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Between Hagiography and Wounded Attachment: Raphaël Lemkin and the Study of Genocide

Acknowledgements

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Guest Editorial: Between Hagiography and Wounded Attachment: Raphaël Lemkin and the Study of Genocide

One or Several Lemkins

Raphaël Lemkin is the signature figure of genocide studies. From his invention of the term, to his fervent efforts to create the Genocide Convention, to his detailed historical analysis of mass atrocities, Lemkin's status ensures that his writings and life will remain a source of continuing interest for the field. This collection of articles seeks to deepen the growing scholarship on Lemkin's life, activism, and thought. While considerable time has been spent pouring over Lemkin's lifework and his campaign for the Genocide Convention has captured popular attention, much of the scholarship on Lemkin tends to describe his writings and labors in one of three genres. First, Lemkin the hero. This genre of scholarship imagines Lemkin as a tireless, ever working man who, through self-sacrifice and great personal tragedy, fought for the improvement of the human condition.¹ A champion of rights and freedoms, in this genre Lemkin's work is lauded as a signature achievement of human compassion and international justice. A second genre, in contrast, emphasizes the role of Lemkin as a scholar. In this genre, Lemkin's life, journey and activism are not placed at the narrative center, rather, Lemkin is envisioned as a kind of authentic intellectual. His insights were forged from an exposure to the vicissitudes of the refugee condition, he wrote and spoke in response to dark times and crafted new analytical tools for confronting mass violence. According to this scholarly interpretation of Lemkin, his writings develop new connections between different episodes and forms of violence and serve as a model for the future of genocide scholarship.² A final major genre positions Lemkin as the obdurate critic of his time. In this perspective, Lemkin appears as a visionary who understood the dangers of the colonial and national experiments emerging at the end of the 19th century. A person of great perspective and self-reflection, Lemkin foresaw the fascism of the colonial condition, or so the argument goes. He rejected the flimsy ideological excuses given for mass murder and the destruction of indigenous livelihoods or religious communities everywhere. Distinctly aware of modernity's propensity to stoke social anxieties and enflame xenophobic hatreds, Lemkin emerges as a critical activist that grappled with the deep problem of the colonial predicament.³

These genres do not describe all studies on Lemkin nor are they mutually exclusive. Each genre has been subject to doubt, criticism, debate, contradiction and confusion. Each genre presents important, if contestable, features of Lemkin's life and work. However, all too often these genres impede scholarship on Lemkin and mass atrocities more generally. In specific, genres provide readily identifiable tropes or patterns of narrative that, by definition, both support and limit what scholars can say about a particular topic. In this case, the dominance of the genres surrounding Lemkin potentially precludes a more thorough investigation of his life and the benefits and drawbacks of his conceptual schemas.

These genres do serve an important function by providing an anchor point for the discipline of genocide studies, which ensures that scholars speak a common language and refer to similar set of problems. In an interdisciplinary pursuit like genocide studies, this function is vital to connecting scholars that work across different regions, languages, societies, historical periods, and methodologies. Nonetheless, by codifying genres for interpreting Lemkin's work, genocide scholars run the risk of minimizing disagreements and overlooking other resources and approaches

¹ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Jay Winter, "Prophet Without Honors," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 3, 2013, accessed December 28, 2018, <http://chronicle.com/article/Raphael-Lemkin-a-Prophet/139515/>.

² Philippe Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of 'Genocide' and 'Crimes Against Humanity'* (New York: Knopf, 2016); Berel Lang, *Genocide: The Act As Idea* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Dominick J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer, eds., *The Origins of Genocide: Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

³ Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); John Docker, "Raphaël Lemkin, creator of the concept of genocide: a world historical perspective," *Humanities Research* 16, no. 2 (2010), 49-74; Martin Crook and Damien Short, "Marx, Lemkin and the Genocide-Ecocide Nexus," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 3 (2014), 298-316.

to the study of genocide.⁴ Indeed, the problem with each of the existing genres on Lemkin's work is not that they are historically inaccurate or rhetorically unpersuasive. Lemkin's life was filled with moments of a certain kind of tenacity and courage, he did write voluminous descriptions of mass violence; he did criticize forms of nationalism, colonialism and modernity. At the same time, these genres are well known at this point in the study of genocide. Remarking again and again on Lemkin's prophetic character, deep intellect, or critical faculties amounts to a refresher, to a proclamation: "once more with feeling" in response to the problems of an ever-changing world grappling with an ever-changing problem. It is our belief that if the discipline of genocide studies is to persist and to create valuable new insights and, moreover, if Raphaël Lemkin is to remain an important figure, then his work must be understood in new ways, received where it is useful and abandoned when it becomes an obstacle to further scholarship. While it is difficult to render any final judgment, we believe that the genres of Lemkin have become cliché and that sometimes impede rather than produce new scholarship in genocide studies.

The articles in this special issue both engage in the different genres of Lemkin studies (heroic, scholarly, and critical), but also provide excellent insights into the constraints of these genres. They challenge the image of Lemkin as a heroic figure, that he, through sheer force of will (or famous obstinacy) compelled others to listen, that he was an excellent or even novel scholar, that he gazed at the violence of the world with a fresh eye. To the contrary, the Lemkin described in this issue is sometimes a marginal figure in the birth of ideas, the construction of international law, or the popularization of genocide discourse. In others, he appears almost as the villain, dissuading and undermining appeals for racial justice. Still others read his interpretation of mass violence and historical methodology as too limited for a valuable examination of mass violence or view the genocide studies community as emphasizing the wrong pieces of his oeuvre. Yet, Lemkin's work still emerges as an inspiration, as a provocation to explore different modes of violence or legacies of domination as cases of genocide. In this respect, the volume deepens the critical scholarship (in both positive and negative senses) on Raphaël Lemkin's life and work. In doing so, it moves past the common tropes of Lemkin scholarship. In making these observations, the articles do the work of continuing to make Lemkin a useful figure for contemporary scholars in new and different ways.

Three different themes emerge across the writings in this volume. Each theme at minimum challenges received interpretations of Lemkin's writings, if not calling for a larger reconsideration of his work or role in the development of antigencide regimes. The first theme articulated in the special issue concerns the problem of situating Lemkin's work in historical context. What political conditions, forces or variables impacted Lemkin's process? Which actors changed the rhetoric of genocide? Who was responsible for the development of the first judicial judgments after Nuremberg? Was Lemkin as sensitive and honest about his life as his now famous autobiography implies? These questions have significant implications for the study of genocide because they concern not only how we situate Lemkin's life and work, but the formative period for law and genocide analysis. The articles in this piece thus reestablish the historical conditions of possibility for modern uses of genocide in scholarship, international law, and political activism.

The second theme that emerges in these pieces is the danger of constructing a hagiography of Lemkin's life and intellect. Indeed, Lemkin appears in many of these works less as the tireless advocate or genius activist and more like the pragmatist willing to sacrifice principle or a cunning sophist willing to spin a good story rather than stick to the facts. Lemkin's account of key dynamics in his homeland, his recollection of his role in the Nuremberg tribunals, and even the values that led him to create the concept of genocide emerge in a new light.

Finally, many of the articles outline key elements of Lemkin's scholarship, which could advance specific areas of genocide research such as the use of narcotics or the importance of territory to the preservation of community life. Here, Lemkin remains a valuable, if compromised, source for genocide research especially as a foil for contemporary interpretations of genocide that often deviate significantly from his original concept.

⁴ Benjamin Meiches, "Speaking of Genocide: Double Binds and Political Discourse," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 11, no. 2 (2017), 36-52.

Each article in this issue addresses one or more of these themes. They expand the historical context of Lemkin's works, challenge his position as the intellectual and moral compass for genocide studies, and propose new ways of addressing his work. As a set, they offer a brilliant advancement for the study of genocide as it reexamines the writings and life of its signature figure.

History, Hagiography, Dehiscence

Many of the pieces in this special issue explore into Lemkin's historical context and the different actors and agents that shaped the emergence of international law. As Anton Weiss-Wendt argues in his article "When the End Justifies the Means: Raphaël Lemkin and the Shaping of a Popular Discourse on Genocide," the appeal of Lemkin is, in this sense, easy to explain: "the world ... needs heroes." Weiss-Wendt contends that Lemkin is the right archetype for the twentieth century hero. He is a private citizen, a refugee from the Nazis who struggled to forge idealistic humanitarian norms and fought to create the first humanitarian treaty of the United Nations era. However, Weiss-Wendt argues that Lemkin should not be made into a saintly figure because doing so would obscure the questions of why and how the Genocide Convention became an imperfect instrument of international criminal law. Weiss-Wendt's article raises several pointed research questions: could the failure of the Genocide Convention be attributed to the way Lemkin had approached it? How do we retrospectively understand the advocacy and outcomes surrounding the Convention? The answer Weiss-Wendt proposes is that Lemkin should be credited with the adoption of a highly problematic and oftentimes counterproductive treaty as well as self-consciously oversimplify his own concept for mass consumption.

Mark Klamberg's "Raphaël Lemkin in Stockholm – Significance of his work on *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*," similarly examines Lemkin's life and complicates our narratives of the creation of the concept of genocide. In this piece, Klamberg addresses Lemkin's brief time in Sweden, prior to escaping occupied Europe, and long before Lemkin moved to the US, authored *Axis Rule*, or joined the allied prosecutors at Nuremberg. This history is crucial, Klamberg argues, because a significant part of the material for *Axis Rule* was collected when Lemkin lived in Stockholm between 1940 and 1941. Klamberg's article presents new information on how Lemkin was allowed to enter Sweden, his time as a lecturer at Stockholm University, and the people who helped Lemkin during his time in Sweden, including the lawyer and politician Karl Schlyter, and Professor Gösta Eberstein. The study also raises the question of whether the Swedish businessmen who travelled to Warsaw and helped Lemkin collect documents about the Nazi occupation were the same Swedish businessmen who helped the Polish resistance smuggle documents about the holocaust to London through Stockholm. Klamberg's piece poses serious questions about the different influences that helped to frame the questions and events that interested Lemkin over the course of his study.

Turning to Lemkin's experience at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Alexa Stiller reassesses Lemkin's impact on the war crimes tribunal. According to Stiller's contribution, "The Mass Murder of the European Jews and the Concept of 'Genocide' in the Nuremberg Trials: Reassessing Raphaël Lemkin's Impact," Lemkin had basically no influence on the course of these processes, but the concept of 'genocide' did. It was the Nuremberg proceedings that narrowed the concept down to the crime of direct and planned mass murder, Stiller argues, not the United Nations drafting process. Obviously, Stiller points out, the final definition of "genocide" was established with the Genocide Convention. Yet, Stiller continues to explore the contingencies in this history of Lemkin and the genocide idea and further contends that the extermination of Europe's Jews and the concept of 'genocide' were not used congruently in the Nuremberg trials and, in fact, this association between the 'Holocaust' and 'genocide'—which scholars often cite to explain the success of the word 'genocide' at the UN—could not have developed between 1945 and 1948.

Thomas Earl Porter's article, "In Defense of Peace: Aron Trainin's Contribution to the IMT," contributes to recent research on the relationship between Lemkin and the diplomatic history of the UN Genocide Convention. Porter argues that the UN Convention was not the result of a world-moral undertaking, but a compromise with Soviet legal theorists. Porter focuses on the towering Soviet legal theorist Aron Trainin, who is recognized by legal historians as one of the preeminent figures in the 20th century history of international criminal law. Trainin's contributions to the concept of genocide during the Nuremberg Tribunals and at the United Nations, Porter contends, have been

virtually ignored by scholars in the field of genocide studies, yet remain critical to understanding the origins and scope of international law. Porter delves into the significant influence of the Soviet delegation to the Nuremberg tribunals, a subject which is also largely overlooked by scholars of genocide. Along with Stiller's article, Porter's argument places far greater emphasis on lawmakers beyond Lemkin's context as crucial to the popularization of the concept of genocide.

Steven L. Jacobs, in contrast, addresses Lemkin's autobiographical presentation of the trials of Soghomon Tehlirian and Samuel Schwartzbard. In a brilliant excavation, "The Complicated Cases of Soghomon Tehlirian and Sholem Schwartzbard and Their Influences on Raphaël Lemkin's thinking about Genocide," Jacobs shows that both of these trials were widely known during Lemkin's life, but, more importantly, also involved critical issues, such as the status of anarchism, that Lemkin consistently fails to address in his oeuvre. Documenting the competing legal, social, and political factors at stake in these trials, Jacobs raises important questions about the status or function of Lemkin's scholarship and memory. This history raises troubling questions about how to read Lemkin. How do contemporary scholars situate and narrate the history of his life when he offers only partial explanations of the events and incidents that supposedly inspired him? By raising these questions, Jacobs subtly questions the hagiographic attention frequently devoted to Lemkin.

Daniel Solomon takes a different approach to the question of historical context by examining the historical use of genocide discourse as part of anti-racist and black liberation struggles in the United States. In his "The Black Freedom Movement and the Politics of the Anti-Genocide Norm in the United States, 1951-1967," Solomon traces invocations of genocide from the Civil Rights Congress' *We Charge Genocide* petition to the writings and speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., advocacy of Stokely Carmichael, political struggles in the state of Mississippi and elsewhere, Solomon provides an overview of an alternative history of the mobilizations surrounding genocide. In this version, the language of genocide served as a rich resource in the struggle for freedom amongst black Americans who easily drew the connection between Lemkin's vision and the practices of slavery and segregation. Largely unknown to contemporary audiences, Solomon demonstrates that the language of genocide played an important function for many political struggles beyond international humanitarian law. By doing so, Solomon opens a path to reread anti-genocide politics of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s as active and vibrant in arenas far afield from the core concerns of Lemkin and international law. Interwoven throughout Weiss-Wendt, Klamburg, Stiller, Porter and Solomon's pieces is a dedication to unpacking the historical context surrounding postwar international law. Each challenges the traditional genres of narrative and scholarship that envision Lemkin as essential to the ascendance of international humanitarian law.

In contrast, other scholars seek to delve further into Lemkin's writings in order to present a previously unconsidered image of Lemkin's thought. For example, Charlotte Keichel's article, "Legible Testimony: Lemkin," turns our attention to three undertheorized dimensions of Lemkin's scholarship: his emphasis on testimonials, his focus on the global scale of mass violence and political life, and his concern for the psychological dimensions of violence. By foregrounding these elements of Lemkin's writings, Keichel contends that a richer understanding of genocide, one more closely attuned to contemporary conditions, will emerge. Lemkin consequently appears as a precursor to insights about global politics that have only recently taken hold in the social sciences. This move, while celebrating Lemkin's foresight, also supplies us with a new image of Lemkin, one where Lemkin pushes not only the political, but theoretical boundaries of his time in an effort to grapple with the problem of mass violence. Keichel thus brings into relief how the hagiography of Lemkin may actually overlook otherwise important aspects of Lemkin's scholarship.

Elena Lesley's piece takes up a similar issue by analyzing the problematic practice of distributing alcohol as a technique of genocide. Starting with Lemkin's work, "Cultural Impairment and the Genocidal Potential of Intoxicants: Alcohol Use in Colonial North America," reveals Lemkin's sensitivity to the distribution of alcohol (and other substances aimed at the body's well-being) as a crucial technique of genocide. Lesley then connects these observations to the widespread use of alcohol as a technique of domination, assimilation and genocide in the context of indigenous North America. Emphasizing Lemkin's attunement to the porous or multiple character of violence, Lesley offers an image of Lemkin as sensitive to the multiplicity of practices that contribute to mass

violence. Here, Lemkin appears as a figure highly concerned with marginalized or invisible cases of genocide and with a novel approach to understanding mass violence.

In “Raphaël Lemkin’s Derivation of Genocide from His Analysis of Nazi-Occupied Europe,” Raffael Scheck re-examines the creation of the term genocide, arguing that Lemkin derived the concept from an analysis of a wide variety of Nazi occupation regimes. Lemkin’s writings reveal, for instance, that he thought the Nazi war effort, by waging a war on foreign peoples rather than states, was calculating that even a militarily defeated Germany would dominate a decimated Europe after the war. German aggression in Lemkin’s analysis, Scheck argues, was not only a war of conquest, but also an attempt to carry out a demographic revolution. Scheck also argues that Lemkin’s thinking on genocide was influenced by the U.S. government agency for which he worked at the time, the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW). By identifying German violations of the international law on occupations, Scheck contends, Lemkin could argue for the introduction of new international laws on genocide and on military occupations, which were orientated not only towards military campaigns and violent conflict, but also significant social and economic objectives.

Jonathan Hobson, in “Three Theoretical Approaches to Lemkin’s definition of genocide,” the first of two articles in this issue, places Lemkin’s theories of genocide, mass violence, and conflict into conversation with the seminal figure in Peace Studies, Johan Galtung. In addition to charting a way for Lemkin’s work to be relevant to Peace Studies, Hobson also attempts to elucidate the way Galtung’s concepts of direct, structural, and cultural violence—and his broader phenomenology of violence—offers an important tool for illustrating how genocide is a deliberate, long term and multifaceted process as Lemkin described, replete with many forms of social manipulation, victimization, repression, and oppression across all realms of social life. Also important for Hobson are the ways Galtung’s and Lemkin’s ideas overlap in their assessment of the role of power, in the act of direct violence and in the cultural and structural violence that often proceed direct widespread violence. Hobson subsequently turns to Greg Stanton’s well-established 10 stages of genocide model to offer a guide the pervasive processes that Lemkin and Galtung identify in their respective works.

Hobson, in the second article in this issue, “Lemkin and Prosecuting Genocide: Successes and Controversies,” adopts the social theory of genocide derived from the overlay of Galtung and Lemkin established in the previous article. Hobson’s goal is to use this theoretical framework to examine the history of genocide legislation, detail the extent of genocide prosecutions to date with novel primary source materials and, finally, illustrate the politics involved in genocide prosecutions using a case study of the International Criminal Court’s involvement in Africa and the failed extradition of Sudanese president Omar Al Bashir. The paper argues that the international community has not been able to stop what Lemkin described as genocide and has not seen a reduction in the kinds of cultural and structural violence that Lemkin and Galtung were both saw as a significant impediment to true and just peace. In each of these arguments, the rereading of Lemkin also is accompanied by a call to revisit central premises of genocide studies. Rather than return again and again to the same propositions about Lemkin, they offer a break or dehiscence that turns Lemkin’s writings into a resource for excavating previously unthought dimensions of mass violence.

Revisiting the Lemkin We All Know (and Love?)

Where does this leave us in our relationship to Lemkin’s life and work? At the outset, we outlined three genres of Lemkin studies. While the articles in this issue add complexity to these images of Lemkin they also raise further questions for the future of the discipline. For instance, has Lemkin become something of a fetish figure? Biographical, critical and popular histories of Lemkin’s work have become a regular feature of writing about the problem of genocide. The basic history of Lemkin’s creation of the language of genocide and his role in the creation of the Genocide Convention is so well-known that this journal, *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, explicitly asks contributing authors not to review this history because it is assumed to be common knowledge.⁵ Yet, Lemkin’s

writings in *Axis Rule* remain collective references in publications on genocide despite serving as a touchstone for nearly four decades of scholarship. Given the politicized, inconsistent and partial nature of these records, the question emerges why have scholars (including ourselves) remained so driven to outline, rehash, and recapitulate commentary on Lemkin's work. Put differently, what is at stake in the practice of "repeating Lemkin?" Why does his work command such utter fascination relative to his peers and to the many important efforts of later genocide scholars?

One potential answer is that Lemkin's role in the creation of the concept of genocide and the campaign for the Genocide Convention is relatively well established and part of a recent, reasonably well documented historical moment. Unlike many disciplinary origins and, beyond that, narratives of historical individuals, Lemkin's life is available for comment in broad strokes and especially in relation to the problem of genocide. This history provides a compelling narrative for scholars, one that reflects the conditions of genocide scholars and activists. Indeed, Lemkin's fervent, self-sacrificial effort to establish the Genocide Convention, his dedication to writing at the cost of his personal and social life, his apparent willingness to go to all lengths, including subterfuge, stand in stark contrast to the defeat of his agenda, his dramatic disappearance from public attention, and ultimate demise. In short, Lemkin's figure is one of a certain melodrama that combines the drive for social justice with a battle against an entrenched opposition of far greater power and resources.⁶ His story is one of an intellectual and writer, a thinker and an activist, a sojourner and inventor who lived at a moment of "world-historical" importance who faced almost certain defeat in spite of the apparent rightness of his moral position. This story resonates with the palpable sense of tragedy or defeat that advocates face when they call for more powerful responses to mass violence. In this regard, Lemkin's life and work potentially provides an anchor point for many genocide scholars, one that does affective and emotional work by providing a role model for intellectual courage in the face of near certain neglect.⁷

Another potential answer is simpler. Lemkin is the only point in common for genocide scholars. His work and history are, in brief, what holds us all together. The discursive pin, the name of 'Lemkin,' the narratives surrounding Lemkin, bind together disparate scholars that address the problem of mass violence in highly variable ways.⁸ Consider, for example, that genocide scholars do not agree on the precise cases that constitute genocide, they do not agree on the normative value of the term genocide, they do not agree on the best methods for studying mass violence, they do not have a consensus on the role of international law, they share few philosophical principles, and they have not come to any lasting consensus on the nature of the discipline itself.⁹ While every discipline is contestable and undergoes reinvention, the majority have the illusion of a common history and set of problems that define the objects and questions at stake for the field. In contrast, genocide studies is a nascent field with contestable boundaries that combines academic and non-academic scholars that, with limited exceptions, do not exclusively study the problem of genocide in their home fields. In this condition, Lemkin's story, his life and work, provide the most obvious point of discursive reference for scholars working across difference. The historical availability of Lemkin's archive and the popularity of his narrative certainly aid in this process, but Lemkin's

⁵ "Genocide Studies and Prevention Submission Guidelines: In effect beginning with Issue 13.1 and new submissions from September 1, 2018," *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, accessed November 1, 2018, https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/submission_guidelines.pdf.

⁶ John Cooper, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Power, *A Problem from Hell*. On melodrama as a genre of narration in response to violence see Elizabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁷ For instance, Jennifer Carlson and Kathleen Stuart describe how mood magnetizes or draws scholars to particular sensibilities, social circles, and forms of writing. See Jennifer D. Carlson and Kathleen C. Stewart, "The Legibilities of Mood Work," *New Formations* 82, no. 3 (2014), 114-133.

⁸ For an excellent account of linguistic functions see K. David Harrison, *When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹ Mohammed Abed, "Clarifying the Concept of Genocide," *Metaphilosophy* 37, no. 3-4 (2006), 308-330; Scott Straus, "Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, no. 3 (2001), 349-375; A. Dirk Moses, "Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the 'Racial Century': Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust," *Patterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 4 (2002), 7-36.

work, his invocation, enables scholars to speak to one another, to establish a common language that facilitates the intelligible sharing of insights across boundaries. As a result, Lemkin's work may be marshalled for any of a variety of activists, analytical or critical purposes. Michel Foucault once described the "author function" in relation to figures such as Karl Marx to indicate how a specific figure emerges to consolidate and legitimate subsequent statements or expressions of truth within an academic discourse.¹⁰ The author-function encapsulates how a particular name, in this case Lemkin's, grounds subsequent debates about the problems she or he introduced, the legitimacy of his or her different texts, the signature works versus the more unfinished musings. In the context of genocide studies, the author-function enables scholars that embrace deconstruction, quantitative measurements, agent-based modeling, linguistic anthropology, non-Western history, and normative advocacy within international law to speak to one another through their different problematizations. Lemkin is, in this respect, a kind of suture point that holds the field of genocide studies together despite disagreements and divergences. Many scholars might argue that it is the events or episodes of mass violence that draw the discipline together. However, this raises the question of whether such an agreement truly exists among scholars about which episodes are legitimate points for discussion. The potent reaction of different divisions with genocide studies indicates that far from a settled, constant response to mass violence, we experience affective responses to different rhetorical invocations of the term. The discipline's interests in Lemkin are thus motivated by more than a concern about mass violence, they concern the identity or self-definition of genocide studies.

The status of Lemkin in genocide studies raises several different questions for contemporary genocide scholars. First, has the discipline arrived at a limit with respect to what studies of Lemkin offer in terms of new ideas and insights? Put differently, is there a sense that Lemkin has had his moment or do Lemkin's writings continue to offer a resource for genocide scholars? This question addresses the broad emergence of a field of "Lemkin studies?" Beyond questions regarding whether Lemkin's comparatively small number of writings support the creation of such a field, does his writing sustain rich enough conflicts over meaning or intent, method or analysis, history or impact to sustain an ongoing dialogue? These questions do not have any clear answers. Nonetheless, it is important to raise them in the context of Lemkin's work precisely because the gestures of deifying, criticizing, and rescuing Lemkin have, in different forms, already been carried out. Is there more to say on the life and work of Lemkin or should we be looking elsewhere? Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive options, nor do we counsel any final direction, but raising the question is important to taking self-inventory as a field of scholars concerned with their common history.

Second, what is at stake in the return to Lemkin in relation to the politics of the study of genocide? If Lemkin provides an inspiration, model or guide for scholar activists what does this say about the political commitments and methods of genocide scholars? Does the popularization of Lemkin signal that genocide studies has reached an impasse with respect to the question of how to pursue the goals of ending mass atrocities or mobilizing efforts to redress histories of mass violence? Could Lemkin's work and life serve as an alibi for not addressing the more fundamental problem facing genocide scholarship, the absence of a model for politically achieving a different outcome despite many decades of innovation in international law, political organization and disciplinary insight? As the political theorist Wendy Brown discusses, returning again and again to the same figure or episode often constitutes a "wounded attachment."¹¹ In this case, does Lemkin's lifework constitute the "wounded attachment" for genocide scholars without a place to express dissatisfaction with the state of the relationship between scholarship, activism and political change?

Finally, does Lemkin's work, as a common reference for scholars of genocide, substitute for a more active discussion about the principles and values that guide the study of genocide? Lemkin certainly offers a model of scholarship and politics, but there are other modalities available. Is the desire to return and reiterate the lessons of Lemkin also a movement against the more difficult challenge of addressing the future of this area of scholarship? To put the point differently, the

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interview by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113-138.

¹¹ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 52-77.

Leninist question “what is to be done?” places a timely pressure on the burgeoning field of Lemkin studies. We pose this question without a definitive answer. It may not even be the right question to pose in the first place. However, the consistent interest in Lemkin, both supportive and critical, works against the more arduous, contestable process of deciding, collectively, what the ethical and political ambitions of genocide studies are to become. Indeed, unlike other disciplines, genocide studies lacks an epistemological center capable of providing the illusion of a stable historical foundation. As such, the discipline should be far more open to transformative and exploratory work.

The articles in this volume both implicitly and explicitly address these questions and problems. They highlight the need for further critical scrutiny of Lemkin’s place in history and in the discipline of genocide studies more specifically. Many of the authors would likely disagree with the above characterization of Lemkin or offer their own variations on these themes. Nevertheless, the problems outlined here remain germane both to the study of Lemkin’s legacy and to the location of Lemkin’s writings in the future of genocide studies. These are issues without obvious or clear direction and where the predicative ability to assess the importance of Lemkin’s work for the future. One thing, however, is quite clear. Lemkin will remain a formidable figure for studies of genocide well into the future.

Acknowledgements

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