

## Epilogue

### The Holocaust and Masculinities

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The Holocaust is one of the best if not *the* best explored events in human history, with some fifteen to twenty thousand books catalogued in the Library of Congress, written by historians and scholars of all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. These books and innumerable articles and essays include titles that focus on women and female perspectives, and yet it is safe to say that Holocaust studies have been reluctant to utilize the concept of gender as a tool to analyze relations between men and women and the manifest and hidden workings of ideas and imageries of masculinities and femininities.

Inquiries into women's suffering from, women's agency during, and women's complicity in the Holocaust have rendered obsolete initial worries of some Holocaust scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. A gendered approach, they suspected, might distract from the common suffering of Jewish men and women from Nazi persecution and obfuscate the priority of race over gender in the Nazi genocidal mind-set. But this is a misunderstanding of the concept of gender. As a category of social difference and social hierarchies—of power—gender operates in conjunction with other categories of difference and power, such as race. A gendered approach does not need to question the impact of racist ideologies, political institutions, great men (and women), military conquests, or economic exploitation. It rather supplements and often corrects them (Rittner and Roth 1993; Baumel 1998; Ofer and Weitzman 1998; Kaplan 2003).

Gender studies' initial and primary goal has been to unveil the obvious or clandestine marginalization of women in society. Subsequently, gender scholars have exposed specifically female experiences of victimization under the Holocaust such as the humiliation from head and body shavings, the loss of menstruation, and coerced abortions in the camps (Weitzman 2010). Gender scholars have drawn attention to previously neglected spaces of genocidal terror such as family life, intimacy, and sexuality. They have revealed how such terror challenged traditional gender roles, emasculated Jewish men, and enabled Jewish women to gain agency by assuming those traditionally male roles (Kaplan 1998; Tec 2003). More aggressive processes of female empowerment have been diagnosed for perpetrator society (Koonz 1987; Stibbe 2003). There, women pursued careers as camp guards, engaged in ethnic cleansing, served as military aides, or provided idyllic family retreats for male perpetrators (Schwarz 1997; Harvey 2003; Lower 2013; Mailänder 2015). Without these studies, our knowledge of the social fabric of the Nazi genocide and its broad social basis would be missing crucial pieces (Kühne 2010, 137–161).

### Gender Dynamics and Male Perspectives

Only rarely have Holocaust scholars or genocide scholars more largely inquired into the male perspective of these gender dynamics or into men's gendered acting, enabling, or resisting genocide. Unwillingly, these scholars have thus confirmed the subtle power strategy of patriarchal gender regimes. These regimes "unmark" maleness and present it as the human normal, whereas the corresponding female category appears as derivation and thus less important or meaningful. Genocide studies have been, in the words of Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, "preoccupied with the lives of women, leaving men within the original framework of universal subjecthood and thereby unintentionally reaffirming the assumption of the gender-neutrality of men's lives" (2010, 67).

Adding men as gendered subjects removes the veil of invisibility of unmarked normative masculinity, as Björn Krondorfer in the programmatic essay (chapter 1) explains by putting unmarked masculinity in larger antisemitic and colonial contexts. Adding men and masculinity to Holocaust studies means to explore the gendered fabric of the agency, the suffering, the emotions, the actions, the thoughts of male perpetrators, victims, bystanders, enablers, resisters, rescuers, witnesses, interpreters,

narrators, deniers, obfuscators during and after the Holocaust. Bringing men back into the history of the Holocaust—not as unmarked but as gendered beings—will be most successful if Holocaust scholars utilize the rich body of theoretically sophisticated and disciplinarily diverse research on the workings of different or even competing concepts of masculinity that has been done for a broad range of Western and non-Western societies, and for hegemonic as well as discriminated groups. Advocates of men's studies have since the 1980s shown that ideas and practices addressed as masculine or manly are not the result of biology but are socially and culturally constructed, changing over time and varying in different societies (Brod 1987; Kimmel and Messner 1989; Brod and Kaufman 1994; Gilmore 1990; Roper and Tosh 1991; Connell 1995; Kühne 1996; Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2004; Mosse 2008; Reeser 2010). Discarding vernacular concepts of manhood as a never-changing essence of the biological male fabric and inherent to all human cultures, gender scholars stress the social and historical contingency and changeability of what societies consider to be manly. In exploring these constructions, the relationality, multiplicity, and fluidity of masculinity, its intersection with other categories of social division, the hegemonic organization of competing concepts of masculinity, and not least the resilience of the patriarchal essence of most masculinities have been stressed. What do these categories mean to the study of the Holocaust?

Gender is a relational category. It is tied into binary pairings of the men-women dichotomy, of what is considered as manly and womanly, masculine and feminine (Scott 1986). This way, gender determines the relation between public and private spheres, home and workplace, production and reproduction, action and passivity, hardness and weakness, rationality and emotionality, aggression and peacefulness. Polarized sexual stereotypes present cultural constructs as biological givens. Men appear as energetic, powerful, brave, bold, aggressive, independent, rational, intellectual, and knowledgeable. Women embody the opposite. They are weak, yielding, modest, dependent, emotional, and intuitive.

How the polarization of gender stereotypes can shape experiences, coping strategies, and writings under the impression of genocidal terror is illustrated in this volume by Monika Rice's analysis of autobiographical writings of Jewish physicians about the Holocaust. Male doctors' memoirs and diaries are concerned with the public sphere, prefer abstract thinking, adhere to the ideal of the autonomous individual, and stress rational decision-making. Their female counterparts represent the respective opposites,

the private sphere, the concrete, sociability, emotions, and compassion. And yet, the polarization is not rigid; the duress of events such as the Holocaust, or wars, economic crises, and social change challenged established gendered writing patterns.

Conventionally, masculinity is defined by the “repudiation of femininity.” Being a man means “not being like a woman,” and at the same time it means ruling over and controlling women, explains the sociologist Michael Kimmel (1994, 119–120, 126), a pioneer of men’s studies in America. For men, however, “a terror remains,” Kimmel continues, “the terror that the young man will be unmasked as a fraud” who has only superficially managed to rid himself of his mother’s traits. The feminine coding of homosexuality and homoerotic desires causes an additional, yet related, threat. These desires must be suppressed. Masculinity means to repudiate the “homosexual within.” Male homosociality—that is, all-male bonding—is, paradoxically, entrenched by homophobia, states Kimmel, which is “the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and to the world that we don’t measure up, that we are not real men.” Masculinity is uncertain, “tenuous and fragile” (Kimmel 1994, 126–131).

A popular aggressive response to masculinity’s fragility is examined in this volume by Edward Westermann: male drinking rituals. Controlling one’s body despite intoxication made the man, and drinking rituals, Westermann shows, established the male bond. They radiated misogyny and transgression, facilitated inclusions, exclusions, and hierarchies among perpetrator groups (who holds most?), fueled social amalgamation and killing effectiveness of the all-male group. They reconfirmed the hypermasculine standard. But it did so only temporarily, in fact only for a moment, after which, as we know from many testimonies, doubts resurged, demanding new and more transgression and aggression.

The workings of the paradoxical web of fragility, homophobia, and patriarchy have been widely analyzed by scholars of different disciplines, most prominently by the German literature scholar Klaus Theweleit in his 1977–1978 inquiry into “male fantasies.” Theweleit extracted these fantasies from the misogynist and militarist autobiographic writings of German post–World War I volunteer paramilitary (*Freikorps*) fighters. In Theweleit’s view, *Freikorps* men radicalized common Western and German norms about male self-control, as well as about cold, tough, and hard masculinity, into a perpetual war against women and femininity, especially the latter when operative within men and experienced by them as a desire for domesticity, tenderness, and compassion. The men explored

by Theweleit needed to fight the hybrid substances of the body and all flowing emotional conditions.

However, a plethora of research, not least on Nazi Germany, has shown that relations between men and women, between concepts of manliness and femininity, between different men, as well as between different women, were more complicated and complex than the polarizing models suggest. Often inspired by poststructuralism, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, and other students of male emotions, identities, and sociability have pointed to the “tensions and contradictions” of masculinity and to its fluidity and hybridity. They have cautioned against overemphasizing the antifeminine fabric of masculinity and suggested “explor[ing] the locus of expression of ‘non-masculine’ sentiments by men” (Vale de Almeida 1996, 116; classic: Sedgwick 1985). The “sign” masculinity, they say, is anything but stable. Instead, “masculinity always bleeds . . . over into its definitional others, despite efforts to the contrary.” Gender is a “continuum.” Human beings then “oscillate . . . between the two gender poles” (Reeser 2010, 38–39, 45). But how far does the inclusion of femininity go? What counts as femininity? And how is tied into masculinity?

### **Varied Masculinities among German Soldiers and Perpetrators**

There is no generic, universal answer to this question. Instead, it depends on time and space, on which men are considered, and on the contexts in which they operate, think, and feel. My inquiries into ordinary German soldiers’ experiences in the Nazi war of annihilation, and the memorialization of these experiences afterward, have illuminated the “protean” fabric of military masculinity (Kühne 2018). Already during and after the First World War, the traumatic experience of suffering—from facing death and mutilation, from constantly fearing either or both, from paralysis, powerlessness, and emasculation—shattered seemingly stable ideas about manliness being owned only by men and femininity only by women (Kühne 2017, 72). Subsequently, inclusive and fluid rather than exclusive and rigorous notions of martial masculinity emerged. Only the former gave meaning to the ambivalent, ambiguous, and complex desires, emotions, and experiences of soldier men and built bridges over diverging experiences, united disrupted identities, and could be adopted by different types of men as they fought together in modern conscripted mass armies.

Such concepts of military masculinity even demonstrated how femininity and masculinity could be on good terms within one person. The protean fabric of the concept of masculinity allowed soldiers to switch between different emotional and moral states without losing their male identity.

“O, what is man,” lamented former *Wehrmacht* lieutenant Tim Gebhardt during a memorial service for his regiment’s war dead in 1955. “What is virility, when death intervenes and obliterates everything?” Of course, being hurt, physically and mentally, had always been part and parcel of the construction of military masculinity. Initiation into the ranks of “real” men began with indignities and humiliations during the training period, and they did not end there but shaped the soldier’s career till the end. The soldier man was never fully sure of his virility. Accepting this uncertainty, knowing about the risk of falling and how to get up again, was precisely what made a man. The cement of the male community was the shared knowledge of this uncertainty. If you felt it, you were not the only one: you knew that your comrades were with you. This is what Tim Gebhardt meant when he apodictically invoked the memory of soldiers’ sacrifice in Russia: “The best thing in the life of a man is comradeship.” As Gebhardt explained, comradeship meant empathizing with “the hardships and worries of others,” and risking one’s life “when it comes down to rescuing a wounded soldier, so that he won’t fall into enemy hands. And when this wounded man, now a rescued comrade, feels his rescuer gently stroke his hair, just as a mother would, then he can die in peace.” Tender manliness, even crying—otherwise the epitome of unmanliness—became respectable in the presence of death. The sphere of death ensured that the symbolic hierarchies—hardness containing weakness—were operative (Kühne 2017, 222–224).

By expressing feminine qualities, exclusively male societies did not simply refresh or remember their ties to the civilian world at home. Rather, they imagined themselves as independent from real women and real families—from the civilian society and civilian morality. The message was: being on our own, we men generate a sense of family, even if we fight cold-bloodedly shortly after; we are emotionally independent. We may miss the world at home, but now we create it ourselves. Paradoxically, the demonstration of the independence of male society from the world at home culminated in violating the very morality that the comradely community claimed to honor. An entire set of manly rituals, all of them violating domestic and civilian norms, served to conform the claim for autarky. Demonstrative excessive drinking, showing of sexual adventures,

boasting misogynic rhetoric, staging rowdyism, even carrying out collective rape in extreme cases, all this gained its social momentum from being staged, practiced, reported, or applauded together (Elkins 1946). Abusing women in the occupied areas was the ultimate expression of performative masculinity, an assertion of the sovereignty of the male bond. Sexual violence during the Holocaust, as well as other genocides, is the ultimate expression of the patriarchal dynamic of masculinity (Mühlhäuser 2009; Morris 1996; Rittner and Roth 2012). Directed against women (in some cases also against men), it also organizes the informal hierarchy of all male society within: Who goes first, who is the most brutal, and who has the least restraints? (Kühne 2017, 169–176).

The language of womanhood, femininity, and patriarchal family used to address complex masculinity signaled the inclusion of diverse personalities and emotional conditions, but on a rigidly hierarchical basis. It was all about fitting in. Accepting the priority of the group's "We" over the individual "I" granted the latter some leeway. Not all men were equal when it came to assessing manliness, nor were the various emotional states considered equal. The Nazi machine of annihilation bore a surprisingly high degree of tolerance toward men who shied away from murder. When the German Police Battalion 101 was ordered to murder the Jews of Józefów in Poland in 1942, a minority eagerly agreed. They had internalized what in Nazi Germany counted as the ultimate proof of masculinity—the ability to overcome moral restraints and feelings of guilt about murdering Jews, including women and children. Most of the battalion was not able to simply discard those restraints but acted as ordered anyway, haunted with pangs of conscience. Another minority backed out, neither able nor willing to suppress the feelings of guilt. They had to swallow being labeled "weaklings" or "kids." They were placed at the bottom of an informal hierarchy that was led by those who demonstrated "hardness"—the alpha males. Importantly, however, the "weaklings" were not ousted. In fact, they avoided being ousted precisely by claiming to be "too weak" to commit murder. They could have claimed to be "too good," that is to say, to refuse on moral grounds, but they rarely did. Instead, they claimed to be too weak or at least accepted being seen that way. This is a crucial difference. It meant that they did not question the symbolic order of the male community, but that they interpreted their own constitution as deviant. They presented themselves as exceptions to the rule of hardness, thus confirming the rule and accepting the dominance of the alpha males. This way, they avoided being ousted, and were

granted a spot within that community, although on the lowest level. In a culture of hard masculinity, the weaklings represented the other and thus helped to make the hegemonic virtues properly visible (Browning 1992; Kühne 2010, 83–87).

Christopher Browning has masterly explored how the social web of a murder unit such as Police Battalion 101 enabled genocide. To explain the choices these “ordinary men” took, Browning relied on the social psychology of obedience to authority and group conformity. The explanatory potential of these studies is enormous as Browning’s application shows. But it is also limited, as has been argued in the debate on perpetrator behavior (Browning 2017). Psychological models of conformity and obedience tend to omit the historical factor—the specific cultural contexts that enforce or mitigate the way they work in concrete historical situations. It is here where a sociologically informed history of masculinities comes into play. In the case of Nazi Germany, the mythical inflation of the concept of comradeship in war, the ultimate experience of male solidarity, into a quasi-religious dogma that demands conformity and subjugation of the “I” under the “We” of the group lubricated the complicity of ordinary men in mass murder.

### Religious Models of Stoic Masculinities

Hardness, toughness, aggressiveness, stoicism, endurance, self-control, and so forth, remained the vanishing point of all protean masculinity. Heinrich Böll, who after the war became an icon of West German pacifism, was drafted into the *Wehrmacht* (the regular army, not the SS and other police murder units) and served as private the entire war. He was a designated outsider, and he wanted to be one. What Böll found embarrassing was the military’s demand that its members renounce their civilian self for the sake of group cohesion and dynamics. In a letter, he once called the community of comrades a “gathering of fishwives” (Böll 2001, 2: 899). In Böll’s postwar novel *The Train Was on Time*, the soldier Andreas found it “terrible being among men only all the time. Men are so womanish” (1978, 108). But even individualists like Böll did not abandon heroic, hard masculinity altogether. Reading Ernst Jünger in early 1943 left Böll fascinated with the heroic warrior who fought ahead and above the mass of comrades; this man, in Böll’s words, was “absolutely martially, truly the absolute soldier” (2001, 1: 592, 2: 1091). At the same time, Böll, like



many other Christian believers, found solace by picturing himself as reenacting the sufferings and the sacrifice of Christ (Reid 2001; Kühne 2017, 184–190). Böll despised male camaraderie, but many of his fellow soldiers drew fighting spirit from the Christian interpretation of selfless comradeship by referencing the model offered in the Gospel of John (15: 13): “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Kühne 2017, 19).

The polyvalent imagery of the imitation of Christ provided both Catholic and Protestant believers—in this volume, studied by Lauren Faulkner Rossi and Benedikt Brunner—also with another, more aggressive justification of engaging in the Nazi war on Europe and especially against Bolshevism in the East: the *miles Christi* (lit., soldiers of Christ). Such imageries of Christian masculinity that glorified stoic suffering and demanded the fight against bolshevist godlessness spurred Catholic and Protestant soldiers’ combat motivation even in Hitler’s war in the East. By reenacting the ideal of the *miles Christi*, Catholic and Protestant men claimed their belonging to the racial Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German nation that had cleansed itself of the Jews. And yet, Christian masculinity drew the line at the Nazi genocidal project. Rescuers of Jews in the German army were rare, and the number of soldiers who resisted orders or permission to murder Jews or other civilians was limited. Those who did either or both, however, were often motivated by a compassionate type of masculinity that was rooted in Christian belief systems (Wette 2002, 2003). This Christian manliness contrasted sharply with the Nazis’ genocidal morality that demanded—as the ultimate proof of true manliness—merciless and remorseless brutality against alleged racial enemies, be they combatants or civilians; such morality feminized the virtue of compassion with the defenseless as weakness—as unmanly (Kühne 2017, 143–153).

### Hegemonic, Complicit, and Subordinate Masculinities

R. W. Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity (1995) provides the sociological framework to explore rivalry, overlaps, and entanglement of multiple conceptions of masculinity and, by extension, of diverse fabrics of complicity in the Holocaust. Not all men are equally able to match, and many do not even aim at matching, the bar of hard, rational, autonomous masculinity. Instead, they adhere to alternative masculinities, often depending on and intersecting with racial, class, professional, religious, and

sexual identities. Different men—for example, generals versus the rank-and-file, war volunteers versus drafted soldiers, soldiers versus civilians, blue-collar workers versus white-collar workers, black men versus white men, Jewish versus Christian men—may honor different masculine norms (Hanisch 2005). Such plurality was operational still among Jewish camp prisoners, as Kim Wünschmann (2013) has shown in a pioneering article. Depending on their social upbringing, Jewish inmates of Nazi camps adhered to revolutionary, bourgeois, or soldierly concepts of masculinity.

The post-Holocaust masculinities in Austria analyzed by Carson Phillips in this volume represent another example of masculinity's plural condition. After 1945 in Austria, military masculinity did not entirely vanish, despite its disastrous consequences, but enjoyed some crude revival in the student fraternities. But at least three different civilian masculinities put them under pressure: the refined and charming one of the cultured gentleman, the physically strong and agile one of the soccer player, and eventually the deliberately pacifist one of the remembrance activist. Phillips juxtaposes these different masculinities but leaves open the question of their competition and rivalry. Connell (and, following Connell, many students of masculinity across the disciplines), by contrast, stresses the constant state of competition for broader social approval and power that fuels the dynamic of the construction of masculinities. They struggle for hegemony. Connell (1995) proposes to analyze the hierarchic order of multiple masculinities in a Gramscian fashion. While men's subordination of women constitutes hegemonic masculinity, the fabric of that masculinity also allows for a range of diverse yet hierarchically ordered male identities. Subordinate masculinities, represented paradigmatically by gay men in most of the twentieth century in Western societies, defy the hegemonic heterosexual hegemony and thus are considered illegitimate. Complicit masculinities, by contrast, also fail to embody the dominant standard, but they do so willingly. They confirm dominance to achieve assistant status and thus reap the "patriarchal dividend." Such masculinities are embodied, for instance, by unserviceable men in a militarized society or by unemployed men in civilian society. "Complicit" men still rule over women and rank above men of "illegitimate" male identities (Connell 1995, 77–80; Tosh 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

The rigorousness and effectiveness of this hegemony and subordination, however, is historically and culturally contingent, and their fabric depends not least on their institutional and political context. Hegemonic masculinity, understood in a dynamic fashion, structured the social rela-

tions not only of the perpetrators, accomplices, and bystanders but also those of the victims of the Holocaust, as Michael Becker and Dennis Bock exemplarily show in this volume. The status of the *Muselmann*, Becker and Bock argue, was not a definite one but an assigned one that could be revoked. Eventually, most *Muselmänner* died. Assigning *Muselmann* status to certain prisoners allowed the other prisoners to preserve higher status, self-esteem, and agency. While the SS aimed at destroying the male honor and manly identity of all prisoners, the prisoners struggled competitively to save or regain at least some portions of that honor and identity. They did so, on the one hand, by labeling the SS guards as inhuman or non-human, thus denying them male honor and “feminizing” them. On the other hand, they distanced themselves from the physically and mentally weakened, emasculated *Muselmänner*. Eventually, they established a new social hierarchy that allowed them to secure remnants of agency, the resources for survival and resistance.

The complex and even paradoxical web of masculinity as a resource of Jewish agency, even resistance, on the one hand, and as a maelstrom of complicity on the other has been scrutinized also in other settings of Jewish struggle for survival. As Michael Geheran (2018) has shown, German Jewish World War I veterans fought their disempowerment and daily humiliation since 1933 by standing up against Nazi thugs publicly and in front of other men (and women). They displayed core features of martial masculinity such as bravery, strength, initiative, decisiveness, and perseverance. They retained their masculine honor and regained their self-esteem. In Connell’s terms, these veterans deployed a “complicit” form of masculinity. By utilizing the hegemonic martial masculinity to secure their own status, agency, and identity, the veterans distanced themselves, although unwillingly, from nonmilitary Jews and thus confirmed Nazi stereotypes about these Jewish men’s effeminacy. The analysis of Jewish veterans’ struggle for male honor exemplifies how the hegemonic masculinity—including its unconscious workings—could eventually support or resist the Nazis’ efforts of destroying Jewish solidarity structures.

### Fragility, Fluidity, Reversals

Masculinity is fragile, fluid, and contested; many crises of masculinity have been observed in the past and in the present, which testify to that fragility. Yet the patriarchal fabric of hegemonic masculinity, which informs

men's domination of women, and other characteristics such as notions of male autonomy, honor, control, strength, and decisiveness have proven extraordinarily stable and resilient. This resilience is at ease with arguments about the confusion of traditional gender stereotypes in Jewish families under Nazi terror and during the Holocaust. Most prominently, Marion Kaplan (1998) and Nechama Tec (2003) diagnosed a collapse of male gender identities and a role reversal under Nazi antisemitism in Germany and in the ghettos, camps, and resistance movements. Nazi persecution, they said, robbed Jewish men of their traditional roles of providers and protectors of their families, emasculated them, and left them apathetic, helpless, and passive. At the same time, these scholars argue, women took over; made decisions about emigration or staying in Germany or Europe; secured food and shelter for their families, including men, in the ghettos; and provided mental survival kits in the camps and elsewhere. Women performed roles and tasks that had been previously performed by men.

This role reversal did not last among those Jews who escaped and survived the Holocaust, immigrating to Palestine and Israel or other parts of the world. Instead, the polarization of sexual stereotypes remained intact or was restored, although with restrictions, as military service in Israel indicates. Similar paradoxical developments—temporary confusion, yet eventual reaffirmation of traditional gender roles—were common in all societies that engaged in and were targeted by the total wars of the twentieth century. Women volunteered and were mobilized for and targeted by war and genocide. But in the long run women's suffering from war and acting in war as factory workers, nurses, military aids, resistance fighters, or even regular soldiers (in the Soviet Union in World War II) did not overthrow the traditional gender order. Historians Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet (1987) deployed the metaphor of the double helix to explain this "paradoxical progress and regress" and the underlying constancy of a "gender-linked subordination." In the same spirit, literature scholar Susan Jeffords (1989) pointed to the "remasculinization" of America in the 1980s—the revival of patriarchal values and martial images of men and standards of masculinity that the Vietnam crisis and the defeat of the United States had undermined and weakened. The remasculinization reaffirmed the male-dominated gender order and even the public adoration of military values. Sarah Imhoff's inspiring inquiry in this volume into the reception of Zionist ideals of physically strong, muscular, fighter masculinity in post-World War II America points to older continuities of remasculinization. Her research suggests conceiving of remasculinization

not as limited to certain time periods but rather as an ongoing dynamic process, as a cultural resource to be deployed by any society or groups whenever needed.

Inquiries into Jewish masculinities under Nazi terror by Kim Wünschmann (2013, 2015), Maddy Carey (2017), Michael Geheran (2016, 2018), and Sebastian Huebel (2017) raise more serious doubts of the gender role reversal. These scholars show that Jews could preserve or reassert male agency, male honor, male protector and provider roles and thus reverse or counter experiences of emasculation even in the ghettos, in resistance movements, or in the camps, thus inaugurating processes of “remasculinization” even during the Holocaust. Similar sequences of breakdown and recovery of masculinity are the subject of Patrick Farges’s comparative argument in this volume about *Yekkes* (German-speaking refugee Jews) in Palestine and Canada. Although their environments were rather different, Jews in both countries countered experiences of disempowerment, humiliation, and emasculation by rebuilding traditional male identities—in the Canadian camps and postwar Jewish communities as providers and professionals, in the *Yishuv* by internalizing Zionist ideals such as pioneering farmer spirit and the appreciation of physical labor and of the muscular male body. Categorizing processes like these as “remasculinization” is not meant to distract from inherent changes: German Jews in Israel and in Canada did not simply reassert the same types of masculinity they or their fathers and grandfathers had adhered to before emigrating. Their masculine identities changed: they adopted softer traits in Canada, harder traits in Israel. As Farges points out, *Yekkes* in neither country followed one path of rebuilding masculinity but plural ones.

### Moving Forward

This volume gathers first efforts to bring men back into Holocaust studies—men not as unmarked bearers of normality but as gendered beings whose choices, actions, mind-sets, feelings, capacities, and incapacities are motivated or impeded by cultural and social discourses on masculinity. Reflecting on masculinities during and after the Holocaust widens and deepens our understanding of the agency of victims, bystanders, and perpetrators, and it illuminates the complex and complicated mechanisms of complicity into and coping with the consequences of mass murder. Gender is the foremost category to study micro-politics, and as such

gender comprises both femininity and masculinity. To gain momentum in Holocaust studies, further inquiries into the workings of masculinities will benefit from methodically 1) considering and distinguishing the rather different places, media, and practices of construction of masculinity; 2) historicizing and contextualizing the manifold ways masculinity operates; 3) utilizing the analytical potential of gender as a category that signifies, establishes, and fuels power structures.

Masculinity may be understood as ideology, and as such it is “created and propagated through various social forms, especially through images, myths, discourses, and practices” (Reeser 2010, 21). Consequently, masculinities have been studied—so also in this volume—from different disciplinary approaches and by using different types of sources. Analyzing the relation of two trajectories has been most successful: first, the representations of masculinity in laws, literature, and artifacts; and second, the subjective experience and appropriation of such representations. Neither exists independently from the other. It was the “crisscrossing of ideologies and experience, of discourses and material transformation” that propelled or barred change (Canning 2006, 15). To determine the causes, processes, and consequences of this change and to explore how masculinities are constructed, how they work, and what impact they have, students need to carefully reflect on the differences between those “social forms” and the specific knowledge they allow to be established. Nazi representations of martial, hard, and heroic masculinity contrast with the fluidity, flexibility, and ambiguousness of masculinity as practiced by ordinary men at home, on the battlefields, and anywhere in between.

Gender, as a category of social difference, works in conjunction with, and through distinction from, other categories of social differences. Constructions of masculinity intersect with, are shaped by, and themselves shape other constructions of social difference such as class, race, age, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and nation (Collins and Bilge 2016). Masculinity operates in the mode of plurality. Multiple masculinities coexist or compete in any given society, at any given time. The full range of this plurality has barely been fathomed yet. Instead, martial masculinity, often in its superhuman representations of Nazi art and propaganda (Mangan 1999), is usually considered as the idiosyncrasy of male perpetrators and bystanders, as if they all were enthused about war or even genocide. However, the social cleavages of German as well as other European societies, the division between Christian believers and Nazis, between working- and middle-class men, between entrepreneurs and soldiers, between older and younger

men did not simply disappear after Hitler's ascent to power in 1933 or the beginning of World War II in 1939, nor did the different codes and norms of masculinity they had honored before the Nazis tried (but never succeeded) to establish a totalitarian society. And when it comes to assessing masculinities of the victimized people, generic ideas about provider and protector roles of men in modern societies are taken as the standard of Jewish and non-Jewish societies. But the Jews that were thrown together in the ghettos and camps or escaped or resisted the Nazis came from rather diverse Jewish communities in Europe, highly assimilated and secular ones on the one hand, orthodox and ultraorthodox ones on the other. This diversity was reflected in an equally wide range of masculinities. In this range, assimilated masculinities revolving around military honor, national pride, and economic success contrasted sharply with religious alternatives, such as effeminate, gentle, and delicate maleness of *Edelkayt*, whose ideal subject was the *Yeshiva-Bokhur* who devoted his life to the study of the Torah (Boyarin 1997, 23; Carey 2017, 21–48; Brod 1988; Brod and Zevit 2010; Baader, Gillerman, and Lerner 2012). How did this diversity affect discourses and experiences of masculinity during the Holocaust?

Codes and norms of masculinity have influenced, and have been created or challenged by, men and by women. Masculinity is a concept that defines power relations between men, but foremost they define power relations between men and women. In response to popular dichotomist conceptions of patriarchy as a system of male domination over women—as if all men oppressed all women—men's studies have highlighted gendered hierarchies between men. Too often, inquiries into masculinities in general and especially those that mattered during and after the Holocaust are restricted to men's perspectives, thus reasserting inadvertently the ideology of the unmarked male universal. Typically, and so mostly in this volume, masculinities are examined through the lens of those men who enact them—perpetrators, Christians, Jewish and non-Jewish camp prisoners, Jewish refugees, Jewish settlers. While codes and norms of masculinity need the approval of men to exert power, they are also negotiated in interaction with women, who may applaud, doubt, or challenge the performance of masculinity. The construction of gender is a societal concert that includes women as well, and men who did not or did not want to “match the bar.” How did they perceive, confirm, or question martial or other masculinities? Neither the hypermasculinity of merciless genocidaires, nor the emasculation and possible remasculinization of their victims, nor the adherence of bystanders and onlookers to the moral inflation of men's

solidarity and conformity operate in a world without women. The female perspective on masculinity cannot be omitted when it comes to bringing men back into a gendered research agenda of the Holocaust.

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# THE HOLOCAUST AND MASCULINITIES

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PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF MEN

Edited by

Björn Krondorfer and Ovidiu Creangă

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