

Editorial

Emiliano Perra

The issue 4.1 of JPR starts with the exciting news that historian and Rwanda specialist Erin Jessee (University of Glasgow) has joined Susanne Knittel, Emiliano Perra, and Uğur Ümit Üngör as co-Editor-in-Chief of JPR! The addition of Jessee at the helm of the journal adds invaluable expertise to the team and will further cement the journal's intellectual aim to provide a space for the scholarly and multidisciplinary discussion of perpetrators and perpetration of political violence.

This issue of the journal is a particularly rich one. The first section is devoted to a Roundtable discussion on the theme of populism, with contributions by Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Alex Hinton, and Valentina Pisanty about their respective latest books.¹ In line with the JPR's ethos of conceptualising the field as a genuinely multidisciplinary dialogue, the discussion of the books written by an historian, an anthropologist, and a semiotician is enriched in this roundtable by the contributions of political scientist Luisa Morettin and historian-cum-memory studies scholar Wulf Kansteiner. This brief editorial was penned in December 2021. The news is dominated by new waves of infections caused by the Omicron variant of COVID-19 that promise to further entrench social divisions on top of inflicting suffering and death, mounting tension between Russia and NATO over the status of Ukraine and the Baltic States, growing signs of impending climate catastrophe after the substantial failure of the COP26 summit in Glasgow, and authoritarianism and populism dominating politics in world and regional powers like China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Hungary and Poland among others, and dealing blows to democracy in many other countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom. The themes discussed in the roundtable presented here range from how populist leaders get hold of power and the lengths they go to preserve it (Ben-Ghiat and Morettin), the rhetorical strategies deployed by ultranationalists and xenophobes to legitimise their extreme positions (Pisanty and Hinton),

1 Valentina Pisanty, *The Guardians of Memory and the Return of the Xenophobic Right* (New York: Centro Primo Levi Editions, 2021); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Strongmen: How They Rise, Why They Succeed, How They Fall* (London: Profile, 2020); Alexander Laban Hinton, *It Can Happen Here: White Power and the Rising Threat of Genocide in the US* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).



how does this affect memory and forgetting in an age of social media and dangerous conspiracy theories (Kansteiner).

The Articles section in this issue kicks off with Marcelo Svirsky's investigation of the role played by settler colonialism in the formation and perpetuation of Israeli subjectivities. Drawing on the Marxian concept of social reproduction, Svirsky's article illuminates the importance of Jewish Israeli subjectivity formation in perpetuating (and perpetrating) oppression of Palestinians on a daily basis, thus shedding light on structural and mundane forms of perpetration that are not always at the centre of the field of perpetrator studies. The second article by political scientist Marc-Olivier Cantin engages with the important questions of what motivates rank-and-file combatants in civil wars to target civilians. Drawing on an extensive literature on a broad range of cases, the article argues that a microfoundational approach to the radicalisation trajectories of combatants on the ground is essential in order to better understand wartime violence against civilians. The theme of dehumanisation of those who deemed to be enemies of the in-group discussed by Cantin is also at the centre of Rachel Louise Hatcher's article on the rhetorical strategies deployed by the rightwing Foundation against Terrorism to dehumanise human rights activists in Guatemala. In her discussion of the Foundation's communication strategies on social media, Hatcher illuminates its alarming pre-genocidal tones. The last two articles revolve around relatively under-investigated aspects of World War II. Alexandra Birch's article explores the theme of forced singing during Nazi mass shootings in the USSR. In her fascinating research, Birch argues that forced singing served multiple functions, from providing entertainment to the perpetrators to reinforcing the genocidal othering of the victims, thus adding a further layer to our understanding of the Holocaust, but with ramifications that can be applied to other cases of extreme political violence. Kevin Hall's article engages with another relatively overlooked aspect of World War II: a comparative analysis of Axis mistreatment of downed Allied flyers in the European and Pacific theatres of war, with a particular focus on the extremely dangerous phase (which could last anything between mere minutes and whole years) between being shot down and being sent to a POW camp.

The final section of this issue is represented by several book reviews. These include Helena Duffy's review of *The Routledge Handbook of Perpetrator Studies* (2020) coedited by JPR's own Susanne Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg; Stephanie Bird's review of Clare Bielby and

Jeffrey Stevenson Murer's edited volume *Perpetrating Selves: Doing Violence, Performing Identity* (2018); Ariel Ahram's review of JPR's own Uğur Ümit Üngör, *Paramilitarism: Mass Violence in the Shadow of the State* (2020); Sabah Carrim's review of Craig Etcheson, *Extraordinary Justice: Law, Politics, and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals* (2019); Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's review of Raya Morag's *Perpetrator Cinema: Confronting Genocide in Cambodian Documentary* (2020); Juanjo Monsell's review of Anacleto Ferrer's *Facticidad y ficción: Ensayo sobre cinco secuencias fotográficas de perpetración de la Shoah* (2020); Hasan G. López Sanz's review of Anacleto Ferrer's and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's edited volume *El infierno de los perpetrators: Imágenes, relatos y conceptos* (2019); Mary Fulbrook's review of Peter Black, Bela Rasky, and Marianne Windsperger (eds), *Collaboration in the Holocaust and World War II in Eastern Europe* (2019); and last but not least, Franziska Karpinski's review of Alex J. Kay, *The Making of an SS Killer: The Life of Colonel Alfred Filbert, 1905-1990* (2016).

Issue 4.2 of JPR will be a special issue guest edited by Laurike in't Veld (Erasmus University Rotterdam) on the representation of perpetrators and perpetration in comics, and will be published in Spring 2022.