Michael Marrus, *Lessons of the Holocaust* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). 216 pp. Paperback $19.46.

Running on the Republican ticket for the U.S. House of Representatives in the ninth congressional district of Ohio in 2012, the former plumber Joseph Wurzelbacher gained national and international media attention by drawing an unusual lesson of the Holocaust. "Joe the Plumber," as the media had dubbed him since his polemic against Barack Obama's allegedly socialist aspirations four years earlier, issued a video on gun control in which he claimed that Nazi Germany's implementation of gun control had prevented European Jews from defending themselves during the Holocaust. Wurzelbacher also suggested that the Armenian genocide, too, could happen only because of the gun control established by the Ottomans in 1911.

Wurzelbacher lost the election, perhaps despite or because of his Holocaust analogy—or maybe it did not matter at all to Ohio voters. In Michael Marrus' book, the anecdote is cited as an admittedly absurd illustration of the ever increasing popular fascination—some would say obsession—with using lessons from the Holocaust to make the world a better place. It is mostly the political left, not the right, and legions of educators who do so, not least in a growing number of American states and countries which mandate teaching about the Holocaust. These efforts are supported by powerful organization and institutions such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Facing History and Ourselves, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Yad Vashem. Marrus does not question the work of any of them specifically, especially not as far as they enable the furthering of scholarly knowledge about the Holocaust. In a classic historians' fashion, however, he warns of the dangers of using the history of the Holocaust for propagating tolerance, diversity, and inclusion, for fighting racism and bigotry, for spreading civil courage, and for preventing further genocides. "Narrowing the Holocaust to an issue of intolerance and prejudice," which have been common throughout human history and the present without leading to genocides, Marrus argues, not only distorts and simplifies the complex causality of the murder of the European Jews but also spreads delusional understandings of "such wrongdoing in our world today" (154). And so do other lessons of the Holocaust, such as the idea that more civil courage, more brave peoples' speaking up, or a broader empathy with the victims would have changed the catastrophic course of Nazi politics against Jews. Instead of spreading such distortions of the historical reality, Marrus contends, educators should honor their "first responsibility … to get the history right" (159). What is proclaimed as lessons of the Holocaust is determined not by history but by current values, ideas, mindsets, and interests of the proclaimers.

Yet Marrus maintains, in line with generations of historians, that studying and teaching the Holocaust is still useful, and certainly does not only satisfy

antiquarian interests. What it does is sharpen and enlarge "our knowledge of the human condition" in a rather generic way, just as learning about any part of history does, as a grand lesson about "human capacities," human agency, human choices and why humans in each moment take certain choices and not others (162).

This message is embedded in a merge of academic memoir, historiographical account, and philosophical tractate. In its first chapters, the book assembles authorities that have warned of granting "social responsibility" to history as did A.J.P. Taylor, who denounced the proximity of such endeavors to "the censor and the Index, the OGPU and the Gestapo" (43). The core four chapters of the book then review in a partly chronological, partly systematic fashion the growth of the "popular hunger for lessons from the Holocaust" (161), especially in Israel and in the American Jewish community. The Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, the Six-Day-War in the Middle East, the debate about and the success of the United States Holocaust Museum and the big names of Holocaust studies and Holocaust literature including Hannah Arendt, Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Raoul Hilberg, and Claude Lanzmann figure prominently. While readers familiar with Holocaust historiography and Holocaust memory may not gain many entirely new insights, they will appreciate Marrus' vivid accounts and his talent to present even complex debates in a concise and comprehensible fashion. The book makes for great reading in introductory classes on the Holocaust and especially in those on Holocaust memory.

Marrus touches on the euphoria in the academic world and beyond in the 1990s and even more in the 2000s about universal human rights allegedly spreading all over the world thanks to, not least, global Holocaust memory. Scholars such as Tony Judt, Elazar Barkan, Jeffrey Alexander, Michael Rothberg, Daniel Levy, Nathan Sznaider, Aleida Assmann and Ulrich Beck have written about it. In the last couple of years, however, aggravating conflicts about violent pasts and the advent of a new respectability of bigotry and even racist sentiments around the world, and especially in the United States, the Middle East, and post-Soviet Eastern Europe have, for the time being, stalled that euphoria. These developments seem to confirm Marrus' doubts.

And yet, I wonder if Holocaust scholars can or should simply lean back and rest on old insights in the limited political impact of their products? Calls for temperance in public and popular history won't satisfy the hunger for lessons from the Holocaust. Shouldn't historians intervene in how that hunger is satisfied, for instance by promoting and engaging in discussions, debates and controversies on how the past has affected and may affect the present? Focusing on the lessons of the Holocaust drawn and debated in America and Israel, Marrus is not much interested in the respective discourse in Europe since 1945. Europe's historical learning process has always been, and will be, a bumpy one, certainly not free of setbacks such as the current rise of xenophobic and antidemocratic

movements. But its process shows that engaged and even controversial public disputes on violent pasts may enable inclusive and consensual political cultures. Such disputes, however, do contrast the simple lessons of the Holocaust that Marrus rightly criticizes.

Thomas Kühne
Clark University

Toru Miura, *Dynamism in the Urban Society of Damascus: The Salihiyya Quarter from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Centuries* (London and Boston: Brill, 2015). 347 pp. Hardback $159.20.

This is the sort of book that is possible to write only after years of continuous research. Toru Miura has been studying Mamluk Damascus and specifically the northern quarter of al-Salihiyya since the 1980s, and therefore brings to *Dynamisn in the Urban Society of Damascus: The Salihiyya Quarter from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Centuries* the insight and maturity of a life-time of research.[1]

Several themes stand out in Miura's latest work. The long period under discussion allows him to utilize a number of methodologies and various types of primary sources in narrating the historical story of al-Salihiyya. Unlike many studies in pre-modern history published in the last two decades, Miura's familiarity with the subject allows him to develop a narrative that spans an extended time period from the establishment of the quarter in the Ayyubid period until the twentieth century. This is a return to history of the *longue durée* in a certain micro-historical fashion. Furthermore, the "dynamism" the title refers to is aptly brought to life in the text.

The book is divided into nine chapters in addition to an introduction and conclusion. Chapters one to three follow the establishment of the Salihiyya quarter of Damascus in the Ayyubid period through the Hanbali madrasas that were set there and their *awqaf* (pious endowments). Miura brings to light the different generations of Hanbali scholars, many of whom were Jerusalemite emigrants to Syria such as the Qudama family, and their role in establishing the quarter. The Abu 'Umar madrasa (college for Islamic higher religious studies) established in 1201–1202 served as a focal point and attracted new migrants to the quarter. Eventually, by the end of Mamluk rule, the quarter hosted thirty madrasas or around 19.7% of the madrasas of Damascus (63). Miura shows that despite the formative role that Hanbali scholars played in establishing the quarter, eventually the Hanafi scholars became more influential and enjoyed more patronage and support from military governors (69–76). In the third chapter the author analyzes the structure of Salihiyya itself and paints a picture of the sub-quarters or *haras* within it (which reached thirty to forty). Using the surviving literary