

Absicht sein dürfte. Das liegt an einem Mangel an theologischer Begründungstiefe, den man der Arbeit attestieren muss. Die Leitbegriffe wie Sendung, Verantwortung, „prophetische Mahnung“, dann aber auch „Dialog zwischen Politik und Religion“ (291) bleiben eigenartig unreflektiert. Die Stärke des Buches, eine pragmatische, zugreifende Direktheit, hat hier ihre Grenze. Bezeichnender Weise wird eine Andeutung zur theologischen Deutung der Profangeschichte nur in einer Fußnote mit Bezug auf E. Schillebeecks kurz angerissen (276). Man ahnt hier einen Ansatz, der Harutyunyans Stellungnahme ein Fundament geben könnte. Aber es bleibt unbedacht, wie die Zielvorstellung Harutyunyans vom Verhältnis der Kirchen zur Politik und zum ökumenischen Agieren der Kirchen theologisch in ihrer Notwendigkeit begründet und damit auch verbindend-verbindlich gemacht werden könnte. Dieses Defizit zeigt sich auch am Schicksal des gewählten Buchtitels. Die Frage, ob die Einigung Europas ein christliches Projekt sei, wird in den letzten Zeilen ganz pragmatisch, ja geradezu statistisch beantwortet. Sie ist „kein christliches Projekt mehr“, weil die Akteure sich nun einmal nicht mehr alle als Christen begreifen, aber „viele der Gestalter sind Christen und Europa verfolgt viele Ziele, die mit christlichen Zielen übereinstimmen.“ (292) Eine weniger banale Antwort kann Harutyunyan nicht geben, weil er zu wenig reflektiert, was im politischen Kontext „christlich“ heißen müsste. Das ist schade, denn die „Vision“, die das Buch offensichtlich bewegt, ist keineswegs banal.

*Gregor Taxacher*

**Simone Erpel (Hg.), *Im Gefolge der SS: Aufseherinnen des Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück*, Berlin: Metropol-Verlag 2007, 22,00 €, 374 S., ISBN: 978-3-938690-19-2**

This anthology of twenty five essays complements the permanent exhibition in the former guard residence (Aufseherinnenhaus) outside the barbed wire of the women's concentration

camp of Ravensbrück that officially opened to the public in 2004. This exhibit marked a turning point in the pedagogy and politics of memorial culture in Germany because it shifted attention towards perpetrators. Most displays in concentration camps turned “admonition and memorial sites” (Mahn- und Gedenkstätte) focused on victims and survivors while perpetrators appeared as nameless agents of cruelty. This anonymity of SS men and women in uniform, armed with whips and dogs, has now been broken. But such a shift is not without controversy as the inclusion of perpetrator biographies might intentionally or unintentionally (re)awaken sympathy and condone their self-portraits as victims of a ruthless regime. Most contributors to this volume are cognizant of this danger and take pains to avoid any such potential (mis)readings.

More importantly, the exhibit and this complementing volume turn the gaze towards female perpetrators. Between Daniel Patrick Brown’s sexualized *Beautiful Beast* and Bernhard Schlink’s illiterate *Reader*, misconceptions about the motivations and behaviors of the approximately 5000 female SS-Associates had flourished while historians generally ignored this aspect of perpetrator history. This anthology provides original research and allows a comprehensive overview of the biographies and post-war prosecutions of women who applied for or were enlisted to camp guard duty in Ravensbrück. Ravensbrück was the only women’s camp in the vast Nazi camp system and it trained all female guards later stationed elsewhere. Ravensbrück is a great starting point for the study of women’s backgrounds, range of choices, criminal convictions and post-war lives.

The book is divided into five sections: the first section of six essays analyzes individual biographies, the motivations and coping mechanisms of women who entered camp guard careers. The second and third sections present ten different military and national trials against Ravensbrück guards. The fourth section addresses the use of photo collections and films by and about SS-associates in the context of museums. The last part extends into the present and asks survivors, family

members, neighbors and young visitors to Ravensbrück how they deal with the memory of particular guards. All of the contributors are authorities in their fields, and their contributions arise from larger studies (often dissertations). Without a doubt, this volume has compiled the most up-to-date scholarship and sets a new standard for the study of [discussions] of female perpetrators.

Killing is men's business. Women are not supposed to act aggressively or to engage in violence—and, on the whole, the history of war and crime lies solidly in the hands of men. All the more intriguing are the motivations of the few women who joined in atrocity: Who were they, how did they get started, why did they do it, and were they more sadistic than their male counterparts? The Nazi state had not originally envisioned a career path for SS-women. The women who were recruited and trained in Ravensbrück were never officially integrated into the SS. They were “associates” of the SS and remained subject to male supervision at all times. Lavern Wolfram's statistical analysis shows that the vast majority of women were not even members of the National Socialist party. In contrast to their male colleagues, who had been politically indoctrinated and formally inducted into the elite brotherhood of the SS, less than 5% of the women guards applied for membership in the NS party. These women were not drawn to cruelty and murder by political conviction. Instead, they responded to newspaper advertisements or were enticed by promises of better pay, more prestige and less tedium. The majority wanted to escape mandatory postings in military armament factories, desired economic freedom and security and enjoyed personal independence from the family. Several of the women signed up as single mothers raising illegitimate children. Others entered into relationships with SS-men with whom they were in close working contact. There were marriages in Ravensbrück and there were pregnancies. Since the SS supported the birth of racially pure children, they built a daycare center in 1941 staffed by camp inmates, mostly Jehovah's Witnesses. Compared to other work environments, the guards lived well. And

they took pleasure in the power and prestige accorded to uniforms, weapons, dogs and violence.

Once initiated and sufficiently brutalized in Ravensbrück, there were two paths up the career ladder: one could be promoted to Oberaufseherin (charged with the supervision of the other female guards), or one could be transferred to Auschwitz, Majdanek, Stutthof and Groß Rosen. Four biographical portraits illustrate different trajectories and range of behaviors among female camp personnel. The first two essays follow the careers of two supervisory guards (Oberaufseherinnen), Maria Mandl (convicted by Polish courts and hanged December 24, 1948) and Dorothea Binz (convicted by British courts and hanged May 2, 1947). Neither of them betrayed any sense of awareness of guilt (Schuldbewusstsein). Despite detailed survivor testimony of their brutality, both women defended their reign of terror as legitimate and necessary in order to control unruly, undisciplined and “freche” prisoners. Johannes Schwartz argues further that the young Dorothea Binz used violence not only as a strategy to control inmates, but also to manipulate her male superiors and to carve out some autonomy and authority.

While both Mandl and Binz applied for camp service, the case of Marianne Essmann validates claims of mandatory enlistment. Stefanie Opper presents the official *Verpflichtungsbescheid* (Obligatory Enlistment) with which Marianne Essmann was ordered to report for training in Ravensbrück on August 20, 1944. Opper points out that women had been subject to the Law Regulating Obligatory Service (*Dienstpflichtverordnung*) since 1939, though this law was not strictly enforced. Apparently, a number of Ravensbrück guards were required to report for duty from their postings in military factories. However, such a transfer could be refused. One woman declined to sign the contract once she saw the “misery crying out to heaven,” and was subsequently returned to factory duty. Clearly, such refusal required personal courage that only exceptional women possessed. While most defensive post-war claims of mandatory recruitment were false, some of

the women—in contrast to SS-men—were in fact transferred from civilian assignments to camp duty without volunteering. Once in the camp system, women did make choices concerning their participation in violence. Eva Wolfangel describes the case of Margarete Mewes, a native of Fürstenberg, who had entered the concentration camp in 1939 to support her children as an unmarried, single mother. Convicted to ten years by the British Military court (and released after five), she denied having engaged in “excessive” violence and portrayed herself as a “decent woman.” The court questioned her portrayal as a “decent woman... supervising what was nothing then (sic) a torture chamber.” Clearly, “normal enforcement” of rampant hunger, dirt, deprivation, coldness, hard labor, brutal discipline and random cruelty designed to break the human spirit of inmates implicated every camp guard in violence. Occasional glimpses of humanity and gestures of care for selected favorites could not undo the inhumanity of the place.

After the war, the guards faced wildly differing legal treatments. The ten studies making up the second and third sections provide an overview of the range of criminal prosecutions: Ravensbrück guards were tried and convicted by British, French and Soviet military tribunals as well as Polish, Austrian, West and East German national courts. This means that camp guards faced widely different laws and legal proceedings, and their sentences varied accordingly: death sentences were handed down by the British, Polish and French courts, though the French verdicts were eventually overturned. Soviet military tribunals convicted a total of 74 women guards to prison terms between eight years and life in the post-war internment camp of Sachsenhausen.

The prosecution in the two German states was complicated by cold war politics. Several of the women convicted by East German courts in 1949 fled to the Federal Republic after serving their sentences of four months to two years where they were welcomed as political refugees. The second East German trial in Rostock in 1963, initiated in response to West

German Nazi trials, were conducted in secret and ab/used by the secret service (MfS aka Stasi) to press defendants into service as spies for the East German surveillance network. Open criminal convictions of camp guards would have contradicted the official explanation of National Socialism as an aberration of fascist capitalism that had been defeated by the victorious New Socialist Germany. The competition between the two German states, as junior partners in the cold war, turned legal "coming to terms with the past" (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) into a farce. This pattern repeated itself shortly after reunification in 1994, when one camp guard, Margot Kunz, applied for rehabilitation and was awarded monetary compensation for wrongful imprisonment. Convicted to 25 years by the Soviet military tribunal in 1947 as a Ravensbrück guard, she was released in 1956 for good behavior after nine years in Sachsenhausen and Hoheneck. After much public scandal and soul searching, the German ministry of justice repealed its flawed decision in 1996. But this case, points to widespread, mostly conservative political suspicion of the legal legitimacy of any proceedings against Nazi perpetrators.

The West German Majdanek trial, conducted between 1975 and 1981, also involved a total of six Ravensbrück guards. Koslov Mailaender examines the impact of gender expectations on the sentences in this last, longest and costliest West German trial. Several of the defendants died over the course of the trials, while others were declared medically unfit due to old age. In the end, the two remaining women received the highest sentences, 12 years and life respectively, considerably higher than their male co-defendants. This perplexing outcome, Mailaender argues, results from the scandal of female violence. Surviving witnesses could remember their names and faces vividly, while the memory of male tormentors had become blurry after 35 years. The grandmotherly appearance of the defendants served to further accentuate the abnormality of their behavior. The revelation that these women had engaged in the same level of brutality as their male colleagues registered as distinctly more erschütternd (disturbing) and

warranted more severe punishment. The violence of men, though repugnant, conformed to gender expectations and apparently was more easily condoned.

The fourth section problematizes the use of visual material made by perpetrators that depict their quaint after-hours lives. Although scholars in Holocaust studies have long been mindful of the fact that most extant photos were “shot” by perpetrators and reflect their gaze, the objects of these photographs have usually been victims: the boy with the raised arms, the mother protecting her child, the undressed women at the mass grave, and the gaunt figures in ghettos have become visual icons of the Holocaust. But the casual snap shots of guards proudly displaying their dogs, of SS-men and female SS-associates drinking and hiking, of SS-men in their private quarters are dangerously normalizing the abnormal. In four essays, we learn about different collections: official photographs of Ravensbrück made for propaganda and administrative purposes; the private photo album of an SS-camp guard made for her son; a collection of portraits shot of female guards made after the war; and the first film about Ravensbrück made by a Polish Jewish survivor of Ravensbrück.

The last section examines how different constituencies live with the memory of perpetration: the impact reaches from traumatic memories to complete denial, from elaborate deceptions to revisionist reclamation and bored disinterest. Despite decades of pedagogical programming, political education and therapeutic intervention, the memory of inhumane cruelty and genocidal violence remains distinctly uncomfortable.

Perhaps the Buddhist practice of mindfulness rather than the Christian drama of sin and redemption, guilt and forgiveness provides a better strategy for “coming to terms:” to become mindful of these women’s lives and atrocious actions, and to embrace their humanity without demonizing or valorizing their experience. This anthology succeeds in presenting the broken humanity of these women in a dispassionate, yet sympathetic tone. The contributions are critical and distanced

with respect to the deep self-deception but remain compassionate and empathetic.

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**Fabian Wittreck, *Nationalsozialistische Rechtslehre und Naturrecht. Affinität und Aversion*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck-Verlag 2008, 19,00 €, 81 S., ISBN 978-3-16-149864-0**

### *Zwischen Ablehnung und Anziehung*

Fabian Wittreck analysiert die Relevanz naturrechtlichen Denkens für die NS-„Rechtslehre“.

Fabian Wittreck ist Professor für Öffentliches Recht an der Westfälischen Wilhelm-Universität Münster. Einem allgemeinpolitisch interessierten Zeitungsleser wurde er vor kurzem dadurch bekannt, dass sein „akademischer Lehrer Horst Dreier“ (Vorwort) ihn im Zusammenhang mit dessen umstrittener Position zur Folter zitierte. Diese hat eine heftige Polemik ausgelöst, die Dreier am Ende eine Berufung zum Verfassungsrichter kostete. Mit „Nationalsozialistische Rechtslehre und Naturrecht“ erschien nun die Antrittsvorlesung seines Schülers Wittrecks als „Werkstattbericht“ (Vorwort) bei Mohr Siebeck.

Schon im Untertitel deutet sich die Janusköpfigkeit des Naturrechts für den Nationalsozialismus an: „Affinität und Aversion“. Die Entwickler der nationalsozialistischen „Rechtslehre“ (Wittreck begründet überzeugend, warum es sich dabei eigentlich nicht um eine Lehre handelt, stellt den Begriff aber dennoch nicht in Anführungszeichen) stehen dem Naturrecht höchst ambivalent gegenüber, denn sie sind mit dem Problem konfrontiert, dass das Paradigma des Neuen, das sich Hitler auf die Fahnen geschrieben hatte, eine zu starke Anbindung an die Tradition verbietet, sich in dieser andererseits Elemente finden lassen, die sehr gut zur Abgrenzung gegenüber den verhassten Konzepten der bürgerlich-liberalen