HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

CONFRONTING THE COMMUNAL GRAVE: A REASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS DURING THE HOLOCAUST IN EASTERN EUROPE*

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ABSTRACT. *This historiographical review focuses on the complex interactions between Nazi Germany, local populations, and east European Jews during the Holocaust. Braving fierce historical revisionism in eastern Europe and the Baltic states, recent studies have shifted the spotlight from Germans to Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, and other ethnicities. As a result, the analytic categories with which most historians still work – notably 'perpetrator/victim/bystander' and 'collaboration/resistance' – have outlived their usefulness. A more complex picture of the Nazi-occupied territories in eastern Europe has emerged and now awaits new theoretical frameworks. This article argues that past paradigms blinded scholars to a range of groups lost in the cracks and to behaviours remaining outside the political sphere. Through four criteria that shed light on the social history of the Holocaust in eastern Europe, it draws connections between central and east European, German, Jewish, and Soviet histories, in order to engage with other fields and disciplines that examine modern mass violence and genocide. As Holocaust studies stands at a crossroads, only a transnational history including all ethnicities and deeper continuities, both temporal and geographical, will enhance our knowledge of how social relations shaped the very evolution of the Holocaust.*

Who owns history? 'Everyone and no one' was the US historian Eric Foner's assessment in 2003. Noting a deep fissure between academic and public discourse on slavery, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction era, Foner urged historians to reinvigorate their engagement with public history.[1] Almost two

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[1] Eric Foner, *Who owns history? Rethinking the past in a changing world* (New York, NY, 2003).

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decades later, in the wake of an anti-globalization backlash and resurgent anti-semitism, Foner's worries apply even more so to the Holocaust. Perhaps the most contentious field of history, it truly haunts us.[2] Innovative research on this seminal twentieth-century event thrives as never before. The opening of Soviet archives and a globalized commemorative culture centred on the Holocaust have contributed to shifting scholarly attention from Germany to eastern Europe.[3] A state-directed mass crime carried out by the Third Reich, the genocide of the Jews, and the targeting of Soviet POWs, Slavs, LGBTQ, Roma and Sinti, and the disabled could not have occurred without the participation, tacit support, and inertia of millions of non-Germans. Paradoxically, scholars who point to the complexity of these social relations have never been so harshly criticized throughout eastern Europe as they are now.[4] Poland, Ukraine, and other countries have increasingly developed official memory politics that often consider local populations as victims caught between Hitler and Stalin.[5] In the face of scholarly discourse stifled by aggressive public voices, we historians must bridge this gap. One of the foremost tasks is to take stock of the available scholarship scattered across the fields of central European, eastern European, German, Soviet, and Jewish history. This historiographical review on social relations in Nazi-dominated eastern Europe – a central point of contention in recent heated debates – is meant to be a step towards a dispassionate engagement with public discourse.

The current historiographical moment is indeed ready for a new overview of the field. Historians have realized that genocide is a social practice, and have moved away from studying it only as a bureaucratic and industrial process. Innovative studies of the involvement of local populations in the Holocaust have transformed our understanding of the events on three levels. First, the uniqueness paradigm, which emphasizes the impossibility of comparing the genocide of the Jews to other historical events, has lost momentum.[6] Various scales of analysis have more recently included macrophenomena (wars), structural-political factors (totalitarian regimes), and social psychological analyses.

[2] Deborah Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: here and now* (New York, NY, 2019); Peter Hayes, *Why? Explaining the Holocaust* (New York, NY, 2017), pp. 329–43.

[3] Jens Meierhenrich and Devin Pendas, eds., *Political trials in theory and history* (Cambridge, 2017). On 'collaboration', see, for instance, David Gaunt, Paul A. Levine, and Laura Palosuo, eds., *Collaboration and resistance during the Holocaust: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania* (Bern, 2004).

[4] Jörg Hackmann, 'Defending the "good name" of the Polish nation: politics of history as a battlefield in Poland, 2015–18', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20 (2018), pp. 587–606; Kiril Feferman and Kobi Kabalek, eds., 'Scholars' forum (part II): Holocaust historiography in eastern Europe', *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 31 (2017), pp. 261–306; Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács, eds., *The Holocaust in Hungary: seventy years later* (Budapest, 2016).

[5] Gelinada Grinchenko and Eleonora Narvselius, eds., *Traitors, collaborators and deserters in contemporary European politics of memory* (Kharkiv, 2017).

[6] Rebecca Jinks, *Representing genocide: the Holocaust as paradigm?* (New York, NY, 2016).

Second, the now well-established field of genocide studies enhances this comparative perspective. In specialized journals, such as the *Journal of Genocide Research* and *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, this interdisciplinary field has unearthed the widespread potential for genocide in modern society. But unresolved tensions in and between the two fields remain. While most historians produce empirical studies, genocide scholars tend to prefer a theoretical approach.[7]

Third, and most importantly, the regionalization of studies, resulting in the remarkable fragmentation of the field, has discredited the existing categories of analysis. The late Raul Hilberg, one of the founders of Holocaust studies, had established three categories for the protagonists, namely 'perpetrators', 'victims', and 'bystanders'. For Hilberg, a political scientist, and Michael Marrus, a historian, the universal concept of 'bystanders' encompasses all those 'contemporaries of the Jewish catastrophe' who 'saw or heard something of the event'.[8] As scholars studied eastern Europe, they increasingly criticized these categories, particularly that of 'bystanders', for their inability to consider specific levels of opposition to or approval of the Nazi regime.[9] A more complex picture of social relations during the Holocaust has now emerged, facilitated by an ever-growing dialogue with other disciplines.[10]

As a result, the history of the Holocaust stands at a crossroads. In 2002, the historian Mark Mazower rightly lamented that the Holocaust had become such a strong reference for measuring modern mass violence that other cases pale into insignificance.[11] But studies of comparative genocide have not integrated recent empirical findings of Holocaust historiography either. Given the vitality of both fields, I wish to extend Mazower's thoughts. Despite early efforts by Jewish survivors, such as Philip Friedman, who drew attention to the complex relations between Jews and non-Jews in eastern Europe, historians

[7] Peter Hayes and John K. Roth, eds., *The Oxford handbook of Holocaust studies* (Oxford, 2010); Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, eds., *The Oxford handbook of genocide studies* (Oxford, 2010).

[8] Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, victims, bystanders* (New York, NY, 1992), pp. xii and 195–268; Michael Marrus, *The Holocaust in history* (Hanover, NH, 1987), pp. 156–83.

[9] Christina Morina and Krijn Thijs, eds., *Probing the limits of categorization: the bystander in Holocaust history* (New York, NY, 2018); Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw, eds., *The Holocaust and European societies: social processes and social dynamics* (Cambridge, 2016); Jan Grabowski, 'The role of "bystanders" in the implementation of the "Final Solution" in occupied Poland', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 43 (2015), pp. 113–31.

[10] Robert M. Ehrenreich and Tim Cole, 'The perpetrator–bystander–victim constellation: rethinking genocidal relationships', *Human Organization*, 64 (2005), pp. 213–24. For revisions, see Jochen Böhler and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, 'Collaboration and resistance in wartime Poland (1939–1945): a case for differentiated occupation studies', *Journal of Modern European History*, 16 (2018), pp. 225–46; Vesna Drapac and Gareth Pritchard, *Resistance and collaboration in Hitler's empire* (Basingstoke, 2017).

[11] Mark Mazower, 'Violence and the state in the twentieth century', *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), pp. 1158–78; A. Dirk Moses, 'Paranoia and partisanship: genocide studies, Holocaust historiography, and the apocalyptic conjuncture', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), pp. 553–83.

have not adopted such a perspective frequently enough.[12] This review essay contends that if, and only if, historians speak a language understood by experts of other fields can the Holocaust serve as a sophisticated template for the study of modern mass violence in which racial and gendered classifications, robbing, and killings on a massive scale have occurred.

Yet scholars often lack the tools to engage in such a dialogue. To begin with, Hilberg's trilogy, along with the 'resistance and collaboration' paradigm, does not help consider a wider range of social groups and behaviours outside the political sphere. In the past, historians conflated rigid categories with an analysis of the complex experiences of communities and individuals. The fallacious compulsion to judge behaviours and antisemitism as a universal explanation has also limited our efforts to understand the web of social relations in the Holocaust. This article argues that merely using a transnational focus can enhance our understanding of the complex interactions between the Nazi regime, local populations, and east European Jews.[13] As a case study, it will focus on the Polish–Ukrainian borderlands (*kresy*), including western Belarus and eastern Lithuania, as well as the Baltic states, western Russia, and the Crimea. All these regions experienced drastic political and social change during the war and were deeply affected by both the Soviet regime and the Nazi occupation. Recent scholarship has emphasized similar local dynamics and interpersonal relations in the Axis states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Romania), but such far-reaching considerations go beyond the scope of a single article.[14] As historians are probing transnational approaches to the Holocaust, I suggest reading the available literature on these borderlands through four criteria that stress the transnational and that may be productively incorporated into broader perspectives on modern genocide and mass violence: the importance of pre-war politics; the multiplicity of social groups involved; a multi-dimensional perspective; and spatial and gender views.

These four criteria need to be read within the recent opening of Holocaust studies to other disciplines and fields. Borderlands scholars could gain many insights from eastern Europe, a variegated space of multiple languages, religions, and ethnicities.[15] Attempts to apply cultural history to the Holocaust

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[12] Philipp Friedman, 'Outline of program for Holocaust research', in Ada June Friedman, ed., *Roads to extinction: essays on the Holocaust* (New York, NY, 1980), pp. 565–76.

[13] For a similar call, see Gaëlle Fisher and Caroline Mezger, eds., *The Holocaust in the borderlands: interethnic relations and the dynamics of violence in occupied eastern Europe* (Göttingen, 2019); Doris L. Bergen, 'Holocaust und Besatzungsgeschichte', in Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw, eds., *Der Holocaust. Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung* (Frankfurt, 2015), pp. 299–321.

[14] See, among others, Diana Dumitru, *The state, antisemitism, and collaboration in the Holocaust: the borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 2016); Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the nation: population exchange and ethnic cleansing in World War II Romania* (Baltimore, MD, 2009); Zoltán Vági, László Csosz, and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary: evolution of a genocide* (Lanham, MD, 2013).

[15] Jared Orsi, 'Construction and contestation: toward a unifying methodology for borderlands history', *History Compass*, 12 (2014), pp. 433–43.

have proven meaningful.[16] Although disputed and sometimes overstating historical continuities, an 'imperial turn' has demonstrated how colonial history might inform the Nazi empire.[17] Holocaust studies can also join forces with global historians who are beginning to reflect on cross-imperial connections and the diversity of colonial societies.[18] Comparing is not trivializing, as entangled histories will even further underline the Holocaust's particularities. Social transformations via war and genocide, the reorganization of gendered relations, and the subordination of local populations along racialized or cultural lines respond to the interests of many scholars.

I

Scholarship on the Holocaust traditionally took as its starting point the search for origins. Earlier works were limited to the confines of Germany's borders. The 'historians' quarrel' (*Historikerstreit*), inflamed by both scholars and the German public in the late 1980s, centred on contentious issues such as the weight of antisemitism in German society, Prussian militarism, and the failed modernization of the German bourgeoisie.[19] Since then, the field has evolved in two directions. The historian and survivor Saul Friedländer, releasing Holocaust history from its German shackles, elaborated the now widely accepted concept of 'integrated history of the Holocaust', a method that combines the voices of all social groups, particularly those of Jewish victims, and moves beyond the inner workings of Nazi institutions.[20] To explain the destruction of social relations in wartime eastern Europe, historians usually reflect on the Soviet occupation that began with the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact (23 August 1939), which divided eastern Europe between Berlin and Moscow. Recent studies now argue that the Holocaust constitutes the tragic peak of a century-long process of the 'unweaving' of European populations, stretching back to the 1870s – a period that A. Dirk Moses aptly dubs the 'racial century'. At stake are thus nation-building, quarrels over national borders, imperialist

[16] Alon Confino, *A world without Jews: the Nazi imagination from persecution to genocide* (New Haven, CT, 2014); Dan Stone, 'Holocaust historiography and cultural history', *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 23 (2009), pp. 52–68.

[17] Thomas Kühne, 'Colonialism and the Holocaust: continuities, causations, and complexities', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 13 (2013), pp. 339–62; 'Scholarly forum on the Holocaust and genocide', *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 27 (2013), pp. 40–73.

[18] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in world history: power and the politics of difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010).

[19] Jürgen Kocka, 'Looking back on the *Sonderweg*', *Central European History*, 51 (2018), pp. 137–42.

[20] Saul Friedländer, 'An integrated history of the Holocaust: some methodological challenges', in Dan Stone, ed., *The Holocaust and historical methodology* (New York, NY, 2012), pp. 181–9; Alexandra Garbarini and Paul B. Jaskot, eds., *New approaches to an integrated history of the Holocaust: social history, representation, theory, Lessons and Legacies*, 13 (Evanston, IL, 2018).

rivalries, and ideological conflicts.[21] From such a vantage point, which, unlike earlier perspectives, includes the history of the Jewish victims, the Holocaust is embedded spatially within a broader European framework, and chronologically within the early twentieth century, and especially the interwar years.

Lithuania offers one powerful example of this trend. Christoph Dieckmann follows local nationalism from the nineteenth century and interweaves the boiling conflicts between Jews and non-Jewish Lithuanians during the Soviet and Nazi occupations. In Estonia, bitter memories of the Russian empire were combined with a sense of nationalism from which Jews were increasingly excluded. This 'political promiscuity', as Anton Weiss-Wendt calls it, left Estonians longing for a national state, which eventually led them to join forces with the Nazi regime. For the eastern Galician town of Buczacz, Omer Bartov traces ethnic conflicts back to the violent demise of the Habsburg empire.[22] In the aftermath of the First World War, hostility towards Jews intensified, and the feelings of belonging to a specific ethnic group significantly increased with the foundation of nationalist parties. The inability of Ukrainian nationalists to found a state ignited fascist ideology in eastern Galicia, with profound implications for Jews after 1941. New political movements and networks that emerged after the fall of the Romanov and Habsburg empires seem to have paved the way for extreme collective violence. Applying the notion of 'fascism' to eastern Europe, though still disputed, can potentially serve as a productive frame for a transnational approach to antisemitism and post-imperial politics.[23]

But a *longue durée* approach to the Holocaust has not been confined to a political perspective. Lived experiences of ethnic groups have become central to explaining the origins of violence. Young Jews, having reached adulthood in the Second Polish Republic (1918–39) and used to embracing 'cultural Polishness', were simultaneously pushed to the socio-economic margins. Primarily focused on teasing out Polish antisemitism, earlier studies oversaw how Betar, one of the most popular Zionist youth movements, with nearly 40,000 members in Poland alone, negotiated its role in the nascent Polish

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[21] Mark Levene, *The crisis of genocide: devastation: the European rimlands 1912–1938* (Oxford, 2013); Donald Bloxham, *Genocide, the world wars and the unweaving of Europe* (Oxford, 2009); A. Dirk Moses, 'Conceptual blockages and definitional dilemmas in the "racial century": genocides of indigenous peoples and the Holocaust', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36 (2007), pp. 7–36.

[22] Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen, 1941–1944* (Göttingen, 2011); Anton Weiss-Wendt, *On the margins: essays on the history of Jews in Estonia* (Budapest, 2017), p. 344; Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a genocide: the life and death of a town called Buczacz* (New York, NY, 2018), pp. 102–16; 'Book forum: Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a genocide: the life and death of a town called Buczacz* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2018)', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20 (2018), pp. 624–58.

[23] For recent literature, see Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, eds., *Fascism without borders: transnational connections and cooperation between movements and regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945* (Oxford, 2017).

state.[24] This complex picture makes it possible to consider ethnic groups as fluid entities, and Jewish communities engaged in Bundism (the Jewish socialist party), communism, orthodoxy (Agudat Yisrael), and Zionism as the most flexible on class and religious matters. In 1983, Ezra Mendelsohn wrote about 'Jewries of varying nature'. According to his typology, which has not, surprisingly, more widely resounded in Holocaust studies, the Jews in the western borderlands, attached to German culture, were different from Galician Jews – who were usually bourgeois and close to Polish Zionism – and the majority of Jews from the rural eastern borderlands (kresy), traditionally disengaged from their Christian neighbours.[25] Different levels of politicization among Polish and Ukrainian peasants also point to a more complex panorama for non-Jews. After the demise of the Russian and Habsburg empires, peasant parties in western Galicia gained a sense of ethnic nationalism, in contrast to the eastern borderlands, where the lower strata of Poles assimilated into Ukrainian culture.[26] What was the depth of those nationalist sentiments? Scholars of the Habsburg empire have recently argued that borderland populations could be indifferent to the nationalistic endeavours of small groups of activists until the First World War, navigating among languages to their advantage.[27] How did these regional differences affect, some twenty years later, individual and group behaviour in the Holocaust?

The Soviet occupation, another centrepiece of recent literature, left each ethnic group suffering. Soviet rule had profoundly traumatized the Estonians. Polish nationalists believed that Jews had plotted with Stalin's local henchmen. Ukrainian extreme nationalism had formed in south-eastern Poland, targeting Soviets, Poles, and Jews as so many obstacles to an ethnic state. In Belarus, the Soviet regime had already embarked on an anti-Jewish policy, sharpening the general animosity towards the Jewish minority. Here, Timothy Snyder's framework of a 'double occupation', first Soviet, then Nazi, serving as a laboratory of escalating genocidal violence, is more persuasive than the old stereotype that Jews were punished for their involvement with the Soviets.[28] Case studies

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[24] Kamil Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu: świadomość, kultura i socjalizacja politycznamłodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej* (*Children of modernism: awareness, culture and political socialization of Jewish youth in the Second Polish Republic*) (Wrocław, 2017); Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jabotinsky's children: Polish Jews and the rise of right-wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ, 2017).

[25] Gershon Bacon, 'One Jewish Street? Reflections on unity and disunity in interwar Polish Jewry', in Antony Polonsky, Hanna Węgrzynek, and Andrzej Żbikowski, eds., *New directions in the history of the Jews in the Polish lands* (Boston, MA, 2018), pp. 324–38; Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of east central Europe between the world wars* (Bloomington, IN, 1983), pp. 43–83.

[26] Kai Struve, 'Polish peasants in eastern Galicia: indifferent to the nation or pillars of Polishness? National attitudes in the light of Jozef Chalasinski's collection of peasant youth memoirs', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 109 (2014), pp. 37–59.

[27] Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg empire: a new history* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Tara Zahra, 'Imagined noncommunities: national indifference as a category of analysis', *Slavic Review*, 69 (2010), pp. 93–119.

[28] Timothy Snyder, *Black earth: the Holocaust as history and warning* (New York, NY, 2015), pp. 191–206.

from eastern Galicia and Białystok have revealed that the number of Jews in the Soviet administration was not higher than were those from other ethnic groups.[29] This myth of Judeo-Communism (*Żydokomuna*), which replaced the obsession with blood libel between 1941 and 1945, is best seen as a symbol of the overall culture of hatred. The more the latter took root in public discourse, the lower the threshold for physical violence became.[30]

Therefore, to grasp the history of the Soviet occupation, one must recognize that attitudes towards Jews and other minorities differed from one region to another. Although the Soviets were ethnically cleansing the Poles of eastern Galicia until July 1941, the asymmetric trio of Ukrainians, Jews, and Poles left the last more sympathetic to Jews in western Galicia. The analysis of long-term social structures could thus help to overcome the existing scholarly opposition between the Institute for National Remembrance, which praises the help given to Jews by Christian Poles, and the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research, which highlights their betrayal.[31]

Long-term structures of political and cultural geography also help to explain individual choices under Nazi rule from June 1941. The will of Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Baltic nationalist groups to participate, for instance, in pogroms must be understood via the concept of a 'National Revolution' and Christian apocalyptic visions, such as in the German-uniformed battalion *Nachtigall* in Lwów (today Lviv, Ukraine). After unsuccessful attempts to proclaim a Ukrainian state on 22 June 1941 and a Lithuanian one the following day, local nationalists turned their attention to ethnic cleansing and neighbour-on-neighbour violence, long considered the bloody pinnacle of eastern European antisemitism. In 2001, Jan T. Gross's much-contested and harrowing account of the Jedwabne pogrom on 10 July 1941 centred explicitly on the Polish villagers as the brutal executioners.[32] Extending Gross's case study to 219 pogroms across the eastern Soviet borderlands, the political scientists Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg explain the pogroms' occurrence through pre-war behaviour. They argue that pogroms happened in places where the perceived threat of Jewish political rights and the longing for an ethnically homogenous state were high. If pogroms in about 10 per cent of all localities were merely retaliation against Jewish–Soviet collaboration, once the Party

[29] Kai Struve, Elazar Barkan, and Elizabeth A. Cole, eds., *Shared history – divided memory: Jews and others in Soviet-occupied Poland, 1939–1941* (Leipzig, 2007).

[30] Paul Hanebrink, *A specter haunting Europe: the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018); Joanna Michlic, 'The Soviet occupation of Poland, 1939–41, and the stereotype of the anti-Polish and pro-Soviet Jew', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society*, 13 (2007), pp. 135–76.

[31] Barbara Engelking, 'Powiat bielski' ('Bielski County'), in Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* (*It's still night: the fate of Jews in selected counties of Poland*) (Warsaw, 2018), pp. 168–70.

[32] Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: the destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).

officials had left, other 'collaborators' besides Jews would have been targeted.[33] The authors' thought-provoking argument, focusing on political rather than cultural integration of Jews, contradicts recent findings that every pogrom had a unique scenario.[34] Current scholarly differences seem to centre on the importance of Nazi violence and the ideological convergence between local and German perpetrators. A comparative analysis of local non-German perpetrators, their pre-war organizations, and anti-Soviet background is still missing.

In his study of the ghettos of Minsk, Krakow, and Białystok, Evgeny Finkel develops a typology of Jewish reactions to Nazi policy by delineating the vast range of stances between 'collaboration' and 'armed resistance'. Adding 'cooperation', 'compliance', 'coping', and 'evasion' to our tools for under-standing victim behaviour, he contends that Jewish communities with pre-war experiences of discrimination and violence were more likely to resist and escape from ghettos. Everyone had to make choices, often reflecting pre-war habits, at every stage of one's involvement – or not – alongside the Nazis and the war, inseparable from the Holocaust.[35] Firmly grounded in eastern Europe, a broader framework tackles the stigmatization of ethnic minorities, disabled people, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Only in this condition can the geno-cide of the Jews be understood within the history of European mass violence.

II

To write about social interactions, historians usually begin with the history of one group. How, when, and why did some people become mass killers, whereas others did not? Since Christopher R. Browning's seminal study entitled *Ordinary men* (1992), 'perpetrator history' (*Tätergeschichte*) has become a staple of Holocaust studies. Browning demonstrated that the Order Police Reserve Battalion 101, comprising middle-aged men from Hamburg, killed around 83,000 Jews because of peer pressure, feelings of duty, obedience to authority, and brutalizing circumstances. While the 'ordinariness' of these men has been challenged, historians have stressed a 'particular National Socialist morality' (Harald Welzer) and male bonding and comradeship for the generation of Schutzstaffel (SS) leaders in the Main Security Office (RSHA) in Berlin, the

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[33] Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate violence: anti-Jewish pogroms on the eve of the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY, 2018). For an overview of earlier literature, see Jeffrey Burds, *Holocaust in Rovno: the massacre at Sosenki Forest, November 1941* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 6–17.

[34] Kai Struve, *Deutsche Herrschaft, ukrainischer Nationalismus, antijüdische Gewalt. Der Sommer 1941 in der Westukraine* (Berlin, 2015), p. 557, emphasizing activists from the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B).

[35] Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: choice and survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ, 2017), pp. 7 and 191; book forum, *Shofar*, 36 (2018), pp. 239–47; Gerhard Weinberg, 'Two separate issues? Historiography of World War II and the Holocaust', in David Bankier and Dan Michman, eds., *Holocaust historiography in context: emergence, challenges, polemics and achievements* (New York, NY, 2008), pp. 379–401.

concentration camps, the German army (Wehrmacht), and the paramilitary Stormtroopers (SA).[36] Explanations have included a cult of self-sacrifice, submission to higher authorities, and personal ambition. Courage and responsibility were essential virtues the military and SS leaders on the ground propagated and endorsed.[37]

This ever-widening subfield of 'perpetrator history' has led to scholarly interest in previously unstudied German-speaking groups in eastern Europe through lenses of class, race, and gender. For instance, Wendy Lower tackles the neglected role of German women in the occupied territories. At least 500,000 – nurses, teachers, secretaries, and wives, of whom Lower follows thirteen eastwards – became witnesses and accomplices, sometimes murdering Jews on their own. For a sense of adventure, careerism, romance, upward social mobility, and independence from oppressive family authority back home, these women, a generation whom Lower calls 'World War I baby boomers', often engaged in intimate relationships with future victims, such as Jewish hairdressers in Warsaw's police department.[38] Scholarly attention has shifted towards daily life and the variety of German groups in eastern Europe, first and foremost ethnic Germans.[39] Current debates concern women's participation in Nazism, the levels of ideology and indoctrination, and the transgression of gender norms. Future studies need to broaden these perspectives to female physicians, cooks, nurses, drivers, and other German professional groups that participated in mass murder.

But to implement the 'Final Solution', the Nazi regime required active involvement and depended heavily on locally recruited auxiliaries. Beginning in the late 1980s, Holocaust historians became interested in non-German groups, which, in turn, inflamed the nationalist ethos in eastern Europe. Civilians becoming auxiliaries in modern genocides remain comparatively little studied, but the numbers of individuals involved in executing the Holocaust are staggering. Himmler and the SS had 300,000 local policemen at their disposal in Nazi-occupied eastern Europe. In the administrative unit of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, the SS employed some 15,000 Germans and 238,000 local police, a ratio of nearly 1 to 16 by late 1942 and sometimes

[36] Major milestones stem from Christopher R. Browning, Dieter Pohl, Michael Wildt, Edward B. Westermann, Thomas Kühne, and Sara Berger. For Nazi morality, see Harald Wälzer, *Täter. Wie aus normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt, 2005), p. 31. For a synthesis, see Guenter Lewy, *Perpetrators: the world of the Holocaust killers* (Oxford, 2017).

[37] Ben Shepherd, 'The clean Wehrmacht, the war of extermination, and beyond', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), pp. 455–73. For a recent example, see Daniel Siemens, *Stormtroopers: a new history of Hitler's Brownshirts* (New Haven, CT, 2017).

[38] Wendy Lower, *Hitler's furies: German women in the Nazi killing fields* (Boston, MA, 2013); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi east: agents and witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT, 2003).

[39] For a recent summary, see Winson Chu, 'Ethnic cleansing and nationalization in the German–Polish and German–Czech borderlands', *German Studies Review*, 41 (2018), pp. 143–52.

1 to 50 by 1944. As for the Wehrmacht and the SS, Mark Edele estimates that between 120,000 and 250,000 Red Army soldiers became 'German skins' (*nemetskie shkury*) after the Nazi invasion, called Operation Barbarossa, on 22 June 1941.[40] Nazi units killed 110,000 Soviet officers, well below the traditional 800,000 given in historical accounts. By spring 1942, many Communist party cadres had become 'accomplices (*posobniki*) of the enemy', as N. K. Spiridonov, the chief of the Red Army's political department, complained in an internal report.[41] For many Russian populations, a German victory was considered inevitable until late 1941. Most excesses of Stalin's regime were, therefore, meted out on Russian Jews.[42] If one follows Jan T. Gross's suppositions, then approximately 1–1.5 million Jews would have died at the hands of non-Germans in Nazi-dominated Europe. Jan Grabowski estimates that 250,000 Polish Jews might have escaped 'Operation Reinhard(t)' – the Nazi codename for the extermination of Jews in death camps after July 1942. Many Christian Poles contributed to the fact that fewer than 50,000 survived this hell.[43]

We now know that local henchmen participated in the search, robbing, and killing of Jews. Across eastern Europe, local police, such as the Estonian battalions (Omakaitse), carried out Nazi orders, whose sheer brutality becomes particularly evident in the case of the Latvian Arājs and the Lithuanian Hamann Commandos. The most controversial case in public discourse remains the Polish 'Blue' Police (Polnische Polizei) because of their widespread participation in Nazi terror. This unit, composed of 20,000 men at its peak in late 1943, undertook mass executions and liquidated ghettos.[44] Moreover, the armed wing of the SS (Waffen-SS) employed many non-Germans, such as the Galizien, Wiking, and Handschar divisions, composed of Ukrainians, 'Germanic' volunteers, and Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina, respectively.

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[40] David Cesarani, *Final Solution: the fate of the Jews, 1933–1949* (London, 2015), pp. 382 and 394; Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen*, p. 252; David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's war* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), pp. 228–45; Mark Edele, *Stalin's defectors: how Red Army soldiers became Hitler's collaborators, 1941–1945* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 33–5.

[41] Jeffrey Burds, '"Turncoats, traitors, and provocateurs": communist collaborators, the German occupation, and Stalin's NKVD, 1941–1943', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 32 (2018), pp. 606–38, at p. 622.

[42] Sergei Kudryashov, 'The hidden dimension: wartime collaboration in the Soviet Union', in John Erickson and David Dilks, eds., *Barbarossa: the Axis and the Allies* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 238–54.

[43] Jan T. Gross, 'A colonial history of the bloodlands', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 15 (2014), pp. 591–6, at p. 595; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: betrayal and murder in German-occupied Poland* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), p. 172.

[44] Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: crimes of the local police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941–44* (New York, NY, 2000); Leonid Rein, *The kings and the pawns: collaboration in Byelorussia during World War II* (New York, NY, 2011); Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin, *Fateful decisions: the Polish policemen and the Jewish population in occupied Poland, 1939–1944* (Ph.D. thesis, Toronto, 2017); Jan Grabowski, 'The Polish police: collaboration in the Holocaust', Ina Levine Annual Lecture, 17 Nov. 2016, https://archive.org/details/bib256980_001_001.

Often, intimacy with the victims incited murder. Henchmen, whom local Jews often knew personally, guarded ghettos and cordoned off shooting sites. In Buczacz, eastern Galicia, 300 Ukrainian policemen and two dozen Nazis murdered 60,000 'neighbours, colleagues, classmates, or parents of their children's friends'.[45]

In this vein, more systematic analyses of the triangular relationship between Nazi occupiers, Jews, and local populations have emerged. The General Government (GG) – that is, Nazi-occupied Poland – in which one of every three Jews perished, can illustrate such a valuable approach. The so-called Trawniki men, a heterogeneous group, were composed of 4,000 to 5,000 men – first, mainly Soviet POWs, then Ukrainian and Polish civilians, and sometimes ethnic Germans.[20] These men, whose group took their name from their training camp near Lublin in south-east Poland, served as guards of deportation trains and in the death camps of Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka.[46] Two recent accounts of Operation Reinhard(t) complement this largely unknown phase of the Holocaust by delving into its core, namely ideologically driven mass murder without primary economic interests, with kill rates ten times higher than in other genocides. In its dark heart in south-east Poland, approximately 1.6–1.73 million Jews were killed in twenty months.[47]

Rescue and betrayal by local populations are two crucial aspects of interactions among ethnic groups after most Jews had been forced into ghettos or deported. The most innovative body of literature on the 'hunt for Jews' (*Judenjagd*) exists, again, for the General Government. In his work on Dąbrowa Tarnowska County, south-east Poland, Jan Grabowski emphasizes the extent to which middle-class farmers, along with the Blue Police, handed Jews over to the Nazis for material rewards, out of fear, or because of antisemitic attitudes. Quite often, those who began as helpers betrayed the victims after they had exhausted their financial means, or, at times, sexually abused them. A mere 1–2 per cent of Polish Jewry survived.[48]

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[45] Andrii Bolianovskyi et al., 'Belarusian auxiliaries, Ukrainian Waffen-SS soldiers and the special case of the Polish "Blue Police"', in Jochen Böhler and Robert Gerwarth, eds., *The Waffen-SS: a European history* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 165–208; Māris Ruks, *Arāja Komandas Lettonia: no arhīvu materiāliem* (*The Latvian Arājs Commando: from archival material*) (Riga, 2014); Bartov, *Anatomy of a genocide*, p. 166.

[46] Angelika Benz, *Handlanger der SS. Die Rolle der Trawniki-Männer im Holocaust* (Berlin, 2015).

[47] Stephan Lehnstaedt, *Der Kern des Holocaust. Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka und die Aktion Reinhardt* (Munich, 2017); Dariusz Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie. Zarys problematyki* (*The extermination of the Jews in the General Government: outline of the problems*) (Lublin, 2017); Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard death camps: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka* (rev. edn, Bloomington, IN, 2018), p. 440, for the death toll.

[48] Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*, pp. 53–89. See also Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, 'Kollaboration im Zweiten Weltkrieg und im Holocaust: ein analytisches Konzept', *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 19 July 2019, https://zeitgeschichte-digital.de/doks/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/1444/file/docupedia_rossolinski-liebe_kollaboration_v1_de_2019.pdf.

These studies have helped to reinforce our appreciation of a more precise chronology and to understand that the Holocaust included multiple episodes of violent intimacy shaped by abuse, hope, trust, and treachery. Most Jews in eastern Europe were shot in the open, near their homes. By late 1942, approximately 4 million Jews had been killed in eastern Europe, along with 250,000 from western and central Europe.[49] How did interactions between Jews and non-Jews evolve at this stage? When the 'liquidation actions' of the camps and ghettos began, Jewish prisoners fomented the well-known uprisings in Sobibór and Treblinka, and some managed to escape. Two volumes of micro studies expand these perspectives to nine counties in today's Poland and Ukraine between mid-1942 and 1945. They remind us that we still know relatively little about the firefighters, farmers, Polish youth organizations, and village watchmen involved in handing over Jews. The extreme struggle for survival of the 10 per cent of Jews in hiding is not well explored either.[50]

Therefore, interactions during the *Judenjagd* have yet to be addressed, as the Polish countryside represents only a fraction of eastern Europe. After murdering between 70,000 and 100,000 Polish civilians, Ukrainian nationalists, internally divided between the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Orhanizatsia Ukraïns'kykh Natsionalistiv, OUN), hunted down several thousand Jews.[51] Blind spots remain, such as rural Russian populations' attitudes towards Jews and the second largest group of victims, the Soviet POWs.[52] How did the loyalties and attitudes of Russian non-Jews evolve in areas that had fallen under Nazi rule and were reconquered after the battle of Moscow in January 1942? Most recently, Soviet historians have emphasized the intimate link between politics of retribution and reaffirmation of Soviet authority.[53] How did these wartime behaviours and post-war belonging affect the ongoing Holocaust? We have only begun to grasp the complexities on the ground, such as for the often-neglected non-European areas, including the Crimea and the north Caucasus. After the Nazi mobile killing squad D (Einsatzgruppe D) had shot 30,000 Jews in the Crimea and 40,000 Jews in the north Caucasus, many Tartars, in the former, and Cossacks, in the latter, were recruited to hunt down any remaining Jews. The thoroughness of Nazi mass crimes spared only particular groups, such as two-thirds of the Mountain Jews in the north Caucasus, and the Karaites, considered half-Muslims, in the Crimea.[54] Comparing Poland with these understudied eastern borderlands would help

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[49] Christian Gerlach, *The extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 100.
[50] Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttmann, eds., *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York, NY, 2016); Engelking and Grabowski, eds., *Dalej jest noc*.
[51] Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews 1941–1944* (Jerusalem, 1990), p. 256.
[52] Gerlach, *Extermination of the European Jews*, p. 232.
[53] Franziska Exeler, 'What did you do during the war? Personal responses to the aftermath of Nazi occupation', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 17 (2016), pp. 805–35.
[54] Kiril Feferman, *The Holocaust in the Crimea and the north Caucasus* (Jerusalem, 2016).

explain to what extent and why locals' involvement and Jewish survival rates varied from region to region. But the diversity of protagonists in these regions was not limited to east Europeans. For instance, several thousand Dutch Nazis attempted to participate in the build-up of the murderous Nazi utopia in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltics, smitten with the fantasy of a common Germanic race.[55] Recent scholarship has both turned to interpersonal, often sadistic, episodes and shied away from notions of 'good' and 'evil'.

Many of these studies focus on the search for motives and the willingness of locals to participate in the murder of the Jews. The cohesion of Nazi perpetrators contrasts sharply with the Nazi euphemism of 'voluntary helpers' (*Hilfswilligen*), extremely diverse yet wholly treated as second-class human beings, who triggered genocidal behaviour. Unlike German policemen, for whom Christopher R. Browning found hints of scruples, east European auxiliaries participated in the killings of Jews in the hope of securing favourable treatment for their communities, liberation from the Soviet yoke, or their own survival, or simply for entertainment. Ideology, opportunism, and inertia all played a role. Non-Germans constantly compromised between their values and the inclusive policies of Nazi Germany.[56] Former Soviet party members put themselves at the service of the Nazis because the authorities labelled anyone behind their lines a 'collaborator'. Historians have begun exploring the worldview of these men and women and have found, for instance, that Ukrainian nationalists embraced a form of fascism that valued antisemitism, national independence (*samostiinist'*), and the indiscriminate use of violence and racism towards other groups.[57] Here, a mere focus on Jews does not suffice to account for genocidal violence. For instance, the participation of peasants in the mass murder of Jews in western Ukraine and Belarus foretold the ethnic cleansing of up to 60,000 Volhynian Poles in 1943.[58] How do we explain this?

Continued historical exploration of the complex relations between a diversity of social groups should be encouraged. In light of persisting Holocaust denial, scholars have been concerned, understandably, with reconstructing the timeline of the persecution and the inner workings of death camps and major ghettos. But the multiplicity of ethnic groups involved in mass killing reminds us that historians, in concert with scholars in other disciplines, can elaborate

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[55] Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Kunzel, *Hitler's Brudervolk: the Dutch and the colonization of occupied eastern Europe 1939–1945* (Abingdon, 2015).

[56] For an overview, see Moritz Föllmer, 'The subjective dimension of Nazism', *Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp. 1107–32.

[57] Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *The fascist kernel of Ukrainian genocidal nationalism* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2015), p. 41.

[58] Jared McBride, 'Peasants into perpetrators: the OUN-UPA and the ethnic cleansing of Volhynia, 1943–1944', *Slavic Review*, 75 (2016), pp. 630–54; Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: the life and afterlife of a Ukrainian nationalist: fascism, genocide, and cult* (Stuttgart, 2014).

new frameworks for understanding social interactions beyond psycho-social theories of obedience and conformity drawn from the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments. Most models have, indeed, only been applied to German perpetrators. And yet violence changes everyone. Social psychologists have stated that becoming a 'perpetrator' is a social process – for which we should distinguish actions, actors, and mutual perceptions, notably the sense of the self in relation to, and moral judgments made about, others.[59] Historians play a crucial role in analysing relationships through social and cultural history. Two directions seem most promising. The much-used expression 'local nationalists' hides vast differences in these actors' worldviews and pre-war training that need further exploration, as well as their social and political background and their wartime experiences. This holds for the Holocaust and other instances of mass violence.[60] The idea that locals in eastern Europe acted upon 'primitive' instincts needs to be foregone, as this is nothing less than a post-war opposition between western and eastern Europe.

How do we move forward? Using broad categories to define social groups in the Holocaust, historians have produced excellent studies that have recently found an echo in what Father Patrick Desbois and others now call the 'Holocaust by bullets', namely mass shootings of 2.8 million Jews over pits across eastern Europe.[61] The term 'Holocaust' summons a variety of events, places, and groups, which means accepting the limits of scholarly language and the necessity to use categories for social behaviour. Nevertheless, we need to reflect more on analytical terms such as 'locals' and 'nationalists'. Social identity theory is probably best for enhancing our grasp of, for example, Ukrainian nationalists who understood themselves as members of a racist and fascist movement. After the Nazi occupiers had retreated, they continued mass murder.[62] We thus need more studies on their organizations, the relations between Russian populations and the Nazi regime, Soviet POWs, the Sinti and Roma, the Holocaust in the Baltics, and petty yet murderous initiatives taken at the grass-roots level. Future studies, on smaller ghettos and labour camps for example, make more sense through a transnational focus on *what* social groups did to each other.

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[59] Aliza Luft, 'On murder and morality: how social perception mediates moral judgment about violence', unpublished paper, Dec. 2018, draft kindly provided; Kristen Monroe, 'Cracking the code of genocide: the moral psychology of rescuers, bystanders, and Nazis during the Holocaust', *Political Psychology*, 29 (2008), pp. 699–736.

[60] Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: a genocide* (Oxford, 2009), p. 296; Michael Mann, *The dark side of democracy: explaining ethnic cleansing* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 289 (pogroms).

[61] Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by bullets: a priest's journey to uncover the truth behind the murder of 1.5 million Jews* (New York, NY, 2008); Il'ia Al'tman, *Zhertvy nenavisti: Kholokhost v SSSR, 1941–1945* (*Victims of hate: the Holocaust in the USSR, 1941–1945*) (Moscow, 2002), p. 303.

[62] John-Paul Himka, 'Former Ukrainian policemen in the Ukrainian national insurgency: continuing the Holocaust outside German service', in Wendy Lower and Lauren Faulkner Rossi, eds., *New directions in Holocaust research and education*, *Lessons and Legacies*, 12 (Evanston, IL, 2017), pp. 141–63.

III

Communal violence in eastern Europe left no-one indifferent. Remaining passive was impossible between Nazi warfare and interethnic violence.[63] However, a multi-dimensional history of the Holocaust that takes into account the shifting social fabrics and interethnic relations must be further encouraged.[64] Indeed, the field has moved in recent years from Nazi policies to the perceptions of those under German occupation. These lived experiences range from daily violence and economic plunder to severe hunger and shortages.[65] There is still much to be done, building either on the range of rich, fascinating micro studies of cities, camps, and ghettos,[66] or on the macro approach best represented by Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*, understood as the area of eastern Europe where up to 14 million people lost their lives.[67]

The multiple levels and types of interaction require that the typical focus on 'politics' be abandoned for a broader range of social behaviour. To exemplify much-needed histories of the Holocaust beyond a political focus, we can use the General Government as a laboratory. Martin Winstone offers the first comprehensive account of this brutally exploited zone, including Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish voices. Emphasizing the horror in its daily face, he carefully assesses that, although only Nazis and a minority of ethnic Poles killed Jews, the majority did not assist them either. In a compelling account of wartime Poland, Halik Kochanski discusses different Polish groups' hardships. Unfortunately, she overstates Christian Poles' sympathy towards Jews and does not reference the vast German literature.[68] The complex encounters between Germans, ethnic Germans, Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians are not addressed – one could begin here with the Polish Underground State (Polskie Państwo Podziemne, PPP). By June 1944, its 350,000 members represented the largest resistance

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[63] For an overview, see Waitman Wade Beorn, *The Holocaust in eastern Europe: at the epicentre of the Final Solution* (London, 2018), pp. 247–55.

[64] Omer Bartov, 'Eastern Europe as the site of genocide', *Journal of Modern History*, 80 (2008), pp. 557–93.

[65] Alex J. Kay and David Stahel, eds., *Mass violence in Nazi-occupied Europe* (Bloomington, IN, 2018); Tatjana Tönsmeyer, Peter Haslinger, and Agnes Laba, eds., *Coping with hunger and short-age under German occupation in World War II* (Basingstoke, 2018).

[66] See, among others, Sara Bender, *In enemy land: the Jews of Kielce and the region, 1939–1946* (Boston, MA, 2019); Elżbieta Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w Dystrykcie Krakowskim w Latach, 1939–1945* (*The extermination of Jews in the Krakow District, 1939–1945*) (Rzeszów, 2014); David Silberklang, *Gates of tears: the Holocaust in the Lublin District* (Jerusalem, 2013); Laurie Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis: everyday life in occupied Russia* (Rochester, NY, 2013).

[67] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, NY, 2010); reviews by Dan Diner, 'Topography of interpretation; reviewing Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*', *Contemporary European History*, 21 (2012), pp. 125–31, and, critically, Omer Bartov, *Slavic Review*, 71 (2012), pp. 424–8. For the tension between scales, see Mark Mazower, 'God's grief', *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 Sept. 2010, pp. 7–8.

[68] Martin Winstone, *The dark heart of Hitler's Europe: Nazi rule in Poland under the General Government* (London, 2014); Halik Kochanski, *The eagle unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

movement in Nazi-dominated Europe. Survival of Polish Jews and Ukrainians depended on varying attitudes that the Polish Underground bore on the ground, ranging 'from aid efforts to the murder of the Jews both in hiding and as armed partisans'.[69]

Other perspectives are less known. Few historians have systematically studied how the attitudes of Jews towards Germans, Poles, and other groups evolved, although social classification is an inherent historical process.[70] In this vein, Tomasz Frydel argues for a combination of Nazi-directed policies and bottom-up perspectives that centre on Polish villagers and, often, their fear of Jews and other persecuted groups, such as deserter Soviet POWs.[71] Have we seen, thus far, only the peak of what was massive structural violence? Invaluable material awaits historians. The mass desertion of Soviet party cadres and the large-scale purges after the 'liberation' of Nazi-occupied zones produced myriad post-war trial records, 32,000 in Poland alone.[72]

To promote this type of social history of genocide, we need to concentrate on the different ethnic groups – such as 'ethnic Germans'. In the broader scheme of Nazi population policies (*Volkstumspolitik*), ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) – amounting to 70,000 former Polish citizens – were to replace local groups as warriors-farmers (*Wehrbauern*).[73] We now possess studies on these communities in Ukraine, interwar Poland, Prague, and the Banat region (Yugoslavia) that contributed to the forcible acquisition of Jewish goods ('Aryanization').[74]

Ethnic Germans were among those thousands who bought and managed Jewish property across Nazi-occupied Europe. Thus far, Hamburg and Vichy France are the best-documented cases of this type of complicity in the Nazi genocide.[75] In 2005, Götz Aly drew public attention to the economic aspects of the Holocaust, arguing that the Nazi regime, which he presents as a system

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[69] Joshua D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York, NY, 2015).

[70] Havi Dreifuss, *Changing perceptions on Polish–Jewish relations during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 2012).

[71] Tomasz Frydel, '*Judenjagd*: reassessing the role of ordinary Poles as perpetrators in the Holocaust', in Timothy Williams and Susanne Buckley-Zistel, eds., *Perpetrators and perpetration of mass violence: action, motivations and dynamics* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 187–203.

[72] Martin J. Blackwell, *Kyiv as regime city: the return of Soviet power after Nazi occupation* (Rochester, NY, 2016).

[73] Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität. Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg, 2012).

[74] Doris L. Bergen, 'The Nazi concept of "Volksdeutsche" and the exacerbation of anti-Semitism in eastern Europe, 1939–45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (1994), pp. 569–82; Eric C. Steinhart, *The Holocaust and Germanization of Ukraine* (New York, NY, 2015). Outside this essay's scope, see, for instance, Mirna Zakić, *Ethnic Germans and national socialism in Yugoslavia in World War II* (New York, NY, 2017).

[75] Frank Bajohr, '*Aryanization' in Hamburg: the economic exclusion of Jews and the confiscation of their property in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2002); Shannon L. Fogg, *Stealing home: looting, restitution, and reconstructing Jewish lives in France, 1942–1947* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 33–82; Hein Kleemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied economies: an economic history of Nazi-occupied Europe, 1939–1945* (London and New York, NY, 2012).

of redistribution and social provision, bought the loyalties of Germans via the plunder of the Jews and the occupied territories. In 2017, Aly broadened his argument across Nazi-occupied Europe, claiming that antisemitism was motivated by social envy, with Jewish assets serving as rewards for local non-Jews.[76] But his characterization of Germans proves highly problematic regarding Nazi Germany, let alone eastern Europe. Recent research has advanced our understanding of the economic history of genocide in these regions.[77] The pauperization of Jews and their expropriation were indeed a 'social dynamic of the Holocaust' (Martin Dean). What happened to property whose owners were robbed and killed in eastern Europe? A much-needed comparative focus would underscore similarities across national frames. Local administrators, from the Nazi administration (*Haupttreuhandstelle Ost*) to the village elder (*starosta*), enrolled Jews in forced labour and administered their property.[78] How did the persecution of Jews affect the fabric of society on a regional level, along with the socio-economic life of non-Jews?

Another possibility for transcending political history comes from historians who study everyday life.[79] Veritable cultural warfare reached many people through millions of leaflets in Poland, or the 200 Russian-language and 160 Ukrainian newspapers that the Nazi regime sponsored.[80] If one attempts to analyse daily life (*Alltag*) in the Holocaust, the persecuted appear as members of families and communities, as individuals who strove to maintain normality under extreme conditions.[81] Here, scholars of mass violence can profit from Walter Johnson's reflections on Afro-American slaves. He urges historians to elaborate other concepts than 'agency' to think about dignity and social self-determination. A history of slavery which perceives the lives of enslaved people ought to be written as 'powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible

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[76] Götz Aly, *Hitler's beneficiaries: plunder, racial war, and the Nazi welfare state* (New York, NY, 2006); idem, *Europa gegen die Juden 1880–1945* (Frankfurt, 2017).

[77] Anna Wylegała, 'About "Jewish things": Jewish property in eastern Galicia during World War II', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 44 (2016), pp. 83–119. Outside this essay's geographical scope, see Svetlana Suveica, 'Local agency and the appropriation of Jewish property in Romania's eastern borderland: public employees during the Holocaust in Bessarabia (1941–1944)', in Fischer and Metzger, eds., *Holocaust in the borderlands*, pp. 133–56; Sanela Schmid, *Deutsche und italienische Besatzung im unabhängigen Staat Kroatien, 1941 bis 1943/45* (Berlin, 2019).

[78] Jan Grabowski and Dariusz Libionka, eds., *Klucze i kasa. O mieniu żydowskim w Polsce pod okupacją niemiecką i we wczesnych latach powojennych, 1939–1950* (*Keys and cash: Jewish property in Poland under the German occupation and in the early post-war years, 1939–1950*) (Warsaw, 2014); Martin Dean, *Robbing the Jews: the confiscation of Jewish property in the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, 2008).

[79] Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring, eds., *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: daily life in occupied Europe* (Oxford, 2006).

[80] Kostiantyn Kurylyshyn and Iaroslav R. Dashekvich, *Ukrains'ke zhyttia v umovakh nimets'koi okupatsii (1939–1944 rr.)* (*Ukrainian life and mentalities during the German occupation (1939–1944)*) (Lviv, 2010).

[81] Doris L. Bergen, Andrea Löw, and Anna Hájková, eds., *Alltag im Holocaust. Jüdisches Leben im Großdeutschen Reich 1941–1945* (Munich, 2013).

to, their slavery'.[82] In this vein, social history needs to show more how Jews and other victim groups strove to preserve their humanity.

Fresh perspectives on subjectivities might help. At the peak of the German advance in late 1941, close to 80 million Russians came under Nazi rule. Ethnic Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Belarusians, and Russians all had competing visions of territory and society that brutal warfare pushed to the extreme. A spate of innovative studies on Stalinist society at war highlights two points. The first is the Nazis' dependence on locals, which partly restored their self-determination: Russian administrators had a surprising degree of freedom in their everyday lives as long as they executed Nazi orders. For many rural Russian populations in the north-west, the Nazi occupation even improved their living standards after the dissolution of the much-hated collective farms and the revival of the Orthodox church. Second, the lived experiences of 'ordinary' Soviet citizens prompt us to consider their inner worlds when the Germans, often seen as liberators, arrived.[83] As Masha Cerovic shows, no formal category of 'collaborator' existed for Russian partisans in Belarus. Insightful studies on the Soviet Union have worked towards a subtler understanding of people's capacity to make sense of their environment, negotiating rather than internalizing the regime's values.[84] This approach offers a promising outline for other ethnic groups during the Holocaust.[85]

A change of perspective is thus necessary, which leads Holocaust scholars from high Nazi policies, via the cultural challenges facing the persecuted Jews and other ethnic groups, to the very terms of social being. Furthermore, we need to connect all ethnic groups; historians have come a long way since the 1980s, when Ukrainians were either defended or accused.[86] The farther one moves eastwards, the more the legacy of multi-ethnic empires forces us to deconstruct traditional dyads and to take into account all ethnicities – such as, in the Crimea, Russians, Ukrainians, ethnic Germans, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Tatars, and Sinti and Roma. In these understudied Nazi-occupied borderlands, 'religion' shaped the very contours of interethnic relations, such

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[82] Walter Johnson, 'On agency', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), pp. 113–24, at p. 115.

[83] Johannes Due Enstad, *Soviet Russians under Nazi occupation: fragile loyalties in World War II* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 6.

[84] For this trend, see Seth Bernstein, 'Ambiguous homecoming: retribution, exploitation and social tensions during repatriation to the USSR, 1944–1946', *Past & Present*, 242 (2019), pp. 193–226; Jochen Hellbeck, *Stalingrad: the city that defeated the Third Reich* (New York, NY, 2015).

[85] Masha Cerovic, *Les enfants de Staline. La guerre des partisans soviétiques (1941–1944)* (Paris, 2018).

[86] Taras Hunczak, 'Ukrainian–Jewish relations during the Soviet and Nazi occupations', in Yury Boshyk, ed., *Ukraine during World War II: history and its aftermath. A symposium* (Edmonton, 1986), pp. 39–57; Aharon Weiss, 'Jewish–Ukrainian relations in western Ukraine during the Holocaust', in Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj, eds., *Ukrainian–Jewish relations in historical perspective* (Edmonton, 1990), pp. 409–20.

as family dynamics and age.[87] For its claimed 'crusade against Bolshevism', Nazi Germany exploited Muslims' open enmity towards the Soviet regime. In the Crimea, Islam was a powerful marker of difference that defined group survival after 1941.[88]

Despite much excellent work done by east European historians, some parts of national historiography tend to echo or replicate official memory politics. The Lithuanian government elaborates on the 'Double Holocaust myth', the equation of Nazi and Soviet crimes that dates to the Prague declaration of 2008. Academic quarrels in Ukraine, revolving around the Nationalists (OUN-B), have not reached a broader audience. 'They lived among us, didn't they?' asked the historian Sofiya Grachova in 2005, defying some fellow scholars to forgo nationalist politics of memory – an ongoing challenge in politically charged contexts.[89] Fortunately, scholars continue to tackle vital questions. For the concentration camp system, we now possess a multi-dimensional history, thanks to Nikolaus Wachsmann's monumental effort to combine a history of institutional violence with the study of different ethnic groups.[90] Such an entangled perspective will be useful beyond the extensive network of camps. Jewish informers worked for the Gestapo in Krakow, while prostitution for survival was common practice in the Warsaw ghetto.[91] Grief and black despair pushed parents to kill their children. Historians are not judges of the past. As disquieting as it proves, research on taboos – for instance, on moral dilemmas faced by the victims – is essential to advancing our understanding of a social system of genocide that did not spare the most intimate theatres of violence.

IV

Considerations of gender are relatively recent in the history of the Holocaust and modern genocide. It was only during the 1990s that this subfield emerged but, although strongly informed by a feminist framework, it neglected the diversity of women's experiences. Despite some foundational volumes, a gendered perspective must still be integrated into mainstream Holocaust

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[87] Doris L. Bergen, 'Religion and genocide: a historiographical survey', in Dan Stone, ed., *The historiography of genocide* (London, 2008), pp. 194–227.

[88] Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's war.*

[89] Sofia Grachova, 'Vony zhyly sered nas?' ('They lived among us, didn't they?'), *Krytyka* (2005), pp. 22–6; Hana Kubátová and Jan Láníček, *Jews and Gentiles in central and eastern Europe during the Holocaust: history and memory* (London, 2017).

[90] Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: a history of the Nazi concentration camps* (London, 2015).

[91] Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada? Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym* (*Forced co-operation or betrayal? Cases of Jewish collaboration under the occupation*) (Krakow, 2018); Katarzyna Person, 'Sexual violence during the Holocaust: the case of forced prostitution in the Warsaw ghetto', *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 33 (2015), pp. 103–21.

studies, as must the willingness of (male) academics to engage further in such discussions. Gender mattered for social relations, as Zoë Waxman shows with her 'feminist history of the Holocaust', revealing hardships specific to Jewish women. They were targeted in their role as mothers and were the victims of sexual violence in ghettos, hiding, concentration camps, and displaced persons (DP) camps.[92] Studies on the sexual nature of Nazi crimes and its deleterious effects on Jewish masculinity are most welcome, not the least because recent writings have been prolific on non-Jewish east Europeans.[93] Indeed, the omnipresence of sexual violence in genocide invites us to rethink the connection between masculinity, war, and queer experiences.[94] Gender relations in the killing fields, for Jews in hiding, in the occupied Soviet territories, and in the vast forests of Belarus are not yet well known. Between 10,000 and 13,000 people, primarily women and children, joined 'family units' there to build a surrogate community. What were their experiences? Were women more frequently spared in some areas? More research is needed into the connection between anti-partisan warfare and the killing of Jews,[95] and into the role of gender as a marker for social norms, the effects of age and generational differences, the dynamics of hierarchical relationships, and bearing witness after the war's end.[96]

Encouraged by broader historiographical trends, the spatial turn has also made its first marks on Holocaust history. Timothy Snyder's much-debated works have challenged us to think about 'space'. Recent work has shed light on topographies of the Holocaust and camp geographies, and has applied new GPS-led technologies to testimonies concerning the Janowska camp on the outskirts of Lviv, Ukraine.[97] Impetus from environmental history compels us to integrate the landscape into broader narratives.[98] For instance, few hiding spots existed in the Crimea, two-thirds of which is covered by semi-arid prairies. Research on hiding, flight, forced migration, and deportations can

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[92] Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a feminist history* (Oxford, 2017).

[93] Two samples are Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren, eds., *Women and genocide* (Bloomington, IN, 2018); Maddy Carey, *Jewish masculinity in the Holocaust: between destruction and construction* (London, 2017).

[94] 'Holocaust and the history of gender and sexuality', forum with Elissa Mailänder, Anna Hájková, Atina Grossmann, Doris Bergen, and Patrick Farges, *German History*, 36 (2018), pp. 78–100.

[95] But see Walter Manoschek, *'Serbien ist judenfrei!' Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42* (Munich, 1995).

[96] Marion Kaplan, 'Did gender matter during the Holocaust?', *Jewish Social Studies*, 24 (2019), pp. 37–56; Thomas Kühne, 'Introduction: masculinity and the Third Reich', *Central European History*, 51 (2018), pp. 354–66.

[97] Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, eds., *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN, 2014); Waitman Beorn, 'Last stop in Lwów: Janowska as a hybrid camp', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 32 (2018), pp. 445–71.

[98] For first insights, see David Blackbourn, *The conquest of nature: water, landscape, and the making of modern Germany* (New York, NY, 2006), p. 279.

only be inherently transnational.[99] The oft-forgotten history of Polish Jews who lived in the Soviet-occupied territories in 1939 is one such case. Between 150,000 and 300,000 Polish Jews found harsh yet life-saving shelter as refugees, political prisoners of the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD), or Red Army soldiers. The integration of 'mobility' into Holocaust studies is merely in its infancy, despite the high numbers of people who moved in what Andrew Denning defines as 'a circulatory state'.[100]

The focus on rescue offered by non-Jews equally provides a new window onto intimate relationships in Nazi-occupied territories. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews were rescued, but a comprehensive history of this process, moving beyond the Vatican or government structures, such as the US War Refugee Board, is yet to be written.[101] The circular paradigm of the 'strong self' and 'altruistic personality', centred on the rescuer, shrouds an array of interactions ranging from sexual barter to sincere support.[102] This catch-all category of 'rescuer', designating between 50,000 and 500,000 non-Jews (less than 0.5 per cent of the total population under Nazi rule), needs to give way to the comparative analysis of local factors. In this vein, the sociologist Aliza Luft rightly points to 'behavioral boundary crossing' in Rwanda.[103] The death penalty for hiding Jews hung like a sword of Damocles, not just over Poles' heads, but over all of eastern Europe. Further research needs to address how and why non-Jews, after decades of often intimate relations with their Jewish neighbours, became able to betray them to foreigners and sometimes murder them.

V

Forty years ago, Jan T. Gross published his dissertation on Nazi-occupied Poland. The book quickly became a hallmark study but, in keeping with the prevailing assumptions of the day, Gross allotted merely a page and a half to the fate

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[99] Wendy Lower, 'Holocaust studies: the spatial turn', in Shelley Baranowski, Armin Nolzen, and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, eds., *A companion to Nazi Germany* (Hoboken, NJ, 2018), pp. 565–79.

[100] Mark Edele, Atina Grossmann, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: rethinking Jewish survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit, MI, 2017); Andrew Denning, '"Life is movement, movement is life!" Mobility politics and the circulatory state in Nazi Germany', *American Historical Review*, 123 (2018), pp. 1479–1503.

[101] Eva Fogelman, Sharon Kangisser Cohen, and Dalia Ofer, eds., *Children in the Holocaust and its aftermath: historical and psychological studies of the Kestenberg archive* (New York, NY, 2017); Dan Michman, ed., *Hiding, sheltering and borrowing identities: avenues of rescue during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 2017).

[102] Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The altruistic personality* (New York, NY, 1988); Dariusz Libionka, 'Polish literature on organized help and individual help to the Jews (1945–2008)', *Holocaust: Studies and Materials* (2010), pp. 11–75.

[103] Aliza Luft, 'Toward a dynamic theory of action at the micro-level of genocide: killing, desistance, and saving in 1994 Rwanda', *Sociological Theory*, 33 (2015), pp. 148–72.

of 3 million Poles of Jewish faith in these war-torn regions.[104] Scholars have made significant progress since the 1980s, when they abandoned a bureaucratic image of the victims and confronted such past horrors. Nowadays, post-colonial historians fear that the universality of Jewish suffering eclipses other cases of mass violence, although Holocaust historians have begun to engage with broader historiographical trends. The time has come to rethink our engagement as scholars and citizens in today's challenges, whereby academic training in national contexts has proven insufficient. The Holocaust was a socially rooted, transnational genocide. A continued dialogue, based on the notion of history as a 'discipline of context and of process', is necessary.[105]

The most inspiring legacy of Timothy Snyder's vividly debated concept of 'Bloodlands' has been the merging of Jewish and non-Jewish stories in eastern Europe. These encounters have begun to be explored through shared lenses, such as ethnic violence, mass murder, politicization, everyday life, upward social mobility, and geographic displacement. A palpable tension concerns the explanatory power of antisemitism, not least because scholars have mostly dwelled on national frameworks. Furthermore, Nazi population policies, economic greed, and fear of Bolshevism cannot account for the effect of social processes that allowed for the murder of the Jewish minority.[106] If we write about 'age-old hatred' of Jews, then we need to give ourselves the tools to do so with the history of emotions.[107] Such an approach, along with visual and digital history, is a path by which Holocaust history can bring forward pioneering results, a challenge raised by Shelley Baranowski in 2018.[108]

Since the first decade of this century, scholars have established the extensive complicity of local populations in the Holocaust. Of every three Jews who survived killing fields and ghettos, two perished, often at the hands of non-Germans. Group histories have indeed produced a complex picture of the social fabrics under Nazi occupation. Simultaneously, a battle for the recognition of victimhood emerged. Therefore, we need a multi-dimensional and transnational approach that includes all social groups and the full array of human behaviours. Basic assumptions remain unchallenged. To what extent were ethnic groups in these Polish–Ukrainian borderlands, and eastern Europe more broadly, cohesive or culturally adaptable? Should we continue to use 'ethnicity' as an analytic tool? What socio-economic criteria made people

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[104] Jan T. Gross, *Polish society under German occupation: the Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944* (Princeton, NJ, 1979).

[105] Bloxham, *Final Solution*, p. 323.

[106] 'Rethinking anti-Semitism', *American Historical Review*, 123 (2018), pp. 1122–1245.

[107] Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What is the history of emotions?* (Malden, MA, 2018).

[108] Stefan Hördler, 'Sichtbarmachen: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Analyse von NS-Täter-Fotografien', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 65 (2017), pp. 259–72; Shelley Baranowski, 'The future of central European studies', *Central European History*, 51 (2018), pp. 155–8.

'ordinary'? Based on social system theory, the sociologist Stefan Kühl's argument – 'ordinary' organizations both seduced and coerced Germans into killing – fails to move beyond some core Nazi, 'not-so-ordinary' organizations.[109] Complex encounters require historians to allow for and compare local meanings of ethnicity, racial fantasies, belonging, and religion. Fragmented subfields of the Holocaust ought to be brought together through a common language.[110] The four criteria I have suggested in this article can illustrate the potential for such a transnational approach that welcomes other disciplines.

'We, the east Europeans', therefore, serves as a call to think about social groups using a transnational focus, extending Julian Tuwim's heart-breaking manifesto *My, Żydzi Polscy* (*We, the Polish Jews*), whose pages reveal an 'infinitely great grave of relatives' (*nieskończenie wielka bratnia mogiła*).[111] Both historians and citizens have long puzzled over how a frightful regime could first be created and then murder millions of people, at the heart of 'civilized' western Europe. Though scholars' focus has now increasingly shifted to eastern Europe, public discourse in these regions still tends to compare human suffering or to look away from the vanished Jewish life. As painful as this public reckoning with the past may be, only a transnational perspective can further our understanding of the history of local populations and their complex encounters.

[109] Stefan Kühl, *Ordinary organizations: why normal men carried out the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2016).

[110] Raz Segal, 'The modern state, the question of genocide, and Holocaust scholarship', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 20 (2018), pp. 108–33.

[111] Madeline G. Levine, 'Julian Tuwim: "We, the Polish Jews…"', *Polish Review*, 17 (1972), pp. 82–9, at p. 87.