

FACEBOOK THREAD FROM PROFESSOR MARK BAKER'S FACEBOOK / REPRODUCED WITH HIS PERMISSION / OCTOBER 2010



[Mark Baker](#) If anyone's got nothing better to do on a Saturday night than read this new interpretation of the place of the Holocaust in the Second World War then this is an important book (review). *Bloodlands* by Tim Snyder, a Yale historian, levels the killing fields of the territory usually referred to as the borderlands between ...Poland and Russia by pointing to the multiple, reciprocal, and indiscriminate episodes of genocide perpetrated by both Hitler and Stalin in this compact area and period. Snyder asks us to think of the murder of Jews, Soviets, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles on a continuum (rather than hierarchy) of suffering and death, opening a new front in the ongoing memory/history wars about the meaning of the twentieth century.

[The Worst of the Madness by Anne Applebaum | The New York Review of Books](#)

www.nybooks.com

Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin by Timothy Snyder Basic Books, 524 pages, \$29.95

[October 23 at 1:18pm](#)



[Ant פרוש Frosh](#) Continuum and hierarchy are not mutually exclusive.

October 23 at 2:53pm



[Ant פרוש Frosh](#) To be more explicit, continuums often contain hierarchies.

October 23 at 2:56pm



[David Shneer](#) Mark,

What do you think of Dovid Katz's critique of Tim Snyder in his recent piece in the Guardian?

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/sep/30/baltic-nazi-soviet-snyder>

October 23 at 9:05pm



[Deborah Staines](#) and yet one of the world's leading economic authorities on the Ukrainian famine continues to argue there is no causative link between the economy of the local grain controllers and Stalin himself. which might suggest that either a) genocide was committed by the regional controllers and not by Moscow; or b) evidence of Stalin's authorisation existed but is now lost; or c) genocide is not the right term for this particular historical episode.

October 24 at 4:34am



[Deborah Staines](#) Hierarchy requires division; continuum is about one thing passing into another without division.

October 24 at 4:35am



[Ant פרוש Frosh](#) DS, things can exist on a continuum while at the same time being of different magnitude. E.g. There is a spectrum/continuum (albeit non-hierarchical) of colour, but we can still divide this continuum up in order to label colours discretely.

October 24 at 7:50am



[Deborah Staines](#)

Yes, but as you say, that is a very good example of non-hierarchy. anyhow, those were Mark's choice of words to describe a difference of type. Typology itself is problematic concept, so it's hard to find a stable position using any of these terms. To go back to the question of terms for genocide and mass murder, genocide involves the intent to deny existence to a group. Grouping is part of casting, typing, categorising; this suggests the term 'genocide' is formulated by the same kind of thinking that produces genocide, in some ways (highly qualified statement). Yet, some people like groups, e.g. they identify with their national/sexual/cultural group. whilst 'genocide' is strictly a legal term, created by and formally used by international law, its popular usage is much broader and looser, and it sounds like that is what Snyder is entering into. Another interesting term is 'equivalence' or 'levelling' as Mark suggested. would a

metaphor of 'planes' as used by Deleuze & Guattari by useful to conceptualise away from the divisions of categories when thinking about political violence/mass killing?

October 24 at 8:38am



[Mark Baker](#)

Hi David; I've just read the Dovid Katz article. Dovid is a friend from my Oxford days who recently guided my student group around Vilnius so I'm very familiar with his double genocide critique of Lithuania. I do agree with him and am troubled by Tim Snyder's historiographical frame (I haven't read it yet, only the NYRB article). I'm troubled by reducing everything to a century of mass atrocity and genocide, which the reviewer seems to attribute to the Milosz quotation about the ubiquity of death made possible by war in these multi-ethnic territories. Each decade goes further in blurring the distinctions between perpetrators and victims by spreading the guilt and therefore nullifying it. While Snyder does seem to make an important case for the interconnectedness of all of these atrocities it seems to minimise the central role that ideologies have in driving genocides during war and allows the reviewer to go further in connecting the murders of WW2 to the post-war campaigns in Vietnam and presumably Iraq today. What do you think?

October 24 at 10:08am



[David Shneer](#) I agree with you, Mark, and probably could not have phrased it quite so eloquently. I'm putting together a workshop on Holocaust denial and

trivialization for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and am debating whether or not to include double genocide thesis and these kinds of equivalencies in the discussion, not obviously as denial, but as creating moral equivalencies that can lead one to think that the Holocaust was just another example of 20th century mass violence (i.e. trivializing it).

Tuesday at 2:24am