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drama, *Singer*, is one of the most poignant portrayals of Holocaust survivorship written in the twentieth century” (p. 283). What makes this text “remarkable” and “one of the most poignant portrayals,” given the vast number of survivor dramas?

Plunka also might have confronted more fully some of the larger issues of dramatic representation of the mass murder—issues such as the appropriateness of using the Shoah to comment on contemporary political issues. He does not fully address, for example, the appropriateness of Tony Kushner’s commentary on Ronald Reagan in his Holocaust drama *Bright Room of Day*, or Flannery’s use of the genocide of the Jews to criticize Margaret Thatcher in *Singer*. For that matter, are these truly Holocaust dramas if their intent is to critique the present rather than to explore the uniqueness of the Shoah?

Another chapter that calls for additional theoretical analysis is “Transcending the Holocaust.” Plunka explains: “Two Holocaust dramas, *Eli* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, transcend the Holocaust by universalizing the experience, leaving the audience with the philosophical notion that the Shoah was essentially a quasi-moral or religious battleground, a momentary phase of history in which evil temporarily triumphed over good” (p. 94). While Plunka does in-depth analyses of both texts, he might also confront the suitability of this dramatic strategy in relationship to the lessons of the Holocaust. Should the Holocaust be transcended in theatrical works? What is the value of universalizing this specific genocide in such representations?

These issues aside, Plunka’s *Holocaust Drama* adds significantly to previous studies of theatrical representation of the Shoah. Most important, perhaps, the work is a successful introduction to Holocaust drama, useful to students and general readers who are engaging for the first time with the complexity of representing on stage the Nazi genocide of the Jews.

Alvin Goldfarb

Western Illinois University

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***American Jewish Loss after the Holocaust*, Laura Levitt (New York: New York University Press, 2007), xxxvi + 283 pp., cloth 40.00.**

In *American Jewish Loss after the Holocaust*, Laura Levitt likens herself to the *Odyssey*’s Penelope, “simply appreciating the unfinished character of ordinary life, weaving and unweaving . . . both putting together and taking apart . . . beloved family stories (p. xvi).” Levitt describes such actions as an American Jewish response to the Holocaust in that they enable American Jews to see a connection between their own stories and Holocaust experiences.

Through analyses of her family’s personal history, including its immigration to the United States as part of “the vast migration of Eastern European Jews at the

beginning of the twentieth century,” Levitt suggests that we “begin to imagine other Jewish futures after the Holocaust” (p. xvii). She hopes American Jews will “bring their own pictures and stories” to the Holocaust—that they will “no longer be embarrassed about [being] encumbered with [their] own losses,” and that they will therefore participate in an “affirming” and “generative” practice (p. 191). Ultimately, Levitt describes three things: her search for the history of her father’s mother, Lena Levitt; the search’s significance to her family now; and the pertinence of the search to Holocaust loss.

Having received a cache of unattributed photographs of her family, she thinks back to the “allure of family photographs in . . . Yaffa Eliach’s *Tower of Faces in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*” (p. 8). In her first chapter, Levitt recalls that “seeing familiar Jewish faces, postures, and poses in this public space,” she wanted “to imagine these people as my own. I wanted these photographs to be those of my own family’s albums” (p. 19). She identifies with these “Jewish faces,” and imagines her own “family pictures . . . on display in public as a way of complicating the notion of identification” (p. 8). For this reason as well, she sandwiches family photographs between sections analyzing other forms of Holocaust representation. Her notion of a complicated identification implies that American Jews need to integrate the Holocaust into “normal” stories of loss; their “desire to be included in the narrative of the Holocaust is expressed quite literally in [their] efforts to seek out a connection” (p. 21).

Levitt’s position is freighted by her desire for public connection, which leads her to contrast her desires for identification and inclusion with those of Lori Lefkowitz, a child of survivors and a professor at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, who takes “no pleasure in identifying with these images,” and who finds “this recognition . . . unbearable,” for, as she says, this “was not a place of affiliative belonging” (p. 29). Levitt admits that her subject position is underwritten by a desire for such belonging; the desire to see her family album displayed on the Tower’s walls is a desire for recognition within that history, to imagine herself as part of that community. Consequently, she includes herself and her family in that history without being “embarrassed”: they are not victims of the Holocaust, but they have experienced losses.

Lefkowitz’s remarks, though, lead Levitt to the realization that she has “expressed a comfort and pleasure in identifying with European Jews who had been murdered in the Holocaust” (pp. 29–30). Levitt perceives this admission, which is made only rarely in literary criticism, as a part of the “process” that she must make visible to her readers. She provides the provenance of her own responses to the Holocaust; in doing so, she gets at the subjective underpinnings of American Jewish responses to the Holocaust—and this is what makes her work significant.

The third chapter concerns photographs that Levitt's father amassed as a child. In his youth, he hid them in the house his family eventually would lose during the Depression (p. 87). These pictures came to light only when the new owner of the house discovered them. Levitt's father recovered the pictures and Levitt analyzed their meaning for her family. She likens the discovery of her father's "secret stash" of photographs to Ann Weiss' discovery of 2,400 personal photographs taken from Jews upon their arrival at Auschwitz—a discovery that led Weiss to publish her 2001 volume *The Last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz-Birkenau*.

Levitt criticizes Leon Wieseltier for insisting, in his foreword to Weiss's book, that "we must complete the story of every picture. We adhere these families to their fate" (p. 126). She argues that Wieseltier's admonition must be "resisted" because "what we lose in 'completing these stories' in this way is the prosaic ordinariness of these lives. We blot out the normal, everyday character of Jewish life before the Holocaust" (p. 127). Echoing her earlier claim that she aims to appreciate "the unfinished character of ordinary life" (p. xvi), Levitt notes the importance of seeing "these stories next to each other—my father's stash and the 2,400 photographs from Auschwitz. I do this, not to fold them in on each other, but to see them in conversation, touching each other, but not necessarily overlapping" (p. 143). However, Levitt's placement of "her father's stash and the 2,400 photographs from Auschwitz" next to each other seems to beg the question: are the two forms of suffering—her father's loss of his mother to illness at a young age and the victims of mass murder—commensurable? If they are to be joined, then, is identification the necessary link for this commensurability?

In her conclusion, Levitt describes her return to the Tower, carrying a folder of the "narratives and images of my two grandmothers, my father's stories, as well as the many tales of friends and colleagues" (p. 191). She invites the reader to enter the Tower with her, bringing their pictures and stories so that they, too, can "make connections" (p. 192).

In a risky move, Levitt uses the Holocaust as a signifier that adds value to her family narratives. Her gesture of holding up her family photos and notebooks to the photos in the Tower illustrates a "literal attempt" to insist on identification as the condition for witness. By claiming that "identification can continue to happen; stories can continue to come alive, and, in the process, new and different memories and other stories of loss can be more fully entertained" (p. 207), Levitt implies that anyone who would hold up their "pictures and stories" against the images presented in the Tower would come to a similar conclusion: their stories have value—not the same value, but a commensurate value nonetheless. However, readers might question whether such an intensive form of identification is really appropriate to "American Jewish loss after the Holocaust."

As a secondary source for researchers and graduate students in the arts and humanities, Levitt's text does not unearth new primary materials. It does, however, expose in American cultural discourses themes of and desires for inclusion as they pertain to the Holocaust. Historians and ethnographers should find it valuable.

Kitty Millet

San Francisco State University

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***Genocide Before the Holocaust*, Cathie Carmichael (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 256 pp., cloth \$45.00.**

Has Europe been the site of numerous genocides over hundreds of years? If modernization led to the Holocaust, did it also contribute to half a dozen other genocides on the continent? What is the real history of Europe behind the "progress" narrative of Western civilization? Such questions are raised, if not always answered, in *Genocide Before the Holocaust*, which ranges from the Balkans through Anatolia to the Caucasus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over the past decade Mark Levene, Donald Bloxham, and other scholars have problematized the received assumption that Europe's genocides are limited to the Holocaust and Bosnia. Levene, Bloxham, and Carmichael have examined populations that fell within reach of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, and in particular the violence resulting from the crumbling and then collapse of those structures.

Bloxham has argued that the Holocaust culminated a period of imperial collapse, emerging nationalisms, and complicating economic and political interests of the Great Powers.¹ Levene has privileged not Europe per se but the spread of Western European ideals of social "homogeneity" in the emerging system of nation-states.² Both focus on the genocide of the Armenians. Carmichael adds a number of other histories.

Re-evaluations have followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and reflect a new institutional preference for world history courses that supplant the narrative of an East-West divide. Marshall Hodgson's work on the relationship between Islam and Europe argues that this "division" between East and West is a reflection of Western ethnocentrism.³ In work on the European Union, Gerard Delanty postulates instead "many Europes," a plurality extending into the continent's "very civilisational nature": as a geopolitical entity Europe is as much "Eastern" as "Western."⁴

Carmichael's book advocates key features of the revised narrative. *Genocide Before the Holocaust* casts modernization as suffering, contradicting both the great "progress narrative" and notions of genocide as atavistic. It details relentless attempts to homogenize populations and to narrow identities. The targets were almost always religious and ethnic minorities, some extending over many parts of Europe and the Near East. *Genocide Before the Holocaust* depicts a normalization