



JOURNAL OF
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RESEARCH

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The Journal of Perpetrator Research (JPR) is an inter-disciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal committed to promoting the scholarly study of perpetrators of mass killings, political violence, and genocide.

The journal fosters scholarly discussions about perpetrators and perpetratorship across the broader continuum of political violence. JPR does not confine its attention to any particular region or period. Instead, its mission is to provide a forum for analysis of perpetrators of genocide, mass killing and political violence via research taking place within the fields of history, criminology, law, forensics, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, memory studies, psychology, politics, literature, film studies and education. In providing this interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary space the journal moves academic research on this topic beyond, and between, disciplinary boundaries to provide a forum in which robust and interrogative research and cross-curricular discourse can stimulate lively intellectual engagement with perpetrators.

JPR thus not only addresses issues related to perpetrators in the past but also responds to present challenges. The fundamental questions informing the journal include: how do we define, understand and encounter the figure of the perpetrator of political violence? What can we discern about their motivations, and how can that help society and policy-makers in countering and preventing such occurrences? How are perpetrators represented in a variety of memory spaces including art, film, literature, television, theatre, commemorative culture and education?

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Editorial

Susanne C. Knittel

We are delighted to present you with our latest issue of JPR, just in time for the holidays. It opens with a timely exchange, hosted and introduced by Uğur Ümit Üngör, on the concept of genocide between two prominent scholars in the field: Martin Shaw, who defends genocide as a legal and sociological concept, and Dirk Moses, who points out the concept's instability and concomitant limitations. Shaw's contribution is based on the paper he delivered on 17 October 2024 at the NIOD Institute in Amsterdam as the annual Holocaust and Genocide Studies lecture. In it, he engages centrally with the work of Dirk Moses, and so we were very pleased when Dirk agreed to write a response for this issue.

Following this roundtable, there is a special section on perpetrator sites and their materiality, edited by Ingvild Hagen Kjørholt, Mario Panico, and Anneleen Spiesens. This special section is the result of an inter- and transdisciplinary panel session entitled 'Perpetrator Spaces: Preservation, Representation and Memory' at the 7th annual Memory Studies Association conference in Newcastle in July 2023, and it focuses on materiality, preservation, and artistic representation of violence in spaces connected to the memory of perpetrators and perpetration. Specifically, it homes in on curatorial, educational, and artistic practices at former concentration and torture camps, camp commandant's houses, and camp guards' or officers' homes that all revolve around the question of materiality and embodied visitor experience. The special section consists of an introduction by the guest editors and four contributions. The introduction situates the contributions within the broader spatial and material turn in the fields of memory and perpetrator studies, as well as within ongoing debates about difficult heritage, 'ordinariness', and the materiality of memory. Taking material sites and objects as 'witnesses' of perpetration, the contributions – and the artworks and exhibitions discussed in them – suggest a critical shift away from the traumatic paradigm and from simplistic notions of perpetrators versus victims towards a more nuanced understanding of involvement in mass violence. The introduction also lays out the shared semiotic approach the authors take: 'reading' sites as signs and analysing how the form, content, materiality, and context of these sites, as well as the curatorial and artistic interventions into the space, shape the cultural image of the perpetrator.

Ingvild Hagen Kjørholt opens the section with a discussion of the temporary art exhibition 'Perpetrator Perspectives' (2022–2023) at the camp commandant's house at the Falstad Nazi camp memorial in Norway. In her reading of the site and the art exhibition, the camp commandant's house emerges as a multilayered, complex space of complicity that has to negotiate home, crime scene, and memorial space, inviting

the visitors to participate in the – discomfiting – process of engaging with perpetrator memory.

Mario Panico's article discusses artistic interventions that revolve around material objects connected to the private lives of perpetrators at two former perpetrator homes: an SS-Auxiliary's house at the Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück in Germany, and the apartment of Rubén Chamorro, the director of the former detention and torture centre ESMA in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In his discussion, Panico draws on Georges Perec's notion of the 'infra-ordinary' in order to reflect on how the presence of trivial objects in the memorial space – curtains, cushions, a television set – connected to the everyday lives of perpetrators can provoke reflection on the unsettling normality of evil.

Kjørholt's and Panico's articles are followed by Michael Šafarić Branthwaite's reflection on his own artistic practice in relation to sites and archives of perpetration. He discusses three artworks, two of which were developed as a direct response to visits to the sites and their material archives: the Falstad concentration camp in Norway, and Camp Westerbork in the Netherlands. The third is a collaborative project that revolves around a requisition list authored by Irmfried Eberl, the commandant of the Treblinka extermination camp, archived at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. Šafarić Branthwaite explains how his artistic practice grapples with the question of what happens when we look at perpetrators in a contemporary context, combining historical material with conceptual art. His aim is to invite the audience to consider new ways to think about Holocaust memory, surfacing some of the more ordinary aspects of the perpetrators' lives.

Anneleen Spiessens concludes the special section with her in-depth analysis of Fort Breendonk memorial museum, a former Nazi *Auffanglager* in 1940, notorious for the brutality of its guards and commanders. Spiessens presents a critical discussion of the visitor tour, which hinges on curatorial interventions and representation strategies that facilitate empathy with the victims while othering the sadistic perpetrators. Her spatial-semiotic analysis is then complemented by an empirical study of 200 TripAdvisor reviews that give a sense of visitor impressions of the site, attesting to the efficacy of some of the curatorial choices. She concludes with a critical reflection that problematizes curatorial approaches that privilege mimetic experience and authenticity effects at the cost of a more nuanced depiction of the diverse roles and subject positions that contribute to structures of collective violence.

The issue concludes with a report of the 2024 Perpetrator Studies Network Annual Conference in Brussels, Belgium, written by Dušan Janković and Mohana Zwaga, and five book reviews: Jan Burzlaff's review of Mary Fulbrook's monograph *Bystander Society: Conformity and Complicity in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press, 2023); Guido Bartolini's Review of *Perpetration and Complicity under Nazism and Beyond: Compromised Identities?* (Bloomsbury, 2023), edited by Stephanie Bird, Mary Fulbrook, Stefanie Rauch, and Bastiaan Willem; Helenie Demir's review of Hülya Adak, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Ronald Grigor Suny's edited volume *Critical Approaches to Genocide: History, Politics and Aesthetics of 1915* (Routledge, 2023); Joanne Pettitt's review of Ned Curthoys's monograph *The Bildungsroman in a Genocidal Age* (Bloomsbury, 2024); and Sarah Snyder's review of Alette Smeulers's monograph *Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities: Terribly and Terrifyingly Normal?* (Routledge, 2023).

As always, we would like to thank our authors, guest editors, and book reviewers for publishing their fantastic work with us. We would also like to thank our peer reviewers, copyeditors, and typesetters for their hard work in bringing this issue together.

A special thank you goes to Uğur Ümit Üngör, our co-founder and co-editor-in-chief, who is leaving JPR after nearly a decade. It is hard to imagine JPR without him and he will be greatly missed. I am pleased to say, however, that we have found a wonderful replacement in the form of Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız, a lecturer in sociology from Goldsmiths, University of London, who will be joining us in the new year. I am also delighted to announce two new section editors, Clare Bielby, senior lecturer in women's studies at the University of York, and Vanessa Voisin, associate professor of political and social history at the University of Bologna. We look forward to working with them in the new year!

On behalf of the editorial team,

Susanne C. Knittel