

All in all, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* is a thoughtful work of analysis, but its loosely related essays never really settle on a common theme. The closest Dean comes to a unifying thesis appears in her brief conclusion, where she describes the current discourses on pornography, celebrity, indifference, and homosexuality as part of an evasive and defensive unwillingness of contemporary society to admit that a “monstrous ... person may be lurking anywhere and may even be ‘us’” (p. 136). This thesis may be valid, but without empirical support it remains unproven. To be sure, Dean also argues throughout that the discourses she analyses reflect the “precariousness,” “fragility,” and “failure of empathy” in today’s world. But, despite the fact that the theme of empathy is ostensibly central, readers will be hard-pressed to find Dean offering clear declarations of causation, for she seems to prefer argumentation via metaphorical association.

Further complicating readers’ efforts is Dean’s idiosyncratic style that, while not overburdened by jargon per se, displays a large number of lexical and stylistic oddities. Beyond a tendency to engage in first-person signposting throughout the book (“In what follows I discuss how...”), she displays a pattern of turning adjectives into nouns (“indifference was a more active form of uncaring,” p. 90); transforming nouns into verbs (“Friedlander nuances his assertion;” p. 92); using conceptual nouns as active subjects (“effeminacy ... sought to degrade [Hitler’s] charisma,” p. 112); and a repetitive and opaque usage of the verb “to figure” (as in, “sexual ... ‘pathology’ figures pathological politics” p. 134). On top of this, a number of small errors can be found in the book, including mistaken references to “Michael Bodeman” (instead of Y. Michal Bodemann, p. 34), “Wolf Jost Siedler” (instead of Wolf Jobst Siedler, p. 103), “Jacob Heibrunn” (instead of Heilbrunn, p. 50), and Saul Friedlander’s *Reflections on Nazism* (instead of *Reflections of Nazism*, p. 156). Taken individually, such glitches are minor, but together with an elusive argumentation, they contribute to a somewhat awkward reading experience and may lead some readers to wish that Dean had spent more time allowing her otherwise provocative ruminations to ripen still further.

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***The Genocidal Temptation: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda and Beyond*, Robert S. Frey, ed., (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), xviii + 267 pp., cloth \$35.00.**

All but one of the seventeen chapters of this book are reprinted from the journal *BRIDGES: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Theology, Philosophy, History, and Science*. The subtitle hints at the subject matter: ethics in light of the enormities of the twentieth century. The editor claims its originality in the following terms: “This is the first time that—in one volume—compelling integrated focus has been directed

towards the Nazi killing programs, American atomic bombings in Japan, Tutsi massacres in Rwanda, Soviet genocide in Lithuania, and other mass killing and repression programs” (p. xvi, emphasis in original). Given this idiosyncratic assortment, it is hardly surprising that no other book reprises exactly the same list. Thus we have Darrell J. Fasching, Eric Markusen, David Blumenthal, Konrad Paul Liessmann, Alan Milchman, and Alan Rosenberg reflecting on ethics after Auschwitz and Hiroshima; Samuel Totten, Henry Huttenbach, Steven L. Jacobs, and Peter V. Ronayne thinking about genocide and condemning the reluctance of the USA and others to call what transpired in Rwanda in 1994 by that name. Robert Frey, Steven Carter, and Hans Askenasy worry about “the bomb,” while Askenasy, in a second chapter, condemns what he calls Daniel J. Goldhagen’s “Holocaustbabble” and asks whether we are all Nazis; Warren K. A. Thompson links the Holocaust and masters degrees in business administration, and, in a contribution that is difficult to relate to the others, Dovidé Budryté writes about the Soviet deportations of Lithuanians during World War II.

Apart from the Budryté chapter, which is historical in character and tries to say something new to English-language readers, the analyses are neither compelling nor integrated. For one, the chapters are far too short (one is 2 ½ pages!) to be able to do more than raise a question or two and advance a thesis. As many of the writers are well-known in their respective fields, it is more profitable to consult their elaborated arguments elsewhere. Neither are these their best performances. The questions posed are unoriginal and the theses advanced no longer particularly interesting. Wringing one’s hands about the human capacity for evil explains nothing and, at least here, impedes clear vision. Some of us wonder why genocides do not occur more often. Moralizing is no substitute for sober historical analysis. At times, the essays appear to argue that these crimes could be prevented if people behaved ethically: if we were nice to one another then we would not be beastly, a circular argument of dubious value.

And yet the book does not focus solely on the individual. The challenges of modernity are also a constant theme, above all the role of value-free science and instrumental rationality in inuring their agents to the consequences of their actions. The commentary and endnotes reveal a heavy and usually uncritical reliance on Weber, the Frankfurt School, Arendt, Bauman, and other critics of rationalization. It is not that the authors are wrong. It is that they are conveying banalities about scientific civilization. Certainly, one does not find here the creative operationalization of their ideas evident, for example, in Omer Bartov’s 1996 *Murder in Our Midst*. The discussion is extremely derivative and offers nothing new for those interested in these issues. Because the basic concepts are not explicated adequately either, the book cannot not serve as a primer or introduction.

If the contributors wanted to advance our understanding of why genocide occurs in particular forms in modernity, they would have needed to link rationalization to various racisms (such as antisemitism). But ideological issues are almost

totally absent from the book. Then there is the polemic against the “uniqueness of the Holocaust.” The catholic gesture of subjecting the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and other instances of mass death to comparative analysis is commendable, but not if it entails flattening out their differences by viewing them as but instances of modern pathologies. I miss the careful negotiation of the general and the specific features of these events one finds in Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence* (2003).

The true value of *The Genocidal Temptation* is its character as a symptomatic text. It expresses the simplistic assumptions of well-intentioned men (no women here!) who, judging by what is on display, know something about genocide but less about social theory. Of course, Huttenbach, the founder of the *Journal of Genocide Research*, is apprised of the salient literature, but what is the value of publishing our thoughts in this form? In the increasingly hectic world of modern academia, the ratio between the spare time to read and the amount to read is spiraling. I mourn the trees destroyed in the production of this book. Reducing the environmental impact of our work by offering the scholarly community only what honestly can be asserted to be essential reading is the ethical lesson I have drawn.

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***Survivors: Cambodian Refugees in the United States*, Sucheng Chan (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 337 pp., cloth \$45.00, pbk. \$25.00.**

It has become a truism that, for survivors of genocide, the destruction does not end when the killing stops. The obliteration of families, communities, entire ways of life; the persistence of flashbacks and nightmares; continuing efforts to achieve some semblance of justice and establish appropriate remembrance; the retrieval of remnants of the world before; the multiple tasks of recreating life and livelihood (which are much more difficult in a new language and culture): all of these factors make “survival” not a fact but a process that is negotiated and renegotiated throughout the years.

If this is the experience of genocide survivors in general, Sucheng Chan’s excellent study teaches us why it has been true in particular for those survivors of the Cambodian genocide who have resettled in the United States. At the center of their story are the horrors of the destruction itself: an eruption of atrocity sustained by a virulent mix of racism and ideology, and a system of terror that leveled everything—marriage, religion, education—that undermined total obedience to the state. By the end of the “Democratic Kampuchea” (DK) regime in 1979, Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge had killed 1.7 million people, or 20 percent of the Cambodian population; many more had been beaten, tortured, and raped. Virtually everyone had been forced to witness the brutality. According to one survivor, “We were timid and lost. We had to