JPR

Editors' Introduction

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Perpetrator studies is booming. The past twenty-five years have seen a marked increase in scholarly and cultural engagement with perpetrators of genocide, mass killings and political violence across fields and disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities, as well as in law, medicine, and psychology. In one sense, of course, there has always been a great deal of interest in the perpetrators of history's atrocities, but the 1990s witnessed a confluence of a number of factors that contributed to this upsurge in attention to the perpetrator and perpetration. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, vast archives detailing atrocities committed under National Socialism and under Communist regimes became available for study. The end of Apartheid in South Africa and the ensuing work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission likewise focused public attention on state violence and its perpetrators. At the same time, the war in Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda sparked a renewed discussion about crimes against humanity. The establishment of International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), as well as the International Criminal Court (ICC), are important legal milestones in the 'era of the perpetrator' that provide a framework for the international and comparative study of perpetrators and perpetration.

Within the field of perpetrator studies as it has developed, the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities represent a key point of reference, and here the publication in 1992 of Christopher Browning's Ordinary Men has had an impact that can scarcely be overstated and whose reverberations can be felt to this day. The 2000s were to a certain extent defined by the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. This new context has had a profound effect on the study and representation of perpetrators of mass violence. On the one hand, it has carried with it a shift from genocide and state crime toward fundamentalist paramilitary organizations and global militant groups such as Al Qaida and ISIS. On the other hand, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the global 'War on Terror' have also focused attention on the guilt and responsibility of the United States and its allies. The acts of torture and extra-judicial incarceration in Abu-Ghraib and at Guantanamo Bay, for example, not to mention the killing of civilians as a result of drone warfare, have contributed to a pervasive ambiguity surrounding the distinction between victims and perpetrators, heroes and villains. The same period has also seen a growing number of films, novels, plays, and other cultural artefacts dealing with the figure of the perpetrator, many of which subvert or otherwise play with the traditional dichotomy of good and evil. If anything,

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it is this ambiguity and the proliferation of grey zones and the necessary acknowledgement of the complexity of the issues at stake that have given rise to the field of perpetrator studies in its current form.

While there has been research on perpetrators in various disciplines on a variety of cases for several decades, it is only really in the last five to ten years that this research has begun to coalesce into an interdisciplinary field in its own right with a set of common foundational texts, questions, and concerns. The overwhelming response to the call for papers for the 'Encountering Perpetrators of Mass Killings, Political Violence, and Genocide' conference held at the University of Winchester in September 2015 and the extraordinary breadth of topics represented there provided palpable evidence of the extent of scholarly interest in perpetrators and perpetration. At the same time, the conference also demonstrated the need for a forum for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and knowledge among members of this growing community of scholars.

The *Journal of Perpetrator Research* (JPR) seeks to be just that forum. In founding this journal, our aim is not only to help consolidate work being carried out in this area but also to concur in shaping the field through the publication of cutting-edge research to help set the research agenda. JPR is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal committed to promoting the scholarly study of perpetrators of mass killings, political violence, and genocide. The journal will foster scholarly discussions about perpetrators and perpetration across the broader continuum of political violence without confining its attention to any particular region or period. Our mission is to provide a forum for research within and between fields including, but not limited to, history, sociology, anthropology, law, political science, criminology, forensics, philosophy, literary and cultural studies, film studies, memory studies, psychology, gender and ethnicity studies, area studies, and education.

It is our firm belief that such disciplinary variety and cross-pollination is one of the main strengths of this intellectual project. Moreover, we wish to emphasize that while the primary focus of JPR is on perpetrators and perpetration, it is of course imperative to regard perpetrators in the context of victims, bystanders, and other subject positions within historical, theoretical, and ethical frameworks. This is important to emphasize above all with respect to the oft-repeated concern that any attempt to understand the motivations or rationale of perpetrators of genocide or mass violence may lead to condoning or even justifying their actions. On the contrary, refusing to engage with perpetrators for fear of losing one's moral compass is to ascribe to them a power and influence that is both unwarranted and dangerous, particularly in the current climate of re-ascendant white supremacism and ethnocentric nationalism.

The fundamental questions at the heart of JPR are thus: How do we define, understand and encounter perpetrators of political violence? What can be learned from studying the perpetrators? How are perpetrators made and unmade? Which socio-

logical, psychological, historical, and political processes are relevant in understanding perpetrators and perpetration? 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? We are delighted to be able to present the inaugural issue of JPR featuring contributions by Scott Straus, Kjell Anderson, and Laura Blackie, Nicki Hitchcott and Stephen Joseph. All these contributions focus on different aspects of the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath and reflect on what it means methodologically and ethically to study perpetrators. Sibylle Schmidt's contribution, on the other hand, focuses on the philosophical and ethical concerns related to perpetrator testimony. In addition to these articles, the issue also features reviews of the following books: *The Genocide Contagion: How We Commit and Confront Holocaust and Genocide* by Israel W. Charny, *Man or Monster? The Trial of a Khmer Rouge Torturer* by Alexander Laban Hinton and *La Mort du Bourreau: Réflexions Interdisciplinaires sur le Cadavre des Criminels de Masse*, edited by Sévane Garibian, all published in 2016. We hope you will enjoy reading this inaugural issue and look forward to receiving your submissions for future editions. For the remainder of this introduction, we would like to indicate some of the avenues of enquiry which, as we see it, will be central to JPR, and to the field of perpetrator studies, going forward.

Broad View of Political Violence

JPR deliberately conceives political violence as a continuum ranging from terrorism to genocide; its interest is in everything revolving around the acts of perpetration and their actors, as well as the aftermath of such acts, including how perpetrators of political violence are presented and represented. From this point of view, the notion of political violence adopted by JPR is one that includes extra-legal warfare, ethnic cleansing and genocide, civil war, terrorism and state repression, revolution and counter-revolution. It includes state perpetrators as well as non-state perpetrators, acts of perpetration carried out within or outside warfare and revolution, and for political reasons that might be secular or religious. In short, JPR focuses on the perpetrators of violence enacted pursuant of socio-political control or change.[1] Political violence, including its more extreme exterminationist forms, is to a large extent inherent to human social life. The foundational texts of Western civilization are replete with examples of such

1 This theoretical framework is borrowed from Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, 'Introduction' to *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe,* ed. by Bloxham and Gerwarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1–10, in particular pp. 1–2.

acts and with descriptions and often glorification of those who carry them out.[2] By the same token, the West has drawn extensively from such texts as sources providing justification for acts of extreme violence throughout its history. The briefest mention of the Old Testament's influence in justifying the Crusades, or the role played by Ancient Greek and Roman texts such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* in providing a repository for European colonial and imperial expansions, is sufficient illustration of this point.[3] JPR is interested in developing the innovative research already underway in this area by investigating perpetrators across the broadest chronological and geographic scope, in line with the interdisciplinary principle underpinning the journal.[4]

Perpetrators

Despite the very long history of political violence, however, the scholarly study of perpetrators is a much more modern phenomenon, largely stemming from the attempt to make sense of Nazi crimes. From this point of view, the obvious starting points for discussion are two judicial events: the 1945–46 Nuremberg Trials and the 1960–61 Eichmann Trial. Whilst impossible to discuss in any detail here, it must at least be mentioned that the former had a momentous impact on key topics from scholarly and popular understanding and presentation of Nazi perpetrators, to the development of international law, to Germany's post-war self-perception and willingness to come to terms with the past.[5]

The Eichmann Trial had an equally momentous impact thanks to Hannah Arendt's extremely influential, if controversial, interpretation of Eichmann as an example of

2 Many general works in the field of genocide studies state this at the outset; as mere examples, see Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 1–6; Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 3–9.

3 For a recent brief introduction to this fruitful area of research vis-à-vis the concept of genocide, see Norman M. Naimark, *Genocide: A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

4 For examples of the adoption of the concept of genocide to ancient, medieval, and early modern history, see Hans Van Wees, 'Genocide in the Ancient World', in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. by Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 239–58; James E. Fraser, 'Early Medieval Europe: The Case of Britain and Ireland', in ibid., pp. 259–79; Nicholas A. Robins, 'Colonial Latin America', in ibid., pp. 304–21; Len Scales, 'Central and Late Medieval Europe', in ibid., pp. 280–303.

5 On these topics, see respectively Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Caroline Sharples, 'Holocaust on Trial: Mass Observation and British Media Responses to the Nuremberg Tribunal, 1945–1946', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, ed. by Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 31–50; Philippe Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016); Susanne Karstedt, 'The Nuremberg Tribunal and German Society: International Justice and Local Judgment in Post-Conflict Reconstruction', in *The Legacy of Nuremberg: Civilising Influence or Institutionalised Vengeance?*, ed. by David A. Blumenthal and Timothy L.H. McCormack (Leiden: Nijhoff, 2008), pp. 13–35.

the 'banality of evil'.[6] Arendt's interpretation, centred on an evil that was at the same time 'radical' in its consequences and 'banal' in its perpetrators, dovetailed with the equally well-known 'obedience to authority' and Stanford Prison experiments in social psychology carried out by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo, respectively.[7] Originating in the 1960s and 1970s, what these works have in common is the rejection of essentialized or dispositional views of perpetrators in favour of incrementalist or situational ones.[8] Arendt, Milgram, and Zimbardo, and a host of other scholars along with them, did not believe that the perpetration of 'evil' acts can be simply explained in terms of personality, agency, sadism and other dispositions (let alone in terms of nature and genetic make-up), but that 'evil' is something people are capable of depending on circumstances. In other words, when the situational force fields are dominated by deindividuation, obedience to authority, peer pressure, rationalization, and dehumanization of the victims, individuals can end up participating in acts that they might not have previously seen themselves capable of.[9] Although in recent years these influential studies have been revisited and the ideas raised within them both challenged and developed, perhaps most notably, within the experimental BBC prison case study conducted by Steve Reicher and Alex Haslam, the role they have had in shaping the field of perpetrator research should not be underestimated.[10]

The most remarkable application of these theories to the empirical study of Holocaust perpetrators came in 1992 with Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*, which famously investigated a group of around 500 members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 and their role in the mass murder of thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland.[11] Explicitly drawing on the work of Milgram, Browning explains the participation of the reserve policemen from the Hamburg area, most of them not particularly noticeable for their pre-existing dedication to the Nazi cause, with the combination of ideology, traditions of racism, siege mentality, careerism, obedience to authority, peer pressure, and the brutalization of war. In the closing stages of the book, he draws an explicit

6 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963). On the impact of this interpretation on Holocaust historiography, see Hans Mommsen, 'Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of the Holocaust as a Challenge to Human Existence: The Intellectual Background', in *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, ed. by Steven E. Aschheim (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 224–31.

7 Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (London: Tavistock, 1974); Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (London: Rider, 2007).

8 On this, see Zimbardo, *Lucifer Effect*, pp. 6–7 and Paul A. Roth, 'Social Psychology and Genocide', in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. by Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 198–216.

9 Zimbardo, *Lucifer Effect*, xii. On these three scholars' interpretations, see also Claudia Card, *Confronting Evils: Terrorism, Torture, Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 10–16.

10 Stephen Reicher and Alexander Haslam, 'Rethinking the Psychology of Tyranny: The BBC Prison Study', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 45 (2006), 1–45

11 Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2001).

parallel between those perpetrators and American soldiers responsible for mass murders in Vietnam. His chilling conclusion is: 'If the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers under such circumstances, what group of men cannot?'[12]

This 'situational' approach adopted by Browning was a far cry from more traditional views of Nazi perpetrators which centred on their inhuman sadism, popularized in best-selling books such as *The Scourge of the Swastika*, or the sensationalized presentation of female camp-guards such as Irma Grese and Ilse Koch.[13] Browning's interpretation of some German perpetrators as ordinary men did not go unchallenged, most vehemently by Daniel Goldhagen and, with much higher degrees of nuance, by Yaacov Lozowick and Jürgen Matthäus.[14] The controversy highlights a key analytical problem in the study (and definition) of perpetrators: how far can the perpetrators be seen as separate from society as a whole? Despite their differing conclusions, both Browning and Goldhagen emphasize the ordinariness of the perpetrators in their study. The term 'perpetrator society' (*Tätergesellschaft*), which has recently found its way into discussions about the Nazi past in Germany, illustrates the difficulty of neatly separating perpetrators and the society they lived in, while at the same time running the risk of inflating the concept to the point of conflating society and perpetrators. In the context of this Editorial and for reasons of space, we shall leave aside the extensive developments in the specific scholarly literature on Holocaust perpetrators since the 1980s and early 1990s, to focus briefly on two other points instead — the gendering of perpetrators and the study of what JPR terms democratic perpetrators.[15]

12 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 189. He further developed this interpretation in Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 116–69.

13 Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Scourge of the Swastika: A Short History of Nazi War Crimes* (London: Cassell, 1954). On the sensationalist take on female perpetrators, see Sybil Milton, 'Women and the Holocaust: The Case of German and German-Jewish Women', in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 297–333.

14 Yaacov Lozowick, *Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil*, trans. by Haim Watzman (London: Continuum, 2002); Jürgen Matthäus, 'What About the "Ordinary Men"?: The German Order Police and the Holocaust in the Occupied Soviet Union', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 10 (1996), 134–50; Jurgen Matthäus, 'Historiography and the Perpetrators of the Holocaust', in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. by Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 197–215. For an insightful discussion of these themes, see Richard Overy, '"Ordinary Men," Extraordinary Circumstances: Historians, Social Psychology, and the Holocaust', *Journal of Social Issues*, 70 (2014), 515–30.

15 For a succinct and comprehensive discussion of the historical literature on this, see Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 95–111.

Gendering Perpetrators

The growing interest in the situational contexts in which ordinary people were able and willing to perpetrate acts of violence, particularly within the Third Reich, also gave rise to greater engagement with questions surrounding the role of women within, and across, the social and political stratum of perpetrator nations, exemplified by the so called 'female historian's debate' of the 1980s between feminist scholars Claudia Koonz and Gisela Bock.[16] Although this debate did much to stimulate increased scholarly attention on the position of women in the Third Reich and encouraged greater engagement with gendered experiences of violence, specifically of female actors within that context, understandings of perpetrators have continued to be defined by generalizations of both male and female experience and cultural understandings about gender and gender roles. For many years interpretations of violence have intersected with gendered ideas of, and assumptions about, femininity and masculinity in which women are perceived as nurturing caregivers and men are seen as being imbibed with fierce and forceful tendencies. These assumptions have, in turn, fed into understandings of both victimhood and perpetration in which the victim of mass violence is viewed as female whilst the perpetrator is archetypally male.

It is of course clear that in many instances women *are* the victims of political violence and are often targeted in particular ways as a direct result of their gender and what their biological and cultural position in society represents to both the victimized group and the perpetrators.[17] Yet, the prevalence of gendered assumptions and interpretations has both shaped and distorted the way in which political violence has been imagined and discussed. Whilst the depiction of the female as victim has allowed for the necessary recognition of, and research on, sexual violence carried out against women, the issue of male victimhood is still relatively understudied.[18] Moreover, deeply ingrained conventional wisdom around male perpetration has led to relatively limited critical engagement with male perpetrators and victims through

16 See Claudia Koonz, *Mother's in the Fatherland: Women, The Family and Nazi Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1987); Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State', *Signs*, 8 (Spring 1983), 400–21.

17 For an excellent recent collection of essays on this topic, see *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance*, ed. by JoAnn DiGeorgio-Lutz and Donna Gosbee (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016).

18 Having said that, there is growing awareness on the issue. See on this R. Charli Carpenter, 'Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations', *Security Dialogue*, 37 (2006), 83–103. The rise in awareness has led to a number of studies on specific cases, such as Gabrielle Ferrales, Hollie Nyseth Brehm, and Suzy Mcelrath, 'Gender-Based Violence against Men and Boys in Darfur', *Gender & Society*, 30 (2016), 565–89; Adam Jones, 'Masculinities and Vulnerabilities in the Rwandan and Congolese Genocides', in *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey* ed. by Amy E. Randall (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 62–84.

a gendered lens.[19] JPR welcomes submissions investigating the perpetration of gender-specific forms of violence against women and men by male as well as female perpetrators.

In fact, women do participate in political violence, including in its most extreme forms. However, women are, alongside children, essentially perceived in public discourse as outside archetypal gendered understandings of the perpetrator. As a result of deep-seated gender constructions, when women *do* participate in acts of atrocity they are often sensationalized and characterized as deviant aberrations of womanhood who have betrayed their supposedly innate nurturing instinct. This is the case of the already mentioned infamous Nazi perpetrators Irma Grese and Ilse Koch as well as more recent figures such as Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Biljana Plavsic. By committing acts of extreme cruelty, such women are often seen to have transcended traditional gender boundaries and to have adopted male characteristics which enable them to perform tasks deemed by society as being fundamentally situated against notions of femininity. Alongside sensationalism, this discourse surrounding female perpetrators runs the risk of minimising women's agency in the commission of acts of political violence to the extent that they present female perpetrators as being manipulated to perform acts of violence against their will either out of fear or through a process of indoctrination that they were unable, or unwilling, to resist.

The subordination of women to the role of passive actors or the sexualized abomination of womanhood in public and, to a certain extent, scholarly engagement with perpetrators has meant that there has been little space to engage with the female actor of violence beyond simplistic depictions and sensationalized, sexualized and stereotyped tropes. This has resulted in little sustained critical analysis or understanding as to their role in acts of atrocity or their motivations. There have, however, been advancements in this area of the field which complicate our understandings of women's relationship to violence by considering the issues involved with greater nuance - most notably the work carried out by Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry who directly confront the issue of how continuing narratives of motherhood, mental instability and sexuality are used to deny the agency of women within the contexts of political violence.[20] This move towards more nuanced and critical engagement is a move which JPR is keen to see developed further in the future.

19 On this, see Miranda Alison, 'Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity', *Review of International Studies*, 33 (2007), 75–90; Aliraza Javaid, 'Feminism, masculinity, and male rape: Bring male rape "out of the closet".' *Journal of Gender Studies*, 12 (2014), 1–11. See also the classic Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), and Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. by Erica Carter, Chris Turner, and Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

20 Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007); see also Sandra McEvoy, 'Loyalist Women Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland: Beginning a Feminist

Democratic Perpetrators

The word 'perpetrator' is at its core a legal and/or moral term containing an element of legal and/or moral judgement, in the sense that the 'perpetrators' are defined as such because they carry out deeds that are deemed 'evil' or criminal by others.[21] Two main consequences stem from this fact. The first is that the definition of 'perpetrator' is ascribed to certain people by others who do not deem their actions to be either ethically or legally justified; the flipside of this is that the unreconstructed 'perpetrators' often resort to a wide variety of justifications and rationalizations for their deeds — an area of clear interest to JPR and something addressed directly by Scott Straus in his contribution to our first issue. From this point of view, then, the field of Perpetrator Studies shares similar semantic and perhaps conceptual tensions with cognate fields such as Genocide Studies and Terrorism Studies; the question of who is a perpetrator is not necessarily more self-evident than that of what constitutes genocide or terrorism.[22] The second related consequence is that, beyond the more straightforwardly egregious acts of political violence around which there is widespread consensus, an unselfconscious notion of 'perpetrator' could lead to relative silence surrounding other cases otherwise worthy of inclusion. Acts of political violence can be discussed in terms of perpetration in JPR even when they are not recognized as such in the cultural context of the societies that produced them.

To make the above point more explicit: by 'democratic perpetrators' we are referring in particular to countries that see liberalism, tolerance, and respect of human

Conversation about Conflict Resolution', *Security Studies*, 18 (2009), 262–86; Sara E. Brown, 'Female Perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 16 (2014), 448–69; Lisa Sharlach, 'Gender and genocide in Rwanda: Women as agents and objects of Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1 (1999), 387–99; Alette Smeulers, 'Female Perpetrators: Ordinary and Extra-Ordinary Women', *International Criminal Law Review*, 15 (2015), 1–26; Miranda Alison, *Women and Political Violence: Female Combatants in Ethno-National Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Georgina Holmes, *Women and War in Rwanda: Gender, Media and the Representation of Genocide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Carrie Hamilton, 'The Gender Politics of Political Violence: Women Armed Activists in ETA', *Feminist Review*, 86 (2007), 132–48; Megan H. Mackenzie, *Female Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Sex, Security and Post-Conflict Development* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Nancy Berns, 'Degendering the Problem and Gendering the Blame: Political Discourse on Women and Violence', *Gender and Society*, 15 (2001), 262–81; Rachel Century, *Female Administrators of the Third Reich* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

21 For an excellent attempt at devising a typology of perpetrators from a criminological point of view, see Alette Smeulers, 'Perpetrators of International Crimes: Towards a Typology', in *Supranational Criminology: Towards a Criminology of International Crimes*, ed. by Alette Smeulers and Roelof Haveman (Antwerp: Intersentia, 2008), pp. 233–65.

22 A clear indicator of this complexity is that large number of general works on genocide or terrorism feel obliged to start off by presenting their own definition of genocide or terrorism. Very succinct and informative introductions to these debates can be found in, for example, Paul R. Bartrop, *Genocide: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–6, and Sue Mahan, and Pamala L. Griset, *Terrorism in Perspective*, 3rd edn (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), pp. 1–6.

rights as cornerstones of their self-identity but that nonetheless carry out acts of perpetration. A good case in point is that of the mass violence linked to the rise and fall of the British, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian, and French Empires, as well as the establishment and consolidation of countries built on a foundation of settler violence such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. There is excellent scholarly work on the latter topic, in particular in the field of Genocide Studies, with relevant work also being produced on the forms and structures of late imperial violence.[23] This burgeoning body of research is valuable. However, it is painfully apparent that in many of these instances 'post-imperial melancholia', means that the themes and issues raised by this work have yet to become part of broader culture.[24] Much of popular British discourse, for example, is more inclined towards being selective over what to remember of the Empire, simply glorifying it wholesale along with the violent means with which it was built and maintained, perpetrators included.[25] This is even more significant considering the systematic efforts made by the British state to destroy as much evidence as possible pertaining to imperial and late-imperial violence.[26] JPR has a specific interest in exploring how 'democratic perpetrators' are encountered and represented in public memory, popular culture and how they and their actions are framed within education and welcomes submissions that address these issues and associated topics.

23 For some recent important works on the topic of settler genocide, see *Genocide on Settler Frontiers: When Hunter-Gatherers and Commercial Stock Farmers Clash*, ed. by Mohamed Adhikari (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015); Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. by Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Colin Tatz, *Australia's Unthinkable Genocide* (Gordon, NSW: XLibris, 2017); Tom Lawson, *The Last Man: A British Genocide in Tasmania* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). For work on later imperial violence see the solid overview by Andrew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2012) and the comparative study by Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria*, trans. by Dona Geyer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). On the notorious case of anti-Kikuyu violence in Kenya, see also the excellent book by David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2006). See also *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence: The Dutch Empire in Indonesia*, ed. by Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses (London: Routledge, 2014); *Memories of Post-imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonization 1945–2013*, ed. by Dietmar Rothermund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide* (London: Faber, 2011)

24 For the notion of 'postimperial melancholia', see Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 98.

25 An obvious case in point is Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

26 For an interesting journalistic take, see Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia: A Secret History of Torture* (London: Portobello, 2013), pp. 76–109.

The Dynamic Process of Perpetration

Having briefly sketched out the rationale for our focus on perpetrators, it must immediately be added that in the past two decades research on mass political violence has shifted its perspective from the study of merely *perpetrators* to the acts of *perpetration*. Whereas the former term refers to the agency of the individuals who have perpetrated forms of mass violence against civilians, the latter concept refers to the process of collective commission of mass violence. Perpetration of mass violence is an inherently complex process. The advantage of taking a processual view is that it enables us to illuminate the complexity of the process of perpetration through the exploration of different layers of authority, different motives of involvement, different rules of engagement, and most importantly, the changes in these factors over time.

Perpetration can be approached from at least three analytical perspectives: macro (top-level architects), meso (mid-level organizers), and micro (low-level killers). The macro level refers to the context of high political office: the structures and the context of the political helm that wields supreme authority inside a state and is responsible for the decision-making processes that launch mass killing. The meso level consists of those developments right below the highest level: mid-level political and administrative elites, the internal agencies that assume the tasks to divide labour and organize the machinery of killing, the (para-)military bosses who press buttons, and the mechanisms of mass mobilization for the destruction of the victim group. The micro level, then, is about the lowest socio-ecological level: the individuals who become involved in the violent process, either as direct or indirect perpetrators. Viewed in its coherence, these three contextual layers are not simply piled on top of each other, but the largest contexts are often preconditions for the smallest ones. Without the macro context of the radicalization of the political elites, the violent measures against the victims would not have been conceived by mid-management, and ultimately countless individual perpetrators would not have murdered innumerable individual victims in micro situations of killing. By the same token, as shown in countless examples of settler violence, radicalization at the micro and meso levels can result in a sanctioning at the macro level of extreme violence that was not always necessarily planned or contemplated.[27] In other words, let alone the complexity of each level in itself, we must bear in mind the relevant connections between the three levels, including how these may oscillate over time. JPR welcomes submissions that address

27 On this, see Andrew Woolford, 'Discipline, Territory, and the Colonial Mesh: Indigenous Boarding Schools in the United States and Canada', in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. by Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 29–48; and Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

any of these three levels of perpetration or the dynamic and changing relationship between the three across time and space.

Alongside such analytical perspectives JPR is also keen to consider how these processes of perpetration begin, develop, and end. Mass violence of the scale that unfolds in genocides, for example, generally develops through three fairly distinct phases: the pre-violent phase, the phase of mass political violence, and the post-violence phase. The pre-violent phase is often rooted in a broader economic, political, and cultural crisis that vexes the country internally and aggravates its external relations with neighbouring states. Such a crisis between political groups and social movements can polarize into non-violent confrontations such as mass protests, boycotts, or strikes. At the local level, it can be characterized by fragile, even hostile, but still non-violent coexistence between political or ethnic groups. Occasionally, however, a local pogrom or a political assassination can occur, and often the state can gradually become engaged in a low-intensity conflict. The main precondition for extreme violence such as massacres or genocide is (civil) war. During wars, violence is exercised on a large scale, first exclusively between armies in legally sanctioned military hostilities, but later potentially also in illegal paramilitary operations against civilians.[28]

These transitions from crisis to mass violence are often turning points, where serious moral and political transgressions occur in a rapid process of violent polarization. Comparative research on mass political violence demonstrates that once unleashed, such violence can develop its own dynamic and become all but unstoppable by internal means — reaching 'relative autonomy'.[29] This dynamic consists of a routinization of the killing and a collective moral shift in society due to mass impunity. Two other key variables are the political elite's decision-making and the organization of violence. The first is often conducted in secret sessions, develops in periodic eruptions, and becomes visible only retroactively, when the victims are killed. Indeed, violent conflict exposes the criminology of violent political elites, who often begin operating as an organized crime group with growing mutual complicity developing among them. Secondly, the organization of the violence is another major analytical category to be examined. The violence is often carried out according to clear and logical divisions of labour: between the civil and military wing of the state, but also crucially between the military and paramilitary groups. The killing process has the dual function of at once annihilating the victim group and constructing the perpetrator group.[30]

28 An authoritative study of the dynamic of violence in civil war is: Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

29 On the relative autonomy of violent persecution developing into genocide see: Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), in particular the discussion on pp. 101–07.

30 See e.g.: Max Bergholz, *Violence as a Generative Force: Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

The transition to a post-violent phase often overlaps with the collapse of the violent regime itself. The main perpetrator groups within the regime will attempt to deny their crimes, while traumatized survivor communities will mourn and seek justice or revenge. In this phase, these groups often struggle to propagate their own memory of the conflict by attempting to straitjacket the complexity of the conflict into a single, self-serving view. The term 'transitional justice' often proves to be an elusive concept: sometimes a fragile democracy develops, and sometimes a different authoritarian regime takes over. In either case, impunity has proven to be the rule and punishment the exception in post-violence societies. This is a genuine dilemma because often an enormous number of people are involved in crimes, and there are often no clear, premeditated, written, and circulated orders of particular massacres. The direct victims and often even their offspring can continue to suffer for years, even decades. Historians and other scholars often struggle with sketching a detailed picture of the course of the violence, and forms of denial by successor governments who inherit the perpetrator state is often the rule.[31]

Together, the above approach generates a dynamic model that has three analytical dimensions and three temporal dimensions. It is primarily a political, historical, and sociological model: its focus is centred on the power relationships between offices, agencies, and individuals. Finally, whereas the dividing social boundaries between perpetrators and victims are crystal clear during the mass killings, these lines can become more ambiguous and ambivalent before and after. The ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) in the Soviet Union are a good example of these dynamics: before World War II they were persecuted and deported by the Stalinist authorities; during the war, they significantly enlisted in the Nazi apparatus and participated in mass violence against civilians; after the war, they were targeted for punishment and expelled from their ancestral lands. Perpetrators can become victims; victims can become perpetrators; and 'bystanders' or 'third parties' can become either. The breadth of the category of 'perpetrator' ultimately depends on the definition of the scholar, but a responsible use of the term 'perpetration' offers a more flexible and effective tool for understanding the participation of non-killers (such as professionals, officials, and civilians) in the violence.

A close look at most work on mass violence clearly identifies patterns of interaction between the three levels, e.g. in the recruitment of perpetrators, the coordination of murderous efforts, civil society initiatives toward assisting the murderous state apparatus, and the manufacturing of broad-based indifference towards the plight of

31 Donald Bloxham and Devin Pendas, 'Punishment as Prevention? The Politics of Prosecuting Génocidaires', in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. by Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 617–37.

the victims.[32] On the other hand, an over-focus on the macro level may also blind us to the autonomy and agency of these mid-level bureaucracies. Perpetration of mass violence is co-produced by a vast network of collaborating ministry officials, military officers, government functionaries, gatekeepers and caretakers, committees, civil servants, police commissars, career diplomats, party bosses, provincial judges, urban regulators, militia bosses, and many others. In principle, these are not yet the men who get their hands dirty.[33] The macro-level overseers are well aware they need these people to manage the many necessary tasks. Before the killings, the civil-bureaucratic and military takeover deeply polarizes and purifies this level of officials. Some stay in their positions if they can reconcile themselves with the vague (but unmistakably murderous) designs of the new regime, others are either purged or leave on their own volition. This partly self-regulating and self-reinforcing process paves the way for the macro-level organizers to push through their plans, and also bolsters the political polarization.

When we turn to the micro level, we are concerned with the extraordinary things that occur to rank-and-file executioners on the ground.[34] Alexander Hinton's book title nicely captures the overarching research question in this field: Why did they kill?[35] At this level, the study of perpetration thrives. The study of low-level perpetrators has moved way beyond the cliché of faceless, banal, or sadistic killers, undifferentiated and unexplained, who murder people for no apparent reason other than hatred and malice. Biographical investigation and sociological contextualization has challenged and debunked these essentialist ideas for years now. Comparative research on the killers is gradually reflecting common ground, increasing sophistication, and a nuanced and complex picture of dispositional and situational factors.[36] Journalistic research on perpetrators has also often been insightful. In *They Would Never Hurt a Fly*, for example, Slavenka Drakulić uses ICTY court transcripts and contextual interviews to paint a moving picture of Dražen Erdemović, a Bosnian Serb who passed through various trials and tribulations, and ended up shooting Bosniak men in the Srebrenica massacre of 13–22 July 1995.[37] But despite such contributions the study of perpetration

32 An excellent recent example is: Alexander Vatlin, *Agents of Terror: Ordinary Men and Extraordinary Violence in Stalin's Secret Police* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

33 But there are examples of relatively high-ranking Nazis performing executions, like Theodor Eicke who executed Ernst Röhm.

34 See the website of the Perpetrator Studies Network for a bibliography on micro-level perpetrators: https://perpetratorstudies.sites.uu.nl/bibliography/

35 Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

36 *Ordinary People as Mass Murderers: Perpetrators in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Olaf Jensen and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

37 Slavenka Drakulić, *They Would Never Hurt a Fly: War Criminals on Trial in The Hague* (New York: Viking, 2004), pp. 106–20.

suffers from a certain imbalance, or lopsided growth: whereas many studies have contributed to the micro level, the macro and meso levels have not enjoyed the same attention particularly when looking beyond the field of Holocaust studies.

Once the violence begins, the micro-level perpetrators conduct countless killings of unarmed civilians or defenceless prisoners. When we speak of 'perpetration', this is generally what we mean: the violent phase at micro level. This reductionist perspective can be expanded by imagining perpetration as an explicitly multi-level process with distinct phases. One more problem in the scholarship is the confusion between mass violence and organized violence, i.e. the over-focus on (mass) individual motives, instead of small-scale sociological organizational dynamics.[38] Micro-level perpetrator studies invariably include models and explanatory diagrams, but these are often too static, and do not reflect sufficiently the dynamic interactions over time as a *process*. Juxtaposition of motives, regardless how convincing, does not capture the changing 'life moments' of the perpetrators' inner world: motives change over time, they are unanticipated beforehand, and produce unwanted consequences. The micro-sociology of studies conducted by Lee-Ann Fujii (on Rwanda), Ton Robben (on Argentina), Aziz Nakkash (on Syria), Kjell Anderson (comparative), and Abram de Swaan (comparative) are insightful and promising steps toward greater engagement with this particular area which JPR anticipates developing further.[39]

Paramilitarism

A recent, fruitful line of research on perpetrators in civil wars and genocides has focused on paramilitarism. Perpetration of mass violence against civilians is often carried out by well-equipped, specialized, irregular paramilitary forces. Paramilitarism refers to clandestine, irregular armed organizations that carry out acts of violence against clearly defined civilian individuals or groups. It has immense importance for understanding the processes of violence that are played out during ethnic conflicts, which often see the formation of paramilitary units that conduct counter-insurgency operations, scorched earth campaigns, and violence against civilians, including genocide. Many studies of mass violence have convincingly demonstrated the central role

38 See e.g.: Guenter Lewy, *Perpetrators: The World of the Holocaust Killers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1996).

39 Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Antonius Robben, *Political Violence and Trauma in Argentina* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Aziz Nakkash, 'The Alawite Dilemma in Homs: Survival, Solidarity and the Making of a Community' (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013); Abram de Swaan, *The Killing Compartments: The Mentality of Mass Murder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Kjell Anderson, *A Criminology of Genocide: Killing Without Consequence* (London: Routledge, 2017).

of paramilitaries in the perpetration of the killings.[40] Whether in democratic or authoritarian states, throughout the twentieth century paramilitaries have been responsible for widespread violations of human rights against civilians. States orchestrating mass violence spawn paramilitary units as a covert augmentation of state power for special purposes such as mass murder. The set of questions to ask here is: How and why were paramilitary forces organized and deployed? Why did they emerge, and which relationships can we detect between paramilitaries and other meso-level perpetrator clusters? The perpetration of paramilitary groups has been studied extensively for some of the major cases of mass violence.[41] The SA and SS, for example, have extensive, stand-alone historiographies. There are good studies of the Rwandan *Interahamwe*, Serb paramilitary groups, the *Janjaweed* in Sudan, or the Hindu-extremist militias in Gujarat.[42] A comparative reading of these studies offers unique insights into the 'nuts and bolts' of perpetration, and it is both hoped and anticipated that future studies will focus on these types of paramilitary groups.

Motives and Motivations

There also seems to be a widespread confusion about *motives* versus *motivations*. Both terms basically mean incentive or drive, but *motive* is used to mean the specific reasons for performing a specific action, an incentive, a particular goal or objective. It also often implies ulterior motives, and therefore the term is often used in judicial proceedings to explain the actions of criminals — a suspect's possible 'motives' for committing a crime. Motivation is generally what drives a person, at a deeper level, to pursue certain broader goals of self-actualization in life. For example, someone can decide to become a doctor to help relieve human suffering; the motivation is to relieve human suffering. Therefore, 'motive' has a more negative and short-term connotation than 'motivation'.[43] We need to apply fine-grained distinctions here: a perpetrator may hold general motivations in life, which during a conflict, war, or genocide may give him/her specific motives to kill. This approach is related to explanations founded on

40 For one overview, see: Alex Alvarez, 'Militias and Genocide', *War Crimes, Genocide, & Crimes against Humanity*, 2 (2006), 1–33.

41 *Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder with Deniability*, ed. by Bruce Campbell and Arthur Brenner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

42 See: André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda, 1990–1994* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), ch. 4; Kate Ferguson, *Architectures of Violence: The Command Structures of Modern Mass Atrocities, from Yugoslavia to Syria* (London: Hurst, 2018); Julie Flint, *Beyond 'Janjaweed': Understanding the Militias of Darfur* (Geneva: GIIS, 2009); Ward Berenschot, *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian State* (London: Hurst, 2012).

43 *The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation*, ed. by Richard Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), parts two and three.

collective emotions. Studies of ethnic violence have identified three major emotional responses triggering ethnic violence in the twentieth century: fear, hatred, and resentment. For the micro level of perpetrator research, this is a useful point of departure. According to emotion-based theories, political elites construct identity narratives based on group experiences of structural changes. Shifting socio-economic conditions and patterns of social mobility alter power and status relations among groups, as they overturn time-honoured hierarchies in ranked ethnic systems. These changes can tap into motivations and affective dispositions of to-be perpetrators and manufacture acute collective emotions such as hatred, fear, and resentment.[44]

The transition to killing has been elaborately studied in perpetrator studies; this phase of micro-level perpetration, too, is a process with at least three distinct stages of development. First, the killers are subjected to a moment of initiation or induction: they are confronted with the tasks of mass killing, pressured by vertical and horizontal forms of coercion, painstakingly described by Christopher Browning in *Ordinary Men*. The group then bonds through these collective transgressions and gradually develops into a routinization process, in which killings become more and more standardized and the perpetrator gets used to the perpetration. Finally, the adaptation process produces a unique moral shift, in which the killings are so normalized that it becomes increasingly difficult for the perpetrators to realize the full extent of their crimes and imagine the destruction from the meso or micro levels. Once the murderous tasks are completed, micro-level perpetrators enter the post-perpetration phase and their identities change again. How do they process, discuss, and explain their perpetration in hindsight? How do they view the (absence of the) victim community? To what extent can we speak of guilt, or a 'perpetrator trauma'?[45]

Teaching about Perpetrators

When it comes to teaching, perpetrators certainly present a limit case. On the one hand, in recent years we can observe a growing consensus among educators that, in order to learn about past atrocities and the aftermath of atrocity, it is important to consider the perpetrators as well as the victims — and other subject positions such as bystanders, rescuers, and profiteers. Furthermore, most educators agree that presenting the perpetrators as somehow apart from society or even as monsters or psychopaths obscures the social, political, historical, and cultural mechanisms that have

44 Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

45 Saira Mohamed, 'Of Monsters and Men: Perpetrator Trauma and Mass Atrocity', *Columbia Law Review*, 1157 (2015), 1157–1216.

enabled their crimes and inhibits an understanding of the continued relevance of studying and remembering past atrocities for today.

Notwithstanding this, Holocaust and genocide pedagogy has so far been somewhat reluctant to tackle the question of how to teach about perpetrators. One of the greatest concerns is that we and our students may find them too fascinating. Another is that understanding the perpetrators might in some way lead to a justification of their actions or to a consideration of them as victims of the times, the system or the prevailing ideology; in short: circumstances beyond their control. The pervasive unease concerning the place of perpetrators in the classroom is compounded by the prevalence of affective modes of education being employed to teach about these complex and emotive issues. The dominant strategies for making past atrocities relevant to young people have sought to promote identification and empathy with the victims and to elicit shock at the scale and brutality of the crimes. This is often done through the use of photographs or film, or by visiting sites of atrocity themselves, or through immersive experiences designed to allow students and visitors to feel (at least some approximation of) what it was like to be a victim of these atrocities.[46] Such approaches become infinitely more complex and problematic if we shift our focus from the victims to the perpetrators. What is the educational value of prompting students and visitors to museums and other sites to imagine what it felt like to be a perpetrator? Clearly, the moral and ethical pitfalls here are enormous. Nevertheless, or indeed precisely for that reason, it is important to ask what the role of affect is in teaching about atrocities more generally. And here the question of the perpetrator provides an opportunity.

More generally, perpetrator studies can offer new perspectives on the important role education plays in understanding and coming to terms with genocide and other forms of mass violence and preventing them from occurring in the future. An important precursor here is Theodor W. Adorno's 1966 influential essay 'Education after Auschwitz'. The essay has become something of a manifesto of Holocaust education, but very often only the famous first sentence — '[t]he premier demand upon education is that Auschwitz not happen again' — is quoted.[47] Looking more closely at Adorno's essay we can see that talking about education after Auschwitz also means talking about education *before* Auschwitz and, moreover, that this essay is itself a foundational text in perpetrator studies. Adorno is quite emphatic on the point that there is little

46 Cf. Wolf Kaiser, 'Nazi Perpetrators in Holocaust Education', *Teaching History*, 141 (2010), 34–39; Jana Jelitzki & Mirko Wetzel, *Über Täter und Täterinnen sprechen. Nationalsozialistische Täterschaft in der pädagogischen Arbeit von KZ-Gedenkstätten* (Berlin: Metropol, 2010); Samuel Totten, *Teaching about Genocide: Issues, Approaches, and Resources* (Greenwich: IAP, 2004); Rebecca Jinks, *Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as Paradigm?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); and Waitman Wade Beorn, 'Perpetrators, Presidents, and Profiteers: Teaching Genocide Prevention and Response through Classroom Simulation', *Politics and Governance*, 3.4 (2015), 72–83.

47 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Education after Auschwitz', in: *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, transl. by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 191–204 (p. 191).

we can learn from studying the victims that can help us to ensure that 'Auschwitz not happen again', and that it is imperative that we study the perpetrators. What was their education like? What was the system that gave rise to these individuals? From his vantage point in the 1960s, Adorno takes pains to insist that the underlying social structures have not changed all that much since before the war. In many respects the same can be said for today's society, as the current political climate in Europe, the United States and elsewhere attests.

While understanding the social and systemic conditions under which acts of mass violence become possible is a vital component of teaching about perpetrators, it is no less important to focus on the aftermath and how societies have dealt with perpetrators and the legacy of their crimes. The extent to which they were prosecuted and otherwise held to account serves as an important index of the ways in which those societies have dealt with issues of guilt, responsibility, complicity, collaboration and, by extension, in how far the underlying conditions and victim–perpetrator dynamics in a given society remain in place. A crucial medium for thinking through these and related issues are cultural representations, i.e. literature, film, art, and theatre. Such representations have the advantage from a pedagogical standpoint of providing a 'buffer' between the students and the events in question that potentially allows for a greater degree of critical engagement and self-reflexivity.[48] Whether the perpetrators and acts represented are fictional or based in fact, it is always important to consider not just *what* is being represented but *how* it is being represented, and furthermore how self-reflexive the text or work itself is or appears to be concerning the representational strategies and aesthetic choices employed. This speaks to a more general issue within perpetrator studies, namely that of representation as such.

Representing Perpetrators

The question of the perpetrator cannot be dissociated from the question of how perpetrators and their acts are represented. There are many modes of representation, including self-representation (in social media, auto-documents, interviews, testimonies), representation in the news and the media, fictional representation (in literature, film, and the arts), legal representation (either contemporary or historically), representation in the accounts and testimonies of victims and survivors, and representation in academic scholarship of various disciplines. Given the breadth of the term, it can be useful to distinguish between representation as depiction or description on the one

48 See for example Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Teaching about Perpetrators', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch & Irene Kacandes (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2004), pp. 68–85; Ernst van Alphen, 'Playing the Holocaust', in *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, ed. by Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York: The Jewish Museum; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. 65–83.

hand, and representation in a political or legal sense on the other, i.e. as a form of speaking on behalf of, or standing in for someone else.[49] While it is useful to keep these two meanings of the word distinct, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that they frequently overlap or clash in complex ways. One unavoidable task of perpetrator studies is to identify and account for these convergences and divergences of the two. If, for instance, we take one iconic moment in Holocaust studies like the Eichmann trial, we very quickly become aware of the multiple layers of representation at work. First, within the courtroom setting, Eichmann was represented by his defence team, but also represented himself, both juridically and metaphorically, by presenting a particular version of himself and his acts. The proceedings in the courtroom were simultaneously translated, filmed and transmitted via closed-circuit television to journalists outside the courtroom, while the tapes were flown to the United States to be broadcast there the following day.[50] The media coverage of the trial was extensive, including, of course, Hannah Arendt's report on the 'banality of evil', which adds yet another layer of representation and interpretation to the event. As noted above, Arendt's representation of Eichmann is thus a meta-representation that reflects on the performative character of the trial as a whole and of Eichmann's self-representation. Faced with such an irreducibly complex web of representations, translations, and (re-)mediation, one might feel the urge to strip them away in order to arrive at some deeper or more immediate truth concerning Eichmann. While it is legitimate and important to ask ontological questions concerning the nature of evil and responsibility, it is reductive and potentially misleading to regard the layers of representation in such a case merely as an obstacle to overcome rather than as an intrinsic characteristic of the object of study. In order to understand a figure like Eichmann or an event like the Eichmann trial, it may therefore be more productive to engage in what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called 'thick description'[51]: the significance of the Eichmann trial is inextricable from the multiple ways it has been represented and interpreted.[52]

Matters become even more complicated in the context of artistic representations of perpetrators and perpetration, not least when it concerns fictional representations. Such representations invariably entail a more or less subtle and intricate interplay of self-reference and external reference. In other words, even purely fictional perpetrators refer in one way or another to actual historical examples. Otherwise they would

49 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak elaborates on this dual meaning of representation in her famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271–313 (pp. 275–80).

50 David Cesarani, *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes, and Trial of a 'Desk Murderer'* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2006).

51 Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.

52 Bettina Stangneth, *Eichmann before Jerusalem: The Unexamined Life of a Mass Murderer*, trans. by Ruth Martin (New York: Knopf, 2014).

not be recognizable as perpetrators. Depending on the genre and ambition of the work, it may play self-reflexively with these associations by means of meta-fictional devices such as *mise-en-abyme* (e.g. the 'film-within-the-film') or alienation effects (e.g. 'breaking the fourth wall') and so on. A characteristic of these devices is a troubling of the boundaries between fact and fiction, the real world and the world of the artwork. The more self-reflexive the work, the more it comments not only on its own status as fiction and artifice, but also on the role of representation (fictional or not) in the real world. It is no accident that some of the most prominent and most-discussed representations in perpetrator studies in recent years are also the most self-reflexive.[53] Many of the artworks on display at the much-debated 2002 exhibition *Mirroring Evil* at the Jewish Museum in New York, for example, centred on ironic juxtapositions of Nazi art and popular culture, commenting on the fascination with and commodification of images of the Holocaust.[54] Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (2006) can be read as a critical intervention into the ongoing debate surrounding the representation and representability of the Holocaust.[55] Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) involves an elaborate meta-cinematic frame in which the Indonesian perpetrators re-enact their crimes in the form of their favourite movie genres (gangster movie, musical, Western), while in the central documentary layer of the film they speak candidly about their actions and motivations, revealing, among other things, that even at the time of the mass killings they were inspired in part by Hollywood movies.[56] Thus, in Oppenheimer's film, art imitates life imitating art imitating life. As representations, all of these works are not only about perpetrators, but also in an important sense about their representation, and, moreover, about how such representations are produced, disseminated, and received in the media and in popular culture. That is to say, their engagement with the question of the perpetrator is not only thematic but also theoretical. The same also applies to perpetrator studies as a field, and hence, research on perpetrators must involve a robust theory of representation.

53 *Representing Perpetrators in Holocaust Literature and Film*, ed. by Jenni Adams and Sue Vice (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013).

54 *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, ed. by Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York: The Jewish Museum; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

55 Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Harper, 2009). Among the myriad scholarly responses to the novel, see for instance Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'When the perpetrator becomes a reliable witness of the Holocaust: On Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*', *New German Critique*, 36.1 (2009), 1–19; Klaus Theweleit, 'On the German Reaction to Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*', *New German Critique*, 36.1 (2009), 21–34; Jenni Adams, 'Reading (as) Violence in Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones*', in *Representing Perpetrators*, ed. by Adams and Vice, pp. 25–46; Debarati Sanyal, 'Reading Nazi Memory in Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 50.4 (2010), 47–66; and Erin McGlothlin, 'Empathic Identification and the Mind of the Holocaust Perpetrator in Fiction: A Proposed Taxonomy of Response', *Narrative*, 24.3 (2016), 251–76

56 Joshua Oppenheimer (dir.) *The Act of Killing* (Dogwoof Pictures, 2012). For critical engagements with the film see for example the special issue of *Film Quarterly* 67.2 (2013), edited by B. Ruby Rich.

The question of representation for the field as a whole also pertains to the issue of the over-representation of certain genocides and groups of perpetrators and, conversely, the under-representation of others. Thus, in addition to the thematic concerns that we have outlined above, we would also like to call for more work on precisely these under-examined and under-represented cases as this burgeoning field continues to evolve. As noted, the roots of the field lie in the study of the Holocaust, and it is thus not surprising that studies of and conferences on Nazi perpetrators continue to generate attention and attract more funding and a broad global audience. By now, the Rwandan genocide, the former Yugoslavia, Armenia, and Indonesia, as well as the Soviet context, are beginning to receive more scholarly attention, whereas fundamental research still remains to be done on a whole range of other perpetrators, e.g. in Sudan and Cambodia. Compared to the mass global interest in ISIS, we still know next to nothing about Saddam Hussein's perpetrators. Perpetrator research must bear in mind cultural and political biases, the level of development of the society in question, availability of sources, and continuity of perpetrator regimes. Comparative research on perpetrators cannot disproportionately rely on well-documented and thoroughly-studied cases only. This is a task for the next generation of perpetrator scholars.

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