

Editorial

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We are proud to present the third regular issue of *JPR*! This issue is being published according to our new schedule, which includes a regular issue and a special issue per year. The first special issue on perpetrators and photography was published last autumn, and we are already looking forward to the next special issue on paramilitarism, edited by Uğur Ümit Üngör.

We are especially pleased to be able to publish this issue on time, thanks in large part to our indomitable copy- and layout editor Sofía Forchieri, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has understandably cast its shadow over everything for the past months and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Except for our special section (of which more below), the contributions to this issue were largely written before the pandemic, and so do not directly thematise it. Nevertheless, this unprecedented situation does warrant consideration from the perspective of perpetrator studies and we think that it would be a fitting and necessary topic for a special section or a special issue in the future.

The pandemic presents a limit case for our field in several respects. First and foremost, its global scale and diffusion make it difficult if not impossible to assign blame or identify a single perpetrator or group of perpetrators who can be held responsible. At the same time, the pandemic has laid bare the inherently biopolitical and indeed necropolitical parameters of globalized neoliberal capitalism. The designation of precarious workers, especially in food and agriculture, as essential implicitly marks them also as disposable, since their health and wellbeing is subordinate to the preservation of the existing system. By the same token, the rhetoric of 'herd immunity' deployed by political leaders in the UK and the Netherlands for example, translates into the strategic sacrifice of the elderly, the infirm, the poor and the disabled for the health of the body politic. In this way, it obeys precisely the eugenicist logic of determining which lives are worth living and worthy of protection.

Furthermore, the global state of exception has been and is being instrumentalized by authoritarian leaders and regimes in order to push through anti-democratic, discriminatory, and potentially murderous agendas and policies. In this context, the furore surrounding the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's response to the lockdown in Italy

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is an instructive case. Agamben, whose work has largely centred on the sinister biopolitical implications of the generalized state of exception, saw in the Italian government's response to the outbreak an actualization of his theories. But his proposal that we ignore or resist the government's measures in the name of freedom and autonomy placed him problematically in the same camp as authoritarian leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro, Donald Trump, and others who would ordinarily be his ideological opposites. In other words, while he may have been correct in his diagnosis (especially if we look at developments in Poland, Hungary, India and elsewhere), his proposed remedy was dangerously myopic, as other commentators were quick to point out.¹ This scrambling of polarities has implications for perpetrator studies, particularly for scholars whose work engages with theories of biopolitics, political violence, and also resistance and solidarity. The Agamben case is interesting because it highlights the need for new theoretical approaches even as it confirms the validity of existing ones.

Finally, the pandemic in its root causes and ramifications is inextricably bound up in the broader problematic of climate change and habitat and biodiversity loss – in short, it is an instantiation of the assemblage of issues collectively referred to as the Anthropocene.² Since the question

- 1 See Agamben's response here: 'The State of Exception Provoked by an Unmotivated Emergency', *positions politics*, <<http://positionswebsite.org/giorgio-agamben-the-state-of-exception-provoked-by-an-unmotivated-emergency>> [accessed 5 May 2020] (originally published as 'Lo stato di eccezione provocato da un'emergenza immotivata', *Il manifesto*, 26 February 2020, <<https://ilmanifesto.it/lo-stato-deccezione-provocato-da-unemergenzaimmotivata>> [accessed 5 May 2020]). For some reactions see Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Viral Exception', *unbecoming community*, 29 February 2020, <<https://unbecomingcommunity.wordpress.com/2020/02/29/viral-intrusions-and-other-friendships>> [accessed 5 May 2020]; Simona Forti, 'Pan-demic: All People-in-One or Pandemonium?', *The Quarantine Files: Thinkers in Self-Isolation*, curated by Brad Evans, <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation>> [accessed 5 May 2020]; Anastasia Berg, 'Giorgio Agamben's Coronavirus Cluelessness', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 March 2020, <<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Giorgio-Agamben-s/248306>> [accessed 5 May 2020].
- 2 See e.g., Francesco De Pascale and Jean-Claude Roger, 'Coronavirus: An Anthropocene's Hybrid? The Need for a Geoethical Perspective for the Future of the Earth', *AIMS Geosciences*, 6.1(2020), 131–134 <<https://www.aimspress.com/fileOther/PDF/geosciences/geosci-06-01-008.pdf>>; Sigal Samuel, 'Our Environmental Practices Make Pandemics like the Coronavirus More Likely', *Vox*, 31 March 2020, <<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2020/3/31/21199917/coronavirus-covid-19-animals-pandemic-environment-climate-biodiversity>> [accessed 5 May 2020]; Louise Boyle, 'We Should Start Thinking about the Next One', *Independent*, 20 March 2020, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/coronavirus-uk-pandemics-environmentalists-warning-a9413996.html>> [accessed 5 May 2020]; Adryan Corcione, 'Eco-fascism: What It Is, Why It's Wrong, and How to Fight It', *TeenVogue*, 30 April 2020, <<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-ecofascism-explainer>> [accessed 5 May 2020]. See also Neel Ahuja's response to the series 'One Question: COVID-19 and Capitalism', in *States of Nature*, ed. by Cihan Aksan and Jon Bailes, 27 March 2020, <<https://stateofnatureblog.com/one-question-covid19-coronavirus-capitalism>> [accessed 5 May 2020].

of the Anthropocene is already one of the frontiers of perpetrator studies, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity and an exhortation for perpetrator studies to engage critically with these broader questions.

One potential theoretical approach to these complex questions is suggested by Michael Rothberg's concept of implication, which he develops in his recent book *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (2019). This issue of *JPR* opens with a special section on *The Implicated Subject*, consisting of an interview with Rothberg and three responses by scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds: Nathan Snaza (English and curriculum studies), Honni van Rijswijk (Law), and Juliane Prade-Weiss (Comparative Literature). We invited each of these respondents to reflect on and think with Rothberg's concept and bring it into dialogue with their own work. The result is a multifaceted and rich conversation that addresses the question of implication in a range of historical, geographic, and methodological contexts, such as the Holocaust, settler-colonialism, slavery, the MeToo movement, capitalist extractionism, and the positionality of critique.

The articles section comprises four research articles that span a variety of disciplines, contexts, cases, and media. The first article, by memory studies scholar Laurike in't Veld, explores the affordances of the comics medium to render not only the traumatic memory of a Holocaust survivor, but also to explore what Primo Levi calls the 'grey zone' – the morally ambiguous space of compromise and (forced) collaboration of privileged prisoners in the concentration camp. In her discussion, in't Veld focuses on Reinhard Kleist's graphic novel *The Boxer* (2011), which tells the story of Harry Haft, who participated in forced boxing matches in Auschwitz to survive. Kleist's work, she argues, explores in-between figures and gradations of complicity by employing visual and verbal strategies – what she calls 'nuancing gestures' – that challenge binary, simplistic, and redemptive popular narratives of the Holocaust. She further shows how the graphic novel addresses, through visual cues and correspondences, the legacy of violence, trauma, and complicity over time. In their contribution on crimes of the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union, historians Alex J. Kay and David Stahel focus on what they call 'secondary crimes', e.g. sexual violence, theft, starvation, and forced labour, which have received comparatively little attention in scholarship on the German conduct of war and occupation. If these crimes have received less attention, it is largely because the harm inflicted on the victims is less easily attributable to the direct actions of individual perpetrators. Hence, by

highlighting these crimes, Kay and Stahel's article seeks to provide a more detailed picture of criminal conduct by the Wehrmacht while at the same time significantly broadening the scope of who counts as a perpetrator. The third article, by international relations scholar Kateřina Krulišová, critically analyses the rhetorical strategies and gendered tropes employed by Biljana Plavšić in her guilty plea before the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Through her analysis, Krulišová shows how, in order to resist the bestialization and defeminisation of women perpetrators by both the media and the court, Plavšić instead in her speech attempts to align herself with traditional feminine archetypes. The article thus further contributes to our understanding of the gendered framing of genocidal violence and crimes against humanity. Continuing the emphasis on gender, the fourth article in this main section, by comparative genocide scholar Sara Brown, explores the roles and scope for action of women perpetrators during genocide in a comparative study of Nazi Germany and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The article begins by discussing the substantial body of scholarship on the Holocaust that shows how the Nazi regime opened up possibilities for women to pursue careers that were otherwise reserved for men. These included participation in the genocidal apparatus. On the basis of interviews with women convicted of participating in the Rwandan genocide, Brown goes on to argue that, despite the important differences between the two cases in terms of duration, scope, historical, socio-cultural, and geographic context, one can nevertheless observe a comparable 'relaxation' of the patriarchal norms in Rwanda. The article concludes with a broader discussion of the role gender archetypes play in the post-genocide representation of and in some cases on the part of these women perpetrators.

This *JPR* issue also features a continuation of the interdisciplinary Roundtable from our 2018 issue (issue 2.1). That Roundtable was occasioned by an essay we received from Christian Gudehus in response to our inaugural issue (and in particular our 'Editors' Introduction'), in which he addressed questions of terminology, methodology, and focus of *JPR* and of perpetrator studies in general. We took Gudehus' intervention as a starting point for an ongoing conversation about theoretical and methodological questions in the field and invited a number of scholars from different disciplines to engage with our Editorial and the points raised by Gudehus. The conversation continues in this issue with a

further response by Gudehus and position papers by the sociologists Aliza Luft and Daniel Bultmann.

The issue concludes with a rich book review section. Alette Smeulers's review essay revisits recent publications on Milgram's obedience experiments and discusses the extent to which these recent publications and the opening of the Milgram archives shed new light on Milgram's experiments and their explanatory power when it comes to questions of obedience. This is followed by Iva Vukušić's review of Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel's edited volume *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Action, Motivations and Dynamics* (2018), Ilmari Käihkö's review of Miguel A. Centeno and Elaine Enriquez's *War & Society* (2017), and Timothy Williams's review of the edited volume *Perpetrators of International Crimes. Theories, Methods, and Evidence* (2019), edited by Alette Smeulers, Maartje Weerdesteijn, and Barbora Holá.

On behalf of the editors, I would like to thank the authors for their contributions and invite our readers to submit their work for inclusion in the next issue of *JPR*.