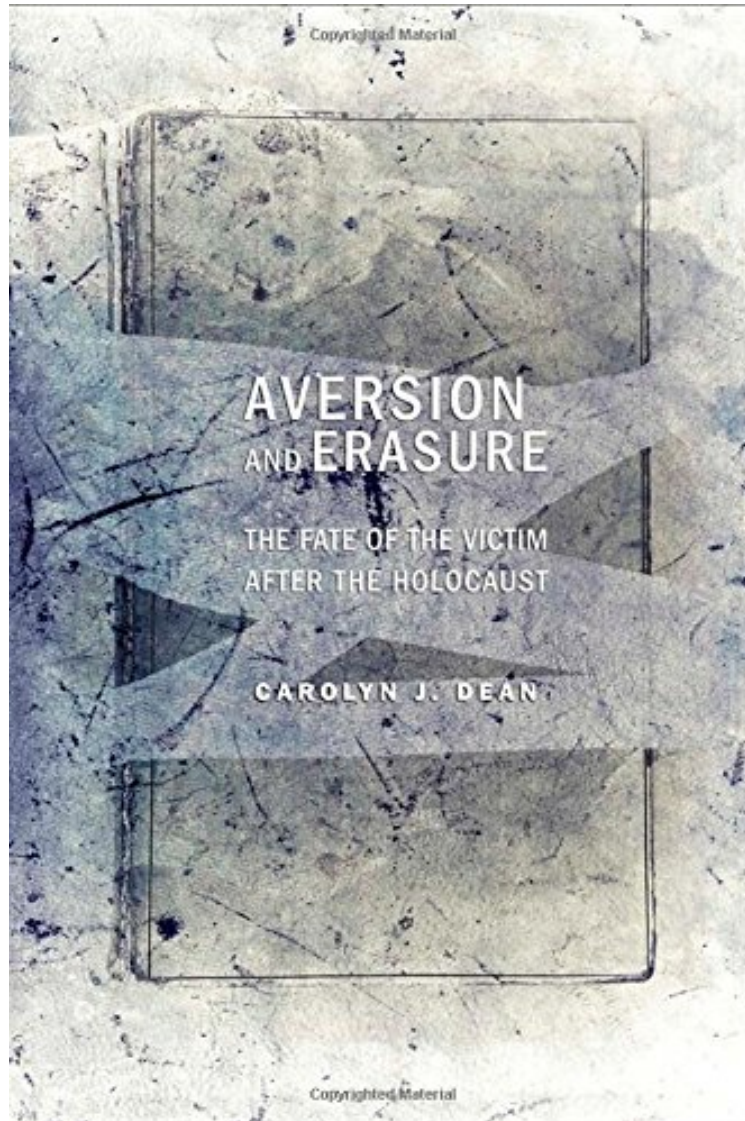


[Ebook free] Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust

## Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust

*Carolyn J. Dean*

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**Carolyn J. Dean : Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "How attitudes toward victims have been shaped historically." By ROROTOKO Professor Dean's interview on "Aversion and Erasure" ran as the Rorotoko Cover Feature on February 2, 2011 (and can be read in the Rorotoko archive).

In *Aversion and Erasure*, Carolyn J. Dean offers a bold account of how the Holocaust's status as humanity's most terrible example of evil has shaped contemporary discourses about victims in the West. Popular and scholarly attention to the Holocaust has led some observers to conclude that a "surfeit of Jewish memory" is obscuring the suffering of other peoples. Dean explores the pervasive idea that suffering and trauma in the United States and Western Europe have become central to identity, with victims competing for recognition by displaying their collective wounds. She argues that this notion has never been examined systematically even though it now possesses the force of self-evidence. It developed in nascent form after World War II, when the near-annihilation of European Jewry began to transform patriotic mourning into a slogan of "Never Again": as the Holocaust demonstrated, all people might become victims because of their ethnicity, race, gender, or sexuality because of who they are. The recent concept that suffering is central to identity and that Jewish suffering under Nazism is iconic of modern evil has dominated public discourse since the 1980s. Dean argues that we believe that the rational contestation of grievances in democratic societies is being replaced by the proclamation of injury and the desire to be a victim. Such dramatic and yet culturally powerful assertions, however, cast suspicion on victims and define their credibility in new ways that require analysis. Dean's latest book summons anyone concerned with human rights to recognize the impact of cultural ideals of "deserving" and "undeserving" victims on those who have suffered.

"In *Aversion and Erasure*, Carolyn J. Dean offers stunning insight into the enormous influence the concepts of victimhood and suffering bring to bear on current debates in history, identity, and human rights, as well as in political controversies. She allows the richness and complexity of issues including the iconic status of the Holocaust and the category of Jewish victimhood to unfold over the course of the book." Ethan Kleinberg, Wesleyan University, author of *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France* "All too often, and with the cool assurance of intellectual sophistication, it is said that post-Holocaust culture has entered upon an era of traumatic excess an apotheosis of a victim whose moral stature has grown so exorbitant that no representation can ever be adequate and no reparation can suffice. Suffering, we are told, has been fetishized, then instrumentalized, and finally displaced by its simulacrum. But even if such complaints merit consideration, the question is rarely posed as to just why we are so quick to doubt the reality of the victim's experience: What covert investments underlie the very critique of suffering? And what are the paradigms that shape our expectations of 'proper or proportionate suffering such that when confronted with actual testimony we suppress our empathy and avert our gaze? These are only a few of the questions that animate Carolyn J. Dean's provocative and critically agile reflections in this new book on the place of the victim in post-Holocaust theory and historiography. *Aversion and Erasure* simply abounds with originality and insight." Peter E. Gordon, Harvard College Professor, Department of History, Harvard University, author of *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* About the Author Carolyn J. Dean is Charles J. Stille Professor of History and French at Yale University. She is the author of several books, including *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* and *Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust*, both from Cornell.