992 study *Ordinary Men*, historian Christopher Browning provided an eloquent defence of an empathetic approach to the perpetrators:

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interpretation of the Nazi period around the time that *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was first published was that of the *Sonderweg* or 'special path' school. Although more concerned with explaining the rise of Nazism overall, the *Sonderweg* approach nonetheless demonstrates, through its characterisation of Nazism as a uniquely German problem, a tendency to look for anomalies and specificities to explain the horror rather than the 'ordinary'. For an example of the *Sonderweg* approach from this period, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (1945), London, Routledge Classics, 2001. Among the best known critiques of the *Sonderweg* interpretation is D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984. For a more general discussion, see J. Kocka, 'German History Before Hitler: The Debate About the German Sonderweg,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1988, pp. 3-16.

[11] This willingness is all the more remarkable in light of Richard Evans' claim that "[a] historian who uses terms like 'wicked' and 'evil' about the past will only succeed in looking ridiculous." See R. J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (1997), New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1999, p. 44. Of course, Arendt was not a historian by training and did not actively seek to write a history of the Holocaust, but *Eichmann in Jerusalem* nonetheless contains a considerable amount of historical discussion and analysis, and has proved so influential and important within Holocaust historiography, that I believe it is legitimate to deem it a work of history.

[12] For one such example of this discussion, see S. Moyn, 'Empathy in History, Empathizing with Humanity,' *History and Theory*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2006, pp. 397-415. For some examples of the discussion about empathy and its application to the Holocaust, particularly its victims, see C. J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy After the Holocaust*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004; C. J. Dean, 'History Writing, Numbness, and the Restoration of Dignity,' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 57-96; and D. LaCapra, 'Tropisms of Intellectual History,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2004, pp. 499-529.

> Clearly the writing of such a history requires the rejection of demonization. The policemen in the battalion who carried out the massacres and deportations, like the much smaller number who refused or evaded, were human beings. I must recognize that in the same situation, I could have been either a killer or an evader—both were human—if I want to understand and explain the behavior of both as best I can. This recognition does indeed mean an attempt to empathize. What I do not accept, however, are the old clichés that to explain is to excuse, to understand is to forgive. Explaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving. Not trying to understand the perpetrators in human terms would make impossible not only this study but any history of Holocaust perpetrators that sought to go beyond one-dimensional caricature.[13]

Empathy, when understood in this fashion, demands a degree of identification with the object, which can be a difficult task when confronting character traits or behaviours which one finds abhorrent. Fully comprehending and understanding such people, however, necessitates a recognition that the same malign potential may exist within oneself. To this end, it is worth emphasising Browning's admission that "I must recognize that in the same situation I could have been either a killer or an evader…if I want to understand and explain the behavior of both as best I can."

Some measure of identification is therefore a vital precondition for achieving true empathy with those whose actions or ideology we deem distasteful. Emphasising the alterity of these objects usually results in demonisation, and thus compromises an effort at true understanding. It is important to note, however, that recognising the commonality between ourselves and the perpetrators of atrocity does not necessarily lead to condoning their behaviour, or leave us unable to condemn. A choice always exists between positive or negative identification with the object of one's empathy. In demonstrating the moral failings of these people but acknowledging that we too could fail in similar ways, we go some way towards meeting the demands of true empathy with the perpetrators. Nonetheless, achieving this empathetic identification remains a difficult task, as the arguments of and reactions to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* revealed.

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Hannah Arendt did not find herself in Jerusalem by chance, as the opportunity to observe Eichmann's trial firsthand was one she had actively sought.[14] In a letter to her friend Mary McCarthy dated 20 June 1960, Arendt noted that she was "half-toying with the

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[13] C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992), New York, Harper Perennial, 1998, p. xx.
[14] Cesarani, *Eichmann*, p. 344.

idea to get some magazine to send me to cover the Eichmann trial."[15] By 8 October, she was able to report to McCarthy:

> I decided that I wanted to attend the Eichman-Trial [sic] and wrote to the *New Yorker*. (Just three lines, nothing elaborate.) [William] Shawn called me and seemed to agree to let me go for them with the understanding that he does not have to print whatever I may produce, but that they would pay my expenses, or at least the greater part of it. This suits me fine.[16]

Why was Arendt so keen to travel to Jerusalem? A clue to her eagerness may be found in a letter to Vassar College dated 2 January 1961, where she explained that "to attend this trial is somehow, I feel, an obligation I owe my past."[17]

Indeed, Arendt's personal history was one informed by the system of government and its crimes which she would spend the greater part of her intellectual life trying to comprehend. Born in Germany in 1906 to Jewish parents, Arendt completed her tertiary studies at the universities of Marburg and Heidelberg, receiving her doctorate in philosophy from the latter institution in 1929 under the supervision of Karl Jaspers. Her year at Marburg was spent under the tutelage of Martin Heidegger, a period of Arendt's life which in more recent times has become a source of controversy following revelations of her affair with the married professor seventeen years her senior.[18] Shortly after the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933, Arendt was arrested and briefly imprisoned for 'illegal' activities on behalf of a Zionist organisation. She fled to France soon after her release from prison, before fleeing again to New York in 1941, where she would live until her death in 1975.

By the time *Eichmann in Jerusalem* appeared, Arendt was an established and well-known scholar. The 1951 publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was met with critical acclaim, and had, in Arendt's own words, transformed her into something of a "cover

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[15] Letter from Hannah Arendt to Mary McCarthy, 20 June 1960, in C. Brightman (ed.), *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975*, San Diego, Harvest, 1995, p. 81.

[16] Arendt to McCarthy, 8 October 1960, in Brightman (ed.), *Between Friends*, pp. 98-99. Why Arendt ultimately chose *The New Yorker* as her medium remains unclear.

[17] Letter from Hannah Arendt to Vassar College, 2 January 1961, as cited in E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 329.

[18] Unsurprisingly, Heidegger's later activities during the Nazi period (and subsequent unrepentant attitude) and Arendt's Jewish identity have contributed to the interest and intrigue surrounding their affair. On the Arendt-Heidegger relationship, see, for example, E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995; D. R. Villa, 'Apologist or Critic? On Arendt's Relation to Heidegger,' in S. E. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, pp. 325-337; R. Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 34-38; Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, pp. 50-61; and E. Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 21-25. For their correspondence, see U. Ludz (ed.), *Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger: Letters 1925-1975*, trans. A. Shields, Orlando, Harcourt Books, 2004. The nature of their relationship continues to provoke controversy. For recent discussions, see, for example, M. O'Brien, 'Reassessing "The Affair": The Heidegger Controversy Revisited,' *The Social Science Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-20; and R. Rosenbaum, 'The Evil of Banality: Troubling New Revelations About Arendt and Heidegger,' *Slate Magazine*, 30 October 2009, http://www.slate.com/id/2234010, accessed 23 May 2010.

girl."[19] Additionally, in 1959 she had been granted tenure at Princeton University, the first woman to receive such an appointment. Attending Eichmann's trial, Arendt was, as one historian suggests, "no ordinary journalist."[20] Her scholarly credentials and personal experience of the Nazi regime provided Arendt with a certain degree of legitimacy in her role as trial reporter, something which *The New Yorker* certainly recognised. Later, as the controversy over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* enveloped her, editor William Shawn defended Arendt in the magazine, claiming that "[n]o one was more qualified than Miss Arendt to undertake such a work; her experience as German Jew, historian, philosopher, and humanist enabled her to approach her subject with feeling, with reason, and with knowledge."[21]

By contrast, the personal history of the accused had remained somewhat enigmatic until the announcement of his capture in May 1960. Otto Adolf Eichmann was born in 1906 in Solingen, but relocated to Linz with his family as a young child. Contrary to the sensationalist biographies rushed to print in the wake of Eichmann's capture, his most recent biographer David Cesarani has emphasised the relatively normal childhood Eichmann enjoyed:

> The temporary absence of his father [who had relocated a year before the rest of the family], the move to Linz, the death of his mother and his father's remarriage, all against the background of a world war and political upheaval, may have unsettled young Eichmann. But he gave no hint of anything like this in any of the narratives of his life.[22]

He was, however, a poor student, failing to complete both high school and the vocational college where his father placed him as an alternative. While working in various jobs, most notably with the Vacuum Oil Company as a travelling sales representative, Eichmann became drawn to the activities of the Austrian wing of the NSDAP, joining both the party and the SS in 1932.[23] Exactly what drew him to Nazism remains unclear, although Cesarani and others, including Arendt, believe that anti-Semitism was not a motivating factor.[24]

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[19] Letter from Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, 14 May 1951, as cited in E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. x.

[20] Y. Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil*, trans. H. Watzman, London, Continuum, 2002, p. 2. See also R. H. Feldman, 'Introduction: The Jew as Pariah: The Case of Hannah Arendt,' in R. H. Feldman (ed.), *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, New York, Grove Press, 1978, p. 16.

[21] W. Shawn, 'The Talk of the Town,' *The New Yorker*, 20 July 1963.

[22] Cesarani, *Eichmann*, p. 20.

[23] See Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 21-24.

[24] The issue of Eichmann's anti-Semitism (or lack thereof) has remained a controversial point. For Arendt's original musings on the subject, where she seems to accept Eichmann's own argument that he had never been motivated by deep-set anti-Semitic impulses, see H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York, Viking, 1963, pp. 23, 35-36. For similar views to Arendt's, see, for example, S. Gordon, *Hitler, Germans and the 'Jewish Question'*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 54, 285, 314; and H. Mommsen, 'Hannah Arendt and the Eichmann Trial,' in *idem.*, *From Weimar to Auschwitz: Essays in German History*, trans. P. O'Connor, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, p. 265. A more nuanced view is presented by

Eichmann's growing political activism on the part of the NSDAP and the fact he was let go from the Vacuum Oil Company in May 1933 led him to Germany, where he arrived in August that same year. In late 1934, after undertaking military training with the SS, he successfully applied for a position with the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), where he was soon put to work researching and indexing the activities of the Freemasons within Nazi Germany.[25] As the 1930s wore on, Eichmann rose through the ranks of the SD and became known as something of an expert on the 'Jewish Question', playing a particularly prominent role in forced Jewish emigration. With the outbreak of war and the adoption of the 'Final Solution', Eichmann became head of Section IV-B-4 of the SD, where his primary tasks were, as one historian has noted, "organizing the identification, assembling, and transportation of Jews" to either the death camps or the mass shootings.[26] It was in this capacity that Eichmann worked for the greater part of the war, cementing his criminality in connection to the implementation of the 'Final Solution'.

Immediately after the war, Eichmann had been captured by American forces and interned in a POW camp. He escaped, however, in February 1946 and fled to northern Germany, before eventually making his way to Argentina in the spring of 1950.[27] There, with his wife and children joining him two years after his own arrival, Eichmann was able to live untroubled by his past for almost ten years. However, his life as the fugitive 'Ricardo Klement' ended in May 1960, when he was kidnapped by Israeli police agents in a suburb of Buenos Aires and taken to Israel.[28]

Cesarani, who accepts that while anti-Semitism did not appear to inform Eichmann's initial attraction to Nazism, he soon became imbued with the ideology of the Party. See Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 21, 23, 25, 28, 31-34, 345, 360-368. A recent anti-Arendt view which argues for the deeply anti-Semitic attitudes of Eichmann and other 'desk murderers' like him can be found in Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats*, *passim*. For more general comment on the debate about this feature of Eichmann's character, see C. R. Browning, 'Perpetrator Testimony: Another Look at Adolf Eichmann,' in *idem.*, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2003, pp. 3-4; and C. Gerlach, 'The Eichmann Interrogations in Holocaust Historiography,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2001, p. 439.

[25] See Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 36-39.

[26] L. Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 133.

[27] Cesarani, *Eichmann*, p. 205.

[28] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 21. For more on the circumstances of Eichmann's capture in Argentina, see, for example, Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 221-236; M. Pearlman, *The Capture of Adolf Eichmann*, London, 1961; J. A. Ring, 'Hannah Arendt and the *Eichmann* Controversy,' *Women and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1998, p. 62; and A. Shapira, 'The Eichmann Trial: Changing Perspectives,' *Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004, p. 18. Additionally, many of those involved in the actual capture of Eichmann subsequently published memoirs. See, for example, Z. Aharoni and W. Dietl, *Operation Eichmann: The Truth About the Pursuit, Capture and Trial*, trans. H. Bögler, New York, J. Wiley, 1997; I. Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street: The Capture of Adolf Eichmann*, London, Deutsch, 1975; and P. Z. Malkin and H. Stein, *Eichmann in My Hands*, New York, Warner Books, 1990. There was, following the announcement of Eichmann's capture, some rumblings of controversy regarding the legality of the Israelis' actions and whether or not Israel had the right to try Eichmann. For some contemporary examples of this controversy, see 'In the Case of Eichmann vs. Humanity,' *New York Post*, 2 June 1960; 'The Law and the Eichmann Case,' *National Review*, 18 June 1960; 'Israel and the Law,' *The New Republic*, 20 June 1961; O. Handlin, 'The Ethics of the Eichmann Case,' *Issues*, vol. 15, Winter 1961, pp. 1-8; and T. Taylor, 'Large Questions in the Eichmann Case,' *New York Times Magazine*, 22 January 1961. For

Almost one year after his capture, Eichmann's trial began in the District Court of Jerusalem on 11 April 1961. He stood accused of "crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, and war crimes during the whole period of the Nazi regime, especially during the period of the Second World War."[29] Unlike the Nuremberg trials, the proceedings against Eichmann solely addressed the atrocities associated with the 'Final Solution', and represent the first time that these crimes had been the central focus of legal action against former Nazis.[30] Those prosecuting Eichmann were certainly aware of the significance of his trial. In his opening address to the court, the Israeli attorney general Gideon Hausner set the tone for his case against the accused:

> When I stand before you here, judges of Israel, in this court, to accuse Adolph [sic] Eichmann, I do not stand alone. With me at this moment stand six million prosecutors. But alas, they cannot rise to level the finger of accusation in the direction of the glass dock and cry out *J'accuse* against the man who sits there. For their ashes are piled in the hills of Auschwitz and the fields of Treblinka…. Their graves are scattered throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Their blood cries to Heaven, but their voice cannot be heard. Thus it falls to me to be their mouthpiece and to deliver the awesome indictment in their name.[31]

As with other trials of former Nazis, the proceedings against Eichmann saw legal and moral concerns collide. Much like the discipline of history, the legal profession is ruled by the principles of objectivity and neutrality, demanding the dispassionate and careful weighting of evidence in order to reach a fair and just verdict.[32] However, the moral magnitude of the events which were being judged at the Eichmann trial was never lost on the prosecutor, and Hausner actively worked to ensure that the suffering endured by the victims was never far from the forefront of the proceedings.

Arendt was, as mentioned previously, deeply critical of how the trial in Jerusalem had been conducted. First, she questioned whether Eichmann should have been tried in Israel, and suggested that an international tribunal might have offered a more appropriate

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more recent reflection, see, for example, R. J. Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' in *idem*., *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996, p. 157; Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 238-240; Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 128-132; and R. Rein, 'The Eichmann Kidnapping: Its Effects on Argentine-Israeli Relations and the Local Jewish Community,' *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 101-130.

[29] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 21.

[30] On this point see, for example, L. Bilsky, D. Bloxham, L. Douglas, D. Pendas and A. Weinke, 'Forum: The Eichmann Trial Fifty Years On,' *German History*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2011, pp. 271-272; and B. Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment: Hannah Arendt's* Eichmann in Jerusalem, Westport, Praeger, 1999, pp. 1-2.

[31] Attorney General vs. Adolf Eichmann, Proceedings of the District Court of Jerusalem, 1962, in G. Hausner, *Justice in Jerusalem*, 1966, pp. 323-324, as cited in S. Felman, 'Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust,' *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2000, pp. 480-481.

[32] Arendt herself touched on this matter briefly in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 208-209, 253.

forum.[33] Arendt also viewed the proceedings as being heavily 'stage managed' by then Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, and went so far as to accuse him in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of producing a "show trial."[34] She believed Ben-Gurion had attempted to exploit the sufferings of the victims in order to extract 'lessons' for the international community, and had used the trial of Eichmann as a means to garner sympathy and support for the state of Israel and the Zionist cause more generally.[35] Perhaps, however, Arendt's most venomous criticisms were reserved for Hausner, whom she continuously derided as a 'puppet' of the Prime Minister, while attacking his "love of showmanship" and "cheap oratory."[36] Believing that the trial had been designed to serve the agendas of the state, Arendt therefore concluded that its overall focus was hopelessly misguided. "On trial," she argued, "are [Eichmann's] deeds, not the sufferings of the Jews, not the German people or mankind, not even anti-Semitism and racism."[37] She believed, however, that the prosecution's "case was built on what the Jews had suffered, not on what Eichmann had done."[38]

For Arendt, one positive feature of the trial had been the conduct and character of the three judges. She praised them in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as "so obviously three good and honest men," and in a letter to Jaspers as "the best of German Jewry."[39] Believing the judges helped to counter the more grandiose style of the prosecutor, Arendt noted her relief that the case had been "presided over by someone who serves Justice as faithfully as Mr. Hausner serves the State of Israel."[40] Even the judges, however, were not immune

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[33] See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 269. In his letters to Arendt, Jaspers was quite forceful in expressing his views on this particular issue. See, for example, Letter 272, Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, 12 December 1960, in L. Kohler and H. Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, trans. R. Kimber and R. Kimber, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, pp. 410-411; and Letter 278, Jaspers to Arendt, 14 February 1961, in Kohler and Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, p. 424. Discussion of this subject also appeared in Arendt's letters to her husband. See, for example, Hannah Arendt to Heinrich Blücher, 8 May 1961, in L. Kohler (ed.), *Within Four Walls: The Correspondence Between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher*, trans. P. Constantine, New York, Harcourt, 2000, pp. 366-367.

[34] See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 4-5, 19, 122-123. Arendt was far more candid on this point in her letters to Blücher. See, for example, Arendt to Blücher, 6 May 1961, in Kohler (ed.), *Within Four Walls*, pp. 363-364; and Arendt to Blücher, 8 May 1961, pp. 366-367.

[35] For more recent comment regarding what purpose the Eichmann trial was designed to serve and Arendt's views towards it, see, for example, Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' pp. 154-155; M. R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (1987), New York, New American Library, 1989, pp. 4-5; and Neiman, 'Theodicy in Jerusalem,' p. 65.

[36] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 4, 211. For comment on Arendt's attitude towards Hausner and the prosecution's case more generally, see, for example, L. Bilsky, 'Between Justice and Politics: The Competition of Storytellers in the Eichmann Trial,' in S. E. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, pp. 232-252; and M. R. Marrus, '*Eichmann in Jerusalem*: Justice and History,' in S. Aschheim (ed.), *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 208.

[37] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 5.

[38] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 6. For a recent critical view of Arendt's insistence on this point, see Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment*, p. 12.

[39] See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 4; and Letter 287, Arendt to Jaspers, 13 April 1961, in Kohler and Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, p. 435.

[40] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 5.

from what was perhaps Arendt's greatest criticism of the trial, namely that all concerned had failed to properly understand—and thus adequately judge and condemn—the accused. "This crime," Arendt argued, "was no ordinary crime," and, as a result, "this criminal…was no ordinary criminal."[41]

The proceedings against Eichmann, however, were further complicated by the particular kind of perpetrator he represented. In standing trial, Eichmann was, as we have seen, accused of "crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, and war crimes during the whole period of the Nazi regime, especially during the period of the Second World War," with his plea to each of these being "not guilty in the sense of the indictment." This response raised the rather obvious question which Arendt noted in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, namely "[i]n what sense then did he think he was guilty?"[42] She offered the following summation of Eichmann's attitude towards the charges he faced, and at the same time indicated some of the complexities which accompanied his particular case:

> First of all, the indictment for murder was wrong: "With the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter—I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill either a Jew or a non-Jew, I just did not do it," or, as he was later to qualify this statement, "It so happened that I had not once to do it"—for he left no doubt that he would have killed his own father if he had received an order to that effect. Hence he repeated over and over…that he could be accused only of "aiding and abetting" the annihilation of the Jews, which he declared in Jerusalem to have been "one of the greatest crimes in the history of Humanity."[43]

As a bureaucrat within the Nazi system, the nature of Eichmann's participation in the destruction process considerably clouded the questions of guilt and responsibility. He was, as Arendt noted, "a mass murderer who had never killed."[44] How, then, was Eichmann to be judged? Was he more or less culpable than those who had been at the 'frontline' of the Final Solution?

Despite her insistence that "the purpose of a trial is to render justice, and nothing else," Arendt was acutely aware of the importance of such moral questions in the proceedings against Eichmann—something which, in her view, the court itself had not fully comprehended.[45] A tension seemed to exist between the formalities of the legal process and the overwhelming moral gravity of the actions which the trial sought to judge

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[41] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 246. For further comment on this point, see L. Bradshaw, *Acting and Thinking: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 63; Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, p. 178; and Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment*, p. 7.
[42] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 21.
[43] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 22. Ellipses in original.
[44] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 215.
[45] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 253.

and punish. This conflict was recognised by Jaspers, noting in a letter to Arendt of 12 December 1960:

> Just as actions like Eichmann's—you said it beautifully—stand outside the pale of what is comprehensible in human and moral terms, so the legal basis of the trial is dubious. Something other than law is at issue here—and to address it in legal terms is a mistake.[46]

Whether or not Jaspers was correct in his belief that the legal focus of the trial was flawed, his observation highlights the importance of the "something other than law" which informed the proceedings against Eichmann, and also explains the strong moral undercurrent that runs through *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* Arendt was compelled to interrogate what she called "the greatest moral challenge of the case," namely why and how "an average, 'normal' person, neither feebleminded nor indoctrinated nor cynical, could be perfectly incapable of telling right from wrong."[47] Her efforts in this regard have proved influential and enduring, and provide much stimulus for reflection when considering the moral questions which attend discussions about perpetrators of atrocity, including the dilemmas of empathy.

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Arendt's reports from the trial were originally serialised by *The New Yorker* over five issues between 16 February and 16 March 1963, under the title 'A Reporter at Large: Eichmann in Jerusalem'.[48] The first edition of the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* appeared in May that same year. This phrase in the subtitle, for which the book is perhaps best-known and best-remembered, did not appear at all in the original serialisation, and was only mentioned once in the book itself.

Eichmann in Jerusalem, as suggested previously, can be read as a consciously moral text, which immediately marks it out as different from the majority of Holocaust historiography. Arendt took as her central theme what she termed "the troublesome question of Eichmann's conscience,"[49] and she thus attempted to make sense of his personal role, the larger events, and the system which had produced them through the decidedly moral lens of individual judgement and responsibility. As a result, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is, for the most part, a book devoted to determining what, in the absence of clear

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[46] Jaspers to Arendt, 12 December 1960, p. 410.
[47] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 26.
[48] For the original serialisation, see H. Arendt, 'A Reporter at Large: Eichmann in Jerusalem,' *The New Yorker*, 16 February 1963, pp. 40-113; 23 February 1963, pp. 40-111; 2 March 1963, pp. 40-91; 9 March 1963, pp. 48-113; and 16 March 1963, pp. 58-134.
[49] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 194. Elsewhere in the book, Arendt does characterise her writing as "my report on Eichmann's conscience." See Arendt, *Eichmann* (1963 ed.), p. 99.

motives, ideological zeal or psychological disturbance, had induced the title character to become so instrumental in the implementation of genocide.

Arendt's was not, however, an uncomplicated morality. The book raised questions and complexities far beyond mere musings on the activity of Eichmann's conscience, as earlier discussions of both Arendt's observations about the behaviour of the victims and conduct of the trial in Israel have demonstrated. Additionally, several general features of the narrative have proved confusing, challenging and controversial. First, many commentators have had a great deal to say about the tone of Arendt's language in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. While Arendt actively and consciously addressed important moral issues, the appropriateness of her rhetoric in dealing with these issues has repeatedly been questioned.[50] As we saw in the previous chapter, an attitude of non-critical sympathy has traditionally been viewed as the most—if not the only—appropriate means to address the victims of the Holocaust. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt eschewed such an approach and freely employed rhetorical techniques such as irony, sarcasm and, as one critic notes, "abrupt understatement" in her report, which extended to her treatment of both Eichmann and his victims.[51] Examples of the former include Arendt's comment that "[a]las, no one believed him," when Eichmann explained that he was not a zealous anti-Semite, or her observation that his reading of Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* had "converted Eichmann promptly and forever to Zionism."[52]

Another unusual feature of the narrative of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, one closely connected to the question of tone, was Arendt's decision to allow Eichmann to 'speak for himself' within the pages of the book. In rejecting the idea that he was demonic, yet still seeking to make sense of this discrepancy between his monstrous deeds and his ordinary persona, Arendt seemed to adopt an empathetic approach towards her subject. She certainly appeared determined to understand Eichmann on his own terms. Peppered with her own sarcastic and ironic commentary, however, this approach confused many critics, who interpreted remarks such as the above examples literally, and thus charged Arendt with harbouring sympathy for the accused.

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[50] For further discussion on the critical response to Arendt's tone in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see below, pp. 101-102. For more recent commentary about the issue of tone in the book, see, for example, Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' p. 159; Elon, 'Introduction,' p. xvii; Laqueur, 'Re-Reading Hannah Arendt,' pp. 74, 77; Mommsen, 'Hannah Arendt and the Eichmann Trial,' pp. 270-271; S. Muller, 'The Origins of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Jewish History,' *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1981, p. 240; D. Nelson, 'Suffering and Thinking: The Scandal of Tone in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' in L. Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, New York, Routledge, 2004, pp. 219-244; Rabinbach, 'Eichmann in New York,' p. 105; and Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment*, pp. 70-71, 75.

[51] Nelson, 'Suffering and Thinking,' p. 227.

[52] See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 26, 40. For fuller discussion of Arendt's treatment of the victims in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see Chapter Two, 'Writing About Victims: Lessons from Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt,' pp. 54-56.

A more careful reading of Arendt's portrait of Eichmann reveals the important moral points she was attempting to make about perpetrators of atrocity. While her overwhelming impression of Eichmann was that of an 'ordinary' and unimpressive individual, it appears she had anticipated someone far more interesting and sinister. Prior to leaving for Jerusalem, Arendt wrote to the Rockefeller Foundation explaining that "[y]ou will understand I think why I should cover this trial; I missed the Nuremburg Trials, I never saw *these people in the flesh*, and this is probably my only chance."[53] Reality proved somewhat different, however, and the man in the 'glass cage' who confronted Arendt was "not even eerie," as she wrote in a letter of 15 April 1961 to her husband Heinrich Blücher.[54] He did not appear to be a perverted sadist, a particularly zealous Nazi, or even a committed anti-Semite. In light of these appearances, Arendt was concerned to probe Eichmann's state of mind, his motives, and the activity—if any—of his conscience:

> The indictment implied not only that he had acted on purpose, which he did not deny, but out of base motives and in full knowledge of the criminal nature of his deeds. As for the base motives, he was perfectly sure that he was not what he called an *innerer Schweinehund*, a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to [d]o—to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care. This, admittedly, was hard to take. Half a dozen psychiatrists had certified him as "normal"—"More normal, at any rate, than I am after having examined him," one of them was said to have exclaimed, while another had found that his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, and friends, was "not only normal but most desirable"—and finally the minister who had paid regular visits to him in prison after the Supreme Court had finished hearing his appeal reassured everybody by declaring Eichmann to be

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[53] Letter from Hannah Arendt to the Rockefeller Foundation, 20 December 1960, as cited in E. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, p. 329. Emphasis added. Young-Bruehl notes that Arendt was writing this particular letter because in order to travel to Jerusalem for the trial, she needed to alter the terms of a one-year grant she had received from the Foundation. See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 329.

[54] Arendt to Blücher, 15 April 1961, in Kohler (ed.), *Within Four Walls*, p. 355. Arendt expressed a similar view in a letter to Jaspers, claiming that "Eichmann is no eagle; rather, a ghost who has a cold on top of that and minute by minute fades in substance, as it were, in his glass box." See Arendt to Jaspers, 13 April 1961, p. 434. Arendt was not alone in her impressions of Eichmann's 'ordinariness'. Avner Less, the Israeli policeman who conducted Eichmann's interrogation, recalled of their first meeting that "[m]y first reaction when the prisoner finally stood facing us in khaki shirt and trousers and open sandals was one of disappointment. I no longer know what I had expected—probably the sort of Nazi you see in the movies: tall, blond, with piercing blue eyes and brutal features expressive of domineering arrogance. Whereas this rather thin balding man not much taller than myself looked utterly ordinary." See A. W. Less, 'Interrogating Eichmann,' *Commentary,* vol. 75, no. 5, 1983, p. 45. For other first impressions of Eichmann, see, for example, H. Gouri, 'The First Day,' 12 April 1961, in *idem.*, *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, trans. M. Swirsky, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004, pp. 1-5.

> "a man with very positive ideas." Behind the comedy of the soul experts lay the hard fact that his was obviously no case of moral let alone legal insanity.[55]

The Eichmann observed by Arendt at the trial thus seemed to contradict all that was commonly affirmed about Nazi perpetrators at the time, and that which the prosecutor had emphasised during the proceedings in Jerusalem. Despite his monstrous deeds, Arendt could find nothing stereotypically monstrous about Eichmann himself—in fact, she noted, as the trial wore on, "it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown."[56]

Eichmann, as outlined previously, represented a particular type of perpetrator—a so-called 'desk killer'.[57] He had not worked in a concentration camp, or been part of a mobile *Einsatzgruppen* unit. Instead, he had spent the vast majority of his time working in offices, mainly in Vienna and Berlin, and thus quite separate from the actual arenas in which the 'Final Solution' had unfolded. He had been far removed from the physical act of killing, but nonetheless shared responsibility for it. Eichmann was part of a unique bureaucratic system, perhaps the best conceptualisation of which remains that outlined by Hilberg in *The Destruction of the European Jews*. As we saw in the previous chapter, this system initiated a lethal "destruction process" which involved all areas of the state and cut across all sectors of German society, each part relying on the others for the efficacy of the whole. In the revised 1985 edition of *Destruction*, Hilberg characterised this process, particularly the role played within it by bureaucrats like Eichmann, as follows:

> In retrospect it may be possible to view the entire design as a mosaic of small pieces, each commonplace and lustreless by itself. Yet this progression of everyday activities, these file notes, memoranda and telegrams, embedded in habit, routine and tradition, were fashioned into a massive destruction process. Ordinary men were to perform extraordinary tasks. A phalanx of functionaries in public offices and private enterprises was reaching for the ultimate.[58]

According to Hilberg, no one group or sector was able to carry out the 'Final Solution' singlehandedly. The destruction process required—and received—the cooperation of all of its 'parts' in order to carry out its lethal tasks.

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[55] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 25-26. See also, for example, T. Todorov, 'Ordinary People and Extraordinary Vices,' in P. Cicovacki (ed.), *Destined for Evil? The Twentieth Century Response*, Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2005, pp. 119-131.

[56] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 54. For more on this point, see, for example, U. Baer, 'The De-Demonization of Evil,' *Cabinet Magazine*, no. 5, Winter 2001-2002, http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/5/dedemonization.php, accessed 1 June 2010.

[57] For more on the phenomenon of the 'desk killer', see, for example, H. Feingold, 'The Bureaucrat as Mass Killer: Arendt on Eichmann,' *Response: A Contemporary Jewish Review*, vol. 7, no. 39, 1980, pp. 45-51; and A. Milchman and A. Rosenberg, 'Hannah Arendt and the Etiology of the Desk Killer: The Holocaust as Portent,' *History of European Ideas*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1992, pp. 219-225.

[58] R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, student ed., New York, Holmes and Meier, 1985, p. 263.

Eichmann represented only one of these 'parts'. As for the nature of his contribution, Hilberg noted that "[m]ost bureaucrats composed memoranda, drew up blueprints, signed correspondence, talked on the telephone and participated in conferences. They could destroy a whole people while sitting at their desks."[59] Others could locate the victims, organise and assemble them, and then transport them to the assigned killing locations before completing the physical task of murder; the bureaucrats simply had to complete the paperwork which accompanied and facilitated these actions. Most importantly for Arendt's grappling with the question of Eichmann's conscience, however, Hilberg made the astute observation that "with that division of labor the moral burden is fragmented among the participants."[60]

A frequently-cited factor in explaining the behaviour of Eichmann and other bureaucrats is their physical removal from the final outcome of their own labours.[61] An office in Berlin presents a far different working environment to the brutal reality of Auschwitz, and it is perhaps easier to soothe one's conscience when not confronted with this reality. The case of Eichmann, however, is further complicated by the fact that he had not been completely ignorant of what ultimately lethal end his own activities resulted in. On several occasions he had witnessed various elements of the killing process, both by mass shooting and the gas chambers. In recalling his reaction to seeing the preparations for a gassing at Treblinka, Eichmann claimed that:

> For me…this was monstrous. I am not so tough as to be able to endure something of this sort without any reaction…. If today I am shown a gaping wound, I can't possibly look at it. I am that type of person, so that very often I was told that I couldn't have become a doctor. I still remember how I pictured the thing to myself, and then I became physically weak, as though I had lived through some great agitation. Such things happen to everyone, and it left behind a certain inner trembling.[62]

Despite this alleged disgust at the various processes of murder, he was nonetheless able to return to the considerably less confronting environment of his office and retain his thoroughness and zeal in transporting Jews to this very fate. Eichmann, it seems, had neither the empathetic imagination nor the foresight to connect his own bureaucratic activities to the broader destruction programme of which they were an integral part. Arendt deemed this condition to be the result of "thoughtlessness," so complete and

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[59] R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1961, p. 658.
[60] Hilberg, *Destruction* (1961 ed.), p. 760.
[61] On this point, see, for example, Bilsky and others, 'Forum,' p. 275; and Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, p. 132.
[62] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 87. Eichmann recalled having similar reactions to seeing corpses being handled following the use of a mobile gas van, and the aftermath of a mass shooting operation. See Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 87-89.

thoroughgoing that she believed Eichmann had actually "*never realized what he was doing*."[63] Young-Bruehl has provided a helpful expansion upon what Arendt meant by the term 'thoughtless,' noting that she used it to signify "a mental condition reflecting remoteness from reality, inability to grasp a reality that stares you in the face—a failure of imagination and judgment."[64]

It is this "failure of judgment" which became central to Arendt's exploration of Eichmann's conscience, as she believed it was the crucial factor in facilitating the disconnection he was able to make between the reality of his own activities and their murderous outcome. Arendt singled out the Wannsee Conference of January 1942 as being a 'turning point' in Eichmann's 'journey' as a mass murderer. She noted the effects which the conference had upon his attitude to his duties:

> There was another reason that made the day of this conference unforgettable for Eichmann. Although he had been doing his best right along to help with the Final Solution, he had still harbored some doubts about 'such a bloody solution through violence,' and these doubts had now been dispelled. "Here now, during this conference, the most prominent people had spoken, the Popes of the Third Reich." Now he could see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears that not only Hitler, not only Heydrich or the 'sphinx' Müller, not just the S.S. or the Party, but the élite of the good old Civil Service were vying and fighting with each other for the honor of taking the lead in these 'bloody' matters. "At that moment, I sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt." *Who was he to judge*? Who was he "to have [his] own thoughts in this matter?" Well, he was neither the first nor the last to be ruined by modesty.[65]

This passage reveals the fundamental moral point of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, namely Arendt's insistence upon the importance and necessity of thinking and judging.

For Arendt, Eichmann's personality and behaviour demonstrated what could result from a complete failure of individual judgement. It was, however, a failure she also attributed to others within the broader Nazi system and the general German population. The problem, Arendt noted, was that Eichmann (and others) had relied solely on those

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[63] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 287. Emphasis in original.

[64] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, p. 108. For more on this point, see, for example, Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' p. 166; K. Hutchings, *Kant, Critique and Politics*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 90; M. W. Jackson, 'The Responsibility of Judgement and the Judgement of Responsibility,' in G. T. Kaplan and C. S. Kessler (eds.), *Hannah Arendt: Thinking, Judging, Freedom*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1989, pp. 43, 45-46; and V. Vasterling, 'Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt,' in H. Fielding, G. Hiltmann, D. Olkowski and A. Reichold (eds.), *The Other: Feminist Reflections in Ethics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 256, 260.

[65] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 114. Emphasis and brackets in original. For other reflections on the question of Eichmann's conscience and his own conceptions of his guilt and responsibility, see, for example, H. Gouri, "'An Hour to an Hour and a Half,'" 21 June 1961, in *idem*., *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, trans. M. Swirsky, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004, pp. 162-166; and H. Gouri, 'The Cross-Examination,' 9 July 1961, in *idem*., *Facing the Glass Booth: The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, trans. M. Swirsky, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004, pp. 189-193.

around him and "good society" as his determinant of what was right and wrong.[66] The point was not that he had no conscience, or that he had wilfully disobeyed it; instead, and to terrible effect, Eichmann had depended on others to simultaneously guide and soothe his conscience. He had refused to think and judge for himself, and was thus resigned to "thoughtlessness." Arendt noted, "[a]s Eichmann told it, the most potent factor in the soothing of his own conscience was the simple fact that he could see no one, no one at all, who was actually against the Final Solution."[67] This 'consensus' was all he needed to feel absolved of any guilt he may have otherwise experienced, and allowed him to 'wash his hands' of the matter.

Having observed Eichmann's surrender of conscience and suspension of judgement, Arendt felt compelled to give a name to this "phenomenon which stared one in the face at the trial."[68] While still in Jerusalem, she confessed in a letter to Blücher that "I don't understand it yet, but it seems to me that the penny will drop at some point, probably in my lap."[69] Her ultimate answer to these complexities came in the idea encapsulated by the book's subtitle, 'the banality of evil'. This phrase, as mentioned previously, did not appear in the original *New Yorker* articles, and in the book was only mentioned once in the final sentence of Chapter Fifteen. It was not expanded upon nor explained.[70] All that Arendt had written was, upon describing Eichmann's conduct in the final moments of his life, that "[i]t was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us—the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*."[71]

In the postscript to the 1965 edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, in which she addressed the controversy her work had provoked, Arendt elaborated on what she had meant by the phrase:

> When I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on the strictly factual level…. Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth, and nothing would have been further from his mind than to determine with Richard III "to prove a villain." Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. And this diligence in itself was in no way criminal; he certainly wouldn't have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post. He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*…. He was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness—something by

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[66] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 125. For more on the moral importance of independent judgement, see, for example, Vasterling, 'Plural Perspectives and Independence,' pp. 259-260.
[67] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 116.
[68] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 287.
[69] Arendt to Blücher, 20 April 1961, in Kohler (ed.), *Within Four Walls*, p. 357.
[70] See Baer, 'The De-Demonization of Evil'; and Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 314, n. 43.
[71] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 252. Emphasis in original.

> no means identical with stupidity—that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period. And if this is 'banal' and even funny, if with the best will in the world one cannot extract any diabolical or demonic profundity from Eichmann, that is still far from calling it commonplace.[72]

By labelling Eichmann 'banal', Arendt was not attempting to mitigate his criminality or deny the very real suffering of his victims. In many ways, such an assessment was more damning than simply portraying Eichmann as a crazed ideologue or sadistic monster, as such characterisations can complicate the issues of agency and responsibility.[73] Instead, Arendt pointed to the choices which he did have, and emphasised that he *could* have behaved differently and *should* have done so. Eichmann, for Arendt, exemplified the terrible outcomes which can result from a failure of thought and judgement—and a failure of empathy.

Eichmann in Jerusalem thus presented a radically different characterisation of a Nazi perpetrator to that which generally prevailed at the time the book first appeared. According to Arendt, to be a perpetrator of atrocity one did not have to be demonic, sadistic or in some other way perverted, nor even a fanatic devotee of the 'cause' for which the atrocity was committed. Perpetrators could be 'ordinary', and their evil actions did not necessarily indicate a self-conscious and celebratory dedication to an evil agenda.[74] As with any thesis which radically challenges the status quo, Arendt's ideas about Eichmann and perpetrators more generally were bound to provoke debate. The strength of the ensuing controversy, however, remains remarkable, and provides many insights into the moral concerns which accompany historians' engagement with the perpetrators of atrocity.

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Writing in 1979, historian Walter Laqueur declared that "[f]ew books in living memory have stirred up more bitter controversy than Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*."[75] As we saw in the previous chapter, the response to the book was infused with personal venom and intense fervour, with scholarly 'objectivity' often getting lost amidst passionate denunciations of Arendt, her reasoning, and her morality. The response to

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[72] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), pp. 287-288.
[73] On this point, see, for example, J. Kohn, 'Introduction,' in H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. J. Kohn, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, pp. xv-xvi.
[74] Indeed, some years after *Eichmann in Jerusalem* first appeared, Arendt suggested that "[t]he sad truth of the matter is that most evil is done by people who never made up their minds to be either bad or good." See H. Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations' (1971), in H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. J. Kohn, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, p. 180.
[75] W. Laqueur, 'Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem: The Controversy Revisited' (1979), in L. H. Legters (ed.), *Western Society After the Holocaust*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1983, p. 107. For a similar view, see, for example, Cohen, 'A Generation's Response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' p. 253.

Eichmann in Jerusalem was not confined to a single issue, but rather naturally addressed the same three subjects which Arendt had dealt with at length in the text itself—Eichmann's conscience and character, the behaviour of the victims, and the nature and conduct of the trial. While her views about the actions of the Jews during the Holocaust, particularly the *Judenräte*, can account for much of the controversy surrounding the book, Arendt's portrayal of Eichmann was also subject to harsh and extensive criticism.

Regardless of whether the critics were attacking Arendt's views about the victims or the perpetrators, it is clear that at the heart of the debate were important moral concerns, something which its participants were certainly aware of. For example, the editor of *Partisan Review*, which emerged as an important forum for discussion of the book, noted that "[c]learly what is involved is not only the validity of Miss Arendt's argument, but the whole question of political and moral responsibility—a question that Miss Arendt is not afraid to pursue to unpopular conclusions."[76]

Before considering the reactions to Arendt's portrayal of Eichmann, it is worth noting some general contours of the controversy. The debate about the book began with its initial publication in May 1963, and raged for about three years, producing a remarkable volume of response. Geographically speaking, it largely played out in the United States and Great Britain, with New York proving to be a particular hotbed of activity. In terms of the media in which *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was being critiqued and discussed, articles featured in newspapers, magazines and academic journals, and several polemical pamphlets were distributed. One book-length response also appeared within two years of its initial publication.[77] Additionally, several public meetings were held devoted to discussing the folly of Arendt's ideas.[78] The debate over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was therefore not a strictly

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[76] Editor's Note, *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1963. This note immediately preceded Lionel Abel's polemic against *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which launched discussion of the book within the periodical. See L. Abel, 'The Aesthetics of Evil: Hannah Arendt on Eichmann and the Jews,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1963, pp. 211-230.

[77] See J. Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight: The Eichmann Trial, the Jewish Catastrophe, and Hannah Arendt's Narrative*, New York, Macmillan, 1965.

[78] These public forums took place in both America and England, such as the 'Jewish Forum—Answering Hannah Arendt', organised by the British division of the World Jewish Congress, which was held in London on 29 October 1963. A news report published a few days later records that the book was described as "wicked" and "offensive and revolting" at the meeting. See 'Hannah Arendt's Book Attacked,' *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 November 1963. Among the most heated of these meetings was the one organised by *Dissent* and held in New York. Irving Howe, one of the organisers of the forum, recalled the scene in his memoirs: "Hundreds of people crowded into the hall where Lionel Abel and Marie Syrkin, a veteran Labor Zionist writer, spoke against Arendt's thesis, while Raul Hilberg, an authoritative scholar of the Holocaust, and Daniel Bell spoke more or less for her. We had asked Hannah herself to come, but she did not answer our letter. The meeting was hectic, with frequent interruptions: Abel furiously pounded the table; Alfred Kazin intervened nervously at the last moment to defend Arendt; Vladka Meed, a heroic survivor of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, passionately attacked Arendt's views in Yiddish…. Sometimes outrageous, the meeting was also urgent and afire." See I. Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,

'academic' matter, but instead had a very strong presence in far more public forums. It represents the first occasion when the Holocaust and the ongoing questions surrounding it had commanded such a degree of public attention, particularly in the United States.[79]

In addition to these general observations about when, where and how the controversy played out, there are two key factors which featured in almost all the critical discourse about the book. First, as outlined previously, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* has been seen, both in 1963 and more recently, to suffer from distinct problems of tone. Almost all of Arendt's critics made some mention of the tenor of her language, and it seems that the manner in which she advanced her arguments was, for many commentators, more problematic than the arguments themselves.[80] In addition to the inappropriate and grave insensitivity which many felt Arendt brought to her discussions of the victims, other critics found cause for complaint about more general aspects of the book's tone. Reflecting on the debate some twenty years later, one participant noted that "[w]hat struck one in reading *Eichmann in Jerusalem*—struck like a blow—was the surging contempt with which she treated almost everyone and everything connected with the trial."[81] Others declared Arendt "unbearably arrogant";[82] decried her "flippant," "splenetic" and "pretentious" rhetoric;[83] and attacked "the sheer nastiness of tone."[84]

As a result, one journalist believed that the storm which engulfed Arendt "is partly her own fault. She judges Germans, Jews, Israelis over-censoriously: now she is herself judged over-censoriously in turn."[85] This view has been echoed in the work of current critics, such as philosopher Richard Bernstein, who writes that "I believe Arendt herself bears some of the responsibility for how her book was read (and even misread), and why it caused so much pain and anger."[86] Overall, these arguments about the general tone of

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1982, p. 274. Hilberg also recalled the evening in his own memoirs, albeit with more anger and bitterness than Howe. See R. Hilberg, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian*, Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 1996, pp. 152-154. In addition to these meetings, Amos Elon, in the introduction to the 2006 Penguin edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, claimed that "[t]he Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith sent out a circular, urging rabbis throughout America to denounce Arendt from the pulpit on Jewish high holidays," and "[a] group of lecturers—some flown in from Israel and England—toured the country decrying Arendt as a 'self-hating Jew,' the 'Rosa Luxemburg of Nothingness.'" See Elon, 'Introduction,' pp. xix and xx respectively.

[79] On this point, see, for example, Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 144.

[80] As Laqueur, reflecting on the controversy in 1979, noted, "Hannah Arendt was mainly attacked not for *what* she said, but for *how* she said it." See Laqueur, 'Re-Reading Hannah Arendt,' p. 77. Emphasis in original.

[81] Howe, *A Margin of Hope*, p. 271.

[82] H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'How Innocent Was Eichmann?,' *The Times*, 13 October 1963. For a similar charge of "extraordinary arrogance," see M. B. Margolies, 'No Light Cast on Darkest Era,' *The Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, 6 September 1963, p. 7. See also J. A. Wechsler, 'Re Eichmann,' *New York Post*, 30 July 1963, p. 22.

[83] W. Laqueur, 'The Shortcomings of Hannah Arendt,' *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 October 1963, p. 27.

[84] D. Boroff, 'Eichmann and Miss Arendt,' *New York Post Sunday Magazine*, 21 July 1963, p. 13. For other reviews which take issue with Arendt's tone, see, for example, 'Literary *Cause Célèbre*,' *Economist*, 9 November 1963.

[85] C. Welch, 'Eichmann and the Jews,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1963.

[86] Bernstein, 'Evil, Thinking, and Judging,' p. 159.

Eichmann in Jerusalem demonstrate how fraught the moral concerns regarding language and representation have been—and remain—when confronting the history of atrocity.[87]

The second general feature of the debate over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* were attacks upon Arendt's scholarship and 'objectivity'. While Arendt's credentials as a historian and her historical reasoning have also been drawn into question by more recent critics,[88] her contemporaries were fierce and unrelenting in their condemnation. Perhaps the most forceful of these was the legal scholar Jacob Robinson, who later wrote an entire book devoted to undermining Arendt's theses.[89] "Her book," Robinson declared in his original 1963 review, "is a mine of misinformation, generalities, distortions, half-truths, suppressions of evidence running against her thesis, and flatly contradictory statements on numerous points discussed."[90]

For many critics, at the centre of Arendt's poor scholarship was what they perceived as her lack of 'objectivity'. The attacks against Arendt's conceptualisation of the trial and her views regarding its management by the state of Israel, particularly the roles of Ben-Gurion and Hausner, are particularly illustrative on this point. As noted earlier, Arendt was highly critical of the proceedings in Jerusalem and devoted a good part of her book to pointing out its various failings. For her critics, however, this attitude was simply an indication of her biased and unscholarly approach, making it impossible to take any of her arguments seriously. An anonymous critic for the *Economist* noted this effect of reading the book, suggesting that "[i]t is a bad-tempered book, a book that begins badly by displaying an anti-Israel spleen…. One's teeth are set on edge, continually, by Dr. Arendt's obvious bitterness towards Zionism, which she equates almost with Nazism."[91] Marie Syrkin, a particularly vocal critic of Arendt, deplored the "polemical vulgarity" of the book's views on Israel and the author's false "air of Olympian detachment," noting that "[a]ll-too human

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[87] For more on the issue of the representation of past atrocity, see Chapter Four, 'Depicting Atrocity: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the Goldhagen Debate,' pp. 119-151.
[88] For such suggestions by recent critics, see, for example, G. Cotkin, 'Illuminating Evil: Hannah Arendt and Moral History,' *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, pp. 464, 484-485.
[89] See Robinson, *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight*, *passim*. It was unclear how successful Robinson proved to be in his attempt to discredit Arendt's arguments, with most critics believing he had not achieved this objective. See, for example, C. Bermant, 'Author and Critic,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 19 December 1965; G. Lewy, 'Flowers of Evil, or Just Weeds?,' *Book Week*, 24 October 1965, pp. 2-3, 10, 12; and W. Laqueur, 'Footnotes to the Holocaust,' *The New York Review of Books*, 12 November 1965, pp. 20-22. For a positive review of Robinson's book, see G. Ezorsky, 'Hannah Arendt Answered,' *Jewish Frontier*, March 1966, pp. 7-11. Ezorsky had earlier proved a fierce critic of Arendt, which may go some way towards explaining her support for Robinson's refutation. See G. Ezorsky, 'Hannah Arendt Against the Facts,' *New Politics*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1963, pp. 53-73.
[90] J. Robinson, 'Miss Arendt's Eichmann,' *Hadassah Magazine*, June 1963.
[91] 'Literary *Cause Célèbre*'.

bias and brash manipulation of the evidence are more tolerable when offered less ostentatiously as oracular pronouncements."[92]

There is, of course, an undeniable political hue to much of the discussion of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Clearly offended by Arendt's views about subjects such as Israel and Zionism, there is a certain irony in many of these accusations of 'bias' against her. Nonetheless, the fact that such matters did cloud the debate about the book is unsurprising. As historian Hugh Trevor-Roper noted in his review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, "[s]ince Miss Arendt herself is Jewish, a former Zionist now an anti-Zionist, this looks uncommonly like the indecent zeal of a convert against her former friends, and we can understand the bitterness it has aroused."[93] It is important to recognise that throughout the course of the debate there were genuine questions being raised regarding Zionism and the legitimacy and actions of the state of Israel, but a detailed discussion of these subjects is clearly beyond the scope of the present study. For the purposes of this chapter, what is most relevant about the attention which critics devoted to Arendt's discussion of these matters is that it enabled them, however ironically, to attack and draw into question her impartiality, objectivity, and scholarly credentials.

The response to Arendt's characterisation of Eichmann cannot be fully understood without some recourse to the reaction to her observations about the Jews and the *Judenräte*. As we saw in the previous chapter, some of the most heated confrontations over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* were concerned with her arguments about the victims. She was attacked for desecrating the memory of the dead, accused of being an anti-Semite and a "self-hating Jewess," and for being utterly devoid of human sympathy and feeling.[94] The sympathetic and understanding attitude which many felt Arendt should have brought to her discussion of the victims was, they believed, mistakenly applied to Eichmann. The result, one reviewer believed, was that Eichmann "comes off so much better in her book than do his victims."[95]

Clearly, Arendt had failed to achieve an empathetic identification with the members of the *Judenräte*, which remains a troubling element of her narrative. Many critics, however, felt her identification with the accused had been far too successful, and misread her attitude towards him as one of sympathy. For example, one commentator believed that "of all the

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[92] M. Syrkin, 'Miss Arendt Surveys the Holocaust,' *Jewish Frontier*, May 1963, pp. 3-22. For more of Syrkin's criticisms of Arendt and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, see M. Syrkin, 'Hannah Arendt: The Clothes of the Empress,' *Dissent*, Autumn 1963, pp. 344-352. Syrkin was also a speaker at the impassioned forum organised by *Dissent*. See above, pp. 105-106, n. 78.

[93] Trevor-Roper, 'How Innocent Was Eichmann?'. For his part, in the same review Trevor-Roper also declared the book to be "deeply biased."

[94] See Chapter Two, 'Writing About Victims: Lessons from Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt,' pp. 57-59.

[95] Abel, 'The Aesthetics of Evil,' p. 219.

people she writes of, Eichmann…is the only human being with whom she sympathizes."[96] While Arendt's more astute critics recognised the absurdity of such a claim, they nonetheless believed that the understanding which she brought to her analysis of Eichmann did not feature in her discussion of the victims. For example, one commentator argued of the book that "[w]hat cannot be forgiven is her approach," namely "the willingness to understand Eichmann's real and imaginary dilemmas—but not the terrible predicaments and conflicts faced by Eichmann's victims."[97] A similar point was made in a review which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, where the author asked, "[w]hy is it that the fairness of mind she displays, almost ostentatiously, towards Eichmann and his associates apparently deserts her when she comes to deal with the leaders of the European Jews?"[98]

While concerned with the manner in which Arendt had approached her subject, critics also took issue with the actual verdict she reached. Her conclusion that Eichmann was 'ordinary' was, as we have seen, a fundamentally different interpretation to the current understandings of who, or what, a Nazi perpetrator was. The reactions to Arendt's characterisation of Eichmann are testament to the strength of this prevailing view, and provides some insight into how radical a challenge the 'ordinary' thesis actually was at this time. Many critics, it seems, were unable to accept that Eichmann could be anything other than a monster, and that believing otherwise would mean cheapening the suffering of the victims and mitigating his guilt. As one positive reviewer of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* observed, "to be the victims of demons and monsters is more meaningful than to be the victims of ordinary, respectable little men."[99]

Such an understanding is reflected in the views of Arendt's critics, who predictably rallied against her attempt at 'de-demonisation'. One deplored her "incredible trick of humanizing Eichmann," a view echoed by another commentator who believed that "the

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[96] J. Prinz, 'A Reply to Hannah Arendt,' *The Jewish News*, 12 July 1963, p. 19. For similar claims of Arendt's 'sympathy' or 'pity' for Eichmann, see, for example, M. A. Musmanno, 'Did the 6,000,000 Kill Themselves?,' *National Jewish Monthly*, September 1963, p. 54; T. Weiss Rosmarin, 'Self-Hating Jewess Writes Pro-Eichmann Series for *New Yorker* Magazine,' *Tx Jewish News*, 18 April 1963; and S. B. Unsdorfer, 'Jewish Resistance Under the Nazis,' *Jewish Tribune* (London), 18 October 1963, p. 2.

[97] Laqueur, 'The Shortcomings of Hannah Arendt,' p. 27.

[98] 'Judges in Israel: The Case of Adolf Eichmann,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30 April 1964, p. 367. For similar arguments, see, for example, H. I. Bach, 'A Historian's Hindsight,' *The Synagogue Review*, November 1963, p. 68; and Welch, 'Eichmann and the Jews'.

[99] M. Hamburger, Review of H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *Strand Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1964, p. 42. A similar view was echoed by another favourable reviewer, Ernest van den Haag, who noted that "[l]ife would be simpler if only monsters committed monstrous acts; and much safer; there are, after all, few monsters around—by definition. The trouble is that Eichmann was a rather ordinary man. There are lots of ordinary men around and, given the circumstances, they would have acted as Eichmann did." See E. van den Haag, 'Crimes Against Humanity,' *National Review*, 27 August 1963, p. 154. See also D. McDonald, 'More on Eichmann,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1964, p. 265; and N. Fruchter, 'Arendt's Eichmann and Jewish Identity,' *Studies on the Left*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1965, pp. 33-35.

author has achieved the miracle of humanizing Eichmann, the mass-murderer who is not a monster," noting that Arendt had simultaneously "dehumanized" the victims.[100] Across the Atlantic, one British critic felt it "surely perverse to portray him as a conscientious little bureaucrat who went wrong because he unimaginatively obeyed the orders of his superiors."[101] Meanwhile, Justice Michael Musmanno, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, passionately inveighed against Arendt's arguments about the victims, also took issue with her view that Eichmann was 'ordinary'. Musmanno emphatically declared that "Adolf Eichmann must stand out as the very antithesis of ordinariness," and ultimately concluded on the matter, "[n]o word can be found to mitigate the totality of his guilt, even though Hannah Arendt tries hard to do so."[102] For these critics, it seems, the monstrous nature of the crimes demanded to find their counterpart in the personality and character of the man who had been instrumental in their commission.[103] By holding this view, and focusing entirely on the suffering of his victims, they were unable to—and presumably had no interest in—achieving an empathetic engagement with Eichmann.

Somewhat surprisingly, the phrase for which the book would come to be best known, 'the banality of evil', did not attract a great deal of attention from critics when it was first published. In the postscript to the paperback edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt herself indicated that she had anticipated an "authentic controversy" to result from it.[104] However, those who did engage with the notion of the 'banality of evil' seemed to take it literally—so that 'banal' indicated 'trite', 'commonplace' or 'hackneyed'—and thus accused Arendt of characterising the suffering of those who had experienced this evil firsthand with these terms.[105]

While definitely dominated by Arendt's detractors, the debate surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem* does contain some supportive voices. Anticipating the praise which would later be more common, these commentators recognised the value in Arendt's dismantling of the demonic characterisation by which perpetrators of atrocities like the Holocaust were understood. As one such supporter recognised, "Dr. Arendt's de-

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[100] See Prinz, 'A Reply to Hannah Arendt,' p. 19; and Syrkin, 'The Clothes of the Empress,' p. 348 respectively.
[101] R. H. S. Crossman, 'The Case Against Arendt,' *The Observer Weekend Review*, 13 October 1963.
[102] Musmanno, 'Did the 6,000,000 Kill Themselves?,' p. 54.
[103] Arendt's close friend Mary McCarthy touched on this point in an essay she wrote defending both the book and its author from their many critics. She wrote, "[t[he difficulty many people experienced in thinking about the Eichmann trial was to 'make the punishment fit the crime.' The desire of [Lionel] Abel and other critics is to make the *criminal* fit the crime." See M. McCarthy, 'The Hue and Cry,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1964, p. 89. Emphasis in original.
[104] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 287.
[105] See, for example, M. U. Schappes, 'The Strange World of Hannah Arendt,' *Jewish Currents*, July-August 1963, p. 33.

mythologization and de-demonologization of Nazi evil is not only true, but salutary, liberating and instructive."[106] Another reviewer noted that her arguments, while challenging, were nonetheless extremely important, claiming that "[i]f we really want to know the whole story of that terrible decade in which humanity broke down, we shall have to listen to more than the nursery tale that it is only the Eichmanns who must bear the guilt."[107] Other supporters believed that Arendt had demonstrated an admirable morality, such as *The New Yorker* editor Shawn who characterised the book as a "quiet, moral, rational document,"[108] or her close friend McCarthy, who declared that "[t]o me, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* despite all the horrors in it, was morally exhilarating."[109] Nearly all of Arendt's defenders appeared dismayed by the ferocity of the controversy surrounding the book, and believed it to be the result of misunderstanding and misreading, or a conscious refusal to heed an uncomfortable conclusion. As one supporter noted, "bearers of unwelcome messages are usually denied, as are the messages they bear."[110]

Arendt, for her part, remained largely silent as the debate raged around her. She published only a handful of letters in reply to some of her more vociferous critics, and the postscript to the 1965 edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* remains perhaps her most lengthy response to what had unfolded.[111] Her attitude, it seems, was that the impassioned

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[106] Hamburger, Review of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 41.

[107] H. Zeisel, Review of H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *The Annals of the American Academy*, vol. 353, 1964, p. 198. See also H. Altschull, 'Transcript: Eichmann-Nazis II,' *Perspective*, King Broadcasting Co., Seattle, 30 July 1963, Hannah Arendt Papers, Adolf Eichmann File 1938-1968 -- Reviews -- *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Arendt -- United States -- Miscellaneous -- Favorable -- 1963 (2 of 3 folders), Item 9, Image 25; and D. Boroff, 'A Report on the Banality of Evil,' *American Judaism*, Fall 1963, p. 20.

[108] Shawn, 'Talk of the Town'.

[109] McCarthy, 'The Hue and Cry,' p. 91.

[110] Van Den Haag, 'Crimes Against Humanity,' p. 154. For other positive reviews and expressions of support for Arendt, see, for example, B. Bettelheim, 'Eichmann; the System; the Victims,' *The New Republic*, 15 June 1963, pp. 23-33; and McDonald, 'More on Eichmann,' pp. 262-269. For a more cautious defence of Arendt, see D. Bell, 'The Alphabet of Justice: Reflections on *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' *Partisan Review*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1963, pp. 417-429. See also L. Baritz, 'Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: The Respectability of Mass Murders,' *Chicago News*, 18 May 1963; F. S. Burin, Review of H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1964, pp. 122-125; E. T. Gargan, 'The Lessons of Eichmann,' *Continuum*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1966, pp. 388-398; G. Lichtheim, 'The Eichmann Question,' *The New York Review of Books*, 26 September 1963, pp. 6-9; A. E. Mayhew, 'The Lesson of the "Normal Man" Who Helped Kill Millions,' *Commonweal*, 12 July 1963, pp. 429-420; H. Morgenthau, Review of H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, *Chicago Tribune*, 26 May 1963; G. J. Munster, 'Eichmann's Crime,' *Nation*, 11 January 1964, pp. 20-22; E. V. Rostow, 'The Uses and Misuses of Justice: Do Laws Apply to So Great an Evil?,' *New York Herald Tribune*, Books Section, 19 May 1963, pp. 1, 7; E. Samuel, 'One for Six Million,' *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1963, pp. 25-26; J. Suhl, 'Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann,"' *Contemporary Issues*, no. 48, 1964, pp. 9-12; and M. Warner, 'The Banality of Eichmann,' *Cambridge Review*, 19 October 1963.

[111] Arendt did reply to Musmanno's original May 1963 review in *The New York Times Book Review*, and also to Laqueur's later review of Robinson's *And the Crooked Shall Be Made Straight*, which can also be read as her reply to Robinson more generally. See H. Arendt, 'A Statement from Miss Arendt,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 23 June 1963, p. 4; and '"The Formidable Dr. Robinson": A Reply,' *The New York Review of Books*, 20 January 1966, pp. 26-30. Arendt also touched on the controversy in some of her later essays and lectures. See, for example, H. Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship' (1964) and 'Thinking and Moral Considerations' (1971), both in H. Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. J. Kohn, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, pp. 17-48 and pp. 159-189 respectively.

controversy was actually concerned with "a book which was never written," and her limited public commentary displays a measured yet almost dismissive tone towards the fracas her work had provoked.[112] Arendt's private correspondence, however, provides some indication of the toll which the *Eichmann* debate inflicted upon her, such as the following letter to Jaspers dated 20 October 1963:

> There's hardly anything I can do, at any rate nothing that would be effective…. I feel I am not up to this struggle. It isn't just a question of nerves and also not just that the coincidence of this business with my worries about Heinrich are simply paralyzing me. I'm incapable of presenting myself in public because my revulsion at this ruckus overwhelms everything else in me.[113]

A month earlier, Arendt had written to McCarthy expressing similar concerns, noting that "I can no longer trust myself to keep my head and not explode. What a risky business to tell the truth on a factual level without theoretical and scholarly embroidery."[114]

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As with most controversies, the heat surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem* eventually cooled, even if the viciousness with which the combatants had fought was never entirely forgiven or forgotten. In terms of its lasting effects and long-term impact, the debate over the book brought a hitherto unmatched level of public interest and attention to the Holocaust, particularly in the United States, and Arendt's ideas shaped the manner in which perpetrators of atrocity would be conceptualised and understood for decades to come. As outlined previously, the fortunes of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* shifted dramatically with the passing of time, and the 'afterlife' of both the book and Arendt's ideas provides an interesting insight into shifts and trends within Holocaust historiography, particularly of attitudes towards the perpetrators.

The notion of "timing,"[115] as we saw in the previous chapter, is important for understanding both the initial reaction to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the subsequent change in the reception of Arendt's ideas. In 1963, Holocaust historiography was in its very tentative beginning phases. Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, today widely recognised as the first full-scale study of these events, had only appeared two years earlier. In terms of public discourse, the Holocaust was also somewhat on the periphery, and

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[112] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 283.
[113] Letter 336, Arendt to Jaspers, 20 October 1963, in Kohler and Saner (eds.), *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, p. 523. Heinrich, Arendt's husband, had been unwell at the time the *Eichmann* controversy was raging.
[114] Arendt to McCarthy, 16 September 1963, in Brightman (ed.), *Between Friends*, p. 146.
[115] Rabinbach, 'Eichmann in New York,' p. 103.

experienced nothing like its current degree of public attention.[116] If anything, the furore surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was what actually helped to facilitate this awareness; as one recent commentator has noted, "[t]he Eichmann controversy—in part because of the trial itself—was a watershed in the public uses and public acceptance of discussion of Holocaust memory."[117]

Chapter Two outlined how Hilberg and Arendt's arguments about the victims of the Holocaust upset prevailing notions of how this group should best be approached and conceptualised. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* went one step further by also radically disputing the established orthodoxies about the perpetrators. Norman Podhoretz, one of Arendt's fiercest critics, noted how her book challenged the consensus:

> [I]n the place of the monstrous Nazi, she gives us the 'banal' Nazi; in the place of the Jew as virtuous martyr, she gives us the Jew as accomplice in evil; and in place of the confrontation between guilt and innocence she gives us the 'collaboration' of criminal and victim.[118]

With such dramatic revisions of the existing understandings of the Holocaust, it seems that a fierce controversy over Arendt's arguments was inevitable.

Both the trial in Jerusalem and the later response to Arendt's work proved influential for the development of Holocaust historiography in other ways. Scholars have emphasised the significance of the testimony provided by survivors who served as defence witnesses during Eichmann's trial, as it represented the first time they had either the opportunity or the inclination to discuss such traumatic private memories in a very public forum.[119] This same silence, however, also seems to have affected those Jewish communities which had been far removed from the arenas in which the 'Final Solution' had unfolded. Irving Howe, a member of the New York intellectual circles which played

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[116] See Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 103-112. See also Baer, 'The De-Demonization of Evil'; Cohen, 'A Generation's Response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' p. 256; A. Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2001, pp. 4-10; and P. Novick, 'Holocaust Memory in America,' in J. E. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, Munich and New York, Prestel-Verlag, 1994, p. 161.

[117] Rabinbach, 'Eichmann in New York,' p. 103. For more on the importance of Eichmann's trial in this regard, see, for example, Bilsky and others, 'Forum,' pp. 265-268; Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, pp. 11-12; and S. J. Whitfield, '*The Deputy*: History, Morality, Art,' *Modern Judaism*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2010, p. 155.

[118] N. Podhoretz, 'Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: A Study in the Perversity of Brilliance,' *Commentary*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1963, p. 201. A later critic has offered a more balanced assessment of how Arendt's ideas challenged this prevailing consensus, noting that in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, "Eichmann and the Nazis were studied as human beings who performed mass murder; their Jewish victims were also human beings, not saints, and they figured in history not simply as passive entities but as significant characters who affected their own process of history." See Cohen, 'Breaking the Code,' p. 83.

[119] See, for example, Bilsky and others, 'Forum,' p. 273; T. Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 52, 274; and Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, pp. 13-14. For a recent counterview, which challenges the notion of widespread silence and instead emphasises the various efforts of discussion and commemoration by American Jews in the immediate postwar period, see H. R. Diner, *We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, New York, New York University Press, 2009.

such a critical role in *Eichmann* controversy, reflected some years later on why he and his colleagues had been particularly distressed by the book's arguments:

> Many of us were still reeling from the delayed impact of the Holocaust. The more we tried to think about it, the less we could make of it. Now we were being told by the brilliant Hannah Arendt that Adolf Eichmann, far from being the 'moral monster' the Israeli prosecutor had called him, should really be seen as a tiresome, boring, trivial little fellow, the merest passive cog in the machine of death that had so efficiently shipped the Jews to the gas chambers. This Eichmann, she said, was a cog impelled more by bureaucratic routine than ideological venom.[120]

Howe went on to suggest that "[a]s it seems to me now, the excesses of speech and feeling this controversy had as one cause a sense of guilt concerning the Jewish tragedy, a guilt pervasive, unmanageable, yet seldom allowed to reach daylight."[121] From this view, it is clear that the debate over the book was not merely about scholarship alone, but formed part of a broader process of publicly coming to terms with a traumatic past.

Indeed, the very public forum in which the *Eichmann* controversy played out is equally important as the 'timing'. What had hitherto largely been confined to the private sphere of survivors became something which circulated throughout the mass media, being debated and discussed in articles, essays and open forums. This extensive public discussion surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem* concerned many of Arendt's critics, with some questioning the appropriateness of having articles about the Holocaust appearing in a magazine like *The New Yorker*. A typically cutting insight was provided by Laqueur, who, reflecting on the controversy some fifteen years later, summarised the crux of the problem:

> Some critics were shocked by the medium chosen by Mrs Arendt [sic]—a witty weekly, entertaining, frivolous, intellectually pretentious and quite unserious. An investigation into mass murder set out among Peter Arno's cartoons, the advertisements for Cadillacs and Oldsmobiles, Beefeater gin and holidays in Bermuda—a little bit of Holocaust, a little bit of Tiffany and Saks Fifth Avenue—it was quite a remarkable mixture.[122]

In addition to this questioning of the suitability of *The New Yorker* for addressing such serious subject matter, others were concerned about the audience of Arendt's writing and their ability to adequately comprehend the complexities and magnitude of the events she covered. For example, Howe noted that "[t]hese articles reached a mass audience almost certainly unequipped to judge them critically," claiming to be concerned by "the social meaning, the objective consequences, of their appearance in the *New Yorker*."[123]

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[120] Howe, *A Margin of Hope*, pp. 271-272.
[121] Howe, *A Margin of Hope*, p. 274. For another autobiography of a protagonist in the *Eichmann* controversy, see L. Abel, *The Intellectual Follies: A Memoir of the Literary Venture in New York and Paris*, New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 1984.
[122] Laqueur, 'Re-Reading Hannah Arendt,' p. 74.
[123] I. Howe, 'The *New Yorker* and Hannah Arendt,' *Commentary*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1963, p. 319.

Nonetheless, as we saw in the previous chapter with regard to discourses about the victims, while the contemporary intellectual and social climate can help explain immediate reactions to a text, it cannot account for its ongoing significance. For *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, it is, as several commentators have pointed out, the notion of 'the banality of evil' which has been the cause of the ongoing interest in the book and Arendt's ideas. Indeed, one historian has argued that "the concept of the banality of evil now constitutes a career in itself, both in the realm of public debate and in the confines of academic disciplines."[124] The phrase continues to surface in various facets of public reportage and commentary, from the evening news through to the fictional fantasy world of the *Harry Potter* series.[125] There are, however, some critics who bemoan this ubiquitousness of 'the banality of evil'. Journalist Ron Rosenbaum, for example, has fiercely rejected it as "a bankrupt phrase, a subprime phrase, a Dr. Phil-level phrase masquerading as a profound contrarianism," and "the most overused, misused, abused pseudo-intellectual phrase in our language."[126]

In the years after the *Eichmann* controversy, Arendt's notions of 'ordinary' perpetrators and 'the banality of evil', as well as the findings of Stanley Milgram and other psychologists regarding the power of obedience to authority in inducing ordinary people to transgress their own moral norms, gained considerable currency amongst scholars of the Holocaust.[127] The influence of these ideas was so great that Cesarani has argued they "straitjacketed research into Nazi Germany and the persecution of the Jews for two decades."[128] More recently, however, the focus of this historiography has shifted towards more personal studies of the perpetrators, and a new emphasis has been placed upon ideology as a key determining factor for their behaviour, cutting across the 'banality' thesis.[129] Additionally, scholars have come to question whether Arendt misread Eichmann's

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[124] D. Diner, 'Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative,' trans. R. Bashaw, *New German Critique*, no. 71, 1997, p. 177.

[125] See J. Sanchez, 'Eichmann in Hogwarts,' *Reason Online*, November 2003, http://reason.com/archives/2003/11/01/eichmann-in-hogwarts, accessed 1 June 2010. For an argument that over time 'the banality of evil' has become a catchphrase used indiscriminately across a variety of contexts, see N. Apostol, 'Arendt in Jerusalem: A History of the "Banality of Evil,"' unpublished Honours thesis, University of Western Australia, 2006.

[126] Rosenbaum, 'The Evil of Banality'. For another critical engagement with Arendt's concept, see S. Miller, 'A Note on the Banality of Evil,' *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1998, pp. 54-59.

[127] For examples of this psychology, see C. Haney, W. Banks and P. Zimbardo, 'Interpersonal Dynamics of a Simulated Prison,' *International Journal of Criminology and Penology*, vol. 1, 1973, pp. 69-97; and S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, New York, Harper and Row, 1974.

[128] Cesarani, *Eichmann*, p. 15.

[129] See Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 4-5, 355-356. The pioneering and, perhaps, most important of these personal studies of the perpetrators, which nonetheless endorses many of Milgram and Arendt's arguments, is Browning's *Ordinary Men*. For a counterview, which emphasises the importance of ideology in explaining the actions of the perpetrators, see D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York, Knopf, 1996. The important differences between these approaches, and between these two

true nature when she characterised him as 'banal', even if they find value in her general arguments to this effect.[130] Nonetheless, even with these more recent shifts in Holocaust scholarship, Arendt's ideas and particularly her notion of the 'banality of evil' have proved highly influential for conceptualising and making sense of the Nazi system and at least some of its executors. For a book which was almost completely rejected at the time it first appeared, its ultimate influence remains remarkable.

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Arendt's arguments in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the original controversy they produced, and the changing perceptions which have since occurred are testament to the dynamism of 'perpetrator discourse' within Holocaust historiography. We saw in the previous chapter how the permissible moral narratives surrounding Holocaust victims have remained largely static, with the 'rules' established in the earliest debates about the subject not altering significantly with the passage of time. By contrast, the terms of the discussion about the perpetrators have undergone dramatic change, beginning with the initial furore over *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

As has been emphasised to this point, in the early 1960s Holocaust perpetrators were generally characterised as monstrous, sadistic, or in some other way perverted, while Arendt's view was radically different. It was this discrepancy which helped spark the ensuing debate over her work, as Bernstein has argued:

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particular texts, are taken up in Chapter Four, 'Depicting Atrocity: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the Goldhagen Debate,' pp. 134-137.

[130] Browning, for example, has argued on this point that "I consider Arendt's concept of the 'banality of evil' a very important insight for understanding many of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, but not Eichmann himself. Arendt was fooled by Eichmann's strategy of self-representation in part because there were so many perpetrators of the kind he was pretending to be." See Browning, 'Perpetrator Testimony,' pp. 3-4. See also, for example, P. Baehr, 'Banality and Cleverness: *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Revisited,' in R. Berkowtiz, J. Katz and T. Keenan (eds.), *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2010, p. 139; Bernstein, 'Is Evil Banal?,' p. 133; Bilsky and others, 'Forum,' pp. 275-278; Cesarani, *Eichmann*, pp. 4, 356; Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, pp. 66-67; and P. Schotten, 'Hannah Arendt's Eichmann Reconsidered,' *Modern Age*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2007, p. 139. A more direct counterview to Arendt's 'banal' Eichmann, which instead emphasises the importance of his ideology for explaining his actions, comes from the recent study by Yaacov Lozowick. He argues, "[a]s I dug deeper, I grew more and more uncomfortable with Arendt's explanations. *The more I came to know these bureaucrats, the less familiar they became.* I realized that this was a group of people completely aware of what they were doing, people with high ideological motivation, people of initiative and dexterity who contributed far beyond what was necessary. And there could be no doubt about it: they clearly understood that their deeds were *not* positive except in the value system of the Third Reich. They hated Jews and thought that getting rid of them would be to Germany's good. They knew that not everyone thought this way, and they deliberately hid information that might have deterred others from cooperating. While most of them sat behind desks rather than behind machine guns, from time to time some were called on to face flesh and blood Jews and decide their fate, and this they did, ferociously, without batting an eyelid." See Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats*, pp. 8-9. Emphasis in original. For a similar view which emphasises the energy and devotion which Eichmann and his fellow bureaucrats brought to their murderous task, see H. Safrian, *Eichmann's Men*, trans. U. Stargardt, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

> I believe that one of the fundamental reasons why *Eichmann in Jerusalem* stirred up so much controversy is because Arendt challenges our most entrenched (and comforting) ways of thinking about good and evil when we claim that perpetrators of evil deeds *must* be vicious sadistic monsters.[131]

By stripping away the demonic and emphasising the ordinary and even 'banal' characteristics of those who commit atrocities, Arendt was advancing a fundamentally moral point. At the time of her original writing, however, such an emphasis was equated with a mitigation of guilt. As one commentator has suggested, "for many observers, Arendt's discussion of the banality of evil confused and obscured issues of blame, responsibility, and evil."[132] Nonetheless, it is apparent that many historians and other scholars have come to accept that questions of culpability are actually confused by insistence on an individual's demonic character.[133] A discomforting moral lesson instead emerges from the notion of 'ordinary' people committing atrocities, neatly summarised by Browning in his 1992 study of a particular group of Holocaust perpetrators: "[i]f the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 can become killers under such circumstances, which group of men cannot?"[134]

Overall, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* remains a testament to the importance of an empathetic engagement with the history of atrocity, both of its victims and its perpetrators. While it is seemingly easy to "climb into his skin and walk around in it"[135] with regard to a victim, it is clearly a complicated—and controversial—approach to adopt towards the latter, and the dilemmas of empathy present perhaps the greatest moral challenge for historians who wish to adequately comprehend and explain the actions of those responsible for terrible atrocities. However challenging, it is nonetheless a fundamental and necessary element of addressing the perpetrators. Without empathy, we are left with crude demonisation, which only obfuscates our understanding of atrocity and reinforces the simplistic view so vigorously defended by Arendt's critics.

Despite its manifest importance, however, adequately achieving a true empathetic identification with such subjects remains fraught with difficulty. Arendt, for her part, failed

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[131] Bernstein, 'Is Evil Banal?,' p. 134. See also Cohen, 'Breaking the Code,' pp. 42-43.
[132] Sharpe, *Modesty and Arrogance in Judgment*, p. 68.
[133] See, for example, N. G. Finkelstein, 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Crazy" Thesis: A Critique of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*' (1997), in N. G. Finkelstein and R. B. Birn (eds.), *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1998, p. 13; H. Friedlander, Review of D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, *German Studies Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, p. 580; J. D. Noakes, 'No Ordinary People,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 June 1996, pp. 9-10; A. Shatz, 'Browning's Version: A Mild-Mannered Historian's Quest to Understand the Perpetrators of the Holocaust,' *Lingua Franca*, February 1997, p. 57; and F. Stern, 'The Goldhagen Controversy: One Nation, One People, One Theory?,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 6, 1996, p. 136.
[134] Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 189.
[135] H. Lee, *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1960), London, Mandarin Paperbacks, 1997, p. 33.

in achieving this identification with Eichmann. In rejecting the prevailing demonisation of Nazi perpetrators and concluding that he was 'ordinary', she seemingly leant towards an empathetic understanding of her subject. Her approach in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, however, might best be described as 'pseudoempathy'. She did not identify with Eichmann, and maintained a certain distance heavily laced with contempt and condescension. He had not been evil or demonic; he, like many other 'ordinary' people, had simply been "thoughtless." As we have seen, this extrapolation of Eichmann's mindset to humanity more generally featured heavily in Arendt's arguments, including her observation that the "German society of eighty million people had been shielded against reality and factuality by exactly the same…self-deception, lies, and stupidity that had now become ingrained in Eichmann's mentality."[136] What she did not do, however, was place herself into this analysis, and recognise the potential for thoughtlessness or even 'stupidity' within herself. Her 'empathy' thus remained highly didactic—Eichmann and others like him could be 'ordinary', yet seemingly Arendt did not believe this 'ordinariness' applied to herself.

While she failed to adequately achieve it herself, however, the nature of Arendt's arguments in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* nonetheless encouraged an empathetic engagement from 'ordinary' readers by suggesting that people like Eichmann were not dissimilar to themselves. Additionally, as we have seen, the book helped precipitate a shift towards more nuanced characterisations of the perpetrators. Arendt's belief that the perpetrators of the Holocaust could be 'ordinary' people clearly paved the way for the work of scholars such as Browning and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in the 1990s. While Goldhagen's work provoked a torrid debate, the controversy had little to do with his claim that the perpetrator subjects of his narrative were 'ordinary'. This lack of concern becomes even more significant when one considers that Browning and Goldhagen applied the tag of 'ordinary' not to so-called 'desk murderers' like Eichmann who were far removed from the physical reality of the Final Solution, but to those men who had been on the frontline of the killing and actually pulled the triggers.

Furthermore, the challenge of empathy was explicitly taken up by Browning in *Ordinary Men*, with considerably more success than Arendt. In a feature published in 1997, journalist Adam Shatz quoted one historian's recollection of his reaction on first hearing Browning's arguments, fearing that "anything that smelled of empathy with the perpetrators would be taboo because of the moral imperative of writing from the perspective of the victims."[137] The critical reception of *Ordinary Men*, however, suggested otherwise. The book was variously described as "welcome and thought-provoking

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[136] Arendt, *Eichmann* (2006 ed.), p. 52.
[137] Peter Novick, quoted in Shatz, 'Browning's Version,' p. 57.

reading,"[138] as "finely focused and stunningly powerful,"[139] and "skilfully organized, gracefully written and judiciously argued."[140] Additionally, Browning's use of empathy was explicitly praised. One critic declared the book to be "[a] meticulous study of a microcosm of murder, made all the more powerful because it is written with some effort at empathy and understanding."[141] Attitudes towards these issues had clearly evolved over the thirty years since *Eichmann in Jerusalem* first appeared. While Arendt had been attacked for "humanizing" Eichmann, Browning was now being applauded for achieving precisely this outcome.

The extent of this evolution became apparent with the academic community's almost total rejection of Goldhagen's portrayal of perpetrators and Germans more generally in his 1996 study *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. At first glance, Goldhagen seemed to be promising an empathetic engagement with his subjects. In the introduction to the book, he excoriated previous scholars for failing to adequately recognise the humanity of the perpetrators, noting that "[t]he explanations treat them as if they had been people lacking a moral sense, lacking the ability to make decisions and take stances. They do not conceive of the actors as human agents, as people with wills."[142] To correct this failure, he believed that "[w]e must attempt the difficult enterprise of imagining ourselves in their places, performing their deeds, acting as they did, viewing what they beheld."[143] Such assertions were soon qualified, however, by Goldhagen's rejection of what he viewed as a commonly held belief that "Germans [of the Nazi era] were more or less like us." Instead, he argued a better strategy would be to "approach Germany as an anthropologist would the world of a people about whom little is known."[144] As a result, Goldhagen's 'empathy' was in fact a crude demonization of both the perpetrators and of the German nation at large. He repeatedly emphasized the alterity of his subjects and refused any identification with them. Despite his claims to be restoring "the humanity of the perpetrators" in his account, his descriptions and characterizations of his subjects worked to render them a distinct and distant 'other'.[145]

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[138] R. Breitman, Review of C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 5, 1993, p. 1638.
[139] W. Reich, 'The Men Who Pulled The Triggers,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 12 April 1992.
[140] H. A. Turner, Review of C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 67, no. 1, 1995, p. 240.
[141] F. Stern, Review of C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 4, 1992, p. 209.
[142] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 13.
[143] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 21.
[144] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 27, 28.
[145] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 392. For critical comment on this point, see, for example, D. LaCapra, 'Perpetrators and Victims: The Goldhagen Debate and Beyond,' in *idem.*, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 119.

While the following chapter will explore *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the so-called 'Goldhagen Debate' in greater detail, for our purposes here it is vital to note how critics deplored Goldhagen's one-dimensional demonisation of "the Germans" as being counter-productive to understanding their actions and motivations.[146] Furthermore, in making such claims about Goldhagen's characterisation of the perpetrators, scholars made unfavourable comparisons with Browning's more empathetic engagement. For example, one critic noted, "in the place of Browning's ordinary men, persons discomfittingly similar to ourselves, we meet Goldhagen's ordinary Germans, persons of…radically alien and perverted beliefs."[147] Similarly, in declaring *Hitler's Willing Executioners* a "failure," another commentator argued that "Browning offers a far more subtle and more nuanced portrait of 'ordinary' participants in the Holocaust."[148] It appeared far greater support existed for Browning's empathetic approach than for Goldhagen's demonisation in terms of their usefulness for the ongoing effort to make sense of perpetrator behaviour and motivation, which is itself further testament to the shift in attitudes towards characterisations of such people. Goldhagen's simplistic and one-dimensional presentation would most likely have caused little debate amongst those who more than thirty years earlier had attacked Arendt's portrayal of the 'ordinary' and 'thoughtless' Eichmann. It seems that historians are now willing to meet the perpetrators on different terms.

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[146] See Chapter Four, 'Depicting Atrocity: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the Goldhagen Debate,' pp. 119-151. For examples of historians' and other scholars' objections to Goldhagen's portrayal of the perpetrators and Germans more generally, see O. Bartov, 'Ordinary Monsters: *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen,' *The New Republic*, 29 April 1996, pp. 32-38; R. A. Berman, 'An Imagined Community: Germany According to Goldhagen,' *The German Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1998, pp. 63-67; G. Eley, 'Ordinary Germans, Nazism, and Judeocide,' in G. Eley (ed.), *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 1-31; R. Gellately, Review of D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no. 1, 1997, pp. 187-191; A. J. Groth, 'Demonizing the Germans: Goldhagen and Gellately on Nazism,' *The Political Science Reviewer*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2003, pp. 118-158; I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (1985), London, Arnold, 2000, pp. 253, 258; F. H. Littell, 'Introduction: Hype and the Holocaust,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, pp. ix-xi; M. Mazower, 'Fighting Demonization With Demonization,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1996, pp. 73-75; and J. Neusner, 'Hype, Hysteria, and Hate the Hun: The Latest Pseudo-Scholarship From Harvard,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, pp. 147-157.

[147] L. Douglas, 'The Goldhagen Riddle,' *Commonweal*, 9 May 1997, p. 20. Similarly, one historian noted that "[a]lthough Browning's book draws on only some of the material explored by Goldhagen, it is to my mind more penetrating, more subtle, and more interesting both methodologically and morally." See I. Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 1998, p. 140.

[148] R. Kunath, 'Book Review: *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review*, vol. 5, no. 2 1997, http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-2/kunath.html, accessed 3 February 2009. For other unfavourable comparisons of Goldhagen's work to Browning's, see, for example, R. Hilberg, 'The Goldhagen Phenomenon,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1997, pp. 721-722; and Shatz, 'Browning's Version,' pp. 48-57. Browning, for his part, astutely noted of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that "[n]ot once as I read the 600 pages did it occur to me to ask the question of the perpetrators: 'what would I have done in their place?'" See C. R. Browning, 'Daniel Goldhagen's Willing Executioners,' *History and Memory*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1996, p. 99.

Empathy therefore remains the most pressing moral dilemma—and moral obligation—for historians wishing to understand the perpetrators of atrocity. As the differing receptions of Browning's 'ordinary men' and Goldhagen's 'ordinary Germans' revealed, an empathetic engagement is no longer considered taboo in historical narratives of perpetrators, marking a dramatic shift of opinion from when *Eichmann in Jerusalem* first appeared. This shift is undeniably a positive development in the historiography, and represents a profitable moral and scholarly direction for future study of atrocity. Understanding, it is worth repeating, is not forgiving. While this suggestion is seemingly self-evident, it is clear some resistance to the point lingers in both scholarly and more public contexts.[149] The psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, himself a survivor of the Nazis' concentration camps, reflected on these dilemmas:

> I restricted myself to trying to understand the psychology of the prisoners and I shied away from trying to understand the psychology of the SS—because of the ever-present danger that understanding fully may come close to forgiving. I believe there are acts so vile that our task is to reject and prevent them, not to try to understand them empathetically.[150]

However, a true empathetic engagement actually offers considerable opportunity for rejecting and preventing vile acts. Empathy is not equivalent to sympathy. For historians, a choice always exists between negative or positive identification with the object of their empathy. In recognising that such acts are not the reserve of the perverted and sadistic, but that the potential for such behaviour exists within ourselves as perfectly 'ordinary' people, we arrive at what has often been stressed as the greatest 'lesson' to draw from the

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[149] Recent popular culture productions have shifted towards more empathetic representations of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, which has been accompanied by considerable debate and discussion regarding the morality of humanising such figures. Two recent films, *Der Untergang* (2004) and *The Reader* (2008) provide examples of this phenomenon. For comment on *Der Untergang*, see, for example, A. Eckardt, 'Film Showing Hitler's Soft Side Stirs Controversy: *The Downfall* Aims to Portray Three-Dimensional German Leader,' *NBC Online*, 16 September 2004, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6019248/from/RL.1/, accessed 25 August 2010; and I. Kershaw, 'The Human Hitler,' *The Guardian*, 17 September 2004. On *The Reader*, see, for example, M. Dargis, 'Innocence is Lost in Postwar Germany,' *The New York Times*, 10 December 2008; and R. Rosenbaum, 'Don't Give an Oscar to *The Reader*,' *Slate Magazine*, 9 February 2009, http://www.slate.com/id/2210804/pagenum/2, accessed 25 August 2010. In terms of scholarly discussion of this issue, it is interesting how those studies of perpetrators which seek to engage empathetically with their subjects nearly always contain a 'disclaimer' of sorts which defends this approach and argues that understanding or explaining certain behaviours does not necessarily result in condoning them. For example, the social psychologist James Waller, whose 2002 study *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* outlined several psychological explanations for this phenomenon, argued in his preface that "[t]o offer a psychological explanation for the atrocities committed by perpetrators is not to forgive, justify, or condone their behaviors. Instead, the explanation simply allows us to understand the conditions under which many of us could be transformed into killing machines." See J. Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. xiv. For a similar defence, see, for example, R. J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York, Basic Books, 1986, pp. xi-xii; and E. Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. xiii-xiv. This tendency also features in biographies of classically 'evil' figures—the preface to the first volume of Ian Kershaw's *Hitler*, for example, contains similar sentiments. See I. Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris 1889-1936*, London, Arnold, 1998, p. xxi.

[150] B. Bettelheim, 'Their Speciality Was Murder,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 5 October 1986, p. 1.

experience of the Holocaust and other atrocities, and can go some way towards our ongoing efforts at commemoration and education.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the idea of critically judging the victims of atrocity has long been rejected as morally inappropriate. For the perpetrators, however, the impulses at work are clearly different. Judgement and condemnation is expected, if not demanded, from those who engage with them. As with the victims, the ultimate question of judging the perpetrators concerns *how* one proceeds to do so—either with empathy, or without it. It seems difficult to argue that a true moral engagement with the perpetrators of atrocity can occur without some degree of empathetic identification. Clearly, it is a challenging task when confronted with those whose actions or ideology that one deems abhorrent. Nonetheless, adequately coming to terms with the moral enormity of past atrocity demands that historians try.

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The present and preceding chapters have considered two works which have proved highly influential for the development of Holocaust historiography. As we have seen, discussion of Hilberg's and Arendt's work has never really ceased, and the impact of these debates continues to be felt in the present. In particular, what might be termed the 'moral effects' of their work seem enduringly relevant. Reflecting on the *Eichmann* controversy, one recent commentator has noted that, in responding to Arendt, "critics presented the Holocaust in archetypal terms: the Nazis were monsters, the Jews powerless martyrs."[151] The same rings true for much of the critical response to *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Clearly, the arguments of both Hilberg and Arendt challenged this prevailing "archetypal" understanding of these events. However, in rejecting the accepted modes of representation and understanding for the perpetrators and the victims, they revealed—unwittingly or otherwise—the powerful moral complexities of an atrocity such as the Holocaust, and how much of it resists straightforward comprehension. It is 'easy' to understand why monsters commit monstrous deeds, and why the powerless do not act in the face of their impending destruction. It is considerably less easy to make sense of 'banal' or 'ordinary' perpetrators, or the actions of some members of the *Judenräte* and other 'compromised' victims.

At the forefront of what was then only the tentative beginnings of Holocaust historiography, Arendt and Hilberg thus bequeathed a legacy of moral complexity to their successors which has persisted well into the present. Early on it was established that the

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[151] Cohen, 'A Generation's Response to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,' p. 276. For a similar view, see, for example, Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 141.

history of atrocity could not be reduced to simple tales of a confrontation between demons and saints. The 'morals' of these stories are considerably more challenging and ambiguous. The search for these 'lessons', and the process of coming to terms with these particular pasts, continues.

Chapter Four

Depicting Atrocity:
Hitler's Willing Executioners and the Goldhagen Debate

The critical response to both *The Destruction of the European Jews* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* demonstrated that questions of representation—be it of 'passive' or 'compromised' victims, and 'banal' or 'demonic' perpetrators—have formed an important part of the debate concerning historians' moral engagement with past atrocity. This chapter explores these dynamics of depiction more closely through an examination of one of the most controversial books of recent Holocaust historiography, namely Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. We encountered Goldhagen and *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in the previous chapter, where the implications of his lack of empathy and ensuing demonisation of his perpetrator subjects was discussed. There were, however, several additional problems of representation raised by the book. In particular, it was Goldhagen's decision to employ graphic 'thick' description of the torture and murder of Jews in his narrative which troubled many of his critics.[1] The debate was further complicated by the extreme discrepancy between the scholarly and public receptions of the book. As Goldhagen himself would later recognise, "*Hitler's Willing Executioners* unwittingly provoked a moral uproar, and a moral subtext continually enveloped—and partially derailed—the extensive written and verbal discussion around the book."[2] Indeed, the debate generated by the depiction of both 'the Germans' and extreme depravity and horror in the book raise several important questions regarding the moral concerns and choices historians face in writing about atrocity. This chapter considers what they reveal for our ongoing efforts to represent these particular pasts in a manner which meets the demands of both historiography and morality.

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* Along with some protagonists in the other historiographical 'case studies' which make up this project, the perspective of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen on the events and issues discussed in this chapter was sought by the author. He declined, however, to be interviewed.

[1] Goldhagen explained this decision for such descriptions in the introduction to *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as part of a broader desire "to reveal something of the perpetrators' backgrounds, to convey the character and quality of their lives as genocidal killers, to bring to life their *Lebenswelt*. What *exactly* did they do when they were killing? What did they do during their time as members of institutions of killing, while they were not undertaking killing operations? Until a great deal is known about the details of their actions and lives, neither they nor the perpetration of their crimes can be understood. The unearthing of the perpetrators' lives, the presentation of a 'thick', rather than the customary paper-thin, description of their actions, as important and necessary as it is for its own sake, lays the foundation for the main task of this book's consideration of them, namely to explain their actions." See D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), New York, Knopf, 2002, p. 7.

[2] D. J. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*, London, Little, Brown, 2002, p. 4.

The 1996 publication of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* has been described by several commentators as an "event" in Holocaust historiography.[3] Based on Goldhagen's Harvard doctoral dissertation, the book advanced several controversial arguments concerning the motivations of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, that character of 'ordinary' Germans and the nature of anti-Semitism, producing a torrid debate that raged for several years following its initial publication. Despite the publisher's claim that the book was "[a] work of the utmost originality and importance—as authoritative as it is explosive—that radically transforms our understanding of the Holocaust and of Germany during the Nazi period,"[4] the academic community was almost unanimous in its rejection of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, and in its condemnation of Goldhagen's methods, arguments and conclusions. Stanley Hoffman, a political scientist and one of Goldhagen's dissertation supervisors, admitted that the book "was bound to provoke strong reactions," but claimed to be surprised by "the degree of hostility and the amount of vituperation it has elicited from other scholars of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany."[5] Beneath this "hostility" and "vituperation," important moral questions were being contested which hold great significance for history writing about atrocity.

The basic claims of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* are well known and have been exhaustively discussed. For Goldhagen, "Germans' antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust," which was itself "a German national project."[6] He provided the following summary of his overall argument regarding what had motivated the perpetrators:

> The conclusion of this book is that antisemitism moved many thousands of 'ordinary' Germans—and would have moved millions more, had they been appropriately positioned—to slaughter Jews. Not economic hardship, not the coercive means of a totalitarian state, not social psychological pressure, not invariable psychological propensities, but ideas about Jews that were pervasive in Germany and had been for decades, induced ordinary Germans to kill unarmed, defenseless Jewish men, women, and children by the thousands, systematically and without pity.[7]

For Goldhagen, this anti-Semitism was "eliminationist" and ultimately "exterminationist" in nature, characterised by "the belief that Jewish influence, by nature destructive, must be

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[3] See, for example, R. B. Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1997, p. 195; G. Eley, 'Ordinary Germans, Nazism, and Judeocide,' in G. Eley (ed.), *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory and Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 3; and M. Mazower, 'Fighting Demonization With Demonization,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1996, p. 73.

[4] This text is taken from the front flap of the dust jacket of the 2002 hardback edition of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

[5] S. Hoffman, Review of N. G. Finkelstein and R. B. Birn, *A Nation On Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 4, 1998, p. 128.

[6] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 9, 11 respectively.

[7] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 9.

eliminated irrevocably from society."[8] Such beliefs, however, were not limited to the Nazi leadership, organisations like the SS, and those who had carried out the physical task of genocide. According to Goldhagen, "eliminationist" anti-Semitism was "an almost universally held conceptualization" in Germany before and during the Nazi period; it was "the common property of ordinary Germans."[9]

Like Christopher Browning in his groundbreaking 1992 study *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Goldhagen agreed that Holocaust perpetrators could be characterised as 'ordinary'. For the latter, however, they were 'ordinary' *Germans*, motivated by the pervasive power of "eliminationist" anti-Semitism. Goldhagen's arguments about the perpetrators were built upon three case studies: the activities of the members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland, Jewish work camps in the Polish District of Lublin, and the death march of female inmates from the Helmbrechts concentration camp during the last weeks of the war. From his analysis, Goldhagen concluded that "the overall character of the members' [of the police battalions and camp staff] actions can, indeed must be, generalized to *the German people in general*. What these *ordinary* Germans did also could have been expected of other *ordinary* Germans."[10] The logical inference of Goldhagen's argument is that practically all 'ordinary' Germans during the Nazi period were genocidal killers-in-waiting.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his simplistic and monocausal arguments, Goldhagen found an enthusiastic public audience and *Hitler's Willing Executioners* became an international bestseller.[11] Somewhat surprisingly, given the nature of his arguments, one of the places where Goldhagen was best received was Germany, where his book tour in September 1996 attracted sell-out crowds and commanded a national television audience.[12] This positive reception in Germany culminated with Goldhagen being awarded the prestigious Democracy Prize from the *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* in March 1997. In his laudatory remarks at the presentation of the award, the philosopher Jürgen

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[8] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 48, 428 respectively.
[9] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 48, 448 respectively.
[10] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 402, 454 respectively. Emphasis in original.
[11] *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was, as Omer Bartov has recognised, the first academic book about the Holocaust to achieve this bestseller status. See O. Bartov, 'Germans as Nazis: Goldhagen's Holocaust and the World,' in *idem*., *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 139.
[12] For comment on Goldhagen's book tour and his reception, see, for example, M. Ash, 'American and German Perspectives on the Goldhagen Debate: History, Identity and the Media,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1997, p. 396; R. E. Herzstein, 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Ordinary Germans": A Heretic and His Critics,' *Journal of the Historical Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2002, pp. 115-116; and I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (1985), London, Arnold, 2000, p. 253.

Habermas thanked Goldhagen for providing "a new stimulus to a reflection about the proper public use of history."[13]

The success of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in the public sphere came in spite of a near unanimous rejection of Goldhagen's theses and methods by the academic community. The majority of these critiques were not simply minor criticisms of Goldhagen's work, but outright condemnation. Historians variously disparaged *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as "not deserv[ing] consideration as an academic inquiry,"[14] "a diatribe in academic format,"[15] and "polemical and pretentious."[16] Raul Hilberg, by now the doyen of Holocaust studies, perhaps best summarised the general academic attitude when he deemed Goldhagen to be "totally wrong about everything. Totally wrong. Exceptionally wrong."[17]

This marked discrepancy between the public and scholarly reception of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is only one example of the highly unusual nature of what has come to be known as the 'Goldhagen Debate.' From the outset, it exhibited features that differed from those of most academic controversies.[18] First, the circumstances surrounding the text itself were extremely uncommon, namely a book based on a doctoral dissertation becoming an international bestseller and the untenured academic who wrote it achieving celebrity

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[13] J. Habermas, 'Goldhagen and the Public Use of History: Why a Democracy Prize for Daniel Goldhagen?,' trans. M. Pensky, in R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 264. The public and scholarly reception of Goldhagen and *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Germany is a fascinating element of the Goldhagen Debate, as well as an interesting example of the ongoing process in Germany of coming to terms with and adequately addressing the Nazi past. Due to space constraints, however, it cannot be fully discussed in the current analysis. For examples of German contributions to the debate, see J. Heil and R. Erb (eds.), *Geschichtswissenschaft und Öffenlichkeit. Der Streit um Daniel J. Goldhagen*, Frankfurt, Fischer TB Verlag, 1998; J. H. Schoeps (ed.), *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, Hamburg, Hoffman und Campe, 1996; and R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, which bring together a good selection of material from the German debate about *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. For comment on the German reception of Goldhagen, see, for example, Ash, 'American and German Perspectives on the Goldhagen Debate,' pp. 396-411; P. E. Bergmann, 'Daniel Goldhagen in Germany: An Exploration in German Historiography,' *Historical Reflections*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2000, pp. 141-159; A. Elon, 'The Antagonist as Liberator,' *The New York Times*, 26 January 1997, p. 40; J. Joffe, 'Goldhagen in Germany,' *The New York Review of Books*, 28 November 1996, pp. 18-21; F. Kautz, *The German Historians:* Hitler's Willing Executioners *and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen*, Montreal, Black Rose Books, 2003; B. Rieger, '"Daniel in the Lion's Den?": The German Debate About Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' *History Workshop Journal*, no. 43, 1997, pp. 226-233; and M. Zank, 'Goldhagen in Germany: Historian's Nightmare and Popular Hero,' *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1998, pp. 231-240.

[14] N. G. Finkelstein, 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Crazy" Thesis: A Critique of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' in N. G. Finkelstein and R. B. Birn (eds.), *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1998, p. 87.

[15] F. H. Littell, 'Introduction: Hype and the Holocaust,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. ix.

[16] F. Stern, 'The Goldhagen Controversy: One Nation, One People, One Theory,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 6, 1996, p. 138.

[17] R. Hilberg, 'Is There A New Anti-Semitism? A Conversation With Raul Hilberg,' *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, 2007, http://www.logosjournal.com/issue_6.1-2/hilberg.htm, accessed 3 September 2007.

[18] Herzstein, 'A Heretic and His Critics,' p. 90.

status.[19] Additionally, the volume of discourse generated by the book was remarkable. It encompassed not only individual critiques and reviews, but also online forums and entire books devoted to discussing Goldhagen's ideas. A special televised symposium was held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April 1996, and Goldhagen made numerous media appearances in both Germany and America. The interest in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was so extensive that several critics were soon pointing to a "Goldhagen phenomenon."[20]

Still more unusual than the volume was the tone and overall nature of the debate. It was frequently emotive, aggressive and personal, and the tenuous civility that governs most academic disagreements was repeatedly breached. As one observer wryly noted of this discourse, "[n]o reader of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and these volumes documenting and analyzing the Goldhagen controversy can emerge unwearied from the often shrill rhetoric employed by Goldhagen, his critics and his defenders."[21] Despite the barrage of disapproval from the academic community, Goldhagen steadfastly maintained his position and aggressively defended it in a series of replies to his critics.[22] These conflicts reached their zenith when Goldhagen threatened fellow scholar Ruth Bettina Birn with legal action following her initial critique of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, and was then implicated in attempts to prevent the publication of the volume *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, which reprinted hostile essays from Birn and historian Norman Finkelstein.[23] Clearly, the debate moved far beyond the initial scope of the book, and in

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[19] See R. J. Evans, 'Anti-Semitism: Ordinary Germans and the "Longest Hatred,"' in *idem.*, *Rereading German History 1800-1996: From Unification to Reunification*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 150; H. Hirsch, 'Daniel Goldhagen and the "Straw Man": A Contemporary Tale of Selective Interpretation,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. 121; Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 255; and R. C. Kunath, 'Reflections on the Goldhagen Controversy,' *The Psychohistory Review*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1998-1999, p. 84.

[20] See, for example, Bartov, 'Germans as Nazis,' p. 139; Finkelstein, 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Crazy" Thesis,' p. 4; R. Hilberg, 'The Goldhagen Phenomenon,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1997, *passim*; and K. Kwiet, '*Hitler's Willing Executioners* and "Ordinary Germans": Some Comments on Goldhagen's Ideas,' *Jewish Studies at the Central European University: Public Lectures, 1996-1999*, http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/01_kwiet.pdf, accessed 3 September 2007.

[21] Kunath, 'Reflections on the Goldhagen Controversy,' p. 93.

[22] See, for example, D. J. Goldhagen, 'Presentation on *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' in *The "Willing Executioners"/"Ordinary Men" Debate* (1996), Washington, D.C., United States Holocaust Research Institute, 2001, pp. 1-13; D. J. Goldhagen, 'Motives, Causes and Alibis: A Reply to My Critics,' *The New Republic*, 23 December 1996, pp. 37-45; and D. J. Goldhagen, 'Germans versus the Critics,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 1, 1997, pp. 163-166. For comment on Goldhagen's various responses to his critics, see Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' pp. 172-175.

[23] On these conflicts and threats of legal action, see, for example, C. Glass, 'Hitler's (Un)willing Executioners,' *New Statesman*, 23 January 1998, pp. 24-26; N. G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitations of Jewish Suffering*, New York, Verso, 2000, pp. 65-67; T. Segev, 'Tom Segev in *Ha'aretz*: Opinion Feature by Tom Segev, Historian and Journalist,' *Ha'aretz*, 15 May 1998, viewed at *The Official Website of Norman G. Finkelstein*, http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=2&ar=3, accessed 3 September 2007; J. Vanke, 'The Isolation of Daniel Goldhagen: A Response to Robert Herzstein,' *The Journal of the Historical Society*, vol. 11, nos. 3-4, 2002, p. 453; and D. Vidal, 'Holocaust Book Sparks Fresh Controversy: From *Mein Kampf* to Auschwitz,' trans. B. Smerin, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 18 August 1998, viewed at *The Official Website of Norman G. Finkelstein*, http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=2&ar=4, accessed

doing so revealed much about the state of Holocaust historiography, and historians' beliefs about how they should approach this past. As several commentators pointed out, the debate proved to be far more significant—and more interesting—than the book itself.[24]

Despite the intense interest accorded the book, many critics anticipated that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* would quickly disappear from the historiographical landscape into oblivion.[25] While Goldhagen's claim that his study fundamentally altered scholarly understandings and approaches to the Holocaust has proved inaccurate,[26] the impact of the book and the debate it produced nonetheless lingers on some fifteen years after its initial publication. In particular, it is what one might term the 'moral effects' of both *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the ensuing controversy which have endured with this passing of time. As one observer has noted, "Goldhagen took the argument back to the moral level," which represented a dramatic shift in scholarly focus and, as a result, continues to provoke reaction and comment.[27]

Indeed, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is itself a profoundly moral book, strongly infused with anger, passion and purpose. While Goldhagen would repeatedly claim that "[i]t is a work of historical explanation, not of moral evaluation,"[28] it is impossible to ignore

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3 September 2007. For Birn and Finkelstein's original critiques of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, see Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust,' pp. 195-215; and N. G. Finkelstein, 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Crazy" Thesis: A Critique of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' *New Left Review*, no. 224, July/August 1997, pp. 39-87. For Goldhagen's reply to Birn, see D. J. Goldhagen, 'The Fictions of Ruth Bettina Birn,' *German Politics and Society*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1997, pp. 119-165. While Goldhagen did not respond directly to Finkelstein's initial review, he did publish a response to *A Nation on Trial*. See D. J. Goldhagen, 'The New Discourse of Avoidance,' viewed at *International Web Archive*, http://web.archive.org/web/20021204232909/http://www.goldhagen.com/nda0.html, accessed 28 January 2009. For Finkelstein's reply, see N. G. Finkelstein, 'Finkelstein's Response to Goldhagen: Comments on Daniel Goldhagen's "The New Discourse of Avoidance,"' *The Official Website of Norman G. Finkelstein*, http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=2&ar=2, 9 April 1998, accessed 3 September 2007.

[24] See, for example, O. Bartov, 'German Soldiers and the Holocaust: Historiography, Research and Implications,' in O. Bartov (ed.), *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 173; and G. D. Rosenfeld, 'The Controversy That Isn't: The Debate Over Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Comparative Perspective,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1999, p. 273.

[25] For example, Ian Kershaw argued that "Goldhagen's book will, in my view, occupy only a limited place in the unfolding, vast historiography of such a crucially important topic." See Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 258. See also Bartov, 'Germans as Nazis,' pp. 147-148; and S. Friedländer, 'The Extermination of the European Jews in Historiography: Fifty Years Later,' in O. Bartov (ed.), *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 87. For less confident views regarding the ultimate fate of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Holocaust historiography, see, for example, Hilberg, 'The Goldhagen Phenomenon,' pp. 727-728; and Joffe, 'Goldhagen in Germany,' p. 18.

[26] On this point, see, for example, N. Wachsmann, 'After Goldhagen: Recent Work on the Genesis of Nazi Genocide,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1999, p. 479.

[27] Elon, 'The Antagonist as Liberator,' p. 40.

[28] D. J. Goldhagen, 'Foreword to the German Edition,' in *idem.*, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 479. He continued, in a statement which encapsulates much of the traditional attitude within the discipline of history, "[i]t is because the task of this investigation is historical explanation, not moral evaluation, that the issues of guilt and responsibility are never directly addressed. The book explains why and how people thought and acted as they did, not how we should judge them. I did not discuss this mainly because, whatever the moral significance of this book may be, moral evaluation of this sort has no place in the explanatory enterprise. Addressing the moral concerns, I thought, would lead only to confusion about the book's purpose and its conclusions. I also have no particular professional competence for writing about these issues, so I was eager to leave them, on the one hand, to

the strong undercurrent of morality which pervades the entire text, often in terms which directly appealed to the reader. Early in the book, Goldhagen indicated how he wished to position his readers in relation to the subjects of his narrative:

> We must attempt the difficult enterprise of imagining ourselves in their places, performing their deeds, acting as they did, viewing what they beheld. To do so we must always bear in mind the essential nature of their actions as perpetrators: they were killing defenseless men, women, and children, people who were obviously of no martial threat to them, often emaciated and weak, in unmistakable physical and emotional agony, and sometimes begging for their lives or those of their children.[29]

From the beginning, then, Goldhagen clearly sought a moral engagement from his readers by appealing to their sensibilities and encouraging an emotional response. This approach was the most likely source of the book's strong resonance with its public audience, and can go some way towards explaining its popular success.

Unsurprisingly, the implicit moralism of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* translated into the debate surrounding the text, with two different strands of critique emerging in this regard.[30] The first involved criticism of Goldhagen's adoption of an overt moral tone and approach—a predictable outcome, perhaps, in light of the strength of the discipline's traditional ideal of 'objectivity.' The second was much more subtle, whereby critics took issue not with Goldhagen's desire to frame his account in such terms, but with the particular morality he presented.

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those with greater expertise—such as moral philosophers—and, on the other hand, to each reader to judge for himself or herself according to each one's own moral framework." See Goldhagen, 'Foreword to the German Edition,' p. 481. In his next book, *A Moral Reckoning*, Goldhagen reiterated these claims about *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, arguing of the latter that "I presented no explicit moral judgments about culpability and no program of repair." See Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning*, p. 4. These beliefs have been noted by other scholars, such as Richard Kamber who has noted that "[i]n a brief conversation with me, Goldhagen remarked that his account was intended as a history of what happened rather than an analysis of its ethical implications." See R. Kamber, 'Goldhagen and Sartre on Eliminationist Anti-Semitism: False Beliefs and Moral Culpability,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* vol. 13, no. 2, 1999, p. 269, n. 14.

[29] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 21. Goldhagen continued this moral appeal to his readers, arguing that "[w]hen writing or reading about killing operations, it is too easy to become insensitive to the numbers on the page. Ten thousand dead in one place, four hundred in another, fifteen in a third. Each of us should pause and consider that ten thousand deaths meant that Germans killed ten thousand individuals—unarmed men, women and children, the old, the young, the sick—that Germans took a human life ten thousand times. Each of us should ponder what that might have meant for the Germans participating in the slaughter. When a person considers his or her own anguish, abhorrence, or revulsion, his or her own moral outrage at the murder of one person, or of a contemporary 'mass murder' of, say, twenty people—whether by a serial killer, or by a semiautomatic-toting sociopath in a fast food outlet—that person gains some perspective on the reality that these Germans confronted. The Jewish victims were not the 'statistics' that they appear to us on paper. To the killers whom they faced, the Jews were people who were breathing one moment and lying lifeless, often before them, the next. All of this took place independent of military operations." See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 21-22.

[30] An astute observation on the nature of the discourse produced by the 'Goldhagen Debate' is made by Clare Pullen. Pullen recognises that "[b]ecause of the extremity of Goldhagen's theories and writing style, reviewers and critics are pushed beyond the bounds of usual academic discourse. Since Goldhagen's is an argument with little nuance and differentiation, the commentary generated is similarly polarized." See C. Pullen, 'Perpetrators in the Holocaust: The Daniel Goldhagen Debate on Theory and Methodology,' unpublished Honours thesis, University of Western Australia, 2005, p. 9.

In a 1996 review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* published in 1996, one historian indicated why many had found the book's morality to be so problematic:

> It is not chiefly the repetitive and ugly prose with its theoretical jargon and its hammering reiteration of key concepts…. Nor is it the cavalier dismissal of the existing historical literature or the blithe self-assurance of some of Goldhagen's *obiter dicta* which have made fellow-scholars see red. No, there is something more serious here which has to do with the book's indictment of an entire people. Despite the occasional disclaimer, Goldhagen's references to 'ordinary Germans' shade the distinction between the perpetrators and the rest. By the end the reader is left with the unmistakable impression that the case has been made for collective guilt and made, moreover, in terms which cannot help but cast a shadow over Germans today.[31]

As this reviewer makes clear, it was Goldhagen's sweeping generalisations about the German people that largely informed the critics' discontent with his manner of moralising. Other scholars, however, also objected to Goldhagen's decision to furnish his account with graphic descriptions of the torturing and killing of Jews, and accused him of peddling a "pornography of horror."[32] In light of these extensive criticisms of the morality presented in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, it is possible to interpret the 'Goldhagen Debate' as an extended commentary concerning the ethics of representation in writing about past atrocity. This discourse reflects a distinct unease about the close relationship between generalisation and demonisation, and the moral and aesthetic choices which accompany the depiction of extreme depravity and horror. When coupled with the intense public scrutiny and success of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, the Goldhagen Debate has much to teach us about historians' moral engagement with past atrocity.

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As we saw in the previous chapter, empathy is among the most pressing moral concerns that historians face in writing about the perpetrators of atrocity. Achieving such an engagement is a difficult yet necessary element for adequate explanation and understanding. In this regard, Browning's astute observations on this issue in relation to his own work on Reserve Police Battalion 101 ring particularly true:

> The policemen in the battalion who carried out the massacres and deportations, like the much smaller number who refused or evaded, were human beings. I must recognize that in the same situation, I could have been either a killer or an evader—both were human—if I want to understand and explain the behavior of both as best I can…. Not trying to understand the perpetrators in human terms would make impossible not only this study but any history of Holocaust perpetrators that sought to go beyond one-

[31] Mazower, 'Fighting Demonization With Demonization,' p. 75.
[32] M. Bodemann, 'Pornography of Horror?,' *The New York Review of Books*, 10 April 1997, p. 68.

> dimensional caricature. Shortly before his death at the hands of the Nazis, the French Jewish historian Marc Bloch wrote, "When all is said and done, a single word, 'understanding,' is the beacon light of our studies." It is in that spirit that I have tried to write this book.[33]

As this approach suggests, historians have traditionally sought something of a middle ground between representing the horrors of events such as the Holocaust and understanding its perpetrators, while at the same time tempering their moral outrage and attempting to write their account in line with the disciplinary ideal of 'objectivity.'

Goldhagen, as outlined earlier, broke away from this more moderate approach. Despite the author's claims to the contrary, it is difficult to view *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as a 'neutral' or 'objective' work. From the outset, Goldhagen framed his account in highly emotive terms, and urged his readers to morally engage with the subject under discussion. Infused with anger and passion, Goldhagen's moral voice was one which evoked, as one commentator has recognised, "sympathy, pity, and compassion for the victims, and anger and frustration vis-à-vis the killers."[34] At various instances throughout the narrative, this ubiquitous yet largely implicit "anger and frustration" towards the perpetrators exploded into obvious seething rage. For example, after quoting one perpetrator's recollection of his distaste for his *Rottenführer's* methods of murdering children during a killing operation, Goldhagen commented:

> It was not their killing of the children that the German deemed 'brutal,' but only the manner of killing. He could not bear the sight of it. How unseemly. Presumably, if Abraham [the *Rottenführer*] had killed the children by forcing them to lie on the ground and firing into their little heads, then that would have been a 'decent' mode of execution, one which this German could have watched with equanimity.[35]

Clearly, this is not the voice of a neutral, detached observer desiring only to recreate the past 'as it actually happened.' Instead, Goldhagen strongly emphasised the moral enormity of his subject, and wrote in a manner and adopted a tone designed to shock and engage the reader.

An important element of this approach was Goldhagen's use of graphic and detailed descriptions of the killing and torturing of Jews. Early in the book, he explained why he felt such a method was important:

> The proper description of the events under discussion, the re-creation of the phenomenological reality of the killers, is crucial for any explication. For this reason, I eschew the clinical approach and try to convey the horror, the gruesomeness, of the events *for the perpetrators*…. For us to comprehend the perpetrators' phenomenological world, we should describe for ourselves every

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[33] C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992), New York, HarperCollins, 1998, pp. xix-xx.
[34] Bartov, 'Germans as Nazis,' p. 159.
[35] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 401.

> gruesome image they beheld, and every cry of anguish and pain that they heard. The discussion of any killing operation, of any single death, should be replete with such descriptions.[36]

Indeed, one of the major criticisms which Goldhagen made of other Holocaust scholars was what he perceived as their failure to adequately convey the horror and moral enormity of the events they discussed. He argued that "[t]oo many interpreters of this period…discuss the Germans' actions as if they were discussing the commission of mundane acts…. They lose sight of the fundamentally different, extraordinary, and trying character of these acts."[37] For Goldhagen, then, the 'correct,' or 'moral' means of representation could be achieved by conveying the horror of the Holocaust in its extremity, in laying bare the sheer terror experienced by its victims, and in detailing the gruesome scenes which confronted its perpetrators. Although they might have disagreed with his decision to write in such graphic terms, Goldhagen's critics recognised the power it lent to his argument. In a review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, one historian noted that "[a]s one reads certain sections of the book…it becomes difficult to believe anything other than the notion that many Germans did not have to be coerced into killing Jews because they already shared the Nazi regime's anti-Semitism."[38] This point was echoed by Browning, who believed that "the cumulative emotional effect [of the narrative] is overpowering."[39]

These features of the narrative—a tone and approach infused with emotion, passion and anger; the repeated injection of the authorial voice into the text; and an insistence on graphic description—combined to render *Hitler's Willing Executioners* a very reader-centric text, as Goldhagen was able to create a strong moral affinity between himself and his readers. The book, however, addresses itself to a specific and carefully defined audience, a tendency reflected in the notion of a "Model Reader" proposed by the literary theorist Umberto Eco. Eco argued that "[t]o make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader." In practice, this assumption requires "[t]he author…to foresee a model of the possible reader…supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them"[40] Authors develop a clear sense of the identity of their readers, and thus write their texts accordingly.

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[36] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 22. Emphasis in original.
[37] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 21.
[38] R. Gellately, Review of D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no. 1, 1997, p. 187.
[39] C. R. Browning, 'Daniel Goldhagen's Willing Executioners,' *History and Memory*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1996, p. 99. See also Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' p. 167; and A. Grossman, 'The "Goldhagen Effect": Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany,' in G. Eley (ed.), *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 117.
[40] U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1979, p. 7.

Goldhagen assumed a moral commonality with his readers, and appealed throughout his narrative to a sense of shared values and what constituted a violation of them.[41] Such an appeal can be observed in his description of the escorting of Jews to an appointed killing site in the woods surrounding the Polish town of Józefów by the members of Reserve Police Battalion 101:

> The walk into the woods afforded each perpetrator an opportunity for reflection. Walking side by side with his victim, he was able to imbue the human form beside him with the projections of his mind. Some of the Germans, of course, had children walking beside them. It is highly likely that, back in Germany, these men had previously walked through woods with their own children, marching gaily and inquisitively along. With what thoughts and emotions did each of these men march, gazing sidelong at the form of, say, an eight- or twelve-year-old girl, who to the unideologized mind would have looked like any other girl? In these moments, each killer had a personalized, face-to-face relationship to his victim, to his little girl. Did he see a little girl, and ask himself why he was about to kill this little, delicate human being who, if seen as a little girl by him, would normally have received his compassion, protection, and nurturance? Or did he see a Jew, a young one, but a Jew nonetheless? Did he wonder incredulously what could possibly justify his blowing a vulnerable little girl's brains out? Or did he understand the reasonableness of the order, the necessity of nipping the believed-in Jewish blight in the bud?[42]

This questioning was not designed to evoke empathy for the perpetrators, despite Goldhagen's speculations about their thought processes and emotions. Instead, these questions were designed to elicit outrage by appealing to the moral commonality Goldhagen expected from his Model Readers. His use of a little girl in the quoted example is particularly telling in this regard, reflecting a general cultural attitude that deems violence against children to be especially heinous. Eco recognised that "[a] text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader,"[43] and *Hitler's Willing Executioners* aimed to produce readers who unequivocally supported and mirrored the book's sentiments.

In this sense, Goldhagen clearly desired that his readers identified with himself and not with the perpetrators who were ostensibly the subjects of his narrative. Despite his

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[41] The importance of culture and shared understandings in forming the Model Reader is recognised by Eco, who argues that "when a text is produced not for a single addressee but for a community of readers—the author knows that he or she will be interpreted not according to his or her intentions but according to a complex strategy of interactions which also involves the readers, along with their competence in language as a social treasury. I mean by social treasury not only a given language as a set of grammatical rules, but also the whole encyclopedia that the performances of that language have implemented, namely, the cultural conventions that that language has produced and the very history of the previous interpretations of many texts, comprehending the text that the reader is in the course of reading." See U. Eco, 'Between Author and Text,' in S. Collini (ed.), *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 67-68.

[42] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 218.

[43] U. Eco, 'Overinterpreting Texts,' in S. Collini (ed.), *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 64.

claims to be restoring "the humanity of the perpetrators"[44] in his account, Goldhagen's descriptions and characterisations of his subjects worked to render them a distinct and distant 'other', a tendency well-documented by his critics.[45] In an early review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Browning made the astute observation that "[n]ot once as I read the 600 pages did it occur to me to ask the question of the perpetrators: 'what would I have done in their place?'"[46] Such empathy, however, was not a desired characteristic of the book's Model Reader. The "Germans" of Goldhagen's narrative thus always remain other, subjects only to recoil from or be horrified by.

This lack of empathy underpinned the highly problematic morality of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, as it resulted in the demonisation of the book's subjects. More troubling, however, in light of the book's accusatory and provocative tone, was Goldhagen's repeated careless use of terms such as 'the Germans' to describe both the Holocaust and the Nazi regime more generally. The use of such descriptive terms was, as Goldhagen explained, a deliberate choice:

> The first task in restoring the perpetrators to the center of our understanding of the Holocaust is to restore to them their identities…by eschewing convenient, yet often inappropriate or obfuscating labels, like "Nazis" or "SS men," and calling them what they were, "Germans." The most appropriate, indeed the only appropriate *general* name for the Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust is "Germans"…. To be sure, it is sometimes appropriate to use institutional or occupational names or roles and the generic terms "perpetrators" or "killers" to describe the perpetrators, but this must be done only in the understood context that these men and women were Germans first, and SS men, policemen, or camp guards second.[47]

However, the labels "the Germans" or "German" were used throughout the book without restraint or clarification to describe more than the actions of the perpetrators of the

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[44] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 392.

[45] See, for example, Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' pp. 161-162, 173; Gellately, Review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 189; D. LaCapra, 'Perpetrators and Victims: The Goldhagen Debate and Beyond,' in *idem.*, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 119; and J. M. Riemer and A. S. Markovits, 'Willing Executioners: The Goldhagen Controversy,' *Tikkun*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1998, pp. 48-49.

[46] Browning, 'Daniel Goldhagen's Willing Executioners,' p. 99.

[47] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 6-7. Emphasis in original. Later in an endnote, Goldhagen qualified these statements somewhat, noting that "[w]e do not hesitate to refer to the citizens of the United States who fought in Vietnam to achieve the aims of their government as 'Americans,' and for good reason. The reason is just as good in the case of Germans and the Holocaust. The perpetrators were Germans as much as the soldiers in Vietnam were Americans, even if not all people in either country supported their nation's efforts. Customary usage for analogous cases, as well as descriptive accuracy and rectitude, not only permit but also mandate the use of 'Germans' as the term of choice. Moreover, the Jewish victims conceived of the German perpetrators and referred to them overwhelmingly not as Nazis but as Germans. This usage does not mean that all Germans are included when the term 'Germans' is employed (just as the term 'Americans' does not implicate every single American), because some Germans opposed and resisted the Nazis as well as the persecution of the Jews. That they did so does not alter the identity of those who were perpetrators, or what we should properly call them." See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 475-476, n. 5. Unfortunately, this important qualification in an endnote did not find strong reflection in the actual text of the book.

Holocaust. Goldhagen employed these terms to refer to government policy, Nazi ideology and the general populace, to such an extent that it became a hallmark of the narrative. These terms can be found multiple times within single sentences and often more than ten times on a single page.[48] Goldhagen's use of "the Germans" was so unrestrained that one critic described it as "a drumbeat" throughout the book, akin to "the reiterative 'the Jews' in a printed antisemitic assault."[49]

The hitherto quoted excerpts from *Hitler's Willing Executioners* illustrate how Goldhagen employed the terms "German" and "the Germans" to describe the Holocaust and its perpetrators. The following representative example demonstrates how these terms were used in descriptions of other elements of the Nazi regime, in this instance some of the measures taken against Jews during the early years of the Third Reich:

> *The Germans* began to exclude Jews from governmental services one week after the April 1, 1933, boycott, with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 7, and from many of the professions in the ensuing weeks. *The Germans'* exclusion of Jews from the economy proceeded throughout the first years of the regime as the economic health of the country permitted, and then with increased vigor in 1938. On September 22, 1938, *the Germans* removed Jews from the cultural spheres and the press, which many deemed to be especially 'poisoned' by Jews. During the life of the regime, *the Germans* proscribed virtually all aspects of general Jewish intercourse with Germans.[50]

For Goldhagen, Nazism was Germany, and Germans were Nazis.[51] While a more critical reader might discern the problematic nature of these statements, the Model Reader of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* would not feel uncomfortable with such use of language.

Goldhagen's problematic use of "the Germans" was heightened by the lack of clarity and general inaccuracy which accompanied the use of other descriptive terms in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. As a result, it can be difficult to ascertain precisely who or what Goldhagen intended to refer to. For example, he slipped between referring to "the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies" and "the Germans' policies towards the Jews."[52] Similarly, he wrote of

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[48] See, for example, Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 290, 306, 313, 320, 328, 345, 439.

[49] Littell, 'Introduction,' p. ix. Similar criticisms can be found in Y. Bauer, 'Overall Explanations: Daniel J. Goldhagen, John Weiss, Saul Friedländer,' in *idem.*, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 108; Browning, 'Daniel Goldhagen's Willing Executioners,' p. 104; A. J. Groth, 'Demonizing the Germans: Goldhagen and Gellately on Nazism,' *The Political Science Reviewer*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2003, p. 119; H. Locke, 'The Goldhagen Fallacy,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. 26; and K. R. Monroe, Review of D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 91, no. 1, 1997, p. 213.

[50] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 137-138. Emphasis added.

[51] There is, of course, an irony in the implicit racism of Goldhagen's conceptualisation of "the Germans" through his essentialising of one trait of the 'identity' of the perpetrators. For further comment in this vein, see, for example, Groth, 'Demonizing the Germans,' p. 119; and Wehler, 'The Goldhagen Controversy,' p. 85.

[52] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 132, 135 respectively.

"Hitler and his compatriots," and "Hitler and his followers."[53] This practice reached its zenith in sentences such as "[w]hatever the constancy of Hitler's and other leading Nazis' eliminationist *ideals* was, the Germans' anti-Jewish *intentions* and *policy* had three distinct phases" and "[w]ith *Kristallnacht* the Germans made clearer than ever two things that everyone could discern: the Jews had no place in Germany, and the Nazis wanted to spill Jewish blood."[54]

The underlying moral problem, as one critic recognised, was that Goldhagen "treats 'Nazis' and 'Germans' as interchangeable, even though he knows that most Germans were not Party members; similarly, he equates 'Hitler' and 'the Germans.'"[55] This haphazard employment of descriptive labels is confusing, and makes it difficult to pinpoint the specific target of Goldhagen's accusations and condemnation. As a result, it works to blur the lines between perpetrators and bystanders, the guilty and the innocent, and ultimately renders the entire German nation complicit in genocide. "To pass judgment," one commentator has suggested, "means both to identify the crime and the perpetrator."[56] While Goldhagen certainly achieved the former, his identification of the latter lacked precision. Despite his insistence throughout *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that the perpetrators and the German people more generally should not be "caricatured," and his condemnation of other scholars who he thought had done so in their interpretations, Goldhagen ultimately failed to provide an adequate understanding of both groups.[57]

Goldhagen's moral crusade in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* also extended to his assessment of the scholarship of his predecessors and contemporaries. Another unusual feature of the book was the aggressive and dismissive stance adopted towards the work of other Holocaust scholars, an approach which undoubtedly played some role in the "unusually bitter confrontations" which characterised the 'Goldhagen Debate'.[58] Goldhagen disparaged several features of Holocaust historiography, pointing to what he

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[53] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 140, 144 respectively.
[54] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 140, 420 respectively. Emphasis in original.
[55] R. W. Smith, '"Ordinary Germans," The Holocaust, and Responsibility: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Moral Perspective,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. 48.
[56] B. Schlink, 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation,' in *idem.*, *Guilt About The Past*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2009, p. 75.
[57] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 382. See also pp. 13, 263.
[58] Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 259. Indeed, Richard Evans has suggested of the impact of this element of the narrative: "Goldhagen's case is not strengthened by the vehemence of his condemnation of those historians whose views differ from his. To write off other people's arguments, often without much evidence, as 'absurd', 'specious', 'self-evidently false', 'erroneous', 'untenable', 'mistakes', and to adorn his own arguments repeatedly with adjectives such as 'incontestable', is no substitute for reasoned argument, and does not convince. This is the language of dogmatism, not scholarship. It betrays a disturbing arrogance that is of a piece with the exaggerated claims for novelty which Goldhagen makes in the Introduction." See Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' p. 164.

perceived as his predecessors' incorrect assumptions, conceptual inadequacies and general neglect of the perpetrators.[59] His strongest criticisms, however, were reserved for what he deemed to be the failure of his fellow scholars to comprehend the moral enormity of the events and actions they discussed, and to adequately convey and present this enormity in their histories. As outlined earlier, Goldhagen believed the major reason for this failure was a widespread reluctance to convey the "phenomenological reality" of the perpetrators and the horror of their deeds.[60] This reluctance, Goldhagen argued, worked to rob the perpetrators of individual agency, leading him to believe that "[t]he conventional explanations do not acknowledge, indeed they deny, the humanity of the perpetrators, namely that they were agents, moral beings capable of making moral choices."[61]

By pointing to what he felt were the moral failings of his fellow scholars, Goldhagen was able to furnish his account with an additional degree of authority in this regard. Browning responded sharply to this tendency, arguing that "Goldhagen [has] constructed this pernicious discourse that casts himself as a pioneer of a morally-sensitive history and attempts to delegitimize the generation of pre-1996 historians as morally obtuse."[62] Whatever Goldhagen's intentions, his strong condemnation and rejection of the work of other scholars certainly aided his claims for the legitimacy of his own approach:

> All the conventional explanations must be rejected in favor of an explanation…which include[s] the task of accounting for the perpetrators' actions, the identity of the perpetrators, and the identity of the victims and, second, that recognizes the agency of the perpetrators, the particular, extraordinary nature of the perpetrators' actions, and the humanity of the victims. The one explanation adequate to these tasks holds that a demonological antisemitism, of the virulent racist variety, was the common structure of the perpetrator's cognition and of German society in general. The German perpetrators, in this view, were assenting mass executioners, men and women who, true to their own eliminationist antisemitic beliefs, faithful to their cultural antisemitic credo, considered the slaughter to be just.[63]

By his own criteria of measurement, then, Goldhagen's account was presented as the only appropriate explanation of the Holocaust and its perpetrators, laying bare the supposed scholarly and moral inadequacies of his predecessors and contemporaries.

While almost all pre-existing Holocaust historiography earned Goldhagen's scorn and condemnation for one reason or another, it was his attacks on the work and scholarship of Browning which were particularly scathing. Indeed, one commentator has gone so far to describe the latter as "Goldhagen's bête noire in *Hitler's Willing*

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[59] See, for example, Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 5, 13, 27, 29, 391-393, 439.
[60] See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 475 n. 4; p. 482 n. 51.
[61] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 392.
[62] C. R. Browning, 'Holocaust Responses: Victim Testimony,' *Tikkun*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1999, p. 56.
[63] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 392-393.

Executioners."[64] Ostensibly, both Browning and Goldhagen addressed the same topic—the activities of Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland, and what motivated these men to behave as they did. They used the same archives in Ludwigsburg as the basis for their research. Aside from agreeing that the members of the battalion were 'ordinary' and exhibited a high degree of voluntarism in their actions, however, vastly different conclusions were reached.

The dramatic differences in their interpretations of the evidence, coupled with Goldhagen's aggressive attacks on the quality of Browning's scholarship, led to a prolonged conflict between the two scholars. Browning has recalled meeting Goldhagen for the first time at an academic conference in 1989, where the latter introduced himself by saying, "I'm Daniel Goldhagen. You scooped me."[65] As we saw in the previous chapter, *Ordinary Men* was published in 1992 to a favourable reception. The major exception, however, was a lengthy and highly critical review by Goldhagen published in *The New Republic*. Prefiguring the arguments which would be developed to dramatic effect in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Goldhagen accused Browning of downplaying the role of anti-Semitism in the perpetration of the Holocaust, of misrepresenting the evidence and of failing to properly indict the killers for their murderous deeds.[66]

When *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was published in 1996, Goldhagen continued to fulminate against what he perceived as Browning's misreading of the evidence and flawed argumentation.[67] The aggressive yet to this point largely civilised scholarly dispute rapidly turned sour in December 1996 when Goldhagen, in the first of many replies to his critics, accused Browning of constructing his evidence "out of thin air."[68] Browning later reflected

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[64] D. Reiff, 'The Willing Misinterpreter,' *The National Interest*, November/December 2009, p. 88. Another critic suggested that Goldhagen was "obsessed" with Browning. See F. M. Schweitzer, 'In Pursuit of Guilt and Accountability,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2003, p. 452. For further comment on the propriety of Goldhagen's attacks on Browning, see, for example, Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' p. 164.

[65] C. R. Browning, 'Writing and Teaching Holocaust History: A Personal Perspective,' in S. Totten, P. R. Bartrop and S. L. Jacobs (eds.), *Teaching About The Holocaust: Essays By College and University Teachers*, Westport, Praeger, 2004, p. 39.

[66] See D. J. Goldhagen, 'The Evil of Banality: *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* by Christopher R. Browning', *The New Republic*, 13-20 July 1992, pp. 49-52. One such example of Goldhagen's highly critical response include the following assessment of Browning's presentation of the evidence and argumentation: "Browning frequently tells us, as if it were a fact, that the perpetrators were in certain states of mind or moved by certain motivations, when the assertions are mere speculations. A flagrant example is the attribution of the emotion of shame to the perpetrators. There is no evidence that during the killings these men felt shame, which is a powerful and painful emotion." See Goldhagen, 'The Evil of Banality,' p. 51.

[67] Robert Wistrich has described Goldhagen's attacks on Browning in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as a "running war" in the book's endnotes. See R. S. Wistrich, 'Helping Hitler,' *Commentary*, vol. 102, no. 1, 1996, p. 30. For examples of such endnotes, see Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 531, n. 1; p. 534, n. 1; p. 535, n. 19; p. 536, n. 11; p. 537, n. 19; pp. 540-541, n. 68; p. 542, n. 79; pp. 543-544, n. 98; pp. 545-546, n. 8; p. 546, n. 16; p. 548, n. 32; p. 549, n. 44; pp. 550-551, n. 61; pp. 551-552, n. 65; p. 553, n. 10; p. 556, n. 41; p. 580, n. 22; p. 582, n. 35.

[68] Goldhagen, 'Myths, Causes, Alibis,' p. 40. For Browning's response to the charge, and Goldhagen's begrudging and reluctant retraction, see Letters to the Editor, *The New Republic*, 4 February 1997, pp. 4-5.

that this attack on his scholarly integrity "basically ended discussion" with Goldhagen.[69] Nonetheless, he was sufficiently moved by the experience to include a new Afterword in the 1998 edition of *Ordinary Men* devoted to addressing the conflict. Browning believed this response to be warranted by "Goldhagen's critique of this book and the subsequent controversy surrounding his own work."[70]

Ordinary Men was a dramatically different book to *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. First, as indicated by the books' titles, Browning believed the perpetrators to be 'ordinary men,' as opposed to Goldhagen's characterisation of 'ordinary Germans.' Additionally, *Ordinary Men* presented a completely different account of what motivations lay behind the actions of the perpetrators. Clearly influenced by the ideas of psychologists such as Stanley Milgram, Browning explained the perpetrators' behaviour through a variety of situational and psychological factors, the most prominent of which he believed to be a kind of conformity or peer pressure, as well as deference to authority.[71] He argued, "[t]o break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly nonconformist behaviour, was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot."[72] Far from attributing to the German nation a demonological anti-Semitism and explaining the actions of the perpetrators through this convenient, all-encompassing mechanism, Browning reached the discomforting conclusion that any group of individuals, regardless of time, place or culture, could under similar circumstances commit the atrocities that the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 did.[73]

In addition to these significant differences in their arguments and conclusions, the approach and overall tone of *Ordinary Men* lacked the moral passion and fervour of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. While, as we saw in Chapter Three, Browning made an explicit attempt to bring empathy to his discussion of the perpetrators, he nonetheless maintained a certain 'objective' detachment from his subjects and refrained from graphic engagement with the nature of their actions.[74] This approach was noted approvingly by one journalist, who

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[69] Browning, 'Writing and Teaching Holocaust History,' p. 40.

[70] C. R. Browning, 'Afterword,' in *idem.*, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992), New York, HarperCollins, 1998, p. 192.

[71] Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 175-176, 184-186. For Browning's complete discussion of the various situational and psychological factors which he believed shaped the behaviour of the men of Police Battalion 101, see his final chapter, 'Ordinary Men,' pp. 159-189.

[72] Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 184.

[73] See Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 188-189.

[74] Unsurprisingly, Goldhagen was highly critical of this approach in his review of *Ordinary Men*, suggesting that the victims had receded into the background of Browning's narrative because of his focus on the perpetrators. In particular, Goldhagen criticised Browning's failure to use survivor testimony in his reconstruction of the Battalion's activities. In his review, he noted that "[b]ecause Browning does not use the testimony of survivors in constructing the portrait of this battalion, essentially discounting its value, he accepts as fact the Germans' sanitized and prettified accounts of their handiwork." See Goldhagen, 'The Evil of Banality,' p. 52. This point had also been expressed by positive reviewers of *Ordinary Men*, with one describing the victims as "the quiet characters in the book." See W. Reich, 'The Men Who Pulled The Triggers,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 12 April 1992. These same issues have, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, plagued other discussions of victims and perpetrators. One early reviewer of the first

wrote of Browning that "[u]nlike his adversary Goldhagen, he writes in a reserved style. Also unlike Goldhagen, he seldom veers from strictly empirical attempts to set the record straight."[75] Even if the morality of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is problematic for the reasons outlined earlier, however, is the impulse to want to write in such a moral fashion necessarily a 'bad' one? One critic noted of *Ordinary Men* that "Browning's is an academic treatise which has no explicitly moral voice, and its implicit message that practically *anybody* could have done it leaves the moral puzzle untouched and the reader as helpless as before."[76] It was these precise questions of scholarly detachment, moral passion, and appropriate engagement with past atrocity which proved to be the driving force of discussion in the 'Goldhagen Debate'.

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Reflecting on the 'Goldhagen Debate', one historian has argued that the storm of criticism produced by *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was testament to "how far removed we are from any 'historicization' of Nazism, from treating it dispassionately as a period of history much like any other."[77] In revealing these difficulties in achieving a 'dispassionate' approach to the Nazi past, the 'Goldhagen Debate' also demonstrated a certain confusion and unease regarding what constituted a morally 'appropriate' presentation of the Holocaust. As in many other debates concerning the history of atrocity, Goldhagen and his adversaries each assumed the immorality of the other. Goldhagen believed his predecessors and contemporaries had failed to comprehend the moral enormity of the Holocaust, and saw his own account as providing this key element which was missing from these other histories. Other scholars, however, saw in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* a history which was itself not morally viable—it was shrill and inflammatory, it demonised its subjects and indicted the wider German nation, and was 'pornographic' in its insistence on detailed and gruesome description.

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edition of Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, for example, suggested that in aiming to understand the workings of the mechanisms of destruction, "Mr. Hilberg seems to come near to the view of the bureaucracy he is describing: the Jews are not individuals, they are a bunch, a commodity, a problem." See F. Raphael, 'It's All in the Book,' *Time and Tide*, 1 March 1962. To an extent, such arguments also reiterate the criticisms made of Arendt in terms of her treatment of Eichmann versus that of his victims. It thus remains a dual problem as to whether displaying an empathetic approach to the perpetrators of atrocity clouds an appreciation of their victims' experience, or whether the researcher risks inadvertently absorbing the persecutors' perception of their victims.

[75] A. Shatz, 'Browning's Version: A Mild-Mannered Historian's Quest to Understand the Perpetrators of the Holocaust,' *Lingua Franca*, February 1997, p. 49.

[76] Joffe, 'Goldhagen in Germany,' p. 21. Emphasis in original. This argument, however, fails to recognise that Browning's suggestion that "practically *anybody* could have done it" is actually itself a profoundly moral point.

[77] Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, pp. 261-262. Kershaw, for his part, seems to endorse this notion that the past should be approached and treated 'dispassionately,' while acknowledging this is often difficult when dealing with the history of atrocity.

There were, as outlined previously, two separate strands of moral critique which emerged throughout the course of the 'Goldhagen Debate'. The first addressed the explicit morality of Goldhagen's tone and approach. *Hitler's Willing Executioners* had dispensed with many of the traditional rules of 'objective' historical practice by freely moralising and providing graphic and emotive descriptions of events. Given the enduring strength of these 'rules', it is unsurprising that this element of the book was criticised by those who remained faithful to the professional ideal of 'objectivity'. One historian provided a succinct view of exactly why Goldhagen's approach had offended sensibilities in this regard:

> The book reads like a sermon with all its trappings: a sense of self-righteousness, disdain for differing opinions, and constant repetitions. Its angry and passionate tone, while very popular, contradicts the detached style cultivated by the foremost Holocaust historians…. The idea has always been to let the facts speak for themselves.[78]

Another historian expressed similar sentiments, pointing to the "emotional statements that sit uneasily in a work of scholarship" and, as a result, "the degree of bias which enters into the argument."[79]

Although dramatically fewer in number, there were others who praised Goldhagen's insistence on conveying the moral enormity of the Holocaust in his narrative. In this regard, one commentator deemed Goldhagen to be a "true agent of change."[80] Similarly, historian Fred Kautz argued that the various criticisms of the book were more indicative of a desire to defend a traditional historiography that eschews explicit engagement with morality and favours 'objectivity' as opposed to the actual substance of Goldhagen's arguments. Overall, Kautz ultimately endorsed the more emotionally engaged approach of Goldhagen as the most appropriate stance to take towards the history of the Holocaust.[81]

In the foreword to Kautz' study, fellow historian Helmut Dahner endorsed a similar view. He argued of the response to Goldhagen that "[t]he campaign, which is launched against him, has as its target the type of historiography he tries to reintroduce, historiography with a moral purpose."[82] Was the furore over *Hitler's Willing Executioners* simply yet another front for the ongoing debate between 'moralising' versus 'objective' history writing? Dahner elaborated on this point:

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[78] I. Deák, 'Holocaust Views: The Goldhagen Controversy in Retrospect,' *Central European History*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1997, p. 299.
[79] J. D. Noakes, 'No Ordinary People,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 June 1996, p. 10. For similar examples, see L. Douglas, 'The Goldhagen Riddle,' *Commonweal*, 9 May 1997, p. 20; and Shatz, 'Browning's Version,' p. 49.
[80] R. P. Newman, 'Sinners in the Hands of Angry Goldhagen,' *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1998, p. 420.
[81] Kautz, *The German Historians*, p. 83.
[82] H. Dahner, 'Foreword,' in F. Kautz, *The German Historians:* Hitler's Willing Executioners *and Daniel Goldhagen*, Montreal, Black Rose Books, 2003, p. viii.

> The readers of Goldhagen and his critics will eventually have to decide (as they had to decide in the case of Hannah Arendt), whether Goldhagen's historiography will, in future, be regarded as non-scholarly, or whether it will bring about a 'paradigm change': a change towards the reintegration of the 'subject' and 'morality' into historical scholarship. If Goldhagen's 'turn to the subject' would be adopted by historiography, it would once again become relevant for 'lay people.' History itself would become once again one of the subjects: in the future it would be narrated as a story that could have been prevented under certain conditions. Yes, history could be narrated once again. And this would be good, for only in narration can the history of events be translated back into the history of experience.[83]

It was clear from its beginnings that the 'Goldhagen Debate' would encompass questions and concerns far beyond the original scope of the book, addressing factors which were significant not only to the study of the Holocaust but past atrocity more generally. The response to *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, however, was far more than simply a debate about whether or not one should write this history in such a dramatically moral fashion. The second strand of moral critique generated by the book showed that far more subtle, yet equally important, considerations were at stake.

This second critical discourse was concerned not with Goldhagen's decision to adopt an explicitly moral approach, but rather with the nature of his morality and its potentially pernicious impact. In particular, it addressed the questions surrounding the depiction and representation of atrocity, encompassing such concerns as generalisation in history writing, the appropriateness of descriptions of extreme violence and torture, and public understandings of the past. In this sense, the 'Goldhagen Debate' went far beyond a discussion of the motivations of Holocaust perpetrators or the nature of anti-Semitism in Germany before and during the Nazi period. The historians participating in this discourse were not, however, necessarily conscious of the profoundly moral dialogue they were creating, instead demonstrating what might be termed an 'implicit' morality. Given the disciplinary ideal of 'objectivity', this implicitness is not surprising. Yet as one critic has recognised, "scholarly practice accepts what scholarly theory renounces, and a venture repudiated in program is repeatedly affirmed by act."[84] The debate surrounding *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is no exception in this regard. Historians may disavow 'moralising' in their own work, but they react very strongly when they perceive that their moral sense has been violated.

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[83] Dahner, 'Foreword,' p. ix.

[84] W. P. Metzger, 'Generalizations About National Character,' in L. Gottschalk (ed.), *Generalization in the Writing of History: A Report of the Committee on Historical Analysis of the Social Science Research Council*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963, p. 77.

In much of the literature on historical method, generalisations are accepted as a necessary element of the writing of history. In *What is History?*, E. H. Carr argued that "history thrives on generalisations,"[85] while another scholar has claimed that generalisations enable the historian "to bring order to the chaotic world of history."[86] But how does this assessment translate to writing about past atrocity? How appropriate are generalisations about crimes of great magnitude, particularly when issues of guilt and responsibility are at stake? The strong response to Goldhagen's unrestrained invocation of "the Germans" in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* suggests that a strong moral undercurrent accompanies any generalisation about atrocities. Historian Franklin Littell, for example, was particularly frank on this matter in his critique of the book, arguing that "[t]he exploitation of selected portions of the historical record to undergird a distorted view of '*the* Germans' is wrong, morally, academically, and politically."[87] While few other historians were this forthright, it is nonetheless evident that the criticism of Goldhagen's generalisations was informed by moral as well as scholarly concerns.

Goldhagen, for his part, saw nothing problematic in his generalisations about the perpetrators of the Holocaust and the German people, arguing that "[e]very historian has to generalize."[88] He elaborated on this feature of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in an interview with a Dutch magazine:

> Sure, I generalize by consistently talking about 'the Germans.' That is a very normal way of generalizing which decidedly does no violence to the truth. Americans in the south used to be racists who called blacks niggers and considered them inferior. Nobody wants to challenge that either.[89]

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[85] E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964, p. 64.
[86] A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, London, Macmillan, 1981, p. 158.
[87] Littell, 'Introduction,' p. x. Emphasis in original.
[88] Goldhagen, as quoted from R. Augstein, 'What Were The Murderers Thinking?: Interview with Daniel Goldhagen by Rudolf Augstein,' in R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 152.
[89] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, as quoted from O. Garschagen, '"In Duitsland wordt mijn boek verkeerd uitgelegd." Goldhagen daagt critici uit tegendeel van zijn stellingen te bewuzen,' *De Volkskrant*, 18 May 1996, p. 41, as cited in D. Pollefeyt and G. J. Colijn, 'Leaving Evil in Germany: The Questionable Success of Goldhagen in the Low Countries,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. 9. Goldhagen made a similar argument in his foreword to the German edition of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, claiming that "[j]ust as discussing the substance of a society's political culture does not imply or rely upon notions of unchangeable characteristics of that country's people, so too generalizing about the people in a country does not imply or rely upon any notions of ethnicity or 'race'. The process of generalizing is essential to human thought. Without generalization, we could not make sense of the world and of our experience. We generalize all the time about different groups and societies and when we compare them…. The issue, therefore, is not about the appropriateness of generalization per se but about the veracity and evidentiary basis of generalizations. There is nothing racist or 'improper' about asserting that most Germans today are good democrats anymore that there is about maintaining that the vast majority of whites in the antebellum South were racists, or that most Germans in the 1930s were antisemites. The appropriateness of any of these generalizations depends on whether or not it is correct—on the quality of the evidentiary foundation and of the analysis used to derive the general conclusions." See Goldhagen, 'Foreword to the German Edition,' pp. 478-479.

Judging by the number of critics who took issue with his presentation of "the Germans," however, Goldhagen's was clearly not "a very normal way of generalizing" and other scholars were adamant that it did indeed do violence to the truth about this past.

While deemed necessary, the potential pitfalls of generalisations—namely that they can be overly simplistic, not allow enough scope for nuance and difference, and at worst, distort the historical record—are acknowledged in the literature on historical method. Unsurprisingly, generalisations about national character are viewed as particularly problematic in this regard.[90] In the context of the history of atrocity, the major concerns with generalisation stem from its uncomfortably close relationship to demonisation, and this was strongly expressed by Goldhagen's critics. One historian argued that Goldhagen had "frankly demonized" the Germans of the Nazi era by presenting them "as the embodiment of an evil 'other,'"[91] while another believed that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was simply "hate-the-Hun propaganda masquerading as serious scholarship."[92]

As many critics noted, however, it was Goldhagen's invocation of the concept of 'ordinary' to undergird his portrayal of "the Germans" which proved particularly problematic. Using 'ordinary' as a descriptive device enabled Goldhagen to indict not only the Holocaust perpetrators who were ostensibly the subjects of his narrative, but also the German population at large, leading one of his critics to accuse him of "undifferentially tarring an entire nation with the same racist brush."[93] Indeed, much of the historiographical literature does warn against such generalising concepts. One historian, for example, has cautioned that "the most insidious generalizations are those implied in terms such as 'normal', 'regular', or 'average' which derive meaning only from evidence which we rarely present and which may be very shaky when examined." Yet despite these limitations, he still believed such concepts to be "indispensable" and "of central importance to the history curriculum."[94] As we have repeatedly seen throughout the present study to this point, however, what is endorsed by historical method often does not seamlessly translate to writing about past atrocity.

A particularly vocal critic of Goldhagen's use of 'ordinary' was the political activist David North. In a lecture delivered at Michigan State University in April 1997, North explained what he found to be so problematic about the "ordinary Germans" of Goldhagen's narrative:

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[90] See Metzler, 'Generalizations About National Character,' p. 77.
[91] Gellately, Review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 189.
[92] J. Neusner, 'Hype, Hysteria, and Hate the Hun: The Latest Pseudo-Scholarship From Harvard,' in F. H. Littell (ed.), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, New York, Cummings and Hathaway, 1997, p. 150.
[93] Locke, 'The Goldhagen Fallacy,' p. 27.
[94] G. G. Partington, 'Historical Generalization,' *The History Teacher*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1980, p. 393.

> The methodological flaw of Professor Goldhagen's argument is indicated in its title: *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Let us stop right there: What is meant by 'ordinary Germans'? For those of you who would like a textbook example of an 'abstract identity,' this is it. This is a category that is so broad, it is capable of including virtually everyone, except, presumably, Germans of Jewish parentage. What, after all, makes any particular German an 'ordinary' one? Is it a large girth and a fondness for knockwurst and sauerbraten? Is it blond hair, blue eyes and a penchant for sunbathing in the nude? Is it a talent for abstruse philosophizing and a passion for 300-pound Wagnerian sopranos? A concept built upon such foolish and arbitrary stereotypes cannot be of any scientific value in the cognition of objective reality.[95]

Goldhagen's crude pairing of 'ordinary' with 'Germans' was viewed as problematic and misleading, leading his critics to dismiss his account as little more than the "blanket indictment of the German people."[96]

Additionally, many commentators were concerned with how Goldhagen's demonising presentation of "the Germans" in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* clouded the moral issues of guilt and responsibility which accompany the study of past atrocity. This concern often found expression in the accusation that Goldhagen had revived the much-maligned concept of 'collective guilt' and the notion of a German *Sonderweg*.[97] One scholar provided an insight into some of the questions which were at stake:

> A theory of responsibility…should tell us who the perpetrators are, the victims, the bystanders. It should distinguish between different types, and degrees, of guilt and responsibility—criminal, moral, political and

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[95] D. North, 'Anti-Semitism, Fascism and the Holocaust: A Critical Review of Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' 17 April 1997, viewed at *The Official Website of Norman G. Finkelstein*, http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=2&ar=7, accessed 3 September 2007. This lecture was later published as D. North, *Anti-Semitism, Fascism and the Holocaust: A Critical Review of Daniel Goldhagen's* Hitler's Willing Executioners, Bankstown, Labour Press Books, 1997.

[96] Monroe, Review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 212. Monroe's review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is noteworthy for her revelation of a decidedly moral impulse in deciding to comment on the book. She noted, "[g]rasping the full extent of the Holocaust requires a sensitivity beyond the range of normal human experience, and comment from those who did not live through it can seem foolhardy, even invasive. Indeed, as someone neither Jewish nor German, I am uneasy reviewing this book; I do so only because of a sense of obligation to the Germans I interviewed for *The Heart of Altruism* (1996), people who risked their lives to save Jews and who are ignored and condemned by Goldhagen." See Monroe, Review of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 212.

[97] Collective guilt refers to the accusation made—but rejected soon after—by the Allies of the defeated German nation following the liberation of the concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. Such a notion found expression in the written histories which appeared in the years immediately after the war, most commonly in the form of the *Sonderweg* thesis which argued that German history had adopted a 'special path' of which National Socialism was the logical outcome. See C. Brink, 'Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps,' *History and Memory*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2000, p. 146; Herzstein, 'A Heretic and His Critics,' p. 98; and Kwiet, '*Hitler's Willing Executioners* and "Ordinary Germans."' For the standard critique of the *Sonderweg* thesis, see D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984. While now largely rejected by the academic community, the *Sonderweg* understanding of Germany and the Nazi past has lingered amongst the public and others outside of the historical profession, which many critics pointed to as an explanation for Goldhagen's public success. For examples of the comments made against Goldhagen in this regard, see Bartov, 'Ordinary Monsters,' p. 37; R. Kunath, 'Book Review: *Hitler's Willing Executioners*,' *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review*, http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-2/kunath.html, accessed 3 February 2009; Stern, 'The Goldhagen Controversy,' p. 136; and Wistrich, 'Helping Hitler,' p. 31.

> metaphysical. It should avoid collective judgment, in which whole groups, as opposed to individuals, are deemed guilty. And it should, at a very minimum, distinguish between actual and potential guilt. Goldhagen's account falls short on each of these requirements.[98]

Hitler's Willing Executioners purported to be the only account of the Holocaust which viewed the perpetrators as moral agents and thus held them morally accountable for their actions. By indicting the German nation at large along with the perpetrators, however, Goldhagen confused the process of accountability by blurring the lines between participants and non-participants, obliterating any sense of nuance or differentiation. The resultant effect, as Hannah Arendt astutely observed, is that "where all are guilty, nobody is."[99] In all instances, and even more so when past atrocities are under discussion, to deny individuality is to deny humanity. In turn, the ability to appropriately tease out and apportion guilt and responsibility is also denied.

While claiming that "none of the critics has so far convincingly clarified what is wrong with my generalizations,"[100] Goldhagen vigorously rejected the accusation that his book endorsed the notion of 'collective guilt' or implied that there were specific 'German' characteristics. In a lengthy rebuttal to his critics published in *The New Republic* in December 1996, Goldhagen claimed that suggestions that he indicted the German nation was "a gross mischaracterization of what I do write." He maintained that "I never say or in any way imply that Germans are an 'inherently evil nation' or that Germans 'were normally monsters.'"[101] Considering that Goldhagen had argued in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that "[n]o German could extricate himself from the magical spell that riveted his attention on Jews," that "Germans' violent anger at the Jews is akin to the passion that drove Ahab to hunt Moby Dick," and the German populace was prone to "wild 'magical thinking'" about Jews which were "beliefs that ordinarily only madmen have of others," his assertion that he

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[98] Smith, '*Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Moral Perspective,' p. 50.

[99] H. Arendt, 'Collective Responsibility' (1968), in *idem.*, *Hannah Arendt: Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. J. Kohn, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, p. 147.

[100] Goldhagen, as quoted from Augstein, 'What Were The Murderers Thinking?,' p. 152. Omer Bartov's observation that it was "obvious" that Goldhagen was "adamantly immune to criticism and supremely comfortable in his view that everything he has written is correct while everything his critics have said is, at best, nonsense, if not downright malicious," seems particularly apt in this instance. See O. Bartov, 'Letter to the Editor,' *The New Republic*, 10 February 1997, p. 4.

[101] Goldhagen, 'Motives, Causes, Alibis,' p. 42. Goldhagen repeated similar claims in the afterword to the 1997 Vintage edition of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, declaring of the critical response to his work that "[t]hese articles by both journalists and academics consisted almost wholly of denunciations and misrepresentations of the book's contents, including the almost axiomatic accusation that I was charging Germans with 'collective guilt.' That the book's argument attributes to Germans an unchanging 'national character,' that it impermissibly generalizes about Germans of the time, and that it puts forward a monocausal explanation of the Holocaust. The critics presented no serious argument and no evidence to support their contentions on these and other points. They did not do so because such arguments and evidence do not exist." See D. J. Goldhagen, 'Afterword to the Vintage Edition,' in *idem.*, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York, Vintage Books, 1997, p. 463.

did not imply that Germans were "inherently evil" or "normally monsters" seemed hollow.[102]

In addition to his controversial depiction of "the Germans," Goldhagen's decision to convey the torturing and killing of Jews in vivid and explicit detail also came under serious criticism. Goldhagen, as outlined earlier, insisted that any history of the Holocaust needed to adequately portray the horror of what he described as the perpetrators' "phenomenological reality." An example of Goldhagen's attempts to do so can be observed in the following passage which describes a killing operation in Lomazy:

> The killing site itself presented an unspeakable scene. The pit…was between 1.6 and 2 yards deep, and about 30 yards wide by 55 yards long. It sloped down at one end. The Jews were forced to clamber down the incline and lay themselves face down. The Hiwis, standing in the pit and using rifles, put a bullet into the back of each Jew's head. The next wave of Jews had to lay themselves down on top of their bloodied and skull-bursted predecessors. Using this method, the pit gradually filled up. The Hiwis, who had continued to drink steadily, were drunk, and therefore aimed errantly. This caused them to aim badly, even at close range. The bad marksmanship produced a hair-raising scene, the ghastliness of which is difficult to imagine and comprehend. Many of the Jews were not killed by the bullets. Because the Germans chose this day not to administer 'mercy shots' (*Gnaden-schüsse*) to those still alive after the initial volley, successive groups of Jews had to lay themselves down not just on bloodied bodies, but some of them on bloodied bodies in their death throes, writhing and emitting human screams articulating their unarticulatable pain. As if this were not gruesome enough, the pit had been dug below the water table. The rising water mixed with blood and the bodies floated about a bit.[103]

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[102] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 63, 398, 412 respectively. Indeed, Richard Evans has noted of Goldhagen and the issue of 'collective guilt' that "[h]e denied correctly that he had ever used the words 'collective guilt' and reminded his readers of his insistence throughout the book on individual responsibility. Yet many individuals make up a collectivity, and when all of those individuals are German, and all of them are said to have imbibed murderous antisemitism with their mother's milk, then the end effect is little different." See Evans, 'Anti-Semitism,' p. 173.

[103] Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 228-229. Similar examples of graphic descriptions include Goldhagen's account of the conduct of members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 during a round-up of the Jewish residents of the ghetto in Józefów: "[T]hey chose to walk into a hospital, a house of healing, and to shoot the sick, who must have been cowering, begging, and screaming for mercy. They killed babies…. In all probability, a killer either shot a baby in its mother's arms, and perhaps the mother for good measure, or, as was sometimes the habit during these years, held it at arm's length by the leg, shooting it with a pistol. Perhaps the mother looked on in horror. The tiny corpse was then dropped like so much trash and left to rot. A life extinguished." See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 215-216. Later, he described the shooting of those taken from the ghetto into the forest surrounding Józefów in the following terms: "The killing itself was a gruesome affair. After the walk through the woods, each of the Germans had to raise his gun to the back of the head, now face down on the ground, that had bobbed along beside him, pull the trigger, and watch the person, sometimes a little girl, twitch and then move no more. The Germans had to remain hardened to the crying of the victims, to the crying of women, to the whimpering of children. At such close range, the Germans often became splattered with human gore." See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 218. Furthermore, the index entries to the book contained extremely specific references to various cruelties and atrocities, including "babies, killing of"; "beards of Jews, burning and cutting of"; "burning Jews alive"; "burying Jews alive"; "expression of aggressive and sadistic impulses, Germans' freedom regarding"; "cruelty of Germans, sadistic sexual component"; and "whips used against Jews." See Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 606, 607, 619.

One historian has recognised that in writing about the Holocaust, "[t]here are genuine issues of taste, strategy, and ethical choice involved in choosing to present this in all its vivid awfulness."[104] These questions proved a source of contention amongst Goldhagen's critics, who were undecided whether his desire to convey these events in such graphic terms hindered or aided an understanding of them.

In keeping with traditional ideals regarding 'objectivity' and the writing of history, some critics who objected to Goldhagen's descriptions argued from the perspective that they were unnecessary, because such terrible 'facts' did not require any elaboration from the historian.[105] One commentator, for example, rejected "the questionable deployment of detailed descriptions of barbaric cruelty," and instead argued that the testimony of survivors provided a more authentic depiction of events and should be allowed to stand alone as a source.[106] Such an approach, however, also enables historians to remain largely removed—and thus morally detached—from the horror of that which they describe.

Others, however, appealed to a moral imperative in order to explain their distaste for Goldhagen's graphic descriptions. One critic, for example, declared of this feature of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* that:

> [O]n purely scholarly, methodological grounds, Goldhagen's strategy of heaping accounts of bestial Nazi atrocities one upon the other—and letting the readers experience these from the perspective of the perpetrators who derived pleasure from it—cannot possibly be justified. What other purpose, then, could this barrage of accounts of barbarism serve? They are, pure and simple, exploitative and pornographic.[107]

The invocation of 'pornography' to describe this element of Goldhagen's narrative was echoed by others. Historian Atina Grossman condemned the book's "grotesque, lurid, virtually pornographic language of witness" which "respected no *Schamgrenze* (shame border)." For Grossman, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* "was neither solemn or respectful."[108]

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[104] Eley, 'Ordinary Germans, Nazism, and Judeocide,' p. 7.

[105] In this sense, we are reminded of Richard Evans' sentiments when asked his views regarding an explicit engagement with morality by historians, declaring that "I don't say anywhere that Hitler was evil. I mean, God, if people can't see that after reading my book there's something wrong with them!" Richard J. Evans, interview with author, 1 March 2010. Nonetheless, others have been critical of this stance. In a 1992 review of Hilberg's *Victims Perpetrators Bystanders*, Michael Marrus noted with some disapproval that "Mr. Hilberg seems more convinced than ever that the terrible events he describes speak, in a sense, for themselves. He chooses facts and gathers them in groups but avoids elaborate argument. Those unfamiliar with Mr. Hilberg's style will be struck immediately by his outward calm, his flat, unadorned prose, enlivened only occasionally by his taste for bitter irony." See M. Marrus, 'Acts That Speak For Themselves,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 20 September 1992.

[106] J. Caplan, 'Reflections on the Reception of Goldhagen in the United States,' in G. Eley (ed.), *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 161.

[107] Bodemann, 'Pornography of Horror?,' p. 68.

[108] Grossman, 'The "Goldhagen Effect,"' p. 117. For a perceptive commentary on these various charges of 'pornography' against Goldhagen, see C. J. Dean, 'History Writing, Numbness, and the Restoration of Dignity,' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 59-67.

In light of the public success of the book, others were concerned by the voyeuristic tendencies such an approach encouraged, and feared it reduced the story of the Holocaust to a simple compendium of terrible violence. Historian Omer Bartov, for example, cautioned that "we must note that such representations may attract readers more interested in detailed descriptions of sadism and murder than in understanding their causes and motivations."[109] He reflected on the dangers and pitfalls of the approach presented by Goldhagen:

> What…are we to do with a scholarly work that not only vividly describes the horrible deaths of children but also speculates on what the perpetrators were thinking as they were doing the killing, neither of which can possibly be found in any documents nor, in this case, can be based on the writer's personal experience, but must rather stem from his own (morbid) fantasies, which in turn would be at least partly influenced by televised, cinematic and literary representations? And since fantasies of horror tend to find an audience, it is reasonable to assume that some of those who rushed to buy the book were curious to read precisely those 'thick' descriptions of atrocities that, they had been told, were so much more 'powerful' and 'gripping' than the laborious interpretations of conventional historians. *This* is a disturbing thought, because it implies that what is most marketable about the Holocaust is its horror, and hence that the more one concentrates on horror the more one is likely to appear to be engaged in a sincere attempt to expose 'what actually happened,' and at the same time to achieve commercial success.[110]

Such concerns remain highly troubling when dealing with the violence and cruelty inherent within past atrocity. Does presenting this past 'as it actually was' and attempting to lay bare the suffering of the victims in explicit detail create additional moral problems? Bartov seemingly endorsed this view, warning that "[p]ornography may be attractive, violence may be fascinating, but lack of boundaries and loss of control is dangerous and threatening."[111] It appears that any decisions regarding an appropriate moral stance to adopt in the face of an event like the Holocaust remain an ongoing challenge for historians.

This acute unease expressed by Goldhagen's critics regarding the appropriate depiction of atrocities in written histories finds echo in J. M. Coetzee's 2003 novel *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons*.[112] Although a fictional work, it clearly evokes many of the same moral questions concerning representation which informed the critical discourse generated by *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.[113] The title character, an elderly Australian author, is invited to a

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[109] O. Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 209-210.
[110] Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*, p. 209. Emphasis in original.
[111] Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*, p. 210.
[112] Milsons Point, Random House, 2003.
[113] A recent non-fiction discussion of these issues can be found in the reaction to the 2009 English translation of Jonathan Littell's novel *The Kindly Ones*. The novel was originally published in France to great acclaim in 2006 and was awarded the prestigious Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie française and Prix Goncourt

conference in Amsterdam to speak on the problem of evil. Elizabeth takes as the point of departure for her address the disturbing experience of reading Paul West's *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, a book replete with graphic descriptions of the execution of those who attempted to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. In her conference presentation, Elizabeth explains why she is so disturbed by her reading of West's book:

> That is my thesis today: that certain things are not good to read *or to write*. To put the point in another way: I take seriously the claim that the artist risks a great deal by venturing into forbidden places: risks, specifically, himself; risks, perhaps, all. I take this claim seriously because I take seriously the forbiddenness of forbidden places.[114]

The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg is, in Elizabeth's view, an "obscene" book, in the sense that West "has shown what ought not to be shown."[115] Clearly, many critics felt this same sentiment applied to Goldhagen and *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

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literary awards that same year. Littell's book is, as one commentator has neatly summarised, a highly graphic "fictionalized memoir of a remorseless former Nazi SS officer, who in addition to taking part in the mass extermination of the Jews, commits incest with his sister, sodomizes himself with a sausage and most likely kills his mother and stepfather." See M. Rich, 'Publisher's Big Gamble on Divisive French Novel,' *The New York Times*, 3 March 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/04/books/04litt.html, accessed 1 August 2011. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the book prompted a highly bifurcated response from the critics upon its appearance in English translation. Amongst those who responded positively, it was described as "a great work of literary fiction, to which readers and scholars will turn for decades to come," with the author praised for "hav[ing] made this horrific tale recounted by such a profoundly unsympathetic character so gripping." See A. Beevor, Review of J. Littell, *The Kindly Ones*, *The Times*, 20 February 2009. For other positive assessments, see, for example, J. Derbyshire, 'With Hitler and His Pals,' *New Statesman*, vol. 138, no. 4940, 16 March 2009, pp. 55-56; and L. Hodes, 'Furious Responsibilities: Littell Narrates an Alternative Understanding of Communal Guilt,' *The Forward*, 13 March 2009, http://forward.com/articles/103563, accessed 1 August 2011. Others, however, were shocked and appalled by the graphic nature of the text, and questioned the morality of presenting these events in this fashion. A reviewer in the *New York Times*, for example, characterised the book as follows: "Willfully sensationalistic and deliberately repellent, *The Kindly Ones*—the title is a reference to the Furies, otherwise known in Greek mythology as the Eumenides—is an overstuffed suitcase of a book, consisting of an endless succession of scenes in which Jews are tortured, mutilated, shot, gassed or stuffed in ovens, intercut with an equally endless succession of scenes chronicling the narrator's incestuous and sadomasochistic fantasies." See M. Kakutchi, 'Unrepentant and Telling of Horrors Untellable,' *The New York Times*, 23 February 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/books/24kaku.html?ref=books, accessed 1 August 2011. For another negative review, see, for example, R. Franklin, 'Night and Cog,' *The New Republic*, 1 April 2009, pp. 38-43. For various academic commentary on *The Kindly Ones* and the controversy it provoked, see, for example, D. LaCapra, 'Historical and Literary Approaches to the "Final Solution": Saul Friedländer and Jonathan Littell,' *History and Theory*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2011, pp. 71-97; S. R. Suleiman, 'When the Perpetrator Becomes a Reliable Witness of the Holocaust: On Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*,' *New German Critique*, no. 106, 2009, pp. 1-20; and K. Theweleit, 'On the German Reaction to Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*,' *New German Critique*, no. 106, 2009, pp. 21-34.

[114] Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 173. Coetzee provides a vivid description of Elizabeth's reaction to her first reading of West's book. Having documented the nature of West's descriptions about the executioner and the condemned men, Coetzee writes: "This is what Paul West, novelist, had written about, page after page after page, leaving nothing out; this is what she read, sick with the spectacle, sick with herself, sick with a world in which such things took place, until at last she pushed the book away and sat with her head in her hands. *Obscene!* she wanted to cry but did not cry because she did not know at whom the word should be flung: at herself, at West, at the committee of angels that watches impassively over all that passes. Obscene because such things ought not to take place, and then obscene again because having taken place they ought not be brought into the light but covered up and hidden forever in the bowels of the earth, like what goes on in the slaughterhouses of the world, if one wishes to save one's sanity." See Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, pp. 158-159. Emphasis in original.

[115] Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 169. These exact issues raised by Elizabeth concerning *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* have also informed the discussion of Littell's *The Kindly Ones*.

Elizabeth's belief that there is a 'danger' in reading and writing about certain subjects is also reminiscent of what historian Götz Aly has described as "self-protection" on the part of the scholar.[116] Aly rejected suggestions that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was 'pornographic', and claimed to be "grateful" to Goldhagen "for his attempt to relate something that is difficult to relate," recognising that most historians have chosen to avoid doing so.[117] The central question, it seems, concerns distance—distance, for both historians and their readers, from the graphic and disturbing reality of the events; distance from the mindset of the perpetrators; and distance from the victims' suffering. Holocaust historiography, as one commentator has recognised, has largely kept these distances in order to render the scholarship produced "more asssimilable to the 'objective' and emotional neutral conventions of academic history."[118] Distance from the gruesome realities of past atrocities thus also produces a distance from the grave moral concerns which result from engaging with these events.

Although severely tainted by his excessive and ill-conceived use of "the Germans," Goldhagen's insistence on conveying the horror of the events he described may be conceived as one of the redeeming features of his narrative. If historians are committed, in however varying degrees, to the notion of conveying the past 'as it actually happened,' the revolting reality of the Holocaust cannot, and perhaps should not, be avoided. While, as Bartov has rightly recognised, some simply may seek to indulge distasteful voyeuristic urges in reading graphic accounts of atrocity, the capacity of such descriptions to shock and engage may prove to have an ultimately positive effect for others. This point is suggested by Coetzee in *Elizabeth Costello*. Following her conference address, Elizabeth is questioned by an audience member who takes issue with her claim that books like *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* are 'bad' to write and to read. The audience member argues, "[p]erhaps Mr. West is made of sterner stuff. And perhaps we, his readers, are made of sterner stuff too. Perhaps we could read what Mr. West writes and learn from it, and come out stronger rather than weaker, more determined never to let the evil return."[119]

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[116] G. Aly, 'The Universe of Death and Torment,' in R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 173.
[117] Aly, 'The Universe of Death and Torment,' p. 170.
[118] Eley, 'Ordinary Germans,' p. 6.
[119] Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 175. Similarly, some positive reviewers of *The Kindly Ones* explicitly praised the book's graphic content and argued that it added a necessary realism to the depiction of these terrible events. Hodes, for example, declared that "[t]hese detailed descriptions of how the extermination of Jews was systematically implemented on an institutional level seem a much-needed dose of reality when contrasted with the fairy-tale quality of recent Holocaust fiction." See Hodes, 'Furious Responsibilities'. Another favourable critic noted of *The Kindly Ones* that "unlike, say, Tom Cruise in *Valkyrie*, this is the real thing, a journey into the belly of the beast, a chance to live through the doings of mankind at its worst, a book that is relentlessly fascinating, ambitious beyond scope in that it tries to show us in every unforgiving detail what we least want to see, and which never once lets the reader, or the Germans, off the hook. You want to read about Hell, here it is. If you don't have the strength to read it, tough shit. It's a dreadful, compelling,

These serious problems which the critics identified with the morality presented by Goldhagen in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* were further complicated by the enthusiastic reception of the book in the public sphere. There was, as we have seen, an extreme discrepancy between how *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was received by scholars and the general public, and several commentators were disturbed by this significant dissonance between how the Holocaust was conceptualised and understood by both groups. As one historian observed:

> In the academic world, among Holocaust scholars and historians, there is a consensus: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is a bad book, prejudiced and repetitious. Academe has already shown it can take care of itself. The public effect of the book, propelled into 'bestseller' standing in several countries, is another matter.[120]

The discourse which emerged regarding the public reception of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the broader question of public understandings of the past reveals a distinction between those who wished to explain the book's success through factors external to the history profession, and others who saw this success as indicative of something amiss within the profession itself.

Clearly, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* struck a chord with its public readership in a manner which other academic histories of the Holocaust had not. Several commentators pointed to the powerful publicity machine behind the book as a major reason for the hype it generated, as opposed to any merits inherent in the text.[121] Others accused Goldhagen of tapping into common stereotypes and prejudices, simply confirming for the public what they already believed about Holocaust perpetrators and the Nazi past. As one critic witheringly noted, "from Goldhagen we can learn that we face a public fraught with

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brilliantly researched, and imagined masterpiece, a terrifying literary achievement, and perhaps the first work of fiction to come out of the Holocaust that places us in its very heart, and keeps us there." See M. Korda, 'A Brilliant Holocaust Novel,' *The Daily Beast*, 25 February 2009, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2009/02/25/a-brilliant-holocaust-novel.html, accessed 1 August 2011.

[120] Littell, 'Introduction,' p. x.

[121] Ian Kershaw provided a particularly astute observation of the effects which extensive marketing had upon *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, noting that "the Harvard PhD thesis, examining the role of the perpetrators in the killing units of the east through an analysis of their testimony in postwar trials, was transformed by publishers' hype into what was marketed as the most original interpretation of the Holocaust ever published, one that stood the entire historiography of five decades—massive in quantity, often excellent in quality, greatly varied and nuanced in interpretation—on its head." See Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 255. For other comment on the marketing of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* see, for example, Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust,' p. 215; Kwiet, '*Hitler's Willing Executioners* and "Ordinary Germans,"'; and R. R. Shandley, 'Introduction,' in R. R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. 3-4.

ignorance and predisposed to find in Hitler all things German."[122] While blaming publicity campaigns or public unawareness for the success of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, many were disturbed by the negative impact this success could have upon the history profession at large. "Somehow," one historian lamented, "Professor Goldhagen is portrayed as one who writes good history for ordinary people, while established Holocaust scholars come off as a small clique writing history only for themselves."[123]

Others, however, were prepared to look inward to explain Goldhagen's success, and to recognise it as possibly symptomatic of the profession's failure to adequately engage the wider public in its scholarship. One historian, in an online forum discussing *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, noted of the state of "interaction…between historians and the public":

> The two most famous historians in the field right now are Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and David Irving, aka "that Jewish professor from Harvard who says the Germans enjoyed it" and "the guy who says Hitler didn't do it." There are no preeminent names in the field to whom the public turns for a reaction to Goldhagen's thesis. Those who have responded fail to get their message across. While the goal of historians should not be fame per se, it is fair to ask if the goal should be to collect research grants, teach a few undergraduates, and write obscure and often unreadable texts.[124]

Many critics believed that Goldhagen's work had resonated with the public by providing an element which had been either absent from or implicit within other histories, namely its moral engagement with the subject. One historian, for example, suggested that the public success of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* indicated that many readers were "obviously dissatisfied with a scholarly consensus that makes it very difficult to talk of intention, agency, and responsibility in relation to the Holocaust. Yet these are among the most burning issues that these historical experience raises."[125] This sentiment was echoed by another scholar, who believed that the book's "unrestrained moralism" was a key factor in its success, as it enabled the reader to cut through complexity and hold the perpetrators accountable in an emotionally satisfying fashion."[126]

Of course, herein lies the essential problem of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*—the reader is encouraged to engage with a 'failed' morality, one beset by the myriad of problems and concerns identified throughout the present chapter. Ultimately, despite

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[122] R. A. Berman, 'An Imagined Community: Germany According to Goldhagen,' *The German Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1998, p. 66. See also Bartov, 'Germans as Nazis,' pp. 147-148; and Birn, 'Revising the Holocaust,' p. 215.

[123] F. R. Nicosia, 'Goldhagen and Historical Writing,' *H-NET List on German History*, 9 May 1996, http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse/pl?trx=vx&list=hgerman&month=9605&week=b&msg=I9FkpKf9/Fr%26n82DHnopeA&user=&pw=, accessed 28 November 2008.

[124] P. Schommer, 'The Goldhagen Debate and the Role of Historians,' *H-NET List on German History*, 30 April 1996, http://www.h-net.org/~german/discuss/goldhagen/gold11.html, accessed 3 September 2007.

[125] A. D. Moses, 'Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and His Critics,' *History and Theory*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1998, p. 217.

[126] Dean, 'History Writing, Numbness, and the Restoration of Dignity,' p. 59.

raising the issues and opening up avenues for reflection, Goldhagen did not leave his audience any better equipped to comprehend the moral questions which are raised when one confronts a historical experience such as the Holocaust. Nonetheless, this failure actually offers a challenging invitation to historians. It may be true that in presenting the Holocaust as a 'morality play' peppered with angels and demons, which reduced the event to little more than a melodramatic soap opera, Goldhagen was simply catering to public belief and desire. It would be remiss, however, to ignore what the popular response to *Hitler's Willing Executioners* suggests for the dynamics of historians' moral engagement with past atrocity, and how this engagement is communicated to their audience. The history of atrocity is inextricably linked to the public sphere, and a strong commemorative and educative impulse informs much of the work which is produced about this past. If, as the reaction to *Hitler's Willing Executioners* indicates, an explicit moral impulse resonates strongly with this public, other historians might consider addressing their readers in similar terms—albeit in a far more subtle and nuanced fashion than that offered by Goldhagen.

Chapter Five

Alternatives, Agency and Atrocity: 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?'

'Responsibility' is a somewhat curious concept for historical inquiry. It goes hand in hand with notions of 'guilt' and 'blame', and as such carries unavoidable moral connotations. Unsurprisingly, then, its assignment forms a key element of making sense of any past atrocity. Consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, historians make decisions on how to apportion responsibility, and who to absolve or condemn. The desire to hold certain persons, institutions or ideologies accountable is also pronounced in public discourses about atrocity. The next three chapters of this study examine different debates and controversies within the historiography of Stalinism. While, as we shall see, each of these discussions raise their own concerns, they are nonetheless united by a sense that questions of responsibility lie at their heart—be it individual, institutional, or for a particular type of crime, namely genocide. Such undercurrents have long informed this historiography, as two historians of the period point out: "[m]uch of the literature…focuses on the question of responsibility. Post-Soviet historical writing, a clear descendant of Soviet polemic, still seeks categorically to fix responsibility on bad persons and bad systems."[1] Clearly, an examination of how historians have grappled with the notion of 'responsibility' can help suggest where this very moral concept might fit into the process of writing about past atrocity. We begin here with the question 'was Stalin really necessary?', and the various answers it has evoked.

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When confronted with the history of atrocity, questions invariably raised include 'why did it happen?' and 'could it have been prevented?'. As an eminent historian of the Soviet Union has recognised, "[d]iscussion of the phenomenon of Stalinism leads inexorably—particularly for Soviet intellectuals—to the question of historical necessity: was Stalinism an inevitable development in Soviet history, or could it have been avoided?"[2] The historiography of Stalinism contains several debates regarding the 'necessity' or otherwise of Stalin and his measures, as well as arguments advancing the viability of possible alternatives to both the leader and his policies. As is always the case when past atrocity is being discussed, a strong moral undercurrent can be observed in these debates, one which concerns the questions of blame and responsibility, individual agency, and the notion that a 'better' history can be found in answers to the question of 'what might have been?'.

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[1] J. A. Getty and O. V. Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin's "Iron Fist"*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 206.
[2] S. Fitzpatrick, 'Constructing Stalinism: Reflections on Changing Western and Soviet Perspectives on the Stalin Era,' in A. Nove (ed.), *The Stalin Phenomenon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993, p. 91.

Traditionally, however, these questions have not seriously concerned historians. Most professionals have viewed counterfactual history—which is variously known as alternate history, 'allohistory' or virtual history—with both suspicion and contempt.[3] Perhaps its most famous critic remains E. H. Carr, who described such an undertaking as merely a "parlour game."[4] Other notable historians have also argued for the general uselessness of asking the question 'what if…?' about the past. A. J. P. Taylor sternly suggested that "a historian should never deal in speculation about what did not happen,"[5] while E. P. Thompson was even less charitable, describing "counterfactual fictions" as simply "unhistorical shit."[6] More recently, Richard Evans has joined the fray, arguing that counterfactual history cannot be regarded as a "serious intellectual endeavour."[7] The counterfactual approach to the past has thus largely been deemed to be a 'game', something which makes for an amusing pastime but not deserving the status of 'real' history.

Unsurprisingly, these negative views about counterfactual speculations have been reflected in much of the existing historiographical literature. While musings about possible alternate pasts have long been the domain of novelists and other fiction writers, until recently such accounts written by professional historians have been difficult to find. These earlier works appear to have been influenced by the general disparaging attitudes of the history profession, and vary in their seriousness and hence scholarly application. Of this literature, major works include *If It Had Happened Otherwise* (1931), *If I Had Been… Ten Historical Fantasies* (1979) and *For Want of a Horse: Chance and Humor in History* (1984). Historian Niall Ferguson, who edited the 1997 volume *Virtual History*, was disparaging in his assessment of these and other earlier collections, concluding that "by posing implausible questions or by providing implausible answers, counterfactual history has tended to discredit itself."[8]

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[3] See, for example, N. Ferguson, 'Virtual History: Towards a "Chaotic" Theory of the Past,' in N. Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, London, Picador, 1997, pp. 1-90; and G. D. Rosenfeld, 'Why Do We Ask "What If?": Reflections on the Function of Alternate History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2002, pp. 90-103.

[4] E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (1987), London, Penguin, 2008, p. 97.

[5] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, as cited in R. N. Lebow, 'What's So Different About a Counterfactual?,' *World Politics*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2000, p. 551, n. 4.

[6] E. P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory: Or An Orrery of Errors,' in *idem.*, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, London, Merlin Press, 1978, p. 300. For a similar warning against the use of counterfactual history, see D. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Towards a Logic of Historical Thought*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971, p. 15.

[7] R. J. Evans, 'Telling It Like It Wasn't,' *Historically Speaking: The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2004, http://www.bu.edu/historic/hs/march04.htm#4, accessed 8 July 2009. The same issue of *Historically Speaking* included a variety of responses to Evans' critique of counterfactual history, and all were later republished in D. A. Yerxa (ed.), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2008.

[8] Ferguson, 'Virtual History,' p. 19. For Ferguson's scathing assessment of his predecessors, see pp. 10-17.

In more recent times, however, increasing numbers of professional historians have begun to re-evaluate this approach to the past and sought to salvage its reputation. So extensive has the recent interest in counterfactual history writing become that one commentator has described it as "a veritable phenomenon in contemporary Western culture."[9] Several collected editions of alternate histories have been published within the last fifteen years, along with essays which have attempted to flesh out a theory and methodology for the approach.[10] Interestingly, for many historians, writing in this genre has proved to be lucrative—Robert Cowley's *What If?* series has spawned three bestselling volumes, and the *What If?* concept has now been trademarked. As one commentator has observed, "both historians and the reading public have a deep interest in playing with history."[11]

Several reasons have been suggested for this new prominence of counterfactual history, including the impact of postmodern theory on history writing; the increased use of information technologies and the associated blurring of the distinctions between the real and the virtual; and broader historical events, such as the collapse of Communism in Europe, which undermined certainty in more deterministic theories of history.[12] Whatever the reason, it is clear that many professional historians have begun to move away from the

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[9] Rosenfeld, 'Why Do We Ask "What If?,"' p. 91. See also G. D. Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 2.

[10] For these recent collected editions of essays, see, for example, R. Cowley (ed.), *What If? Vol. I: Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, London, Pan Books, 1999; R. Cowley (ed.), *More What If? Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (2001), London, Pan Books, 2003; R. C. Cowley (ed.), *What Ifs? of American History: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, New York, G. P. Putnam's 2003; G. Dozois and S. Schmidt (eds.), *Roads Not Taken: Tales of Alternate History*, New York, Del Rey, 1998; Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History*; A. Roberts (ed.), *What Might Have Been: Imaginary History from Twelve Leading Historians*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004; D. Showalter and H. Deutsch (eds.), *If the Allies Had Fallen: Sixty Alternate Scenarios of World War II*, New York, Skyhorse Publishing, 2010; P. E. Tetlock and A. Belkin (eds.), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological and Psychological Perspectives*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996; P. E. Tetlock, R. N. Lebow and G. Parker (eds.), *Unmaking the West: "What-If?" Scenarios That Rewrite World History*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2006; and H. Turtledove and M. H. Greenberg (eds.), *The Best Alternate History Stories of the Twentieth Century*, New York, Del Rey, 2001. Examples of theoretical and methodological essays include J. Bulholf, 'What If?: Modality and History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1999, pp. 145-168; M. Bunzl, 'Counterfactual History: A User's Guide,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 3, 2004, pp. 845-858; T. De Mey and E. Weber, 'Explanation and Thought Experiments in History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2003, pp. 28-38; R. J. Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't? Alternative History and Counterfactual History,' *International History Review*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2007, pp. 338-348; R. N. Lebow, 'Counterfactual Thought Experiments: A Necessary Teaching Tool,' *The History Teacher*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2007, pp. 153-176; and A. Tucker, 'Historiographical Counterfactuals and Historical Contingency,' *History and Theory*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1999, pp. 265-276. A further sense of the scale of the literature is offered by the website *Uchronia*, which, while not limited to scholarly endeavours, presents a comprehensive bibliography of a diverse range of counterfactual histories and currently lists over 3100 titles. See *Uchronia*, www.uchronia.net, accessed 1 August 2011.

[11] Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't?,' p. 340.

[12] See, for example, R. J. Evans, 'Telling It Like It Wasn't?,' in D. A. Yerxa (ed.), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, p. 78; Ferguson, 'Virtual History,' pp. 75-76; Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made*, pp. 6-10; and Rosenfeld, 'Why Do We Ask "What If?,"' pp. 91-92.

"parlour game" mentality, and are instead embracing counterfactuals as a useful tool in their approach to the past.

Countering one commentator's suggestion that alternate history writing is "an enterprise without serious historiographical aspirations,"[13] its advocates have been active in promoting the benefits of the approach for historians. In particular, the major advantage which they emphasise is the ability of counterfactual history to provide a deeper understanding of the past. By examining and analysing what might have happened but did not, it is suggested, historians will gain a deeper appreciation of how and why what actually happened did occur. Alexander Demandt, in his 1984 study *History That Never Happened: A Treatise on the Question, What Would Have Happened If…?*, provides an illustrative example of this common argument:

> Thinking about alternatives is an indispensable activity of historical scholarship. We can judge the forces that have prevailed only by comparing them with those that have been defeated. The profile of the events that occurred is dispensable only against the background of the events that might have been expected otherwise. To the extent that the unrealized possibilities had a perceptible chance, recording them serves to complete our historical knowledge. For in seeking and giving reasons for alternatives, facts that would otherwise have been overlooked come to light.[14]

In addition to outlining the potential benefits, proponents have also pointed to the unavoidably counterfactual nature of history writing and research, arguing that any causal reasoning and argumentation depends upon such an approach.[15] Sharing many similarities with those who are emphasising the current 'turn' to ethics in historiography, advocates of alternate history have suggested that historians have long used counterfactuals in an unconscious or implicit manner, and that they are seeking to remedy this state of affairs by encouraging explicit debate and discussion about the most effective methods for using the approach. In a statement equally applicable to the place of morality in history writing, one

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[13] Bunzl, 'Counterfactual History,' p. 847.

[14] A. Demandt, *History That Never Happened: A Treatise on the Question, What Would Have Happened If…?* (1984), trans. C. D. Thomson, Jefferson, McFarland, 1993, p. 36. For examples of similar arguments see Bulholf, 'Modality and History,' pp. 146-147; R. Cowley, 'Introduction,' in R. Cowley (ed.), *What If? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (1999), London, Macmillan, 2000, pp. xi-xii; De Mey and Weber, 'Explanation and Thought Experiments,' p. 29; Lebow, 'Counterfactual Thought Experiments,' p. 157; and H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'History and Imagination' (1980), in H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden (eds.), *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, London, Duckworth, 1981, pp. 363-364.

[15] For example, historian Henry Ashby Turner has argued in this vein that "virtually everyone routinely employs similar reasoning in formulating judgments about the past. Whenever we brand a past action or policy as mistaken, for example, we are asserting that a better outcome would have been achieved by another action—one that did not, however, actually happen, one that is therefore by definition counterfactual. Whenever we designate something in the past as particularly important for what ensued, we are, in effect, saying that we have counterfactually reconstructed the subsequent course of history in order to gauge the impact of that factor's hypothetical absence. Only by limiting ourselves to chronicles of what happened in the past that are devoid of interpretation can we hope to avoid counterfactual analysis." See H. A. Turner, 'Human Agency and Impersonal Determinants in Historical Causation: A Response to David Lindenfeld,' *History and Theory*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1999, p. 306.

commentator has argued that "[i]f counterfactuals are unavoidable or just useful in a particular case, far better they be explicit and 'regulated' than remain implicit and risk undermining the larger analysis altogether."[16]

Of course, the enthusiasm of the recent proponents of counterfactual history has been tempered by a recognition of the potential pitfalls of their approach. Aware of the discipline's traditional disparaging attitude, the advocates of a professional counterfactual history enterprise have made it clear that there are 'good' and 'bad' counterfactuals.[17] To be deemed a 'good' what-if scenario, most scholars emphasise the need for a high degree of plausibility and probability. Ferguson, for example, has described 'plausible' or 'possible' alternatives as being "*only those…which we can show on the basis of contemporary evidence that contemporaries actually considered.*"[18] 'Good' counterfactual reasoning is thus firmly grounded in the reality of the actual past; all possible pasts need to have a strong connection to what actually did happen. By contrast, a 'bad' counterfactual, as one commentator has cautioned, has "no grounding; it is merely an act of imagination, and unconstrained imagination at that."[19]

Despite its growing popularity as a legitimate means of historical inquiry, it remains to be seen how counterfactual history can—or should—be applied to writing the history of atrocity. Of course, as outlined previously, some engagement with counterfactual reasoning is a part of all historical interpretation and argumentation. But does an explicit counterfactual approach in written histories of events such as the Holocaust or Stalin's brutal policy of forced collectivisation somehow trivialise or undermine the solemnity with which one usually comes to such history?[20] One hardly wishes to play "parlour games" with mass death. To be sure, questions of representation are fraught and highly contested when approaching past atrocity. Even someone as convinced of the inherently literary nature of historical writing as Hayden White ultimately conceded that histories with a "serious theme"—namely mass murder or genocide—could only support certain strategies of

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[16] P. Nash, 'The Use of Counterfactuals in History: A Look at the Literature,' *The SHAFR Newsletter*, March 1991, p. 12.
[17] Historian Allan Megill, for example, makes this distinction with the phrases "restrained" and "exuberant." See A. Megill, 'The New Counterfactualists,' in D. A. Yerxa (ed.), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, p. 101.
[18] Ferguson, 'Virtual History,' p. 86. Emphasis in original. For similar observations see, for example, P. E. Tetlock and G. Parker, 'Counterfactual Thought Experiments: Why We Can't Live Without Them and How We Must Learn to Live With Them,' in P. E. Tetlock, R. N. Lebow and G. Parker (eds.), *Unmaking the West: "What-If?" Scenarios That Rewrite World History*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2006, p. 30.
[19] Bunzl, 'Counterfactual History,' p. 845.
[20] For further discussion of this point, see Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't?,' pp. 340-341.

emplotment.[21] But where—if at all—does a counterfactual approach fit in? Does the "serious theme" of the history of atrocity make it emphatically unsuitable for the 'frivolity' associated with counterfactuals?[22]

Aware of these legitimate concerns, many advocates of the counterfactual approach have pointed to its usefulness in embracing a moral dimension in history writing.[23] One example of this view can be observed in Ferguson's lengthy introduction to *Virtual History*, where he provided a moralistic critique of deterministic theories of history and in doing so, justified the use of counterfactuals in similarly moral terms:

> In different ways, belief in determinist theories made all the great conflicts studied here—the English Civil War, the American War of Independence, the Anglo-Irish conflict, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War—more rather than less likely. Ultimately, as this book seeks to argue, those who died in these conflicts were the victims of genuinely chaotic and unpredictable events which could have turned out differently. Probably as many people have been killed by the unintended consequences of deterministic prophecies as by their self-fulfilling tendencies. It is nevertheless a striking fact that their killers have so often acted in the name of deterministic theories, whether religious, socialist, or racist. In this light, perhaps the best answer to the question "Why bother asking counterfactual questions?" is simply: What if we don't? Virtual history is a necessary antidote to determinism.[24]

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[21] H. White, 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth,' in S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 41.

[22] Indeed, some have noted how engaging with explicit 'what-if?' questions with an event like the Holocaust can carry serious moral implications. Historian Gavriel Rosenfeld, for example, has noted in this regard that "[e]ver since Theodor Adorno's famous dictum concerning the immorality of art after Auschwitz, there has reigned a general view among mainstream writers that the Holocaust should be 'approached as a solemn event' and portrayed from an appropriate moral perspective. Given this consensus, it is understandable why alternate scenarios that tinker with the facticity of the Holocaust might easily be misinterpreted as frivolous, if not dangerous. The allohistorical premise of the Holocaust's never having occurred, for example, smacks of Holocaust denial." See Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made*, p. 335.

[23] See, for example, Bulholf, 'Modality and History,' pp. 147, 159; Granieri, 'Telling it Like it Isn't?,' pp. 340-342, T. S. Presner, 'Subjunctive History? The Use of Counterfactuals in the Writing of the Disaster,' *Storiografia*, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 23-38; and Rosenfeld, 'Why Do We Ask "What If?",' pp. 92-93, 103.

[24] Ferguson, 'Virtual History,' p. 88. For a similar view, see, for example, Turner, 'Human Agency,' p. 305. Richard Evans remains unconvinced by Ferguson's arguments in this vein, and has suggested that political motivations lie behind them: "It is no accident, if I may use this well-worn cliché, that so many proponents of speculative history have been located on the right wing of the political spectrum. Niall Ferguson's collection on virtual history for example carries essays by such historians of the young fogey school as John Adamson, Jonathan Clark, Andrew Roberts, Michael Burleigh, and Mark Almond. Their arguments for chance and contingency in history are frequently directed against historians they regard as Marxist or at least socialist in orientation, such as E. H. Carr, Lawrence Stone, E. P. Thompson, or Eric Hobsbawm. In aiming at these historians they have a larger target in mind—the looming specter of determinism, which in Ferguson's view expresses the Marxist's 'contempt for free will.' Yet what's offered as a butt for criticism is often a caricature. Determinism simply means that historical events and processes are ultimately caused by factors independent of the individual human will. Contrary to what Ferguson claims, this does not mean that human will plays no part in history, nor did Marx and Engels ever say so. It does mean that people don't always get what they want." See Evans, 'Telling It Like It Wasn't?,' p. 79. For criticism of Evans' "complaint against alternate history [being] largely political in nature," see G. D. Rosenfeld, 'Alternate History and Memory,' in D. A. Yerxa (ed.), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, pp. 107-108.

In addition to Ferguson's lofty appraisal of counterfactual history serving as a "necessary antidote," others have pointed to the need to bear in mind "the responsible limits of historical imagining."[25] The propriety of approaching past atrocity with "unconstrained imagination" is clearly open to question.

Many perceptive discussions of counterfactual history and its moral dimension have pointed to the importance of what these speculations about the past suggest about the culture of the present, particularly how that culture views and remembers its past. In this sense, counterfactual history actually becomes closely related to writing about past atrocity, whose ongoing commemoration and remembrance in the present is at the centre of its continuing significance. Historian Todd Presner, in an essay devoted to counterfactual history and what he termed "the disaster," noted that "counterfactual stories give a history of the present—not the reality of the past—from the standpoint of what remains of the disaster."[26] Rather than trivialising or relativising the history of atrocity, Presner argued that counterfactual engagements with this past can reveal and document "the needs, desires, anxieties, pressures, and hopes of a given present," while providing an important parallel account to strictly factual histories.[27]

An important part of what counterfactual histories of disaster reveal about the culture of the present is "a kind of wish fulfilment."[28] The parameters of the alternate histories constructed by historians are suggestive of discourses of desirability, of creating a 'better' alternative to the reality of what did occur. One particular historiography of atrocity where this tendency is especially prevalent is that which addresses the atrocities associated with the Stalinist period of Soviet history. Predating the current popularity of the counterfactual approach, historians of this period have engaged in several important debates which centre upon explicitly counterfactual questions, along with more deterministic questions of 'inevitability' and 'necessity'. These debates reveal many of the moral concerns regarding counterfactual histories of atrocity, and suggest how questions of blame, responsibility, and individual agency take on a particular urgency when crimes of great magnitude are under discussion. As such, they are highly instructive for a consideration of historians' moral engagement with this past.

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[25] Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't?,' p. 345.
[26] Presner, 'Subjunctive History,' pp. 23-24.
[27] Presner, 'Subjunctive History,' p. 37. For similar views about counterfactual history and what it suggests about the present, see, for example, Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't?,' pp. 341-342; and Rosenfeld, 'Why Do We Ask "What If?",' pp. 92-93, 103.
[28] Granieri, 'Telling It Like It Isn't?,' p. 342. See also Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made*, pp. 10-11.

The figure of Stalin and the experience of Stalinism remain ongoing sources of debate in the historiography of the Soviet Union. Historians continue to ask questions regarding the origins, development and outcomes of Stalin's rule and policies, and have often engaged in explicit counterfactual reasoning in order to find answers to these questions. Conversely, others who have adopted a more deterministic approach to the Soviet past have denied the possibility of alternatives, and instead argued for the 'inevitability' or 'necessity' of what actually did occur. In one of the few essays to focus on counterfactuals in the historiography of the Soviet Union, historian George W. Breslauer has noted that "the field has paid little attention to…the methodology of counterfactual thought experiments," believing that "the quality of counterfactual reasoning in the field of Soviet studies has surely been affected by the nature of the issues and the purposes of the participants."[29] As Breslauer suggests, in the historiography of the Soviet Union "the purposes of the participants" have often been of a political nature, but when the atrocities associated with Stalinist policies are under consideration, the discussion also takes on a clear moral focus.[30]

Of all the various strands of historiographical discourse concerning Stalin and Stalinism, the discussions regarding the process through which Stalin emerged as Lenin's successor in the late 1920s and the decision to adopt the policy of forced collectivisation have proved to be among the most contentious. Broader questions about the origins of Stalinism and the Soviet economy during the 1920s, particularly the possible continued viability of the New Economic Policy as opposed to the supposed necessity of collectivisation, have helped drive and sustain these debates. It is from these discussions that some of the major counterfactuals in the historiography of the Soviet Union, namely the 'necessity' or 'inevitability' of Stalin and his methods, and the possibility of leadership alternatives, have emerged. These speculations, however, have in turn created further controversy.

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[29] G. W. Breslauer, 'Counterfactual Reasoning in Western Studies of Soviet Politics and Foreign Relations,' in P. E. Tetlock and A. Belkin (eds.), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 71, 84. For Breslauer's adoption of counterfactual methods in own writing on the Soviet Union, see G. W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. Rosenfeld has made a similar point regarding the importance of those writing the histories, arguing specifically of counterfactual histories of the Third Reich that "studying the identities of the authors of alternate histories and their motives for writing them clarifies their own relationship to the Nazi past. Such factors as an author's national origins, generational identity and political affiliation can illuminate their motives for speculating [or refusing to speculate] about the past." See Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made*, pp. 13-14. I would argue that this observation is equally valid for those writing about Soviet history.

[30] Of course, it is clear that this nexus between politics and morality is relevant to all historiographical discussion of atrocity, including that concerning the Holocaust. The present study, however, will address these issues in relation to the historiography of Stalinism, as it is a strongly developed, sophisticated and prominent feature of the debates, and thus offers greater opportunity for reflection and analysis.

Among the first to engage with these questions was Isaac Deutscher, whose biography of Stalin was published in 1949. Deutscher, a Polish Jew and committed Marxist who emigrated to England in 1939, described himself as "a 'premature' anti-Stalinist."[31] Indeed, before being expelled from the Polish Communist Party in 1932 for "Trotskyism," Deutscher had led its first "anti-Stalinist opposition."[32] Despite this personal antipathy towards Stalin, however, much of his work on the *vozhd'* reflects the notion that "History has its own cunning."[33] As such, the role of the individual is considerably diminished. In his 1954 study *Russia After Stalin*, for example, Deutscher simply declared, "[t]he trend of the time found in Stalin its 'organ'. If it hadn't been Stalin it would have been another."[34] Similarly, he argued elsewhere that "necessity works through such human material as it finds available."[35]

As a result, in his writings on the Soviet Union Deutscher tended to reduce Stalin's individual agency in the course of events, and policies such as collectivisation were attributed to greater circumstantial forces such as those of revolution and the structure of the Bolshevik political system.[36] For example, when explaining Stalin's actions during the grain crisis which hastened the decision to collectivise in the late 1920s, Deutscher argued that "Stalin was precipitated into collectivization by the chronic danger of famine in 1928 and 1929," claiming that he "acted under the overwhelming pressure of events. The circumstance that he was not prepared for the events precipitated him into a course of action over which he was liable to lose control."[37] Stalin was thus presented as being

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[31] I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (1949), London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. xii.
[32] M. Cox, 'E. H. Carr and Isaac Deutscher: A Very "Special Relationship,"' in M. Cox (ed.), *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000, p. 127. See also D. Horowitz, 'Introduction,' in D. Horowitz (ed.), *Isaac Deutscher: The Man and His Work*, London, Macdonald, 1971, p. 11; L. Labedz, 'Isaac Deutscher: Historian, Prophet, Biographer,' *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, vol. 30, nos. 1-2, 1988-1989, p. 35; and D. Singer, 'Armed With a Pen: Notes for a Political Portrait of Isaac Deutscher,' in D. Horowitz (ed.), *Isaac Deutscher: The Man and His Work*, London, Macdonald, 1971, pp. 29-35.
[33] P. Beilharz, 'Isaac Deutscher: History and Necessity,' *History of Political Thought*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1986, p. 379.
[34] I. Deutscher, *Russia After Stalin*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1953, p. 41.
[35] I. Deutscher, 'The Meaning of De-Stalinization,' in *idem.*, *Ironies of History: Essays on Contemporary Communism*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 23.
[36] For an interesting discussion of how the notion of 'agency' figures in Deutscher's *Stalin*, see, for example, P. Pomper, 'Historians and Individual Agency,' *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1996, pp. 289-292.
[37] Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 318. A similar argument can be found in Theodore von Laue's 1981 essay 'Stalin Among the Moral and Political Imperatives, or How to Judge Stalin?', in which his final assessment of Stalin was "[w]e are left to praise Stalin as a tragic giant set into the darkest part of the twentieth century, into the most nightmarish cleavage between ends and means in politics. He was raised by circumstances beyond his making and beyond his grasp—and by his own steely resilience—to heights of power unmatched in known history and utterly abnormal by common understanding on the ground floors of life anywhere, in his own country even by his guiding ideology, as well as in the West and the world at large…. All other statesmen have strutted on the world stage for shorter periods, under easier conditions and, it might seem, with no more comprehension of the forces among which they were trying to steer their course." See T. H. von Laue, 'Stalin Among the Moral and Political Imperatives, or How to Judge Stalin?,' *Soviet Union*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1981, p. 17.

controlled by and therefore acting from the historical circumstances he found himself in, rather than creating and shaping them through his own 'free' decisions.

In addition to his views regarding the 'inevitability' of Stalin, Deutscher also believed that his policies were brutal but 'necessary', and their results should not be ignored when assessing Stalin's overall legacy. He argued, "[i]mmense as was the waste of human life, energy, and of materials, the achievement, too, was enormous."[38] Furthermore, Deutscher suggested that without such measures, the course of recent history, namely the outcome of the Second World War, may well have been different:

> The truth was that the war could not have been won without the intensive industrialization of Russia, and of her eastern provinces in particular. Nor could it have been won without the collectivization of large numbers of farms. The *muzhik* of 1930, who had never handled a tractor or any other machine, would have been of little use in modern war. Collectivized farming, with its machine-tractor stations scattered all over the country, had been the peasants' preparatory school for mechanized warfare.[39]

For Deutscher, then, historical circumstances had propelled Stalin to his position of absolute power, and determined his subsequent decisions and actions. Brutal as the 'second revolution' may have been, there were also genuine—and necessary—achievements.

Deutscher's views were similar to those of his friend E. H. Carr.[40] As we have seen, Carr had little patience with the 'might-have-beens' of history, and, while not sharing Deutscher's Marxist convictions, nonetheless held similar beliefs regarding the 'inevitability' of Stalin and his methods in light of the historical circumstances of Russia in the 1920s.[41] In his multi-volume work *A History of Soviet Russia*, for example, Carr noted of the *vozhd'*:

> More than almost any other great man in history, Stalin illustrates the thesis that circumstances make the man, not the man the circumstances. Stalin is the most impersonal of great historical figures. In the party struggles of the nineteen-twenties he appears not to mould events, but to mould himself to them…. [T]he qualities which raised him to greatness were precisely the

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[38] Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 332. Elsewhere, Deutscher elaborated on this point, arguing that: "In the course of three decades…the face of the Soviet Union has become transformed. The core of Stalin's historic achievements consists in this, that he found Russia working with wooden ploughs and left her equipped with atomic piles. He has raised Russia to the level of the second industrial Power of the world. This was not a matter of mere material progress and organization. No such achievement would have been possible without a vast cultural revolution, in the course of which a whole nation was sent to school to undergo a most intensive education." See I. Deutscher, 'An Obituary on Stalin,' in *idem.*, *Ironies of History: Essays on Contemporary Communism*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 184-185.

[39] Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 550.

[40] On the Carr-Deutscher relationship see, for example, Cox, 'E. H. Carr and Isaac Deutscher,' pp. 125-144; T. Deutscher, 'E. H. Carr: A Personal Memoir,' *New Left Review*, no. 137, 1983, pp. 78-79; and J. Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892-1982*, London, Verso, 1999, pp. 138-140, 156, 243.

[41] For Carr's reflections on his attitudes to Marxism, see E. H. Carr, 'An Autobiography' (1980), in M. Cox (ed.), *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000, pp. xxi-xxii. For comment on this aspect of Carr's beliefs, see, for example, R. W. Davies, 'Carr's Changing Views of the Soviet Union,' in M. Cox (ed.), *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000, p. 105.

> qualities which mirrored the current stage of the historical process. They were the qualities, not only of the man, but of the period.[42]

The particular historical circumstances, Carr believed, made the extreme solutions which were adopted more or less unavoidable. He argued, for example, of the various crises and problems which had precipitated the decision to collectivise, "[a] situation so completely out of hand bred a mood in which desperate remedies may well have seemed the only way out."[43]

While, like Deutscher, Carr praised the achievements of the Soviet Union under Stalin's rule, he was certainly not ignorant of the suffering which Stalinist policies had produced. Nonetheless, he remained committed to the view that such measures had been necessary, and determined by the wider historical circumstances:

> It would be wrong to pass over in silence…the cost of this operation in human suffering, or its other ambiguous aspects. The most cruel burdens fell on the peasants who formed the mass of the Russian people. The drawing off of surplus population from the land, the reorganization of agriculture and the introduction of modern and large-scale methods of cultivation were a necessity if the country was to move forward and take its place in the modern world. The callousness and the brutalities with which the task was accomplished can be explained by the conditions in which it was undertaken—notably by the weakness of the regime in the countryside and the alienation of the peasant from it—but have left their stain on subsequent Soviet history.[44]

Overall, Carr believed of the Soviet Union that "the harshness and cruelty of the régime were real. But so were its achievements."[45]

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[42] E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in One Country 1924-1926*, vol. 1, London, Macmillan, 1964, pp. 176-177.

[43] E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 1, part 1 (1969), London, Macmillan, 1978, p. 269. Similarly, Carr argued elsewhere of the decision to collectivise that "[i]n the past twelve years [between 1917 and 1929] agriculture had remained a quasi-independent enclave in the economy, functioning on its own lines, and resisting any attempt from without to alter them. This was the essence of NEP. It was an uneasy compromise which did not last. Once a powerful central authority in Moscow had taken in hand the planning and reorganization of the economy, and embarked on the path of industrialization, and once the failure of agriculture under the existing system to supply the needs of a rapidly expanding urban and factory population became evident, the break logically followed. The battle was joined, and was fought out with great tenacity and bitterness on both sides." See E. H. Carr, *The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin 1917-1929*, London, Macmillan, 1979, p. 161.

[44] E. H. Carr, 'Unfinished Revolution,' in *idem.*, *1917: Before and After*, London, Macmillan, 1969, p. 170. Carr made a similar argument in another essay published in this same volume, namely that "[i]t would be wrong to minimize or condone the sufferings and the horrors inflicted on large sections of the Russian people in the process of transformation. This was a historical tragedy, which has not yet been outlived, or lived down. But it would be idle to deny that the sum of human well-being and human opportunity in Russia today is immeasurably greater than it was fifty years ago." See E. H. Carr, 'The Russian Revolution: Its Place in History,' in *idem.*, *1917: Before and After*, London, Macmillan, 1969, p. 8. See also, for example, Carr, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 172. Nonetheless, others have argued that the ends did not justify the Stalinist means. Robert Conquest, for example, claimed in *The Great Terror* that "Stalinism is one way of attaining industrialization, just as cannibalism is one way of attaining a high-protein diet. The desirability of the result hardly seems to balance the objections." See R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, London, Macmillan, 1968, p. 496.

[45] Carr, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 189.

Another early proponent of the view that Stalin and his measures were 'inevitable' and/or 'necessary' was Theodore von Laue. The answers to the questions in the title of his 1964 study *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?* were, von Laue believed, inherent within "the ordeal of modern Russia," which "had been in the making for many years."[46] In particular, he emphasised the geopolitical 'necessity' of the measures adopted in the Soviet Union from the late 1920s, noting the struggle which the Bolsheviks, and all Russian rulers before them, faced in "establish[ing] secure boundaries, weld[ing] together their inchoate territories, and mak[ing] their subjects into willing and capable citizens."[47] An additional and closely related 'necessity', von Laue believed, was Russia's rapid modernisation and industrialisation "at whatever price."[48] In terms of how such factors influenced Stalin's attitudes and behaviour, von Laue argued that:

> Stalin was terrified by the dangers to his country posed by expansionist nations like Italy and Japan. Germany soon would follow, he feared, and American influence loomed even larger. Stalin therefore determined to modernize the Soviet Union in the shortest time possible, whatever the price.[49]

In light of the pressures of these circumstances facing the Bolsheviks, von Laue believed that "we have no right to condemn their frantic effort to advance their country to strength and glory."[50]

Much like Carr and Deutscher, von Laue presented the individual role of Stalin as secondary to the pressure of circumstances and broader historical forces. For von Laue, Stalin's fierce fight against Bukharin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders in the wake of Lenin's death was inherent in the situation they found themselves in. Others, he believed, would have been forced to use such methods had they been in Stalin's position:

> [S]ince there was no settled machinery of succession, every one of these men, had *he* risen to the top, would have had to eliminate his rivals by some form of wolfishness. A militant Communist party required a single head. No collegium could maintain in the long run the dynamic drive of Communist myth. Thus Stalin emerged as the first complete heir of the Imperial autocrat. Under the prevailing conditions, Russian society did not manage to produce a more civilized dictator. The blame, if blame there must be, falls on the country and on circumstances rather than on the man.[51]

Von Laue, then, was quite explicit on the matter of responsibility. The wider historical circumstances, rather than Stalin's own actions and choices, were more at fault.

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[46] T. H. von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?: A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution, 1900-1930* (1964), London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966, p. 16.
[47] von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 39.
[48] von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 51.
[49] T. von Laue, 'A Perspective on History: The Soviet System Reconsidered,' *The Historian*, vol. 61, no. 2, 1999, p. 386.
[50] Von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 221.
[51] Von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 205. Emphasis in original.

Unsurprisingly, in light of the broader political climate that Deutscher, Carr and von Laue were writing within, their views attracted considerable critical attention. Other scholars responded sharply to suggestions of Stalin's 'inevitability', and considered such arguments, especially when coupled with frank acknowledgement of the achievements of the Soviet Union during this period, as amounting to an apologia. For example, Leopold Labedz, a fierce critic of Deutscher and Carr, noted of the former's biography of Stalin:

> Deutscher washes whiter than Clio allows. His anthropomorphic language only obscures the realization that 'history' cannot 'cleanse' anything. Stalin's victims are in their graves, millions of them unknown, and they cannot be raised from the dead. And a moral restitution involves not an historical apologia, but an unequivocal condemnation.[52]

Similarly, Labedz found Carr to be, along with Deutscher, "no crude whitewasher of Stalin," but, perhaps more sinisterly, "a very subtle apologist."[53]

Both during his life and after his death, Carr has, as his biographer has noted, "aroused enormous antipathy from fellow intellectuals."[54] Among the sources of this antipathy were his views regarding the 'necessity' and 'inevitability' of Stalin, his outspoken hostility to historical alternatives, and what one critic termed his "what-was-is-right deterministic argumentation."[55] A famous dispute erupted between Carr and Isaiah Berlin concerning these exact issues, and it has been suggested that Carr devised his 1961 G. M. Trevelyan Lectures, which went on to form *What is History?*, as an extended reply to Berlin's 1954 book *Historical Inevitability*.[56] Berlin, for his part, was highly critical of historical

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[52] L. Labedz, 'Deutscher as Historian and Prophet, II,' *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1977-1978, p. 150. For other, generally less critical reviews of Deutscher's biography, see, for example, H. W. Ehrmann, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* and H. von Eckardt, *Ivan the Terrible*, *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1950, pp. 472-473; M. Fanisod, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1, 1950, pp. 151-154; H. Kohn, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, vol. 272, 1950, pp. 282-283; J. Margolis, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1950, pp. 363-364; J. Miller, Review of S. Alliluyeva, *Twenty Letters to a Friend* and I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *Soviet Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1967, pp. 283-284; J. Towster, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1949, pp. 1290-1291; R. C. Tucker, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1961, p. 182; and L. Volin, Review of I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1950, pp. 606-607.

[53] L. Labedz, 'E. H. Carr: An Historian Overtaken by History,' *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, vol. 30, nos. 1-2, 1988-1989, p. 99.

[54] J. Haslam, 'E. H. Carr and the History of Soviet Russia,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1983, p. 1021. Indeed, almost twenty years after his death, fellow historians still felt sufficient animosity to label Carr as "'consistently nasty'…in his works as in his life," and "[h]aving no room for humans in either his personal life or in his scholarship." See N. Stone, 'Horrible History Man,' *The Spectator*, 4 September 1999, p. 34; and R. Pipes, 'A Very Cold Fish: How Hatred of Bourgeois Culture Drove E. H. Carr to Sympathize With Hitler, Then Stalin,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 10 September 1999, p. 3, respectively.

[55] D. Raleigh, Review of E. H. Carr, *The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1981, p. 646.

[56] See Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity*, pp. 198-199; W. E. Odom, 'Bolshevik Politics and the Dustbin of History,' *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. 12, nos. 1-2, 1976, p. 190; and H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'E. H. Carr's

determinism, not least because of "the elimination of the notion of individual responsibility" that it implies.[57] "We are…told that as historians," he argued, perhaps with Carr in mind, "it is our task to describe, let us say, the great revolutions of our own time without so much as hinting that certain individuals involved in them not merely caused, but were responsible for, great misery and destruction."[58] The effects of this 'commandment', Berlin believed, were serious: "to accept this doctrine is to do violence to the basic notions of our morality."[59]

Interestingly, other critics of Carr also emphasised the moral implications of his arguments concerning 'necessity' and 'inevitability', and his closed-mindedness with regard to possible alternate historical paths. In a review of one of the later volumes of Carr's *History*, for example, one commentator found cause for complaint with "an undertone of self-evident necessity in all the steps that were taken by the Stalinist leadership."[60] This same reviewer also indicated what they felt was really at stake in steadfastly holding such a position, noting that a serious consideration of alternatives such as that offered by the Bukharin opposition "was no parlor game, but a question of appraising the fundamental forces and possibilities operating on a society and, to put it bluntly, a matter for moral judgment of the alternatives chosen."[61] Carr's "vantage point and his determinism," other

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Success Story,' *Encounter*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1962, p. 76. Like *What is History?*, *Historical Inevitability* was based on earlier lectures. In Berlin's case, it was the August Comte Memorial Trust Lecture, delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on 12 May 1953. See I. Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954. For more on the Berlin-Carr dispute, see, for example, A. Talbot, 'Chance and Necessity in History: E. H. Carr and Leon Trotsky Compared,' *Historical Social Research*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2009, pp. 88-89.

[57] Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 25. On the subject of historical determinism and the question of individual responsibility, Berlin continued that "[n]obody denies that it would be stupid as well as cruel to blame me for not being taller than I am, or to regard the colour of my hair or the qualities of my intellect or heart as being due principally to my own free choice; these attributes are as they are through no decision of mine. If I extend this category without limit, then whatever is, is necessary and inevitable. This unlimited extension of necessity, on any of the views described above, becomes intrinsic to the explanation of everything. To blame and praise, consider possible alternative courses of action, damn or congratulate historical figures for acting as they did, becomes an absurd activity. Admiration and contempt for this or that individual may indeed continue, but it becomes akin to aesthetic judgment. We can eulogize or denounce, feel love or hatred, satisfaction and shame, but we can neither blame nor alter. Alexander, Caesar, Attila, Mohammed, Cromwell, Hitler are like floods and earthquakes, sunsets, oceans, mountains; we may admire or fear them, welcome or curse them, but to denounce or extol their acts is as sensible as addressing sermons to a tree." See Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 26.

[58] Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 77.

[59] Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 77.

[60] R. V. Daniels, Review of E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 1, *Slavic Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1972, p. 429.

[61] Daniels, Review of Carr and Davies, p. 429. Von Laue was also criticised for his similar closed-mindedness to historical alternatives. For example, one reviewer of *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?* accused him of being "excessively deterministic" and "ignor[ing] the elements of contingency and personality that played such a large role in the Bolshevik victory." See C. E. Black, Review of T. H. von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?: A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution, 1900-1930*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1964, pp. 750, 749 respectively. Similarly, another reviewer criticised von Laue for the fact that "[l]ittle importance or attention is given to the complex alternatives that faced the leadership, and the abstract 'necessities' of history virtually replace Communist doctrine as the chief formative influence of Soviet history." See H. J. Ellison, Review of T. H.

critics charged, led him to ignore this task of moral condemnation, and "understate the great miseries suffered by the Soviet people."[62] The moral concerns of blame, responsibility and agency which are raised by the notions of 'necessity' or 'inevitability' have therefore long accompanied historiographical debate concerning Stalin and his policies, and have remained an important feature of the discussion.

While historians like Deutscher, Carr and von Laue had dealt with concerns of inevitability and necessity as part of broader enquiries into the Soviet system, the explicit question of 'was Stalin really necessary?' was first posed by Alec Nove in his 1962 essay of the same name. The various 'what ifs?' raised by Stalin and his 'second revolution' were something which Nove had been pondering for some time. In a 1959 article entitled 'The Peasants, Collectivization, and Mr. Carr,' a response to the fifth volume of Carr's *History*, Nove noted with some asperity how "one feels in his book a tendency to suggest that the solution adopted (if not the precise extent of the violence used) was predestined. Perhaps it was, but it is still worth carefully enquiring into possible alternative roads."[63] Overall, he cautioned historians approaching the subject of collectivisation that "it would be dangerous to assume that the policy was a response to necessity."[64]

By the time he posed and addressed this question himself, however, Nove appeared to have changed his mind. In his 1962 article, he argued that Stalin—or at least a Stalin-like figure—was indeed 'necessary' in light of the historical circumstances. For Nove, any consideration of the necessity of a particular past outcome or the viability of any alternatives needed to be constrained not by what was "*physically* possible," but by what he described as "practical alternatives."[65] He demonstrated this point with his famous metaphor of an Orthodox rabbi faced with the option of choosing between a cheese or a ham sandwich actually having no choice, as eating pork is not a "practical alternative" for an Orthodox rabbi.[66] Nove applied similar reasoning to the choices of the Bolsheviks, arguing that physically possible alternatives to the problems facing the Soviet Union in the late 1920s could not be adopted precisely because of the ideological commitments of those in power.

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von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?: A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution, 1900-1930* and A. Balabanoff, *Impressions of Lenin*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 70, no. 2, 1965, p. 461.

[62] P. Kenez, Review of E. H. Carr, *The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin*, *The Russian Review*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1980, p. 372. In this same review, Kenez was highly critical of "Carr's well-known determinism," claiming that "[i]n his interpretation, it is not a particular group of people with a certain set of values who made decisions determining the fate of the Soviet Union. Instead, it seems to the reader, events occurred which really could not have happened otherwise." See Kenez, Review of Carr, p. 372.

[63] A. Nove, 'The Peasants, Collectivization, and Mr. Carr,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1959, p. 385.

[64] Nove, 'The Peasants, Collectivization, and Mr. Carr,' p. 389.

[65] A. Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' *Encounter*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1962, p. 86. Emphasis in original.

[66] See Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 86.

The major problem facing the Bolsheviks, Nove suggested, was the need for rapid mass industrialisation, a need which would invariably lead to a confrontation with the peasantry. More moderate leaders like Bukharin wished to soften the blow of this confrontation by industrialising at a slower rate and relying on the voluntary activities of the peasants. Time, however, was not on the Soviets' side; "[t]he Bolsheviks," Nove noted, "were in a hurry."[67] Furthermore, opening up any system of free trade between the state and the peasantry—which was inherent in the logic of the Bukharinist approach—necessitated the development and expansion of the 'kulaks'. Allowing such a situation to develop was, Nove argued, an ideological impossibility for the Bolsheviks, "including, despite momentary aberrations, Bukharin himself."[68] To escape this bind, and still achieve the necessary mass industrialisation at the required pace, collectivisation became the only viable option for Stalin and the regime in dealing with the 'problem' of the peasantry.

The consequences of the policy of forced collectivisation—such as increased coercion and violence, increased police presence and power, as well as the unpopularity of the regime—were inevitable, and, Nove argued, created a situation in which totalitarian rule became necessary in order to maintain power and control. On this point, Nove concluded that "[t]he whole-hog Stalin…was not 'necessary', but the possibility of a Stalin was a necessary consequence of the effort of a minority group to keep power and carry out a vast social-economic revolution in a very short time. And *some* elements of Stalinism were, in those circumstances, scarcely avoidable."[69]

Perhaps mindful of the criticisms which historians like Deutscher and Carr had faced before him, Nove was most insistent that his belief that Stalin was 'necessary' did not absolve Stalin from responsibility for his crimes, and that 'necessary' was in no way akin to 'desirable'. In a careful statement of these concerns, he noted that:

> To some people, the word 'necessary' smacks of 'historicism,' of a belief in inevitability, or suggests that the author wishes to find some historic justification, a whitewash to be applied to Stalin and his system. This is far from being my intention. 'Necessity' is used here with no moral strings attached.[70]

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[67] Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 88.
[68] Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 88.
[69] Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 92. Emphasis in original. In a later study, Nove continued this line of argument, suggesting that "the success of the Soviet Union, albeit by totalitarian and economically inefficient methods, in making of itself the world's second industrial and military power is indisputable…. What if, given Russia's whole historical experience and the irreversible fact of revolution, there was in fact no alternative path for her? By this is not meant that any one act of cruelty or oppression was in some sense predestined, but rather that modernization from above, by crude and sometimes barbarous methods, was rendered highly probable by the circumstances of the time. Might not some, or many, of the excesses, stupidities, errors, be part of the *cost* of industrializing in this manner?" See A. Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (1969), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p. 378. Emphasis in original.
[70] Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 86.

A large part of Nove's essay was subsequently devoted to discussing what Stalin, while still being deemed 'necessary', could be held responsible for. From this assessment Nove concluded that while the brutal methods which were employed were not necessary (what he meant by the "whole-hog Stalin") and for which the *vozhd'* could and should be held responsible, he maintained his grim belief that given the historical circumstances, the emergence of Stalin or a Stalin-like figure was unavoidable.

In November 1975, a debate was staged between Nove and fellow economic historian James R. Millar at Duke University. By this time, the question Nove had originally posed, namely 'was Stalin really necessary?', had morphed into the closely related question of 'was collectivisation really necessary?'. It was not, however, the first time the two scholars had found cause for confrontation on these matters. In 1971 a disagreement between Nove and Millar had been published in *Soviet Studies*, relating to an earlier article by the latter which suggested that "as an empirical proposition, the necessity for collectivization has by no means been established."[71] Before coming face-to-face with Nove at Duke University, Millar continued to argue against the 'necessity' of Stalin and the policy of collectivisation. Perhaps the most developed expression of his views can be found in his 1974 article 'Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five-Year Plan'.[72]

In this essay, Millar's main concern had been to evaluate collectivisation as an economic policy, with a specific focus on how appropriate it had been as a means of aiding the achievement of rapid industrialisation. Following on from the work of Soviet historian A. A. Barsov, Millar based his arguments upon various statistical figures from the period 1928-1932, including the trade balance between the agricultural and non-rural sectors and price and quantity indices for agriculture. Against what he termed the "standard hypothesis" of the rationale for Soviet collectivisation, which held that the agricultural sector had made a net contribution to industrialisation, Millar suggested that agriculture was in fact a net *recipient* of real resources during the period.[73] The agricultural sector had therefore made a negative 'contribution' to the industrialisation effort. Far from viewing Stalin or collectivisation as having being 'necessary', then, Millar ultimately concluded that

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[71] See J. R. Millar, 'Soviet Rapid Development and the Agricultural Surplus Hypothesis,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1970, p. 86. For Nove's reply, see A. Nove, 'The Agricultural Surplus Hypothesis: A Comment on James R. Millar's Article,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1971, pp. 394-401. Millar then responded in turn. See J. R. Millar, 'The Agricultural Surplus Hypothesis: A Reply to Alec Nove,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1971, pp. 302-306.

[72] See J. R. Millar, 'Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five-Year Plan: A Review Article,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1974, pp. 750-766.

[73] See Millar, 'Mass Collectivization,' p. 751.

"mass collectivization of Soviet agriculture must be reckoned as an unmitigated policy disaster," pointing to "its adverse long-run consequences" which "deprived [it] of any economic rationale whatever."[74] As an alternative to the disaster of collectivisation, Millar suggested that "a continuation of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s would have permitted at least as rapid a rate of industrialization with less cost to the urban as well as the rural population of the Soviet Union"—in other words, the Bukharinist line.[75]

Millar presented these same arguments in the 1975 debate with Nove. After outlining what he termed the "standard story" of Soviet collectivisation, namely that "[c]ollectivization was a necessary step if the Soviet Union was to achieve the rate of industrialization that it did in the 1930s," Millar once again argued for the statistical evidence which suggested that the agricultural sector actually took real resources away from industry as opposed to contributing any.[76] Observing that Nove "comes perilously close to a determinist positions at times," Millar nonetheless claimed to have little concern with the inevitability or otherwise of Stalin, and instead wished only to evaluate collectivisation as an economic policy.[77]

In response to Millar, Nove held to his belief that while 'better' alternatives to collectivisation may have been available to the Bolsheviks, it was ideologically impossible for them to accept any of these alternatives, rehashing his 'rabbi and a ham or cheese sandwich' metaphor in order to support this point.[78] Importantly, he continued to emphasise that "necessity" in this instance was not akin to "desirability":

> [L]et me repeat once more my belief that the actual collectivisation program carried out by Stalin, which was a most dreadful thing, was not inexorably predetermined and that it was not morally justified by the outcome of the industrialisation drive of the 1930s.[79]

As both protagonists recognised, they were fundamentally concerned with different questions—for Nove, the question of why collectivisation had originally been adopted was particularly important, while Millar was more concerned with the outcomes and impact of collectivisation once it had once it had been adopted.[80] As a result, despite moderator Jerry F. Hough's view of the exchange between Nove and Millar that "[f]ew debates have, I

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[74] Millar, 'Mass Collectivization,' pp. 764, 766.
[75] Millar, 'Mass Collectivization,' p. 766.
[76] See J. R. Millar, 'What's Wrong with the "Standard Story,"' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1976, pp. 50, 51.
[77] J. R. Millar, 'Rejoinder,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1976, p. 60.
[78] A. Nove, 'The "Logic" and Cost of Collectivization,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1975, p. 55.
[79] Nove, 'The "Logic" and Cost of Collectivization,' p. 59.
[80] See Millar, 'Rejoinder,' pp. 59-60; and A. Nove, 'Rejoinder,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1976, p. 61. Reflecting on the debate more than a decade later, Lynne Viola drew a similar conclusion regarding the fundamental "cross-purposes" of the arguments Nove and Millar were advancing. See L. Viola, 'Back on the Economic Front of Collectivization or Soviet Agriculture Without Soviet Power,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1988, pp. 217-218.

think, been so successful as this one in clarifying issues and advancing our understanding,"[81] the historiographical debate remained far from closed.

These issues were explicitly taken up again in the late 1980s, with the original protagonists of Nove and Millar being replaced by historians Lynne Viola and Holland Hunter. The focus of discussion remained the necessity of collectivisation, and the viability of alternative options such as NEP, but the dual issues of historical alternatives and historical inevitability were now at the forefront. What made Hunter's analysis different from those of both Nove and Millar before him was his explicitly counterfactual attempt to compare "what actually happened and what might have developed" by imagining what Soviet grain harvests may have yielded in the period 1928-1940 had the policy of collectivisation not been adopted.[82] In his article Hunter did not explicitly suggest what alternative to collectivisation might have been followed, but appeared to favour a continuation of what had been occurring in the late 1920s under NEP. Based on his projections, Hunter provided a sobering conclusion:

> Collectivization not only undermined deliveries from agriculture to nonagriculture but required an emergency flow of resources from industry to agriculture, in the form of tractors, trucks, and combines to replace the lost animal tractive power. These resources were diverted from the industrial expansion the party was seeking. The projections spelled out in the present essay illustrate an alternative course of agricultural development in the prewar period that would have yielded somewhat more agricultural output and supported a substantially better standard of living. With the benefit of hindsight it seems tragic that this road was not taken.[83]

While Hunter conceded that collectivisation had been "politically inevitable," he nonetheless argued for the usefulness of counterfactual reasoning and argumentation in order to understand the Soviet past and the viability of Stalin's policies.[84]

In response to Hunter, Viola was dismissive of such attempts to elucidate alternatives to past realities. Reiterating the "parlour game" mentality common to the profession at large, Viola described Hunter's counterfactual projections as "futile at best," pointing to what she perceived as the unoriginal and unsurprising findings which the

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[81] J. F. Hough, 'A Moderator's Afterthoughts,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1976, p. 62.
[82] H. Hunter, 'Soviet Agriculture With and Without Collectivization, 1928-1940,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1988, p. 203. Hunter had engaged with similar concerns in the same journal some years earlier, where he concluded that "Bolshevik objectives might have been achieved without the Draconian methods that Stalin used," and suggested "[a] number of alternative paths were available, evolving out of the situation existing at the end of the 1920s, and leading to levels of capacity and output that could have been as good as that achieved by, say, 1936, but with far less turbulence, waste, destruction, and sacrifice." See H. Hunter, 'The Overambitious First Soviet Five-Year Plan,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1973, p. 256.
[83] Hunter, 'Soviet Agriculture,' p. 216.
[84] H. Hunter, 'Reply to Viola or Toward Historical Analysis with Fuller Understanding,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1988, p. 223.

exercise had produced.[85] She appeared, however, to be less concerned with the actual findings of Hunter's counterfactual analysis than with the idea that seeking and discussing historical alternatives was desirable or even possible. To this end, she argued:

> To say that collectivization occurred and that its shape and outcome were likely given the historical context is not to argue for inevitability in history. The very word *inevitability* is meaningless within the context of the past even though some advocates of certain kinds of economic projections and certain kinds of alternatives often charge their opponents with determinism (another nonword in history) and claims based on the inevitable. Could there have been an alternative to Soviet collectivization?.... In the abstract, alternatives are always possible, but what type of alternative should be considered a historical alternative? A clear policy alternative offered by a policy maker seems to qualify more as a historical alternative than an alternative offered by a contemporary scholar.[86]

It appears that the issue of contention between Hunter and Viola was not the finer details of collectivisation, but rather that of counterfactuals and historical inevitability. In this sense, the historiographical discussion had evolved to become a debate regarding the appropriateness and limitations of counterfactuals and concepts like 'necessary' or 'inevitable' in comprehending the Soviet past. "The essential question to be raised," Viola noted, "is why certain western scholars are so persistent in their search for alternatives to Soviet realities."[87]

One particular such "alternative to Soviet realities" which has proved especially contentious has been that of a leadership alternative to Stalin. Could someone else have fulfilled the role of Lenin's successor, and how would the Soviet Union's path of development have differed accordingly? As the debate regarding the 'necessity' of both Stalin and collectivisation played out, others were beginning to probe further into the personalities and behaviour of the other Bolshevik figures in the years between Lenin's death in 1924 and Stalin's emergence as supreme leader of the Party by the end of 1928. These scholars explicitly rejected the notion that Stalin and the policies he proposed were 'necessary'. Instead, they believed that the Soviet Union could have taken a different (namely, a 'kinder' or 'gentler') path had someone other than Stalin been at the helm.

In rejecting Stalin as the 'necessary' or 'inevitable' successor to Lenin, the most popular alternative choice for these historians was Bukharin. Among the early engagements with this particular possibility was Moshe Lewin's 1968 study *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, in which he noted of Soviet history that "it is just such

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[85] Viola, 'Back on the Economic Front,' pp. 218-219.
[86] Viola, 'Back on the Economic Front,' p. 221.
[87] Viola, 'Back on the Economic Front,' pp. 221-222.

alternatives that concern us in the present study, for in our view it is equally legitimate to argue…that there existed an alternative, which was a valid one but which, for certain reasons, was not adopted."[88] In declaring Stalin to be Lenin's "unwanted heir" whose methods "were very different from those envisaged by his master,"[89] Lewin suggested that the passing of time had actually endorsed the approach which Bukharin had originally proposed:

> Since Stalin's death, almost every one of Bukharin's major theories has been revived in the communist world which, without admitting it, is making an enormous effort to implement his programme of 1929. Do not the efforts of leaders like Khrushchev, Kosygin and Gomulka recall Bukharin's insistence on the importance of balanced, scientific planning, and of maintaining a prosperous agricultural base during the process of industrialization, as well as his realistic appraisal of capitalism and his informed awareness of its achievements?[90]

Nonetheless, Lewin conceded that the circumstances the regime faced in the late 1920s were not necessarily conducive to the "progress 'at a snail's pace'" inherent in Bukharin's approach, and his focus on maintaining positive relations with the peasantry meant that "his outlook became dangerously one-sided."[91] For Lewin, then, Bukharin may indeed have

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[88] M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, trans. I. Nove, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 16. Lewin prefigured some of the issues which have accompanied the current discussion of counterfactual history in his account, and was ultimately critical of those who held fast to a position of 'inevitability': "Discussion of the respective roles of Stalin, Trotsky and Bukharin—or indeed discussion of a similar kind which is bound to arise the context of almost any work of historical research—involves the historian adopting one or other of a number of characteristic standpoints. Some scholars, unhappy at the turn which events have in fact taken, indulge in speculation about what might have been, elaborating theories on the probable course of history if, for example, different policies had been adopted, or different individuals had been in the seat of power—an exercise which English writers who find this attitude irritating have sometimes dismissed as 'if history'. However, while claiming with some justification that idle conjecture has no place in the domain of historical research, the critics of 'if history' occasionally go to the other extreme, arguing that the historian should not even raise the question of an alternative, and thereby ruling out consideration of a potential pattern of events for which the necessary pre-conditions or forces did exist, but were not brought into play (for reasons which it is then the historian's duty to elucidate). It is as if they were mesmerized by the logic of events, the lure of powerful personalities and conquerors in general." See Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, pp. 15-16. Perhaps Lewin had Carr in mind when he referred to the "English writers who find this attitude irritating."

[89] Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 166.

[90] Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 335. Lewin expanded upon this particular point in a later study. See M. Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers* (1974), London, Pluto Press, 1975.

[91] Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 139. Like von Laue, Lewin suggested the primacy of international security among the major concerns facing the regime during the 1920s. He noted how Bukharin's ideas had certain implications for this particular concern: "A policy based on Bukharin's strategic approach would ensure steady though naturally very slow progress towards socialism…. He does not seem to have been unduly worried by the prospect of possible international complications. He considered that as long as the revolution had not triumphed in Europe, a socialist country had no definite guarantee that the old order would not be restored at bayonet point by a foreign power. But he believed in preparing for any such contingency by ensuring the internal stability of the régime, and winning the support of the peasantry, rather than by seeking salvation in a spectacular build-up of the industrial base, and in an arms race…. His attitude might well be summed up in the statement that the country would be no better defended by a well-armed, but hostile peasantry, than it would be by a peasantry which was less well-armed, but willing to defend the régime. In the light of subsequent developments, it will be seen that at this stage Bukharin was guilty of over-optimism." See Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 139.

represented a "valid option," but circumstances and various other factors dictated that it could not be realised.

The argument that Bukharin had represented a genuine leadership alternative to Stalin found explicit expression with the 1973 publication of Stephen F. Cohen's *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*. In the preface to this book, which Nove described as "the best book to be published on the USSR for many years,"[92] Cohen noted that:

> I regard this book as a contribution to the ongoing effort by various scholars to revise the customary interpretation which views the Bolshevik revolution after Lenin chiefly in terms of a Stalin-Trotsky rivalry. Much of what follows will suggest that by the mid-twenties Bukharin, what he represented, and his allies were more important in Bolshevik politics and thinking than Trotsky or Trotskyism…. This issues relates in turn to the prevailing view that Stalinism was the logical, irresistible outcome of the Bolshevik revolution.[93]

With the publication of this biography, Cohen's status as Bukharin's principal defender and champion was cemented. In subsequently published works, Cohen continued to advance his thesis that "it was Bukharin and his politburo allies Rykov and Tomsky who represented and defended an alternative to Stalin at the crucial moment in Soviet history."[94]

Lewin, Cohen, and others who engaged with the notion of a Bukharinist alternative to Stalin often presented their efforts as part of a wider attempt to move away from strictly deterministic theories of the Soviet past. "The view," Lewin argued, "which sees in Stalinist policy during the final stages of NEP the direct expression of an ineluctable historical necessity, takes no account of the part played by the subjective errors and shortcomings of Party policy, and is therefore ill-founded."[95] Similarly, in an essay published more than a decade after *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Cohen reflected upon the questions of determinism and alternatives in history-writing:

> Just as there is no iron-clad historical inevitability, there are always historical alternatives. History written without an exploration of lost or defeated alternatives is, therefore, neither a full account of the past nor a real explanation of what happened. It is merely the story of the outcome made to seem inevitable.[96]

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[92] A. Nove, Review of S. F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, *Soviet Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1974, p. 614.
[93] S. F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, New York, Knopf, 1973, pp. xvi-xvii. Lewin echoed this point when he noted that "Bukharin, an exceedingly interesting figure in Soviet history and one of the most popular leaders of the party until he was defeated by Stalin and his faction, has not attracted in Western scholarship the same amount of attention as has been devoted to Lenin, Trotsky, and later, to Stalin." See Lewin, *Political Undercurrents*, p. xi.
[94] S. F. Cohen, 'Stalin's Revolution Reconsidered,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1973, p. 266.
[95] M. Lewin, 'The Immediate Background of Soviet Collectivization,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1965, p. 166.
[96] S. F. Cohen, 'Bukharin, NEP, and the Idea of an Alternative to Stalinism,' in *idem.*, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 71.

For his part, Cohen has remained an advocate of an explicit counterfactual approach. In his 2004 essay 'Was the Soviet System Reformable?', he found cause for complaint with "Sovietology's long-standing habit of reading, or rereading, history backwards in light of a known outcome," and pointed to the appropriateness of "counterfactual questions about alternatives and contingencies" in approaching and comprehending the Soviet past.[97]

At the time of their original writing, there were many scholars who responded positively to both Lewin and Cohen's engagement with the notion of a Bukharinist alternative. Lewin's *Russian Peasants* was deemed "excellent"[98] by one commentator, while his *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates* was described as "impressive"[99] and "a major work."[100] Unsurprisingly, Cohen was also full of praise for his colleague, noting approvingly that he "sets himself apart from what has been a virtual consensus in academic Soviet studies—the interpretation of Soviet history after 1917 as the continuous, even inevitable, development of a single political tradition culminating in Stalinism."[101] Earlier, Lewin had favourably reviewed Cohen's biography of Bukharin, and was candid about the implications his work had raised:

> At first glance Soviet history looks rather like an irresistible and implacable one-way trend, with all its former leaders…rolling down the slope, constantly deteriorating as politicians and as personalities, and being finally crushed. But the real story presents a somewhat different picture, and Cohen's work can serve as an illustration for this thesis. It helps us thus see more clearly what was and what was not implacable and irreversible in the making of Stalinism and of the Soviet system, "rehabilitates," to some extent, the Bolsheviks, by helping us see them as they were a political stream and a party, not a Cheka subsidiary. At the same time, though Cohen does not make this point explicitly…Bolshevik leaders come out as people who failed to grasp the possibilities offered to them by the power they had.[102]

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[97] S. F. Cohen, 'Was the Soviet System Reformable?,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2004, pp. 462, 463.
[98] H. J. Ellison, Review of M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1972, p. 431.
[99] A. Swatkovsky, Review of M. Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 420, 1975, p. 232.
[100] B. Katz, Review of M. Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers*, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1976, p. 774.
[101] S. F. Cohen, 'Politics and the Past: The Importance of Being Historical,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1977, p. 143.
[102] M. Lewin, Review of S. F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, *Journal of Modern History,* vol. 47, no. 2, 1975, p. 373. For another example of a proposed Bukharinist alternative, see N. K. Chandra, 'Bukharin's Alternative to Stalin: Industrialisation Without Forced Collectivisation,' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1992, pp. 97-159. For a Russian perspective on the Bukharinist alternative, see V. P. Danilov, 'The Issue of Alternatives and History of the Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1-13; and V. P. Danilov, 'The Historical Significance of Alternatives to Stalinism,' *Russian Studies in History*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2004, pp. 53-69.

It seems, then, that for those who subscribed to the notion of a viable Bukharinist alternative to Stalin, the past could be 'rehabilitated' by imagining 'better'—meaning, evidently, less morally indictable—alternatives.[103]

Nonetheless, there were other scholars who did not wholeheartedly accept this counterfactual argument, deeming it to be unreasonable and decidedly unrealistic. Unsurprisingly, Carr proved to be a particularly vocal critic of both Cohen and Lewin.[104] In his review of *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Carr derided the idea that Bukharin represented a true alternative to Stalin, noting that it "would be difficult to think of a more fantastic claim."[105] Instead, he suggested that it was Trotsky who was "the supreme adversary of Stalin and of everything Stalin stood for," while not going so far as to declare Trotsky a viable alternative to the ultimate Stalinist outcome.[106] Carr repeated this suggestion a few years later in his review of Lewin's *Political Undercurrents*, arguing that "[i]f a prize is to be offered for a 'Bolshevik anti-Stalinite', Trotsky is surely a more convincing candidate; and to describe Trotsky in exile as becoming converted to 'Bukharinist' ideas borders on the absurd."[107] In addition to these quibbles regarding the 'unreality' of the Bukharin counterfactual, critics have also questioned the political motives of those who argue for it. For example, in a review of Cohen's 1985 study *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*, in which he had continued to push his Bukharinist alternative, one critic disapproved of his tendency to present "[t]he beautiful, morally and socially attractive idea of 'Bolshevism'…in contrast with demonic Stalinism," and accused Cohen of subscribing to the view that "under no circumstances should one approach Soviet policy from a standpoint of firm moral principle."[108]

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[103] As one historian has noted of these arguments concerning alternatives, "[a]t stake was not just the Soviet past but the Soviet future, and, perhaps, the soul of socialism." See D. C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 288.

[104] Indeed, Carr's biographer Jonathan Haslam has noted of his subject's reviews of Lewin and Cohen's work: "Carr rightly sensed their belief that, had Bukharin's policies been adopted in the late twenties and early thirties, the U.S.S.R. would have avoided the traumas suffered under Stalin. For him the choice between Stalin and Bukharin was unreal. Russian conditions implanted the one in power, and simultaneously left the other redundant. As a consequence, the reviews Carr wrote of these works were harsh and hurt both writers considerably." See Haslam, 'E. H. Carr and the History of Soviet Russia,' p. 1024.

[105] E. H. Carr, 'The Legend of Bukharin,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 September 1974, p. 991. For another review which, while generally positive, explicitly objects to Cohen's conception of a 'Bukharinism' see, for example, A. Ulam, Review of S. F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, 1975, p. 441.

[106] Carr, 'The Legend of Bukharin,' p. 991. Other have also pushed for Trotsky as a leadership alternative. See, for example, R. V. Daniels, 'The Left Opposition as an Alternative to Stalinism,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1991, pp. 277-285.

[107] E. H. Carr, 'The Legacy of Stalin,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 23 January 1976, p. 89.

[108] L. Timofeyev, 'How Stephen Cohen Re-Thinks the Soviet Experience,' *Survey: A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1989, pp. 191, 193.

Even as the debate surrounding the work of Cohen, Lewin and others has quietened, the possibilities of "*alternativnost*" have continued to intrigue historians of the Soviet Union.[109] For example, the 1991 Summer edition of *Slavic Review* was devoted to the proceedings of the 1989 Moscow Historians' Conference, the historiographical focus for which had been "the possible 1920s alternatives to the course history actually took in the 1930s."[110] Additionally, these questions surrounding alternatives as well as the old issue of 'necessity' were raised again with the 1993 publication of *The Stalin Phenomenon*, a collection of essays edited by Nove.[111] The opening of the archives following the collapse of the Soviet Union has also provided historians with new impetus to return to these older debates. One scholar, for example, has claimed that this 'archival revolution' has "provided the 'smoking gun' for Stalin's personal involvement in the Great Purges," which in turn has meant that "[t]hose inclined to credit individual agency…now can argue more forcefully that it is important not only to take into account the ideologies that urged or sanctioned the deaths of millions to achieve a desired end, but to examine closely the leaders who turned ideology into policy."[112] In this sense, and when coupled with the new prominence of counterfactual history more generally, it appears that alternatives to the reality of the Soviet past will continue to inform historiographical discussion and debate.

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It is appropriate at this point to return to Viola's question, namely "why certain western scholars [have been] so persistent in their search for alternatives to Soviet realities,"[113] as the answers have much to suggest for historians' moral engagement with past atrocity. Clearly, as with Soviet historiography more generally, politics are a vital factor in shaping how these histories have been written. For those hostile to the Soviet Union, there were no 'better' alternatives as the terror of Stalinism was inevitable within the doctrine of Leninism, and even Marxism.[114] Historian Richard Pipes, for example, saw the origins of Stalin's evil quite clearly: "[e]very ingredient of what has come to be known as Stalinism save one—murdering fellow Communists—he had learned from Lenin, and that

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[109] R. C. Tucker, 'Introduction: Soviet History in the 1920s,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1991, p. 239.
[110] Tucker, 'Introduction,' p. 239.
[111] London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993. Another exploration of the 'necessity' argument, in this instance applied to the Soviet Union as a whole, can be seen in V. Swoboda, 'Was the Soviet Union Really Necessary?,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 44, no. 5, 1992, pp. 761-784.
[112] Pomper, 'Historians and Individual Agency,' p. 304.
[113] Viola, 'Back on the Economic Front,' pp. 221-222.
[114] Indeed, Cohen has noted that "the less empathy a historian has felt for the Revolution and original Bolshevism, the less he or she has seen meaningful distinctions between Bolshevism and Stalinism." See S. F. Cohen, 'Bolshevism and Stalinism,' in *idem.*, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 38.

includes the two actions for which he is most severely condemned: collectivization and mass terror."[115] Similarly, another scholar suggested how Stalin's emergence was 'inevitable' from the resources provided by his predecessor:

> It was by means of the party machine Lenin had forged that Stalin rose to power in the twenties, and defeated his rivals. It was by exploitation of Lenin's system of Communist control that Stalin established his mastery over the country. Even if he abused it in a way that was not originally intended, it was from Lenin that Stalin inherited the instrument of rule; and once provided with the means, Stalin was as unlikely as Lenin to be restrained by moral considerations: neither of the two men ever accepted moral factors as a limit on his course of conduct.[116]

For many historians of a particular political persuasion, then, the evils of Stalin were an inevitable outcome of the particular ideology and system of government he was operating within.[117]

For those approaching the Soviet past from the other end of the political spectrum, this 'inevitability' argument was deeply problematic. Emphasising contingencies, and claiming that there were alternatives to Stalin, provided a means of confronting it. By suggesting, to use the argument of historian Roy Medvedev as an example, that "[f]or the young Soviet state the road of development was not determined in such a way that it necessarily had to grow into the Stalinist system,"[118] it became possible to 'rehabilitate' this state (and its ideological underpinnings) somewhat from the horrible turns its history had taken. The emphasis placed upon 'Bukharinism', which Lewin characterised as an "antitotalitarian, anti-Stalinist program of social change, mindful of 'a human face' of the regime,"[119] provided additional support in this regard. Furthermore, those who argued in favour of contingencies and alternatives in the Soviet past also highlighted the moral implications of arguing for continuities. Medvedev, for example, suggested that according

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[115] R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 508.

[116] L. Schapiro, *1917: The Russian Revolution and the Origins of Present-Day Communism*, Hounslow, Maurice Temple Smith, 1984, p. 218.

[117] Of course, as we have seen with the work of Carr and Deutscher, the 'inevitability' of Stalin was not limited to those hostile to the Soviet Union. Cohen believed the strength of the 'continuity thesis' between Bolshevism and Stalinism amongst historians of the Soviet Union this approach can explain "an 'implicit consensus' between the mainstream cold-war scholarship and the counterschool of Carr and Deutscher" on this issue. See Cohen, 'Bolshevism and Stalinism,' p. 45.

[118] R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (1971), trans. G. Shriver, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 616. Medvedev himself makes clear in the preface to the revised and expanded edition of his original 1971 text that his political sympathies are very much aligned with socialism, and that Stalinism and its legacy is a scourge which is incorrectly equated with 'socialism'. He writes, "[i]t is a fact that Stalin was Lenin's heir as leader of the Soviet Communist Party and the world Communist movement. But he was the kind of heir who squandered rather than increased his inheritance. Therefore we cannot equate Stalinism with socialism, Marxism, or Leninism—no matter how imperfect those doctrines might be in some respects. Stalinism is the sum total of the perversions Stalin introduced into the theory and practice of scientific socialism. It is a phenomenon profoundly alien to Marxism and Leninism." See Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 872.

[119] See Lewin, Review of Cohen, p. 382.

to the 'inevitability' view, "to explain Stalinism we have to return to earlier and earlier epochs of Russian history, very likely to the Tartar yoke. But that would be wrong; it would be a historical justification of Stalinism, not a condemnation."[120]

This last point highlights how moral concerns have remained a constant companion of the politics within these debates regarding 'inevitability', 'necessity' and counterfactuals. Clearly, many historians who have suggested alternative histories to Stalinism have been motivated by a belief that "a better history can be imagined."[121] As our discussion to this point has demonstrated, however, there are important moral implications for writing about past atrocity which arise from these counterfactuals, along with "the classical question of historical inevitability and human responsibility for the Soviet experience" which they themselves reflect.[122] In particular, two key and interrelated concerns are at stake—responsibility and blame, and individual agency.

As we have seen, Nove was adamant that when he used the term 'necessity' to describe Stalin's ascendancy to power and his adoption of certain policies, it was "with no moral strings attached."[123] It seems, however, that terms such as 'necessary' and 'inevitable' carry unavoidable moral connotations when being applied to past atrocities, as the various debates discussed through this chapter have amply demonstrated. In *What is History?*, Carr reflected upon the implications of language and the difficulties they presented to historians of the Soviet Union, from which historians of Britain's economic development were relatively immune:

> Virtually every historian will treat the [British] industrial revolution, probably without discussion, as a great and progressive achievement. He will also describe the driving of the peasantry off the land, the herding of workers in unhealthy factories and unsanitary dwellings, the exploitation of child labour. He will probably say that abuses occurred in the working of the system, and that some employers were more ruthless than others, and will dwell with some unction on the gradual growth of a humanitarian conscience once the system has become established. But he will assume, again probably without saying it, that measures of coercion and exploitation, at any rate in the first stages, were an unavoidable part of the cost of industrialization. Nor have I ever heard a historian who said that, in view of the cost, it would have been better to stay the hand of progress and not industrialize; if any such exists, he…will—quite properly—not be taken seriously by serious historians. This example is of particular interest to me, because I hope soon in my history of Soviet Russia to approach the problem of the collectivization of the peasant as a part of the cost of industrialization; and I know well that if, following the

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[120] R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (1971), trans. C. Taylor and D. Joravsky, London, Macmillan, 1972, p. 359. See also Cohen, 'Bolshevism and Stalinism,' pp. 43, 49-451.
[121] Demandt, *History That Never Happened*, p. 152.
[122] Odom, 'Bolshevik Politics and the Dustbin of History,' p. 190.
[123] Nove, 'Was Stalin Really Necessary?,' p. 86.

> example of historians of the British industrial revolution, I deplore the brutalities and abuses of collectivization, but treat the process as an unavoidable part of the cost of a desirable and necessary policy of industrialization, I shall incur charges of cynicism and of condoning evil things.[124]

Carr's reflections underline, as the present study has emphasised to this point, the 'unclosed' nature of the history of atrocity. As long as this past refuses to 'pass away', the moral concerns that it raises remain palpable and unavoidable.

The charge of "condoning evil things" by declaring certain events or actions to be 'necessary' or 'inevitable' reflects the importance of responsibility and blame, and the closely related concept of individual agency, in writing about atrocity. We saw in Chapter Three how the description of Holocaust perpetrators as 'ordinary' and 'banal' caused a storm of controversy, largely because it was perceived to mitigate their guilt. The notions of 'necessity' and 'inevitability' have proved similarly problematic. The basic questions remain: if the leadership of Stalin was 'inevitable', or Stalinism is deemed to be a flawed but 'necessary' development, is his agency, and therefore his personal culpability, somehow mitigated? Conversely, if Stalin was not 'necessary', and leadership and policy alternatives did exist, how is the apportioning of blame affected accordingly?

The impact of these two opposing views upon the assignment of responsibility to Stalin have been elucidated by historian J. Arch Getty. He suggests two different outcomes, depending on the view which one adopts:

> [M]any writers have…posited lost alternatives to Stalinism in order to show that it was not inevitable. The idea is that if Stalinism were not foreordained by the Russian Revolution and that other roads were possible, then Stalin's personal role was mostly to blame, not 'the system' which could have gone right. It is said that the other point of view, wrongly called the inevitability theory, suggests that if Stalinism were inevitable or inherent in the system, then Stalin's *personal* responsibility or importance are somehow reduced. In other words the system produced him and is at fault.[125]

Clearly, as discussed earlier, whichever 'side' of Getty's divide historians fall on is significantly informed by their political leanings. Whatever political motivations underlie the search for or denial of alternatives, however, the moral dimension remains. Whether one blames Stalin or the system, or both, the imperative to blame and hold responsible is present, and viewed as something which needs to takes place. Interpreting Stalin and

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[124] Carr, *What is History?*, pp. 80-81. Interestingly, in his biography of Stalin Deutscher made these exact claims through a favourable comparison between the British industrial revolution and Stalin's policies of collectivisation and industrialisation. See Deutscher, *Stalin*, pp. 342-343.

[125] J. A. Getty, 'The Politics of Stalinism,' in A. Nove (ed.), *The Stalin Phenomenon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993, p. 138. It is worth noting, however, that for those hostile to the Soviet Union—who would, according to Getty's formulation, be in the latter category of 'blaming the system'—would also be quick to emphasise Stalin's 'evil' nature and his moral responsibility for the events which transpired under his rule, even if they were an 'inevitable' outgrowth of the system.

Stalinism, it seems, cannot be achieved without recourse to the notions of blame and responsibility.

Carr, however, was adamant that "cause and moral responsibility are different categories."[126] Unsurprisingly, others have disagreed. As we have seen, one such dissenter was Berlin, who felt that deterministic theories of history invariably rendered it "pointless to blame men for not having done better; for there was no alternative which such men could—causally could—have chosen." By denying individual agency in this manner, Berlin believed, such a view simply offered a fail-safe "historical *alibi*."[127] This point has also found echo amongst those writing about different atrocities. For example, reflecting on the historiography of the destruction of Tasmania's Aboriginal population during British colonisation, one historian suggested that the presentation of such events "as inevitable outcomes of broad historical forces" was actually "contrived to deny the proposition that historical actors choose and execute courses of action for which they must bear responsibility."[128]

As outlined previously, many advocates of a counterfactual approach have recognised this moral implication of arguing for 'inevitability' in history, and have been quick to emphasise how an engagement with 'what-if?' speculations encourages and embraces the notion of agency. One such proponent, for example, has suggested that "suitably restrained reflection on the consequences of particular events opens our eyes to contingency and can sharpen awareness of the role of human agency in the historical process we would like to understand."[129] It is easy to see how such an idea is appealing in the face of historical atrocity. Confronting mass death and suffering is a humbling experience; the suggestion that these events could have had a different, 'better' outcome can offer some solace. Furthermore, by emphasising the importance of human agency, our ability to 'learn' from this history and shape a 'better' future is seemingly bolstered. As one historian has recognised that by engaging with "historical contingency":

> [I]t becomes evident that history could have been different, and that things could have been and could be other than what they are. Much of what has happened in the past has happened and has been interpreted quite arbitrarily, and the future course of events is no more fixed, but can still be affected. In fact, we are "empowered" by realising that the direction of history, both as past narratives and future events, can actually be changed.[130]

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[126] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 95.
[127] Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, p. 67. Emphasis in original.
[128] S. Breen, 'Human Agency, Historical Inevitability and Moral Culpability: Rewriting Black-White History in the Wake of Native Title,' *Aboriginal History*, vol. 20, 1996, p. 109.
[129] W. H. McNeill, 'Counterfactuals and the Historical Imagination,' in D. A. Yerxa (ed.), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, p. 98.
[130] B. Southgate, *History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Perspectives*; London, Routledge, 1996, p. 54.

It is precisely this 'empowerment' which becomes important in thinking about the moral implications of counterfactuals and the history of atrocity. Highlighting the role of human agency in the events of the past not only encourages confidence in our capacity to impact the present and future. Such an emphasis also reaffirms space for judgement of—and the assignment of responsibility to—historical actors like Stalin.

Nonetheless, teasing out the role of individual agency and affording responsibility accordingly remains a difficult undertaking, particularly when addressing past atrocity. As historian Philip Pomper has recognised, these historical experiences have resisted traditional understandings of causation and agency:

> The "age of extremes," as Eric Hobsbawm describes the "short twentieth century," has challenged the creative powers of historians invested in the idea that causes have to be proportional to effects. To attribute events that cost tens of millions of lives to the agency of a few individuals violates historians' sense of proportion, not to speak of theoretical commitments.[131]

There are no straightforward answers to these dilemmas, and no one 'lesson' can be gleaned. The challenge for historians of atrocity, it seems, remains the finding of an appropriate balance between the personal and impersonal forces which impact and shape these events. As we saw in the critical response to Deutscher and Carr, an overemphasis of the impersonal obscures the importance of individual action and agency. Conversely, focusing too exclusively on the personal can also prove distorting, and at worst becomes a rehashing of the 'Great Man'—or, perhaps, in the case of past atrocity, the 'Evil All-Powerful Dictator'—theory of history.

The key moral question raised by this balancing of the personal and impersonal remains the relationship between responsibility and agency. Whether intended or otherwise, arguing for the 'inevitable' in history diminishes both the former and the latter. As one historian of Nazism has recognised, "[i]f Hitler's success was the product of impersonal forces, it would be not only unjust but irrelevant to blame any of those individuals who played a role in the events that delivered power into his hands." He continued, "[t]hat, surely, is a tendency that should not be encouraged if we hope to draw lessons from the past for the future."[132] Indeed, 'Never Again' becomes rather problematic if we view what has happened in history—and, by extension, that which is yet to happen—as 'inevitable'.

Overall, we are led back to the question of what we wish to achieve from writing the history of atrocity, and what purpose it is ultimately designed to serve. Is it to

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[131] Pomper, 'Historians and Individual Agency,' p. 281.
[132] Turner, 'Human Agency,' p. 305.

commemorate the victims, as Chapter Two suggested? Is it, as Chapter Three outlined, to understand and hold accountable the perpetrators? Or is it to show that this terrible history was contingent, and that 'better' outcomes were possible, as we have seen throughout the present chapter? Whichever view one takes, it is clear that a concern with humanity lies at the core of this history, bred from the profound questions about human behaviour, psychology and ideology which these historical experiences have raised. Are they satisfactorily answered—both historically and morally—by the responses which more deterministic approaches to the past can provide? It remains for historians and their readers to decide, but, as our examination of the various responses to the question 'was Stalin really necessary?' has shown, the moral implications which arise from conceptualising the history of atrocity in this fashion cannot be ignored.

Chapter Six

"A Holocaust the West Forgot"?: The Ukrainian *Holodomor* and the Politics of Victimhood

Chapter Two of the present study examined how writing about the victims of atrocity has proved a morally fraught and complex exercise, where the desire for commemoration and appropriate observance of the victims' suffering can sometimes sit uneasily with the demands of rigorous historical analysis. We now turn our attention to a different yet equally fraught and complex element of this history, namely the 'politics' of victimhood and the various ends which the historical experience of atrocity can be made to serve. Employing the discourses surrounding the Ukrainian *Holodomor* as a case study, this chapter will explore how competing claims of victimhood and suffering, and the notion of different atrocities being somehow morally 'worse' than others, have informed history writing about these events. Overall, it cautions against making moral comparisons between atrocities and rejects the distasteful practice of quantifying and ranking the suffering of victims, suggesting that such efforts are ultimately counterproductive and potentially damaging to professional historians' ongoing efforts to adequately and appropriately write this history.

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Between 1932 and 1933, a large famine spread across several regions of the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, the Volga valley, the North Caucasus region, and some parts of Kazakhstan. Generally understood as an outgrowth of the Soviet agricultural policy of collectivisation, the number of people who died as a result of the famine has been variously estimated at between 4.5 and upwards of eight million.[1] Although its effects were felt in differing degrees across the Soviet Union, it has been the characterisations of and narratives about the Ukrainian experience of the famine—which has come to be known in Ukraine and elsewhere as the '*Holodomor*' (*holod*, meaning "hunger or famine" and *mor*,

[1] This figure range for famine deaths is cited by R. W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft in their 2004 study *The Years of Hunger*. See R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 400-401. Their own figure for the death toll from the famine is 5.5 to 6.5 million people. See Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, p. 401. For their discussion of other figures, see Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, pp. 412-420. For other varying estimations see, for example, R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 303, 306; A. Karatnycky, 'Forced Famine in the Ukraine: A Holocaust the West Forgot,' *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 July 1983, p. 22; H. Kuromiya, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2008, p. 665; L. Y. Luciuk, 'Foreword: Reaping What They Once Sowed,' in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. v; J. E. Mace 'The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Ukraine: What Happened and Why?,' in I. W. Charny (ed.), *Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1984, p. 67; and C. Young, 'Remember the Holodomor,' *The Weekly Standard*, 8 December 2008. More recently, Timothy Snyder has estimated the number of Ukrainian famine victims to be 3.3 million. See T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York, Basic Books, 2010, p. 53.

"mass death")—that have emerged as particularly controversial in the subsequent historiographical and public discourse.[2]

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, much of the discussion about the famine resulted from the efforts of the Ukrainian diaspora. Both at the time it was occurring and well afterwards, Soviet officials refused to acknowledge the existence of the famine, and talk about these events within Ukraine itself was thus highly restricted. Following Ukraine's declaration of independence on 24 August 1991, however, the *Holodomor* has come to be adopted as a nation-defining historical experience.[3] In terms of how the nature of this experience and its impact upon Ukrainians is understood, historian Orest Subtelny offers an illustrative explanation:

> The famine that occurred in 1932-1933 was to be for the Ukrainians what the Holocaust was to the Jews and the Massacres of 1915 for the Armenians. A tragedy of unfathomable proportions, it traumatized the nation, leaving it with deep social, psychological, political, and demographic scars that it carries to this day.[4]

The *Holodomor* has thus become an integral part of an Ukrainian narrative of victimhood.[5] The adoption of this particular type of narrative may itself be viewed as something not unique to Ukraine, but part of a broader process shared by other nations in coming terms to terms with their Soviet pasts. As two commentators have noted, "[i]n all post-Soviet countries, with the partial exception of Russia, new historiographies have embraced the rhetoric of victimisation."[6]

In using the experience of the *Holodomor* as part of a nation-defining exercise, however, a particular characterisation of events has been adopted, which in turn supports a

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[2] This translation of the term '*Holodomor*' is taken from J. E. Mace, 'Is the Ukrainian Genocide a Myth?,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2003, p. 51. Others believe the term can be simply translated as 'death by hunger'. For more on the issues concerning 'naming' the famine, see, for example, C. A. M. Duncan, 'Afterword: Labelling Events and Selecting Contexts in History,' in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. 227.

[3] For discussion on the role played by the famine in the establishment of independent Ukraine, see, for example, J. Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture*, Lund, Lund University Press, 2006; A. Graziosi, 'The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 27, nos. 1-4, 2004-2005, p. 97; D. R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2007; and C. Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998. For an examination of the role of *Holodomor* memory in recent Ukrainian politics, see T. Zhurzhenko, '"Capital of Despair": Holodomor Memory and Political Conflicts in Kharkiv after the Orange Revolution,' *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2011, pp. 597-639.

[4] O. Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (1988), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2000, p. 413.

[5] For a general treatment of the 'victim' rhetoric of Ukrainian history, see Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, *passim*.

[6] A. M. Khazanov and S. G. Payne, 'How to Deal With the Past?,' *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 9, nos. 2-3, 2008, p. 424. For more on the building of a national history within Ukraine following the collapse of the Soviet Union, see, for example, M. von Hagen, 'Does Ukraine Have a History?,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1995, pp. 664-672. Interestingly, this article does not mention the famine. For a response to von Hagen, see S. M. Plokhy, 'The History of a "Non-Historical" Nation: Notes on the Nature and Current Problems of Ukrainian Historiography,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1995, pp. 709-716.

particular type of victimhood. According to the official line within Ukraine, the *Holodomor* was a genocide committed by the Soviet Union against the Ukrainian people, and Ukraine is thus depicted as a "post-genocidal" society.[7] This understanding of events has come to be reflected in Ukrainian law, and is supported by legislation in other countries. In November 2006 a law entitled 'On the *Holodomor* in Ukraine, 1932-1933' was passed by the Ukrainian parliament, which formally recognised the genocidal nature of the famine and also sought, albeit unsuccessfully, to criminalise *Holodomor* denial.[8]

Prior to Ukraine's independence and the nation's adoption of the *Holodomor*-as-genocide narrative, however, several scholars in the West had been arguing for this particular interpretation. Unsurprisingly, counterviews have also been offered, and from the 1980s onward a large discourse concerning the famine has emerged, with sharp divisions between particular 'schools' of thought.[9] Historian David Marples has noted of the bifurcated nature of scholarship on the famine:

> A fundamental divide has developed that has served critically to undermine the issues and at times has taken on a distinctly political hue. Those who have supported the genocide argument have been accused of adopting a political stance, while those who oppose it have been perceived as pro-Soviet or pro-Russian in their political leanings.[10]

While Marples is undoubtedly correct in his emphasis on the political nature of this discourse, it can be argued that it also possesses an inherent and thoroughgoing moral dimension. As is often the case in the various debates within the historiography of the Soviet Union, and of atrocity more generally, the scholarly discussion about the famine has been shaped by an intermingling of both political and moral imperatives.

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[7] See L. Luciuk, 'A Genocide Long Ignored: Ukraine's Suffering Gaining Recognition,' *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 November 2008, p. A17.

[8] The Law of Ukraine, No. 376-V, 'On the *Holodomor* in Ukraine, 1932-1933,' 28 November 2006, as cited in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. 357. This law declaring the Holodomor a genocide, however, was only narrowly passed. For an interesting discussion of the debate over the passing of the law in Ukraine, and how regional differences appear to influence perceptions of the famine, see J. Himka, Review J. Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture* and S. V. Kul'chyts'kyi, *Holod 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraini iak henotsyd/Golod 1932–1933 gg. v Ukraine kak genotsid*, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2007, pp. 689-691. See also Zhurzhenko, "'Capital of Despair,'" pp. 599, 602, 603-604.

[9] Marples notes that "the Famine has generated an emotional debate in the West, and no consensus has resulted." See Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 35. Elsewhere, Marples has been critical of the fact that "a wide gap exists between the perception of the famine among the Ukrainian diaspora, non-diaspora Western scholars, and popular opinion in various parts of Ukraine," and "[i]n the West the schools of thought represented by American academics, such as [Mark] Tauger and J. Arch Getty, on the one hand, and diaspora scholars such as Roman Serbyn and George Liber, and non-diaspora scholars known for their anti-Soviet views, such as Robert Conquest, on the other hand, are as far apart as ever." See D. R. Marples, 'Stalin's Emergent Crime: Popular and Academic Debates on the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33,' *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 29, nos. 1-2, 2004, p. 309.

[10] D. R. Marples, 'Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2009, p. 508.

It is important to note the degrees of separation which exist between the Ukrainian public discourse about the famine and the scholarly debate which has largely occurred outside of Ukraine itself. The Ukrainian discussion of the *Holodomor* is unique to that particular political and cultural context, and cannot be understood in isolation from the dual processes of coming to terms with a particular national past while simultaneously trying to create another. Historian Omer Bartov has argued that public use of the rhetoric of victimisation and victimhood is suggestive of a deeper struggle concerning "the meaning, memory, and political use of crimes against humanity."[11] It is this struggle which has manifested in the Ukrainian narratives of the *Holodomor*.

While separate from the unique political and cultural milieu which governs public discussion about the famine within Ukraine, the scholarly debate concerning the *Holodomor* is also informed by palpable moral issues, and raises several important considerations for writing about past atrocity. Clearly, this discourse engages with similar concerns raised in the debates regarding the necessity or inevitability of, as well as possible alternatives to, Stalin and Stalinism. The famine itself is testament to what was always at the heart of these discussions—the terrible human cost of the agricultural policies which were adopted, and, with a different leader or a different approach, might have been avoidable. The same questions of responsibility, blame and agency which informed these debates are also clearly at work within the scholarly discourse surrounding the famine.

This discourse, however, raises several additional concerns regarding morality, history writing, and past atrocity. As outlined previously, the major question which has dominated the scholarly debate surrounding the *Holodomor* is its status as a genocide. One historian has suggested that "the word genocide has to be applied to the Ukrainian famine, the *Holodomor*, for if it is not, th[e]n the word genocide loses all useful meaning."[12] The definitional parameters of the term are highly contested, however, and precisely what does or does not qualify as 'genocide' remains a source of ongoing controversy. Nonetheless, far more than definitional quibbles are raised by the debate regarding the genocidal status of the *Holodomor*. Baldly put, the central questions concern the 'attractiveness' of this particular classification, and the desire, as one commentator has phrased the issue, to "benefit from history" through claiming a particular status of victimhood.[13] What informs the desire to have the *Holodomor* recognised as not 'merely' a terrible crime against humanity

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[11] O. Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 71.

[12] D. Rayfield, 'The Ukrainian Famine of 1933: Man-Made Catastrophe, Mass Murder, or Genocide?,' in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. 93.

[13] See C. S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 161.

but specifically as a genocide? Do certain classifications lend a greater moral weight or legitimacy to atrocities, and, by association, to their victims? Is there a 'hierarchy' of these events and the suffering they entailed, or do certain events stand out as 'unique' and thus beyond any such comparison? More importantly, is there any benefit to scholarship from classifying these historical experiences in this fashion? These questions are clearly being contested in the debates surrounding the *Holodomor*, and, as a result, this discourse is highly instructive for a consideration of the 'politics' of victimhood and their impact upon historians' efforts to come to terms with past atrocity.

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Both the scholarly and public discussion of the *Holodomor* are relatively recent phenomena, as for many years it was an event which received little attention and recognition. This state of affairs was undoubtedly influenced by the official Soviet line of denying that the famine had ever occurred. At the time it was taking place, a few foreign journalists and officials, such as Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge, managed to report what they had witnessed in the areas affected.[14] It was, however, the accounts of other foreign correspondents, perhaps most notably those of *The New York Times'* Walter Duranty which downplayed and covered up the extent of the famine, that came to dominate understandings of it in the West.[15]

Discussion of the *Holodomor*, then, as one historian has recognised, began as a "history in exile."[16] The majority of publications on the famine prior to the 1980s had

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[14] Examples of Muggeridge's reports include a three-part series entitled 'The Soviet and the Peasantry: An Observer's Notes,' the individual articles of which were 'Famine in North Caucasus,' *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1933, pp. 13-14; 'Hunger in Ukraine,' *Manchester Guardian*, 27 March 1933, pp. 9-10; and 'Poor Harvest in Prospect,' *Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1933, pp. 9-10. For discussion of Muggeridge and his reporting on the famine, see, for example, D. G. Dalrymple, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1964, pp. 250-284; and I. Hunter, 'A Tale of Truth and Two Journalists: Malcolm Muggeridge and Walter Duranty,' in W. L. Hewitt, *Defining the Horrific: Readings on Genocide and Holocaust in the Twentieth Century*, Upper Saddle River, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004, pp. 134-135. For Jones' reporting, see 'Famine in Russia,' *Manchester Guardian*, 30 March 1933, p. 12. For more on the famine reports of Muggeridge and Jones, see, for example, S. Colley, 'A Curtain of Silence: An Essay in Comparison,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2008, pp. 297-319.

[15] For examples of Duranty's selective reporting on the famine, see W. Duranty, 'Soviet Acts to Spur Basic Industrialization,' *The New York Times*, 4 October 1932, p. 11; 'Soviet in 16th Year: Calm and Hopeful,' *The New York Times*, 13 November 1932, p. E4; 'All Russia Suffers Shortage of Food: Supplies Dwindling,' *The New York Times*, 25 November 1932, p. 1; and 'Food Shortage Laid to Soviet Peasants,' *The New York Times*, 26 November 1932, p. 9. Duranty remains a highly controversial figure, heightened by the increased research into the Famine in recent times. For biographical accounts, see, for example, J. W. Crowl, *Angels in Stalin's Paradise: Western Reporters in Soviet Russia 1917-1937, A Case Study of Louis Fischer and Walter Duranty*, Washington, D.C., University Press of America, 1982; and S. J. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, the New York Times's Man in Moscow*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990. In 2003 an ultimately unsuccessful campaign was launched to have Duranty's Pulitzer Prize revoked. See Young, 'Remember the Holodomor'.

[16] M. Edele, *Stalinist Society 1928-1953*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 236.

resulted from the efforts of members of the Ukrainian diaspora, who were naturally concerned to emphasise the experience of the famine in Ukraine, and in this sense may have helped to generate the current scholarly focus in this direction. Some of these publications included *The Golgotha of the Ukraine* (1953), *The Black Deeds of the Kremlin* (1953) and *Communism: The Enemy of Mankind* (1955).[17] These works, however, remained marginal, and aside from two articles written by the agricultural historian Dana Dalrymple in the early 1960s, in which he argued that the famine was a "man-made disaster" brought about by "the economic and social policies followed by the Soviet government during its first five-year plan," it did not command serious or extensive attention in Western scholarship.[18] Occasionally some scholars of the Soviet Union, such as Alec Nove and Moshe Lewin, made brief references to the famine and its causes in their work, but no extensive analysis or discussion was offered.[19]

Several initiatives worked to change this state of affairs from the early 1980s, and the famine began to attract greater attention from Western scholars. Much of this new interest resulted from the efforts of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI). Founded in June 1973, the Institute today describes its mission to be "the advancement of knowledge about Ukraine in the United States through research and teaching of the highest quality."[20] Between 1982 and 1983, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the famine, the Institute launched the HURI Famine Project, which it has retrospectively described as an effort "that first broke the prevailing silence and placed the Holodomor high on the agenda of historians."[21] Additionally, in 1983, the first international conference on the famine was held in Montreal.[22] With this new attention, however, came a new conception of events. The famine was not only being presented as a terrible atrocity brought about by unwise policy decisions and governmental negligence, but as a premeditated crime specifically targeting the Ukrainian people, and in this sense, an attempted genocide.

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[17] For a short discussion of these works, see, for example, J. A. Getty, 'Famine in the Ukraine,' *The London Review of Books*, 22 January 1987, p. 7.

[18] Dalrymple, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934,' p. 250. See also D. G. Dalrymple, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1934: Some Further References,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1965, pp. 471-474.

[19] See A. Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (1969), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, pp. 177-181; and M. Lewin, 'Taking Grain: Soviet Policies of Agricultural Procurements Before the War,' in C. Abramsky (ed.), *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr*, London, Macmillan, 1974, pp. 281-323, especially pp. 291-296.

[20] Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 'About HURI: Mission,' http://www.huri.harvard.edu/about.mission.html, accessed 4 November 2009. See also Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 'About HURI: History of the Institute,' http://www.huri.harvard.edu/about.html, accessed 4 November 2009.

[21] Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 'International Conference at HURI to Break New Ground on Famine Studies,' *HURI News*, Autumn 2008, p. 2. See also L. Hajda, 'Twenty Years After the HURI Famine Project: Revisiting the Issues and the Scholarship,' *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 25, nos. 3-4, 2001, pp. 153-155.

[22] United States Commission on the Ukrainian Famine, *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932-1933: Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1988, p. 32.

The year 1984 proved to be something of a watershed in Western scholarly and popular discourse about the famine and the Ukrainian experience of it. In this year, Ukrainian émigrés in Canada produced a documentary film entitled *The Harvest of Despair*, which was widely screened in North America and thus served to introduce these events to a wider public audience. In terms of scholarly discourse, it was also in 1984 that James Mace, at the time a junior research fellow at HURI, first described the famine "as an act of genocide" in an article published in *Problems of Communism*, as well as in an essay from the edited collection *Towards the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide*.[23] A year earlier, journalist Adrian Karatnycky had employed the term 'genocide' to describe the famine in *The Wall Street Journal*, which he also deemed "a Holocaust the west forgot."[24] Mace's use of the term, however, represented the first academic use of 'genocide' to characterise the famine.

By 1986, another milestone in *Holodomor* historiography came with the publication of Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*. Commissioned by the HURI, Conquest's book represented the first full-scale scholarly study of these events. Following from Mace's line of argument, Conquest also presented the famine as planned on the part of the Soviet authorities, and alluded to the idea that it was a genocide against the Ukrainian people although he did not explicitly endorse this view. He declared that "[i]t certainly appears that a charge of genocide lies against the Soviet Union for its actions in the Ukraine," but nonetheless noted that "whether these events are to be formally defined as genocide is scarcely the point. It would hardly be denied that a crime has been committed against the Ukrainian nation."[25]

In arguing that the famine could potentially be characterised as genocide, Conquest was quite clear on the issues of guilt and responsibility. He argued that Stalin, other Party officials and even Marxist doctrine shared differing degrees of culpability. "The main lesson," Conquest concluded, "seems to be that Communist ideology provided the motivation for an unprecedented massacre of men, women and children."[26] Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his forthright declarations of guilt and responsibility, Conquest also spoke frankly about the moral impetus behind his writing about the famine and its victims, noting in the introduction to the *Harvest of Sorrow*:

> It is for the historian to discover and register what actually happened, to put the facts beyond doubt and in their context. This central duty done, it cannot

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[23] See J. E. Mace, 'Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1984, p. 37; and Mace 'The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Ukraine,' pp. 67-83. Marples has written of Mace that "[t]he US-born historian James E. Mace will always be identified with the study of the Famine in Ukraine." See Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 64.
[24] Karatnycky, 'Forced Famine in the Ukraine,' p. 22.
[25] Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (1986 ed.), p. 272.
[26] R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (1986), London, Pimlico, 2002, p. 344.

> mean that he has taken no view of the matters he describes. The present writer does not pretend to a moral neutrality; and indeed believes that there can be few nowadays who would not share his estimate of the events recorded in the pages which follow.[27]

Following from this acknowledgment of his explicit moral position, Conquest also noted the emotional toll he experienced in writing about the famine, claiming that "[f]or the present writer…the task has often been so distressing that he has sometimes hardly felt able to proceed."[28] A similarly frank morality appears to have informed later scholarship from those who argue a similar line to Conquest's.

The Harvest of Sorrow was met with a generally favourable reception, with most critics praising Conquest for his efforts in bringing the hitherto neglected famine to the attention of scholars and the reading public. One journalist argued that "*The Harvest of Sorrow* qualifies as a monumental contribution towards an understanding of the modern totalitarian state," and believed that the book "reinforces Robert Conquest's reputation as the preeminent historian of the formation of the Stalinist system."[29] Fellow historians were also supportive of Conquest's scholarship and conclusions, such as Norman Stone's assessment of *The Harvest of Sorrow* that "[l]ike Conquest's other books, this one is scholarly, well-written, highly intelligent and horrible."[30] For some historians, this positive assessment extended to the view that the famine in Ukraine could be viewed as genocide. For example, Geoffrey Hosking believed that "Conquest's research establishes beyond doubt…that the famine was deliberately inflicted there [in Ukraine] for ethnic reasons," and noted

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[27] Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (2002 ed.), p. 10. Such frank admission of a moral impetus behind his work is a common feature of Conquest's histories. In the preface to his 1968 study *The Great Terror*, for example, he noted that "[t]he Purge raises, at every step, the most profound moral issues. On most of these the facts speak for themselves, by any normal standards; and I hope I have been able to avoid too much tedious moralizing. But there are cases in which judgment became perhaps a trifle confused by the claims of the regime that the ends it supposedly held in view permitted it to transcend 'bourgeois morality'. Every sacrifice of humanist principles was made in the name of the true interests of humanism." Conquest continued, "[t]he present writer cannot conceal that he has views on these ethical and political matters…. He hopes, in any case, that the prejudices he feels are those of most civilized men." See R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, London, Macmillan, 1968, pp. xii, xiv. An interesting assessment of Conquest's frank morality and its relationship to the reception of the history he writes is argued by Kevin Tyner Thomas, who suggests of Conquest that "a good deal of his intellectual authority is inextricably bound up with his strident claims that studies such as *The Harvest of Sorrow* constitute the morally correct treatment of Stalinism's atrocities. Conquest is taken seriously largely because he skillfully infuses his intentionalist approach with his moral earnestness. This enables him to create a compelling authorial persona—that of a hard-nosed crusader for the truth and a herald of the unheard." See K. T. Thomas, 'The Politics of Interpretation: Robert Conquest and the Historiography of Stalinism,' *Radical History Review*, no. 52, 1992, p. 122.

[28] Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (2002 ed.), p. 10.

[29] A. Puddington, 'Starvation as Policy,' *Commentary*, vol. 83, no. 6, 1987, pp. 74, 76.

[30] N. Stone, 'Turning on the Terror Machine,' *The Sunday Times*, 28 September 1986. For similarly positive scholarly reviews of *The Harvest of Sorrow* which do not explicitly assess the veracity of the genocidal aspect of Conquest's arguments, see, for example, J. A. Armstrong, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 92, no. 5, 1987, pp. 1240-1241; and H. Hunter, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 496, March 1988, p. 152.

approvingly that "[h]is book does not only exhume dead knowledge, it is guided by a moral imperative."[31] Similar endorsement was offered by economic historian Peter Wiles, declaring of Conquest that "he has persuaded this reviewer" of the genocidal nature of the famine in Ukraine.[32]

Other historians, while finding some positive contributions in *The Harvest of Sorrow*, stopped short of endorsing Conquest's conclusion that the famine was purposefully inflicted and could therefore be viewed as a genocide against Ukrainians. Alec Nove, while generally positive in his assessment of the book, noted some misgivings he had with Conquest's interpretation:

> There is one matter on which one must disagree with Conquest. It is what could be called the Ukrainian aspect. That the majority of those who died in the famine were Ukrainian peasants is not in dispute. But did they die because they were peasants, or because they were Ukrainians? As Conquest himself points out, the largest number of victims proportionately were in fact Kazakhs, and no one has attributed this to Stalin's anti-Kazakh views.[33]

Several other historians echoed similar concerns in their reviews of the book.[34] Of course, as we shall see, there were other scholars who were unflattering in their assessment of Conquest's conclusions and fiercely rejected his arguments about the deliberate and potentially genocidal nature of the famine in Ukraine.[35] In this sense, the response to *The Harvest of Sorrow* can be seen as the beginnings of the bifurcation of the current discourse about the famine.

Following the publication of *The Harvest of Sorrow*, attention to the famine rapidly increased, and the genocidal interpretation began to enjoy considerable support from various groups and bodies. From 1985, the famine was appearing in American public high

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[31] G. A. Hosking, 'Arranging a Catastrophe,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February 1987, p. 191.
[32] P. Wiles, 'Stalin's Two Famines,' *The New York Review of Books*, 26 March 1987, p. 45.
[33] A. Nove, 'When the Head is Off,' *The New Republic*, 3 November 1986, p. 37. Despite Nove's observation that the suffering and death endured in Kazakhstan as a result of the famine has not been "attributed…to Stalin's anti-Kazakh views," some scholars have argued that it can and should be classified as genocidal. Noted genocide scholar Kurt Jonassohn, for example, has argued that "[t]here is no doubt that the deliberate starvation of the Kazakh people, coupled with the purges of Kazakh intellectuals and cultural leaders makes this a clear case of genocide." See K. Jonassohn and K. S. Björnson, *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations in Comparative Perspective* (1998), New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1999, p. 256. See also, for example, N. M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 76-77. For an account of the Kazakh experience of the famine and collectivisation more generally, see M. B. Olcott, 'The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1981, pp. 122-142.
[34] See, for example, J. C. Campbell, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* and R. Serbyn and B. Krawchenko (eds.), *Famine in the Ukraine 1932-1933*, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 4, 1987, p. 908; P. Kenez, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, *Society*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1988, pp. 94-96; G. Liber, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 103, no. 2, 1988, pp. 400-401; and C. Whitney, 'Starving the Hands That Fed Them,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 26 October 1986, pp. 11-12.
[35] For discussion of these more critical reviews, see below, pp. 196-197.

school history curricula as part of studies of genocide and human rights.[36] Furthermore, in April 1988 the United States Commission into the Ukrainian Famine submitted its report to Congress. This Commission, led by Mace as its executive director, had been established a few years earlier following lobbying by the American Ukrainian community.[37] Having argued that the famine was man-made, preventable and widely known to Soviet authorities, the sixteenth finding of the report declared that "Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against Ukrainians in 1932-1933."[38] Having thus presented their overall findings, the members of the Commission concluded in their report:

> The Commission on the Ukraine Famine has sought to fulfill its legislative mandate by attempting to answer some of the questions arising from one of history's worst crimes against humanity. In doing so, it may well have helped to make such crimes less likely in the future by demonstrating that, though it may take more than half a century, the truth will come out…. Sadly, collective victimization, the use of food as a weapon, and disinformation campaigns by oppressive regimes are far from being a thing of the past. During the Commission's existence, the world has seen Marxist regimes carry out not dissimilar policies in Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Sadder still, it would be naïve to assume that these most recent instances are the last.[39]

The Commission's investigations into the famine saw the disparate concerns of scholarship, politics, morality, and the law collide. This same combination was also at work when, two years later, the Final Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Ukrainian Famine was published.

The establishment of this Inquiry was, like the United States Commission, the result of efforts from the Ukrainian émigré community, having being created and funded by the World Congress of Free Ukrainians.[40] A major impetus for its formation, it has been subsequently claimed, were attacks on the veracity of Conquest's arguments in *The Harvest of Sorrow*.[41] Those behind the establishment of the Inquiry therefore sought "an independent scholarly assessment of what had, in fact, taken place."[42] Beginning its work in

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[36] J. Coplon, 'In Search of a Soviet Holocaust: 55-Year Old Famine Feeds the Right,' *Village Voice*, 12 January 1988, p. 32.
[37] S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine of 1931-3: Political and Natural Factors in Perspective,' *Food and Foodways*, vol. 12, nos. 2-3, 2004, p. 117.
[38] United States Commission on the Ukrainian Famine, 'Executive Summary: Commission Efforts and Accomplishments,' in *Investigation of the Ukrainian Famine, 1932-1933: Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1988, p. vii. The work of the Commission also produced a volume of oral histories about the famine. See J. E. Mace and L. Heretz (eds.), *Oral History Project of the Commission on the Ukrainian Famine*, Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1990.
[39] Commission on the Ukrainian Famine, 'Executive Summary,' p. xxv.
[40] I. A. Hunter, 'Putting History on Trial: The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933,' *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1990, p. 47.
[41] See J. W. F. Sundberg, 'International Inquiry into the 1932-1933 Famine in Ukraine,' in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. 69. For an outline of the attacks on *The Harvest of Sorrow* which is sympathetic to Conquest, see A. Puddington, 'Denying the Terror-Famine,' *National Review*, 25 May 1992, pp. 33-34.
[42] Sundberg, 'International Inquiry,' p. 69.

1988, the Inquiry published its Final Report in 1990. This report revealed that all seven commissioners were unanimous in their view that "it is beyond doubt that the immediate cause of the 1932-33 famine lay in the grain procurements imposed upon Ukraine from 1930 onwards," believing that "the Soviet authorities, without actively wanting the famine, most likely took advantage of it once it occurred to force the peasants to accept policies which they strongly opposed."[43] They were not, however, in similar agreement on the question of the famine's genocidal nature, with two commissioners dissenting on this point.[44] The problem, as one member of the Inquiry later explained, concerned the concept of 'intention' which is widely regarded as a necessary element of a genocide.[45] This same question of intent has continued to plague discussion of the *Holodomor's* status as a genocide, the implications and importance of which will be analysed later.

By the early 1990s, the nature of the discourse about the famine within Ukraine itself was also changing rapidly. With perestroika had come a degree of relaxation and the tentative beginnings of a Ukrainian discourse about these events.[46] It was also at this time that the Ukrainian word *Holodomor* began to be used and popularised. Coined by the Ukrainian writer Ivan Drach, Mace has characterised '*Holodomor*' as "a unique term arising from the depths of a victimized nation itself."[47] The first official use of the term in Ukraine is regarded to be a speech delivered by Volodymyr Sheherbyts'kyi, then the communist leader of Soviet Ukraine, on 25 December 1987, with its first appearance in writing occurring in early 1988.[48] The term has subsequently being adopted in both scholarly and popular discourse about the famine, in and outside of Ukraine.

Unsurprisingly, as the famine began to command greater attention in and outside of academia, and those who argued for the famine-as-genocide interpretation gained voice, counterviews began to emerge. Among the first reactions against this classification was Stephen G. Wheatcroft's response to Mace's 1984 article in *Problems of Communism*, in which the latter had first claimed that the famine constituted an act of genocide. In

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[43] International Commission of Inquiry into the 1932-33 Famine in Ukraine Final Report, 10 March 1990, as cited in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, pp. 268, 271-272.
[44] See International Commission of Inquiry Final Report, pp. 282-285.
[45] Hunter, 'Putting History on Trial,' p. 68.
[46] For discussion on this point, see, for example, D. R. Marples, 'New Interpretations of Ukrainian History,' *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 2, no. 11, 12 March 1993, p. 57.
[47] Mace, 'Is the Ukrainian Genocide a Myth?,' p. 51. See also Himka, Review of Dietsch and Kul'chyts'kyi, p. 684.
[48] See Graziosi, 'The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor,' p. 97; Himka, Review of Dietsch and Kul'chyts'kyi, p. 684; and Mace, 'Is the Ukrainian Genocide a Myth?,' p. 51, n. 20. For more on the tentative beginnings of discussion of the famine within Ukraine itself, see Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, pp. 36-42.

correspondence published in the journal in 1985, Wheatcroft was unflinching in his assessment of Mace's contribution to scholarship:

> I certainly have no intention of defending Soviet agrarian, social, or national policy in this period, which I consider to have been inexcusable, but as a historian working on this period I must register my concern about the standard of academic discussion of this very important topic, which in my opinion has seriously deteriorated in recent years. Dr. Mace's contribution adds to this deterioration.[49]

Wheatcroft also accused Mace, and Dalrymple before him, of perpetuating and overstating poor estimations of figures pertaining to the mortality rates of the famine in order to support a politicised interpretation of events.

As outlined previously, the responses to Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow* also revealed which scholars dissented from the famine-as-genocide position, and thus cemented the two opposing 'schools' of thought on the issue. Several notable scholars of the Soviet Union responded critically to the book, with particular disparagement reserved for the genocidal interpretation which Conquest appeared to support. For example, J. Arch Getty's review of *The Harvest of Sorrow* appeared in *The London Review of Books* in January 1987, and witheringly rejected "a theory which has not been generally accepted by non-partisan scholars outside the circles of exiled nationalities."[50] Another reviewer, John Kenez, similarly believed that Conquest's "narrow and conservative ideology" had negatively impacted the veracity of the book.[51]

Sharper criticism of *The Harvest of Sorrow* was expressed in a polemical article written by journalist Jeff Coplon, which was published in *The Village Voice* in January 1988. This article aggressively questioned the veracity of the entire genocide interpretation and the motives behind the ongoing attempts to publicise and promote the famine in North America, believing it was designed to deflect attention from Ukrainian nationalists who had collaborated with the Nazis.[52] In addition to dismissing Conquest as "an ideologue whose

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[49] S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Correspondence: Ukrainian Famine,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1985, p. 133. For Mace's reply, in which he declared that "[t]o deny such importance to the deaths of millions—and this is equally true whether one accepts Wheatcroft's figures or mine—through the hitherto unknown instrumentality of a man-made famine, is simply unconscionable," see J. E. Mace, 'Correspondence: Ukrainian Famine,' *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1985, pp. 134-138. The cited quotation is taken from page 138.

[50] Getty, 'Famine in the Ukraine,' p. 7.

[51] Kenez, Review of Conquest, p. 94. Similarly, R. W. Davies argued in his own review of *The Harvest of Sorrow* that "Conquest's conviction that the actions of the Soviet leaders can be explained primarily in terms of the inhumanity of Communist ideology prevents him from examining the economic and social crisis which preceded the desperate decisions which led to the famine." See R. W. Davies, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*, *Détente*, vol. 9, no. 10, 1987, p. 45.

[52] Ukrainian anti-Semitism and participation in the Holocaust continues to be a highly vexed and thorny issue, and one which has not, as Coplon's article demonstrates, remained separate from discourse about the *Holodomor*. For a similar interpretation of the famine and its relation to this element of the Ukrainian past, see, for example, D. D. Tottle, 'The Realm of Subjectivity,' *Canadian Dimension*, vol. 21, 1987, p. 37; and D. D.

serious work is long behind him" and questioning Mace's credentials as a scholar, Coplon cited several leading historians of the Soviet Union, including Roberta Manning, Lynne Viola and Moshe Lewin, who shared his views on the genocide interpretation.[53] Coplon quoted Lewin's description of this interpretation as "crap, rubbish…. I am an anti-Stalinist but I don't see how this [genocide] campaign adds to our knowledge. It's adding horrors, adding horrors, until it becomes a pathology."[54]

From these early beginnings a large discourse has emerged concerning the most adequate way to explain the *Holodomor*. The 'rediscovery' of the famine in the 1980s and the disagreements concerning its genocidal nature encouraged other scholars to explore its origins, causes and consequences. Support for or rejection of a genocidal interpretation appears to be determined by one's area of research expertise. In an assessment of scholarship on the famine, historian Hiroaki Kuromiya has pointed out that scholars who are Soviet specialists (and thus inclined to view the famine as part of an all-Union phenomenon) tend to fall on the non-genocide side of the debate, while Ukrainian specialists tend to support the genocide argument.[55] What remains a central focus of this discourse, regardless of whether the view is affirmative or negative on the question of genocide, are the interrelated questions of cause, responsibility and intent.

For those who argue in favour of the genocidal interpretation, the famine in Ukraine constitutes an act of genocide in the sense that it was a planned and deliberate attack which, to use Mace's representative argument, aimed to "destroy the Ukrainian

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Tottle, *Fraud, Famine and Fascism: The Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard*, Toronto, Progress Books, 1987. For a counterview, see, for example, Puddington, 'Denying the Terror-Famine,' pp. 34-36. For general comment on how discourse on the *Holodomor* has been shaped by the issue of Ukrainian participation in the Holocaust, see, for example, Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering*, pp. 4, 7, 8, 124-128, 136, 144. In some diaspora circles, an (erroneous) argument has been advanced that the involvement of Jewish Soviet officials such as Lazar Kaganovich in the administration of grain requisitions in Ukraine during the famine 'explains' the participation of Ukrainians in the Holocaust. As one such unashamedly anti-Semitic publication phrased the issue, "Kahanovych [Kaganovich] and the politburo organized a man-made famine in which 7 million Ukrainians died. Imagine that the head of Israel was a Ukrainian and that under his leadership 7 million Jews died. What would be the Jewish reaction?" See Y. Chumatskyj, *Why is One Holocaust Worth More Than Another?*, Lidcombe, Veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, 1986, p. 31. It was precisely this argument which found expression in Australian writer Helen Demidenko's highly flawed 1994 novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper*, and the ensuing controversy demonstrated the potency which these issues continue to possess. For a perceptive commentary of the 'Demidenko Affair', see R. Manne, *The Culture of Forgetting: Helen Demidenko and the Holocaust*, Melbourne, The Text Publishing Company, 1996. For more on the 'Demidenko Affair' and Manne's commentary, see, for example, I. Clendinnen, *Reading the Holocaust*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 1998, pp. 4-6.

[53] Coplon, 'Search for a Soviet Holocaust,' p. 31. On the question of Mace's credentials, Coplon argues that "[h]e is widely regarded as a right-wing polemicist, an indifferent researcher who has made a rather checkered career out of faminology." He quotes Roberta Manning as saying of Mace, "I doubt he could have gotten a real academic job…. If he hadn't hopped on this political cause he would be doing research for a bank, or running an export-import business." See Coplon, 'Search for a Soviet Holocaust,' p. 32.

[54] Coplon, 'Search for a Soviet Holocaust,' p. 31.

[55] See Kuromiya, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,' p. 667. See also Marples, 'Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,' p. 508.

nation as a political factor and social organism, a goal which could be attained far short of complete extermination."[56] In holding this position, several common arguments are evoked in order to support it, forming what one might term the 'standard' pro-genocide argument. First, it is maintained that no natural factors played a role in the onset of the famine, as the harvests of those years were actually quite good or at least adequate. Instead, the famine resulted from the impossible grain requisitions imposed by the regime upon the Ukrainian peasantry, and can be tied to a concurrent attack upon Ukrainian nationalism.[57] Additionally, it is argued that the Soviet leaders were well aware of what was occurring, but did nothing to assist the starving and prevented any international aid from reaching them.[58] Despite the fact that grain reserves were available, the Soviet Union continued its exports. Furthermore, the borders of the affected areas were closed, preventing the starving from moving on in search of food.[59]

Conversely, in rejecting this famine-as-genocide interpretation, those who argue the counterview also advance several common points in support of their position. Many of these historians point to the fact that proportionately speaking, it was the population of Kazakhstan who were worst affected by the famine.[60] This particular point leads to the second stressed by scholars, namely that the famine stretched far beyond the geographical confines of Ukraine into other areas, meaning that it cannot necessarily be construed as a singular attack against only Ukrainians as other ethnic groups felt its effects. Additionally, many emphasise the differences between the rural and urban experience of the famine, in that Ukrainian (and other) peasants starved while Ukrainian (and other) urban workers remained, in relative terms, better provisioned.[61] These factors have generally led most scholars who argue against the genocidal interpretation to see the famine not as an ethnic genocide but as an example of the regime's ruthless attitudes towards the peasantry.[62] If

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[56] Mace, 'The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Ukraine,' p. 67.

[57] F. Sysyn, 'The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-3: The Role of the Ukrainian Diaspora in Research and Public Discussion,' in L. Chorbajian and G. Shirinian (eds.), *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 191. Although not a supporter of the famine-as-genocide view, Terry Martin has provided a classic study on the 'national factor' in the famine of 1932-1933. See T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2001.

[58] See, for example, R. Conquest, D. Dalrymple, J. Mace and M. Novak, *The Man-Made Famine in Ukraine*, Washington, D.C., American Institute for Public Policy Research, 1984, pp. 6-7; and Mace, 'Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine,' p. 38.

[59] See also N. Werth, 'A State Against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,' in S. Courtois and others (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes Terror Repression*, trans. J. Murphy and M. Kramer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 164. Werth, however, ultimately comes down in favour of the non-genocide argument. See Werth, 'A State Against Its People,' p. 168.

[60] See Kuromiya, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,' p. 667; and Nove, 'When the Head is Off,' p. 37.

[61] See Himka, Review of Dietsch and Kul'chyts'kyi, p. 693; and Kuromiya, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,' p. 668.

[62] See, for example, Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine,' p. 120.

anything, the famine targeted peasants as a group, not a particular national or ethnic identity.

Amongst those who reject the genocidal interpretation, several alternate explanations have been offered which stress either environmental causal factors, political causal factors, or a combination of both. As a result, these explanations differ in how deliberate or accidental the famine is presented, and thus in the degree of responsibility which is afforded to Soviet leaders. Some historians present the responsibility of Soviet leaders as limited to mistakes and ignorance, while others emphasise the regime's negligence and callousness towards the peasants but stop short of declaring the famine an intentional act of genocide. The explanation offered by historian Mark Tauger is an example of one which stresses environmental causal factors. While Tauger has claimed that the famine resulted from "a complex of human and environmental factors, an interaction of man and nature, much as most previous famines in history," a closer examination of his work reveals that the greatest emphasis is placed on the environmental as opposed to the human factors.[63] In many ways, Tauger's argument can be seen as representative of one end of the 'spectrum' of views on the famine and its causes, with what Wheatcroft has described as the "extreme genocidal position"[64] held by scholars such as Mace, representing the other.

Tauger's arguments were based upon his insistence that the 1932 harvest was very low, which he believed "essentially made a famine inevitable," and as such, "call[s] for a revision of the genocide interpretation."[65] This revision is necessary, he argued, because other scholars who have advanced this view have claimed that the 1932 harvest was of a good or at least adequate size. In making the low harvest the centrepiece of his arguments, Tauger's interpretation thus emphasised the various natural factors which precipitated it. While he cited issues such as the weather as contributors to the situation, Tauger also saw an interaction between man and nature in facilitating some of these 'environmental' factors which impacted the harvest. He believed that problems with "labour availability" and "peasant resistance" led to "soil exhaustion," "massive weed infestations," and "the mice infestations of 1932-1933."[66] Overall, Tauger emphatically rejected the suggestion that the famine was 'artificial' or 'man-made', and instead held Stalin and other Soviet leaders

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[63] M. B. Tauger, 'Natural Disaster and Human Actions in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1933,' *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, no. 1506, The Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2001, p. 6.
[64] Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine of 1931-3,' p. 118.
[65] M. B. Tauger, 'The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1991, pp. 89, 71.
[66] Tauger, 'Natural Disaster and Human Actions,' pp. 36, 37, 39.

responsible only for what he saw as ignorance, lack of awareness, and incorrect beliefs and assumptions about both agriculture and the causes of famines.[67]

While Tauger emphasised the primacy of various environmental problems, historian D'Ann Penner provided an alternate explanation that stressed political causal factors. Despite their differences in emphasis, however, Penner and Tauger shared a similar view regarding the responsibility of the regime for the famine. Focusing much of her analysis on what she terms the "Don region"[68] as opposed to Ukraine, Penner argued that the famine can be characterised as "a political crisis in villager-Party relations with serious economic ramifications," noting that "government policies and peasant reactions from 1929-1932 created conditions unfavourable to agricultural stability, let alone development."[69] She saw peasant resistance and reaction to the policy of collectivisation as being the key factor in the onset of the terrible food shortages. Rejecting what she termed the "intentionalist" view (which she believed Conquest had argued in *The Harvest of Sorrow*), Penner simply concluded on the issue of intention that "the Communist Party did not have the power to create a famine."[70] In emphasising the importance of peasant resistance in creating the famine, Penner's views have been controversial. Wheatcroft, himself no supporter of the famine-as-genocide approach, has nonetheless argued that "Penner is effectively offering us a revised Stalinist explanation in which peasant motivation is being presented as the crucial factor."[71]

Of course, while criticising fellow historians' interpretations, Wheatcroft has offered his own. Usually in collaboration with his colleague R. W. Davies, Wheatcroft has presented several arguments about the famine since the 1980s. These reached their pinnacle with the 2004 publication of Davies and Wheatcroft's monograph *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*, which represented the second major study of these events after *The Harvest of Sorrow* and is described by Marples as "[t]he most notable work in the school of writing that maintains that the famine was not genocide."[72] Despite the difference in their conclusions, Davies and Wheatcroft nonetheless appeared quite deferential to Conquest in their own book, describing *Harvest* as a "classic study," and note that their own views, aided by new archival material not available to Conquest in 1986, "modify and supplement Dr Conquest's presentation of the famine but do not change it

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[67] Tauger, 'Natural Disaster and Human Actions,' pp. 41-42.
[68] D. R. Penner, 'Stalin and the *Ital'ianka* of 1932-1933 in the Don Region,' *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1998, p. 28. Penner defines the "Don region" as "the northern half of what in 1932 was known as the North Caucasus Territory, which included all the counties of the former Don province and four Kuban counties (Eisk, Kushchevsk, Stavo-Minok, and Belo-Glinsk)." See Penner, 'Stalin and the *Ital'ianka*,' p. 28.
[69] Penner, 'Stalin and the *Ital'ianka*,' pp. 28, 29.
[70] Penner, 'Stalin and the *Ital'ianka*,' p. 51.
[71] Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine,' p. 122.
[72] Marples, 'Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,' p. 508.

fundamentally."[73] They also noted that "we would criticise Dr Conquest's description of the famine only in points of emphasis and detail," although they actually reached a very different conclusion as to its causes.[74]

In many ways, Davies and Wheatcroft's presentation of these events combines both environmental and political causal factors, with an additional emphasis on what they termed "the economic and social background to the famine."[75] Rejecting the suggestion that it was intended by the regime, Davies and Wheatcroft reached the following conclusion:

> We do not at all absolve Stalin from responsibility for the famine. His policies towards the peasants were ruthless and brutal. But the story which has emerged in this book is of a Soviet leadership which was struggling with a famine crisis which had been caused partly by their wrongheaded policies, but was unexpected and undesirable. The background to the famine is not simply that Soviet agricultural policies were derived from Bolshevik ideology, though ideology played its part. They were also shaped by the Russian pre-revolutionary past, the experiences of the civil war, the international situation, the intransigeant circumstances of geography and the weather, and the *modus operandi* of the Soviet system as it was established under Stalin. They were formulated by men with little formal education and limited knowledge of agriculture. Above all, they were a consequence of the decision to industrialise this peasant country at breakneck speed.[76]

The famine was therefore not, according to Davies and Wheatcroft, an attempted genocide against the Ukrainian people. In fact, they appeared disinterested in what Marples has termed "the national issue."[77] As the full title of the book suggests, *The Years of Hunger* was concerned with examining the famines of 1931-1933 across all geographic areas of the Soviet Union, and thus, unlike much scholarly work in this area, does not focus exclusively on the Ukrainian experience.

Like Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow* before it, *The Years of Hunger* has been accompanied by debate and discussion amongst historians and other commentators. Indeed, Kuromiya has described the book as having "renewed the controversy" about the famine.[78] Reviewers found much to like in Davies and Wheatcroft's account, with one suggesting that "[t]here can be little question that this study will supersede other accounts of the famine."[79] A similar view was echoed by historian Peter Gatrell, who was full of

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[73] Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, p. xiv.
[74] Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, p. xv.
[75] Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, p. xv.
[76] Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, p. 441.
[77] Marples, 'Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,' p. 505.
[78] Kuromiya, 'The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,' p. 663.
[79] C. Scott Leonard, Review of R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2005, p. 156.

praise for "this magisterial volume."[80] Other scholars, however, were critical in their assessment of the book, and a squabble ensued in the pages of *Europe-Asia Studies*. Michael Ellman took issue with what he saw as too exclusive a focus on the "impersonal structural and agronomical factors," and chided Davies and Wheatcroft for not adequately addressing the Soviet leadership's views, namely "the *perception* of the situation by the *vozhd'* himself."[81] Tauger, meanwhile, found cause to complain about what he described as a "pattern of omissions and inaccurate citations" in relation to Davies and Wheatcroft's treatment of his own work.[82] "All those who seek," Tauger curtly suggested, "a more objective understanding of this event need to avoid such problematic use of each other's scholarship."[83]

In the wake of the publication of *The Years of Hunger*, scholarly interest and discussion about the *Holodomor* shows no signs of slowing. Historians who argue against the genocide interpretation are continuing to advance alternative explanations for the origins, causes and implications of the famine. For example, in 2008 Kuromiya argued that Soviet international relations and foreign policy concerns represented an additional and significant causal factor for the famine which had hitherto not being considered. Of course, those who argue the counterview remain equally active. Publications about the *Holodomor* continue to appear with regularity, and in 2009 the academic periodical *Holodomor Studies* was founded.[84] In November 2008 the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, so instrumental in bringing these events to scholarly and public consciousness in the early 1980s, hosted an international conference entitled 'The Great Famine in Ukraine: The

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[80] P. Gatrell, Review of R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, *Business History*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2005, p. 139. For other reviews of *The Years of Hunger* see, for example, A. Graziosi, Review of R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2007, pp. 774-775; and M. Harrison, Review of R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture 1931-1933*, *Economic History Review*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2005, pp. 626-628.

[81] M. Ellman, 'The Role of Leadership Perceptions and of Intent in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1934,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 57, no. 6, 2005, p. 824. Emphasis in original. For Davies and Wheatcroft's reply to Ellman, see R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-1933: A Reply to Ellman,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2006, pp. 625-633.

[82] M. Tauger, 'Arguing from Errors: On Certain Issues in Robert Davies' and Stephen Wheatcroft's Analysis of the 1932 Soviet Grain Harvest and the Great Soviet Famine of 1931-33,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 58, no. 6, 2006, p. 983.

[83] Tauger, 'Arguing from Errors,' p. 983. For Davies and Wheatcroft's reply to Tauger, see S. G. Wheatcroft, 'On Continuing to Misunderstand Arguments: Response to Mark Tauger,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 59, no. 7, 2007, pp. 847-868.

[84] For recent publications on the *Holodomor* which endorse a genocidal view of events, see, for example, A. Graziosi, *Stalinism, Collectivization and the Great Famine*, Cambridge, Ukrainian Studies Fund, 2007; H. Halyna (ed.), *Hunger By Design: The Great Ukrainian Famine and its Soviet Context*, Cambridge, Ukrainian Studies Fund, 2008; W. W. Isajiw (ed.), *Famine-Genocide in the Ukraine: 1932-1933: Western Archives, Testimonies and New Research*, Toronto, Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre, 2003; P. Kardash, *Genocide in Ukraine*, trans. D. Myrna, Melbourne, Fortuna Publishers, 2007; and L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008.

Holodomor and its Consequences, 1933 to the Present.' The year before, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the famine and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the HURI Famine Project, the symposium 'Breaking the Silence on the Ukrainian Terror-Famine,' was also held. Outside of the realm of academia, the *Holodomor* continues to be discussed and presented in more public forums. For example, production has been underway in the United States for some time for a feature-length film entitled *Holodomor: Ukrainian Genocide*, although it has not yet been released.[85]

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Having considered to this point the development and evolution of the scholarly debate surrounding the *Holodomor*, important questions remain as to its moral significance and what it might suggest about understanding and writing about past atrocity. Amidst the historical, political and moral concerns which have shaped this discussion, the 'politics' of victimhood—namely the means and processes through which the historical experience of victimisation can be put to use by various groups in the present—are clearly visible.[86] Narratives about past atrocities possess a certain potency in the present, which those surrounding other historical events do not seem to share to the same degree. The moral power of these particular pasts, along with an elevation of the status of victimhood and the persistence of a "culture of complaint," lends them a certain 'usefulness', and many aggrieved groups have attempted to gain from their earlier experiences of victimisation.[87] History, it is often said, is always history for a purpose, and this insight rings particularly true when confronted by the 'politics' of victimhood. Nonetheless, understanding how these 'politics' have informed historical narratives of atrocity, and interrogating their value

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[85] See *Holodomor: Ukraine's Genocide*, http://www.holodomorthemovie.com, accessed 1 August 2011.

[86] For an interesting discussion of 'the politics of victimhood' from an anthropologist's perspective, see L. Jeffrey and M. Candea, 'The Politics of Victimhood,' *History and Anthropology*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2006, pp. 287-296.

[87] See R. Hughes, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993. See also R. J. Evans, *Rereading German History 1800-1996: From Unification to Reunification*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 168. Several commentators point to a shift in the status of victimhood with the rise of 'identity politics'. Peter Novick, for example, has observed on this issue that "[t]here has been a change in the attitude toward victimhood from a status all but universally shunned and despised to one often eagerly embraced. On the individual level, the cultural icon of the strong, silent hero is replaced by the vulnerable and verbose antihero. Stoicism is replaced as a prime value by sensitivity. Instead of enduring in silence, one lets it all hang out. The voicing of pain and outrage is alleged to be 'empowering' as well as therapeutic." See P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1999, p. 8. For examples of similar arguments, see O. Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 8; O. Bartov, 'Reception and Perception: Goldhagen's Holocaust and the World,' in G. Eley (ed.), *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 38; N. G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, London, Verso, 2000, p. 32; M. Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State, Volume I: The Meaning of Genocide*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2005, p. 6; and Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, p. 164.

and suitability for historians' ongoing efforts to appropriately render accounts of these events, remains an important task.

The fundamental interpretative (and moral) issue in the debate surrounding the *Holodomor* is the question of its genocidal status. For the purposes of the present study, however, the actual answer to this question is largely irrelevant. What is of interest here is not so much the historical events themselves, but the nature of the discourse about them and what it suggests about the moral concerns which historians face in writing about atrocity. Several questions are raised by the 'morality' of the *Holodomor* debate. First, what informs the commitment to attain the particular classification of genocide for the Ukrainian experience of the famine? How do those who argue this line attempt to legitimate their point of view? And, most importantly perhaps, why does this 'famine-as-genocide' interpretation persist even when the majority of the scholarship on the subject does not support it?

A search for answers to these questions must begin with an examination of the highly contested concept of 'genocide'. Indeed, the volatile nature of the discourse surrounding it has both shaped and been shaped by the 'politics' of victimhood. While fierce controversy and disagreement has characterised much of the scholarly discussion of genocide, a general consensus that it represents a particularly grave transgression against humanity has nonetheless been achieved. In part, this 'status' of genocide has resulted from its fundamental association with the Holocaust; a connection which, as one scholar recognises, has granted the term "an ineluctable and powerful moral connotation: it [is] synonymous with the apex of human evil."[88] For many people, 'genocide' conveys a particular power which 'mass death', however horrible, simply does not. As philosopher Berel Lang has noted, "the term 'genocide' has come to be used when all other words of moral or political opprobrium fail, when the speaker or writer wishes to indict a set of actions as extraordinary for their malevolence and heinousness."[89]

Ironically, however, it is this dramatic moral power—along with the prominence of the Holocaust, "the genocide of genocides,"[90] in discussions of atrocity—which has helped

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[88] S. Straus, 'Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2001, p. 359. Similarly, Jeffrey C. Alexander has argued that the Holocaust has come to represent "a tragic archetype and a central component of moral judgment in our time." See J. C. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2002, p. 52.

[89] B. Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1990, p. 3. For other arguments in this vein, see, for example, Himka, Review of Dietsch and Kul'chyts'kyi, p. 689; and D. Moshman, 'Conceptual Constraints on Thinking About Genocide,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2001, p. 431.

[90] Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, p. 1. This view is echoed by Geoffrey F. Goekjian, who has written of genocide that "the Holocaust remains its canonical and even proprietary example." See G. F. Goekjian, 'Genocide and Historical Desire,' *Semiotica*, vol. 84, nos. 3-4, 1991, p. 212.

fuel the 'politics' of victimhood. It has rendered genocide "an attractive concept"[91] for would-be victims, and has allowed "a genocidal past [to become] an obvious political asset."[92] Within the *Holodomor* discourse, it is clear that the push for genocidal recognition has been informed by the moral 'legitimacy' and political benefit which the term provides. Indeed, this perceived 'worth' of genocide may go some way towards explaining why, in addition to the *Holodomor*, attempts to declare the 1921-1923 famine a genocide against the Ukrainian people have also been made.[93]

While the emotional and moral meaning of genocide is quite clear, its scholarly and legal definition has proved an ongoing source of controversy. What, exactly, is 'genocide'? Equally importantly, what is it not? Part of the problem in finding satisfactory answers to these questions is, as one recent scholar has recognised, the 'politics' themselves: "the very term has become so charged and carries such a weighty emotional load, that almost any attempt at definition is likely to run up against any number of interest groups demanding their pet issue for inclusion or exclusion."[94] These concerns, however, have plagued discussions of genocide since the term was first coined by the Polish legal scholar Raphaël Lemkin in 1943. Noting that this new phrase "denote[d] an old practice in its modern development," Lemkin had sought to give a name to the Nazis' programmes of systematic violence in their occupied territories, particularly the mass murder of Europe's Jews.[95] Nonetheless, his original definition was rather limited and non-specific, deeming it to be "the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group."[96]

Lemkin was later instrumental in the creation of the United Nations' *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide*, which was approved by the U.N. General Assembly on 9 December 1948 and provided a legal definition of the term. Genocide is herein defined as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical,

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[91] Straus, 'Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives,' p. 359.
[92] G. D. Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1999, p. 46. On this point, see also, for example, S. D. Stein, 'Conceptions and Terms: Templates for the Analysis of Holocausts and Genocides,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2005, p. 190.
[93] See W. Veryha, *A Case Study of Genocide in the Ukrainian Famine of 1921-1923: Famine as a Weapon*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2007. See also Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 237.
[94] Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, p. 203. A similar point is suggested by Dirk Moses, who asks whether "the concept [of 'genocide'] is fated to exist without an ultimate determination of its meaning. Too much trauma has been caused, and too many individual and group emotions and political claims are invested in the term for it to be regarded as a purely heuristic device. And, after all, more than a strong whiff of criminality attends any policy or process associated with the term." See A. D. Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century": Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust,' *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2002, p. 28.
[95] R. Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington, D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944, p. 79. For discussion of how the Nazis' programmes prompted Lemkin's development of the concept of genocide, see, for example, D. Harris, 'Defining Genocide: Defining History?,' in W. L. Hewitt (ed.), *Defining the Horrific: Readings on Genocide and Holocaust in the Twentieth Century*, Upper Saddle River, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004, p. 29; and L. Kuper, *Genocide*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981, pp. 22-23.
[96] Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, p. 79.

racial, or religious group."[97] The adoption of this definition by the U.N., however, was not itself without controversy, and, as one commentator has recognised, might be seen as the product of "political compromise."[98] Original drafting of the Convention had included social and political groups as potential victims of genocide, but this element was eventually withdrawn after vigorous protests by some delegates, among the most vocal of which was the Soviet Union.[99]

This initial controversy concerning inclusion and exclusion has persisted, and many scholars have suggested alternate definitions of genocide since 1948. An early example was the more inclusive classification offered in 1959 by the legal scholar Pieter Drost, who declared it to be "the deliberate destruction of physical life of individual human beings by reason of their membership of any human collectivity as such."[100] By this formulation, political and social groups can be considered victims of genocide. Drost's view has found echo in the work of sociologist Leo Kuper, who defines genocide as a "crime against a collectivity, taking the form of mass slaughter, and carried out with explicit intent."[101] More inclusive still is the approach suggested by noted genocide scholar Israel Charny, who has classified the term as "the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims."[102]

Meanwhile, other scholars have continued to champion a more exclusive understanding of genocide. In the most recent edition of his seminal study *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power*, sociologist Irving Horowitz cautioned against an overly inclusive

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[97] United Nations General Assembly, 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,' approved by the General Assembly 9 December 1948, as cited in L. Kuper, *Genocide*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981, p. 210.

[98] F. Chalk, 'Redefining Genocide,' in G. J. Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (1994), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 48.

[99] An early draft of the Convention reveals this expanded definition: "Genocide is the denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings; .... Many instances of such crimes of genocide have occurred when racial, religious, political and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part .... The General Assembly, therefore, affirms that genocide is a crime under international law .... whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or any other grounds." See Legal and Administrative Decisions, United States Weekly Bulletin, 31 December 1946, as cited in B. van Schaack, 'The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention's Blind Spot,' *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 106, no. 7, 1997, p. 2263. Ellipses in original. For discussion of the various political influences which shaped the adoption of the Convention, see, for example, Kuper, *Genocide*, pp. 24-26; Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, pp. 4, 9, 21-24; and Rummel, *Lethal Politics*, pp. xiv-xv. In light of these influences, Naimark makes the salient observation that "[t]he specific language of the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide of December 1948 is frequently cited as the reason why Stalin's crimes cannot be considered genocide. However, if one looks at the history of the convention itself, there are good reasons to think more flexibly about the document's meaning." See Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, p. 15.

[100] P. N. Drost, *The Crime of State Volume II: Genocide*, Leyden, A. W. Sythoff, 1959, p. 125, as cited in F. Chalk, 'Redefining Genocide,' in G. J. Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (1994), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 48.

[101] Kuper, *Genocide*, p. 86.

[102] I. W. Charny, 'Classification of Genocide in Multiple Categories,' in I. W. Charny (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide: Volume I*, Jerusalem, The Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1999, p. 7.

definition, noting that "[b]roadening the concept so that everyone somehow ends up a victim of genocide only leads to a tautological reasoning."[103] Expanding upon this view, Horowitz argued:

> [T]here is a danger in broadening the concept of genocide so that it becomes symbolically all-embracing and hence meaningless…. A deflated, pessimistic, and ultimately confused concept of genocide deprives the very people who are presumably genocide victims of the capacity to resist and retaliate. For that reason, I have come to believe that a restrictive rather than an omnibus concept of genocide is the most operationally valid.[104]

Other researchers, however, have defended a broader definition of genocide, claiming that it is far more dangerous to be too exclusive in conceptualising the term. Charny, for example, has argued that genocide should refer to "all known types of mass murder and mass deaths that are brought about at the hands of man," so that atrocities will not "fall by the theoretical wayside" as a result of a definition that is too restrictive.[105] In response to these difficulties and lack of consensus regarding what should be excluded or included under the banner of 'genocide', scholars have proposed a variety of subcategories and separate words to denote different kinds of mass killing, such as "politicide,"[106] "cultural genocide," and "democide."[107]

In contrast to this ongoing controversy regarding inclusivity and exclusivity, the notion that intention on the part of the perpetrators is a necessary condition to the commission of genocide has proved less contentious. The formulation set out in the official U.N. definition, namely that genocide entails "acts committed with intent," seems to be generally accepted by most scholars.[108] For the debate surrounding the genocidal

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[103] I. L. Horowitz, *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power* (1976), New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1997, p. 81.
[104] Horowitz, *Taking Lives*, pp. 80-81.
[105] I. Charny, 'Toward a Generic Definition of Genocide,' in G. Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, p. 91.
[106] Charny uses the term 'politicide' to mean "intentional mass murder of people defined as political enemies or threats to the regime in power or seeking power." See Charny, 'Classification of Genocide in Multiple Categories,' p. 8.
[107] The term 'democide' has been proposed by Rudolph J. Rummel, who defines it as "murder by government agents acting authoritatively." See R. J. Rummel, 'The New Concept of Democide,' in I. W. Charny (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide: Volume I*, Jerusalem, The Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1999, p. 20. 'Genocide' thus becomes a subcategory of 'democide'. For discussion of 'democide' in a Soviet context, see R. J. Rummel, *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917* (1990), New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1996. For general discussion concerning the proliferation of different terms and subcategories of 'genocide', see, for example, Stein, 'Conceptions and Terms,' pp. 171, 181-185. Further confusion on this issue of naming can be seen in the arguments of one commentator that the *Holodomor* was the pinnacle of the "metagenocide" committed by Russians against Ukrainians, which is defined as "long term ongoing genocide systematically targeting for destruction not just a group of people but also all that defines them as a group. The goal is not just to deny the group's right to exist, but to deny that it ever existed as a nation in the first place, to wipe it from humanity's collective memory." See P. Borisow, 'Holodomor: Metagenocide in Ukraine—Its Origins and Why It's Not Over,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2008, pp. 257-258.
[108] Of course, there are scholars who argue against the necessity of intention in deeming acts or events genocidal, and this issue has also proved to be controversial in the discourse about the meaning and nature of

status of the *Holodomor*, however, the question of intent has become an important point of contention. If Stalin consciously inflicted the famine on Ukrainians, it can be more easily classified as a genocide. If he did not intend it, however, but did not act to stop it once started, or it was caused by largely natural factors (and thus wholly unintended), the case for genocide becomes much weaker, and the already murky issues of blame and responsibility are further clouded.

The absence of any written document which suggests Stalin purposefully ordered and oversaw the famine has often been cited in arguments against the genocide interpretation. Davies and Wheatcroft, for example, have stated their conclusions plainly: "we have found no evidence, either direct or indirect, that Stalin sought deliberately to starve the peasants."[109] Others, however, have not found this absence of evidence to be a necessary indication of the famine's non-genocidal nature. Historian Norman Naimark, for example, has made the following observations on this particular issue:

> There is not a lot of evidence that Stalin himself ordered the Ukrainian killer famine, but there is every reason to believe he knew about it, understood what was happening, and was completely indifferent to the fate of the victims. This may not be enough evidence to convict him in an international court of justice as a genocidaire, but that does not mean that the event itself cannot be judged as genocide. Recent international jurisprudence concludes that a historical event—such as the massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995—can constitute genocide without the demonstration that specific perpetrators were guilty of the crime.[110]

While Naimark's points are certainly valid, they do raise more questions than answers and thus serve to further highlight the lack of clarity and consensus in much of the scholarly discussion of genocide. In these spaces of ambiguity, the 'politics' of victimhood have thrived.

The Holocaust looms inescapably large in any discussion of genocide and the 'politics' of victimhood. As outlined previously, the Nazis' destruction of the Jews has

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genocide. Charny has been vocal on this point, arguing for "the danger that many events of mass murder will be disqualified from being labelled genocide if there is an obligation to establish clear-cut specific intent." See J. Balint and I. W. Charny, 'Definitions of Genocide,' in I. W. Charny (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide: Volume I*, Jerusalem, The Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1999, p. 14. For further discussion about the issue of intention and the commission of genocide, see, for example, F. Chalk and K. Jonassohn, 'Conceptualizations of Genocide and Ethnocide,' in R. Serbyn and B. Krawchenko (eds.), *Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933*, Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1986, pp. 180-181; N. Finzsch, 'If It Looks Like a Duck, If It Walks Like a Duck, If It Quacks Like a Duck,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 119-126; and Kuper, *Genocide*, p. 33.

[109] Davies and Wheatcroft, 'Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33,' p. 628. For a similar view regarding the difficulties establishing clear genocidal intent in the famine, see, for example, T. W. Simon, 'Genocides: Normative Comparative Studies,' in J. K. Roth and E. Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 108-109.

[110] Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, p. 77.

become the paradigmatic genocidal event, is widely considered to be the apogee of historical atrocity, and continues to command the largest degree of public and scholarly attention, discussion and recognition. This centrality has resulted in what one scholar has termed "a Holocaust-based conception of genocide," meaning that "[w]e think more about the Holocaust than any other genocide, and we understand other genocides by analyzing their similarities to and differences from the Holocaust."[111] While, as many researchers have documented, this narrow view has repercussions for our understanding and knowledge of such events, it has also seriously impacted the 'politics' which surround discussions of genocide.[112] As historian Peter Novick has recognised, "the success of the Jews in gaining permanent position of center stage for their tragedy, and their equal success in making it the benchmark against which other atrocities were judged, produced a fair amount of resentment—'Holocaust envy.'"[113]

This "Holocaust envy" has found expression in a persistent urge for comparison amongst those who wish to have their own particular atrocities canonised as genocide. Clearly, drawing such comparisons can serve many functions. First, in being so widely recognised as a singularly terrible event, highlighting similarities with the Holocaust can help to emphasise the magnitude of the comparative case in terms which are already understandable to large numbers of people. Indeed, one commentator has noted that "the Holocaust [has] provided a convenient, highly symbolic, and easily recognizable event many [have] used to draw attention to their own interests."[114] Some scholars writing about the *Holodomor* have been explicit in making these connections. Historian Stanislav Kulchytsky, for example, has declared of the aims behind the genocide recognition campaign:

> Ukraine is not laying blame on any modern country or political force for this act of genocide that destroyed millions of its citizens. The country only wants

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[111] Moshman, 'Conceptual Constraints on Thinking About Genocide,' p. 435.

[112] For examples of such discussions regarding how the predominance of the Holocaust has influenced scholarship on genocide more generally, see H. R. Huttenbach, 'Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum: Towards a Methodology of Definition and Categorization,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1988, pp. 289-303; Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas,' pp. 7-36; Moshman, 'Conceptual Constraints on Thinking About Genocide,' pp. 431-450; Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness,' pp. 28-61; D. E. Stannard, 'Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship,' in A. S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1996, pp. 163-208; and D. Stone, 'The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond "Uniqueness" and Ethnic Competition,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2004, pp. 127-142.

[113] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 192. Similarly, Mark Levene has noted on this issue that "[p]aradoxically, though equally problematically, it is this very continuing cultural hegemony of Holocaust *as* genocide, and the resistance to contenders which this often engenders, which repeatedly acts as a magnet to advocates of other human catastrophes, clamouring to make the point that the 'g-word' applies to theirs, too. Demonstrate that what happened to 'your' group was comparable to what happened to the Jews under the Nazis, or that its perpetrators were similarly impelled by a racist worldview, and you have made the case." See Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, pp. 2-3. Emphasis in original.

[114] Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness,' p. 34.

> the international community to know about and to acknowledge this tragedy appropriately, just as it knows about and acknowledges as genocide the tragic destruction of the Jewish people during the Second World War, the Holocaust.[115]

There exists, however, a distasteful undertone to such comparisons. In addition to drawing parallels of a historical nature, many have also sought to make moral comparisons between the Holocaust and various atrocities, aiming to demonstrate that their particular event was 'worse' and the victims suffered 'more'. Confronted with this tendency, we are forced to consider the discomforting and highly problematic idea of 'competitive' atrocity, and a 'hierarchy' of suffering and victimhood.

The discourse surrounding the *Holodomor* has demonstrated many of these dynamics of comparison with the Holocaust. Indeed, the emphasis on real or imagined parallels with the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews could be described as a hallmark of the 'famine-as-genocide' discourse.[116] The aims behind the adoption of this comparative approach appear to reflect the two main functions outlined above. First, in much of the earlier writing on the famine in the 1980s and early 1990s, comparisons to the Holocaust were used to emphasise and condemn the preceding neglect of the *Holodomor* in scholarly and public discourse. The clear moral purpose of such comparisons was to elicit outrage about the fact an event as bad as, if not worse than, the Holocaust had not received a like degree of public attention and commemoration. In this sense, these comparisons helped to lend the *Holodomor* a certain seriousness, as a crime of the same dimension as the Nazis' destruction of the Jews. The second purpose, however, which comparisons between the

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[115] Kulchytsky, 'Defining the *Holodomor* as Genocide,' p. 129.

[116] Of course, this impulse is not limited to the discourse surrounding the *Holodomor*. Drawing comparisons and parallels with the Holocaust is a feature of countless groups' attempts to characterise and articulate their own experiences of suffering and injustice, and are often used as a means to draw attention to a particular cause. A fierce critic of this practice was Lucy Dawidowicz, who inveighed against the use of the Holocaust, its rhetoric and its symbolism in service of different ends: "How commonplace nowadays the glib equation of the murder of the Jews with any disaster or atrocity, with any state of affairs one abhors or even merely dislikes. Extremist blacks, with careless disregard for linguistic precision or conceptual clarity, have abused words like 'genocide,' 'Auschwitz,' 'holocaust,' exploiting them in excesses of rhetorical overkill to describe conditions in urban slums. Some American antiabortionists, with the fanaticism of zealots, have compared advocates of population control to Nazis who murdered the Jews." See L. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 16-17. A similar view is expressed in Y. Bauer, 'Whose Holocaust?,' *Midstream*, vol. 26, no. 9, 1980, p. 42. For more measured commentary on this tendency, see, for example, Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals,' p. 51; B. Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 37; Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 191-195, 230-231; and Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness, pp. 34, 38-41. Examples of such comparisons include, but are certainly not limited to, I. Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust*, New York, Basic Books, 1997; W. Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1997; G. Grau, *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-1945*, Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn, 1995; and D. E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. See also, for example, Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness,' p. 52, n. 25.

Holodomor and the Holocaust have been designed to serve is to present the former as a 'worse' atrocity than the latter.

The specific form these comparisons have assumed includes the adoption of terminology and mechanisms of commemoration normally associated with the Holocaust, as well as direct equation between the numbers of victims and the nature of their suffering. A particularly illustrative example of these impulses can be observed in Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*. He opened his study with the following invocation of the experience and conditions of the famine:

> Fifty years ago as I write these words, the Ukraine and the Ukrainian, Cossack and other areas to its east—a great stretch of territory with some forty million inhabitants—was like one vast Belsen. A quarter of the rural population, men, women and children, lay dead or dying, the rest in various stages of debilitation with no strength to bury their families or neighbours. At the same time, (as at Belsen), well-fed squads of police or party officials supervised the victims…. In terms of regimes and policies fifty years is a long time. In terms of individual lives, not so long. I have met men and women who went through the experiences you will read of as children or even as young adults. Among them were people with 'survivors' guilt'—that irrational shame that they should be the ones to live when their friends, parents, brothers and sisters died, which is also to be found among the survivors of the Nazi camps.[117]

The appeal to such imagery and the use of direct analogies to the Holocaust and its victims underlies Conquest's opinion (at least at the time of his original writing) that the famine was a genocide akin to that of the Nazis' murder of the Jews—in its scope, the number of victims, and their suffering.[118]

Similarly, several writers have frequently employed the term 'Holocaust' in reference to the famine. It has been variously described as "a Holocaust the west forgot," "the hidden Holocaust," "Ukraine's Holocaust," "the early Holocaust," and "the holocaust-famine."[119] Other phrases and terms commonly associated with the Nazis'

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[117] Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (2002 ed.), p. 3. For interesting comment on Conquest's use of this "truly powerful stylistic tool," see Thomas, 'The Politics of Interpretation,' p. 126.

[118] With the passing of time, Conquest appears to have altered his opinion on the genocidal nature of the famine. In his article 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine of 1931-3,' Wheatcroft cited personal correspondence from Conquest dated August 2003, in which the latter declared he was not of the opinion that "Stalin purposely inflicted the 1933 famine. No. What I argue is that with the resulting famine imminent, he could have prevented it, and put 'Soviet interests' other than feeding the starving first—thus consciously abetting it." See Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining Soviet Famine of 1931-3,' p. 134, n. 26. Wheatcroft later claimed that "Conquest appears to have become concerned about the views that were being attributed to him, and had quite explicitly asked Professor Davies and myself to make clear in our book what his (Conquest's) views were on these matters." See Wheatcroft, 'On Continuing to Misunderstand Arguments,' p. 860. Parentheses in original.

[119] See Karatnycky, 'Forced Famine in the Ukraine,' p. 22; M. Dilot, *Execution By Hunger: The Hidden Holocaust*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1985; S. Weatherbe, 'The Ukrainian Holocaust,' *Ukrainian Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1984, pp. 18-25; F. Kapusta, 'The Early Holocaust in Europe: Collectivization and the Man-Made Famine in Ukraine, 1932-33,' *Ukrainian Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1981, pp. 369-382; and G. V. Mylton, 'Books Expose Famine-Genocide,' *Ukrainian Weekly*, 8 October 2000, respectively. For other examples of the term

destruction of the Jews have also been applied to the *Holodomor*, such as Mace's characterisation of the famine as "a means used by Stalin to impose a 'final solution' on the most pressing nationality problem in the Soviet Union."[120]

In addition to this adoption of terminology, the 'famine-as-genocide' interpretation has also been informed by several commemorative and juridico-legal mechanisms which echo those surrounding the Holocaust. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this impulse is the attempted adoption within Ukraine itself of legal structures similar to those which exist in Germany and other countries against Holocaust denial. As outlined previously, the genocidal status of the famine is now enshrined in Ukrainian law, although *Holodomor* denial was ultimately not recognised as a criminal act. Additionally, several national governments, including those of Australia, the United States and Canada, have formally recognised the famine as a genocide against the Ukrainian people, and a *Holodomor* Remembrance Day is now observed in Ukraine, Canada and several other countries.[121] Efforts to have the United Nations officially recognise the famine as a genocide, however, have thus far proved unsuccessful.

Another important point of comparison which has been drawn between the *Holodomor* and the Holocaust concerns the number of victims. There are, as we have seen, wildly varying estimates of the death toll of the famine, but many writers who argue in favour of a genocide interpretation have been at pains to draw parallels between the scope of mortality for the *Holodomor* and the Nazis' annihilation of the Jews. One historian, for example, has argued that in terms of the number of victims, the *Holodomor* is "clearly…of the same order as the catastrophe that struck Europe's Jews in 1942-1945 [sic]," a view echoed by another scholar who has suggested that the famine "rivals in its magnitude the Jewish Holocaust."[122] This line of reasoning has been taken slightly further by historian Lubomyr Luciuk, who has argued that "the intensity of mortality in Soviet Ukraine over a

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'Holocaust' being used to describe the famine, see I. Drach, 'To the Famine-Genocide of 1933,' trans. R. K. Stojko-Lozynskyj, *Ukrainian Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1993, pp. 357, 361; and V. I. Hryshko, *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933*, trans. M. Carynnyk, Toronto, Bahriany Foundation, 1983.

[120] Mace, 'Famine and Nationalism in Soviet Ukraine,' p. 37.

[121] For discussion of these various initiatives, see, for example, Borisow, 'Holodomor—Metagenocide in Ukraine,' p. 251, n. 1; S. Kulchytsky, 'Defining the *Holodomor* as Genocide,' in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, p. 129; Luciuk, 'A Genocide Long Ignored,' p. A17; Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 52; and Young, 'Remember the Holodomor'. For examples of *Holodomor* legislation both in Ukraine and in Canada, see Law of Ukraine, 'On the *Holodomor* in Ukraine of 1932-1933,' pp. 357-359; and Statutes of Canada, Bill C-459, 'The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide ("Holodomor") Memorial Day Act,' 29 May 2008, as cited in L. Y. Luciuk (ed.), *Holodomor: Reflections on the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine*, Kingston, The Kashtan Press, 2008, pp. 361-363, respectively.

[122] See Rayfield, 'The Ukrainian Famine of 1933,' p. 89; and Karatnycky, 'Forced Famine in the Ukraine,' p. 22, respectively. A similar view was argued by Mace in his earliest writings on the famine, where he suggested that "purely in terms of mortality, it was…of the same order of magnitude as the Jewish Holocaust." See Mace, 'The Man-Made Famine of 1933 in the Soviet Ukraine,' p. 67.

duration of less than a year confers upon the *Holodomor* the unenviable status of being a crime against humanity arguably without parallel in European history."[123]

This emphasis on the importance of "body counts" in describing and conceptualising an atrocity reflects, as Horowitz has observed, a tendency to measure "the qualitative worth of a genocide by the quantitative figures involved."[124] However, in seeking to establish the 'worth' of the *Holodomor* as a genocide by comparing its death toll with that of the Holocaust, it seems that many have not been content with mere equation. In his 1988 article in the *Village Voice*, Coplon quoted Eli Rosenbaum, then general counsel for the World Jewish Congress, on the issue of figures for famine victims that "[t]hey're always looking to come up with a number bigger than six million…. It makes the reader think: 'My god, it's *worse* than the Holocaust.'"[125]

Such attempts to present the *Holodomor* as being a 'worse' atrocity than the Holocaust become particularly apparent when one considers the comparisons which have been drawn between the nature of the suffering of the victims. Some writers on the famine have gone so far as to claim that the gas chambers were somehow 'kinder' than death by starvation. The following passage from a review of *The Harvest of Sorrow* provides a particularly vulgar example of this notion of 'comparative suffering':

> Conquest's description of the mass starvations…ranks with the most distressing reading I have ever done. In horror it surpasses anything I have seen in the Nazi literature, even Eugen Kogon's *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, a survivor's account of Buchenwald. Indeed, it makes the Nazi death camps with their clean, quick gas chambers disguised as showers seem almost humane.[126]

It is worth noting that, in addition to the many problems which this argument raises from both historiographical and moral perspectives, it is also reminiscent of the Nazis' own attitudes and approach towards the 'Final Solution'.

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Writing the history of atrocity, it is clear, is never a neutral undertaking. As we have seen throughout the course of this chapter, the moral capital bestowed by past experience of victimisation can be made to serve a variety of present purposes, and historical

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[123] Luciuk, 'Foreword,' p. v. Emphasis in original. Luciuk made the same claim in a November 2008 article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. See Luciuk, 'A Genocide Long Ignored,' p. A17. Similarly, another commentator has deemed the *Holodomor* to be "the most brutal ethnic genocide in history." See Borisow, 'Holodomor: Metagenocide in Ukraine,' p. 251.
[124] Horowitz, *Taking Lives*, p. 29.
[125] Coplon, 'In Search of a Soviet Holocaust,' p. 33.
[126] E. H. Methvin, Review of R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, *National Review*, vol. 47, no. 23, 1995, p. 124.

narratives of these events can become a vehicle for decidedly non-historical agendas. Before considering what 'lessons' the *Holodomor* debate and its 'victim politics' might suggest for historians and their moral engagement with past atrocity, however, one additional question needs to be addressed. Why, to put it simply, should such 'politics'—by their very definition well outside the confines of 'objective' historical scholarship—be of any concern to historians? After all, if "[t]he notion that Ukraine was uniquely victimised by Soviet famine is just a nationalist fantasy,"[127] and is simply "a theory which has not been generally accepted by non-partisan scholars outside the circles of exiled nationalities,"[128] why should historians even bother to engage with it?

In practice, these issues are not so clear-cut. The *Holodomor* is unusual in the sense that the 'politics' of victimhood which surround it have translated into the academic discourse, and, as a result, historians have been forced to take notice. As we have seen, in the wake of Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow* the famine itself has become a significant object of study within Soviet history.[129] What is unusual—and deeply problematic—about the discourse surrounding the *Holodomor* are the massive discrepancies in interpretation and emphasis which all coexist under the single mantle of academic history. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a similar event where arguments as disparate as Mace's (the famine was wholly intended) and Tauger's (wholly unintended) are both part of legitimate historical discourse.

Furthermore, these discrepancies have extended into public discussion of the *Holodomor*. We are confronted with a situation whereby the majority of historical scholarship supports a non-genocidal interpretation, while governments around the world have passed legislation enshrining the opposite conclusion, which has also found an echo in various public educational and commemorative efforts. As Marples has observed, "it may be fair to say that political activism with regard to the issues, including the adoption of resolutions by various governments to recognize it as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people, has *preceded* the conclusion of the scholarly debate."[130] This state of affairs is a serious cause for concern, and demands a response from historians. As we saw in our examination of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the Goldhagen Debate in Chapter

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[127] M. Ellman, Review of H. Kuromiya, *Stalin*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 58, no. 6, 2006, p. 986.
[128] Getty, 'Starving the Ukraine,' p. 7.
[129] Thomas, 'The Politics of Interpretation,' p. 123.
[130] Marples, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 303. Emphasis in original. For a more critical view from Marples on how such governmental initiatives 'settle' debates which actually remain unclosed in their academic contexts, see Marples, 'Ethnic Issues in the Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine,' pp. 508, 510, 516.

Four, stark discrepancies between public and scholarly understandings of past atrocity are something historians need to guard against and actively seek to avoid.[131]

Clearly, then, the *Holodomor* debate and its 'politics' have much to tell us about the moral concerns which accompany history writing about atrocity. The major point seems to be the ultimate futility of comparisons designed to emphasise the severity or seriousness of one atrocity at the expense of another. To be sure, drawing parallels between different atrocities can be useful and instructive, but there remains important distinctions between historical and moral comparisons.[132] Once one engages on the moral plane, and suggests that some death or injustice was 'worse' than another, or that certain modes of murder are somehow 'nicer' than others, it is very easy for the comparative to morph, intentionally or otherwise, into the competitive. Charny makes an important observation on this issue, cautioning that:

> Although human thought and speech is oriented, not entirely without reason, to concepts of *more* and *less*, *strong* and *weak*, and so on of polarized comparatives and dichotomies it is proving of the utmost importance to guard against such coins of speech leading to the implications, even if unintentional, that the suffering, tragedy or degree of evil inflicted on any one people was somehow *more* than or *less* than that suffered by another people.[133]

Suffering cannot be quantified and then ranked accordingly, and it is distasteful to try. As Horowitz has noted, "it is dangerously unbecoming for victims to engage in divisive squabbles about whose holocaust is real or whose genocide is worse."[134] Additionally, as has been pointed out by numerous scholars, from the perspective of those who did not survive such atrocities, it is also irrelevant.[135]

As we have seen, Novick's invocation of "Holocaust envy" offers an effective description for this seemingly relentless phenomenon of comparison/competition amongst those who desire a like degree of recognition for their own experiences of victimisation. He makes the equally salient point, however, that "'Holocaust envy' contends with 'Holocaust possessiveness.'"[136] The latter refers to those who argue that the Holocaust is a distinctly Jewish experience, a terribly unique event in the catalogue of genocide and human iniquity, and who have generally responded negatively to attempts by others to 'appropriate' its

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[131] See Chapter Four, 'Depicting Atrocity: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and the Goldhagen Debate,' pp. 149-151.
[132] On this point, see Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, p. 8.
[133] I. W. Charny, 'Comparative Study of Genocide,' in I. W. Charny (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide: Volume I*, Jerusalem, The Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1999, pp. 9-10. Emphasis in original.
[134] Horowitz, *Taking Lives*, p. 241.
[135] See, for example, R. J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1989, p. 89; and R. G. Suny, 'Russian Terror/ism and Revisionist Historiography,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, p. 13.
[136] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 197.

symbolism, rhetoric and meaning.[137] For historians trying to navigate their way through the moral complexities which attend any engagement with past atrocity, this "possessiveness" proves to be as problematic as the "envy," and these two concepts shape and inform each other in a perpetually futile cycle. The 'uniqueness' argument is, as one scholar has recognised, "exactly what makes the Holocaust the archetypal and defining member of the greater concept which includes it, the standard against which all other genocides, and purported genocides, are measured."[138] As we have seen, however, it is this 'status' of the Holocaust which feeds the "envy," and those who take issue with its centrality simply try to claim it for their own atrocity.[139]

The moral implications of the 'uniqueness' argument also raise troubling questions. Novick has again proved vocal on this point, arguing that "[t]he assertion that the Holocaust is unique—like the claim that it is singularly incomprehensible or unrepresentable—is, in practice, deeply offensive." He continues, "[w]hat else can all of this possibly mean except 'your catastrophe, unlike ours, is ordinary; unlike ours it is comprehensible; unlike ours is representable.'"[140] Nonetheless, it is clear that important distinctions *do* exist between the Holocaust and other atrocities like the *Holodomor*. Historian Richard Evans, for example, has pointed out that "[t]here was no Soviet

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[137] See Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness,' pp. 29, 35-37. There is a significant degree of diversity within the various arguments advanced regarding the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust. Yehuda Bauer, for example, has come to define the Holocaust as being distinct from 'genocide' generally. Therefore, "the Holocaust is an extreme form of genocide," and "the extremeness of the Holocaust is what makes it unprecedented." See Y. Bauer, 'Comparisons with Other Genocides,' in *idem.*, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 50. For other reflections by Bauer on this issue, see, for example, 'Whose Holocaust?,' pp. 42-46; and 'A Past That Will Not Go Away,' in M. Berenbaum and A. J. Peck (eds.), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined* (1998), Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 12-22. Other scholars, most notably Steven Katz, have argued that the uniqueness of the Holocaust results from its genocidal nature, because is the only true instance of historical genocide. See S. T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context, Volume I: The Holocaust and Mass Death Before the Modern Age*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994. For similar arguments from Katz, see S. T. Katz, 'The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension,' in A. S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1996, pp. 19-38. For other examples of variants of the 'uniqueness' argument, see Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, pp. 11, 13-15; D. J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996), New York, Knopf, 2002; and D. E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, New York, The Free Press, 1993. For various critiques of the notion of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, see, for example, Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, pp. 42-55; V. Lal, 'Genocide, Barbaric Others, and the Violence of Categories: A Response to Omer Bartov,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 4, 1998, pp. 1187-1190; A. Ophir, 'On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise,' *Tikkun*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1987, pp. 61-66; and Stannard, 'Uniqueness as Denial,' pp. 163-208.

[138] Moshman, 'Conceptual Constraints on Thinking About Genocide,' p. 433.

[139] Indeed, historian Dan Stone has noted this counterproductive tendency for scholars and others who argue against the uniqueness view to "single out their own preferred genocide and attempt to put it forward as the 'worst', or as unique, thereby displacing the Holocaust and instating another genocide in its place." See Stone, 'The Historiography of Genocide,' p. 133.

[140] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 9. For similar views, see, for example, Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas,' pp. 14, 16; and Stone, 'The Historiography of Genocide,' p. 130.

Treblinka, built to murder people on their arrival."[141] Can these distinctions be drawn without resort to the morally-loaded language of 'uniqueness', thus begetting the cycle of comparison and competition? In theory, it certainly seems possible—as one scholar has noted, "there is no reason why empirically distinguishing the Holocaust from other genocides is synonymous with declaring it a greater evil."[142] As we have seen, however, the practical realities have proved far more difficult. The most profitable way forward, as one

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[141] Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, p. 88. Similarly, historian Charles Maier has argued that "[n]o Soviet citizen had to expect that deportation or death must be so inevitable by virtue of ethnic origins…. Nor did the Soviets establish facilities purely for extermination. The conditions of labor in the Siberian camps were lethal enough that only a quarter of inmates might survive. But no camp such as Treblinka existed, precisely just to kill masses of human beings on arrival. Nor did the Soviet regime dedicate itself to the dragnet of victims, wherever it might reach them." See Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, pp. 76-77. Both Evans and Maier's comments cited here were made in response to the *Historikerstreit*, or 'Historian's Dispute' which erupted amongst West German historians during the mid-1980s and continued for several years. In addition to questions concerning the 'historicisation' of the Nazi past, at stake in this debate was the precise question of the singularity or 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust, and whether or not it was comparable to other atrocities, specifically those associated with Stalinism. Historian Ernst Nolte, widely credited with 'sparking' the *Historikerstreit*, believed parallels could be drawn between the crimes of Nazism and Stalinism, and even ventured to suggest that "[w]as not the Gulag Archipelago prior in history to Auschwitz?.... Wasn't the 'class murder' of the Bolsheviks the logical and real precondition to the 'race murder' of the Nazis?" See E. Nolte, 'Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will: Eine Rede, die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte,' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 June 1986, as cited in R. J. Evans, 'The New Nationalism and the Old History: Perspectives on the West German *Historikerstreit*,' *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1987, p. 765. Nolte had expressed similar views in an English publication a year earlier. See E. Nolte, 'Between Myth and Revisionism? The Third Reich in the Perspective of the 1980s,' in H. W. Koch (ed.), *Aspects of the Third Reich*, London, Macmillan, 1985, pp. 17-38. Nolte's views proved highly controversial, and a long-running debate amongst other West German historians ensued. Some examples of contributions to the debate include A. Hilgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reichs und das Ende des europäisches Judentums*, Berlin, Siedler, 1986; and H. Wehler, *Entsorgung der deutschen Vergangenheit? Ein polemischer Essay zum "Historikerstreit"*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 1988. Additionally, a collected edition of a variety of publications appeared in English in 1993, having first appeared in German in 1987. See *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*, trans. J. Knowlton and T. Cates, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1993; and *"Historikerstreit": Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, Munich, Piper, 1987, respectively. In addition to those by Evans and Maier, commentaries on the *Historikerstreit* in English include P. Baldwin (ed.), *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historians' Debate*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1990; and I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (1985), London, Arnold, 2000, pp. 231-232, 239-240, 248, 250-251, 267-269. While the *Historikerstreit* remains a dramatic example, others have continued to draw parallels between the crimes of Nazism and communism more generally, the most notable recent example being *The Black Book of Communism*, published in 1999. See S. Courtois and others (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes Terror Repression*, trans. J. Murphy and M. Kramer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999. In the foreword to *The Black Book*, Martin Malia reflected on some of the issues which accompany comparative study of the crimes of Nazism and communism, particularly Stalinism: "[D]efeat cut down Nazism in the prime of its iniquity, thereby eternally fixing its full horror in the world's memory. By contrast, Communism, at the peak of *its* iniquity, was rewarded with an epic victory—and thereby gained a half-century in which to lose its dynamism, to half-repent of Stalin, and even, in the case of some unsuccessful leaders (such as Czechoslovakia's Alexander Dubcek in 1968), to attempt giving the system a 'human face.' As a result of these contrasting endings of the two totalitarianisms all Nazism's secrets were bared fifty years ago, whereas we are only beginning to explore Soviet archives, and those of East Asia and Cuba remain sealed." See M. Malia, 'Foreword: The Uses of Atrocity,' in S. Courtois and others (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes Terror Repression*, trans. J. Murphy and M. Kramer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. xii. Parentheses in original. For other criticism of this tendency towards comparison between the Holocaust and the mass death in the Soviet Union under Stalin, see, for example, Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*, pp. 193-194, n. 6.

[142] Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness,' p. 47. See also Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow*, p. 79.

scholar has suggested, is "to dispense with the vocabulary of uniqueness" and begin to draw distinctions in a manner which encourages openness as opposed to closure.[143]

Meanwhile, stuck between these dual process of "envy" and "possessiveness," much discussion of genocide and atrocity has been compromised by a "dreary spectacle of assertion and counter-assertion"[144] in a competition for absolute primacy—"the gold medal," to borrow from Novick, "in the Victimization Olympics."[145] Much of the discourse surrounding the *Holodomor* has, as we have seen, proved no exception. Apart from being distasteful, it is clear that this enterprise is counterproductive and does little to enhance our understanding of these events. As one historian has observed, "a crime does not cease to be a crime just because a worse one has been committed elsewhere."[146] While the centrality of the Holocaust in discussions of genocide and atrocity more generally has proved problematic, simply displacing it with another event (such as the *Holodomor*) as the archetypal standard with which all other atrocities must be shown to be morally commensurate only perpetuates the same difficulties. Historians need to approach these deeply troubling yet hugely important events from a different perspective, and work to change the terms in which they are conceptualised and categorised. As Levene has noted of the historical experience of victimisation, "entitlement to a hearing should not have to be dependent upon an unseemly jockeying for position on the hierarchy of suffering."[147]

Finally, a strange irony of the 'politics' of victimhood is that the actual victims often get lost amid the clamour for recognition and importance.[148] In the desperate attempts to show how the *Holodomor* 'measures up' to the Holocaust, the most profound similarity they

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[143] Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas,' p. 18. Alan Rosenbaum has outlined the ultimate 'middle ground' which would be ideal to achieve on this highly vexed issue: "[A]ny presumption about the uniqueness of the Holocaust may be entirely warranted provided that, upon proper scrutiny, it does not in any manner diminish or still the certain moral authority that must be accorded to other groups whose members have also been forced to endure unspeakable atrocities during their history. And yet any acknowledgement of the persecutions and mass deaths endured by members of other groups should not be construed as vitiating or denying, in the absence of honest and rational debate, claims as to the uniqueness of the Holocaust." See A. S. Rosenbaum, 'Introduction,' in A. S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1996, p. 3.
[144] Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas,' p. 18.
[145] Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 195.
[146] T. Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Reflections on the Twentieth Century*, trans. D. Bellos, London, Atlantic Books, 2003, p. 236.
[147] Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, p. 6.
[148] Noted Holocaust historian Michael Marrus has made the salient observation regarding much of the *Holodomor* discourse that "[i]n my view, formal classification of the famine [as a genocide against Ukrainians] matters less at this point than the appreciation of the limitless cruelty and anguish it entailed." See M. R. Marrus, 'Foreword,' in M. Carynnyk, L. Y. Luciuk and B. S. Kordan (eds.), *The Foreign Office and the Famine: British Documents on Ukraine and the Great Famine of 1932-1933*, Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1988, p. xv, as cited in Y. Bilinsky, 'Was the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 a Genocide?,' *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1999, p. 147.

share—namely that both involved the terrible mass suffering and death of innocent people—is often overlooked.[149] Trying to draw comparisons between them on a moral level and ask which was 'worse' or whose victims suffered more, as we have seen in some discussions of the *Holodomor*, only obscures an appreciation of this point. Restoring the humanity of the victims, and adequately acknowledging their suffering, are amongst the most important tasks of historians of atrocity. The fundamental moral point which should guide this process is that all atrocity and the resulting human suffering is recognised as being abhorrent. With an acknowledgement and adoption of this approach, the 'politics' of victimhood can recede and the victims themselves find space for the respectful commemoration they deserve.[150]

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[149] On this point, Wheatcroft's observation of the *Holodomor* that "[i]t deserves condemnation for what it was. And not for what it was not" rings particularly true. See S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Causation and Responsibility in the *Holodomor* Tragedy,' *Holodomor Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2009, p. 27.

[150] As Finkelstein has noted of Holocaust victims, "[t]he noblest gesture for those who perished is to preserve their memory, learn from their suffering and let them, finally, rest in peace." See Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, p. 150. Such sentiments are equally applicable to all victims of atrocity.

Chapter Seven

Rehabilitation and Responsibility: Revising the Great Terror

The previous two chapters have explored the different ways in which the notion of 'responsibility' has driven debate in the historiography of Stalinism. It is unsurprising, then, that historians' engagement with the Great Terror has proved equally contentious in this regard.[1] In particular, it is the intense conflict between 'revisionist' historians of the Stalin period and their more traditional, so-called 'totalitarian' colleagues which provides a wealth of insight into how such moral concerns have shaped history-writing about the terror. This debate about revisionism and the terror addresses issues similar to those raised in Chapter Five regarding the relationship between individual agency and responsibility. How responsible was Stalin for the terror? Were these events simply a reflection of one man's power and paranoia, or, as the revisionists claimed, an offshoot of a complex bureaucratic system which depended upon the involvement of countless individuals and thus blurred the clear-cut division between victims and perpetrators? In this sense, we are also led back to the notion of 'compromised' victims first discussed in Chapter Two. An additional sense of 'responsibility' emerges, however, from the discussions concerning the revisionist enterprise and the terror, namely that of the historian. These debates were fiercely

[1] Although for reasons of space it cannot be explored fully in the present chapter, it is worth noting that, following on from Chapter Six's discussion of Stalin's status as a *genocidaire* with regard to the famine of 1932-1933, some scholars have argued that the Terror can also be labelled a genocide. Historian Norman Naimark, for example, has noted that "[t]he purges of 1937-38 are hard to classify as genocide because no particular ethnic, social, or political group were attacked, though alleged opponents, most of whom ended up being executed, were indeed placed together by their accusers in completely fabricated conspiratorial parties," but nonetheless finds "[t]he very extent of the killing and repression lends weight to the argument that one could call this genocide instead of the normal appellation of 'terror'. After all, we speak confidently about the Cambodian 'genocide', which had many of the same characteristics as the Great Terror: a party leader—Pol Pot—turning against his own party leadership and its history, as well as survivors of the prior regime, and persecuting intellectuals and those who thought for themselves, in the name of a 'clean slate'. Pol Pot also attacked national minorities, as did Stalin." See N. M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, pp. 100, 109 respectively. For other arguments concerning the genocidal status of the Great Terror, see, for example, J. Harris, 'Was Stalin a Weak Dictator?,' *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2003, p. 385; and K. Jonassohn and K. S. Björnson, *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations in Comparative Perspective* (1998), New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1999, pp. 56-57. Essays on the terror have also appeared in volumes which address genocide as a more general phenomenon. See, for example, N. Werth, 'The Mechanisms of a Mass Crime: The Great Terror in the Soviet Union, 1937-1938,' in R. Gellately and B. Kiernan (eds.), *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 215-239. Against this view, Richard Evans has suggested that, while the Great Terror was a terrible crime, "the distinctions between these events and those of the Third Reich…were not without significance. When Communist spokesmen announced their intention to 'exterminate the bourgeoisie as a class' or 'liquidate the kulaks,' they were not stating that they would physically eliminate every man, woman, and child of bourgeois or 'big-peasant' origin, no matter what their opinions were or how they conducted themselves. Bolshevik and Stalinist mass murder were carried out as an instrument of terror, subjugation, and social reconstruction; Nazi mass murder was an end in itself. Nor did Stalin seek out kulaks to exterminate in those parts of Europe which fell under his control, as Hitler did with the Jews, despite repressions and atrocities carried out on a considerable scale in occupied Poland and the Baltic States. The Communist use of the term 'destruction' or 'liquidation' was…not biological but political in its essence. The consequences of this fact for Stalin's reign of terror were not trivial, but they do set it apart from the genocide practiced by the Nazis…. There was no Soviet Treblinka, built to murder people on their arrival." See R. J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1989, p. 88. For similar arguments, see, for example, C. S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 76-77, 82; and S. G. Wheatcroft, 'The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-45,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48, no. 8, 1996, pp. 1334, 1348.

contested and deeply political, and many of the critics of the revisionists emphasised both the irresponsibility and immorality of their arguments about Stalin and the terror. As a result, this discourse raises important questions regarding what moral obligations historians have not only to the past, but to their colleagues and their profession.

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"We like to think," historian Gábor Rittersporn began in his 1991 study *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications*, "that we live in an age that is breaking down taboos." He quickly clarified, however, that such a liberal attitude did not extend to all orthodoxies and so-called 'certainties':

> If…one tries to publish a tentative analysis of some almost totally unknown material, and to use it to throw new light on the history of the Soviet Union in the 1930s and the part that Stalin played in it, one discovers that opinion tolerates challenges to the received wisdom far less than one would have thought. At best the author will receive a condescending disapproval, and if others suspect him of being perverse he must think himself lucky that at least they have conceded that there are mitigating circumstances. But other critics will go further, even accusing him of an attempt to "rehabilitate Stalin," and hence of justifying the regime and the political attitudes which are inseparable from his name. The traditional image of the "Stalinist phenomenon" is in truth so powerful, and the political and ideological value-judgments which underlie it are so deeply emotional, that any attempt to correct it must almost inevitably appear to be taking a stand for or against the generally accepted norms that it implies. In these circumstances, to plead innocence and claim that one was only trying to see a little more clearly into the nature and workings of a political system seems to ring false, and any attempt to rectify the current image of "Stalinism" seems quixotic.[2]

Rittersporn's observation highlights the divisiveness and intensity of the historiographical controversy concerning revisionism of the Stalin period, and, in particular, of the Great Terror. These debates began in the late 1970s and reached a crescendo in the 1980s. Even if they lost some of their heat following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, discussion of the nature of the terror and Stalin's role within it continues to provoke controversy. Having at its heart the decidedly moral question of responsibility, both of historical actors and the historians who study them, a reexamination of this discourse is particularly instructive for our consideration of the moral dimension of history writing about past atrocity.

[2] G. T. Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR 1933-1953*, Chur, Harwood Academic Publications, 1991, p. 1.

The revisionist enterprise within Soviet historiography can be viewed as a specific expression of broader intellectual and cultural trends that gained momentum throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.[3] What it translated to in practice was an extended critique of the 'totalitarian model' which at the time was the field's prevailing interpretative orthodoxy.[4] Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the field of 'Sovietology' was largely the domain of political scientists as opposed to historians, and in many ways their work reflected this disciplinary divide.[5] The 'totalitarian model', informed and inspired by the work of theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, approached the Soviet Union almost exclusively through the prisms of politics and ideology.[6] As the revisionists conceptualised and presented it, this model viewed the Communist Party, headed by its dictatorial leader Stalin, as an all-powerful ruling entity which, through the dual means of terror and propaganda, exercised total control over a frightened and atomised population.[7] The development of this situation had been inherent in the Marxist-Leninist ideology that underpinned the Soviet Union itself. 'Society', therefore, had been overwhelmed and subsumed by the totalitarian state.

By contrast, and taking their cue from earlier developments in the discipline of history as a whole, the revisionists sought to write a social history of the Soviet Union, or a history 'from below'.[8] As Sheila Fitzpatrick, an immensely influential historian of Stalinism who has been described as a "parent"[9] of the revisionist enterprise, has noted, a major part of this process was "the claiming for history of an area of enquiry that had formerly been the prerogative of political scientists."[10] The revisionists rejected what they presented as the

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[3] On this point, see, for example, S. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 3; and D. Shearer, 'From Divided Consensus to Creative Disorder: Soviet History in Britain and North America,' *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1998, p. 564.

[4] See, for example, S. Fitzpatrick, 'Constructing Stalinism: Reflections on Changing Western and Soviet Perspectives on the Stalin Era,' in A. Nove (ed.), *The Stalin Phenomenon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993, p. 82; S. Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2008, p. 683; and R. G. Suny, 'Writing Russia: The Work of Sheila Fitzpatrick,' in G. Alexopoulos, J. Hessler and K. Tomoff (eds.), *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 9.

[5] See S. Fitzpatrick, 'The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century,' *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2007, pp. 57-58.

[6] See H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951; and C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Democracy*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956.

[7] See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 699. For other revisionist presentations of the 'totalitarian' explanation, see, for example, S. F. Cohen, 'Scholarly Missions: Sovietology as a Vocation,' in *idem.*, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 5-6; J. A. Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 1-2; and R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, pp. xiv-xv. For a classic example of the 'totalitarian view', see Z. Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956.

[8] See Chapter One, 'A History of Morality in Historical Practice,' pp. 25-26.

[9] J. Burbank, 'Controversies Over Stalinism: Searching for a Soviet Society,' *Politics and Society*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1991, p. 328.

[10] S. Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' *History and Theory*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2007, p. 78. Fitzpatrick made a similar argument of "trying to establish the study of Soviet history by historians, in particular social

'totalitarian' conception of a monolithic all-powerful state, and the ensuing depiction of a powerless population lacking any form of agency.[11] In downplaying the importance of ideology, they sought to find evidence of social processes and relationships, and, in particular, what support existed for the regime amongst its subjects.[12]

Of course, by virtue of being 'revisionists', it is precisely this group who are able to define and conceptualise that which they seek to revise, often with varying degrees of accuracy. As one scholar has noted, "[t]he insights of one generation, especially the crucial ones that define its vision of the world, are often sitting ducks for those who speak for the next generation."[13] The depiction of the 'totalitarian' and 'revisionist' approaches outlined above is generally how the latter group envisaged and presented them. It has been suggested, however, that the discrepancies between the two may not have been as stark as they were portrayed. In a recent study, one historian has pointed to the somewhat hollow nature of the revisionist claims for innovation and originality, arguing instead for the existence of "a direct line from the old literature on totalitarianism to revisionist preoccupations with Soviet complications to recent neo-totalitarian approaches."[14] There were, for example, scholars pursuing lines of enquiry into the social basis of Stalin's regime, and the notion of 'everyday life' under his rule as early as the 1950s, such as those involved in the Harvard Interview Project.[15] Others, including the political scientist Merle Fainsod, were also investigating the efficacy of the Soviet mechanisms of power and control, and how the general population related to them. Fainsod's 1958 study *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*

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historians" as opposed to it hitherto been "mainly in the hands of the political scientists" in a 2002 interview. See T. Dymond, 'Social and Subjective—Soviet History after the Cold War: An Interview with Sheila Fitzpatrick,' *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, 2002, p. 43.

[11] See M. Edele, 'Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2007, p. 363.

[12] See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 689.

[13] A. Gleason, '"Totalitarianism" in 1984,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1984, p. 158.

[14] See M. Edele, *Stalinist Society 1928-1953*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 219. Edele goes on to note that "[s]uch continuities…are often obscured as scholars feel compelled to distinguish themselves from those who came before by claiming absolute novelty." See Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 219. Certainly, so-called 'totalitarians' were complaining about the revisionists' tendency for misrepresentation at the time these debates were at their height. Robert Conquest, for example, noted with disapproval that "[r]evisionists…tend to propagate various myths about the established view. One is that it sees the Stalinist regime as a pure despotism operating solely by terror initiated from the top. This is a caricature. Of course it has been a truism for historians over millennia that a despotism must rely on some measure of consent, at least from its own henchmen. Nor is there anything new in despotisms inspiring delators and denouncers or in millenarian sects arousing ruthless fanaticisms at the lower levels." See R. Conquest, 'Revisionizing Stalin's Russia,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 389.

[15] See Edele, 'Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life,' pp. 352-358; and Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 218. Edele's argument is echoed by Robert Daniels, who has noted that "this new revisionism was not all that new; a lot of the questions that it raised—totalitarianism, modernization, movements from below, interest groups inside the party structure, the cultural revolution under Stalin—were old hat to people who had embarked on Soviet studies before the 1960s. In any case, by suggesting that there may have been an autonomous social realm beyond the effective reach of dictatorial political control, social history directly challenged the prevailing totalitarian model, tempting devotees of the latter to impute dire political agendas to the revisionists." See R. V. Daniels, 'Comment: Revisionism Avant la Lettre,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2008, p. 706.

concluded that while "the terror apparatus was undoubtedly efficient," the archival material nonetheless revealed that "the totalitarian machine, at least in the Smolensk area, was far from perfect," and "the totalitarian façade concealed a host of inner contradictions."[16]

Nonetheless, even if it was not quite the dramatic break in research and writing it was often presented to be, revisionism still represented something of "a scholarly revolution."[17] The revisionists applied their ideas and approaches to many different research topics in Soviet history. We have already encountered one such example in Chapter Five, namely Stephen F. Cohen's *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, which Fitzpatrick has described as "one of the first explicitly revisionist publications."[18] In addition to the 'inevitability' of Stalin's assumption of power, other subjects re-examined by the revisionists included the 1917 revolution itself and the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP).[19]

Nowhere, however, was the revisionist project more controversial than its application to the Stalin period and, in particular, the Great Terror, and it is these discourses which will be the main focus of the present chapter. In questioning the efficacy of the processes through which the party functioned and governed and the degree to which Stalin did or even could exercise complete control, as well as emphasising popular support for his regime, the revisionists came up against an impassioned legion of critics. The viciousness of much of the discourse accompanying revisionist accounts of the terror remains remarkable, and was clearly informed and influenced by the broader political and cultural climate of the time.

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[16] M. Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, London, Macmillan, 1958, pp. 449, 449-450, 454 respectively. On the subject of the terror, Fainsod pointed to the role which local initiative and circumstances had played in the unfolding of these events, something which the revisionists would emphasise many years later. See, for example, Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, pp. 235-236. Indeed, Edele has noted of Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, and the revisionists that "Fainsod's totalitarianism was so close to their own image of Soviet reality that, once the now tenured radicals reread his book in the 1990s, some of them simply declared him an honorary member of their own school of thought." See Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 219.

[17] D. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 286.

[18] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 685.

[19] See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' pp. 82-83. For studies which present a 'revisionist' view of the 1917 revolution, see, for example, D. H. Kaiser (ed.), *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917: The View from Below*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; D. Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981; A. Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1976; S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories, 1917-1918*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; and R. G. Suny, *The Baku Commune, 1917–1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972. For more traditional interpretations of 1917, see, for example, L. Schapiro, *The Origins of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First Phase, 1917-1922*, London, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1955. For general historiographical discussion about interpreting 1917, see R. G. Suny, 'Revision and Retreat in the Historiography of 1917: Social History and Its Critics,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 53, no. 2, 1994, pp. 165-182. On the NEP, see, for example, S. Fitzpatrick, A. Rabinowitch and R. Stites (eds.), *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991; and M. Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*, London, Methuen and Co., 1985. See also S. F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888-1938*, New York, Knopf, 1973.

Indeed, recourse to this wider context is vital in order to adequately comprehend the debate over revisionism and the terror.[20] Soviet historiography has always been strongly informed, and, to an extent, constrained by the atmosphere produced by the Cold War and its impact upon international relations and cultural attitudes, both before and after 1991. As Cohen has observed, "[f]ew academic fields have been so intimately related to American political and intellectual life as Soviet studies."[21] To this observation, however, one might also add 'moral life'. As we have seen in the preceding chapters' discussion of the debates regarding alternatives to Stalin and the nature of the *Holodomor*, the political and the moral become closely entwined when confronting the *vozhd'* and the more odious aspects of his rule. It is unsurprising that the same is true of discussions of the terror.

Nonetheless, this mixing of the moral and the political means that these discussions about the terror have much to suggest regarding historians' engagement with past atrocity. To begin with, the debates regarding revisionist accounts of the terror continue the discussion about 'responsibility' which was first outlined in Chapter Five. With the specific example of the terror, however, the questions are slightly different. Is the 'evil' figure of a Stalin solely to blame for these events, or can the guilt be spread amongst those who actually implemented the orders and plans? If responsibility is to be more evenly shared, are there differing degrees of blame along the 'chain of command'? How are they decided upon? What about the nature of the structures and institutions that these individuals were working within? Can the 'system' share responsibility for what its executors ultimately created?

Additionally, the actual arguments advanced by the revisionists further complicate the dynamics of responsibility for past atrocities. In seeking to move away from a Stalin-centric conception of the terror that emphasised his evil genius and presented those around him as pawns in his cunning plan, and instead pointing to the chaotic manner in which the terror operated and the involvement and initiative of individuals at all levels of society, the revisionists highlighted some of the ambiguities which can exist in the perpetrator-victim distinction. Chapter Two has already addressed some of these ambiguities of victimhood as they have featured in Holocaust historiography, vividly evoked in the 'grey zone' described by Primo Levi. In many ways, the terror renders the 'grey zone' greyer still; as one historian has noted of how these events played out, "[y]esterday's denouncer often became

[20] Indeed, as Fitzpatrick has noted, "[t]he argument that developed between revisionists and totalitarian-model scholars cannot be understood outside the context of the Cold War, for it quickly became a political slanging match, with totalitarians calling the revisionists whitewashers and fellow-travelers who were 'soft on communism,' and revisionists calling the totalitarians cold Warriors whose work was distorted by the imposition of a political agenda." See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' p. 81.
[21] Cohen, 'Scholarly Missions: Sovietology as a Vocation,' p. 8.

tomorrow's victim."[22] When such confusions and uncertainties are taken seriously, the already complex task of assigning responsibility becomes far more fraught with difficulty.

To these basic concerns, however, one can add what might be termed the 'politics' of responsibility—as applied to both historical figures and the historians who seek to make sense of their behaviour. The ferocity of the debates regarding revisionism and the terror, and the many searing accusations and counter-accusations of moral and scholarly failure, reveal a wider discussion concerning the responsibilities of historians *as historians* to this particular past. Clearly, the emotional power of past atrocity means that concerns of blame and culpability are strong driving factors in many discussions, yet assigning responsibility—be it to Stalin or to one's colleagues—is never a value-free exercise. Present concerns, purposes, and politics all shape and inform how it is apportioned. Teasing out these various dynamics, however, can demonstrate not only how such factors have shaped historians' moral engagement with both this past and other scholars, but also suggest profitable directions in which such relationships might develop.

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Before considering how the revisionists reinterpreted the history of the terror, it is important to first examine the nature of the pre-existing history they sought to revise. Unsurprisingly, the 'standard story' of the terror reflected ideas commonly attributed to the broader 'totalitarian model'. Several of its key explanatory tenets—the unlimited power of the dictator and party, the inherently violent nature of Bolshevism, and an atomised and terrorised population—found expression in many 'totalitarian' histories of the terror.[23]

Among the first full-scale accounts of these events was Robert Conquest's 1968 study *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, which can be seen as a quintessential

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[22] W. Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 9.

[23] While perhaps not ideal, I nonetheless believe that referring to histories of the terror as either 'totalitarian' or 'revisionist' offers the easiest and least confusing way to proceed. Certainly, such terminology has itself proved a site of antagonism. Recounting her own experiences as a revisionist, Fitzpatrick has noted that: "'Revisionism' might in principle be a neutral word for innovative work, but in my experience it is usually pejorative—the word used for those challenges to conventional wisdom that incur disapproval as well as disagreement inside the profession and censure outside. In Soviet history, the 'revisionists' of the 1970s used the term unwillingly at first, often in quotation marks, but in the end it stuck. As for the way of naming what the revisionists were opposing, they called it 'totalitarian-model scholarship' or 'traditional Sovietology' back then, and now tend to refer to its protagonists by the shorthand of 'totalitarians' (one good pejorative deserves another)." See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' p. 79. Nonetheless, in the interests of preserving clarity, these terms offer convenient shorthand for making sense of this historiography. For more on the controversial nature of the term 'revisionist', see, for example, R. G. Suny, 'Russian Terror/ism and Revisionist Historiography,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2007, p. 5.

example of the 'totalitarian' view.[24] Indeed, Conquest has been described as one of "the most influential contemporary spokesmen"[25] for this position, and is also credited for having "popularized the term 'the Great Terror.'"[26] As with much of his writing, Conquest was not reluctant to emphasise the moral dimension of his subject, or to indicate how it had influenced his analysis. "The present writer," he declared in the preface, "cannot conceal that he has views on these ethical and political matters," yet was hopeful "that the prejudices he feels are those of most civilized men."[27]

In terms of explaining the terror, Conquest's overall argument was simple: "[t]he nature of the whole Purge depends in the last analysis on the personal and political drives of Stalin."[28] This emphasis on the figure and personality of Stalin is itself a key feature of 'totalitarian' explanations for the terror. For example, Adam Ulam, author of a 1973 biography of Stalin, described the *vozhd'* as "nervous, sardonic and vengeful," and motivated by an insatiable desire for power.[29] Ulam believed, however, that "he was corrupted by absolute power. Absolute power turned a ruthless politician—but within the Soviet context not unusually ruthless—into a monstrous tyrant."[30] Following on from these characterisations, 'totalitarian' explanations argued that in his role as all-powerful dictator, Stalin conceived and carefully planned the terror, beginning with his alleged involvement in the murder of Leningrad party boss Sergei Kirov in December 1934.[31] He oversaw its

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[24] London, Macmillan, 1968. A second edition of the book appeared in 1990, and was followed by a 'fortieth anniversary edition' in 2008. See R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990; and R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (1990), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008 respectively. All subsequent references are, unless otherwise indicated, to the original 1968 edition.

[25] C. Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, New York, Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1993, p. 125.

[26] P. Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 4.

[27] Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. xiv.

[28] Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 62.

[29] See A. B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (1973), Boston, Beacon Press, 1989, p. 437. Conquest also argues for the primacy of Stalin's drive for power. See Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 81, 509. See also, for example, R. Hingley, *Joseph Stalin: Man and Legend*, London, Hutchinson and Co., 1974, pp. 287-288.

[30] Ulam, *Stalin*, p. 740. For another argument concerning the importance of Stalin's personality for the development and course of the terror, see R. C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above 1928-1941*, New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1990, pp. 146-171; 475-478.

[31] See, for example, Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 91, 286; R. A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (1971), London, Macmillan, 1972, pp. 190-191; and Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, p. 445. Roy Medvedev is an interesting figure in the discussion of the 'totalitarian versus revisionism' debates. Unlike Conquest and many other 'traditional' historians of the terror, Medvedev was a Soviet dissident writing first in Russian, and a committed communist who sought to demonstrate how Stalin had perverted the ideals of Marxism-Leninism and the October revolution. He argued, for example, that "Stalin was not a Marxist…. Of course, Stalin often wrote and spoke like a Marxist. He could not ignore the Party's ideology or avoid the use of Marxist terminology. But he was never a Marxist in essence, especially during his last twenty-five years. For Marxism represents not only a certain system of concepts; it is also a system of convictions and moral principles, and devotion to the achievement of happiness for all working people is one of the fundamental principles. Those moral qualities are precisely what Stalin lacked." See Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 333. Clearly, this argument was where he parted company from other 'totalitarian' writers like Conquest, who saw the violence and terror of Stalinism as a logical outcome of Russian history, Leninism and the revolution. Nonetheless, in seeking to save communism from the scourge of Stalinism, Medvedev could put forward a 'totalitarian' view of the terror and as such, is often associated with such authors and arguments in the historiography. For further discussion of Medvedev, see, for example, T. R. Ravindranathan, 'The Legacy of

development and implementation, even if he relied upon the help of others, such as NKVD chief Nikolai Ezhov, along the way. Regardless, Stalin remained, to borrow from one historian who has argued along these 'totalitarian' lines, "the Terror's director general."[32]

While emphasising the importance of Stalin to the conception and course of the terror, traditional accounts have also suggested that the dictatorial violence and ruthlessness it embodied were themselves part of the "logic of Bolshevism" and Leninist doctrine.[33] For example, political scientist Leonard Schapiro argued on this point:

> It was by means of the party machine Lenin had forged that Stalin rose to power in the twenties, and defeated his rivals. It was by exploitation of Lenin's system of Communist control that Stalin established his mastery over the country. Even if he abused it in a way that was not originally intended, it was from Lenin that Stalin inherited the instrument of rule; and once provided with the means, Stalin was as unlikely as Lenin to be restrained by moral considerations: neither of the two men ever accepted moral factors as a limit on his course of conduct.[34]

Others have echoed this view, with one historian suggesting that "[w]ith his enthusiastic exploitation of deceit and violence Stalin did indeed show himself Lenin's faithful disciple."[35] Conquest concurred, claiming that "[t]he Purge was not a sudden and total surprise. It had roots in the Soviet past."[36] More recently, another scholar similarly argued of Stalin and the terror that "[e]very ingredient of what has come to be known as Stalinism save one—murdering fellow Communists—he had learned from Lenin, and that includes the two actions for which he is most severely condemned: collectivization and mass terror."[37] Clearly, this emphasis on terror being an inherent part of Bolshevism itself has some connection to the 'necessity' and/or 'inevitability' of Stalin debates which were discussed in Chapter Five. For those who argued a 'totalitarian' view of the terror, Stalin and the violence he unleashed were an inevitable consequence of Bolshevik rule.

Stalin and Stalinism: A Historiographical Survey of the Literature 1930-1990,' *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1994, pp. 118-119. Stalin's role in Kirov's assassination continues to provoke discussion. While the revisionist historians of the terror would suggest that the evidence was shaky at best, some scholars still argue in line with the 'totalitarian' view. See, for example, A. Knight, *Who Killed Kirov? The Kremlin's Greatest Mystery*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1999. For a discussion of these issues, and a counterview to Knight, see M. Lenoe, 'Did Stalin Kill Kirov and Does It Matter?,' *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 74, no. 2, 2002, pp. 352-380; and M. Lenoe, *The Kirov Murder and Soviet History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010.

[32] Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, p. 444.

[33] Ward, *Stalin's Russia* (1993 ed.), p. 126.

[34] L. Schapiro, *1917: The Russian Revolution and the Origins of Present-Day Communism*, Hounslow, Maurice Temple Smith, 1984, p. 218. Schapiro applied the same arguments in his refutation of the revisionists. See L. Schapiro, 'Upward Mobility and Its Price,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18 March 1983, p. 269.

[35] Hingley, *Joseph Stalin*, p. 434.

[36] Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 1. For further comment on this particular tendency of 'traditional' accounts, see, for example, Shearer, 'From Divided Consensus to Creative Disorder,' p. 562.

[37] R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 508.

A final key feature of the 'totalitarian' conception of the terror concerns the experiences and attitudes of the population at large. Specifically, the argument suggests, in accordance with the atmosphere of "permanent purge" that the Soviet Union existed under, the entire population had been terrorised by these events.[38] For many commentators, it was this element of the terror which proved to be most odious. "These were not streams," one historian argued, "these were rivers of…the blood of honest Soviet people. The simple truth must be stated: not one of the tyrants and despots of the past persecuted and destroyed so many of his compatriots."[39] Conquest was also typically emphatic on this point:

> It is very hard for the Western reader to envisage the sufferings of the Soviet people as a whole during that time. And in considering the Terror, it is precisely this moral and intellectual effort which needs to be made. To demonstrate the facts is no more than to provide the bare framework of evidence. It is not the province of the investigator to do more. Yet it cannot but be that these facts are offered for moral judgment.[40]

Others shared this sense of duty to lay bare the sufferings of the Soviet masses during the course of the terror. Ulam, for example, suggested that "the period of the Great Purge was also one of great fear which affected everybody from the Politburo member down to the street cleaner," observing of the general mood of the populace that "[n]ever since the outbreak of the Black Death in the fourteenth century could so many ordinary people have felt so alone and afraid, so deprived of any mooring in reality, so much a plaything of blind fate."[41]

It was this general conception of the terror, then, that the revisionists sought to challenge and reinterpret. As outlined previously, in critiquing the 'totalitarian model' more generally, the revisionists had sought to write a social history of the Soviet Union. While this aim translated into a variety of subjects and approaches, Fitzpatrick has recognised that "one of the things that united revisionists was an interest in investigating support 'from below' for the regime."[42] In doing so, they emphasised evidence for "upward social mobility" as a result of some of the policies adopted which in turn helped to legitimise the regime, greater autonomy and agency for both party officials and ordinary citizens, as well a

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[38] For the 'permanent purge' reference, see Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge*.
[39] Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 239.
[40] Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 276.
[41] Ulam, *Stalin*, pp. 409, 393 respectively.
[42] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 689.

greater degree of chaos and decentralization in how the party actually operated under Stalin.[43]

While many revisionist accounts of different aspects of the Stalin period were appearing from the late 1970s, it was not until the 1980s that the terror itself became a serious focus. The first major 'revisionist' studies of the terror were J. Arch Getty's *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (1985) and Gábor Rittersporn's *Simplifications staliniennes et complications sovietiques: Tensions sociales et conflits politiques en URSS 1933-1953* (1988),[44] which appeared in an English translation in 1991. Other historians also courted controversy in contributions to academic periodicals which presented 'revisionist' views of the terror, perhaps most notably Robert Thurston's 1986 article 'Fear and Belief in the USSR's "Great Terror": Response to Arrest, 1935-1939'.[45]

Unsurprisingly, these early revisionist accounts of the terror began by pointing out the supposed flaws and shortcomings of the 'totalitarian' explanation. Getty, for example, deemed the latter to be tainted by "reductionist fallacies" and largely "untenable," as well as being highly critical of the source base its authors used.[46] Rittersporn was more scathing, suggesting that "few periods of Soviet history have been studied so superficially."[47] He revealed some of the reasons why he believed this state of affairs prevailed:

> [E]ven the most cursory reading of the 'classic' works makes it hard to avoid the impression that in many respects these are often inspired more by the state of mind prevailing in some circles in the West, than by the realities of Soviet life under Stalin. The defence of hallowed Western values against all sorts of real or imaginary threats from Russia; the assertion of genuine historical experiences as well as of all sorts of ideological assumptions; the quite proper denunciation of the revolting iniquities and atrocities that were

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[43] See I. V. Pavlova, 'Contemporary Western Historians on Stalin's Russia in the 1930s,' *Russian Studies in History*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2001, p. 71; and N. G. O. Pereira, 'Revisiting the Revisionists and Their Critics,' *The Historian*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2010, pp. 30-31. For examples of such work, see S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1978; S. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978; S. Fitzpatrick, 'Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-1939,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1979, pp. 377-402; S. Fitzpatrick, 'The Russian Revolution and Social Mobility: A Reexamination of the Question of Social Support for the Soviet Regime in the 1920s and 1930s,' *Politics and Society*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1984, pp. 119-141; H. Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928–1932*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; L. H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity 1935-1941,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; and L. Viola, *Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987.

[44] Paris, Editions des Archives Contemporaines, 1988. See also G. T. Rittersporn, 'The State Against Itself: Social Tendencies and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1936-1938,' *Telos*, no. 41, 1979, pp. 87-104.

[45] See R. W. Thurston, 'Fear and Belief in the USSR's "Great Terror": Response to Arrest, 1935-1939,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1986, pp. 213-234. Earlier, Getty had tested some of the ideas which later formed *The Origins of the Great Purges* in an article in *Slavic Review* which also prompted debate. See J. A. Getty, 'Party and Purge in Smolensk: 1933-1937,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1983, pp. 60-79. For the response, see N. E. Rosenfeldt, 'Problems of Evidence,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1983, pp. 85-91; and R. C. Tucker, 'Problems of Interpretation,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1983, pp. 80-84.

[46] Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, pp. 6, 3 respectively. For Getty's criticisms of the sources traditionally used by scholars studying the terror, see, for example, Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, pp. 4-5. See also Ravindranathan, 'The Legacy of Stalin and Stalinism,' p. 133.

[47] Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications*, p. 12.

> indeed carried out, but are rather over-hastily presented as the only set of data that explains a whole era; the often judicious rejection of political illusions, beliefs and lies: these attitudes do not seem conducive to patient research and much less to open-mindedness.[48]

Overall, as Rittersporn's observation suggests, early revisionist accounts of the terror aimed, in line with the revisionist project more generally, to redress what were viewed as Cold War biases inherent in the 'totalitarian' conception of events.[49] Many revisionists thus saw themselves as restoring a much-needed 'objectivity' to the study of Soviet history.

In many ways, it was this professed desire for 'objective' history on the part of the revisionists, defined in opposition to the perceived 'moralising' of the 'totalitarians', which fuelled much of the debate.[50] In a recent reflection on Fitzpatrick's career, a colleague and friend noted the importance of her "novel approach to the Stalin period, exploring somewhat taboo issues in a cool empirical manner that was like a red rag to those who insisted on a morally driven approach to history."[51] This observation, however, is equally applicable to the revisionist enterprise as a whole.[52] Nonetheless, the revisionists clearly had a sense of the kind of accusations they were inviting by seeking to redress such biases and pursue an 'objective' approach to the Stalinist past. Aiming perhaps to pre-empt his critics, Getty included the following 'disclaimer' early in *Origins*:

> In the period of this study, many thousands of innocent people were arrested, imprisoned, and sent to labor camps. Thousands were executed. Nothing in

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[48] Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications*, p. 23.

[49] See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 683.

[50] Engerman, for example, has noted of the revisionists and their desire for 'objective' histories of Stalinism that "[m]any identified with the Left but saw their historical task in professional terms, trying to distance themselves from the partisan and participant works that had dominated the historiography of 1917." See Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, p. 286. He notes however, that despite "proclaim[ing] their principal goals in professional rather than political terms," the revisionists' "works were nevertheless often understood as political rather than professional." See Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, p. 305.

[51] B. Gillam, 'Sheila Fitzpatrick in New York City,' in G. Alexopoulos, J. Hessler and K. Tomoff (eds.), *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 211. Indeed, Fitzpatrick has been particularly vocal in expressing what has been described as "a rather old-fashioned belief in the historian's craft." See Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 221. Unsurprisingly, this belief included an "anti-moralizing" attitude. See M. David-Fox, P. Holquist and A. M. Martin, 'From the Editors: An Interview with Sheila Fitzpatrick,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2007, p. 480. Fitzpatrick expanded upon her views of this element of history-writing in an earlier 2002 interview, where she noted that "[h]istorians clearly have different attitudes to whether or not the historian's task is to be a moral judge or whether a prosecutorial stance interferes with understanding. I certainly belong to that group of historians who don't like the partisan stance, and not only the political partisan stance. I'm not sympathetic to the notion of advocacy history in general. Writing about history from a particular partisan point of view may have a place, but it's not what I want to do, not what I have done as a historian. In approaching any historical topic, including the Stalin period, I would be primarily trying to understand rather than seeing it as my task to prepare an indictment…. I certainly don't agree that I am or ever was trying to justify or whitewash the Stalin regime." See Dymond, 'Social and Subjective—Soviet History after the Cold War,' p. 45. For more from Fitzpatrick on this issue, and how the revisionists sought to bring an 'objective' approach to historical study of Stalinism, see, for example, Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' pp. 700-701; and Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' pp. 81, 85-86. See also Suny, 'Writing Russia,' pp. 1-2.

[52] See, for example, J. A. Getty, 'Comment: Codes and Confessions,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2008, p. 713; H. Kuromiya, 'Stalinism and Historical Research,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 405; and G. T. Rittersporn, 'History, Commemoration, and Hectoring Rhetoric,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, pp. 418-419.

> the following pages is meant to minimize, justify, or excuse the terror, notwithstanding the terminology and rhetoric that close reliance on contemporaneous texts forces one to use. Certainly, any attempt to excuse such violence would be pointless and morally bizarre. There is also no intention to exonerate Stalin of any guilt or responsibility for these horrors; regardless of the real nature and extent of his participation, his position as party leader forces upon him primary responsibility for the events that ensued under his leadership.[53]

Similar sentiments were expressed by Rittersporn, who somewhat exasperatedly declared, "[l]et us emphasise, if there is still need, that we have no intention of denying in any way, much less of justifying, the very real horrors of the age."[54] Despite these efforts, it would be precisely this issue of responsibility—both of the historical actors, and of the historian to assign it—that would drive the ensuing debate about revisionist explanations for the terror.

The major feature of the arguments presented by scholars like Getty and Rittersporn was a decisive shift away from the power and personality of Stalin as the key determining factors in the course of events. Far from being a careful and controlled 'master plan' of the *vozhd'*, revisionists saw the terror as a series of separate events and actions which themselves were far more chaotic and out of control than they believed the 'totalitarian model' allowed.[55] This argument grew out of the notion that the Party had not been an all-powerful monolithic entity, and various discrepancies had existed in how power functioned. Getty, for example, suggested that "[t]he Communist Party, far from having penetrated every corner of Russian life, was more an undisciplined and disorganized force with little influence outside the cities."[56] As such, "terror was uneven and uncoordinated…. It should not be surprising to find that the executives of terror were no more efficient than

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[53] Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, pp. 8-9.

[54] Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications*, p. 23. This tendency to issue such 'disclaimers', interestingly, has continued well past 1991 and the crescendo of the 'totalitarian versus revisionism' debates about the terror. See, for example, J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning, 'Introduction,' in J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning (eds.), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 14-15; J. A. Getty, '"Excesses Are Not Permitted": Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2002, p. 136; and Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, pp. 137, 227-228. It is a tendency which, as we saw in Chapter Three, also pervades studies of Holocaust perpetrators. See Chapter Three, 'Writing About Perpetrators: The Banal and the Ordinary,' p. 116, n. 149.

[55] For example, Getty argued in *Origins* that "[t]he events of 1933-9 were not all parts of the same planned crescendo of terror and did not constitute a single phenomenon or process. The membership purges of 1933-6 were not simply the predecessors of the police terror of 1937 and were related to it only obliquely. Indeed, all the political events of the thirties were not parts of the same phenomenon, and it is a basic assumption of the study that an analysis of the party's structure can help avoid such reductionist fallacies. Second, political decision making seems incremental, confused, and more contradictory than consistent. Although it is clear that Stalin made crucial decisions during the Great Purges, considerable circumstantial evidence suggests that he did so tentatively, belatedly, and, like most powerful politicians, by choosing or arbitrating among various options." See Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, p. 6.

[56] Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, p. 27.

other party or state bureaucrats of the thirties."[57] Rittersporn concurred, suggesting that it had been the "disorders of the system" which were crucial in the development and course of the terror.[58]

Another key challenge the revisionists levelled against the 'totalitarian' explanation of the terror was the claim that the population at large had been terrorised by the events. Thurston's 1986 article was particularly concerned with this question of fear, and, based upon an analysis of reactions to arrest, concluded that "general fear did not exist in the USSR at any time in the late 1930s."[59] Instead, Thurston pointed to the degrees of agency and autonomy that citizens possessed, claiming "criticism had been encouraged during the purges, and local records contain plenty of it," and denied that "everyone kowtow[ed] to the NKVD or party officials."[60] Similarly, Roberta Manning's case studies of how the terror had played out in the Belyi *raion* argued that local and social factors proved more influential to determining the course of events than the directives emanating from Moscow.[61] Later work from the revisionists would continue to emphasise the importance of social pressures which existed at all levels of society, such as tensions between local polities and the centre or workers and bosses, for the course of the terror.[62]

The revisionist approach to the terror, then, fundamentally challenged how these events had generally been conceived and understood according to the 'totalitarian' model. At the heart of this challenge were the ideas of discontinuity and discord. While many of the 'totalitarians' had seen a carefully conceived plan of Stalin's making from which all

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[57] Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, p. 177. Later in the book, Getty noted of Stalin's role in these events that "Stalin did not initiate or control everything that happened in the party and country. The number of hours in the day, divided by the number of things for which he was responsible, suggests that his role in many areas could have been little more than occasional intervention, prodding, threatening, or correcting. In the course of a day, Stalin made decisions on everything from hog breeding to subways to national defense. He met with scores of experts, heard dozens of reports, and settled various disputes between contending factions for budgetary or personnel allocations. He was an executive, and reality forced him to delegate most authority to his subordinates, each of whom had his own opinions, client groups, and interests." See Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges*, p. 203.

[58] Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications*, p. 127.

[59] Thurston, 'Fear and Belief in the USSR's "Great Terror,"' p. 230.

[60] Thurston, 'Fear and Belief in the USSR's "Great Terror,"' p. 233. Overall, Thurston believed that "the purges had not destroyed a critical sense or independent judgment for many people." See Thurston, 'Fear and Belief in the USSR's "Great Terror,"' p. 233.

[61] See R. T. Manning, 'The Great Purge in a Rural District: Belyi Raion Revisited,' *Russian History*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1989, pp. 409-433. This argument contradicts that of Conquest, for example, who emphasised the importance of the 'centre' in driving the course of events: "[t]he extension of the Purge throughout the country was not, as sometimes suggested, just the result of too much eagerness on the part of local NKVD officials who let things get out of control. On the contrary, it was insisted on from the centre." See Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 286.

[62] See, for example, Goldman, *Terror in the Age of Stalin*, *passim*; S. Fitzpatrick, 'How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 3, 1993, pp. 299-320; S. Fitzpatrick, 'Workers Against Bosses: The Impact of the Great Purges on Labor-Management Relations,' in L. H. Siegelbaum and R. G. Suny (eds.), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 311-340; and Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, ch. 6.

events logically developed, the revisionists found chaos, confusion, and critical weaknesses in how the state maintained its control over what unfolded. Where the 'totalitarians' saw atomisation and terror amongst the population at large, the revisionists pointed to autonomy, agency and individual initiative. But what did these arguments of the revisionists ultimately suggest for understanding the terror? If Stalin was not as responsible as the 'totalitarians' had claimed, who was? If the terror was a result of chaos and lack of control, how could anyone be held to account? Even if many citizens had been undisturbed by these various actions, what about those who had fallen victim to them? It was questions such as these which troubled many critics of the revisionists, and the ensuing debate revealed that adequately answering them was an enterprise fraught with scholarly—and moral—difficulties.

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In a recent article reflecting upon her personal experiences as a revisionist, Fitzpatrick suggested that "it is useful to remind a younger generation how nasty the field could be during the Cold War, so that they may count their blessings."[63] Indeed, the debate occasioned by the revisionist project was unusually heated and intensely personal. Participants have described it as a battle not merely for what could be deemed 'acceptable' histories of Stalinism, but also as a battle for the academy itself.[64] In many ways, criticism of the revisionist project assumed a monolithic and undifferentiated character. Even though the revisionists themselves addressed all manner of topics pertaining to Soviet history and in particular the Stalin period, their opponents tended to argue against the general ideas of revisionism as opposed to more specific criticisms.[65] As such, the debate about the terror is caught up in this general critique of the revisionist project as a whole.

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[63] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 682. Fitzpatrick echoed this point in a 2007 interview, claiming that "[a]ny problems I might now have with American academia—too much political correctness and deference to canonized intellectual authority, for example, too little iconoclasm—are absolutely trivial compared to the past." See David-Fox, Holquist and Martin, 'From the Editors: An Interview with Sheila Fitzpatrick,' p. 483. For more on Fitzpatrick's embracing of iconoclasm, see below, p. 240, n. 88.

[64] On this point, Getty, for example, claims of himself and fellow revisionists that "[i]n addition to vilification in print, our universities received unsolicited tenure letters suggesting that we were incompetent and dangerous." See Getty, 'Comment: Codes and Confessions,' p. 711. On the other side of the ideological divide, Richard Pipes saw the situation very differently: "The revisionists were united not only by a common methodology: they also formed a party determined to impose control on the teaching of modern Russian history. In a manner which I believe was new to American academic life though familiar from the history of Bolshevism, they strove and largely succeeded in monopolizing the profession, ensuring that university chairs in that field across the country went to their adherents. This entailed ostracizing scholars known to hold different views." See R. Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 223.

[65] This suggestions finds echo in a 1984 observation made by Abbot Gleason regarding the reception of Fitzpatrick and her arguments: "I have been present at many discussions of Fitzpatrick's work, and in my experience her actual conclusions are much less likely to be challenged than her explicit or implicit reduction

The major point of contention in the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debate over Stalinism was the notion of 'whitewashing'. In their efforts to present an 'objective' history of this period, many critics felt that revisionist historians had failed in their duty to pass judgement on these events and those who had been involved in them. Interestingly, this concern found expression not only amongst 'totalitarians', but also within the ranks of the revisionists themselves. Cohen, for example, could agree with other historians that there were some decidedly negative aspects to the revisionist project:

> It must also be said that not all the recent trends in history-writing are admirable, especially those that downplay the ugliest aspects of the Soviet experience. Some younger social and institutional historians of the Stalinist 1930s, for example, tend to emphasize what they consider to have been modernizing or otherwise progressive developments, such as industrialization, urbanization, social mobility, mass culture, and administrative rationalism, while minimizing or obscuring the colossal human tragedies and material losses caused by Stalin's brutal collectivization of the peasantry, mass terror, and system of forced labor camps. It is too early to judge whether this unfortunate trend in the new scholarship derives from an overreaction to the revelatory zeal of cold-war Sovietology, the highly focused nature of social historical research, or an unstated political desire to rehabilitate the entire Stalin era.[66]

Similarly, Conquest was also displeased by what he perceived as the "lowest common-denominator hive mind" of the revisionists, and noted that attempting to argue against their ideas "is to risk purse-lipped appeals to 'objectivity.'" Yet for Conquest, such appeals were irrelevant: "[o]f course knowledge of every sort is laudable, and so is intelligence, but neither is a substitute for judgment."[67]

Clearly, this perception of "an exculpatory ring" in much of the revisionists' work found particularly fertile ground in the specific discussion of the terror.[68] The revisionists'

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of Stalin to the status of a political figure who is not essentially different from other leaders in the twentieth century who determined the destinies of large numbers of people." See Gleason, '"Totalitarianism" in 1984,' p. 156.

[66] Cohen, 'Sovietology as a Vocation,' p. 33. Cohen, much like Medvedev, is another curious figure in the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debates. While he was, as we have seen, the author a major revisionist publication in *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* and was deemed by Manning to be a "first-generation revisionist," he nonetheless did not share the views of subsequent revisionists regarding the Stalin period. Manning provided some reasons as to why this "first-generation" held such attitudes: "they have accepted without questioning the totalitarian school's vision of the Stalin era. Indeed, in an effort to 'rehabilitate' Leninism and Bukharinism from the taint of Stalinism, first-generation revisionists tend to portray Stalinism in a more negative light than did earlier, more conservative scholars." See R. T. Manning, 'State and Society in Stalinist Russia,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 407. More recent reflections have suggested this disparity between 'revisionists' actually rested upon deeper problems of terminology. Jerry Hough, who was married to Fitzpatrick from 1975 to 1984, has noted in this regard that "[t]he most important difficulties came from the ubiquitous use of the word 'revisionism' and the failure to define it. Sheila was a 'revisionist,' and Stephen Cohen was a 'revisionist,' but they were revisionists on different questions." See J. F. Hough, 'Reminiscences,' in G. Alexopoulos, J. Hessler and K. Tomoff (eds.), *Writing the Stalin Era: Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet Historiography*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 216. For more on Cohen as a revisionist, see Engerman, *Know Your Enemy*, pp. 287-291.

[67] R. Conquest, 'Worse to Come?,' *The New Republic*, 17 January 1981, p. 31.

[68] Gleason, '"Totalitarianism" in 1984,' p. 156.

explicit rejection of Stalin-centric explanations was not well-received by their critics. For example, in a response to Getty's early work, one historian remarked that "no interpretation that takes as little account of Stalin—his motives and his politics—can meet the needs of the historiography," condemning Getty's "failure to comprehend…Stalin as a political personality."[69] When *The Origins of the Great Purges* appeared, one reviewer cautioned that "[m]any readers will be surprised and possibly alarmed at Getty's minimalist interpretation of the role of Stalin."[70] This observation proved accurate, with critics believing that "the entire book is an attempt at rehabilitating Stalin's reputation," and condemning Getty's "exoneration of Stalin."[71]

In addition to these matters of interpretation, the debate regarding the terror also saw critics question the legitimacy of the revisionists' scholarship. An early critic of Getty, for example, believed his arguments to be "marked by a one-sided selectivity in source material and the author's disinclination to discuss evidence which does not tie in with his main thesis."[72] Such poor methods were, according to the same reviewer, further tarnished by "an inclination to challenge the alleged simplifications of other scholars by using equally or even more simplified argumentation."[73] In a stinging reply to Thurston's 1986 article 'Fear and Belief,' Conquest was typically to the point in condemning the "lack of commonsense perspective" and "certain desk-bound parochialism" in his handling of the evidence.[74] Unsurprisingly, Conquest was unhappy with the conclusions reached in the article, noting that "[i]f Thurston is seriously maintaining that the *Ezhovshchina* was not a terror operation of the most extreme type, he is clearly wrong."[75] For his part, Thurston responded in equally robust measure, declaring "I do think that a monstrous Terror existed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s," before adding "where I differ with Conquest is in describing the scale of the Terror, its effects on the Soviet people, and whether it was a logical policy. I base my view on detailed examination of the evidence."[76]

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[69] Tucker, 'Problems of Interpretation,' p. 84.
[70] L. H. Siegelbaum, Review of J. A. Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1986, p. 341. Thurston was more candid on this point in his own review of Getty's work, claiming "[t]raditionalists will find something to quarrel with on virtually every page," and "[t]o many, *Origins of the Great Purges* will become a symbol of all that is wrong with the revisionists…and their approach." See R. W. Thurston, Review of J. A. Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, *Science and Society*, vol. 51, no. 2, 1987, pp. 222, 223 respectively.
[71] A. G. Meyer, Review of J. A. Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered 1933-1938*, *The Russian Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1986, p. 445. Another critic concluded of Getty that "he has written a major book with major flaws." See R. Service, Review of J. A. Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1988, p. 241.
[72] Rosenfeldt, 'Problems of Evidence,' p. 91.
[73] Rosenfeldt, 'Problems of Evidence,' p. 85.
[74] R. Conquest, 'What is Terror?,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1986, p. 235.
[75] Conquest, 'What is Terror?,' p. 237.
[76] R. W. Thurston, 'On Desk-Bound Parochialism, Commonsense Perspectives, and Lousy Evidence: A Reply to Robert Conquest,' *Slavic Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1986, pp. 243, 244 respectively.

For others, the revisionist historians of the terror were simply asking irrelevant questions and looking at insignificant phenomena, and as such missed the most fundamental moral concerns raised by an atrocity like the terror. In a scathing attack on Getty's book, one historian claimed:

> The very title of this book naturally leads one to expect an explanation for one of the bloodiest terrors in history. It soon turns out, however, that for Getty the purges meant above all a revision of the Party rolls. He points out correctly but irrelevantly that in Russian the word, "purge," *chistka*, did not mean anything particularly sinister. He then proceeds to devote far more pages to the 1935 exchange of Party cards than to mass murder. He adds, rather disingenuously, that he will not discuss in detail the bloody aspects of his story, for that has been done by others. But if that is so, why write a book? His choice of subject matter reminds one of a historian who chooses to write an account of a shoe factory operating in the death-camp of Auschwitz. He uses many documents and he does not falsify the material. He decides not to use all available sources and dismisses the testimony of survivors as "biased."' Instead, he concentrates on factory records. He discusses matters of production, supply, and marketing. One might even say that he adds something to the wealth of human knowledge; yet, he altogether misses the point. He does not notice the gas chambers.[77]

This appeal to the Holocaust and the crimes of the Nazis became a common weapon of those hostile to revisionism. It became particularly acrimonious when, on several occasions, the revisionists were presented as being akin to Holocaust deniers.[78] For example, in a review of Fitzpatrick's 1984 volume *The Russian Revolution*, Leonard Schapiro noted of her treatment of the terror:

> Dr. Fitzpatrick deals pretty lightly with these horrors. For example, she accepts the estimate of 'low hundreds of thousands' for deaths by execution in 1937-38 as against the much higher figures arrived at by those who have specialized in this grim aspect of Soviet history. This may be due to the fact that she seems to equate any kind of condemnation by historians of Soviet reality with lack of objectivity. But things have come to a pretty pass if a historian who expresses any criticism of a régime which has sent millions of innocent men, women and children to die by execution or in a labour camp is to be accused of lack of impartiality. Does the same principle apply to Nazi Germany? Is the murder of six million Jews to be assessed in terms of National Socialist overall social policy, without a hint of disapproval?[79]

While the significance of this recourse to moral arguments about the role and responsibility of the historian will be explored later in the chapter, it is clear that this discourse

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[77] P. Kenez, 'Stalinism as Humdrum Politics,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1986, pp. 398-399.

[78] This situation was, as Fitzpatrick has noted, further fuelled following Rittersporn's participation in "the Holocaust-denial debates in France, taking the unpopular position that even Holocaust deniers had the right to express their opinions." See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' p. 86, n. 25.

[79] Schapiro, 'Upward Mobility and Its Price,' p. 269. Others were more explicit—Conquest, for example, described the revisionist Jerry Hough as "the David Irving of Stalinism." See Conquest, 'Worse to Come?,' p. 32. For a more recent equation of revisionism and Holocaust denial, see J. E. Haynes and H. Klehr, *In Denial: Historians, Communism and Espionage*, San Francisco, Encounter Books, 2003, pp. 1, 11-12.

surrounding revisionism, and in particular the terror, was highly charged, thoroughly moralistic, and clearly removed from the realm of 'objectivity'.

All of these rumblings over the revisionist project came to a head when an article by Fitzpatrick entitled 'New Perspectives on Stalinism' appeared in the October 1986 issue of *The Russian Review*. Reflecting on this article some years later, Fitzpatrick maintained that the majority of her arguments had been "harmless enough."[80] This article, however, sparked an extended angry debate between scholars on both sides of the divide, and in many ways represents the moment at which all the arguments, accusations and acrimony reached a crescendo.[81]

While explicitly denying that she was proposing a "New Cohort manifesto"[82] for the revisionists, Fitzpatrick's article nonetheless represented the fullest enunciation to date of what the revisionists sought to achieve, where they found the 'totalitarian model' lacking, and in what direction their research agenda should proceed in order to "develop a real social-history perspective of the Stalin period."[83] As part of this process, Fitzpatrick turned her attention to how some of the arguments of the revisionists, specifically those concerning the terror, had been received. She noted with disapproval that "[c]ritics have asserted that any reduction of the traditional emphasis on terror amounts to white-washing of the Stalinist regime, or at least unacceptable abdication of moral judgment," suggesting that "historians usually do not accept such a priori limitations on interpretation."[84]

Fitzpatrick's article appeared with four responses from other scholars, which she later described as "assail[ing] me, as I felt, from every possible direction," including that of the revisionists.[85] Unsurprisingly perhaps, many of these commentaries focused specifically on the issue of the terror and the revisionists' capabilities and willingness to adequately come to terms with it. Furthermore, it was not a concern limited to those hostile to their enterprise. Fellow 'revisionist' Cohen, for example, reiterated his earlier criticisms, finding "serious reason to worry" that Fitzpatrick and her 'cohort' "will close one or both eyes to…the prolonged mass terror of the Stalin years," because "[i]n all of their publications to date, the terror is ignored, obscured, or minimized in one way or another."[86] More strident

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[80] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 690.
[81] Indeed, one historian has recently described the *Russian Review* exchange as "an outpouring of emotion disguised as scholarship." See Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 221. More harshly, another commentator declared that the debate over revisionism had "reached an apogee of futility" with these exchanges. See D. Filtzer, Review of J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning (eds.), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, *Social History*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994, p. 421, n. 1.
[82] Fitzpatrick, 'New Perspectives on Stalinism,' p. 358.
[83] Fitzpatrick, 'New Perspectives on Stalinism,' p. 373.
[84] Fitzpatrick, 'New Perspectives on Stalinism,' p. 370.
[85] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 690.
[86] S. F. Cohen, 'Stalin's Terror as Social History,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1986, p. 378.

was Peter Kenez's contribution, in which he accused revisionists of presenting the Stalinist 1930s as "humdrum politics," and argued that "[c]onsciously or unconsciously they de-demonize Stalin and his Politburo, so much so that Stalinism disappears as a phenomenon."[87]

The exchange rapidly transformed into something of a debate concerning 'moralising' versus 'objective historical practice' in the face of past atrocity, in many ways moving beyond the original points made by Fitzpatrick in her article but echoing the general discourse which had hitherto been generated between the revisionists and 'totalitarians'. Fitzpatrick did answer her critics in an afterword, in which she reaffirmed her commitment to objective scholarship and noted that "[t]here are iconoclastic revisionists as well as ideological ones, and I belong to the former group."[88] These matters, however, were far from closed. The October 1987 issue of *The Russian Review* featured a spate of responses to Fitzpatrick's articles and the other commentaries, many of which continued in this same vein about the 'ethics' of revisionism and specifically that concerning the terror. Unsurprisingly, many contributors reiterated the standard tenet of historiography calling for an eschewal of explicit moral judgement, and attacked the biases of those who had responded to Fitzpatrick in the original 1986 discussion. William Chase, for example, accused Cohen and Kenez of "using their commentaries to reaffirm their hatred of Stalinism and sublimating their moral indignation with that system into an unjust condemnation of those who seek to clarify our understanding of it," describing their

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[87] Kenez, 'Stalinism as Humdrum Politics,' p. 396.

[88] S. Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism Revisited,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1986, p. 412. Such an admission is quite revealing about Fitzpatrick as an individual. Indeed, in the case of Sheila Fitzpatrick, E. H. Carr's suggestion that one "[s]tudy the historian before you begin to study the facts" seems particularly useful. See E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (1987), London, Penguin, 2008, p. 23. Born and raised in Australia, completing her PhD at Oxford, and then building her academic career in America, Fitzpatrick's personal experiences can provide some explanations for her professional activities. Her father Brian Fitzpatrick, a left-wing 'radical' historian and political commentator, was, as Fitzpatrick herself acknowledged, "a formative influence," as were the difficulties such a vocation brought upon the family. See David-Fox, Holquist and Martin, 'From the Editors: An Interview with Sheila Fitzpatrick,' p. 481; and S. Fitzpatrick, 'My Father's Daughter: A Memoir,' in S. Macintyre and S. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Against the Grain: Brian Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark in Australian History and Politics*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2007, pp. 163-166. Indeed, Hough believed of the teasing and isolation that Fitzpatrick endured as a result of her father's activities permanently shaped her attitudes and future path: "Brian's children felt the sting of these attacks, and Sheila's wounds from this experience never have quite disappeared. Her interest in the Soviet purge was never limited to the usual questions about its causes and political consequences. She also was fascinated with trying to understand the reasons why average people would denounce others. The roots of that interest lay in her own past." Likewise, when Fitzpatrick herself came under attack as a revisionist from the 1970s onward, Hough similarly suggested that "[t]he experiences of Sheila and her father in her youth meant that this particular type of criticism touched especially sensitive nerves." See Hough, 'Reminiscences,' pp. 212, 216 respectively. Possible reasons for Fitzpatrick's identification with iconoclastic behaviours, then, become clearer upon consideration of her personal background. One historian has gone so far to suggest of Fitzpatrick that "[t]his daughter of an Aussie radical was by temperament predestined to lead and irritate rather than follow the crowd." See Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 221. For other discussions of Fitzpatrick's background and its influence on her work, see, for example, Suny, 'Writing Russia,' pp. 1-2. For more on the life and career of Brian Fitzpatrick, see S. Macintyre and S. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Against the Grain: Brian Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark in Australian History and Politics*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2007.

contributions as "a pair of value-laden essays that unfairly questioned the moral sensibilities of these scholars."[89] Getty also weighed in on these matters, declaring that "I am naïve enough to believe that it is worth making the effort [to be objective], and that scholarship should be judged on its merits rather than on a presumptuous assessment of the author's character."[90]

Importantly, several revisionists used the opportunity presented by *The Russian Review* fracas to defend themselves against the claims that they were 'whitewashing' Stalin in their work, and reiterate earlier statements that their scholarship only aimed to advance knowledge of the subjects it addressed. Rittersporn, for example, declared that "Cohen and Kenez are wrong to contend that the writings of the 'new cohort' absolve anyone from responsibility for the regime's misdeeds or that they minimize or deny terror. One would be curious to see a half-sentence of quotation to support these claims."[91] Similarly, Manning argued that "[t]his insistence on studying Russian politics and society outside the Kremlin walls does not mean that we disdain high politics or seek to 'rehabilitate' Stalin, as is often alleged. We are simply trying to correct an imbalance in the scholarship."[92] "Paradoxically," she noted, "only by ceasing to focus exclusively on Stalin can we ever begin to assess his role and place in Russian history."[93]

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By the end of the 1980s, the revisionists had, despite the acrimony surrounding discussion of their work, "become the establishment"[94] in the field. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in many ways the 'revisionism versus totalitarianism' debate became, as one recent commentator has noted, "largely redundant."[95] While both sides claimed to have 'won', major changes were clearly afoot in the field of Soviet history which eclipsed many of these earlier concerns and rendered them unimportant.[96] To begin

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[89] W. Chase, 'Social History and Revisionism of the Stalinist Era,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 385.
[90] J. A. Getty, 'State, Society, and Superstition,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 395.
[91] Rittersporn, 'History, Commemoration, and Hectoring Rhetoric,' p. 419.
[92] Manning, 'State and Society in Stalinist Russia,' p. 410. For similar arguments in the same series of responses, see Getty, 'State, Society, and Superstition,' pp. 394-395; and Kuromiya, 'Stalinism and Historical Research,' p. 406.
[93] Manning, 'State and Society in Stalinist Russia,' p. 411.
[94] S. Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction,' in S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 6.
[95] K. McDermott, 'Stalinism "From Below"?: Social Preconditions of and Popular Responses to the Great Terror,' *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 8, nos. 3-4, 2007, p. 609. Elsewhere, the debate has been described as "ultimately sterile." See B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott, 'Rethinking Stalinist Terror,' in B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds.), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 4.
[96] On the 'totalitarian' side, for example, Conquest declared in the preface to the 2008 edition of *The Great Terror* that "[t]hough inviting some amendment on a few points, the period's history as given here has been

with, a glut of new archival material, hitherto closed off to scholars, suddenly became accessible. The manner in which scholars sought to actually do history, however, was also changing. The turn towards cultural history, itself reflecting a wider disciplinary shift, defined much of Soviet historiography throughout the 1990s. Histories of "Stalinist subjectivity" proliferated in the wake of Stephen Kotkin's classic 1995 study *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, and in turn, the revisionists found themselves being critiqued by a younger generation of scholars.[97]

Even with these changes in focus and approach, discussion of the terror was far from finished. Despite the intense heat produced by the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debate regarding the terror, younger scholars began to question what it had actually achieved. Kotkin, for example, believed that "what most scholars regard as the defining episode for understanding the Soviet political system, the great terror, seems scarcely better explained today than when it happened."[98] For a long time, the Cold War and the climate it fostered had dictated which issues were under discussion, and how scholars related to both

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substantially validated." See Conquest, *The Great Terror* (2008 ed.), p. vii. In more private contexts, Conquest has been considerably more forthright on this issue. According to a popular anecdote, "Conquest, responding to a request from his publisher for a new title for the revised edition of *The Great Terror* after the opening of the archives, tartly replied, 'How about *I Told You So, You Fucking Fools*.'" See Haynes and Klehr, *In Denial*, p. 23. The same story is recounted in J. J. Bernstein, 'The Historian Who Came in From the Cold: Robert Conquest's Anti-Communism is Vindicated,' *Insight on the News,* 17 August 1992, p. 34. Conversely, Fitzpatrick claimed of the revisionists by the 1990s: "their fight appeared in some essential respects to be won. In the first place, social history finally achieved dominance in the Russian history field, following the trend in the discipline as a whole. In the second place, 'Soviet history' became an accepted part of Russian history—indeed, the most popular period as far as student interest was concerned, such that universities started routinely hiring Soviet historians. The Soviet-history field, minuscule at the beginning of the 1970s, mushroomed; and, as there had been comparatively little Soviet history written by historians before the revisionists, this new generation of graduate students and scholars was trained largely on revisionist work. Many revisionists' arguments and approaches became part of the new 'conventional wisdom' of the field; revisionists stopped having (more than the usual) trouble finding jobs and getting their manuscripts past journal and publishers' referees and, with the passage of time, themselves became senior scholars. The totalitarian model had come to seem passé among scholars of Soviet history and politics…. [W]ithin the field of Soviet history, a paradigm shift had occurred: the anti-totalitarian 'from below' approach was now the dominant paradigm. As the old joke has it, it was time to stop saying revisionist arguments were wrong and start saying they were boring because everybody already knew them." See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' pp. 86-87. Others still have been critical of this tendency to declare winners and losers; Lynne Viola, for example, has noted disapprovingly: "In a bellicose revanchism, some veterans of the Cold War even claimed victory, as if anyone really could have won or any kind of scholarship could have benefited from the decades of polemic, mean-spirited ugly aggression, and pure hatred of the Cold War." See L. Viola, 'The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography and the End of the Soviet Union,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2002, p. 33. In a footnote to this comment, Viola continued, "I, for one, go on record as not having won anything (on the contrary in many ways) and not having served as a soldier in anyone's army." See Viola, 'The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography,' p. 33, n. 28.

[97] See Fitzpatrick, 'The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century,' p. 61. In addition to Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain*, examples of such scholarship include I. Halfin and J. Hellbeck, 'Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain* and the State of Soviet Historical Studies', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1996, pp. 456-463; I. Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000; J. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006; and D. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003.

[98] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, p. 284.

their subject and to each other.[99] The removal of this context, along with the much-heralded opening of the Soviet archives, seemingly promised to resolve many of the questions over which the 'totalitarians' and revisionists had clashed. It seems, however, that old animosities refused to simply vanish along with the Cold War and the Soviet Union, and post-1991 scholarship on the terror continued to provoke controversy and debate.

A particularly illustrative example of this continuing tension is the response which greeted Thurston's 1996 study *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*. Thurston, as we have seen, was no stranger to acrimonious exchanges about the terror. In addition to his 1986 article in *Slavic Review*, however, he had also courted controversy with a polemical 1992 piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in which he criticised a Library of Congress exhibit entitled 'Revelations from the Russian Archives'. He attacked the organisers for "highlight[ing] only the repressive nature of the Soviet regime, ignoring its positive (though flawed) accomplishments," and suggested that "[t]he event raises serious questions about how the library is fulfilling its mission and provides lessons for scholars about the need to constantly update interpretations of the past."[100]

Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia was a particularly radical statement of earlier revisionist positions, yet also drew upon the notion of the 'everyday' which was featuring in newer cultural histories of Stalinism. Like Getty and Rittersporn before him, Thurston pointed to the lack of control which the centre maintained over the course of events, and rejected the notion that there had been a 'master plan' for terror. Thurston broke with earlier interpretations, however, by giving credence to Stalin's belief that there had in fact been a network of enemies plotting against him, arguing that "there was…always a grain of truth to the accusations of the show trials…. With some justification, Stalin saw a dangerous situation developing around him."[101]

Moreover, Thurston suggested that the population at large shared the belief of the *vozhd'* in an internal conspiracy against the Soviet state, and therefore approved the various measures being taken to halt it. Overall, Thurston argued of the relationship between terror and society that:

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[99] For comment on this impact of the Cold War specifically upon American Sovietology, see, for example, Viola, 'The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography,' pp. 25-34.

[100] R. W. Thurston, 'Point of View,' *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 November 1992, p. A36. The response to this piece reiterated similar claims and criticisms from earlier attacks on revisionists. For example, one commentator claimed, "[i]f ever there was a reason for a scholarly examination of mainstream Sovietology, Thurston's article is it. What kind of social science methodology can it be that provides a moral defense (in the name of academic 'objectivity') for one of the most savage governments in history? How long would a teacher who defended the 'positive (though flawed) accomplishments' of Nazism, fascism or apartheid in his writings remain on any faculty?" See A. Beichman, 'To Any Lengths in Defense of Stalin,' *Insight on the News*, 4 January 1993.

[101] Thurston, *Life and Terror*, p. 57.

> Terror was not inevitable in the Soviet system; Stalin did not need mass fear to rule. Other factors were more important in securing popular compliance. An authoritarian and repressive regime enjoyed considerable support in spite of—but also, to some extent, because of—its wide use of coercion. The state's use or threat of force did not result in a 'broken' people.[102]

In Thurston's view, the state could not act "independently of society,"[103] and the terror was thus shaped by how Soviet society responded to it. As such, he concluded, "Stalin becomes more human than other[s] have portrayed him. And his regime becomes less malevolent but possessed of greater popular support than is usually argued."[104]

Despite some positive reviews, such as one historian who deemed the book "lively, informative, thought-provoking—and sometimes exasperating,"[105] many others found much cause for concern in Thurston's arguments. A reviewer in *The New York Times Book Review* believed Thurston to be lacking "basic human sympathy," and cautioned that "[i]f Stalin's ghost is finally to be exorcised, historians must not play down the malevolence of the system he created. His victims deserve better of us."[106] Similarly, others have dismissed *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia* as "an adventure into the land of excuse making."[107]

Protagonists from the older debates also returned to the fray. Some ten years after his attacks on the revisionists in the original *Russian Review* exchanges, Peter Kenez employed similar rhetoric and made similar accusations against Thurston:

> In my view, it is morally reprehensible to whitewash such a regime, as it is morally reprehensible to explain away the crimes of Nazism or of Pol Pot's Cambodia. Thurston attempts to accomplish his unsavory task by making inappropriate comparisons and by defining terror and torture downward.[108]

The older revisionists were also concerned. In her review of Thurston's book, Fitzpatrick recounted the traditional argument made against revisionists of 'whitewashing' Stalin and his atrocities, before suggesting that "[i]f that was generally an unfair criticism of the work appearing in the heyday of revisionism, it unfortunately comes close to applying to R. W. Thurston's new book."[109] However, even while criticising Thurston's "naiveté" and suggesting his analytical skills were "simply not up to the level" of historians such as

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[102] Thurston, *Life and Terror*, p. xx.
[103] Thurston, *Life and Terror*, p. 136.
[104] Thurston, *Life and Terror*, p. 228.
[105] C. Ward, Review of R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1997, p. 151. For another positive, if qualified, review of Thurston, see A. Chandler, Review of R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 112, no. 4, 1997-1998, pp. 725-726.
[106] S. M. Miner, 'Dark Prince of the Kremlin,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 5 May 1996, p. 14.
[107] Haynes and Klehr, *In Denial*, p. 23.
[108] P. Kenez, Review of R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 559, 1998, p. 185. For another negative review, see K. Boterbloem, Review of R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1997, pp. 274-275.
[109] S. Fitzpatrick, Review of R. W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 4, 1997, p. 1193.

Getty,[110] Fitzpatrick was nonetheless disturbed by the sense of déjà vu she felt in the response to his work. She characterised some of the attacks on Thurston as "quintessentially Stalinist" in nature, employing "all the ploys of political smearing and intimidation that are familiar from the Cold War period."[111] It appears that the end of the Cold War had not brought an end to the controversy that accompanied discussion of the terror and, in particular, Stalin's role within it.

As Thurston came under attack from various quarters, other revisionists were moving on. Many turned their hand to the "politically less contentious" subject of resistance to Stalin,[112] while others set about revising their own pre-1991 positions. Getty, for example, acknowledged in the preface to the 1999 study *The Road to Terror*, that "[t]he sudden availability of new archival sources has obliged me to rethink a number of the points about the terror that I had suggested before."[113] In particular, it was the role of Stalin upon which the archives had proved particularly enlightening. "We can now see," Getty continued, "his fingerprints all over the archives," acknowledging that "he played the leading role in the terror."[114] Getty argued, however, that this insidiousness was not the domain of the *vozhd'* alone. To this end, he suggested that:

> The notion that we have clung to for so long—that there must have been 'liberal' or 'decent' Bolsheviks who tried unsuccessfully to stop Stalin's plan for terror—is no longer tenable. Instead, the real picture is even more depressing than a heroic but futile resistance to evil. At every step of the way, there were constituencies both within and outside the elite that supported repression of various groups, sometimes with greater vehemence than Stalin did. The terror was a series of group efforts (though the groups changed frequently) rather than a matter of one man intimidating everyone else.[115]

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110 Fitzpatrick, Review of Thurston, p. 1193.

111 Fitzpatrick, Review of Thurston, p. 1194.

112 See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' p. 86. For examples of work on this new subject from older revisionists, see S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994; and L. Viola (ed.), *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. See also S. Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934–1941*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; and J. J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance Under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005.

113 J. A. Getty and O. V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999, p. xi. While holding different views to Getty regarding the nature of the terror as a whole, a similar point regarding Stalin's own participation in these events has been argued by Stéphane Courtois, who has noted that "Hitler rarely played a personal role in repression, leaving these ignoble tasks to trusted subordinates such as Himmler. By contrast, Stalin always took a strong personal interest in such matters and played a central role in the process." See S. Courtois, 'Conclusion: Why?,' in S. Courtois and others (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes Terror Repression*, trans. J. Murphy and M. Kramer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 745.

114 Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. xiii. Nonetheless, Getty qualified this latter observation by noting that "even with the new documents, that role remains problematic and hard to specify." See Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. xiii.

115 Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. xiv.

Despite the revelations from the archives, Getty's newer study nonetheless held fast to his earlier arguments concerning the absence of a 'master plan' for the terror on the part of Stalin, the chaotic manner in which events proceeded, and, as the extract cited above suggests, the importance and the autonomy of various stakeholders within the system.[116]

This re-emphasis upon the centrality of Stalin has become a hallmark of some recent scholarship on the terror. For example, in the 2009 English edition of *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, Russian historian Oleg Khlevniuk declared that "we can now state with greater certainty what was clear to many observers and historians long before the archives became accessible: 'The nature of the whole Purge depends in the last analysis on the personal and political drives of Stalin.'"[117] Additionally, in contradistinction to the revisionist arguments concerning the chaotic and haphazard development of the terror, Khlevniuk argued that "[t]here is now a basis for believing (and the literature increasingly reflects this belief) that the Great Terror was a series of purposefully and carefully planned centralized operations."[118] Others have also advanced more 'traditional' arguments about the nature of the terror, and the term 'totalitarian' has made a curious reappearance. Historian Paul Hagenloh, for example, has argued that "[t]he Stalinist regime deserves to be termed totalitarian," while nonetheless maintaining "[t]his is not to say that Soviet society was in fact totalitarian under Stalin."[119] This shift in focus has prompted one historian to argue for the emergence of a "neo-totalitarian[ism]" in recent scholarship on the terror.[120]

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[116] See, for example, Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, pp. 571-573, 578, 581, 582-583. For later arguments from Getty of a similar nature, specifically in relation to the 'mass operations' of 1937-1938, see, for example, Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted,'" pp. 113-138.

[117] O. V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, trans. N. Seligman Favorov, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. xix. The author of the quoted text is, of course, Conquest in *The Great Terror*. See above, p. 228, n. 28. Later in the book, Khlevniuk concludes that "[t]here is every reason to believe that the author and driving force behind the policy of terror was Stalin." See Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, p. 202.

[118] Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, p. 167. For more from Khlevniuk on similar issues, see, for example, O. Khlevnyuk, 'The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-38,' in J. Cooper, M. Perrie and E. A. Rees (eds.), *Soviet History, 1917-1953: Essays in Honour of R. W. Davies*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995, pp. 158-176; O. Khlevniuk, 'Party and NKVD: Power Relationships in the Years of the Great Terror,' in B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds.), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, Houndsmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 21-33; and O. V. Khlevniuk, 'Stalin as Dictator: The Personalisation of Power,' in S. Davies and J. Harris (eds.), *Stalin: A New History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 108-120.

[119] Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*, pp. 331, 332. In arguing for the 'totalitarian' nature of Stalin's rule, Hagenloh noted that, "[m]odels of totalitarianism have long been out of favor in Soviet studies, in part because the more popular variants of this model were often overtly simplistic in their Orwellian accounts of a Soviet society bereft of personal and social connections and utterly dominated by the communist regime. The most compelling accounts of totalitarianism, however, were never so shallow. In particular, Hannah Arendt's analysis of modern dictatorships continues to offer much to scholars of the USSR. Arendt argued that totalitarian dictatorships emerged from the political and social dislocations of the early twentieth century, including world war, international depression, and the rise of modern mass politics. These totalitarian regimes used political violence ('terror') to promote unitary politico-historical goals, promising to overcome these dislocations by carrying out the 'laws' of history or of nature." See Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*, p. 331.

[120] See L. H. Siegelbaum, Review of O. V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2009, p. 659. See also Edele, *Stalinist Society*, p. 219.

Perhaps the most significant development in the historiography of the terror since 1991, and itself closely connected to the renewed emphasis on Stalin's personal role and the planned nature of events, has been the 'discovery' of a series of mass repressions carried out against so-called 'dangerous' elements of the Soviet population between 1937 and 1938. Recent studies by Hagenloh and David Shearer have revealed that some 700,000 'ordinary' citizens were executed as a result of NKVD Order 00447, which targeted former kulaks, petty criminals, vagrants, and other 'undesirable' elements of Soviet society, quite separate to the terror against the Party, the bureaucracy and the army.[121] While Hagenloh views these actions as rooted in the history and development of Soviet policing and therefore separate to the 'political' purges, others have suggested that they can be seen as part of the broader climate of terror.[122] Khlevniuk, for example, believes these mass operations were part of a plan by Stalin to eliminate "'anti-Soviet elements' and 'counter-revolutionary national contingents.'" "The objective," Khlevniuk contends, "given growing international tensions and the threat of imminent war, was the liquidation of a 'fifth column.'"[123]

Some twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and longer still since the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debates were at their height, it seems scholarly discourses about the terror have reached something of a comfortable middle ground.[124] As we have seen, the opening of the archives has filled in some gaps, enhanced the overall picture which scholars could create of events, and, in the case of the mass actions which are the subject of Hagenloh and Shearer's work, revealed elements of Stalinist repression that had hitherto been largely obscured. Furthermore, the term 'totalitarian' has returned to discussion of the terror, and not merely as an object of derision or curiosity as a relic from times long passed.

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[121] See Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*, *passim*; and D. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009. For more on this topic, see, for example, Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted,'" pp. 113-138; P. Hagenloh, "'Socially Harmful Elements" and the Great Terror,' in S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp. 286-308; B. McLoughlin, 'Mass Operations of the NKVD, 1937-8: A Survey,' in B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds.), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, Houndsmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 118-152; D. Shearer, 'Crime and Social Disorder in Stalin's Russia: A Reassessment of the Great Retreat and the Origins of the Mass Repressions,' *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 39, nos. 1-2, 1998, pp. 119-148; D. Shearer, 'Social Disorder, Mass Repression and the NKVD During the 1930s,' in B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds.), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, Houndsmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 85-117; and Werth, 'The Mechanisms of a Mass Crime,' pp. 215-239.

[122] See Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*, pp. 5-7.

[123] Khlevniuk, *Master of the House*, p. xx. A similar argument that "[t]he elimination of potential and mythical 'fifth columnists' was at the heart of the Great Terror" has been made by Nicholas Werth. See N. Werth, 'A State Against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,' in S. Courtois and others (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes Terror Repression*, trans. J. Murphy and M. Kramer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 202.

[124] For an example of a statement of this middle ground, see McLoughlin and McDermott, 'Rethinking Stalinist Terror,' pp. 13-14.

Even with the achievement of this 'middle ground', discussion of the terror—particularly concerning the questions of Stalin's role and responsibility—seems far from closed. Certain arguments, as the response to Thurston's study revealed, are still a fertile ground for controversy. Furthermore, scholars such as Martin Malia seemed unable to forgive or forget the earlier acrimony amongst 'totalitarians' and revisionists, and continued to harangue the latter for not admitting to "the conceptual failure of their enterprise," suggesting that "it is high time the Soviet field went beyond its sandbox *Historikerstreit* over social-history revisionism."[125] While Malia demanded the revisionists concede that they had 'lost', others have continued to make accusations of 'whitewashing' against scholars like Getty, Fitzpatrick and Thurston, and decried their perceived monopoly of the academy. Robert Harris, for example, trod the familiar path of comparisons with Nazism and Holocaust denial, noting of these revisionist historians that:

> [T]hey all, in their various ways, offer apologies for, or seek to excuse, aspects of a murderous system that killed more people than Hitler's. And they do so, moreover, in a way which—were they to apply similar arguments to the Third Reich—would certainly lose them their jobs and would possibly land them in prison.[126]

"[C]hoose your dictator wisely," Harris advised his readers, suggesting that "[w]hat you say about Hitler in chilly Bavaria may put you in a prison cell. But say the same thing about Stalin in sunny California and your reward, my boy, will be a comfortable tenure in Soviet studies."[127]

As one commentary has suggested of the state of the field after 1991, "[s]omething strange…happened along the transition to freedom and democracy: the most acrimonious accusations about revisionism survived, and are still prominent in public debate at the turn

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[125] M. Malia, 'To the Editors,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2002, p. 569. Malia had earlier made similar arguments in a review of Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* and the edited collection of essays *Stalinism: New Directions*. See M. Malia, 'Revolution Fulfilled: How the Revisionists are Still Trying to Take the Ideology Out of Stalinism, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 15 June 2001, pp. 3-4.

[126] R. Harris, 'The West Prefers Its Dictators Red,' *The Sunday Times*, 11 October 1998. This criticism has recently been echoed by others, with one commentator describing the revisionists as "apologists for the regime." See Pavlova, 'Contemporary Western Historians on Stalin's Russia in the 1930s,' p. 75. Similarly, other historians have complained that "a sizeable cadre of American intellectuals now openly applaud and apologize for one of the bloodiest ideologies of human history, and instead of being treated as pariahs, they hold distinguished positions in American higher education and cultural life. How is it possible that the memory of Communist crimes could have vanished so swiftly while the memory of Nazi crimes remains so fresh?" See Haynes and Klehr, *In Denial*, p. 1.

[127] Harris, 'The West Prefers Its Dictators Red'. Another invocation of the Holocaust denial analogy came in 1999, when, in response to an article written by Getty in *The Russian Review*, Amy Knight claimed that: "[i]n applying abstract terms like 'unity rituals' to party gatherings where Bolsheviks were pilloried by their comrades to be then arrested and shot, Getty attempts to make these gatherings seem rational and benign. One could likewise refer to the systematic executions of Jews in Nazi gas chambers as 'rituals' that gave the SS 'self-affirmation' and 'corporate identity', but it would not make them any less horrifying." See A. Knight, 'Letters to the Editor,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1999, p. 532. For Getty's response, see pp. 532-533. The original offending article was J. A. Getty, 'Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-38,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 58, no. 1, 1999, pp. 49-70.

of the 21st century."[128] This state of affairs suggests that the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debates cannot be dismissed as simply a Cold War relic. Even after 1991, controversy has still been provoked, similar rhetoric has been employed, and similar accusations have been made. If we cannot simply appeal to the wider political context for answers to this phenomenon, we are forced to look elsewhere for explanations. Where we are led is towards moral concerns.

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As we have seen throughout the present chapter, the entire debate concerning revisionism and the terror in many ways turned upon the decidedly moral question of responsibility. Clearly, Stalin's was at stake—how much could, and should, be attributed to the *vozhd'* for these events? While the revisionists claimed to be providing a clearer and 'objective' sense of how the processes of terror came into being and functioned, and precisely who had been involved, the 'totalitarians' interpreted these efforts as 'whitewashing' Stalin and the regime. Furthermore, these issues have persisted into the present, and can still function as a flashpoint for debate. As Getty and Naumov have recognised, "[p]ost-Soviet historical writing, a clear descendant of Soviet polemic, still seeks categorically to fix responsibility on bad persons and bad systems."[129] It is clear, however, that this idea of 'responsibility' in discussions of the terror extend beyond the historical actors to the historians themselves. The fierceness of the debate, and the nature of the accusations fired amongst the protagonists, suggest that something more than Stalin's culpability was at issue.

In terms of how it could be afforded to the historical figures involved in the terror, it was the revisionists themselves who complicated the issue of responsibility. Before they began to question the 'totalitarian' explanation, these matters were largely resolved. While these events had been understood as Stalin's evil master plan which rendered the entire population frightened and at his mercy, blame and guilt were relatively easy to apportion. The revisionist arguments, however, concerning the chaotic and unplanned nature of the

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[128] M. David-Fox, P. Holquist and M. Poe, 'From the Editors: Really-Existing Revisionism?,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2001, p. 710. Fitzpatrick herself has commented on this lingering bitterness in public discussions of revisionism, noting that "from the point of view of people within Soviet history, this is tremendously old news and the younger ones are not interested. But for some reason this totalitarianism-versus-revisionism controversy, which was so lively in academia in the seventies and is now essentially dead there, seems to have found a new half-life outside academia." See Dymond, 'Social and Subjective—Soviet History after the Cold War,' p. 44.

[129] J. A. Getty and O. V. Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin's "Iron Fist"*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 206.

terror, the initiative and agency of various institutions and individuals, and the murky role of Stalin in the course of events raised more questions than answers. These questions included, as Getty and Naumov have suggested: "is it possible that any single person bore 'full' responsibility for anything? No one else was culpable? Only Stalin bears responsibility?"[130]

Reflecting some years later on the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debate, one historian has observed that "[t]he main axis of controversy over revisionism, clearly, is…the question of power. Can all power in a society be concentrated at the top?"[131] Of course, with power comes the burden of responsibility. By challenging conceptions of the exercise of power in the Soviet Union, namely by arguing that it was less absolute and more fragmented, the revisionists simultaneously challenged traditional views on how to assign responsibility. For example, Getty and Manning suggested of the terror that "[a]lthough Stalin lit the match, the cataclysm also required dry tinder and favorable winds to become what it did."[132]

By shining a spotlight upon the 'tinder' and 'winds' of the terror, the revisionists created a moral complexity which hitherto had not existed in the discourse surrounding it. Explaining this new dilemma, namely that "Stalin's ideas, however sinister and malicious, found clear resonance 'below' in the Party and in society, and not just from fearful or careerist 'little Stalins,'"[133] was now paramount. In this sense there are clear connections to the debates on victims and perpetrators within Holocaust historiography, which were discussed in Chapters Two and Three. While in the case of the Holocaust the distinctions between these two groups are relatively uncomplicated, the events of the terror reveal how ambiguous they can be. As one historian has recognised of the terror, "[i]t transformed every workplace and institution with its ritualized 'unmasking' of trusted workmates, internal reviews, accusations, and denunciations. A worker, party member, engineer, or official could as easily become a victim as a perpetrator."[134] Indeed, in several instances, the machinery of terror actually ended up engulfing those who had helped create and sustain it, the most illustrative example being the fate of Ezhov.[135]

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[130] Getty and Naumov, *Yezhov*, p. 206.
[131] Daniels, 'Comment: Revisionism Avant la Lettre,' p. 706.
[132] Getty and Manning, 'Introduction,' p. 15.
[133] J. A. Getty, 'The Politics of Stalinism,' in A. Nove (ed.), *The Stalin Phenomenon*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993, p. 112. Hough has recognised a similar idea in Fitzpatrick's approach to the problem of the terror, noting that "Sheila never doubted that the purge was a deliberate policy of Stalin, but she certainly thought that many of those 'below' relished actions that Stalin took." See Hough, 'Reminiscences,' p. 216. See also J. F. Hough, 'The "Dark Forces," the Totalitarian Model, and Soviet History,' *The Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 402.
[134] Goldman, *Terror in the Age of Stalin*, p. 9. For an interesting discussion of the 'ethics of denunciation', see S. Fitzpatrick, 'A Little Swine,' *The London Review of Books*, 3 November 2005, pp. 3-6.
[135] See Goldman, *Terror in the Age of Stalin*, p. 8. For fuller discussions of Ezhov and his actions during the terror, see, for example, Getty and Naumov, *Yezhov*, *passim*; M. Jansen and N. Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner:*

In such an environment, how does one tease out the differing strands of responsibility, guilt and blame? In addition to perpetrators like Ezhov who fell victim to the processes of terror they had helped initiate and maintain, this 'grey zone' also included those who had participated in earlier atrocities such as the brutalities of collectivisation or the violence of the civil war. In *The Great Terror*, Conquest reflected on how to address these ambiguities:

> The Party figures…were consciously involved to a greater or lesser degree in a political struggle whose rules they understood. They had themselves in many cases been responsible for the imprisonment or death of peasants or others by the million in the course of collectivization. Our pity for their own sufferings should doubtless not be withheld, but it can at least be qualified by a sense of their having a lesser claim to sympathy than the ordinary people of the country. If Krylenko was to go to the execution cellars, he had himself sent to their deaths, on false charges, hundreds of others. If Trotsky was to be assassinated in exile, he had himself ordered the shooting of thousands of the rank and file, and gloried in it. Pushkin once described an earlier generation of Russian revolutionaries as "positively heartless men who care little for their own skins, and still less for those of others." We may accept this about such people as Rosengolts. But it plainly does not apply to his wife. In her, we can already see the fate and the feelings of an ordinary non-Communist, caught up in the frightful tensions and agonies of the Great Purge.[136]

Clearly, there were large numbers of wholly innocent individuals—such as relatives of 'enemies of the people', or those subject to the mass repressions of NKVD Order 00447—who were consumed by the juggernaut of the terror. Whatever the ambiguities which do exist in the distinctions between the victims and perpetrators of the terror, in some cases there were none, and this crucial element should not be forgotten.

While clearly testament to how notions of responsibility can be clouded by the complexities and ambiguities of the victim-perpetrator continuum, the debates about the terror have much more to teach us with regards to historians' moral engagement with past atrocity. Specifically, we are confronted with what one might term the 'politics' of responsibility, applicable to both how historians deal with their subject matter and with their colleagues. In the case of the former, it is what is revealed by the act of assigning responsibility, and the moral choices inherent in this act, which become particularly important. When, for example, Conquest argues that "Communist ideology provided the

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People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2002; and B. A. Starkov, 'Narkom Ezhov,' in J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning (eds.), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 21-29.

[136] Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 276-277. Kotkin later characterised *The Great Terror* as a story of "only partial tragedy (owing to the victim's complicity in the creation of the system)." See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, p. 539, n. 18.

motivation for an unprecedented massacre of men, women and children,"[137] or Medvedev suggests "[f]or the young Soviet state the road of development was not determined in such a way that it necessarily had to grow into the Stalinist system,"[138] or Thurston claims "Stalin was not guilty of mass first-degree murder,"[139] additional concerns and purposes are revealed beyond the arguments themselves.

Clearly, there is some degree of interplay between one's politics and one's morals. In a field as highly politicised as Soviet historiography, it is unquestionable that this relationship between the moral and the political has influenced how historians have approached the apportioning of responsibility for an event such as the terror. History, it bears repeating, is always history for a purpose. Invariably, some present concerns—admirable or otherwise—do end up transplanted into a prostrate past. As Getty has observed, "[p]olitically, writing about Stalinism has always meant taking a stance."[140] Of course, although Getty does not make it explicit, it also involves a moral stance. Unlike Nazism, whose historiography largely developed only in the wake of its demise, the Soviet Union survived alongside and in many ways helped to shape the various discourses about it in the west. Those who were sympathetic and those who were hostile to the Soviet Union coexisted together within the bounds of legitimate historiography. Conversely, for all the various strands of inquiry within the historiography of Nazism, not one is concerned with whether or not National Socialism was a 'good' thing. Outside of the 'lunatic fringe', one does not find historians defending the ideals or 'cause' of Nazism, even while acknowledging the unfortunate human cost involved. In this sense, the historiography of Nazism has a clear moral consensus. The same is not true of Soviet historiography, where there were and still are historians who believe in the ideals embodied in the revolution, which tragically went off course. Others saw and still see in communism and the Soviet Union something fundamentally evil and the moral equivalent of Nazism. Clearly, the ideological divide—and the ensuing moral divide—are determining factors in where responsibility is deemed to lie. As Kenez recognised in his angry review of Thurston's *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, "[h]ow we write about mass murder will ultimately be determined by our political and ethical commitments."[141]

Nonetheless, whether blame has been deemed to lie with the system, Stalin, or a far more complex blend of factors both from 'above' and 'below', notions of responsibility

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[137] R. Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine* (1986), London, Pimlico, 2002, p. 344.
[138] R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (1972), trans. G. Shriver, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 616.
[139] Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, p. 227.
[140] Getty, 'The Politics of Stalinism,' p. 105.
[141] Kenez, Review of Thurston, p. 186.

have long accompanied investigations into the terror. Clearly, regardless of how a historian chooses to assign it, it seems that such an impulse is viewed as legitimate. There are, however, scholars who have argued against this tendency within the historiography of the terror. Getty and Naumov, for example, have suggested of the notion of 'responsibility' that "[u]nderstood either as blame or as agency, such a broad term does not tell us very much about what happened, how it happened, or even why it happened. Responsibility is a concept with limited analytical value, difficult to fix and largely dependent on context."[142] These observations are compelling, and the concept of 'responsibility' should not be wielded as a means to reduce historical narratives of past atrocities to a simple morality play. They fail to address, however, *why* there exists such a desire to assign blame, what possible satisfaction a scholar or the public at large may derive from finding a Hitler or a Stalin, or communist or fascist ideology, unequivocally responsible for terrible atrocities. Until we begin to consider what informs these impulses, our understanding of how public and scholarly discourse about atrocity has taken shape will remain limited.

After all, a major point of contention in the debates concerning the terror was this precise question of whether or not historians *as historians* have a responsibility to pass judgement and explicitly engage with the morality of their topic. As such, the acrimonious and, to some extent, rather futile exchanges between the 'totalitarians' and revisionists invite us to further consider the duties of historians to apportion guilt and blame, and hold individuals like Stalin accountable in their narratives of past atrocity. Certainly, Fitzpatrick's reflections on how the academic climate of this period impacted work on the terror reflects the importance of this 'responsibility' in the minds of the revisionists' critics:

> The political background noise on this topic was so overwhelming that it severely inhibited thought. On the one hand, there was the constant clamor for revisionists to address the question of the purges, no matter what their particular area of research, on the assumption that this was the only important (permissible?) topic. On the other hand, there was the inadequacy of the available sources, which for a historian of my type (both attached to sources and uninterested in repeating what other people had already said) was discouraging. It was even more discouraging that the clamor was not for new research and new ideas, but rather for public endorsement by revisionists of the conventional view that the purges were a bad thing and that Stalin and the Soviet system were responsible for them. I agreed, of course, that the purges were a bad thing and that 'the system' was no doubt responsible for them (though that sounded a bit like a tautology), but I was at that time agnostic on the degree of Stalin's responsibility, given the murkiness of the available evidence. Also, I did not like being told what to think and what to work on and tended to react in a contrarian manner.[143]

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[142] Getty and Naumov, *Yezhov*, p. 207.

[143] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' pp. 691-692. Interestingly, Fitzpatrick does not make explicit the exact source of this clamour and pressure to study and discuss the purges.

Nonetheless, as we have seen repeatedly throughout the present chapter, this 'agnosticism' on the question of responsibility was interpreted as "de-demoniz[ing] Stalin"[144] and whitewashing the most odious aspects of his rule. The question remains, then, is assigning responsibility to 'bad' individuals or ideologies a necessary part of writing about past atrocity? Does failure to do so invariably suggest 'rehabilitating' or downplaying the horrors of these events, rendering these historians 'irresponsible' scholars for failing in their professional duty?

In this sense, it seems hardly coincidental that the parallel with Holocaust denial was, and still is, repeatedly drawn by those hostile to the revisionist enterprise. After all, is there a more paradigmatic example of 'irresponsible historical scholarship'? As Chapter Eight will explore in greater detail, however, the practice of Holocaust denial has been deemed to be 'irresponsible' not only in a scholarly sense, but also from a moral point of view.[145] Those who were critical of the revisionist enterprise pointed to these same concerns in the work of its adherents. As we have seen, questions were raised over scholarly standards, suggesting that the arguments of the revisionists were the result of tendentious handling of the evidence. For example, on the ongoing controversial question of the number of deaths during the Stalinist 1930s, Conquest displayed his trademark frankness:

> [O]thers (Hough) say Stalin may have killed only the odd hundred thousand, or even 10,000. But in fact every serious estimate is in the millions, with the three latest studies from within the USSR producing higher figures than the rather conservative ones of my own analysis. The only exception is the view, absurd to the point of perversity, of Hough, the David Irving of Stalinism.[146]

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[144] Kenez, 'Stalinism as Humdrum Politics,' p. 396.

[145] See Chapter Eight, '"Bad History": Holocaust Denial and the David Irving Libel Case,' pp. 258-292.

[146] Conquest, 'Worse to Come?,' pp. 31-32. The 'numbers issue'—referring to how many people died as a result of collectivisation or the terror, the population of the gulag throughout the 1930s, or a combination of all three of these elements—has long been a source of controversy in Soviet historiography, and has continued as a flashpoint for debate well after 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Scholars including Conquest and Stephen Rosefielde have argued for numbers well into the millions, while historians such as Stephen Wheatcroft, described by Fitzpatrick as "the main revisionist player in the numbers argument," proposed much lower figures. See Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Soviet History,' p. 86, n. 22. For examples of the arguments from these scholars, see R. Conquest, 'Forced Labour Statistics: Some Comments,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1982, pp. 434-439; S. Rosefielde, 'Excess Mortality in the Soviet Union: A Reconsideration of the Demographic Consequences of Forced Industrialization 1929-1949,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1983, pp. 385-409; S. G. Wheatcroft, 'On Assessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union, 1929-56,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1981, pp. 265-295; and S. G. Wheatcroft, 'More Light on the Scale of Repression and Excess Mortality in the Soviet Union in the 1930s,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1990, pp. 355-367. For other contributions to this discussion, see, for example, A. Nove, 'Revisionism Reconsidered,' *Russian Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987, p. 417; and A. Nove, 'How Many Victims in the 1930s?,' *Soviet Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1990, pp. 369-373. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of the archives, scholars sought to find some concrete answers to these questions concerning numbers of victims and the population of the labour camps. Among the early attempts to address the topic in light of new archival material was J. A. Getty, G. T. Rittersporn and V. N. Zemskov, 'Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Prewar Years: A First Approach on the Basis of the Archival Evidence,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 4, 1993, pp. 1017-1049. The authors cautioned that "is not likely that this new information will end the debates…on the scale of the Great Terror," and "[a]dmittedly, our figures are far from being complete and sometimes pose almost as many questions as they answer." See Getty, Rittersporn

Similarly, more recent critics have stridently attacked the revisionists' scholarship, suggesting that "[s]ilence…is a widespread practice among revisionist scholars in the face of evidence or events that reflect poorly on the Communist enterprise. They treat historical evidence as a cafeteria where one can pick out the items one likes and ignore distasteful ones, constructing just the savory historical meal one desires."[147]

An equally important element, however, of the revisionists' perceived 'irresponsibility' was moral. As we have seen repeatedly throughout the present chapter, the critics drew attention to the lack of moral engagement in the work of the revisionists, and saw this 'disinterest' as an attempted apologia for Stalin and his crimes. Reflecting some years after these acrimonious debates were at their height, Pipes explained the source of his own antipathy for revisionism:

> The quality that always struck me in the adherents of this school was their total insensitivity to the moral outrages of communism—outrages so strikingly reflected in the contemporary sources and so central to the literature on national socialism. Determined to act scientifically, they eschewed moral judgements and disregarded individuals. They dealt entirely in abstractions—'social classes,' 'class conflicts,' party slogans, statistics—turning a bind eye to the living realities of Bolshevik rule from the first day of its existence, so vividly depicted in the newspaper articles of Maxim Gorky and the diaries of Ivan Bunin. They wrote bloodless histories about a time that drowned in blood, a time of mass executions and pogroms carried out by the new dictatorship: what to the peoples of Russia was an unprecedented catastrophe was to them a noble if ultimately failed experiment. This attitude enabled them to avoid moralizing. But the revolution was not nature acting on nature,

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and Zemskov, 'Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Prewar Years,' p. 1019. Their article prompted a curt response from Conquest, who believed "there is much to consider outside the contributors' limited documentation, and their work does not warrant the claims implied," and could not resist noting that "Getty and Rittersporn emerge as more moderate and more responsible than in their previous writings on Stalinism." See R. Conquest, 'Communications,' *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, 1994, pp. 1040, 1038 respectively. These issues have remained a source of contention. More recent examples of debate include Wheatcroft, 'The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-45,' pp. 1319-1353; which was followed by R. Conquest, 'Victims of Stalinism: A Comment,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 49, no. 7, 1997, pp. 1317-1319. Wheatcroft responded in turn to Conquest's criticisms, in S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of the Archival Data—Not the Last Word,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 1999, pp. 315-345. In inveighing against Conquest in this article, Wheatcroft provided a nice summary of the development of the 'numbers debate' through the 1980s up to the time he was writing. See Wheatcroft, 'Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police,' pp. 317-323. However, Wheatcroft's indication in his title that this article was 'not the last word' proved correct, and it produced responses from Conquest and John Keep, with Wheatcroft replying in turn. See R. Conquest, 'Comment on Wheatcroft', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 8, 1999, pp. 1479–1483; J. Keep, 'Wheatcroft and Stalin's Victims: Comments', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 6, 1999, pp. 1089–1092; and S. G. Wheatcroft, 'The Scale and Nature of Stalinist Repression and Its Demographic Significance: On Comments By Keep and Conquest,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52, no. 6, 2000, pp. 1143-1159. Given the nature of the archival documentation of this topic, and the likelihood that any precise figure of deaths from Stalin's various measures during the 1930s will be impossible to achieve, it seems that such debates will continue into the future.

[147] Haynes and Klehr, *In Denial*, p. 20. Similarly, Conquest accused some revisionists in his contribution to the *Russian Review* fracas of "ignoring, or ruling out, a vast amount of valid evidence." See Conquest, 'Revisionizing Stalin's Russia,' p. 386.

> nor humans acting on nature, nor nature acting on humans, but humans acting on humans and as such crying out for judgment.[148]

Once again, we are reminded how the 'revisionism versus totalitarianism' debate over the terror in many ways functioned as a front for a meta-dispute regarding 'objective' and 'moralising' history, between passing judgement or being 'impartial'.

This element of the debate leads us back to the question which has been raised repeatedly throughout the present study to this point, namely what do we wish to achieve in writing the history of atrocity? What purpose is it designed to serve? Clearly, there are moral impulses of bearing witness, commemoration, and desiring to better understand the processes through which people become perpetrators, victims, or bystanders, ideally to prevent such events from occurring again. These moral impulses invariably mean that writing about and discussing past atrocity is infused with strong emotion, and to some extent the work produced is judged by how successful it is in meeting these needs. For many, it seems that apportioning responsibility for such events is part of this process, in order to "cut through complexity and hold the perpetrators accountable in an emotionally satisfying fashion."[149] In the debate over the terror, however, it was on this precise point that the 'totalitarians' and revisionists departed. Pipes, writing from the former perspective, noted that "I…followed the opinion of Lord Acton who felt strongly that the historian must take a moral stand: not to do so when dealing with historical crimes is to become an accomplice."[150] By contrast, from the revisionist view, Fitzpatrick's approach to the past has long been informed by her "belief that…the historian's task was to understand, not to prosecute or bear witness against evil."[151] The ensuing ferociousness with which this divide

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[148] Pipes, *Vixi*, p. 222. The revisionists, unsurprisingly, responded to these charges against their morality. One contributor to the *Russian Review* fracas, for example, singled out one critic of the revisionists, complaining that "Kenez, for instance, seeks to discredit the whole endeavour of the new cohort by questioning its moral integrity. One must be sensitive to the moral dimensions of the subject, yet such an unwarranted allegation on the part of well-established senior scholars would only help intimidate the less established historians and drive them out of the field, thereby re-creating the 'self-dekulakization' of non-kulaks on the Western 'academic front.'" See Kuromiya, 'Stalinism and Historical Research,' p. 406.

[149] C. J. Dean, 'History Writing, Numbness, and the Restoration of Dignity,' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 2004, p. 59.

[150] Pipes, *Vixi*, p. 243. Acton, of course, had famously urged his audience in his 1895 address at the University of Cambridge to "suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong." See J. E. E. Acton, 'The Study of History,' lecture delivered 11 June 1895, in J. R. Fears (ed.), *Selected Writings of Lord Acton Volume II: Essays in the Study and Writing of History*; Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 1985, p. 546.

[151] Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect,' p. 687. Similarly, another historian of the Soviet Union, Chris Ward, has suggested of our approach to the Stalinist past that "we need to remind ourselves of the purpose of academic history. It is not to establish a mythic truth. Nor is it to point the moral tale. Nor is it to praise winners and condemn losers, or vice versa. Hard though it is and imperfect though the attempt must always be, historians should try and see all round a problem; to understand and make comprehensible old policies, old factions, and past lives." See C. Ward, *Stalin's Russia* (1999), London, Hodder, 2005, pp. 264-265. While few would disagree that historians need to "try and see all round a problem" and "to understand and make comprehensible" the past that they study, it is nonetheless questionable—as the present study has repeatedly demonstrated to this point—that the various elements that Ward condemns as not being the purpose of academic history have actually remained so in practice.

was debated produced few clear answers to this dilemma of the historian's responsibility to assign responsibility.

Overall, the historiography of the terror is testament to the complexity of the concept of 'responsibility' in writing about past atrocity. In terms of how it is applied to historical actors, it is clear that the process of making sense of such events resists neat Manichean categories of absolute 'good' and absolute 'evil'. Of course, there is a certain comfort to be gained from believing that a 'bad' ideology gave rise to a 'bad' state controlled by the iron grip of a 'bad' individual. The reality is far more complex, and demands that historians' consider deeper questions concerning human behaviour and atrocity.[152] The debates over the terror, however, also reveal that understanding and specifying where responsibility lies for past atrocities is not all we need to know. Fundamental questions were raised in these debates regarding the role of the historian as a judge of the past, and how dispassionate one can—or should—be in approaching past atrocity. Clearly, adequately coming to terms with the significance of an event like the terror means moving beyond a simple 'blame game' infused with personal or political agendas. But do these events demand more from the historian than dispassionate analysis, and as such, some engagement with the moral questions of culpability and responsibility? Unfortunately, despite the heat their exchanges generated, the revisionists and 'totalitarians' shed little light on this very important quandary. What 'lessons', then, does this ferocious historiographical battle leave for historians? Seemingly, the importance of self-reflexivity is underlined. As one scholar has recognised, "[i]f historians cannot help judging, then we should be aware constantly of what we are doing, of the logic and emotion lurking behind such judgments."[153] In doing so, they can move towards a more rigorous moral engagement with the history of atrocity, and the various dilemmas and demands it holds for the present and the future. If historians do not accept this challenge, we are left with the confusion, obfuscation, and futility that ultimately characterised the 'totalitarianism versus revisionism' debates over the Great Terror.

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[152] Getty has been particularly vocal on this point, both in his own writing and in collaboration with Naumov. See, for example, Getty, 'The Politics of Stalinism,' pp. 112-113; Getty and Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. xiv; and Getty and Naumov, *Yezhov*, p. 221. Thurston has also expressed opinions against the 'comfort' offered by simplistic explanations for the terror and avoiding the thorny questions about human behaviour raised by such events. See Thurston, 'Point of View,' p. A36; and Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia*, pp. xvii, xix, 228-229, 233. See also Ward, *Stalin's Russia* (2005 ed.), p. 265.

[153] G. Coktin, 'A Conversation About Morals and History,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2008, p. 495.

Chapter Eight

'Bad' History:
Holocaust Denial and the David Irving Libel Case

In the preceding chapters, this study has examined controversies surrounding particular texts and schools of thought within the historiographies of the Holocaust and Stalinism, and considered how these are illustrative of the issues and impulses which have shaped historians' moral engagement with past atrocity. This chapter addresses a very different phenomenon, one which lies outside the bounds of historical scholarship and is perhaps best understood as a kind of 'pseudohistory'. It may be tempting to simply dismiss the Holocaust denial movement, as many scholars have, as something confined to the 'lunatic fringe', and therefore not worthy of serious consideration or analysis. After all, what possible ethical point can we hope to draw from those who deny or trivialise terrible atrocities? Holocaust denial, however, has not remained an insular or insignificant phenomenon, and professional historians have been drawn into the discourses surrounding it. Furthermore, the manner in which these historians have responded to Holocaust denial actually demonstrates the same moral impulses which are at work in their more conventional historiographical discussion about atrocity. As such, it becomes appropriate to consider what Holocaust denial suggests about the practice of history, and in particular, about the moral relationship of historians to the past atrocities they study.

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A 2000 libel case in the United Kingdom provides a particularly illustrative example of how the dual concerns of historiography and morality have converged when addressing Holocaust denial. In 1993, Deborah Lipstadt published *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, in which she outlined the history and methodology of a movement she believed had "increased in scope and intensity since the mid-1970s."[1] While a critical success in the United States and recognised as "a standard text on the phenomenon of Holocaust denial,"[2] the book's publication in the United Kingdom led to Lipstadt and her publisher Penguin Books being sued for libel by the British writer David Irving. Due to the peculiarities of English libel law, whereby the burden of proof falls upon the defendant, Lipstadt was required to demonstrate that what she had maintained about

* In addition to Richard Evans and David Irving, the perspective of Deborah Lipstadt on the events and issues discussed in this chapter was also sought by the author. Unlike Evans and Irving, however, she declined to be interviewed.

[1] D. E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, New York, The Free Press, 1993, p. 17.

[2] K. Taylor, 'Irving in Denial: The Trial,' in K. Taylor (ed.), *Holocaust Denial: The David Irving Trial and International Revisionism*, London, Searchlight Educational Trust, 2000, p. 7.

Irving's Holocaust denial, scholarly malpractice and right-wing extremism was true.[3] With a formidable legal team and a panel of eminent historians acting as expert witnesses, the trial resulted in a thoroughgoing defeat for Irving, and represented a crucial blow to the 'cause' of Holocaust denial. Far from being the serious historian he purported to be, the judge found that "Irving has for his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence…. He is an active Holocaust denier, he is anti-Semitic and racist and…he associates with right-wing extremists who promote neo-Nazism."[4] So important was *Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt* that it has been suggested, with slight hyperbole, that "[t]he Irving case has done for the new century what the Nuremberg tribunals or the Eichmann trial did for earlier generations."[5]

As many commentators recognised, however, *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* represented a remarkably different *type* of proceedings to those against Eichmann and other perpetrators. It was not a criminal trial concerning the actions of those who had been a part of and helped shaped the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Instead, it was a trial about this history itself—or, more specifically, how this history had, and should, be written.[6] Journalist D. D. Guttenplan indicated some of the questions at stake:

> [T]he trial poses—indeed, in some respects hinges on—questions about historiography…. Many of these are technical, the historian's equivalent of malpractice: questions about footnotes, translations, sources, statistics, the suppression of conflicting evidence. There are questions about history as a discipline: What are the standards of acceptable conduct? Who sets them? Who enforces them? Are they the same for all kinds of history?[7]

While many reporting on the case created a sense that the factual reality of the Holocaust itself was 'on trial', *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* was really concerned with historical practice.[8] As Irving correctly noted in his opening statement to the court, "[w]hat is moot here is not what happened in those sites of atrocities, but what happened over the last 32

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[3] For an interesting discussion of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* and the nature of English and American libel law, see D. Mulvihill, '*Irving v. Penguin*: Historians on Trial and the Determination of Truth Under English Libel Law,' *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2000, pp. 217-256.

[4] Justice Charles Gray, 'England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) Decisions—*Irving vs. Penguin Books Limited, Deborah E. Lipstadt*,' 11 April 2000, section 13, paragraph 167, *British and Irish Legal Information Institute*, http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2000/115.html, accessed 20 November 2010.

[5] Editorial, 'The Bad History Man,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2000, p. 29.

[6] On this point, see, for example, C. R. Browning, 'Historians and Holocaust Denial in the Courtroom,' in J. K. Roth and E. Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 773; A. Julius and J. Libson, 'Losing Was Unthinkable. The Rest is History,' *The Independent*, 18 April 2000; D. Lipstadt, 'Perspectives From a British Courtroom: My Struggle With Deception, Lies and David Irving,' in J. K. Roth and E. Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 769; S. Moss, 'History's Verdict on Holocaust Upheld,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 5; and W. E. Schneider, 'Past Imperfect: *Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd.*,' *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 110, no. 8, 2001, p. 1531.

[7] D. D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial: History, Justice, and the David Irving Libel Case* (2001), London, Granta Books, 2002, p. 15.

[8] For an illustration of this rhetoric, see, for example, D. Cesarani, 'History on Trial,' *The Guardian*, 18 January 2000, p. A2.

years on my writing desk in my apartment off Grosvenor Square. That is what is at stake here."[9] This view was echoed by the counsel for the defence Richard Rampton, who remarked to Irving during cross-examination that "we are not concerned…with proving or disproving what happened in Auschwitz. We are concerned with your state of mind and your standards of…truth when it comes to reporting history."[10]

Given this strong historiographical focus, then, it is unsurprising that *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, as well as Holocaust denial more generally, suggests much about morality in historical practice. Indeed, more than any other 'case study' considered to this point, the discourses surrounding both the libel case and Holocaust denial are specifically built around the notion of what is and what is not acceptable in the writing of the history of atrocity. Unlike most other historiographical discussion, the moral imperatives are clearly displayed. In particular, we are confronted by the notion of 'bad' history in two different forms. First, the work of Irving and other deniers is deemed 'bad' history because it contravenes the standards of professional ethics regarding the use of evidence and objectivity. Questions abound, however, as to how such standards are, and even can be, enforced. More significantly perhaps, the history of deniers is also deemed 'bad' in the sense that advancing such arguments about a terrible atrocity is morally wrong.[11] Along these lines, then, the fight against people like Irving becomes a kind of moral crusade. Both these understandings of 'bad' history are useful in considering how concerns of morality have shaped historians' engagement with past atrocity. Comprehending 'bad' history leads some way towards appreciating what form 'good' history might assume, and recognising those interpretations which cheapen and belittle these events sharpens a sense of how narratives about them might best be written.

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In many ways, a "confrontation" between David Irving and the professional historical establishment was long overdue by the time the parties assembled in London's High Court of Justice for the libel case.[12] His career has been marked and shaped by controversy, beginning with the 1963 publication of his first book, *The Destruction of*

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[9] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 1, 11 January 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1: Electronic Edition,' pp. 15-16, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day08/view/printall, accessed 11 February 2010.
[10] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 8, 24 January 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 8: Electronic Edition,' p. 79, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day08/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.
[11] For more on the content of deniers' arguments, see below, p. 264, n. 23.
[12] C. Hitchens, 'The Strange Case of David Irving,' *Los Angeles Times*, 20 May 2001.

Dresden.[13] In a 1977 review of Irving's *Hitler's War*, A. J. P. Taylor described him as "a strange bundle of contradictions," an observation which has proved accurate.[14] Irving has assumed many contradictory roles over the course of his career, appearing at once as a professional historian, an intrepid researcher foraging for new documents, and a fascist sympathiser propagating Holocaust denial. As the proceedings of the libel case exposed, however, the latter role has proved to define how Irving fulfils the others. One commentator has noted of the paradoxes inherent in Irving's career:

> Irving is a professional historian in perhaps every sense except the ethical. He is highly intelligent; he has considerable archival expertise; he is extensively published, sometimes by well-regarded publishing houses; his research topics are important ones; and he usually defends unconventional positions. On these grounds he is a historian to be valued; on these grounds, he would deserve to be highly ranked in the academic world, if he had chosen to work within the university. On the ethical front, however, he is a model of anti-professionalism.[15]

It is this notion of the 'ethical' in Irving's historical practice which is of particular interest. As this study has demonstrated repeatedly to this point, when addressing the history of atrocity the moral and the scholarly are intimately connected. The same, it seems, is true even for the pseudoscholarly practice of Holocaust denial.

The problem with Irving, however, was that he had largely managed to keep his moral failings concealed, wrapped up in a façade of respectability. It is a tactic which has characterised recent Holocaust denial more generally. By definition, denial lies well outside the boundaries of genuine historical scholarship, yet those who broadcast these ideas attempt to present their work as fully legitimate. They seek to cloak their unscholarly activities in a shroud of academic respectability, and thereby infiltrate mainstream arenas and present their ideas as the 'other side' of valid scholarly debate concerning the Holocaust. Examples of these techniques include the deniers' assumption of the label 'revisionist' to describe their activities, and the formation of bodies such as the Institute for Historical Review, which holds regular 'academic' conferences.[16] Additionally, until recently the Institute published the *Journal for Historical Review*, complete with all the markings of a scholarly periodical.[17]

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[13] For comment on Irving's *The Destruction of Dresden*, see, for example, D. Cesarani, Review of R J. Evans, *Lying About Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* and D. D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2002, p. 291; and J. Terraine, 'Paperback History,' *History Today*, vol. 36, no. 10, 1986, p. 55.

[14] A. J. P. Taylor, 'Hitler the Opportunist,' *The Observer*, 18 June 1978, p. 28.

[15] A. Tapper, 'Is There an Ethics for Historians?,' *Studies in Western Australian History*, vol. 26, 2010, p. 27.

[16] As we saw in the previous chapter, the deniers' assumption of this term has proved detrimental to genuine scholars, namely the revisionist historians of the Stalin period. See Chapter Seven, 'Rehabilitation and Responsibility: Revising the Great Terror,' pp. 238, 248, 254.

[17] For more on the scholarly pretensions of Holocaust deniers, see, for example, P. Finney, 'Ethics, Historical Relativism, and Holocaust Denial,' *Rethinking History*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1998, p. 360; T. Lawson, *Debates on the*

Perhaps more than any other denier, Irving was most successful in creating this scholarly veneer. He has been described as "the deniers' best shot"—despite being known as a malcontent with 'questionable' views regarding aspects of the Holocaust, he was also recognised by many as a genuine historian and had earned the praise of many eminent scholars for his research capabilities.[18] For example, when reviewing *Hitler's War* in 1977, noted Holocaust historian Martin Gilbert claimed that "[t]his perverse, yet reiterated theme of Hitler's innocence in relation to European Jewry is a grave blemish on an otherwise scholarly work, the fruit of a decade of wide researches."[19] In another review of the book, Hitler biographer Allan Bullock declared that "Mr. Irving's thesis will not be accepted by the majority of historians who have worked on the period," yet still praised "the energy and resource he has shown as a researcher."[20]

Irving's views regarding the 'Final Solution', however, became substantially more radical after *Hitler's War* was published. He repeatedly insisted throughout the course of the libel case that "I am not a Holocaust historian…. I am a Hitler historian. I am a biographer of the top Nazis."[21] Nonetheless, Irving had developed very definite views about the Holocaust, and it occupied a significant portion of his public output. *Hitler's War* represented his first engagement with the subject. In this book, Irving attempted to present the Second World War from the German, and specifically the Führer's, perspective. This approach, he believed, "disclosed a picture of the man that nobody until now had suspected."[22] An important part of this picture was Irving's suggestion, as Gilbert and

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Holocaust, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 5; J. Najarian, 'Gnawing at History: The Rhetoric of Holocaust Denial,' *Midwest Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1997, pp. 78-80; J. Petropoulos, 'Confronting the "Holocaust as Hoax" Phenomenon as Teachers,' *The History Teacher*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1995, pp. 524-527; and Schneider, 'Past Imperfect,' p. 1533.

[18] See Editorial, 'Truth's Sheer Weight: Irving was the Deniers' Best Shot,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 23. For comment on Irving's scholarly defenders, see, for example, J. Heilbrunn, 'Hitler's Historian,' *National Review*, 2 April 2001, pp. 53-56; and T. Judt, 'Writing History, Facts Optional,' *The New York Times*, 13 April 2000, p. A31.

[19] M. Gilbert, 'Unobtrusive Genocide,' *The Guardian*, 16 June 1977, p. 9.

[20] A. Bullock, 'The Schicklgruber Story,' *The New York Review of Books*, 26 May 1977, pp. 12, 10. Similarly, another reviewer believed of *Hitler's War* that "Irving's latest book confirms that while he is usually a Colossus of research, he is often a schoolboy in judgment." See P. Addison, 'The Burden of Proof,' *New Statesman*, 1 July 1977, p. 18. For other reviews of *Hitler's War*, see, for example, E. K. Bramsted, Review of D. Irving, *Hitler's War*, *International Affairs*, vol. 54, no. 2, 1978, pp. 316-318; and L. Morrow, 'Just an Ordinary Man,' *Time*, 2 May 1977, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,918935,00.html, accessed 26 October 2010.

[21] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 6, 19 January 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 6: Electronic Edition,' p. 45, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day06/view/printall, accessed 11 February 2010. For similar expressions from Irving throughout the trial, see, for example, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 5: Electronic Edition,' p. 127, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day05/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010; 'Trial Transcripts, Day 7: Electronic Edition,' p. 130, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day07/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010; and 'Trial Transcripts, Day 8,' p. 162. Irving repeated this view several times when interviewed, variously claiming that "I am not a Holocaust expert and I don't want to be a Holocaust expert," and "I'm not a Holocaust historian. I am more interested in personalities." David Irving, interview with author, 27 February 2010.

[22] D. Irving, *Hitler's War*, New York, The Viking Press, 1977, p. xi.

Bullock noted, that Hitler had been ignorant of the 'Final Solution' until late in the war, and it could therefore not be characterised as a systematic programme of murder initiated and coordinated from above. To begin with, then, Irving's Holocaust denial was 'soft'—he accepted the existence of the gas chambers and the death camps, but questioned the systematic nature of the process and Hitler's responsibility for it.[23]

This attitude changed when Irving was invited to be an expert witness for the defence in the 1988 trial of Ernst Zündel in Canada, an experience which he describes as "the turning point" for his views on the Holocaust.[24] Specifically, it was his exposure to the infamous Leuchter Report during the course of Zündel's trial which Irving recalls as having "knocked me sideways."[25] The report, based on a series of tests conducted on samples from the remnants of buildings at Auschwitz, concluded that no homicidal gas chambers had existed there. Although Leuchter's methods and findings had been widely and thoroughly discredited both at the time of Zündel's trial and after, Irving claimed that "ever since then I began questioning, as anybody should, my previously-held beliefs."[26] Irving published a British edition of the Leuchter Report under his own imprint, Focal Point Publications, in 1989. All mention of the Holocaust and gas chambers was excised from the revised 1991 edition of *Hitler's War*, and Irving became an increased fixture on the international Holocaust denial lecture circuit. A typical example of his rhetoric when addressing the subject can be seen in a speech delivered in 1990:

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[23] Those who have examined denial have defined two categories of 'hard' and 'soft'. Robert Eaglestone explains the difference between the two: "'Hard' deniers claim, for example, that the whole genocide is a hoax, concocted after the war. 'Soft' deniers claim, for example, that Jews were imprisoned in camps and died in limited numbers as a result of illness and other wartime deprivations, or that the genocide was not the result of a systematic Nazi policy, but the work of extremist Nazi elements (the idea of *extremist* Nazis—implying moderate Nazis—is an odd one, of course)." See R. Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial*, Cambridge, Icon Books, 2001, p. 8. Emphasis in original. For more on these categories of denial, see, for example, M. Berenbaum, 'Perspectives on the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on the Truth of Absolute Evil,' *Los Angeles Times*, 29 January 2000, p. B7. Additionally, Evans provided a useful definition of the main tenets of Holocaust denial in his book about the trial, *Lying About Hitler*. He suggests, "it seemed clear that Holocaust denial involved the minimum following beliefs: (a)The number of Jews killed by the Nazis was far less than 6 million; it amounted to only a few hundred thousand, and was thus similar to, or less than, the number of Germans killed in Allied bombing raids; (b) Gas chambers were not used to kill large numbers of Jews at any time; (c) Neither Hitler nor the Nazi leadership in general had a program of exterminating Europe's Jews; all they wished to do was to deport them to Eastern Europe; (d) 'The Holocaust' was a myth invented by Allied propaganda during the war and sustained since then by Jews who wished to use it to gain political and financial support for the state of Israel or for themselves. The supposed evidence for the Nazis' wartime mass murder of millions of Jews by gassing and other means was fabricated after the war." See R. J. Evans, *Lying About Hitler: History, Holocaust and the David Irving Trial*, New York, Basic Books, 2001, p. 110.

[24] Irving, interview with author. Ernst Zündel has been charged and imprisoned in both Canada and Germany in relation to his Holocaust denial activities. Infamous for his pamphlet *The Hitler We Loved and Why*, as well as his views about the Nazis developing UFOs in Antarctica, at his 1988 trial Zündel had been charged under an obscure Canadian law against disseminating false information in connection to his distribution of neo-Nazi and Holocaust denial material. For more on Zündel, see, for example L. E. Hill, 'The Trial of Ernst Zundel: Revisionism and the Law in Canada,' *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, vol. 6, 1989, pp. 165-219.

[25] Irving, interview with author.

[26] Irving, interview with author.

> [H]ow do we explain the fact that for forty-five years since the end of World War Two, we have all, internationally, globally, been beset by a common guilt: the idea that the human race was responsible for liquidating six million human beings in gas chambers? Well, the answer is: we have been subjected to the biggest propaganda offensive that the human race has ever known. It's been conducted with such finesse, with such refinement, with such financial clout, that we have not been able to recognize it as a propaganda offensive—from start to finish. And yet there are these weapons cruising past us on the horizon—in all their ugliness—and the biggest weapon, of course, of all in this propaganda campaign has been the great battleship Auschwitz![27]

By the early 1990s, then, Irving had shifted to more hardcore denial, and increased his activities and public output in this direction. Unsurprisingly, he began to experience a negative impact on his public reputation as a result.

It was around this time that he attracted the attention of Lipstadt as she was writing *Denying the Holocaust*. Irving was only a marginal figure within the book, featuring on less than a dozen pages. In terms of her specific allegations, Lipstadt argued that Irving, "long considered a guru by the far right," had recently "joined the ranks of the deniers," as well as briefly noting his connections to extremist groups and their activities, particularly within Germany.[28] Her treatment of Irving became slightly sharper when she turned attention to his reputation as a serious historian, the bestseller status of several of his books, and the fact that many reviewers of these books were either unaware of or unconcerned by his extremist extracurricular activities. Far from being a harmless 'historical writer' with some strange ideas about Hitler's responsibility for the 'Final Solution', Lipstadt concluded that:

> Irving is one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial. Familiar with historical evidence, he bends it until it conforms with his ideological leanings and political agenda. A man who is convinced that Britain's great decline was accelerated by its decision to go to war with Germany, he is most facile at taking accurate information and shaping it to confirm his conclusions.[29]

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[27] D. Irving, 'Battleship Auschwitz: Remarks Presented to the Tenth International Revisionist Conference with an Introduction by Mark Weber,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1990-1991, p. 499. For other examples of Irving's work within *The Journal of Historical Review*, see D. Irving, 'Churchill and U.S. Entry into World War II,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1989, pp. 261-286; '*Hitler's War*: An Introduction to the New Edition,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1990-1991, pp. 389-416; 'Life Under Fire,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1993, pp. 8-11; 'The Suppressed Eichmann and Goebbels Papers,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1993, pp. 14-25; and 'Revelations from Goebbels' Diary: Bringing to Light Secrets of Hitler's Propaganda Minister,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1995, pp. 2-17. For comment on Irving by others associated with the Institute of Historical Review, see, for example, M. Weber, 'David Irving: Intrepid Battler for Historical Truth,' *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1993, pp. 4-7.

[28] Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 8.

[29] Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 181. A similar view regarding the 'dangerous' element of Irving's work has been advanced by John Lukacs, who argued of Irving that "it would be wrong to underestimate his influence, for at least two reasons. One is the not inconsiderable extent of his readership. The other…is that certain professional and, by and large, respected historians have relied on some of Irving's researches and then given him qualified praise. This is regrettable, but not merely because of the often lamentable and, in many cases, unsavory character of Irving's opinions. Few reviewers and critics of Irving's books, including professional historians, have bothered to examine them carefully enough. Had they done so, they would have found that many of Irving's references and quotations are not verifiable." See J. Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (1997), New

These allegations were serious, but not dissimilar to earlier criticisms of Irving. Even while many found some praiseworthy elements in his work, there were a number of scholars who had expressed strong disapproval of Irving's scholarship. Historians such as Martin Broszat and Charles W. Syndor had published extensive critiques of Irving's handling of historical evidence and his political agenda in response to *Hitler's War* in the late 1970s.[30] Irving had been accused of "manipulat[ing] or alter[ing] evidence to support his thesis," as well as "mistranslation of the German language" with intent to "misrepresent" the facts.[31] As Irving's views underwent their gradual shift to 'hard' Holocaust denial, the critics' attitudes toward his work sharpened accordingly. Throughout the 1980s, Irving was variously described as "a marvellous example of that new breed of right-wing propagandist-cum-historian"[32] and "a great obfuscator," with the latter critic also noting with some disappointment that "[i]t is unfortunate that Mr. Irving wastes his extraordinary talents as a researcher and writer on trivializing the greatest crimes in German history, [and] on manipulating historical sources."[33]

Even if the allegations against him had not changed by the time *Denying the Holocaust* appeared, Irving's own circumstances had experienced a decidedly negative shift. At the height of his career in the 1970s and 1980s, Irving's yearly earnings were in excess of

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York, Vintage Books, 1998, pp. 229-230. Interestingly, Lukacs' book has also felt the litigious wrath of Irving. It took some time for an English edition to appear, and this edition had undergone substantial changes. For discussion of this point, see, for example, Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 293; and G. Wheatcroft, 'Bearing False Witness,' *The New York Times Book Review*, 13 May 2001, p. 12. Irving, for his part, has seemingly chosen to interpret this appellation of 'dangerous' literally. When interviewed he remarked of Lipstadt's use of the term that "I wonder what does she mean by 'dangerous'—I don't go round putting bombs under their tables." Irving, interview with author. Evans and Irving also discussed this issue at length during cross-examination. See *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 19, 14 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 19: Electronic Edition,' pp. 104-107, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day19/view/printall, accessed 11 February 2010. Evans himself had echoed the charge of Irving being a "dangerous spokesperson" in his expert report for the trial. See Evans, 'David Irving, Hitler, and Holocaust Denial,' paragraph 6.2. See also D. E. Lipstadt, 'P.S.: Insights, Interviews and More,' in *idem.*, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2005, p. 8.

[30] M. Broszat, 'Hitler and the Final Solution: An Assessment of David Irving's Theses,' *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 13, 1979, pp. 73-125; and C. W. Syndor Jnr., 'The Selling of Adolf Hitler: David Irving's *Hitler's War*,' *Central European Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1979, pp. 169-199. Again, an argument regarding Irving's 'dangerous' nature had been expressed as early as 1978 by historian Bradley Smith. Discussing *Hitler's War* and Holocaust denier Arthur Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Smith noted that "it is important to stress that while Butz is vicious, Irving is merely frivolous, if irresponsibly so. Yet because he is so technically skilled, Irving through his impact on historians, could have a more pernicious influence than Butz." See B. Smith, 'Two Alibis for the Inhumanities: A. R. Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* and David Irving's *Hitler's War*,' *German Studies Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1978, p. 335. Of course, at the time of Smith's writing Irving had not yet made his public 'conversion' to hardcore denial, which perhaps explains his deeming Irving to be "frivolous" in making his arguments.

[31] Syndor Jr., 'The Selling of Adolf Hitler,' pp. 183, 187 respectively. Conversely, another reviewer took a different view, arguing of Irving and *Hitler's War* that "[i]t would be unfortunate if *Hitler's War* were to be judged solely on its treatment of the Holocaust; Irving is neither a closet revisionist nor a covert anti-Semite. The key weakness of his book is professional, not polemic." See D. E. Showalter, Review of D. Irving, *Hitler's War*, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 82, no. 5, 1977, p. 1281.

[32] K. Bird, 'The Secret Policemen's Historian,' *New Statesman*, 3 April 1981, p. 16.

[33] P. Hoffmann, 'Hitler's Good Right Arm,' *The New York Times*, 28 May 1989, p. BR21.

£100,000 and even with his adoption of more radical views, his books were still being published by reputable mainstream houses.[34] By the early 1990s, however, with convictions for Holocaust denial offences in Germany and Austria, as well as being banned from entering a number of countries, Irving had, as one critic noted, "arrived at a stage of his career where publishers in Britain and the United States seemed reluctant to publish him."[35] While Irving would specifically indict Lipstadt's book as being the cause of his mounting difficulties, it actually represented only one source of negative publicity.[36]

The situation reached its head in 1996, when Irving's American publisher St. Martin's Press broke an existing contract for his biography of Joseph Goebbels after considerable pressure had been mounted by various groups.[37] As Richard Evans dryly noted, "[o]ne would not have expected a reputable historian to have run into such trouble."[38] Nonetheless, Irving's difficulties were becoming very real. Believing himself to be the victim of an international conspiracy determined "to destroy my career and to vandalise my legitimacy as a historian,"[39] Irving took aim at Penguin and Lipstadt, and launched his libel suit in September 1996.

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[34] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 19.

[35] Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, p. 229.

[36] Historian David Cesarani, for example, declared Irving to be an "utterly discredited figure" as early as 1992. See D. Cesarani, 'History's Cache and Carry,' *The Guardian*, 7 July 1992, p. 21. For more on Irving's declining fortunes in the 1990s, see, for example, J. Booth, 'Humiliation for Holocaust Sceptic,' *The Scotsman*, 12 April 2000, p. 4; S. Nicolson, 'Beliefs Turned Historian Into an International Pariah,' *The Scotsman*, 12 January 2000, p. 2; and Taylor, 'Irving in Denial,' p. 9.

[37] For comment on the St. Martin's decision, see, for example, G. A. Craig, 'The Devil in the Details,' *The New York Review of Books*, 19 September 1996, p. 8; J. Heilbrunn, 'Out to Lunch: Meet the Real David Irving,' *The New Republic*, 21 October 1996, pp. 14-15; C. Hitchens, 'Hitler's Ghost,' *Vanity Fair*, June 1996, p. 74; and D. E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court With a Holocaust Denier*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2005, pp. 91-92. For an example of this pressure against St. Martin's Press, see F. Rich, 'Hitler's Spin Artist,' *The New York Times*, 3 April 1996, p. A15. Incidentally, the author of this article had asked Lipstadt for comment on the matter, and quoted her as saying, "[w]hat David Irving is doing and St. Martin's is facilitating is not the destruction of live people but the destruction of people who already died. It's killing them a second time. It's killing history." See Rich, 'Hitler's Spin Artist,' p. A15. During the trial proceedings, Irving made much of Lipstadt's involvement in the campaign against St. Martin's publishing his book, and referred specifically to this article in *The New York Times*, claiming that "the Second Defendant…was among those who put pressure on St Martin's Press Incorporated, who had been one of my United States publishers for some 15 years, to violate their publishing agreement with me and abandon publication of Goebbels, my Goebbels biography, *Goebbels, Mastermind of the Third Reich*…. Professor Lipstadt wheeled out the rhetoric: to Frank Rich, a syndicated columnist of *The New York Times*, she accused me of being a repeat killer, if I can put it like that." See *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 32, 15 March 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 32: Electronic Edition,' p. 121, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day32/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010. For Irving's other references to Lipstadt's involvement in the St. Martin's decision during the trial, see 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 18; 'Trial Transcripts, Day 2: Electronic Edition,' pp. 137, 148, 149, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day02/view/printall, accessed 11 February 2010; and 'Trial Transcripts, Day 12: Electronic Edition,' pp. 9-10, 12, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day12/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.

[38] See Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 14.

[39] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 19.

The proceedings of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* began on 11 January 2000 before Justice Charles Gray, with judgement being delivered on 11 April. Irving chose to represent himself in court, while Lipstadt and Penguin had assembled a formidable legal team.[40] Both Defendants were represented by Richard Rampton QC, a leading defamation barrister, while Lipstadt was also advised by Anthony Julius, who had become well-known in Britain as the late Princess of Wales' divorce lawyer.[41]

The defence faced an imposing task. As outlined previously, English libel law places the burden of proof upon the defendant. In meeting this requirement, the defence team opted for the line of justification, whereby one claims that the alleged libels are true and therefore justified. Evans, who formed an integral part of the defence's campaign, explained how this line of attack was helpful:

> [I]f you use the defence of justification, essentially what you're doing is turning the tables on the claimant. If he says, "you said I was a Holocaust denier and that's false and that's defamation," then you say, "no, you were," and you prove it by a massive accumulation of evidence. Very quickly you put him on the defensive…. Within a few days [of the proceedings] that's clearly what happened.[42]

From the beginning, then, the defence sought to focus the proceedings of the trial upon Irving as a historian and the standards of his history, rather than the content of Lipstadt's book.[43] Nonetheless, it was not a simple matter of showing that Irving had mishandled historical evidence—the defence had to demonstrate, as per Lipstadt's allegations, that he had done so deliberately. As Irving noted in his opening address, "[t]o justify her allegations of manipulation and distortion, it will not suffice for Professor Lipstadt to show, if she can, that I misrepresented what happened, but that I knew what happened and that I perversely and deliberately…portrayed it differently from how I knew it to have happened."[44]

In order to meet this challenge, the defence required, as Evans points out, "a massive accumulation of evidence." There was certainly no shortage of available material when the defence came to building their case against Irving. In addition to Irving's vast body of published work, the process of Discovery had provided access to "many

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[40] G. Wheatcroft, 'Lies and Libel,' *The Guardian*, 18 March 2000, p. 22.
[41] See Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, p. 84; and Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 29.
[42] Richard Evans, interview with author, 1 March 2010. Indeed, Evans has claimed elsewhere of Irving's performance under this pressure of justification that "[r]ight from the start, nobody on the defence side had any doubt that Irving was losing the battle. On one issue after another he was forced to admit that his views were in conflict with the real historical evidence." See R. J. Evans, 'A Trial Under Cross-Examination,' *The Sunday Telegraph*, 18 March 2001, p. 11.
[43] On this point, see Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, p. 91; and Lipstadt, 'Perspectives From a British Courtroom,' p. 770. Evans also echoed this idea during our interview.
[44] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 16.

videotapes and audiocassettes of Irving's speeches, tens of thousands of pages of documents, his complete private diaries, thousands of letters, and a great deal of other material."[45] Faced with such a large amount of evidence, the defence turned to a carefully selected team of expert witnesses to write reports about differing topics which would be covered during the trial. The resulting panel of scholars included some of the most eminent historians of Nazism and the Holocaust. Christopher Browning covered the origins of the murder programme and the course of 'Operation Reinhard'; Robert Jan van Pelt addressed the evidence for the gas chambers at Auschwitz; and Peter Longerich dealt with Hitler's anti-Semitism and his role in the 'Final Solution'.[46] Additionally, the political scientist Hajo Funke provided a report regarding Irving's connections to extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi groups, especially in Germany.[47]

Perhaps the most important witness for the defence was Evans, who had been charged with investigating Irving's historiography and scholarship. Aside from Funke, who was concerned with Irving's activities outside his history writing, Browning, van Pelt and Longerich were all providing key historical background based upon the available evidence which could in turn provide a standard against which Irving's account of events could be measured. Evans, by contrast, was specifically assessing *how* Irving handled this evidence. As Lipstadt herself pointed out, "Evans's report called into question the corpus of his writings. Evans's testimony would constitute a direct assault on him as an historian."[48]

It was this question as to whether Irving deserved the appellation 'historian' which was the key concern of the entire trial. For his part, Irving has long promoted an image of himself as a serious historian. Indeed, his Statement of Claim against Penguin and Lipstadt specifically sought damages for the injuries the alleged libels had caused "to his reputation in his…calling as a historian."[49] Yet despite this "calling," Irving has always defined himself as distinct from the professional establishment, and has proved to be extremely critical of academic historians. He has frequently presented himself as being a "shirtsleeves historian" foraging for new sources while accusing the academics of shunning the archives and

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[45] Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 32.
[46] Both van Pelt and Longerich have used the expert reports they prepared for *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* as the basis for books. See P. Longerich, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution*, Charleston, Tempus, 2001; and R. J. van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 2002.
[47] For more on the selection of these witnesses, see Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, pp. 29-30; and Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, pp. 40-41.
[48] Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 200.
[49] David Irving, Statement of Claim against Penguin Books Limited and Deborah E. Lipstadt, 5 September 1996, paragraph 8, *Focal Point Publications*, http://www.fpp.co.uk/Legal/Penguin/LipstadtClaim.html, accessed 5 November 2010.

committing "inter-historian incest."[50] When interviewed, Irving reinforced this self-image, noting that "I call myself a real historian or a *Realhistoriker*, my job I regard as being to find out what *really* happened and *really* why. I always go one level deeper, dig a little bit deeper, not accept what you're being told."[51] He also reiterated his criticisms of "conformist historians," suggesting that:

> These are the historians who have largely been academically trained, and part of their academic training has taught them to conform…. You face at some point in your career as a historian one or more divides in the way. You've got the lean down to the left, which is the lean that the documents want, they're tugging you because that's what probably happened; and you've got the lean to the right, which is the accepted view, the conformist view where all the money is.[52]

Both before the libel case and after, then, Irving presented himself as a 'real' historian engaging in 'real' history, while simultaneously attacking his academic counterparts as lazy, incompetent, and motivated by money and prestige.

The defence, however, flatly rejected Irving's self-assessment. Rampton made its position very clear from the beginning of the trial, opening his case with the argument that "Mr Irving calls himself an historian. The truth is, however, that he is not an historian at all but a falsifier of history. To put it bluntly, he is a liar."[53] Evans had reached the same conclusion in his expert report, which proved uncompromising in its assessment of Irving's scholarship and his status as an historian. "I was not prepared," Evans declared in the introduction, "for the sheer depths of duplicity which I encountered in Irving's treatment of the evidence, nor for the way in which this dishonesty permeated his entire written and spoken output."[54] Tracing through Irving's corpus of work, Evans highlighted numerous instances of mistranslation, misquotation, suppression, falsification and invention, which he believed had been committed knowingly and wilfully. Evans' overall conclusion was simple: "Irving's claim to be a scrupulous historian is completely bogus."[55]

Of course, in order to make these claims against Irving, Evans had measured his scholarship against standards of conduct for a 'good' historian. In terms of what these

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[50] Irving described himself as a "shirtsleeves historian" during the course of the libel case. See *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 22, 17 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 22: Electronic Edition,' p. 52, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day22/view/printall, accessed 11 November 2010. The phrase "inter-historian incest" comes from the 1977 edition of *Hitler's War*. See Irving, *Hitler's War*, p. xiii. For further comment on this tendency of Irving's, see, for example, Browning, 'Historians and Holocaust Denial in the Courtroom,' p. 775.

[51] Irving, interview with author. Indeed, one commentator has noted of this self-image that "David Irving has positioned himself as the bad boy of World War II historians, one whose skill at ferreting out documents makes him impossible to ignore." See Heilbrunn, 'Hitler's Historian,' p. 53.

[52] Irving, interview with author. Later in our interview, Irving also referred to these "conformist" historians as "cowardly," claiming that they "prefer to go the way of least resistance" in their research and writing.

[53] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 89.

[54] Evans, 'David Irving, Hitler and Holocaust Denial,' section 1, paragraph 6.2.

[55] Evans, 'David Irving, Hitler and Holocaust Denial,' section 6, paragraph 10.

standards were not, Evans had provided a definition in his book about the trial, *Lying About Hitler*:

> Reputable and professional historians do not suppress part of quotations from documents that go against their own case, but take them into account and if necessary amend their own case accordingly. They do not present as genuine documents those that they know to be forged just because these forgeries happen to back up what they are saying. They do not invent ingenious but implausible and utterly unsupported reasons for distrusting genuine documents because these documents run counter to their arguments; again, they amend their arguments if this is the case, or abandon them altogether. They do not consciously attribute their own conclusions to books and other sources which, in fact, on closer inspection, actually say the opposite. They do not eagerly seek out the highest possible figures in a series of statistics, independently of their reliability or otherwise, simply because they want for whatever reason to maximize the figure in question, but rather, they assess all the available figures as impartially as possible in order to arrive at a number that will withstand the critical scrutiny of others. They do not knowingly mistranslate sources in foreign languages to make them more serviceable to themselves. They do not willfully invent words, phrases, quotations, incidents, and events for which there is no historical evidence to make their arguments more plausible to their readers.[56]

Most historians would likely agree with Evans' assessment of a "reputable and professional" member of their ranks. There are, however, no universal standards upon which such an assessment is based.[57] The history profession has nothing akin to a Hippocratic oath, and the guidelines which govern historians' practice have tended to be based upon largely implicit agreement and recognition.[58]

More recently, however, there has been a call for a more systematic approach towards professional ethics. Antoon de Baets, a founding member of the Network of Concerned Historians, proposed a 20-article "Code of Ethics for Historians" in his 2009 study *Responsible History*.[59] In many ways, this Code is designed to render concrete that which has long been an implicit agreement. Of particular interest to the issues surrounding Holocaust denial, Irving and the libel case are Article 10, "Integrity; Historical Truth" and

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[56] Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, pp. 250-251.

[57] On this point, see, for example, J. Cracraft, 'Implicit Morality,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, p. 36; and Schneider, 'Past Imperfect,' p. 1538.

[58] There are, of course, codes of ethics for historians which exist at state and national level in various countries, such as the American Historical Association's Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct. See American Historical Association, 'Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct,' 6 January 2005, *American Historical Association: The Professional Association for All Historians*, http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/professionalstandards.cfm, accessed 8 December 2010. For a fuller list of examples, see 'Codes of Ethics for Historians,' *Network of Concerned Historians*, http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content/ethichist.html, accessed 1 December 2010.

[59] For the full text of the Code of Ethics for Historians, see A. de Baets, *Responsible History*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2009, pp. 188-196. For more of de Baets' reflections on these issues, see, for example, 'Defamation Cases Against Historians,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2002, pp. 346-366; and 'A Declaration of the Responsibilities of Present Generations Towards Past Generations,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, pp. 130-164. For more on the Network of Concerned Historians, see http://www.concernedhistorians.org.

Article 13, "Critical and Objective Method; Independence." The former is set out as follows:

> Integrity is the moral foundation of the historians' work. It shall be the intent of historians to honestly search for the historical truth, even if they are aware that their knowledge is provisional and fallible…. Historians shall always oppose the abuse of history (its use with intent to deceive) and the irresponsible use of history (either its deceptive or negligent use).[60]

Similarly, Article 13 of the Code elaborates on which methods are most supportive of achieving this integrity:

> Historians shall adopt a critical attitude and use a method based on: (1) accuracy (transparency; respect for evidence and argumentation; control of bias and anachronism; impartiality and objectivity) at the levels of statements of fact and description, and (2) plausibility at the levels of statements of opinion and analysis. Historians shall be candid about their perspective on the past…. They shall aspire to political, ideological, and intellectual independence.[61]

It would be these standards of what makes a 'good' historian and what constitutes 'good' historical practice upon which Irving's case would stand or fall. Importantly, Irving did not seem to be ignorant of the standards against which his work would be judged. On the second day of the trial, he had pointed out that "misquoting, misconstruing, mistranslating, distorting or manipulating" evidence "would be a despicable thing for a historian to do."[62] Yet, as the course of the libel case demonstrated, Irving had repeatedly engaged in such behaviour.

In her account of the trial, Lipstadt noted that "I anticipated that the Irving/Evans encounter would not be friendly."[63] Irving's cross-examination of Evans was certainly aggressive, and Evans has indicated that withstanding his questioning, along with his "seemingly limitless capacity for telling lies, distorting the truth, and insulting the memory of the dead," required "tactics of emotional self-preservation."[64] It appears, however, that Evans only developed these techniques as his time in the witness box wore on. Much has been made of his conduct during his first day on the stand, with one journalist suggesting that "Evans seems to have taken Irving's depredations on the historical record personally. He stood through his first day of testimony, refusing a chair, hands balled into fists,

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[60] de Baets, *Responsible History*, p. 192.
[61] de Baets, *Responsible History*, p. 193.
[62] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 2,' p. 175.
[63] Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 200. This view was echoed by D. D. Guttenplan, who noted of the entire length of Evans' time in the witness box, "an electric crackling of loathing…arcs and crackles between the two men." See Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, p. 223.
[64] Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 198. On this point, see also, for example, M. Burleigh, 'The Verdict of History,' *The Sunday Telegraph*, 23 June 2002, p. 13.

barking responses to Irving's cross-examination."[65] If Evans was personally affronted by Irving's 'bad' history, however, it was equally apparent that Irving had taken serious personal offence at Evans' assault on his cherished status of 'historian'. "[F]or seven days and in 750 pages of this report," Irving complained to Justice Gray during his cross-examination, "I have had to listen to the most defamatory utterances poured over my head."[66] Nonetheless, these "defamatory utterances" were ultimately found to be accurate.

In light of Evans' ultimate conclusion that "Irving has fallen so far short of the standards of scholarship customary amongst historians that he does not deserve to be called a historian at all," several questions about historical practice are raised.[67] These concerns echo those discussed in Chapter One regarding the importance of 'objectivity' within the discipline of history.[68] While this chapter sought to establish how historians' moral practice had been influenced by the profession's guiding principle, both Holocaust denial and the case of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* provide a specific illustration of what is actually at stake in arguments concerning 'objectivity' and our ability to know the 'truth' about the past. Historical inquiry is an unclosed and complex process, and degrees of uncertainty accompany all attempts to render an account of historical events. Unfortunately these uncertainties can leave historians' methods open to exploitation by individuals such as Irving, as the course of the trial revealed.

The judgement made clear that Irving failed every test concerning the standards of professional ethics for historians. The history he produced was guided by his ideological leanings and he made the historical evidence fit this worldview through a series of distortions, mistranslations, and omissions—in other words, he was a 'bad' historian because he was biased and lacked objectivity, and handled his evidence accordingly. Irving, however, fought hard to demonstrate that political commitment and bias was a part of all historians' practice. In his cross-examination of Evans, Irving pushed the issue when discussing the academic status of Holocaust deniers:

> PROFESSOR RICHARD JOHN EVANS: The problem is not that they are not academic; the problem is what they are engaging in, in my view, is a politically motivated falsification of history….

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[65] M. Greif, 'History in the Dock,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 July 2001, p. 28. Of the first exchange between Irving and Evans, Lipstadt noted in her account of the trial that "I was not sure if this was the schoolyard or the Royal Courts of Justice." She also quoted Antony Julius reacting to Evans' performance by saying, "[t]his was awful. Evans is a professor at Cambridge. He shouldn't come down to Irving's level and let himself be provoked by Irving's cheap jibes." See Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 202. For more on Evans' first day on the stand, see, for example, Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, pp. 217-222.

[66] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 23, 21 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 23: Electronic Edition,' p. 165, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day23/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.

[67] Evans, 'David Irving, Hitler and Holocaust Denial,' section 1, paragraph 6.11.

[68] See Chapter One, 'A History of Morality in Historical Practice,' pp. 13-39.

> MR IRVING: But is it not equally possible that the use that is made of the Holocaust and that immense tragedy inflicted on the Jews during World War II has just been equally politicized for other purposes, whether good or bad?
> PROFESSOR RICHARD JOHN EVANS: I think there is, obviously, a political element in a great deal of historical writing, if not all historical writing, to some measure or other, but I would distinguish between the historians', as it were, control of that through reference to the documents and through the attempt to arrive at an objective interpretation which is in accordance with the documents, on the one hand, and deliberate falsification and invention on the other. I think the Holocaust deniers belong to the latter category.[69]

It is abundantly clear that all historians write in line with their particular *Weltansschauung*, and may be influenced by different ideological beliefs.[70] As one commentator on *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* has noted, "history is always history for a particular reason which supports, without necessarily stating it explicitly, a certain cause or worldview."[71]

There were certain echoes, as Evans pointed out under cross-examination, between Irving's case and the furore concerning David Abraham's *The Fall of the Weimar Republic* during the early 1980s.[72] This particular instance concerned the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, but the charges of mishandling historical evidence were the same. Abraham blamed sloppy practice for what he claimed were genuine mistakes, yet his fierce critics argued he had deliberately distorted his material in order to incriminate German capitalism in the rise of Nazism, thereby supporting his ideological convictions.[73] It appears Evans concluded of Abraham what he would ultimately conclude of Irving, namely that "if all the mistakes are in the same direction in the support of a particular thesis, then I do not think that is mere negligence. I think that is a deliberate manipulation and deception."[74]

It is clear that even if historians recognise the influence of their varying beliefs and commitments upon the history that they write, they are nonetheless still firmly bound by the limits posed by the evidence. As the renowned Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm noted, when asked his opinion of whether Irving's politics impacted his status as a 'historian', "[m]ost historians are politically engaged one way or another…. You judge what

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[69] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 19,' p. 15.
[70] The 'case studies' from Soviet historiography considered in this dissertation provide a particularly clear demonstration of this influence.
[71] Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial*, p. 34.
[72] Evans had earlier considered what the Abraham case suggested about historical practice and 'objectivity'. See Evans, *In Defense of History* (1997), New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1999, pp. 100-104. He also referred to it when these issues were discussed during our interview.
[73] For examples of the Abraham debate, see the series of articles in *Central European History*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 1984, beginning with G. Feldman, 'A Collapse in Weimar Scholarship,' pp. 159-177; and in *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 28, 1985. See also G. Eley, 'The David Abraham Case: Ten Comments From Historians,' *Radical History Review*, no. 32, 1985, pp. 75-96.
[74] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 18, 10 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 18: Electronic Edition,' pp. 156-157, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day18/view/printall, accessed 21 February 2010.

they do not by the political intent, but by whether they produce work based on evidence."[75] Clearly, there remains a "crucial difference between political bias and systematic falsification of the historical record."[76] Nonetheless, the trial judged that Irving had failed this particular test.

In addition to these problems of bias, Irving spent a great deal of time during the proceedings pointing out the fluid and unfixed nature of historical evidence. Different agendas can be read into the same document, and single sources can seemingly support multiple contradictory interpretations. Irving put this point to Evans during cross-examination:

> MR IRVING: So it is a minefield then, the translation of documents, or it is either a minefield or a sweet shop…depending on which way you are looking at it. If you want to go into those documents with an evil intent or with a perverse intent, then you can fix a meaning which just fits the meaning you want, is that correct?
> PROFESSOR RICHARD JOHN EVANS: Well, if you are referring to yourself, yes. I mean, I would not do that.
> MR IRVING: Well, I am—
> MR JUSTICE GRAY: What is sauce for the goose is source for the gander. In a way, I understand why you are asking these questions. I understand the point you are making.
> MR IRVING: I am just rubbing it in, my Lord, the fact that, as Professor Evans rightly said, if this applies to myself, I could distort the document one way, but, of course, if it applies to a left wing historian or a Marxist, they could distort exactly the same document the other way.[77]

It seems that Irving was attempting to demonstrate not only that all historians are biased, but often the materials upon which they build their interpretations are highly ambiguous.

Along these same lines, Irving also paid considerable attention to some problems which are particularly prominent in the documentary record of the Holocaust. He repeatedly pointed out how shallow much of this surviving documentation is, such as his remark to the judge concerning "how unsatisfactory it is that we are even, so long after the war years are over, obliged to scrabble around with these scraps of paper trying to work

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[75] Eric Hobsbawm, quoted in D. D. Guttenplan, 'Is a Holocaust Skeptic Fit to Be a Historian?,' *The New York Times,* 26 June 1999, p. B9. Similarly, another historian has noted of how one's life as a "private individual" should be kept separate from any professional output: "historians *as historians* owe historical truth to everyone who chooses to be part of their audience. Despite the generality of the audience here, the contrast we need between what people do as private individuals and what they do *as historians* can be completely clear in this context. As a private individual I am entitled to keep my age secret and even to lie about it to those who have no right to that knowledge. Yet if, as a historian, I write a history in which the date of my own birth is a relevant fact required for the objectivity of that history, then I must tell that truth to all and sundry. When I publish as a historian I am *offering* historical truth to my readers. Readers of works of history have a normal and legitimate expectation that they will receive historical truth when a historian, as a historian, purports to provide it. This gives the readers a minimal, but sufficient right to expect that truth." See J. Gorman, 'Historians and Their Duties,' *History and Theory*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2004, p. 112.
[76] M. David-Fox, 'On the Primacy of Ideology: Soviet Revisionists and Holocaust Deniers (In Response to Martin Malia),' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2004, p. 89.
[77] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 18,' p. 27.

out what happened."[78] Concern was also raised, however, regarding the precise meaning of the euphemisms which featured so prominently in the Nazis' documentation of the 'Final Solution'. Irving attempted to exploit the uncertainty such terms created, phrasing the dilemma to Evans:

> MR IRVING: It is a terrible problem, is it not, that we are faced with this tantalizing plate of crumbs and morsels of what should have provided the final smoking gun proof, and nowhere the whole way through the archives do we find even one item that we do not have to interpret or read between the lines of, but we do have in the same chain of evidence documents which [have] quite clearly specifically shown Hitler intervening in the other sense?
> PROFESSOR RICHARD JOHN EVANS: No, I do not accept that at all. It is because you want to interpret euphemisms as being literal and that is what the whole problem is. Every time there is a euphemism, Mr Irving, or a euphemistic or a camouflage piece of statement or language about Madagascar, you want to treat it as being the literal truth, because it serves your purpose of trying [to] exculpate Hitler. That is part of the problem of the way in which you manipulate and distort the documents.
> MR IRVING: We know I am a manipulator and distorter, we have established that point.[79]

Clearly there is some truth to the contention that historical sources can often be ambiguous, support various interpretations, and have unclear points of reference through euphemisms and other "camouflage" language. There is, however, an important distinction between the kind of handling of sources which Irving described in his 'sweet shop' analogy cited above, and genuine differences in interpretation that are still within the limits of the evidence. Once again, Irving was judged to be engaging in the former.

When all other explanations seemed to fail him, and evidence began to mount of his various falsifications and distortions, Irving began to claim that these discrepancies were the result of simple—and genuine—mistakes and errors. Clearly, as both Evans and Browning agreed during their cross-examination, all historians make mistakes and any thorough search of their footnotes will uncover such errors.[80] As both scholars also pointed out, however, mistakes are generally random; they do not tend to direct in one particular path of interpretation, as Irving's certainly appeared to. His pattern of 'mistakes'

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[78] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 6,' p. 142.
[79] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 22,' p. 197.
[80] For Browning, see *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 16, 7 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 16: Electronic Edition,' p. 82, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day16/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010. For Evans, see *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 18,' pp. 156-157.

were akin, in an apt analogy provided by Irving himself, to "a waiter who always gives the wrong change in his favour."[81]

It seems, however, in spite of the devastating critique of Irving's corpus of work and his historical methods produced by the trial, there were those who had sympathy for his claims of mistakes and errors. Donald Cameron Watt, the eminent military historian who had written favourably about aspects of Irving's work, was subpoenaed to testify for him during the libel case. While in the witness box, Watt declared that:

> I must say, I hope that I am never subjected to the kind of examination that Mr Irving's books have been subjected to by the Defence witnesses. I have a very strong feeling there are other senior historical figures, including some to whom I owed a great deal of my own career, whose work would not stand up, or not all of whose work would stand up, to this kind of examination.[82]

Writing after the judgement, Watt stuck fast to this view. In addition to claiming that Penguin was "out for blood," he challenged, "[s]how me one historian who has not broken out in a cold sweat at the thought of undergoing similar treatment."[83] Similarly, John Keegan, another eminent military historian subpoenaed by Irving, wrote after the trial that "the news that David Irving lost his libel case will send a tremor through the community of 20th century historians," because "the judge has now decided that all-consuming knowledge of a vast body of material does not excuse faults in interpreting it."[84] In regard to *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, however, both Watt and Keegan had seemingly confused the real issue.[85] As Lipstadt correctly asked of Watt's assertions that others would not stand up to a similar examination, "[d]id [he] believe that these senior historians had engaged in the same distortions we had found in Irving's work?"[86] Mistakes are just that; deliberate and willful distortion of historical evidence is another matter entirely.

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[81] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 17, 9 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 17: Electronic Edition,' p. 11, *Holocaust Denial on Trial*, http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day17/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.
[82] See *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 7,' pp. 42-43.
[83] D. C. Watt, 'History Needs David Irvings,' *The Evening Standard*, 11 April 2000, p. 15.
[84] J. Keegan, 'The Trial of David Irving—and My Part in His Downfall,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2000, p. 28. As one commentator argued of these reflections from Watt and Keegan after the trial, "Mr Keegan's and Mr Watt's desire to be fair-minded and not to kick a man when he is down may be admirable. But it is hard to accept their central contention, that it is possible to distinguish between the 'good Irving'—the meticulous, dogged historian—and the 'bad Irving'—the propagandist with his strange views about the gas chambers, and his suggestion that Jews should ask themselves why the Nazis were so keen to kill them." See 'Slugging Through the Mud,' *The Economist*, 15 April 2000, pp. 55-56. For further comment on the views of Watt and Keegan, see, for example, Heilbrunn, 'Hitler's Historian,' pp. 53, 56.
[85] Indeed, Julius and Libson noted of Watt and Keegan after the trial that "[t]hey argued history needs its mavericks, its unconventional, controversial figures. Each missed the point. History does not need liars, idealogues [sic] prepared to subjugate truth for propaganda. If such people do decide to launch attacks on their critics (remember Irving sued [P]rofessor Lipstadt) and are then found out, they cannot then complain about the result—nor should anyone on their behalf." See Julius and Libson, 'Losing Was Unthinkable'.
[86] Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 121.

Throughout the course of the trial, then, Irving had attempted to demonstrate how various flaws in objective historical method and the evidence itself could explain any problems or discrepancies within his work. Yet Evans and the other expert witnesses had used the same methods to reveal Irving's pattern of distortion, misrepresentation and falsification. There was, as one journalist pointed out, a certain irony in the Evans-Irving confrontation, as they could be said to share a similar philosophy of history: "[b]oth appeal to documentary evidence, its content, reliability and provenance. Both try mathematical calculations to check statements. Both insist that historians reveal the truth. It just happens that Irving cheats."[87] Yet even though Irving's 'truths' were exposed as lies, the proceedings of the trial highlighted some of the difficulties associated with the often precarious nature of historical truth.

In many ways, these difficulties are also reflective of the debate regarding postmodernism and history outlined in Chapter One. As we saw in this chapter, the history of atrocity has proved to have an particularly problematic relationship with postmodern theory. The Holocaust became something of a moral weapon wielded by those hostile to postmodernism, due to the seeming incapacity for such a morally significant event to be adequately accommodated within the relativism it espoused.[88] Additionally, the "postmodernist intellectual climate,"[89] in which texts are seen to have no singular nor permanent meaning and historical truth is as much created as discovered, has been attacked for aiding the cause of Holocaust denial. Indeed, Lipstadt was explicit on this point in *Denying the Holocaust*, suggesting of postmodernism's influence that "[i]t is a climate that fosters deconstructionist history at its worst. No fact, no event, and no aspect of history has any fixed meaning or content. Any truth can be retold. Any fact can be recast. There is no ultimate historical reality."[90]

As Chapter One indicated, however, such concern seems unwarranted. Postmodernists are not Holocaust deniers, and Holocaust deniers are certainly not postmodernists. Deniers believe in the capacity to find an objective truth about the past, but in order to arrive at their 'truth' they engage in dishonest methods. As we have seen, however, they seek to give their pseudoscholarship a legitimacy through their appeal to the

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[87] Greif, 'History in the Dock,' p. 28. Another commentator similarly noted that all concerned parties in *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* were "were very much operating on the same methodological assumption that the past is objectively knowable." See L. McNamara, 'History, Memory and Judgment: Holocaust Denial, the History Wars and the Law's Problems with the Past,' *Sydney Law Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2004, p. 379.

[88] See Chapter One, 'A History of Morality in Historical Practice,' pp. 37-39. For comment on these issues in relation to Holocaust denial and *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, see, for example, P. Finney, 'Review: Beyond the Postmodern Moment?,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2005, pp. 157-158; and McNamara, 'History, Memory and Judgment,' pp. 380, 382, 383.

[89] Evans, *In Defense of History*, p. 208. Of course, *In Defense of History* can itself be read as an anti-postmodernist tract.

[90] Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 19.

methods and markings of genuine historical practice. Irving remains a perfect example of this paradox. Nonetheless, the trial was able to expose the hollow nature of these pretensions, and, perhaps most importantly, as historian Ian Kershaw recognised, that "[e]ven if the nature of historical truth remains a matter of continuing and legitimate debate…there is such a thing as historical untruth."[91] It was on this point that Irving's façade of scholarly respectability collapsed.

In the aftermath of the trial, Evans declared Irving's defeat to be a triumph for objective scholarly methods. His 'defence of history', spelled out in his book of the same name, had been tested in court and had emerged sound.[92] When interviewed, Evans recalled the scepticism of some colleagues concerning the ability of the defence to verify Lipstadt's claims against Irving, noting that they "were basically saying, 'you'll never prove this, you can't prove he's falsifying history…all of this evidence is open to many different interpretations and his is just one interpretation among many.'"[93] Instead, as Evans noted in his account of the proceedings, "[t]he trial demonstrated triumphantly the ability of historical scholarship to reach reasoned conclusions about the Nazi extermination of the Jews on the basis of a careful examination of the written evidence…. It showed that we *can* know."[94] For Evans, then, the victory was simply for scholarship—any moral concerns raised by *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* were secondary. As he later observed of the trial, "[t]here was no question of any moral judgment being demanded of the court. The issue centered on an empirical question."[95]

In reality, however, the assault upon Irving's pseudoscholarship on the basis of objective historical methods suggested a great deal about historians' moral practice. When atrocities like the Holocaust are under discussion, the potentially pernicious influence of 'bad' history becomes particularly troubling. As Rampton pointed out in his opening statement, "the lies which…Mr Irving has told, concern an area of history in which perhaps it behoves an writer or researcher to be particularly careful of the truth."[96] Overall, it seems *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* highlighted the importance of continuing 'self-regulation' of the historical profession by its members. Clearly, the nature of the profession is such that an official universal standard of ethics would be impossible to enforce. Explicit

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[91] I. Kershaw, 'The Truth Will Out,' *The Sunday Times*, 7 July 2002.
[92] Indeed, when interviewed Evans claimed that "essentially, what had attracted me first of all about being involved with the Irving case was a chance to test that [objective historical enquiry]." Evans, interview with author.
[93] Evans, interview with author.
[94] Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 266.
[95] See R. J. Evans, 'History, Memory, and the Law: The Historian as Expert Witness,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2002, p. 341.
[96] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' p. 90.

discussion about these matters, however, such as that initiated by the Network for Concerned Historians, can only be of positive assistance in this process of 'self-regulation'. Irving and others like him are indicative of what the profession does not want; encouraging historians to actively reflect upon and discuss their professional ethics can serve to make such people easier to recognise and thus prevent them from gaining any recognition as legitimate practitioners. After all, the fact that Irving could masquerade as a professional for so long is a cause for concern. One historian was rather scathing on this point, noting in the aftermath of the libel case that "[b]ecause of the laziness of the historians, as well as the shallow knowledge of general reviewers, Irving was able to acquire a reputation for scholarship. This served as a carapace to shield his later, still more grotesque perversions of history, and turned him into an asset for the far right and the Holocaust denial industry."[97] More concerted effort from historians to engage with the issues pertaining to professional ethics as part of an ongoing effort at 'self-regulation' might help prevent a similar situation from emerging in the future.

The course of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* made clear that Irving comprehensively failed in meeting the standards of professional ethics. In this sense, it was obvious that he was a 'bad' historian who had written 'bad' history. It was clearly not, however, simply a matter of professional incompetence.[98] If it was, a 'bad' history of the Holocaust or another atrocity would be equally abhorrent as a 'bad' history of irrigation methods in rural medieval England. There is a palpable difference, one which rests on the complex moral and political issues surrounding the discourses about past atrocities. Falsifying, manipulating and distorting the historical record—a 'sin' for historians at all times and in all instances—takes on additional significance in these particular cases. As one critic has noted of the trial, "Irving was shown to use intellectually disreputable methods to support a morally repulsive case."[99] These two factors are interrelated, yet the "intellectually disreputable methods" are only one part of the problem. The "morally repulsive" element also renders Holocaust denial 'bad' history, and it is to this element that we shall now turn.

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[97] See Cesarani, Review of Evans and Guttenplan, p. 292. Similarly, another commentator noted that "Irving long benefited from indulgent admirers who lacked the scholarly equipment to know any better." See Wheatcroft, 'Bearing False Witness,' p. 12.

[98] Indeed, as one scholar has noted, "historians should not confine their moral responsibility to the maintenance of a narrowly drawn code of professional ethics," recommending that historians "should stop denying or downplaying the fact that their discipline is inescapably a moral one, from the choice of topic to be investigated to the interpretation of the evidence assembled," and "reflect more carefully on the values informing our work and then clearly articulate, as and where appropriate, a morality adequate to the tasks we assign ourselves." See Cracraft, 'Implicit Morality,' p. 42.

[99] Tapper, 'Is There a Professional Ethics for Historians?,' p. 30.

James Libson, a member of Lipstadt's legal team, reflected after the trial that "it is rare to have a case that is quite so close to one's heart and in which justice is so central." He continued: "here there was an absolute difference between right and wrong. We could wholeheartedly be on the side of the angels."[100] Libson's remarks reflect an attitude which characterises much of the response to Holocaust denial. It is not simply a matter of weeding out poor 'historians'; it becomes a struggle for the dignity and memory of victims and survivors, protecting them against individuals who seek to deny their suffering and ravage their history. In this sense, it is more than a battle against 'bad' history; it is a fight against 'bad' people and 'bad' actions, fuelled by the strong moral imperative of defending the innocent.

This understanding found repeated expression in the proceedings of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*. The defence spent a considerable portion of the trial presenting evidence of Irving's anti-Semitic and racist attitudes. As Justice Gray noted in his judgement, however, "[n]o allegation of racism or of anti-semitism is levelled against Irving by Lipstadt in *Denying the Holocaust*."[101] Why, then, was this time spent exposing Irving as such? First, it is clear that such an approach was useful for demonstrating that Irving was not an 'objective' historian and his scholarship was shaped and informed by these attitudes, thus supporting the charge that he manipulated the historical record for his own ideological purposes. It also, however, went some way towards demonstrating the kind of person that he was.[102]

Drawing upon interviews, Irving's personal diaries and countless videotapes of speeches which were contained in his Discovery, embarrassing evidence was mounted which demonstrated an ugly underbelly to his façade of 'respectability'. A particularly infamous example of this evidence from the trial are the following remarks Irving made to an audience in Ontario in 1991 regarding how to combat the Holocaust 'lie':

> Ridicule isn't enough, you've got to be tasteless about it. You've got to say things like: 'More women died on the backseat of Senator Edward Kennedy's car at Chappaquiddick than died in the gas chamber at Auschwitz. (Laughter in audience). You think that's tasteless? What about this: I'm forming an association especially dedicated to these liars…. It's called 'The Auschwitz Survivors, Survivors of the Holocaust, and Other Liars'—'A.S.S.H.O.L.E.S.' (Laughter in audience).[103]

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[100] James Libson, quoted in Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, p. 288.
[101] Gray, 'England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) Decisions,' section 9, paragraph 1.
[102] In this sense, Hayden White's observation that "[t]he late R. G. Collingwood was fond of saying that the kind of history one wrote, or the way one thought about history, was ultimately a function of the kind of man one was. But the reverse is also the case" rings particularly true. See H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 433.
[103] Videotape 190: Irving Speech at the Bayerischer Hof, Milton, Ontario, 5 October 1991, at 2 hrs. 19 mins. 19 secs. to 2 hrs. 20 mins. 40 secs., as cited in Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, pp. 132-133. Parentheses in original.

Other such examples included Irving's nursery rhyme composed for his infant daughter ("I'm a baby Aryan/Not Jewish or Sectarian/I have no plans to marry/An ape or Rastafarian"),[104] and his remark to an Australian journalist that it made him feel "queasy" to see non-white cricketers playing for England.[105] Despite Irving's attempts to explain away this evidence, Gray's judgement unequivocally found that "Irving is an anti-semite and a racist," and "he is content to mix with neo-fascists and appears to share many of their racist and anti-semitic prejudices."[106] Both the evidence presented during the trial and the judge's ultimate findings reinforced the suggestion that Irving was not merely a 'bad' historian; he was also a 'bad' person.[107]

Much to Irving's chagrin, a good portion of the press coverage of the trial focused upon this particular aspect of the proceedings. Indeed, Evans noted of the media with some irritation that "they devoted the lion's share of their attention to Irving's racism and antisemitism."[108] As a result, the picture of Irving presented by the press played into the 'bad' elements of his character and personality. For example, an editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* the day after the judgement was entitled 'The Bad History Man,' and deemed Irving's "betrayal of his vocation" to be "heinous."[109] Journalist Jonathan Freedland was more explicit, declaring that as a result of the judgement "[a] bad man is finished," and "[f]rom now on, he shall wear the scarlet letter of shame, branded a bigot and a cheat."[110] Lipstadt also appeared to buy into this rhetoric. While she had been far more cautious in this regard in writing *Denying the Holocaust*, she described Irving and the nature of his activities in decidedly moral language at a press conference immediately following the

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For discussion of these remarks during the trial, see *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 29, 2 March 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 29: Electronic Edition,' pp. 34-37, *Holocaust Denial on Trial,* http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day29/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.

[104] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 14, 2 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 14: Electronic Edition,' pp. 97-98, *Holocaust Denial on Trial,* http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day14/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010. Richard Rampton followed his reading out of the rhyme with the observation that "[t]he poor little child has been taught a racist…ditty by her perverted racist father." See *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 14,' p. 99.

[105] *David Irving vs. Penguin Books Ltd. & Deborah E. Lipstadt*, Day 15, 3 February 2000, as cited in 'Trial Transcripts, Day 15: Electronic Edition,' pp. 34-37, *Holocaust Denial on Trial,* http://www.hdot.org/en/trial/transcripts/day15/view/printall, accessed 30 August 2010.

[106] Gray, 'England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) Decisions,' section 13, paragraph 161 and section 13, paragraph 162 respectively.

[107] Indeed, one journalist noted that "Mr Justice Gray delivered a verdict that excoriated Irving as a man and a historian." See V. Dodd, 'Irving: Consigned to History as a Racist Liar,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 1.

[108] Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. xii.

[109] Editorial, 'The Bad History Man,' p. 29.

[110] J. Freedland, 'Let's Close the Book,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 21. For similar reportage, see, for example, I. Burrell, 'Racist. Anti-Semite. Holocaust Denier. How History Will Judge David Irving,' *The Independent*, 12 April 2000; and D. Pallister, 'The Disgrace of Irving: "He is a Holocaust Denier. He Misstated Evidence,"' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 6.

judgement. "David Irving," she declared, "has done a lot of evil things."[111] Elaborating on his conduct throughout the trial itself, Lipstadt noted that "[t]he racist statements he made and the way he tried to justify them in court was horrible. It was evil."[112]

When viewed in this manner, it is easy to see how the enterprise of fighting Holocaust denial can be construed as a kind of moral crusade. Denial has been described as "a moral cancer in Western culture,"[113] and deniers themselves as "sick, not mentally but morally."[114] Historians therefore assume an explicit role of guardians of the memory and the suffering of both victims and survivors of atrocity. In her own account of the libel case, Lipstadt indicated that this was how she had come to view herself. She recalled of an encounter with a stranger as she left the court and entered the media fray after the first day:

> A small elderly woman had resolutely pushed her way through the crush. She had a heavily wrinkled face and very sad eyes…. Ignoring the reporters, she thrust her arm in front of me, rolled her sleeve up to her elbow and emphatically pointed at the number tattooed on her forearm. "You are fighting for us. You are our witness." I heard both encouragement and admonition in this woman's words. It was as if she was saying: Be strong and of good courage *but, whatever you do, do not fail us*.[115]

Lipstadt's account contains many other references to similar encounters, with both Holocaust survivors and ex-servicemen who had fought in the Second World War.[116] These recollections help enforce the idea that those people who had personally experienced the history being dissected by the trial were entrusting their past to the historians who wrote about it. It therefore became their responsibility to protect that past from people such as Irving.

Clearly, there is a strong moral imperative to defend survivors and victims of atrocity from such attacks. Yet how serious a danger did denial present to the history and memory of the Holocaust? Was the 'crusade' even necessary? Many have suggested that Holocaust denial is best dealt with by ignoring it, their reasoning being that since it exists outside the realm of legitimate academic history, any focus upon the activities of deniers

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[111] Deborah Lipstadt, as quoted in K. Taylor, 'Irving in Denial: The Trial,' in K. Taylor (ed.), *Holocaust Denial: The David Irving Trial and International Revisionism*, London, Searchlight Educational Trust, 2000, p. 41.

[112] Deborah Lipstadt, as quoted in N. Tweedie, 'Racist Historian Faces £2m Bill for Libel Defeat,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2000, p. 1. Lipstadt also described the significance of her victory in frank moral terms, declaring it to be a win for "all those who speak out against hate and prejudice." See Deborah Lipstadt, as quoted in A. Buncombe, '"A Victory For All Who Speak Out Against Prejudice,"' *The Independent*, 12 April 2000. Another commentator invoked similar rhetoric to Lipstadt against Irving, writing after the trial that "the Irving verdict is a reminder that our intuitions in these matters are still the best guide we have. Some statements are true, some are false. Some writers have integrity and are to be believed, however outlandish their opinions. Others are knowingly disseminating falsehoods. Most people are good. And some are evil." See Judt, 'Writing History, Facts Optional,' p. A31.

[113] R. Martin, 'Clio Raped,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002, p. 227.

[114] E. Wiesel, 'Opening Address,' in J. K. Roth and E. Maxwell (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, vol. 1, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 10.

[115] Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, pp. 85-86. Emphasis in original.

[116] See, for example, Lipstadt, *History on Trial*, pp. 209, 269-270, 276.

only serves to bring them undeserved attention. While some have argued that Lipstadt had no choice but to fight Irving's defamation claims, other were not so sure.[117] "He could have been ignored," one journalist claimed, and suggested that a misguided "desire to defeat 'revisionism' once and for all" was why the court battle against Irving had proceeded, a view which lends some credence to the notion of a moral 'crusade' against denial.[118] As many other commentators pointed out, the courtroom had provided Irving with a platform for his views, and an unprecedented degree of publicity.[119] One critic, writing after the judgement, suggested that the trial, even though ultimately damaging to Irving's image and reputation, had nonetheless granted him "a lot more print space and air time than [was] ever visited on the publication of his 26 books of often rather turgid military history."[120]

Evans is one historian who has been candid about his belief that a 'crusade' against denial is unnecessary. "I didn't feel particularly passionate about it," he replied when asked whether any principled desire to fight Holocaust denial had informed his decision to become involved in the Irving case. "To be honest, it seemed to be politically and intellectually so marginal and trivial in many ways."[121] As outlined previously, for historians of Evans' persuasion, the fact that 'history'—and correct historical method—had triumphed over Irving was paramount. This triumph mitigated any serious danger the denial movement could pose, as it had been convincingly demonstrated that one could use the documentary evidence to adequately ascertain what happened as opposed to relying on the accounts of eyewitnesses.[122] After all, *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* had been conducted without any survivors providing testimony. "That was my difference of opinion with Deborah Lipstadt," Evans claimed, "who saw this enormous danger when there were no people around to tell us personally what they'd experienced then the door was open…. I

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[117] See Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 27. Similarly, Evans claimed elsewhere of the trial that "the interests of free speech lay…in contesting the writ, and in upholding the right of historians such as Lipstadt to criticize Holocaust deniers such as Irving for their manipulation of the documents. Had Irving won, such criticism would no longer have been possible in Britain…. In truth, Lipstadt and her publishers had no real option but to fight. The costs of not doing so, in terms of freedom of speech, the freedom of historians to say what they like, and the freedom of publishers to publish it, would have been unacceptably high." See Evans, 'History, Memory, and the Law,' p. 341.

[118] J. Freedland, 'The History Men,' *The Guardian*, 1 March 2000, p. 21. By the time the judgement had been handed down six weeks later, Freedland appeared to have drastically changed his mind concerning the necessity of fighting the charge, claiming that "[s]hort of apologising on bended knee to a Nazi sympathiser, Lipstadt had no choice but to defend herself in court." See Freedland, 'Let's Close the Book,' p. 21.

[119] See, for example, N. Ascherson, 'The Battle May Be Over—But the War Goes On,' *The Observer*, 16 April 2000, p. 19; V. Dodd, 'The Disgrace of Irving: How the Web of Lies Was Unravelled,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 4; Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and the Holocaust*, p. 5; and Wheatcroft, 'Bearing False Witness,' p. 12.

[120] G. Glover, 'Hitler's Part in My Downfall—Or How I Lost a Courtroom War, Part One,' *The Scotsman*, 18 April 2000, p. 14.

[121] Evans, interview with author.

[122] As Evans noted during our interview, "the trial had the significance for the future in the sense that…it established that historians using printed or other sources, the record left by the past can still establish with a reasonable degree of certainty what happened and try and understand it, even when the survivors have gone." Evans, interview with author.

thought the trial really did discredit Holocaust denial in a very effective way in the end."[123] For Evans, the fact that Irving was a 'bad' person was of far less consequence than the fact that he was a 'bad' historian.

Of course, from Irving's point of view, he has done nothing wrong. As we have seen, he has always held himself to be a 'real' historian motivated to uncover the 'real' truth about the past, as opposed to the "conformist" academics merely chasing money and prestige. If such as view is accepted, who is the morally 'good' historian? In an interview given shortly after the verdict in the libel case, Irving indicated that he felt there was nothing to feel ashamed about or sorry for:

> [I]'ve achieved a great deal. [I]'ve had five beautiful daughters, [I]'ve written 30 books, [I]'ve done [my] duty both as a human being, and as a member of the species [I]'ve procreated, [I]'ve done [my] bit. [I]'ve led a life that's clean and decent as [I] can by [my] own precepts, which obviously don't match up to the precepts of Mr. Justice Gray or the Jewish community.[124]

Irving's sense of moral superiority, however, goes beyond his clear conscience and his assumption of the persona of a 'real' and therefore 'good' historian. His entire case was built upon the idea that he had been wronged as the victim of a "sustained, malicious, vigorous, well-funded and reckless world-wide campaign of personal defamation."[125] These 'evil' forces sought to rob him of his livelihood and hound him from his profession. In his own mind, then, Irving was "a martyr for the cause of freedom of expression."[126]

Throughout the trial, Irving drew repeated attention to the hurts he perceived he had suffered as a result of this 'conspiracy' against him. "I know of no other historian or writer," Irving argued in his closing remarks, "who has been subjected to a campaign of vilification even 1/10th as intense. The book *Denying the Holocaust* was the climax of this

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[123] Evans, interview with author.

[124] J. Stone, 'Judgment Has Been Passed. So How Do You Feel About Being Labelled as a Racist Now, Mr. Irving?,' *The Independent*, 15 April 2000. This same interview provided further evidence for Irving's 'clean conscience': "What would he say to all the people he has hurt? 'What people have I hurt?' he says indignantly. The Jews, for starters. 'And they've not done anything to hurt me for the last thirty years? Am I supposed constantly to turn the other cheek?.... Am I supposed to write lies when I find something in the documents that I believe to be true, which is not what they have been saying, because it might hurt them to be told after 20 years, 'I'm sorry folks, but you've been a bit gullible'?" See Stone, 'Judgment Has Been Passed'.

[125] Irving, Statement of Claim, paragraph 15. One commentator of the trial observed how this impulse had helped shape the proceedings, claiming of Irving that "he loved being the star of the show he himself had set in motion in Court 73, and revelled in the newspaper and television coverage it was bringing him from all quarters of the globe, was plain. There he was, the solitary citizen, the Lone Ranger, the man unprotected by the phalanxes of lawyers and hired experts, the carrier of his own box-files (in plastic bags from Selfridge's Food Hall), the untrained historian and untrained lawyer, proclaiming the truth in the teeth of the international conspiracy trying to silence him." See D. Jacobson, 'The Downfall of David Irving: Holocaust Denial and Anti-Semitism Have Had Their Day in Court,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 21 April 2000, p. 12.

[126] M. Hasian Jnr., 'Holocaust Denial Debates: The Symbolic Significance of *Irving v. Penguin & Lipstadt*,' *Communication Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2002, p. 142.

campaign."[127] Particularly injurious for Irving were the negative associations which came with being labelled a 'Holocaust denier'. Such a term, Irving claimed, "has become one of the most potent phrases in the arsenal of insult." He suggested, undoubtedly fully aware of the symbolic significance of his choice of words, that "[f]or the chosen victim, it is like being called a wife beater or a paedophile…. It is a verbal Yellow Star."[128]

Irving believed, however, that this 'conspiracy' against him extended far beyond Lipstadt and *Denying the Holocaust*, which had only been its "climax." He expanded upon the nature of the forces he felt conspired against him in his closing statement to the court:

> [T]he real Defendants in this case are not represented in this court but their presence has been with us throughout like Banquo's ghost. These are the people who commissioned the work complained of and provided much of the materials used in it. I understand that [they] provided considerable funds for the defence. I know very little about these bodies, but I am aware that the anti-defamation league of the B'nai Brith, which is an American body, has a 50 million dollar annual budget, substantially greater than an author commands whose livelihood has been destroyed by their activities…. We have them to thank for the spectacle that has been presented in this court room since January. Without their financial assistance, it is unlikely that Mr Rampton and this defence team and his instructing solicitors could have mounted this colossal onslaught on my name.[129]

Irving seemed to forget that it was he who had launched the libel action, and the "colossal onslaught" against him had thus been of his own making. As Rampton remarked during cross-examination, "Mr Irving, you brought this action…[s]o you must expect to be flogged publicly. If the blows have been a little bit painful, I am sorry, but I am going to go on landing them."[130]

Even with his crushing defeat in the libel case, Irving was still able to use the outcome as testament to how powerful this 'conspiracy' against him was. In an interview with *The Guardian* shortly after the trial, Irving presented the experience as a "David and Goliath struggle." Evidently forgetting once again that he had initiated the action, he claimed in the same interview that "[t]hey are out to ruin me…. They want to take my work from me, my reputation, and my home."[131] In this sense, Irving continued to build upon the image that he had created during the trial—a victim of powerful forces, a "shirtsleeves" historian simply trying to uncover the truth about the past, and a martyr of free speech. It appears that the time which has passed since the trial has changed little for Irving in this regard. When interviewed, he was candid about a 'conspiracy' against him,

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[127] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, Trial Transcripts, Day 32,' p. 113.
[128] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 1,' pp. 25, 26.
[129] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 32,' p. 115.
[130] *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt*, 'Trial Transcripts, Day 8,' p. 145.
[131] F. Gibbons, 'Author With No Publisher and Few Funds Landed with £2.5m Bill,' *The Guardian*, 12 April 2000, p. 5.

resulting in "boycott, imprisonment and eviction from your profession." Clearly, Irving felt such events were independent of his own actions, simply stating, "I don't deserve what they've done to me."[132]

Irving's perception of himself as a wronged victim and a martyr of freedom of expression raises one of the most pressing moral concerns surrounding both the practice of Holocaust denial and various attempts to counteract it, namely the issue of free speech. Denial is a criminal offence is many countries, and Irving and several others have been imprisoned under these laws.[133] In other places without specific Holocaust denial legislation, those who propagate such ideas have been prosecuted under laws against hate speech, as with the case of Frederick Toben in Australia.[134] These attempts to address denial through the law are a continuing source of controversy on the grounds of freedom of expression.[135] "It's an absolute scandal," Irving declared when interviewed, "putting people in prison for things they've said or views they hold."[136]

Many historians and other commentators agree. Lipstadt, Evans and Browning, for example, have all argued against such legislation, citing a belief in free speech as their reason for doing so.[137] Another eminent supporter of the denier's rights of expression was Raul Hilberg, who argued, "[i]f these people want to speak, let them…. I am not for taboos and I am not for repression,"[138] and "I believe in the freedom not to be responsible…but that doesn't mean I endorse it."[139] Along these same lines, Irving has always found

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[132] Irving, interview with author.

[133] Irving was sentenced to three years imprisonment for Holocaust denial activities in Austria in February 2006. He was released in December that same year. See S. E. Adkins, *Holocaust Denial as an International Movement*, Westport, Praeger, 2009, p. 124; O. Craig, "'David, What on Earth Would Mother Think?,'" *The Sunday Telegraph*, 26 February 2006, p. 23; Editorial, 'Holocaust Denial,' *Philosophy*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2006, p. 183; R. Elkins, 'Irving Gets Three Years' Jail in Austria for Holocaust Denial,' *The Independent*, 21 February 2006, p. 4; P. Furtado, 'The Politics of Genocide,' *History Today*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2006, p. 2; and K. Lasson, 'Defending Truth: Legal and Psychological Aspects of Holocaust Denial,' *Current Psychology*, vol. 26, nos. 2-3, 2007, pp. 232, 237. For discussion of other cases of individuals being sentenced under Holocaust denial legislation in various European countries, see, for example, A. de Baets, *Censorship of Historical Thought: A World Guide, 1945-2000*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2002; G. Sereny, 'The Nazi Record on Trial,' *New Statesman*, 10 April 1981, p. 4; and G. Sereny, 'The Judgment of History,' *New Statesman*, 17 July 1981, pp. 16-19.

[134] See 'Adelaide Man Jailed as Appeal Fails,' *ABC News*, 13 August 2009, http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/13/2655297.htm?section=justin, accessed 1 December 2010.

[135] For general discussion of Holocaust denial and the law, see, for example, D. Cohn-Sherbok, 'Neo-Nazism, Holocaust Denial and UK Law,' *European Judaism*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2010, pp. 105-115; J. Cooper and A. M. Williams, 'Hate Speech, Holocaust Denial and International Human Rights Law,' *European Human Rights Law Review*, no. 6, 1999, pp. 593-613; L. Douglas, 'Policing the Past: Holocaust Denial and the Law,' in R. Post (ed.), *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 1998, pp. 67-87; R. A. Kahn, *Holocaust Denial and the Law: A Comparative Study*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; and M. Osiel, *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory and the Law*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1997.

[136] Irving, interview with author.

[137] See Browning, 'Historians and Holocaust Denial in the Courtroom,' pp. 777-778; Evans, 'History, Memory, and the Law,' p. 342; and Lipstadt, 'P.S.,' p. 13.

[138] Raul Hilberg, quoted in Hitchens, 'Hitler's Ghost,' p. 74.

[139] Raul Hilberg, quoted in Guttenplan, 'Is a Holocaust Skeptic Fit to Be a Historian?,' p. A19. For more on the issue of Holocaust denial and free speech, see, for example, Editorial, 'Holocaust Denial,' p. 185; B. Lang,

somewhat conditional support in various quarters, even as his views became more extreme. As late as 1996, for example, journalist Christopher Hitchens was willing to argue that "David Irving is not just a Fascist historian. He is also a great historian of Fascism."[140] That same year, reviewing Irving's *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich* for *The New York Review of Books*, one historian argued that "[s]ilencing Mr. Irving would be a high price to pay for the freedom from the annoyance that he causes us," claiming that "he knows more about National Socialism than most professional scholars in his field" and "students of the years 1933-1945 owe more than they are always willing to admit to his energy as a researcher and to the scope and vigor of his publications."[141] Others, however, emerged from the experience of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* fully supporting legislation against denial. The view of historian David Cesarani, for example, was reported by one journalist as "such laws were necessary. Freedom of speech…was a relic of eighteenth-century liberalism—a luxury we could no longer afford." Such a perspective, this journalist believed, "struck me as far more dangerous than anything David Irving has ever said or written."[142]

Additionally, some commentators have expressed concern regarding the curtailing of legitimate debate and discussion as a result of legal intervention in the realm of historical interpretation. One scholar has suggested that "[w]hile I do not share Irving's views, I am worried about the rush to judgment in a case that instantiates particular views of history or historiographic methods as 'the' acceptable forms of World War II memory-work."[143] Other historians commenting on the outcome of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* expressed similar views. Neal Ascherson, for example, summarised the mood of "most British commentators" as being "worried that the judgment would deter 'genuine' historical arguments about the details of the Holocaust," in addition to being concerned about the individual's right to freedom of expression.[144]

'Six Questions On (Or About) Holocaust Denial,' *History and Theory*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2010, pp. 164-166; and J. Mason, 'Writer's Action Raises Thorny Questions,' *Financial Times*, 12 January 2000, p. 6.

[140] Hitchens, 'Hitler's Ghost,' p. 74.

[141] Craig, 'The Devil in the Details,' p. 8.

[142] Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, p. 298. Cesarani was quoted from a presentation given at a forum held at the Weiner Library in London after the trial.

[143] Hasian, 'Holocaust Denial Debates,' pp. 133-134. For other discussion on the issues of Holocaust denial, legislation and academic freedom, see, for example, S. Fish, 'Holocaust Denial and Academic Freedom,' *Valparaiso University Law Review*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2001, pp. 499-524; and E. Stein, 'History Against Free Speech: The German Law Against the "Auschwitz"—and other—"Lies,"' *Michigan Law Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, 1986, pp. 277-324.

[144] Ascherson, 'The Battle May Be Over,' p. 19. For examples of such views, see H. Jacobson, 'Just Because a Lot of People Agree on Something Doesn't Mean They're Right,' *The Independent*, 15 April 2000, p. 5; and M. Linklater, 'This is the Real Price of David Irving's Lies: Now Even the Most Honest Holocaust Scholar Risks Being Smeared,' *The Times*, 13 April 2000, p. 20. Evans provides an extended summary of these opinions in his account of the trial. See Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, pp. 252-254.

As Evans and others have pointed out, however, legitimate historical inquiry had nothing to fear from Irving's downfall.[145] The trial had found him to be a liar and falsifier of the historical record, meaning that he had long been operating outside the boundaries of genuine scholarship. There remains an important difference between the opinions and ideas of a professional historian and the ramblings of a Holocaust denier. An individual's right to say what they wish about a historical event does not then automatically grant these utterances the status of legitimate history. We have the right to tell lies, but we should not expect that our lies be accepted as truth.[146] Lipstadt had recognised this point in *Denying the Holocaust*, noting that:

> The deniers have the absolute right to stand on any street corner and spread their calumnies. They have the right to publish their articles and hold their gatherings. But free speech does not guarantee them the right to be treated as the 'other' side of a legitimate debate. Nor does it guarantee them space on op-ed pages or time on television and radio shows. Most important, it does not call for people such as [Noam] Chomsky to stand by them and thereby commend their views to the public.[147]

This view was echoed by the Yad Vashem Institute in a statement issued after the judgement, whereby it was suggested that "[t]he issue is not one of Irving's right to say or not to say ridiculous things, but that people understand that the ideas of Irving and his ilk are based on a political, neo-Nazi ideology and do not represent any form of historical truth."[148]

Despite the discussion that it prompted on the matter, it is important to note that the proceedings and ultimate outcome of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* actually had little to do with the notion of free speech. As an editorial published the day after the judgement rightly observed, "[n]obody forced him to sue Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin, for libel. His failure to persuade the court that he had been defamed by her book *Denying the Holocaust* has no implication for free speech."[149] If anything, in bringing his case it was Irving who had been trying to curtail open debate and Lipstadt's own rights of

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[145] See Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, pp. 254-257. See also, for example, Wheatcroft, 'Bearing False Witness,' p. 12.
[146] See Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, p. 126.
[147] Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 17. Her reference to Noam Chomsky refers to his defending of the French denier Robert Faurisson, after he was suspended from his post at the University of Lyon and prosecuted under France's Holocaust denial laws. Chomsky's stance caused worldwide outcry. For more on the controversy, see Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, pp. 15-17.
[148] Statement from Yad Vashem Institute, as cited in N. Rees, 'Israelis Welcome the Court Decision,' *The Scotsman*, 12 April 2000, p. 4. A similar view was expressed by Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in a reply to Gordon Craig's review of Irving's *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich*. See *The New York Review of Books*, 19 December 1996, p. 84. Interestingly, Craig responded by quoting from Mill's *On Liberty*.
[149] Editorial, 'The Bad History Man,' p. 29.

freedom of expression.[150] The fact he has threatened many other writers with libel charges only reinforces this view.

Of course, the question remains as to what the trial achieved for the fight against Holocaust denial. In a sense, the outcome was the "good and just end" one journalist proclaimed it to be.[151] Irving was thoroughly discredited by a verdict described as "one of the most crushing judgments ever dumped over an English plaintiff."[152] The 'cause' of Holocaust denial suffered a major blow, having been stripped of its scholarly pretensions. While, to the concern of some, the rapid development of the Internet has provided deniers with a platform hitherto unavailable to them, it is where they have been relegated to in order to spread their ideas.[153] Mainstream avenues have been closed to them. As Evans noted when interviewed, "the obsessive Holocaust deniers will just carry on doing what they do, but they've never had any kind of remotely academic respectability." But of Irving, once described as "the deniers' best shot," he concluded:

> He [now] exists in cyberspace…. That's where he sells and produces his work really, his books are available, self-published and available on mail order. Whereas before, even in the 90s, you would find his books in bookshops. So I think that is the difference it [the libel case] made.[154]

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Overall, both *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* and Holocaust denial more generally challenges historians and others to think about how we address interpretations of history we consider to be morally wrong, or morally harmful. It is this dilemma which has proved central in all responses to the denial movement. The present study has examined a variety of instances where interpretative skirmishes in the historiographies of the Holocaust and Stalinism have been sparked by a sense of moral failure—from Hilberg's 'passive' victims through to the revisionists' 'whitewashing' of Stalin and his crimes. Nonetheless, these legitimate scholarly debates have highlighted the nature of historians' moral engagement with past atrocity, and provided some suggestion for how this history might best be

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[150] "An astonishing number of commentators," Evans wrote in his account of the trial, "seemed to forget this rather basic point as they sharpened their pens in defense of free speech." See Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p. 23.
[151] Freedland, 'Let's Close the Book,' p. 21.
[152] Ascherson, 'The Battle May Be Over,' p. 19. For a similar assessment, see Glover, 'Hitler's Part in My Downfall,' p. 14; and N. Tweedie, 'The Historian who Strode into Court with a Reputation but Left Facing Ruin,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 2000, p. 4.
[153] On the Internet and Holocaust denial, see, for example, Adkins, *Holocaust Denial as an International Movement*, pp. 2-3; M. Kustow, 'Impressions of the Irving Trial,' *History Today*, vol. 50, no. 5, 2000, pp. 4, 5; and J. McCarter, 'Denial.com: Holocaust Denial for Sale,' *The New Republic*, 10 May 1999, pp. 21-22.
[154] Evans, interview with author.

written. Holocaust denial, by contrast, is only illustrative of how this history should not be written; an example of moral and scholarly failure. The potentially pernicious effects of this failure, however, remain an ongoing source of concern.

The history of atrocity, as all the historiographical 'case studies' we have considered to this point have demonstrated, is inextricably linked to the public sphere, providing an additional moral dimension to a history already heavily shaped by such concerns. Efforts of commemoration and education about these events occupy a greater portion of public attention and awareness than any other historical period or phenomena. A great deal of resources and energies are therefore invested in the creation and maintenance of public discussion and memorialisation of past atrocities. Holocaust denial is a flagrant violation of these efforts, and when deniers and their ideas come in more sophisticated packages, such as Irving's work, it becomes particularly problematic. Hilberg, in a letter to historian Gerald Fleming soon after *Hitler's War* was published, noted of Irving that "[h]e may sell his book to people who don't know any better, but I do not think that serious historians will take him seriously."[155] It is, of course, precisely these "people who don't know any better" that present the greatest concern. After all, as one critic has noted, "Irving has sold hundreds of thousands of books on subjects of great moral sensitivity. Most of his readers are unlikely to be able to distinguish between good and bad historiography."[156]

While Evans would claim of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* that "the trial had little to do with memory, and everything to do with history,"[157] it appears the importance of the former cannot be dismissed so lightly. There was clearly more at stake in this case, and in the concerns raised by Holocaust denial more generally, than objective historical method. As one historian has recognised, "[w]e think the Holocaust is important not as a result of some detached, scholarly inquiry, but because of an emotional and intellectual abhorrence of racism, violence and genocide and because we passionately believe in the ethical imperative 'never again.'"[158] The libel case clearly highlighted the important role which historians play in the creation and maintenance of public memory of atrocities, and in doing so, the responsibility they have to the victims of these events. As Lipstadt's many encounters with various people whose personal life histories were intertwined with the same past under discussion during the course of the trial demonstrated, a great deal of trust is placed in historians as both the protectors and defenders of memory. Historians should not shy away from this responsibility. They need not necessarily define their engagement

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[155] Letter from Raul Hilberg to Gerald Fleming, 9 December 1977, from the Raul Hilberg Papers, University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 14.
[156] Tapper, 'Is There an Ethics for Historians?,' p. 30.
[157] Evans, 'History, Memory, and the Law,' p. 341.
[158] Finney, 'Ethics, Historical Relativism, and Holocaust Denial,' p. 367.

with past atrocity in terms of a crusade, but an active acknowledgement of the very real role their research and writing plays in the moral 'afterlife' of this past in the present, and into the future, is perhaps the best way to respond to those who wish to distort and damage it.[159]

As for Irving, he is still working away at writing 'real' histories of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, evidently unperturbed and undeterred by his thoroughgoing defeat before the law and the standards of scholarship now over a decade ago.[160] When asked how he hoped he would be remembered, Irving replied:

> I'd like to think that one hundred years from now people will prefer to read the books by David Irving to find out what actually happened…. I would like this to smooth out and people will say, "Ignore the books by the conformist historians, you're not going to learn very much—by all means have them on your shelf if you want, and go and check back to them just to see how wrong they could've been."[161]

Despite these wishes, it appears that Irving's legacy will be something very different. His story is simply one of total moral and scholarly failure. Nonetheless, against his failures historians can come closer to defining the standards of 'good' history in their ongoing efforts to adequately come to terms with and render sensitive accounts of past atrocity.

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[159] As philosopher Berel Lang has astutely observed, "it seems possible that [the question] 'What is to be done about Holocaust denial?' may not call for a general solution at all, so much as a nest of individual reactions linked together by a common sense of fact and moral grasp." See Lang, 'Six Questions,' p. 166.

[160] Indeed, one commentator noted of Irving soon after the judgement that "he appears to have ingested the slings and arrows of his outrageously self-induced misfortune, and moved on, obsessive and belligerent as ever." See Glover, 'Hitler's Part in My Downfall,' p. 14.

[161] Irving, interview with author.

Conclusion

This study has explored the twin contentions that the historical experience of atrocity has driven discussion of the role of morality within historians' practice, while a variety of moral concerns have themselves shaped and informed history writing about these atrocities. Taking as its point of departure the opportunities offered by the recent 'turn' to ethics across many different disciplines, it has examined how historians have addressed themselves to the various moral quandaries raised by these particular pasts, highlighting the discrepancy between the discipline's objectivist rhetoric and historians' moralistic practices. The course of this study has revealed, however, that such engagement with past atrocity is rarely uncomplicated and raises many questions and dilemmas, lending credence to one historian's suggestion that "moral muddiness"[1] characterises much of our interaction with this past.

All the historiographical 'case studies' we have examined have illustrated that in confronting the history of atrocity, historians cannot avoid engaging with the inherent moral issues raised by this subject. Whether they make such reflections explicit or not, historians clearly work in the shadow of the moral enormity of these events. Having highlighted this irreducible dimension of their work, however, the purpose of this study has not been to demand from historians constant affirmations that mass murder is a 'bad' thing, or that genocide is 'wrong.'[2] We have seen repeatedly that the moral concerns raised by engagement with this history are far more nuanced—and, therefore, far more challenging—than such simplistic 'warnings'. An important difference therefore remains between a moral engagement with this past and 'moralising' about it.

True to the profession's guiding ideal of 'objectivity', many historians might suggest that while undoubtedly important, such moral issues fall outside their intellectual domain.[3] This study has demonstrated, however, that consciously or otherwise, historians are engaged with these questions, and their work is very much infused with and shaped by

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[1] G. Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters: Ethical Quandaries in Modern America*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, p. 3.

[2] Such self-evident moral statements were one of the many reasons that Richard Evans provided for his dislike of 'moralising' in history when interviewed. He argued that "there are people who write about Nazism—Klaus Fischer is a very good example, I think—who just moralise the whole way. They can't stop saying Hitler was wicked, these acts were criminal and it seems to me that that gets in the way of understanding and explanation. But, of course, my moral positions in the three volumes I wrote about Nazi Germany is fairly clear I think without actually making it so verbally explicit that you're beating the reader over the head all the time." Richard Evans, interview with author, 1 March 2010. As the present study has shown repeatedly, however, historians' moral engagement with past atrocity remains very different to simply moralising about past atrocity.

[3] Indeed, historian George Kitson Clark declared of the Holocaust that "[h]istory cannot stay silent about this, and, unless the tribunal of history is a phantasy and a myth, it must pass judgement," but went on to suggest that "[f]ortunately, these problems can perhaps be left with propriety to people who are not primarily historians, to jurists, to philosophers, to theologians, or perhaps to psychologists." See G. K. Clark, *The Critical Historian*, London, Heinemann, 1967, p. 208.

them. What has been lacking, and what this study has sought to promote, is a satisfactory degree of self-reflexivity and awareness regarding this element of their work. Furthermore, why should historians *not* address themselves to these matters? The 'ethical turn' presents an opportunity to make explicit what has long been implicit in historical inquiry, helping to facilitate a more self-conscious and even celebratory engagement with these concerns. At its heart, it is this notion which has driven the present investigation. Historians addressing past atrocity should accept, and not shy away from, the invitation for moral reflection that their subject matter offers them.

Again and again, this dissertation has returned to the question of *how* atrocity has been written about by historians, and how they have addressed the moral questions raised by such an undertaking, in order to gain some insight into how this history might best be approached. Through a close examination of major debates and controversies within the historiographies of the Holocaust and Stalinism, answers regarding the most appropriate manner in which to address these particular pasts have been sought, along with reflection upon the serious moral issues and challenges that are raised by any engagement with them. From the fundamental 'actors' of atrocity in the victims and perpetrators; demonisation and other dilemmas of depicting horror; the appropriateness of counterfactual and more deterministic histories; the 'politics' of victimhood; historians' responsibility to the past, the public, and each other; and the challenges presented by flagrantly unethical 'history', this study has demonstrated that easy answers are hard to find in approaching these events and attempting to make sense of them. Adequately coming to terms with the moral enormity of this past demands far more than reasserting simplistic Manichean categories of good and evil, dividing the "moral sheep from immoral goats,"[4] and reaffirming ourselves and our beliefs. The moral discomfort, uncertainty and ambiguity raised by engaging with the history of atrocity is not something to shrink from, but to interrogate.

A repeated theme of this study has been the 'unclosed' nature of the history of atrocity, and how much of the discussion surrounding it is undeniably presentist in nature. Closely connected to this present focus is the strong connection which exists between the various discourses about such events and the public sphere. Atrocity, it is clear, is not a matter which interests or concerns scholars alone. Perhaps the enduring significance of these events lies in their inherent moral dimension, raising questions and concerns which

[4] P. E. Tillinghast, *The Specious Past: Historians and Others*; Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1972, p. 159. For similar rhetoric, see I. Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 37; and P. Levi, 'The Grey Zone,' in *idem.*, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989), trans. R. Rosenthal, London, Abacus, 2008, p. 23.

have clear resonance with the present.[5] The various ends which this moral dimension can be made to serve, however, have proved far from narrow or closed. Past atrocities have been written about in accord with many different moral agendas, seeing competing claims of commemoration, retribution, and politics sit uneasily beside the profession's continued commitment to 'objective' historical practice.

Clearly, it is entirely appropriate that the history of atrocity experience such an 'afterlife' in the present. Indeed, the imperative of 'Never Again' implies a project of ongoing remembrance, discussion and education. Nonetheless, as we have been reminded repeatedly throughout this study, some caution regarding the presentist nature of this past is still necessary. Contemporary 'employment' of the history of atrocity—from the most extreme degradations of Holocaust denial through to more subtle politics and polemics concerning suffering and victimhood—demonstrate various degrees of disengagement from the past itself in favour of the agendas of the present. The political polemics, claims of 'competition' amongst different atrocities, and the various other problematic accounts we have encountered reveal how troubling such disengagement can be.

While many 'negative' examples have peppered this examination, we have nonetheless gleaned some protocols which do support an appropriate engagement with atrocity. Perhaps the greatest of these is the importance of empathy, not only with the victims but also with the perpetrators. This study has echoed suggestions that empathy does not equal sympathy, and that to understand is not necessarily to forgive. Our examination of the 'pseudoempathy' in Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Goldhagen's demonisation of 'the Germans' in *Hitler's Willing Executioners* revealed how difficult achieving this empathetic engagement can be, but also how important it is for historians to try. The approach demonstrated by Browning in *Ordinary Men*, which recognises the shared humanity between the perpetrators and ourselves, seems to offer the best chance of arriving at a meaningful understanding of the questions which haunt any engagement with the perpetrators of atrocity, namely how they were to able to behave as they did.

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[5] In this vein, one historian has suggested that "[g]enerally speaking, most periods of history are viewed with a relative degree of equanimity, if not apathy, by society at large. In current slang usage, they are 'history' in the sense that they are 'over' and no longer in need of special attention. By contrast, an abnormal past is one that occupies a disproportionate presence within a society's historical consciousness. Historical eras that tend to acquire such exceptional status are those that are associated with the occurrence of traumatic or otherwise controversial events, whether military defeats, civil strife, political crimes, or other major social or economic injustices. These are eras whose traumas remain vivid in the memories of the people directly affected by them—and, in many cases, among their descendants as well. The experience of trauma, loss, and injustice, in turn, directly shapes how the past is viewed, namely by leading it to be surveyed from a distinctly moralistic perspective. Indeed, a crucial identifying feature of a historical legacy that has not been normalized is the persistence of ethically informed calls to study it, learn its proper 'lessons,' and hold them in memory, lest the errors of the past be repeated one day in the future. In short, it is the continued aura of moralism surrounding a given historical era that helps to define its 'abnormality.'" See G. D. Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 16. See also A. Megill, 'Two Para-Historical Approaches to Atrocity,' *History and Theory*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2002, p. 106.

In addition to the importance of empathy, we have seen repeatedly throughout this study the centrality of responsibility in addressing the history of atrocity—both that of historical individuals and institutions, as well as of the historians who study them. While Chapter Seven specifically dealt with how this issue shaped the debate regarding revisionist accounts of the Great Terror, it has pervaded our entire discussion. From Arendt's 'banal' Eichmann to an 'inevitable' Stalin, we have seen repeated accusations of mitigating perpetrator guilt and culpability as a result of particular representations of events. Additionally, even if many historians understandably wish to avoid a 'blame game' in writing about atrocity, it seems that their wider audience does support a more explicit engagement with these matters. As the popular response to *Hitler's Willing Executioners* demonstrated, accounts which enable the reader to "cut through complexity and hold the perpetrators accountable in an emotionally satisfying fashion"[6] resonate with the public. For historians, it seems, critically engaging with the responsibility of past actors remains an important aspect of adequately coming to terms with atrocity.

Nonetheless, the accusations of mitigating the guilt of historical individuals are themselves indicative of an additional responsibility which has been a constant theme of this study, namely that of historians *as historians*—to their profession, their colleagues, their readers, and, most importantly perhaps, to the memory and dignity of the victims of atrocity. Fittingly, these various issues culminated in the final chapter of this study with our examination of *Irving vs. Penguin & Lipstadt* and the antithesis of 'responsible' scholarship in the practice of Holocaust denial. Clearly, historians have not been ignorant of their duties when approaching past atrocity, as the response to Irving and his work aptly demonstrated. Greater awareness and self-reflexivity on these matters, however, remains an ongoing task for historians, and can only prove useful as we continue to ask questions regarding how we want to write about past atrocity. We should not wait for the challenges of 'bad' history in order to engage with these questions of responsibility.

Finally, we return to the necessity of taking seriously and explicitly engaging with the moral complexity raised by the historical experience of atrocity. We have seen repeatedly that this history resists easy understanding; those who try to offer easy answers are more often than not unsuccessful. This "grey zone" beckons for historians, and invites them to embrace the uncertainty and ambiguity rather than simply seek to reaffirm the certainties. Writing a narrative of these events in a spirit of vengeance, competition or indifference, seeking to simply "confirm our own sense of moral righteousness or political

[6] C. J. Dean, 'History Writing, Numbness, and the Restoration of Dignity,' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 17, nos. 2-3, 2004, p. 59.

persuasion,"[7] is ultimately counterproductive. Instead, an attitude described by one scholar as "moral modesty"[8] seems to characterise the more 'successful' histories of past atrocity, informed by a strong commitment to sensitive understanding and prevention. With this approach, writing about such events becomes less presentist and more oriented to the future, rendering Patrick Henry's 1775 observation that "I know of no other way of judging of the future but by the past"[9] more relevant than ever.

In highlighting the implicit moral dimension of historical method and inquiry, and seeking to encourage greater self-reflexivity and explicit discussion of this moral dimension amongst historians, this study has opened up a rich realm for further investigation. Many complex questions, and many avenues for reflection, have been suggested by our systematic examination of how moral concerns have shaped and driven debate within historians' discussion of the Holocaust and Stalinism. One commentator has recognised that "one of the most challenging aspects of writing a moral history…is that it will never have the last word."[10] We have seen, however, that having the 'last word' on the history of atrocity is neither necessary nor desirable. If these histories remain 'unclosed' in the present, it naturally follows that historiographical discussion about them is similarly ongoing. Nonetheless, the task of further discussion must now fall to others. This study has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of addressing the moral questions raised by the more troubling aspects of history, both for our discipline and, far more importantly, for our civilisation. It is hoped that historians will accept this invitation offered to them, and in doing so, go some way towards aiding our continuing efforts to find meaningful and adequate means of addressing the historical experience of atrocity.

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[7] Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters*, p. 4.
[8] Cotkin, *Morality's Muddy Waters*, p. 205.
[9] Patrick Henry, to the Virginia Convention gathered at St. John's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, 23 March 1775, as cited in R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (1990), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. xxiv.
[10] H. S. Stout, "'An Important, Albeit Halting Step,'" *Historically Speaking: The Bulletin of the Historical Society*, November-December 2006, p. 33.

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