Notes

1. For examples, see Penrose, “Authenticity, Authentication and Experiential Authenticity,” 1245–1267 and Richardson, “Site-Seeing,” 1–14.
2. Dalziel, “‘Romantic Auschwitz’,” 185–207; Hilmar, “Storyboard of Remembrance,” 455–470.
3. Urry and Larsen, The Tourist Gaze 3.0.
4. For a criticism of this display, see Jacobs, “Gender and Collective Memory,” 221–222.

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Holocaust education: contemporary challenges and controversies, edited by Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce and Alice Pettigrew, London, UCL Press, 2020, xii + 226 pp., £45 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-78735-797-6 / £25 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-78735-796-9 / Free (open-access PDF), ISBN: 978-1-78735-569-9

There are few organizations which have contributed more to understandings of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom than the University College London Centre for Holocaust Education (UCL CfHE). Since its establishment in 2008, the CfHE has conducted several major investigations into Holocaust teaching and learning, and continues to offer a comprehensive range of continued professional development (CPD) opportunities for educators.

Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies draws on over a decade of milestone research into teaching practices and students’ knowledge in English secondary schools. The book offers a useful synthesis of previous CfHE reports, notably landmark surveys of teachers in 2009 and students in 2016, and allows for Centre members to reflect critically on key findings.1 Centrally, the book addresses the practical and abstract challenges associated with Holocaust education in the twenty-first century.

The publication is formed of ten short essays, contributed by different Centre researchers. The impressive range of topics addressed is testament to the breadth of expertise which the
CfHE has accrued over a period of years. In each chapter, analysis of specific issues is framed within broader debates in Holocaust education. It is clear that the book is intended to appeal to a wide audience. *Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* will be of interest to educators, academics, and policy-makers alike. Indeed, co-editor Andy Pearce has noted the interdisciplinary potentials of the work: there is hope that the collection will facilitate the creation of ‘new connections’ between different ‘realms of Holocaust-related research’.2

Crucially, *Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* does not claim to offer definitive verdicts on the topics it considers. Rather, the tone of the book is such that it acts as a springboard for further debate. In any case, the presence of absolute judgments in the subjective field of Holocaust education should sound an alarm for any discerning reader. Reassuringly, *Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* strikes a skillful balance between evidence-based research and an openness to alternative perspectives.

It is reflective of the CfHE’s dedication to research accessibility that the volume has been made available through open-access platforms online. There can be hope that such measures will increase the reach of the important work undertaken at the Centre. Indeed, it is encouraging that initial CfHE geolocation analytics suggested that the book has received engagement from a truly global audience.

Each of the ten chapters within the book provides valuable input. Readers are steered through a variety of topics, ranging from antisemitism to the Milgram obedience experiments. Genuinely, there are no ‘weak links’ in the contents of this publication. However, certain contributions merit particular recognition.

Drawing on an impressive command of pedagogical theory, Arthur Chapman provides a characteristically perspicacious critical exploration of the ‘lessons-based’ approach to Holocaust education.3 The rational structure of Chapman’s chapter allows readers to gain a concise overview of the logic behind attempts to impart historical ‘lessons’. Chapman convincingly unpicks the differences between learning ‘about’ the Holocaust and learning ‘from’ the Holocaust. Invoking the philosophy of Primo Levi, Chapman offers the concluding thought that ‘thinking about lessons involve[s] a combination of historical and ethical thinking and a form of thinking that attended closely to specificity rather than one that traded in absolutes and universals’.4 Undeniably, Chapman’s contribution is erudite. At times, it bears similarities to a Socratic treatise. As such, it will perhaps appeal less to the general reader, even if the essay itself is ripe for deep academic engagement. Nevertheless, Chapman’s chapter provides a valuable abstract framework within which the rest of the volume can function.

Eleni Karayianni tackles the contentious issue of how primary-school children might be taught about the Holocaust.5 It is only relatively recently that this question has received direct attention, and Karayianni’s piece adds useful thoughts to a collection of essays published in 2018.6 A persuasive case is made for the limited social advantages of exposing primary-school children to the Holocaust, and Karayianni is particularly adept at deploying statistical data to support the discourse. Regardless, by the end of the chapter, the reader is left uncertain whether primary-school Holocaust education is a good idea or not: perhaps this is Karayianni’s intention. However, it is noticeable that this exploration of primary-school lacks the evidential foundations of other chapters in the volume. There have not been extensive surveys of primary-school students or teachers in the same way that the CfHE has studied secondary-school environments. As Karayianni herself admits, ‘more empirical evidence is needed to inform theoretical discussions’.7 Primary-schools represent an educational setting into which the CfHE might usefully aim to expand in coming years.

The complex British response to the Holocaust has typically occupied an uncomfortable position within wider public memory. The CfHE teaching resource *British Responses to the Holocaust* therefore serves an important purpose in encouraging educators to engage with
less-considered historical aspects of the Holocaust. Tom Haward reports on student and teacher reactions to the new classroom resource, and highlights its success in encouraging more sophisticated interpretations of Britain’s national history. The methodical creation of the resource has resulted in classroom materials which allow students to ‘move towards a more robust understanding of British responses that is complex and nuanced’. Initial reactions to *British Responses to the Holocaust* are certainly promising, and point towards a teaching resource that will possess real worth for years to come. Any stimuli that facilitate engagement with ‘difficult’ histories deserve encouragement. However, at this stage, the sample set of students and teachers who have engaged with the materials remains relatively small. *British Responses to the Holocaust* will require a significant expansion in distribution for the findings posited by Haward to be applied to a countrywide context.

One of the most concerning findings of the CfHE survey of students in 2016 was the discovery that some 74.8 per cent of respondents had read John Boyne’s novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Darius Jackson is therefore well-justified to chart the troubled relationship between Holocaust understanding and this particular work of fiction. Jackson articulates elegantly how ‘the blurring of the distinction between perpetrator and victim makes any discussion of justice impossible’, and the deleterious effects of the ‘historical inaccuracies and anachronisms’ within the text. In a longer piece, Jackson might more strongly have teased out the overriding issues at play: namely, the disquieting influence of popular culture on Holocaust consciousness. Scholars such as John E. Richardson have elsewhere considered the role of television and film in shaping public Holocaust memory. At times, certain readers may also feel that the chapter strays into a criticism of Boyne himself. Despite the unfortunate impact which the novel has had on student understanding of the Holocaust, it should also be remembered that Boyne did not intend his work as one of historical reference, nor as an educational tool. Boyne himself described *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as a ‘fable’. Nonetheless, such is the fluidity of Jackson’s argument that the publication of the novel now appears irresponsible to a contemporary audience.

Elsewhere, CfHE Programme Director Ruth-Anne Lenga provides a thoughtful reflection on the use of disturbing materials in the classroom, and offers ‘a disruptive perspective on the prevailing position among leading Holocaust education organisations: that atrocity images have very limited, if any, place in the classroom’. Meanwhile, Alice Pettigrew’s suggestion that the scale of problematic responses from Muslim students to the Holocaust have been exaggerated carries weighty social implications. Pettigrew’s piece might have been strengthened further through closer alignment with existing scholarship. Kara Critchell, for instance, has conducted overlapping analysis of the infusion of ‘Britishness’ in Holocaust memory.

Given the quality of its content, it is a pity that *Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* could not cover even more ground. In general terms, the volume might have benefitted from more extended metaphysical rumination on the responsibilities of Holocaust education organizations themselves. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* With increasingly varied sources of guidance available to educators, it would have been intriguing to explore the Centre’s own stance on the regulation of the Holocaust education ‘industry’. Likewise, perhaps because the work of the CfHE centres on the United Kingdom, it was beyond the ambit of the book to engage with substantial transnational comparisons of Holocaust education.

Overall, *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* offers a commanding exploration of the complex issues surrounding Holocaust education in the twentieth-century. Yet, one would expect nothing less of a publication produced by an organization with the prestige of the CfHE. The book is timely. Whilst comparable earlier works, such as Short and Reed’s *Issues in Holocaust education* (2004), still offer useful insights, the field of Holocaust education has developed apace in the meantime.
To this end, Holocaust education is a living organism. It is possible that the key conclusions of this book will remain up-to-date for only a temporary period. The findings of a CFHE survey of teachers conducted throughout 2019 and 2020 might necessitate revision of certain existing analysis. Equally, the COVID-19 pandemic will alter the practical landscape of Holocaust education. Whilst the CfHE could not have predicted such developments, the organization will nevertheless play an important role in helping educators adapt to the challenges presented by the crisis.

Notes
1. See Foster et al., *What do Young People Know and Understand about The Holocaust?* and Pettigrew et al., *Teaching About the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools*.
2. Quoted, Centre for Holocaust Education, *Major new Centre-authored collection published by UCL Press Open Access*.
3. Chapman, in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*.
4. Ibid., 71.
5. Karayianni, in in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*.
6. Szejnmann et al., *Holocaust Education in Primary Schools*.
7. Karayianni, in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*, 110.
8. Haward, in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*.
9. Ibid., 132.
10. Foster et al., *What Do Students Know and Understand About the Holocaust?*, 90.
11. Jackson, in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*, 148.
12. Richardson, “Broadcast to mark Holocaust Memorial Day,” 505–21.
13. Barber, “A Debate Over the ‘Limits of Representation’.”
14. Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*, 195.
15. Pettigrew, in Foster et al., *Holocaust Education*.
16. Critchell, “Proud to be British,” 1–23.
17. Short and Reed, *Issues in Holocaust Education*.

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The torture doctors: human rights crimes and the road to justice, by Steven H. Miles, Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2020, 207 pp., $29.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-1626167520

It has been 100 years since the publication of Alfred Hoche and Karl Binding’s infamous book Die Freigabe der Vernichtung Lebensunwerten Leben (Authorization of Life Unworthy of Life), a volume that sowed the seeds of medical destruction for the vulnerable and changed German culture at large. Dr. Hoche, himself a psychiatrist, coined the expression Lebensunwerten Lebens (‘life unworthy of life’) and argued, from a ‘rational’ point of view, that medicine and the law working together ought to act on behalf of the state to kill those deemed unworthy of life. Physicians – far from being forced to comply – through a combination of ideology, self-interest, and the quest for power – planned and executed the murder of millions of individuals, including the medicalized and supervised killings of Jewish people.

To our medical school colleagues in the United States, such reasoning immediately strikes them as shocking to the point of disbelief; and, a second thought quickly follows: our profession is so far removed from the medical abuses of the Shoah that ‘it could never happen here.’ Both errant thoughts pose a grave threat to bioethics and professionalism education here and abroad.

Hence, Dr. Steven H. Miles, a physician and Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, gives us a timely reminder – 100 years after Hoche and Binding – of the terrible abuses still occurring by physicians against the vulnerable on behalf the state, and of the reform still necessary if the legacy of the Holocaust is to be fulfilled and honor its victims and survivors.