

A Social History of the Aufseherinnen of Auschwitz.

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Dedication

To Arthur Guinness, without your Black Nectar none of this would have been possible.

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Abstract

This thesis offers a comprehensive insight into the lives and motivations of the *Aufseherinnen* (female guards) stationed within the Auschwitz complex of Nazi concentration camps. Through a detailed examination of records and secondary sources, a picture of the feminine relationship to Nazi propaganda and the role of women as perpetrators within the Holocaust has been established. The *Aufseherinnen* are a subject which has mostly been neglected in previously accepted historical narratives of the Holocaust as defined by patriarchal ideas. However, through the research in this thesis, the balance is readdressed. The focus of the project is on understanding the women individually before attempting to analyse the *Aufseherinnen* as a whole. The research enables the return of womanhood and agency to the women as individuals. The return of agency is also of importance when seeking to analyse how these characters are now perceived in wider popular culture and the consequences that misrepresentation has had upon broader societal knowledge about the role of female Nazi guards. The thesis argues for the inclusion of all genders in the analysis of the Holocaust and recognition of the differing experiences of both perpetrators and survivors based on gender. Above all, this study offers a piece of unique inquiry as it casts a critical reflection on a group of women who have never before been studied as a whole or in detail and opens up the possibility of a further wide-ranging survey on women as perpetrators in Nazi Germany.

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Introduction: Aims and Objectives

This thesis offers a social history of the *Aufseherinnen* (female guards) who were employed at the Auschwitz complex of German Nazi concentration camps. The main objective of the research is to rectify the typical exclusion of female perpetrators from analysis of the Holocaust. The female guards of Auschwitz are often relegated to a footnote in the standard historiographical narrative of the concentration camps; however, they played a significant role in the destruction of human life. The rejection of women that do not fit inside gender norms is a widespread practice within many academic disciplines. It has only recently begun to be addressed by feminist scholars who seek to highlight the multi-faceted roles that women play within society. This study aims to continue this practice, as such, a feminist perspective was used during analysis elevating the study from a historical biographic into an exploration of the role that gender plays in any consideration of female perpetrators. The subject matter, and the manner in which it has been approached, has created a new study in both Holocaust and perpetrator studies. The group of women under discussion have never been analysed as a collective. In fact, many, until now, had not been identified and located at Auschwitz, which leaves significant gaps in the historiography of the camp and the wider Holocaust.

The research presented here is focussed on the Auschwitz concentration camp and its network of subcamps, primarily Auschwitz-Birkenau due to the concentration of *Aufseherinnen* stationed there, but also at the smaller camps that were at a greater distance from the hub of Auschwitz and the town of Oświęcim, a key location for socialising. The chief aim of the thesis was to provide a social history of the *Aufseherinnen* detailing their everyday lives at the camp. Chapter 3 is an in-depth study into the women's lives while stationed at Auschwitz. The chapter details their relationships with prisoners as well as each other, and the connections formed with the SS men that were also posted at the camp. It provides information about the *Aufseherinnen*'s participation in the Holocaust, both their direct and indirect involvement, seeking to discern

the role that gender played on the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Further, a social history offers awareness into the more 'mundane' pursuits of the guards and how, for Nazi personnel at Auschwitz, their lives were played out concurrent with the daily mass murder taking place within the concentration camp. This study of the largest extermination camp provides a unique frame of reference for how perpetrators interacted with the Holocaust and how they were able to distance themselves from the murderous environment and continue with their lives along traditional lines, through friendship, marriage, the birth of children, illness and death.

Through correlation of a wide range of primary and secondary sources the work in this thesis has identified the names and, in many cases, new information on over 100 women who served within the Auschwitz Camp complex. This has been compiled into a series of databases that are presented in Chapter 2. Giving names to the perpetrators allows agency to be returned to the individual. No longer are the *Aufseherinnen* a faceless mass but, instead, they are distinguishable women with their own identities and characteristics. The idea of agency is further expanded upon by analysis of age, origin, relationship status and education. Through these analytical criteria, motivation can be better understood. This is a key question in any study of perpetrators but is further heightened when studying a group that - through interaction with violence - break 'traditional' ideas of womanhood. The question of motivation forms a key part of the discussion in Chapter 2 and is a point that is returned to regularly throughout the thesis. It is imperative to try and grasp the 'why' of the perpetrators if scholars are to understand the 'how' of the Holocaust.

The main aim of the thesis is therefore to provide an overview of the lives of the women serving as guards, investigating not just their work in the implementation of genocide but also their 'everyday' lives away from formal duties, to fulfil the aim of providing a more 'rounded' picture. For example, the analysis looks at the entertainment available for the *Aufseherinnen* when off duty, the typical living conditions the women experienced, and also the social, physical and romantic relationships that were formed. These relationships incorporate both friendship between female comrades and romantic relations with male guards and other men. Relationships between male and female guards stationed at Auschwitz were not uncommon, sometimes resulting in pregnancy and marriage. This provides a clear illustration of how life for such

women was - in numerous cases - profoundly changed by their service at the camp. In particular, at the core of this thesis, the discussion includes a detailed case study analysis of four women who held different roles and responsibilities within the camp (see chapter 4).

These case studies aim to delve deeper into these four women's lives, as well as drawing out wider general points about the life of a female camp guard and the institutional and sociological power structures they encountered. Moreover, they can help scholars to understand what has led to the 'historical blanking-out' of the life stories and crimes of a good number of these women, whilst - at the same time - provide clues as to why others have gained various levels of notoriety over the decades.

The latter point is discussed in Appendix 1, where there is a brief discussion on image and representation of Nazi female guards in popular culture since the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945. This incorporates an analysis of both the medium of popular cinema and also critical evaluation of the 'Naziploitation' genre of films. Through this discussion, the thesis offers the historian important points about how such perceptions have arguably hindered the balanced historical consideration of the actual role and institutional place of the *Aufseherinnen* in the Holocaust.

The originality of this thesis is apparent through the subject matter – new analysis of the rather neglected role of female guards – and its primary source nature is further emphasised through the inclusion of new archival source material from the camp itself and other related key sources. The *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz have never before been studied as a group, nor has a 'social' history been written. This study's importance will therefore be in the inclusion of gender into perpetrator studies and a unique exploration into a group of women who played an important support role in the implementation of the Holocaust. While there has been a limited amount of previous study on *Aufseherinnen*, these have neglected the social history of the camp and the collective experience of the *Aufseherinnen*. The thesis therefore not only offers new and original primary research, but also engages with and adds to the secondary literature on the Holocaust and its perpetrators. Furthermore, the feminist focus of the thesis allows the recognition of women as more than

passive victims; the *Aufseherinnen* were violent murderers, and it is especially important to recognise the full range of feminine experience. The databases presented here expand on previous scholars' work as they establish a complete collection of the names of the women who served as *Aufseherinnen* at Auschwitz. Through correlation of different archives, it has thus been possible to add to the already established list, creating the most complete dataset currently available.

The objective of expanding the range of archives consulted was particularly important to gain as complete a social history as possible. Primary documents were scattered through numerous locations, including the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Dachau, as well as further archives containing essential information regarding the post-war trials of female guards and their subsequent fates and/or civilian employment in peacetime Germany, sources which were located in archives in Germany, Poland, the UK and the USA. All of these archives held documents necessary for full completion of this study, and many practical and logistical hurdles were overcome to meet these research challenges. In a number of cases, careful negotiation had to be undertaken to gain access to archive material, and this entailed a number of return research trips. However, all this work was invaluable in helping throw new light and fresh perspectives on the subject and, all in all, the author is confident this fieldwork has been reflected in the main body of the thesis.

Chapter 1- Historiography and Methodology

This chapter sets out where this thesis sits in relation to the historiography of the Holocaust and elucidates the ‘mixed-methods’ approach that was utilised during the research. The prerequisite for beginning research into the social history of the *Aufseherinnen* was to establish a complete historiography concerning the female guards. The relative lack of scholarly interaction with the topic necessitated the investigation of a broader historiography of the concentration camps and female perpetrators in different environments. This in-depth analysis of previous texts was essential to ensure the fruition of the thesis. From this critical evaluation of the available published material, the author could understand where this thesis would sit in the wider framework of academic research. This allowed analysis into why the *Aufseherinnen* had largely been neglected in previous study of the topic. Furthermore, it was necessary, particularly within the early stages of the research process, for the author to have a defined methodology that would be adopted when handling source documents and interacting with evidence. The definitive decision to undertake a ‘mixed’ methodological approach to the research is further explained and explored within the second part of this chapter.

Historiography

This research project is situated within the subsection of Holocaust scholarship that relates to the perpetrators. The topic, while touched upon in the immediate after-war period, gained impetus in the 1980s and developed into a research area of its own.¹ The focus on perpetrators of the Holocaust was initially criticised as being reliant on a functionalist view of history which excluded the emotional suffering of

¹ Initially, perpetrator studies focussed on understanding how Germans had subscribed to the ‘deviant’ ideology of Nazism. Within this school of thought the role of perpetrator belonged to the top leadership of Nazi society whom it was believed had full control over policy and people. For example, H.L.Ansbacher, ‘Attitudes of German Prisoners of War: A Study of the Dynamics of National-Socialist Followership’, *Psychological Monographs. General and Applied* 62, no. 1 (1948), in which Ansbacher uses his background in psychology in an attempt to understand the motivation of soldiers, and F.Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe. Betrachtungen Und Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1946).

victims and, instead, sought to produce an account based solely on documentation.² Functionalists argue that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were not hardened ideologues driven by rampant anti-Semitism but rather that the Holocaust was a developing process.³ The fear amongst many researchers, especially those that subscribed to the Israeli school of thought, was that a Functionalist research process would remove emotional lessons of the Holocaust and instead focus on the administrative and functional aspects of Nazi departments that were responsible for genocide.⁴ This would remove accounts of suffering and emotional lessons from the scholarship.

The change in focus from the study of elites to bureaucracies and departmental genocides was initially predominately a trend driven by German scholarship. Some of the critical early works were Helmut Krausnick and Hans Wilhelm's survey on the Einsatzgruppen,⁵ Ernest Klee's research on the Nazi euthanasia policy towards the mentally ill⁶ and Müller-Hill's work on the role of geneticists in the Nazi policy of extermination on racial grounds.⁷ This research began to critique the participation of the wider German population within the Nazi system of extermination. Research has made it clear that the earlier idea of the ordinary German as a victim of Nazism was no longer comfortable; involvement in genocidal policy was far more extensive, and the defence of following orders was no longer a satisfactory explanation.

The first study that accounts for a female perspective of perpetrators of the Holocaust is Gisela Bock's account of forced sterilisation.⁸ This study was the first time that a specifically female narrative in regard to

² Christopher Browning, 'Beyond 'Intentionalism' and 'Functionalism': The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered', *Browning, The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (1992), pp.105-06.

³ Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933-1939* (University of Illinois Press, 1970). This offers one of the most comprehensive debates in the moderate functionalist camp, illuminating that the decision to exterminate the Jewish population was not made from the beginning and, rather, that the Holocaust was a series of turns from discrimination, to expulsion, to extermination.

⁴ The 'Israeli' school makes extensive use of survivor memoirs, with work focussing on the preservation of stories and the full understanding of human suffering. In contrast, the 'German' school emphasises the importance of official records, such as letters, correspondence and court documents, with a focus on understanding systems and functionality. This has led to divisions in the historiography of the Holocaust; often based on the locale of the researcher and the influence of different theoretical schools. Dan Michman, 'Is There an "Israeli School" of Holocaust Research?', in *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier & Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Berghan Books, 2008).

⁵ Helmut Krausnick & Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe Des Welanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen Der Sicherheitspolizei Und Des Sd 1938-1942* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlansgs-Anstalt, 1981).

⁶ Ernst Klee, "Euthanasie" *Im NS-Staat: Die "Vernichtung Lebensunwerten Lebens"* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983).

⁷ Benno Müller-Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft: Die Aussonderung Von Juden, Zigeunern Und Geisteskranken, 1933-1945* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1984).

⁸ Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation Im Nationalsozialismus* (Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1986).

perpetrator research was undertaken; however, Bock's research continues to place women in the role of the victim of male perpetrators. Bock's study was followed by the hugely influential work of Claudia Koonz, who began to question if women could be viewed as purely victims, cast in this role through Nazi misogyny.⁹ The misogynistic ideology of the Nazi party had previously been an alibi of women; they could not be perpetrators in a system that was already discriminating and brutalising them. The argument of whether women could be perpetrators of the Holocaust due to their secondary nature in Nazi Germany was fiercely debated. While Bock maintained that women could not be regarded as perpetrators due to their persecution under Nazi ideology, Koonz argued that this was a falsehood and, through demonstrating the vast array of positions that women held within Nazi Germany and their active engagement in the Holocaust, they must be regarded as criminals.

The differences in the analytical procedure are apparent in the historiography of this thesis; the majority of texts that have been consulted have relied on official documents and have been concerned with understanding the motivation of perpetrators. This change from 'systems' to 'individuals' is due to the evolution of the Fundamentalist-Structuralist debate on the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. Through this evolution in research, there is now a specific historiography dedicated to 'Perpetrator Research'.¹⁰ This is a development in style from the overarching description of the process of extermination from the ascent of Nazi power in 1933 to the liberation of the camps by the Allies in 1945, which is an approach often found in early history¹¹. This change is most clearly represented¹¹ in the work of Christopher Browning. Browning's seminal work on Reserve Police Battalion 101,¹² details the shift in focus from large systems and the upper hierarchy of Nazi society to small groups of perpetrators that were by no means the leading policymakers. This new focus on understanding the humanity of perpetrators has continued apace, with studies on a range

⁹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986).

¹⁰ Jürgen Matthäus, 'Agents of the Final Solution - Perpetration in Historical Perspective', in *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier & Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Berghan Books, 2008).

¹¹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-45* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) and Gerald Roberts Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (Elstree: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1961).

¹² Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin, 1998).

of individuals who were involved in the Holocaust.¹³ However, Browning's ideas were challenged, most prominently by Daniel Goldhagen. He disagreed with the idea that any person could become a murderer. Instead, he argued that the killers in the Holocaust were deeply entrenched in the violently Anti-Semitic ideology of the Nazis.¹⁴ Goldhagen's work was rejected by most scholars with Raul Hilberg defining his argument as the 'simple answer' and 'Eliminist Anti-Semitism'.¹⁵ Goldhagen's argument relieves contemporary Germans of guilt and places the wrongdoing in the hands of those who had been misguided by ideology; it cannot stand up to examination. Nevertheless, what Goldhagen's work achieved was to draw attention to the lack of prominence that is given to ideological impressions on perpetrators. The focus on the role of the average German continues to be a debated subject within perpetrator studies.

Early historians' work on the entire period of Nazi rule or a specific camp was unhelpful to full understanding, through either giving too broad a scenario - with little attempt for the conceptualisation of actions or people within the narrative - or through a focus on providing an overview of a specific camp or death site, which can isolate the research concerning individuals or wider events.¹⁶ This has led to a substantial gap in knowledge concerning the physical acts of perpetration and served to remove the Holocaust from society's grasp as an event carried out by *real, tangible* people. As a result, the 'Concentration Camp' has been pushed further back into a realm of history that is no longer identifiable for many people in society today. Actions that were conceived and carried out by human beings towards other humans, based on ideological prejudices about religion and race, have become nearly lost as fable due to a disassociation of culprit behaviour. This is a critical problem that this thesis intends to address directly. By exploring these perpetrators and their behaviour, and firmly explaining the Holocaust's implementation through human behaviour, the thesis will place culpability for the deeds of the *Aufseherinnen* back in their hands.

¹³ Such as Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death: the SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), who focuses on the *Einsatzgruppen* death squads, another example is Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. (London: Random House, 2013) which focuses on the *Helferinnen* sent to the East.

¹⁴ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Vintage, 1997).

¹⁵ Raul Hilberg, 'The Goldhagen Phenomenon', *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (1997), p.723.

¹⁶ Raul Hilberg, 'The Nature of the Process', in *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust*, ed. Joel E. Dimsdale (Washington: Hemisphere Pub. Corp, 1980).

As previously stated, there have been numerous scholarly investigations into the nature of the Holocaust, its methods, and the sites of atrocities. These works have contributed to both the academic and public domain.¹⁷ The aim of this author is not to add to this discussion in a general sense, but to offer a specific perspective on a group of perpetrators at a particular locale. However, a significant number of the published sources have been utilised in this project, to develop some detailed contextual knowledge about the Holocaust and, in turn, a more in-depth insight into Auschwitz precisely. It is near impossible to name all of the sources that have informed and enhanced knowledge of the Holocaust and impacted on this study, partly due to the transference of knowledge through other mediums than scholarly texts, such as popular culture. In so far as any particular works influence this study concerning the general historiography, three studies have been especially utilised to help build the methodological approach employed by the author. These studies are not without fault, due to continuing scholarly work and new perspectives, but have been invaluable in providing some essential core details.

Konnilyn Feig's work has been especially useful for charting the development and implications of wider Nazi policy and its implementation in regard to prisoners and guards' actions within the camps.¹⁸ The manner in which Feig approaches the primary death camps, seeking to understand them not just from a historical perspective but by using multi-disciplinary research methods has created a much more detailed picture of the Concentration Camp system, one with deeper emotional resonance. Similarly, Waschmann's work on the Concentration Camps has also been significant, especially concerning structure and progression towards genocide.¹⁹ While the female camp and the guards who worked within Auschwitz are briefly mentioned, it does not comprise a full study of these particular aspects. It remains a history and overview of the camps in general, without a focus on individual perpetrators. The work is, however, a highly useful tool

¹⁷ This could be an exhaustive list, but some key studies include Browning, *Ordinary men*, Saul Friedländer, *The years of extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), and Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005). All three are highly regarded by scholars and form a key part of the Holocaust narrative.

¹⁸ Konnilyn G. Feig, *Hitler's Death Camps: The Sanity of Madness* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979).

¹⁹ Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015).

for cross-referencing witness testimony, as well as providing the historian with a wealth of documentation in terms of orders from those higher up the Nazi command structure.

Concerning specific histories of the Auschwitz Camp system itself, there was a reluctance to rely solely on survivor testimony. However, this material has still been widely utilised for specific instances of violence and interaction between prisoners and guards. This reluctance is due to the inability to establish the reliability of witness testimony.²⁰ In terms of the range of scholarly studies employed for this thesis, extensive use was made of Laurence Rees' *Auschwitz: A New History*. The book is particularly valuable in terms of events and personnel who worked within the camp and, importantly, makes use of some significant primary source evidence.²¹ However, the work has weaknesses. There is only a very brief section on the female guards within this book, which lacks essential documented evidence, relying solely on survivor testimony and the statements of Höss concerning their 'incompetence'.²² The section concerning the *Aufseherinnen* is surprisingly sparse when considering the number of women who were employed within the camp and the range of female experience. It is with Rees's treatment of the individual guards and the system of perpetration that the book lacks depth. The study is too much a broad history and is limited by its focus on key men in the camp, rather than a discussion of personnel as a whole. Critical engagement by the author with the studies above - Feig, Wachsmann, and Rees - has been a significant influence on this thesis, stimulating the research set out in the chapters.

However, the most valuable resource in terms of information as to the *daily* activities at Auschwitz and offering specificity as to those who were directly involved in actions, is the *Auschwitz Chronicle*, which seeks to give a day-by-day view of life in the camp.²³ This source is the work of Danuta Czech, who has compiled a minute breakdown of the camp, detailing particular deportations, deaths, and the policy changes of the SS. This work is supported by utilisation of extensive historical records, using survivor testimony and

²⁰ Dori Laub. 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. 63 (1995).

²¹ Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History* contains material based on over 100 interviews with both survivors and perpetrators.

²² Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History*, pp.25-8.

²³ Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle* (New York: Owl Books, 1989).

cross-referenced with archival sources. The material presents itself as a primary source, due to the lack of interpretation that is given to the events detailed; rather, the events are presented as substantiated facts upon which the historian can build to conduct further analysis.

Although there are numerous other sources regarding the Holocaust which detail the development and pursuit of Nazi policy, this decreases significantly when the historian seeks to focus on a particular camp. The historiography becomes almost non-existent when one is aiming to analyse a specific group of employees within a single camp system. This weakness in the historiography regarding Auschwitz and the role of *Aufseherinnen* illustrates and emphasises the need for further analysis to take place.

Gender and the Holocaust

The importance of gender has been increasingly recognised and become a critical factor in perpetrator research, the recognition of different experiences and emotional reactions based on gender have dictated new methods of analysis. This change would not have happened without the wider acceptance of gender as an essential area for Holocaust research in itself.

The work by Joan Ringelheim was critical for this change. In the innovative work 'The Unethical and the Unthinkable: Women and the Holocaust'²⁴ Ringelheim critiques why the 'universal' experience of Holocaust survivors is just the masculine experience. The argument put forward by Ringelheim, and by feminist scholars since, is that through the study of the *female* experience a more nuanced history of the Holocaust can be gained. Survivor testimony highlights the difference in experience, based not only on biology but through cultural differences that make up the concept of gender.²⁵ Gender is a culturally

²⁴ Joan Ringelheim, 'The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1 (1984)

²⁵ Several studies were published in the years following Ringelheim that sought to emphasise the specific feminine experiences of women in the Holocaust and how this differed from the too often universalised male experience, such as Carol Ritner & John K. Roth, *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (New York: Paragon House, 1993); Judith Tydor Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Women and the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998); Sigrid Weigel, 'Der Ort Von Frauen Im Gedächtnis Des Holocaust: Symbolisierung, Zeugenschaft Und Kollektive Identität', *Die Philosophin* 6, no. 12 (1995), pp.53-62. Claus Füllberg-Stolberg, *Frauen in Konzentrationslagern: Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1994). All sought to understand the specifically gendered experience of females within the Holocaust.

constructed narrative that defines how the sexes are dictated to behave. Regarding survivors, this is seen through the creation of familial bonds in concentration camps, tending homes in ghettos which are all gender normative reactions. As such, a critique of the perpetrators becomes problematic, as it is a study on how a group of women in Nazi Germany acted outside of their culturally ascribed gender roles.

Ringelheim's emphasis on female experience faced an intense backlash from both historians and survivors, who argued that a focus on gender trivialised the Holocaust and that suffering cannot be broken down into categories. It was the entire Jewish population that the Nazi's sought to exterminate, if their murderers did not focus on gender in their destruction, then why should historians.²⁶ In more recent times, the debate against not including gender has continued and the need for a gendered historiography and a feminist one continues to be fought. As Waxman says, there is a continued challenge to demonstrate that the male experience is not normative.²⁷ In more recent years gendered histories have increasingly been published, both micro and macro, on the role of women in the Holocaust.²⁸ These seek to explore gender as a social construct and the specific feminine experience of the Holocaust. Through a feminist critique, traditional ideas of the role of women are reanalysed, and the impact of a male-centric view of the Holocaust is slowly being reversed to present a more complex picture.

The focus on gender was initially centred on survivor experiences but has now begun to critique the differing experiences and emotional responses of female perpetrators. The study into *Aufseherinnen* was primarily centred in Germany where studies emerged in the early 2000s. The analysis first focussed on the

²⁶ Survivor disagreement with a scholarly focus on gender first became apparent in the conference organised by Ringelheim in New York. See Esther Katz, Joan Miriam Ringelheim, 'Proceedings of the Conference: Women Surviving the Holocaust', Paper presented at the Women Surviving the Holocaust (New York, 1983), where both Vera Laska and Ruth Bondy questioned the impact that a focus on gender would have on Holocaust history. The disagreement by historians, mostly men with a focus on gender, was also apparent. The questions of gender and the arguments for and against its inclusion in the study of the Holocaust are represented in Dalia Ofer & Paula E. Hyman, ed. *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), where the impact of gender study is fiercely debated by both sides.

²⁷ Zoë Waxman, 'Towards an Integrated History of the Holocaust: Masculinity, Femininity and Genocide', in *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies*, edited by Christian Weise & Paul Betts (London: Continuum, 2010).

²⁸ Many books have now been published regarding women's experience during the Holocaust. Some hugely influential works are Barbara Distel, and Wolfgang Benz, *Frauen Im Holocaust*. (Berlin: Bleicher, 2001); Jane Kaplan, 'Gender and the Concentration Camps', in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: A New History*, edited by Nikolaus Wachsmann (London: Routledge, 2010); Sarah Helm, *If This Is a Woman* (London: Little Brown, 2015); Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

ways in which women were involved in the Nazi policy process, which emphasised the different ways in which genders are viewed with regard to violence. Wolfrum and Eckel state that the reason why women acting as criminals in the Holocaust is so shocking is that they violate gender norms.²⁹ The idea of the destruction of gender through violence and murder by the *Aufseherinnen* is a key point of this study, influenced by the feminist views of Holocaust research as discussed above. The concept of female perpetrators is developed through a feminist social science hypothesis on women as aggressors, and how the judgement of these characters is shaped by patriarchal imagery and the cultural construction of feminine behaviour. As Sjoberg and Gentry explain ‘people weigh individuals’ actions through expectations of ‘gendered behaviour’, and this was key when investigating the *Aufseherinnen*. The idea that women guards were worse than their male counterparts has been constructed due to gendered expectations of behaviour.³⁰ Use was made of the wide range of feminist scholarship that has looked into gendered ideas of violence and perpetrators for an understanding of gendered preconceptions.³¹ This area has been developed since the 1980s and challenges the concept of traditional roles of the female.

Study of the *Aufseherinnen* themselves initially focussed on individual guards who had gained notoriety through their sadism or sexual deviancies, such as Irma Grese or Isile Koch. Removal of the individual created an incomplete picture of perpetrators and often embedded salacious tales into the Holocaust narrative. In 2007 the first study of a group of female guards as a complete unit was published.³² This study questioned the impact of women perpetrators as a group and the gendered environment at Ravensbrück, explicitly addressing the role of women as agents of the Holocaust. Erpel’s work fuelled further studies, initially all German-language of different groups of female guards. The increasingly gendered focus of these works challenged the ideas of the traditional identity of the perpetrator and the role that women played in the

²⁹ Ulricke Weckel & Edgar Wolfrum, *Bestien Und Befehlsempfänger. Frauen Und Männer in NS-Prozessen Nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

³⁰ Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007).

³¹ Caroline O. N. Moser, and Fiona C. Clark, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Linda L. Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2015); Paige W. Toller, Elizabeth A. Suter, and Todd C. Trautman, ‘Gender Role Identity and Attitudes toward Feminism’, *Sex Roles* 51, no. 1 (2004), pp. 85-90; Dana M. Britton, *The Gender of Crime* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

³² Simone Erpel, *Im Gefolge Der SS: Aufseherinnen Des Frauen-KS Ravensbrück*. (Berlin: Metropol, 2007).

Holocaust—arguing that not only should women be analysed for their gendered experience as victims but also as perpetrators.³³ Of particular note in these studies is the work of Elissa Mailänder, who published a social history of the *Aufseherinnen* at Majdanek camp. Her work was particularly focussed on the social aspects of the guard's lives, the emotional bonds they formed, their experiences, and how their participation in the Holocaust affected them as women. She offers a gendered narrative of the perpetrators.³⁴

Until 2010, there were no in-depth academic English language studies into the *Aufseherinnen*; Daniel Patrick Brown's work on the camp women provides a vital resource of names but contains minimal exploration into their lives or role in the Holocaust. Analysis of these women begins with Sarah Cushman's work on the 'Women of Birkenau'.³⁵ As she examines the women's camp within Birkenau, Cushman also begins to understand how the *Aufseherinnen* fitted into the concentration camp environment. Cushman's thesis focuses on the entirety of female experience within the Holocaust; the *Aufseherinnen* form only one chapter of the work. Nevertheless, the chapter brings forward important discussion points about gender and violence. Cushman argues that women are perceived as more brutal and sadistic than their male counterparts due to the masculine connotations of violence. When the *Aufseherinnen* or female prisoner functionaries' actions are described, they take on masculine adjectives; they are transformed. The exploration of gender roles and genocide is essential for understanding the paradoxical behaviour of the *Aufseherinnen* and emphasises that they have removed themselves from the parameters of feminine action.

Further, Cushman highlights that the *Aufseherinnen* are a phenomenon of the Holocaust that is only present within the concentration camps, whilst genocide was committed throughout Europe, often with face to face killing, as used by the Einsatzgruppen, women are never conscripted into these methods of annihilation. It is

³³ Ulrike Weckel, and Edgar Wolfrum, "Bestien" Und" Befehlsempfänger": Frauen Und Männer in NsProzessen Nach 1945 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Ann-Kristin Glöckner, "Ganz Normale Frauen "Oder Bestien"? Anmerkungen Zur Darstellung Von Kz-Aufseherinnen in Der Bundesdeutschen Presse Nach 1945." *Vielfalt und Geschlecht-relevante Kategorien in der Wissenschaft* (2011); Fotini Tzani, *Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit - SS- Aufseherinnen Im Kz-Alltag*. (Bielefeld: Lorbeer- Verlag, 2011); Jeanette Toussaint, 'Die Halbe Wahrheit. Das Verschweigen Von Auschwitz Und Majdanek in Lebensläufen Ehemaliger SS-Aufseherinnen', in *Die Erinnerung an Die Nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, edited by Philipp Neumann Andreas Ehresmann, Alexander Prenninger & Régis Schlagdenhauffen (Berlin: Metropol, 2011).

³⁴ Elissa Mailänder Koslov, *Gewalt Im Dienstilltag: Die SS-Aufseherinnen Des Konzentrations- Und Vernichtungslagers Majdanek* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

³⁵ Sarah Cushman. *The Women of Birkenau*. (2010. Clark University)

only when murder has been centred in a specific environment and become a dehumanised process that women are employed as guards. In this manner, they are still removed from the mechanics of genocide within Auschwitz.³⁶

The subsequent English language study was compiled by Wendy Adele-Marie Sarti, whose 2011 book *Women and Nazis: Perpetrators of Genocide and Other Crimes During Hitler's Regime, 1933-1945*,³⁷ was inspired by a conference on the role of Nurses during the Holocaust.³⁸ Sarti also raises the lack of scholarship that has focused on female perpetrators of the Holocaust, naming only four scholars all German language, which have been mentioned in the earlier part of this work. The book contains 11 case studies, 8 of whom were *Aufseherinnen* in various concentration camps. Sarti's main argument is that the war within the concentration camps was an ideological war, a war of extermination against the Jews, placing the *Aufseherinnen* on the ideological frontline.³⁹ This is an important argument in terms of motivation; if this is a moral battle, they are the Reich's ideological soldiers. Unfortunately, the role of the *Aufseherinnen* receives very little exploration, with the same basic facts present in any book containing the female guards being recycled. The book's primary material is the perpetrators' case studies; each individual is given a summary of their life before the camps and their time in the camps. These biographies are supported by survivor testimony and trial records. Sarti provides the reader with valuable information about individual woman through archival holdings and survivor testimony. The case studies help understand the individual guards' experiences. Regrettably, this is not brought together into a meaningful analysis of the guards as a whole.

Another PhD that has been completed on the subject of the *Aufseherinnen* is Shelley Cline's work; in her thesis, she analyses the role of the *Aufseherinnen* as an entire group. Although not focusing on a specific site, her work is primarily centred in Ravensbrück concentration camp. However, this does encompass the

³⁶ Ibid.p.365

³⁷ Wendy Adele-Marie Sarti. *Women and Nazis: Perpetrators of Genocide and Other Crimes During Hitler's Regime, 1933-1945*. (Palo Alto: Academia Press, 2012).

³⁸ Ibid. p. xiii

³⁹ Ibid. p.31

entire experience and dynamic of the concentration camps. Conditions in the East varied dramatically from those within Western Europe and Germany. In addition, Ravensbrück was never an extermination camp, whilst many prisoners died, and conditions were inhospitable to life; this was not a locale for the Final Solution. Therefore, it would be entirely warranted that those stationed at Auschwitz would have had vastly different experiences from those who spent the entirety of the war in Ravensbrück. Cline subscribes to the ideas put forward by Gisela Bock that women hold less responsibility for their actions as perpetrators as they too were victims of Nazism.⁴⁰ Cline states, “While I do not believe the *Aufseherinnen* were passive victims, I do contend that their agency was limited by their minority position in a male-dominated workplace”⁴¹ I disagree; the women who became *Aufseherinnen* in the vast majority made this choice on their own, as both Cushman and Sarti have argued in their work, this was a choice for many women who wanted to be ideologically involved with the Nazi party mission, as well as the financial incentives that Brown and Tillion mention.⁴² Cline’s work particularly emphasises the female guards’ afterwar trials, especially by the British at Bergen Belsen and Ravensbrück. Her analysis of the impact of gender on the outcomes of the trials and the way that women were represented highlights the continued need to understand the relationship between gender and violence. Cline contends that it is only at the time of trial that women are regarded as equals with their male counterparts. This was not the case within the camps, Nazi society or the afterwar years. The *Aufseherinnen* are tried as if they performed the same roles within the camps. Cline also emphasises how women are tried for acting out of their ascribed gender roles, and they are treated more harshly as violence is a masculine trait. Furthermore, they are required to feel remorse in ways that the men are not. Cline’s work emphasises the differences that have continued in terms of guilt and memory of the *Aufseherinnen* actions and how ideas of gender shaped these conversations.

Whilst a small amount of work has begun to be published on the role of the *Aufseherinnen*, seeking to ascertain who these women were, their motivation for joining the Nazi system of terror and the exact role

⁴⁰ Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation Im Nationalsozialismus* (Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1986).

⁴¹ Shelley M. Cline. "Women at Work: SS *Aufseherinnen* and the Gendered Perpetration of the Holocaust." (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Kansas, 2014). p.8.

⁴² Daniel Patrick Brown. *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System*. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002). p15. & Germaine Tillion. *Ravensbrück*. Translated by Gerald Satterwhite. (New York: Anchor Books, 1975). p.43.

that they played within the Holocaust, there is still more to be done. In this work, the group of *Aufseherinnen* within Auschwitz will be studied as a whole as the sole focus of the work. Through this singular focus, a much-expanded social history can be compiled.

Methodology

This thesis employs a ‘mixed-methods’ approach to historical research, seeking to use both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and study. This approach was essential due to the vast range and variety of sources that were examined and the interdisciplinary nature of the work. It is impossible to entirely separate history from the social sciences, and to attempt to do so, would be to seek to remove the study of history from the study of social interaction and societies. The concept of employing both quantitative and qualitative methods for research was first used in psychology but has evolved considerably into a vital technique which is used to examine a range of subjects.⁴³ Concerning this thesis, mixed methodology and its analytical tools have been crucial in building a complete picture of the *Aufseherinnen* and their lives. Quantitative or ‘hard’ data was collected from several archives in order to investigate and understand some essential facts about *who* these women were and *where* they were from, followed by careful and systematic analysis of this material to understand discernible patterns and trends. In contrast, the utilisation of qualitative data has allowed a more in-depth insight into the women’s individual characters through descriptions of their lives.⁴⁴ The use of both of these methods of research is significant when used for checking, cross-referencing and the weighing-up of data sources, thus allowing anomalies that do not fit established trends to be flushed out through cross-examination and additional verification. Mixed methodology is of particular use regarding the exploration of social history, wherein the border between the ‘who’ and ‘why’ of history is at its weakest.⁴⁵

⁴³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2013), p.204.

⁴⁴ A key work used here has been Lawrence W Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Pearson Education, 2002).

⁴⁵ Numerous texts were utilised for an understanding on the basis of Mixed Methodology and how this methodology could best be utilised for this study. The most influential of which were Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (California: Sage, 2010), & John W Creswell, and Vicki L Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (California: Sage, 2007).

This thesis incorporates a wide range of source material to build new insights into and interpretations of fresh primary evidence and knowledge. This is achieved by utilising a large assemblage of new and original primary sources from different records, archives, groups, and mediums. Through scrutiny and employment of a wide range of primary sources, comprised of both official and private records - such as trial transcripts, camp documents, and other related material - new evidence has been compiled to enhance historical understanding of both the role and image of the *Aufseherinnen*. The thesis seeks not only to contribute a unique history but to do so by providing an analysis of sources that have never before been used in conjunction with the *Aufseherinnen*.

The process of research into the *Aufseherinnen* began through consultation of the reference work that was compiled by Daniel Patrick Brown.⁴⁶ Using the records of the Zentrale der Landesjustizverwaltung, a list of the employment cards of the *Aufseherinnen* was created, this data is listed verbatim in the book.⁴⁷ Whilst some basic information is given at the beginning of the book; there is no serious interaction with this source material leaving it open for scholarly interpretation. Brown's work provided the starting block of how to find the women who had worked in the camps and a group of data to expand upon. From this database, the guards who had been employed at Auschwitz according to the records were separated and later research highlighted that not all women who had worked in Auschwitz had it marked on their employment cards. The process of returning agency to the guards required the returning of names marking them as individuals, who committed their actions with their own motivations. The work of Patrick Brown was then supplemented by two further databases that were created by Fotini Tzani and Ernst Klee.⁴⁸ Both provide additional data collections on the *Aufseherinnen*. However, they additionally pose problems, as their evidence for the information published is never adequately stated. In addition to providing names of the

⁴⁶ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002).

⁴⁷ Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonals, Auschwitzliste) B161/2680 & Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonals, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, (BArch) Ludwigsburg.

⁴⁸ Fotini Tzani, *Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit - SS- Aufseherinnen Im Kz-Alltag* (Bielefeld: Lorbeer- Verlag, 2011), and Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz: Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2013).

guards in Klee's work, short biographical summaries are given. Without the construction of these previous databases, it would have been difficult to begin the process of analysis of the *Aufseherinnen*. Moreover, the starting-point of already available record sources suggested the creation of a more in-depth study into the women was possible. This thesis thus seeks to add to the already available data-set by the consultation of additional record sources, via analysis of evidence not contained in the previous databases.

The next stage of research was to collect as much data from secondary sources as possible which concerned the *Aufseherinnen*. This was mostly through the consultation of German language sources where the subject of the *Aufseherinnen* was originally much more frequently discussed. This process is explained in the previous historiography. I also sought to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of Auschwitz and prisoner interaction with the guards. The amount of survivor testimony on the subject is enormous, and an extensive list of those consulted appears in the Bibliography. Both published and unpublished memoirs, as well as video testimony, was used to gain information and new insights about the guards through survivor recollections.⁴⁹ Survivor testimony was important not just for understanding the lives of the guards and their interaction with prisoners but for giving a more nuanced picture of Auschwitz. This research was necessary before interacting with archival documents, as it provided both a firm footing for the historiography and an understanding of the nature of the environment of Auschwitz upon which to build the research.

My next research endeavour was to go to the archives located within the Auschwitz concentration camp. This research trip was the most important I undertook, not only for archival sources but to better understand the physical environment in which the guards existed. I had previously visited the site but not in a research capacity. I spent three months in Auschwitz examining material; these were official documents, such as the Kommandant's memos which gave information about the structure of the SS, entertainments and punishments of the guards. I also analysed records written by the *Aufseherinnen*, as well as trial documents of the first Auschwitz Trial held in Krakow in 1947. At Auschwitz, analysis was also made of the records of

⁴⁹ Unpublished memoirs are held at the Wiener Library (London), Auschwitz-Birkenau State Archive (Poland), USC Shoah Video Archive (London), and United States Holocaust Museum (Washington, USA).

the SS Medical Institut at the subcamp of Rajsko and, from these, it was possible to add more names to the database of guards who had worked within the camp from their trips to the camp doctors. Furthermore, these sources provided vital information about the health of the guards and the sanitary conditions in the camp for the SS. The Rajsko records had previously only been consulted concerning prisoners and the conditions they faced; however, this thesis illuminates how they can be also used as a source to investigate the perpetrators.⁵⁰

Succeeding my research in Auschwitz, additional archives were consulted to furnish information about the *Aufseherinnen* further. Ravensbrück, for example, provided information on the training of guards and their time serving at the camps. Many of the guards initially served at Ravensbrück before transfer to the East. Additionally, a copy of the trial documents from the seventh Ravensbrück trial, where two guards who served at Auschwitz were tried, were held within the archives. Further trips were made to the National Archives at Kew for documents relating to the capture and extradition of *Aufseherinnen* and the Bergen Belsen trial. Another research trip was made to the National Archives at College Park, USA, where the only statement given by Johanna Langefeld, the first chief guard at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, currently is held, and this was of crucial importance for this study.⁵¹ Other primary records concerning the capture and extradition of *Aufseherinnen* by the Americans are also stored here. Lastly, important field trips were made to Düsseldorf to obtain information about the Majdanek trials held in 1975-1981, where several women who had been guards at Auschwitz were put on trial and gave evidence. All of these data sources sought to provide a fuller picture of the *Aufseherinnen* from their own words, official documents or survivor testimony.

This thesis did not intend to focus only on sources that had already been used by historians but to seek out new evidence or to utilise available records in different ways. Through this methodology, further analysis with primary evidence could be compiled. This is seen through my use, for example, of the Rajsko records

⁵⁰ Records of the SS Hygiene Institut Volume Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Oświęcim,

⁵¹ 'Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans', RG338-000-50-11(College Park: NARA).

to provide information about the *Aufseherinnen* rather than just prisoners. Indeed, the Rajske records are already an underused source, and much more work could be done concerning this document cache. In addition, the use of the newly available UNWCC records available at the National Archives at Kew was employed to understand survivor experiences within the camp, their contact with the *Aufseherinnen* and the lasting damage of their time in the camps.⁵² The ITS international tracing system, held at the Wiener Library in London, was also consulted and managed in a new way. Initially intended as a finding aid for victims of the Holocaust, within this study it was used to track the fate of the women guards, which was particularly useful if they had attempted to go into hiding. The record collection was invaluable for tracking movements of guards and their fates in the post-war years.

The newly collected information was compiled into a collection of databases for more precise analysis. These databases form a vital part of the study, providing easily accessible material for analysis. Databases and their analysis form Chapter 2 of the thesis and highlight the additional work that has been achieved concerning re-evaluation of the earlier mentioned record collections discussed by other scholars. It has been possible to add more names and more detailed information about birth locations, date of birth, camps served in and the afterwar lives of the *Aufseherinnen*. It was from this position of fresh data collection that new analysis was possible and through this the creation of a social history of the guards themselves.

Importantly, these sources provide new information about the guards' lives. Thus, through the careful collation and analysis of a variety of new sources using a 'mixed-methods' approach, it has been possible in this thesis to add to the scholarly narrative. The research for the thesis contributes new data and research findings, and therefore adds a new highly evidenced perspective to the available historical literature. Furthermore, the above material, corroborated with witness testimonies and statements from guards, has enabled the thesis to address some key weaknesses in the available published historiography. The preliminary stage of the mixed methods approach to the research was, first, to build a picture of the previous literature published and navigate the gaps in a more thorough fashion. This then provided a clear outline of

⁵² Subseries Foreign Office (FO) 950 (London: The National Archives UK). From now on referenced as TNA

the resources that it would be necessary to investigate in order to delve deeper into the *Aufseherinnen* lives, recognising them as individual women and seeking to understand their motivation through new empirical data. During the earlier literature review, it became very evident to the author that, while quantitative records had been consulted, chiefly regarding personnel in the Camps and official documentation from the Nazi regime, it was the *qualitative* research that was missing from the discussion.⁵³ Through the mixed methods approach, a wealth of records were thus accessed, and these can be cross-checked and corroborated on many different fronts, pertaining to various aspects of the Holocaust. This has arguably provided a more holistic approach to the topic.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, this thesis aims to contribute a new understanding to the history of the Holocaust, specifically relating to the female perpetrators stationed within Auschwitz. In particular, it seeks to approach the data from a Feminist perspective, acknowledging the part that gender played in the experience of the *Aufseherinnen* and their analysis in the past. Making women the sole focus of this research allows for a distinct change in the previously adopted methods of study, which focused on the ‘big men’ in history as being of fundamental importance, or refused to allow for the imbalance in gender and differing experiences to influence analysis.⁵⁴ The importance of the difference in approach in researching the feminine aspects of the Holocaust has already been seen through the new feminist historiography that is being compiled on the Holocaust. It has dramatically enhanced knowledge and uncovered the complexity of experience. This thesis will continue the focus on the female and will not only contribute to the picture of how the Holocaust transpired, but also provides a feminist history of the ‘ordinary’ women perpetrators. Many questions concerning the nature of the Holocaust have been directed towards the lack of humanity of the perpetrators

⁵³ Raul Hilberg, ‘The Development of Holocaust Research - a Personal Review’, in *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier & Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Berghan Books, 2008).

⁵⁴ Gisela Bock, ‘Women’s History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate’, *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (1989), p.42.

and the methodology of genocide, devoid of social aspects of perpetration.⁵⁵ Questioning and challenging historical and sociological theories by approaching these women as subjects who have previously been removed from analysis will provide a wealth of new information to the historical record.

This thesis seeks to complement previous research work completed by scholars and sit among the growing feminist historiography of the Holocaust. The study achieves this by questioning the male centric view of Holocaust experience and seeking to resolve gaps in knowledge by analysing the role of women who were outside of gender normative roles. That female prisoners experienced different realities in the Camps to the male survivors is slowly being established. Persecution based on gender, such as sexual violence, and public humiliation through nakedness, are increasingly spoken of in the historical narrative. However, it has been of detrimental value that scholars have not considered the differences in circumstances that the *Aufseherinnen* would have experienced compared to their male counterparts. These differences were fundamental to experience and individual and collective reactions.

While some studies have focused on the female guards, these have typically been sensationalist histories formed mainly of hearsay and designed to appeal to a fascination with ‘dark’ history.⁵⁶ Therefore, the present study aims to interrogate and critically evaluate the myths that have arisen from this infamy of the ‘Beasts’ and ‘Bitches’ of the camps,⁵⁷ and to rectify these misconstructions through mixed methodological research. The thesis has been completed with a strong focus on the use of primary sources to provide a clear picture of *who* these women were, and *how* they can be discussed in a scholarly manner that is removed from the infamy that grew to surround them in the post-war period.

⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier, the historiography has begun to change to incorporate an understanding of perpetrator behaviour and motivation.

⁵⁶ Valerie Violet Donovan, *The Reality of a Dark History: From Contact and Conflict to Cultural Recognition* (Arts Queensland, 2002).

⁵⁷ Various Camp guards were described in newspaper reports and trials as the ‘Beast’ or ‘Bitch’ of certain camps. Grese was variously described as the ‘Bitch of Birkenau’ and ‘The Beautiful Beast’, while Mandl also was referred to as the ‘Beast of Birkenau’. This illustrates just some of the names conferred upon the women.

Previously unused sources have been critical to the completion of this thesis, including those that have only just been released to scholars, such as the UN War Crimes Commission archive released in April 2017, and the Compensation requests from Concentration Camp survivors in Britain, first published in March 2016, and ongoing. With this new additional evidence, the study of *Aufseherinnen* can be expanded.⁵⁸ It is the incorporation of new material and analysis from differing and mixed angles that has enabled the author to create a study of female perpetrators that adds a new element to debates about the Holocaust. Furthermore, the use of a *range* of records has allowed for some unique perspectives in the study, such as the use of the Rajsko medical records for study of guards' sanitary conditions, and the ITS for tracing guards. By utilising such sources in a new manner, it is possible to glean fresh information on different aspects of life within the camp. These sources have added further dimensions to this research and were vital in bringing to light previously untapped information for detailed analysis. The employment of new source material was of the utmost importance when conducting this study, as it was through these documents that it has been possible to create (arguably) the fullest history of the *Aufseherinnen*.

⁵⁸ UN War Crimes Commission, 'UNWCC' (Wiener Library, 1945); UK Foreign Office: Political Departments: 'Compensation for Victims of Nazi Persecution', FO 950 series, covering the years 1955-1965 (TNA)

Chapter 2 – The Database

Introduction

From the conception of this thesis a key aim was to create a complete, or as near as possible, database of the *Aufseherinnen* that worked within the Auschwitz complex of camps. This had previously been attempted in several academic studies, most notably in the reference work compiled by Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women*.⁵⁹ However, these databases could not be considered complete due to their reliance on a single primary record source. Without expanding the archival search outwards to embrace the multitude of scattered records concerning the make-up of the SS auxiliaries that were employed at Auschwitz, information on many women were missing from previous databases. This is not the case with the database within this thesis, as numerous archival holdings have been consulted and information cross referenced. These include multiple Concentration Camp archives at Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Dachau, as well as the Bundesarchiv, post-war trial records, and the holdings of the National Archives of the UK, USA and Poland.

The database presented here has successfully identified a larger number of women who were employed as *Aufseherinnen* at Auschwitz than previous attempts. The first record set consulted were the records employed by Brown, the employment cards of the *Aufseherinnen* held at the Zentralstelle der Landesjustizverwaltung (ZDL) in Ludwigsburg.⁶⁰ These

⁵⁹ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002).

⁶⁰ Ludwigsburg: Zentralstelle der Landesjustizverwaltung. (ZStL)

documents provided an already established starting point upon which further sources could be built. Through the adoption of a wider research approach, it was possible to expand on previous knowledge of the *Aufseherinnen*. There are several discrepancies between the database that is offered in this study and previous scholars' work. Where these occur, the primary sources that offer confirmation of the woman's time at Auschwitz are presented.

The evidence collected and formed into Database 2 has been distilled into smaller focussed tables and graphs that formed the basis for the quantitative analysis of the *Aufseherinnen*. Here the empirical evidence was evaluated to form conclusions on how age, location and status affected the motivation of the *Aufseherinnen* and how these factors shaped their experience in the concentration camps. This data, through its provision of new source materials, creates new avenues of scholarly enquiry.

Methodology

The construction of a database of *Aufseherinnen* was one of the primary aims of the thesis. To begin this process, I first consulted Daniel Patrick Brown's book on the camp women, a significant piece of work that sought to give the names and basic information of all the *Aufseherinnen* across the network of concentration camps.⁶¹ From this list, the names of those that worked at Auschwitz were separated out and added to my own database. The list was then complimented by the use of German scholars Fotini Tzani⁶² and Ernst Klee's⁶³ work, both of whom had created directories of *Aufseherinnen*. Whilst Daniel Patrick Brown quite

61 Brown, *The Camp Women*.

62 Fotini Tzani, *Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit - Ss- Aufseherinnen Im Kz-Alltag* (Bielefeld: Lorbeer- Verlag, 2011).

63 Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon*. (Berlin: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2015).

clearly states in his book that these records are compiled from the employment cards that are held in the ZDL in Ludwigsburg,⁶⁴ it is harder to understand what sources the other two scholars have employed. Tzani focusses heavily on the Flossenbürg concentration camp, and as such it can be supposed that she relied primarily on the surviving camp documentation from this locale. However, Klee offers no references to back up the data that he presents. This creates a difficult problem around the legitimacy of the information presented, as the lack of sources prevents validation of Klee's data.

From this position, where the database was comprised solely of others' work, my process was thus to consult further sources to determine if these individuals were a complete list of the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz or if women had been missed. My next source material was CROWCAS, the consolidated list of war criminals that were sought by the allied powers in the after-war years.⁶⁵ This was then further enhanced by records relating to service within concentration camps, particularly in Ravensbrück where many of the *Aufseherinnen* began their careers, and at the Auschwitz concentration camp, the locale that the thesis has concentrated on. Names were further added due to consultation of records at the National Archives of the UK and USA, through trial documents and arrest warrants. Database 1 showcases the names of the *Aufseherinnen*, whether they had previously been identified and the source material that has established them as *Aufseherinnen*.

⁶⁴ Brown, *The Camp Women*.

⁶⁵ TNA: FO 944/965 (1946)

Database 1

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen A - C

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Elisabeth | Arneth | Y | N | N | Blood Test Elisabeth Arneth. Records of the SS Hygiene Institut Volume 6/1. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). Elisabeth Arneth, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Hildegard | Beck | O | N | N | Blood Test Hildegard Beck. Records of the SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Oświęcimiu., RG-43.063M Reel 11, Selected War Crimes Trial Records from the Rastatt Zone in French Zone of Occupation in Germany, 1946- 1954. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMM), Washington, DC. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives) |
| Margoth | Bnerz | N | N | N | Case no. 139, United Nations War Crimes Commission, Wiener Library, London., Elisabeth Haselof, HAIX/11 ZR 714, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Berlin. Margoth Bnerz, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Erna-Katerina | Bodem | Y | Y | N | Blood Test Erna Bodem. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/3. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu., Erna Bodem, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Juana | Bormann | Y | Y | N | Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects (CROWCASS), FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Hanna | Bormann | Y | N | N | Hannah Bormann, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 96872, BArch, Berlin. |
| Hermione | Böttcher | Y | N | N | Trial 432 Concentration Camp Lublin-Majdanek (Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek), No.1/278. Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (HStA Düsseldorf), Hermione Böttcher, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 94568, BArch, Berlin. |
| Therese | Brandl | Y | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with |

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| | | | | | pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Anna | Braun | N | N | N | Statement of Anna Braun, Collection of interrogation records on the Ravensbrück concentration camp and its sub-camps (Sammlung von Vernehmungsniederschriften zum Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück und seiner Nebenlager) B 162/449 pp 243-259, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Ernestine | Brenner | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Case no. 139, United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC), Wiener Library, London. Ernestine Brenner, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Annemarie | Blendermann | N | Y | N | Only in Ernst Klee. Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon. (Berlin: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 2015). Unsure what Source used. |
| Luise | Brunner | Y | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. Ravensbrück Case no 6, Subseries within WO 235/528- 529B & WO 235/777, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London. |
| | Bruo | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Luise | Buch | N | N | N | Luise Buch, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg, Affidavit of Luise Buch, SS-overseer at Ravensbrück concentration camp. 1655/3227, Wiener Library, London. |
| Magdalene | Bünning | O | N | N | Blood Test Magdalene Bünning. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 12 & Volume 26. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Case no. 139, United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC), Wiener Library, London., List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives), Magdalene Bünning, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| | Cesar | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Cesar, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Florentine | Cichon | Y | Y | Y | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen D - G

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Luise | Danz | Y | Y | N | Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C, Luise Danz, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Paula | Derressaw | N | Y | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London. Paula Derressaw, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Margot | Dreschel | Y | Y | N | Blood Test Lianie Margot Dreschel. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 26. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Margot Dreschel, Investigations Begun in 1987 (Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1987), B 162/54670 108. BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| | Duchy | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Charlotte | Ebert | Y | N | N | Preliminary Investigation Charlotte Ebert, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/402. BArch Ludwigsburg, Charlotte Ebert, Hannah Bormann, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 106459, BArch, Berlin. |
| Hertha | Ehler | O | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK |
| Gerda | Ernst | Y | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London., Elisabeth Haselof, HAIX/11 ZR 714, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Berlin. Preliminary Investigation Gerda Ernst, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/402. BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Klara | Fielauf | N | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London |
| Leni | Fracht | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |

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|-----------|----------|---|---|---|---|
| Anneliese | Franz | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., "Auf Den Spuren Von Anneliese Franz." Gelsenkirche, 2017, https://www.deropernfreund.de/gelsenkirchen-mir.html ., Anneliese Franz, p237 Reel 14, United Nations War Crimes Commission, Wiener Library, London. Anneliese Franz, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 67307, Barch, Berlin. |
| Gertrude | Fryc | N | Y | N | Only in Ernst Klee. Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon. (Berlin: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 2015). Unsure what Source used. |
| Petra | Fryesseu | N | N | N | Blood Test Petra Fryesseu. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 12. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Gertrude | Giessen | N | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London., Gertrude Giessen, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List A-K (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2679, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Martha | Graße | Y | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Anna | Grebe | N | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives), Anna Grebe, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-I/ 995, Barch, Berlin. |
| Irma | Grese | Y | Y | Y | Blood Test Irma Grese. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/3. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Elli | Gürke | N | N | N | Blood Test Elli Gürke. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen H - J

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Elly | Hartmann | Y | Y | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London. Elly Hartmann, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 129058, Barch, Berlin, Elly Hartmann, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/3161. Barch Ludwigsburg. |
| Elisabeth | Haselof | Y | Y | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London, Elisabeth Haselof, ZA HAIX/11 nr. 714, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BSTU), Berlin. |
| Elisabeth | Hasse | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Gertrud | Haupt | N | Y | N | Gertrud Haupt, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 373138, Barch, Berlin. |
| Anni | Hausheer | Y | Y | N | Anni Hausheer, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/12465. Barch Ludwigsburg, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Irmgard | Hausheer | Y | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London, Irmgard Hausheer, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/3161. Barch Ludwigsburg. |
| Gertrud | Heise | Y | Y | N | Defendant Gertrud Heize, Place of Trial: Celle. WO 235:136. The National Archives (TNA), London. UK., Gertrud Heise, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 24995, Barch, Berlin. |
| Elfriede | Hella | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Elfriede Hella, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 6309, Barch, Berlin. |
| | Hendrik | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |

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| Sofia | Henel | N | N | N | Sofia Henel, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu. |
| Hedwig | Herbert | N | N | N | Blood Test Hedwig Herbert. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Hedwig Herbert, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 194418, Barch, Berlin. |
| | Hinrichsen | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Luise | Hoffmann | N | N | N | Blood Test Luise Hoffmann. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). Luise Hoffmann, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 19565, Barch, Berlin. |
| Margarete | Hoppmans | Y | Y | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Hildegard | Ihle | Y | Y | Y | Hildegard Ihle, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 197026, Barch, Berlin, Investigations against R. Albert wg. the shooting of prisoners of concentration camp Flossenburg during Evacuation Marches in April 1945 (Ermittlungen gg. R. Albert wg. der Erschießung von Häftlingen des KZ Flossenbürg während des Evakuierungsmarsches im April 1945) B162/18260, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Aloise | Irmiler | Y | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Johanna | Jager | Y | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Johanna Jager, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/12465. Barch Ludwigsburg. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Elisabeth | Jahn | Y | Y | N | Elisabeth Jahn, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 465819, Barch, Berlin. |
| Liseselotte | Janda | N | Y | N | Kommandanturbefehl nr. 21/43, Nobert Frei, Thomas Grotum, Jan Parcer, Sybille Steinbacher, Bernd C.Wagner, ed. Standort- Und Kommandanturbefehle Des Konzentrationslager Auschwitz 1940-1945. (München: K.G. Saur, 2000). P. 285. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen K - L

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Elisabeth | Kass | N | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London., Elisabeth Kass, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Anneliese | Kietzmann | Y | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Charlotte | Klauß | Y | N | N | Blood Test Charlotte Klauß. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Erna | Kock | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Criminal Case File Erna Kock, Central Legal Protection Office B305/18450, Barch Berlin. |
| Elfriede | Kock | N | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London, Elfriede Kock, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 36884, Barch, Berlin. |
| Dorothea | Kolhe | O | N | N | Blood Test Dorothea Kohle. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 7. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Lianie | Kolster | N | N | N | Blood Test Lianie Kolster. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 12. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Anni | Koppold | N | N | N | Blood Test Anni Koppold. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/3, Volume 12 & Volume 13. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu |
| Ingeborg | Krüger | O | Y | N | Ingeborg Krueger, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 146765, Barch, Berlin. |
| Helene | Kuck | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA) London UK. |
| Magdalene | Kuntz | N | N | N | Magdalene Kuntz, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu. |
| Johanna | Kuypers | N | Y | N | Only in Ernst Klee. Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon. (Berlin: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 2015). Unsure what Source used. |

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| Hildegard | Lächert | Y | Y | N | Blood Test Hildegard Lächert. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/2 & Volume 11a/3 . Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager LublinMajdanek, No.1/278. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Johanna | Langefeld | Y | Y | Y | Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. Johanna Langfeld Testimony, RG338-000-50-11. National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), Washington D.C. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Gertrud | Liehr | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Gertrud Liehr, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 218695, Barch, Berlin. |
| Elisabeth | Lupka | N | Y | N | Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen M - P

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Mathilde | Malik | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. List of people executed in Polish prisons in 1944-1956. Annex. War criminals of German origin. Warsaw: Ministry of Justice. Central Board of Correctional Institutions, 1990. (Lista osób straconych w więzieniach polskich w latach 1944-1956. Aneks. Przestępcy wojenni pochodzenia niemieckiego. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości. Centralny Zarząd Zakładów Karnych, 1990.) IPN BU 1820/12. Nazwa archiwum: Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej Warsaw. |
| Maria | Mandl | Y | Y | Y | Blood Test Maria Mandl. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a & Volume 17. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Charlotte | Margis | N | N | N | Blood Test Charlotte Margis. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 2/2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| | Maricka | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Karla | Mayer | Y | Y | N | Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek, No.1/278. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Karla Mayer, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/11481, Barch Ludwigsburg. |
| Elisabeth | Meier | O | N | N | Elisabeth Meier, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 176102, Barch, Berlin. |
| Monica | Miklas | Y | N | N | Files in the criminal case of the former members of the SS crew at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, IPN GK 196/141 pp143-146, 239-42, 312-317, Institute of National Remembrance, Krakow. Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. |
| | Milanka | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Elfride | Misch | Y | N | N | Blood Test Elfride Misch. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 2/2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Elfride Misch, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/11481, Barch Ludwigsburg. |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| Luzia | Moschko | N | Y | Y | In Ernst Klee. Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon. (Berlin: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 2015). & Fotini Tzani. Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit - Ss- Aufseherinnen Im Kz-Alltag. (Bielefeld: Lorbeer- Verlag, 2011). Sources used unclear. |
| Maria | Müllender | N | N | N | Blood Test Ria Müllenders. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 43. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Maria Müllender, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| | Myland | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Edith | Nestroy | N | N | N | Blood Test Edith Nestroy. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 2/2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Klara | Opitz | Y | N | N | Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Alice | Orlowski | Y | Y | N | Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek, No.1/278. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. Alice Orlowski, Criminal Case File (Strafprozessakte) B305/16885, BArch Koblenz. |
| | Ouchy | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Ella | Pessiner | Y | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives) |
| Käte | Picklab | N | N | N | Judgement LG Bremen 3 Ks 2/53 against Heilmann, Kierspel and Mirbeth of November 27, 1953 (SA 227a) pp. 1-200, (Urteil LG Bremen 3 Ks 2/53 gg. Heilmann, Kierspel und Mirbeth vom 27.11.1953) B162/14261, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Charlotte | Pliquet | N | N | N | Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK |
| Liesel | Prippert | N | N | N | Liesel Prippert, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Dorothea | Pritzkoleit | Y | Y | N | Statement of Dorothea Pritzkoleit, 461 - Public Prosecutor's Office at the Regional Court of Frankfurt aM - No. 37638/41. Hessian Main State Archive, Wiesbaden. Dorothea Pritzkoleit Trial Documents, 6327 International Research and Documentation Center for War Crimes Trials, Philipps-University Marburg. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen R - S

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Rosa | Reischl | Y | Y | N | Rosa Reischl, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 1057266, BArch, Berlin, Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek, No.1/278. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf. Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. Alice Orłowski, Criminal Case File (Strafprozessakte) B305/16885, BArch Koblenz. Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager LublinMajdanek, No.1/278. Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf. |
| Marianne | Rendel | N | N | N | Marianne Rendel, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Margot | Richiber | N | N | N | Blood Test Margot Richiber. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu |
| Jacoba | Roulofs | N | N | N | Blood Test Jacoba Roulofs. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 3 & Volume 7/1. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu., https://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/hoer-twee-jonge-vrouwen-vrijwilligkambewaakster-in-auschwitz-werden/ |
| Elfriede | Runge | Y | N | N | Elfriede Runge, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Elisabeth | Ruppert | Y | Y | N | Blood Test Elisabeth Ruppert. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 17. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK., Elfriede Runge, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Luise | Rust | Y | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Luise Rust, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 187539, BArch, Berlin. |
| Elfriede | Sackler | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Marianne Rendel, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| | Sassor | N | N | N | Sassor, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Hermine | Schactner | Y | Y | Y | 37638/49 Hauptakten Band 48, Bl. 8514-8710, Public Prosecutor's Office at the Regional Court of Frankfurt aM - No. 37638/41. Hessian Main State Archive, Wiesbaden. |
| Rosina | Schieber | N | N | N | Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, |

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | | WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Rosina Scheiber, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Friedericke | Schneider | Y | N | N | Blood Test Friedericke Schneider. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 5a. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Friederike Schneider, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Maria | Schneider | O | N | Y | Helga Schneider. Let Me Go. New York: Vintage, 2005, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives) , Maria Schneider, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Bertha | Schurr | Y | Y | N | Bertha Schurr, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Anna | Schuster | Y | N | N | Anna Schuster, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-II/ 914153, BArch, Berlin, Anna Schuster, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Elisabeth | Scretzki | N | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. |
| Elfriede | Seidel | Y | N | N | Killing of prisoners in the Lichtewerden branch of the Auschwitz concentration camp between November 1944 and May 1945 (Tötung von Häftlingen im NL Lichtewerden des Konzentrationslagers Auschwitz zwischen November 1944 und Mai 1945) B162/15331-15333. BArch Ludwigsburg, Elfriede Seidel, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Hanne | Snurova | Y | N | N | Blood Test Hanne Snurova. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 8/1. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Hanne Snurova, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Else | Sollich | Y | N | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives), Else Sollich, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg, Else Sollich, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) B162/11481, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| | Strecker | N | N | N | Strecker, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Rosa | Süß | Y | Y | N | Although listed as a separate person in Daniel Patrick Brown and Klee this is a repeated name, Rosa Süß is the maiden name of Rosa Reischl. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen T - Z

| Daniel | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Patrick Ernst Fotini | | | | | |
| First Name | Last Name | Brown (2002) | Klee (2013) | Tzani (2011) | Archival Reference |
| Hertha | Tack | N | N | N | Blood Test Hertha Tack. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 7/1. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| Marianne | Thiel | Y | N | N | Marianne Thiel, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Erna | Tietje | Y | N | N | Case no. 139, UNWCC, Wiener Library, London, Suggestion List no. 6 for awarding of the War Merit Cross Second Class with Swords on 30 December 1943, 432, Ger. Rep. 332 no. 419 pp 331. HsTA Düsseldorf. Erna Tietje, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Elisabeth | Tietze | N | N | N | Elisabeth Tietze, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-I/ 3657, BArch, Berlin., |
| Elisabeth | Volkenrath | Y | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within WO 235/12 -24, WO 235/605, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives), Elisabeth Volkenrath, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Gertrud | Weniger | Y | Y | Y | Blood Test Gertrud Weniger. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 26. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Gertrud Weniger, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Erika | Westfeld | O | Y | N | Blood Test Erika Westfeld. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/3. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Ava | Wiegel | N | N | N | Ava Wiegel, List of SS Aufseherinnen (Lista SS Aufseherinnen), Dpr ZO36, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO). |
| | Witt | N | N | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Witt, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |
| Anna | Wolf | Y | N | O | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
| Emma | Zimmer | Y | Y | N | CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK, Ravensbrück Case no 6, Subseries within WO 235/528- 529B & WO 235/777, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |

| Edith | Zimmermann | O | Y | N | List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives). |
|---------|------------|---|---|---|--|
| Gertrud | Zlotos | Y | Y | N | Gertrude Zlotos, Criminal Case File (Strafprozessakte) B305/16747, BArch Ludwigsburg., Gertrude Zlotos, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonals, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, BArch Ludwigsburg. |

The purpose of the above database was to detail the differences in the four datasets and how the database that has been created in this thesis provides a more comprehensive picture of the Aufseherinnen at Auschwitz. The database uses a simple key of Y for Yes, N for No and O for Objection. Objections are where the guard has been identified in a previous work but there is a disagreement about whether or not they had served within Auschwitz. There are several objections between the directory created by Brown and the one in this thesis;

- Hildegard Beck – In Brown served only at Ravensbrück⁶⁶, can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through blood test conducted at Rajsko and through her trial at Rastatt.⁶⁷
- Magdalene Bünning – In Brown served only at Sachsenhausen⁶⁸, can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through blood test conducted at Rajsko and through wanted status by UNWCC for working at Auschwitz.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p36

⁶⁷ Blood Test Hildegard Beck. Records of the SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/2. Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO), Translated by Charlotte Mears, Oświęcim, RG-43.063M Reel 11, Selected War Crimes Trial Records from the Rastatt Zone in French Zone of Occupation in Germany, 1946-1954. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMM), Washington, DC.

⁶⁸ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p52.

⁶⁹ Blood Test Magdalene Bünning. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 12 & Volume 26. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO) Case no. 139, United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC), Wiener Library, London.

- Hertha Ehlert – In Brown served only at Bergen-Belsen⁷⁰ can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through trial records of the Belsen trial and CROWCASS⁷¹
- Dorothea Kohle – In Brown served only at Ravensbrück⁷² can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through blood test at Rajsko and file at Ravensbrück.⁷³
- Elisabeth Meier – In Brown served only at Markkleeberg⁷⁴ can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through her SS File held at the Berlin Document centre.⁷⁵
- Maria Schneider- In Brown served at only Saschenhausen⁷⁶ can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through her Childs published memoirs and the staff list of Auschwitz personnel held at the Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg.⁷⁷
- Rosa Suß – Brown and Klee both list Rosa Suß and Rosa Reischl as separate people.⁷⁸ This is infact one person with both maiden and married name. As explained through her own testimony at the Majdanek trial in Dusseldorf.⁷⁹
- Erika Westfeld- In Brown served only at Ravensbrück.⁸⁰ Can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through blood test carried out a Rajsko and Ravensbrück file.⁸¹

⁷⁰ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.64

⁷¹ CROWCASS, FO 944/965, The National Archives (TNA), London UK. Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within TNA: War Office (WO) 235/12 -24, (1945) WO 235/605 (1945-1949).

⁷² Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.147

⁷³ Blood Test Dorothea Kohle. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 7. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO) List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. (List von SA-, SS and NSDAP Leuten teilweise mit Bildern) BD 24, No. 327-328, Translated by Charlotte Mears, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives)

⁷⁴ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.175

⁷⁵ Elisabeth Meier, Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence, Berlin Document Center (BDC) Berlin, Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 176102, Translated by Charlotte Mears, Bundesarchiv (BArch), Berlin.

⁷⁶ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.209

⁷⁷ Helga Schneider. *Let Me Go*. (New York: Vintage, 2005), Maria Schneider, Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z (Angehörige des Lagerspersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, Translated by Charlotte Mears, (BArch) Ludwigsburg.

⁷⁸ Brown, *The Camp Women*. pp.195, 222

⁷⁹ Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek, No.1/278. Translated by Charlotte Mears (Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf). Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁸⁰ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.229

⁸¹ Blood Test Erika Westfeld. SS Hygiene Institut Volume 11a/3. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO), List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. No. 327-328, Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives).

- Edith Zimmermann – In Brown served at Floßenbürg and Holleischen.⁸² Can be shown to have served at Auschwitz through her Ravensbrück file.⁸³

There is also an objection with one entry in Tzani's work where Anna Wolf is listed as serving at Ravensbrück and Holleischen concentration camps.⁸⁴ However Wolf's records at Ravensbrück list her as working within Auschwitz.⁸⁵

The databases created by other scholars are useful in providing names and basic information on the women they have identified. However, through their focus on one sole archive as documental proof, key data has been missed and an incomplete resource created. Through the use of a wider set of sources, an additional 37 guards have been identified.

Database 2

The second database gives details on the age and location of the *Aufseherinnen* when they entered the concentration camps. Through analysis of this data, it is possible to understand the cultural and environmental influences on individual lives and how this impacted the guards development. This information was of importance when analysing the motivations of the *Aufseherinnen*, which their age, location and background would have influenced. Their development on the most basic level could be analysed for indicators of why they made the choices to seek employment at Auschwitz, their early impressions of Nazism, and its impact on their character – all factors that would be key for understanding their motivations.

⁸² Brown, *The Camp Women*. p. 233

⁸³ List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. No. 327-328, Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives).

⁸⁴ Fotini Tzani, *Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit*. p.132

⁸⁵ List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. No. 327-328, Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives).

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen A - G

| Relationship | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-----------------------------------|---------|--|--|
| First Name | Last Name | Birth Year | Birth Location | Status | Camps Worked In | Archival Reference |
| Elisabeth | Arneth | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Hildegard | Beck | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Sentenced by French at Rastatt to 20 years. |
| Margoth | Bnerz | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Erna-Katerina | Bodem | 1919 | Zwondau | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Sentenced to three years in prison by Poland. |
| Juana | Bormann | 1893 | Birkenfelde | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Auschwitz-Hindenburg, Bergen-Belsen | Executed by British, Bergen-Belsen trial. |
| Hanna | Borrmann | 1908 | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Hermine | Böttcher | 1914 | Frieland | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried by the Czech in 1948, retried in the Düsseldorf-Majdanek Trial. |
| Therese | Brandl | 1909 | Staudach, near Traunstein Austria | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau-Mühldorf | Executed at Auschwitz trial Krakow. |
| Anna | Braun | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Never Tried, Gave Statement in 1970s. |
| Ernestine | Brenner | Unknown | Ausburg | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau-Mühldorf | Fate Unknown. |
| Annemarie | Blendermann | 1908 | Iserlohn | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Complained of corruption of SS, and treatment of prisoners declared unfit for service sent to prison in Myslowitz on 30/10/43. Fate Unknown. |
| Luisse | Brunner | 1908 | Aidhausen | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried by British at Ravensbrück trial. Sentenced to Three years. |
| | Bruo | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Luisse | Buch | 1913 | Kunzedorf | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Magdalene | Bünning | Unknown | Meckleburg | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Cesar | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Florentine | Cichon | 1921 | Oberglogau, Upper Silesia | Single | Floßenbürg-Venusberg, Auschwitz-Rajsko, Auschwitz-Plawy | Fate Unknown. |
| Luisse | Danz | 1917 | Walldorf (Meiningen), Thüringen | Single | Kraków-Plasów, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück-Malchow | Sentenced to life imprisonment by Polish in Auschwitz trial Krakow. Retried in 1996 released due to age. |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|--|--|
| Paula | Derresaw | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Margot | Dreschel | 1908 | Neugersdorf | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkeanu | Tried and hanged at Batzen by Soviet Authorities. |
| | Duchy | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Charlotte | Ebert | 1922 | Lichenstein | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Poland. Fate Unknown. |
| Hertha | Ehler | 1905 | Berlin | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Rajsko | Tried by British, Bergen trial, sentenced to 15 years. |
| Gerda | Ernst | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Klara | Fielauf | 1913 | Goldmoor | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Leni | Fracht | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Annelise | Franz | 1913 | Goerlitz | Dating | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau-Mühdorf | Never Tried. Died 29/08/1956. |
| Gertrude | Fryc | Unknown | Berlin | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Petra | Fryesseu | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Gertrude | Giessen | 1923 | Muelhausen Venlo | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Martha | Graße | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Anna | Grebe | Unknown | Unknown | Dating | Lichtenburg, Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Died in 1945, Left camps due to Pregnancy. |
| Irma | Grese | 1923 | Wrenchen (bei Neubrandenburg) | Dating | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Executed by British, Bergen-Belsen trial. |
| Elli | Gürke | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen H - L

| Relationship | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---|---|
| First Name | Last Name | Birth Year | Birth Location | Status | Camps Worked In | Archival Reference |
| Elly | Hartmann | 1920 | Furstenburg/ Havel | Married | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück | Fate Unknown, allegedly prosecuted but unknown where. |
| Elisabeth | Haselof | 1921 | Greppin | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek | Never prosecuted used as witness in Majdanek trial. |
| Elisabeth | Hasse | 1925 | Goerlitz | Dating | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried and sentenced to death by Soviet Military Tribunal 1946. |
| Gertrud | Haupt | 1911 | Magdeburg | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück | Fate Unknown. |
| Anni | Hausheer | 1921 | Straube | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald-Allendorf | Fate Unknown. |
| Irmgard | Hausheer | 1923 | Berlin | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | In an affidavit denied ever having worked at Auschwitz |
| Gertrud | Heise | 1921 | Berlin | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Kraków-Plasów, Neuengamme | Sentenced 7 years by British, in Celle, May 26 1946. |
| Elfriede | Hella | 1916 | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Hendrik | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Sofia | Henel | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried and Sentenced to Death in Prague 1948. |
| Hedwig | Herbert | 1919 | Heltau | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Hinrichsen | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Luisse | Hoffmann | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Margarete | Hoppmans | 1925 | Wiedelah | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Hildegard | Ihle | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Kraków 1948. Sentenced to 7 years. |
| Aloise | Irmeler | 1919 | Stara Voda | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Litchenwerden | Sentenced by Czech authorities and sentenced to three years. |
| Johanna | Jager | 1908 | Halle AD Salle | Married | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Berlin Kommando, Frankfurt/Oder Kommando | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Jahn | Unknown | Neugersdorf | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------|------------------------------------|----------|--|--|
| Liseselotte | Janda | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Kass | 1927 | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Anneliese | Kietzmann | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Charlotte | Klauß | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Erna | Koch | 1909 | Meckelburg | Single | Auschwitz | Fate Unknown. |
| Elfride | Kock | 1915 | Friedrichsfeld | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Friedrichsfeld | Sentenced to Three years in prison in Poland. Retried by Germans at Frankfurt. |
| Dorothea | Kolhe | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Lianie | Kolster | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Anni | Koppold | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Ingebourg | Krüger | 1902 | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Never Prosecuted, relocated to Cologne. |
| Helene | Kuck | 1914 | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Babitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Magdalene | Kuntz | 1920 | Baak, Upper Silesia | Single | Auschwitz-Babitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Johanna | Kuypers | Unknown | Hertogenbosch | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in the Netherlands sentenced to 7 years. |
| Hildegard | Lächert | 1920 | Berlin | Single | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried by Polish at Auschwitz trial Kraków sentenced to 15 years. Retried by Germans at Düsseldorf sentenced to 10 years but allowed time served. |
| Johanna | Langefeld | 1890 | Essen Kupferden | Widowed | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück | Indited by Polish for Auschwitz trial at Kraków. Escaped with help from former inmates. |
| Gertrud | Liehr | 1921 | Fletsch | Single | Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Lupka | 1902 | Klein-Damner, Germany (now Poland) | Divorced | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück | Tried in Kraków and Sentenced to Death. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen M - R

| Relationship | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------|---------|---|---|
| First Name | Last Name | Birth Year | Birth Location | Status | Camps Worked In | Archival Reference |
| Mathilde | Malik | 1923 | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Kraków sentenced to 3 years. |
| Maria | Mandl | 1912 | Munzkirchen, Austria | Single | Lichtenburg, Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau-Mühdorf | Sentenced to Death in Auschwitz trial in Krakow. |
| Charlotte | Margis | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Maricka | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Karla | Mayer | 1918 | Freiland | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried by Germans in Düsseldorf Majdanek Trial and Acquitted. |
| Elisabeth | Meier | Unknown | Meckelburg | Single | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Monica | Miklas | 1920 | Hindenburg | Single | Auschwitz | Tried in Wadowice, Poland and sentenced to 8 years. |
| | Milanka | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elfride | Misch | 1920 | Stopmünder | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Luzia | Moschko | 1910 | Wroclaw | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Düsseldorf sentenced to 10 years. |
| Maria | Müllender | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Myland | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Edith | Nestroy | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Sentenced by Polish to 3 Years. |
| Klara | Opitz | 1909 | Schmiedeberg. Riesengebirge | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Died 16/05/1945. |
| Alice | Orlowski | 1903 | Cologne | Married | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Kraków-Plaszów, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Auschwitz Trial Krakow sentenced to Life Imprisonment. Retried by Germans in Düsseldorf Majdanek Trial, Died during Trial. |
| | Ouchy | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Ella | Pessiner | 1895 | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück | Fate Unknown. |
| Käte | Picklab | 1921 | Essen | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Charlotte | Pliquet | Unknown | Konigsberg | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Fate Unknown. |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|--|--|
| Liesel | Prippert | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Dorothea | Pritzkoleit | 1912 | Saarbrücken | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Auschwitz-Rajsko | Tried by Polish and sentenced to 5 years. Resettled in HamburgBergedorf. |
| Rosa | Reischl | 1914 | Genseweis | Single | Ravensbrück, Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried by Polish sentenced to 8 years, retried Düsseldorf Majdanek Trial and Acquitted. |
| Marianne | Rendel | 1922 | Friedrichsthal | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Auschwitz-Harmense | Fate Unknown. |
| Margot | Richiber | 1910 | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Jacoba | Roulofs | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Herzogenbusch, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Never Tried Died 1998. |
| Elfride | Runge | 1920 | Furstenburg | Married | Auschwitz-Budy | Died 20/04/1945 in Berlin. |
| Elisabeth | Ruppert | 1915 | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Tried in Garmisch Partenkirchen sentenced to 10 years in prison. |
| Luise | Rust | 1915 | Varell | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |

Auschwitz Aufseherinnen S - Z

| Relationship | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|---|--|
| First Name | Last Name | Birth Year | Birth Location | Status | Camps Worked In | Archival Reference |
| Elfride | Sackler | Unknown | Teplitz - Schoenau | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Sassor | Unknown | Brusche, Upper Silesia | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Hermine | Schactner | 1926 | Weitzell | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Used as a witness at the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial. |
| Rosina | Schieber | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Arrested by British and held in internment camp. Never Tried. |
| Friedericke | Schneider | 1911 | Vienna | Married | Auschwitz-Babice, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, Floßenbürg-Holleischen | Returned to Vienna. Never Tried. |
| Maria | Schneider | 1905 | Wils | Single | Auschwitz-Buna | Fate Unknown. |
| Bertha | Schurr | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Anna | Schuster | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Scretzki | 1920 | Gennin | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elfride | Seidel | 1921 | Lichtewerden | Single | Auschwitz-Buna | Sentenced to three years by Polish court. |
| Hanne | Snurova | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Else | Sollich | Unknown | Croatia | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| | Strecker | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Hertha | Tack | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Marianne | Thiel | Unknown | Hanburg | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Erna | Tietje | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Tietze | 1914 | Bohm | Single | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |
| Elisabeth | Volkenrath | 1919 | Schonau | Married | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen | Tried by British at Belsen Trial, sentenced to Death. |
| Gertrud | Weniger | 1920 | Schonau | Married | Floßenbürg-Oederan, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Herzogenbusch | Fate Unknown. |
| Erika | Westfeld | Unknown | Unknown | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek | Never Prosecuted. |
| Ava | Wiegel | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz-Birkenau | Fate Unknown. |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---|---|
| | Witt | 1919 | Unknown | Unknown | Auschwitz | Fate Unknown. |
| Anna | Wolf | Unknown | Unknown | Married | Auschwitz-Birkenau, Floßenburg | Fate Unknown. |
| Emma | Zimmer | 1888 | Unknown | Single | Lichtenburg, Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Sentenced to death by British in Ravensbrück trial. |
| Edith | Zimmermann | 1922 | Hohenbach, Poland | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Frankfurt court of justice halted the proceedings against her on 25/08/1961 due to old age. |
| Gertrud | Zlotos | Unknown | Hindenburg | Single | Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau | Frankfurt court of justice halted the proceedings against her on 25/08/1961 due to old age. |

Location

The data offers the location of the women’s birth and their locale when they were recruited for service within the camps. This investigation has not previously been carried out by other scholars. This new dataset provides information that can be employed for analysis of recruitment methods and – dependant on the women’s age at joining – can provide an insight into the level of ideological entrenchment of Nazi beliefs. On condition that a particular territory had a noticeably higher percentage of female employment in the camps, it can be inferred that recruitment was particularly targeted in this locality. Another defining factor in location is the proximity of recruits to the camps and how this affected the recruitment rate. Was close proximity a factor in the women’s decision to become an *Aufseherin* or, rather, was part of the appeal of joining the camps the distance from home and a sense of ‘adventure’ in new spaces?⁸⁸ These questions are important considerations for understanding those who became SS auxiliary agents, and in addition provides important data for

⁸⁸ Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Random House, 2013), p.195.

understanding motivation. This data on location of the *Aufseherinnen* is collected in Database 2 and for spatial analysis is presented in a map in Figure 1.

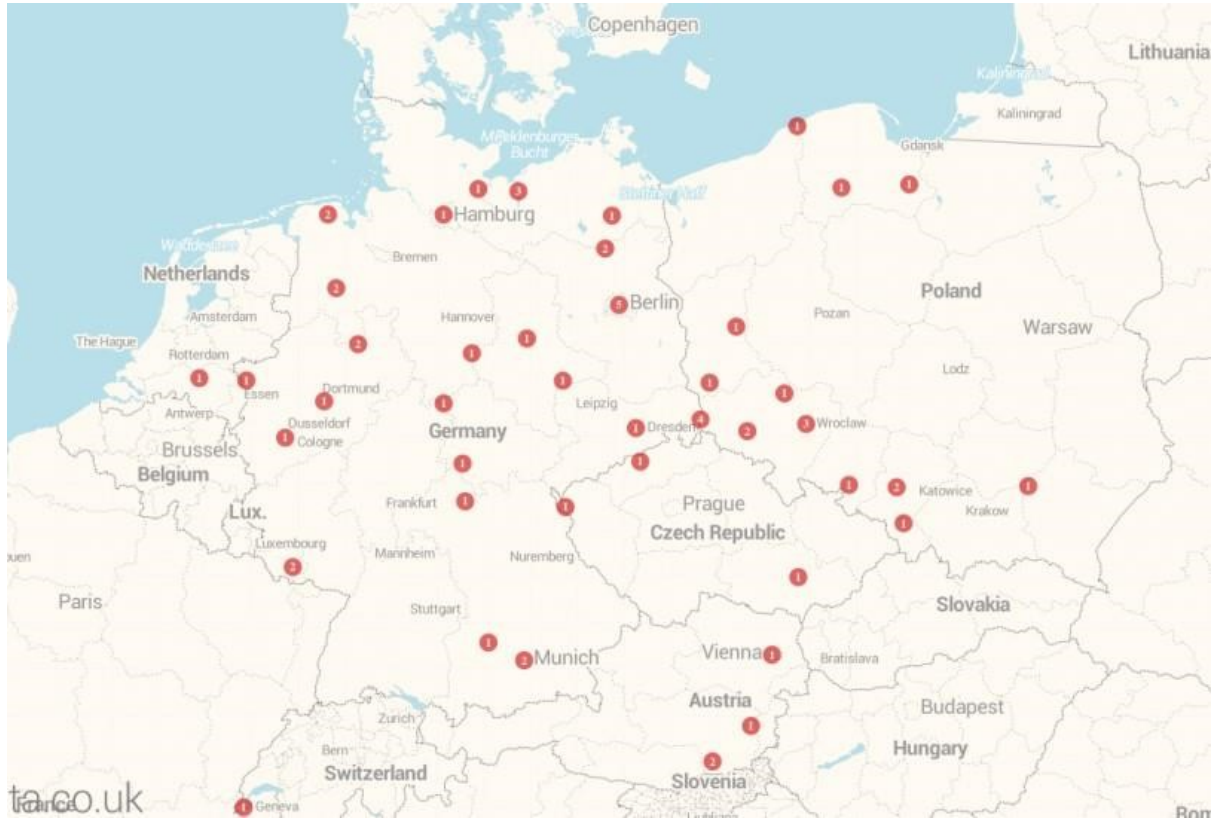


Figure 1 Map displaying the background origins of the female guards who were stationed at Auschwitz.

The map demonstrates the main cluster of guards are from within the borders of Germany. This is an unsurprising conclusion; the main pool of the German *Volk* was located within these borders. It is also reflective of the timeline of the expansion of the concentration camps. The first concentration camps were situated within pre-war German territory, and subsequently expanded outwards along with Nazi territorial expansion.⁸⁹ This expansion,

⁸⁹ Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), pp. 3-65, & Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KI. A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015), pp. 23-45.

through German aggression, not only placed camps throughout Europe, but created a wider pool from which to draw recruits; Ethnic Germans living in previously foreign territory were encouraged to apply to work as auxiliaries for the Fatherland. The guidelines on racial purity were strictly enforced, and on application for the role of *Aufseherin* candidates were required to provide genetic information on their heritage, going back three generations.⁹⁰ Any ‘impurities’ based on the pseudo-science of eugenics would disqualify candidates from service. The expansion of the areas from which recruits were drawn mirrored the expansion of German aggression into Eastern Europe. This is reflected in the map above which visualises the recruitment of women from the occupied territories.

The coincidence of the establishment of camps and recruitment of Ethnic Germans from the same locale emphasises the need for more guards, and the willingness of authorities to consider friendly Ethnic Germans for this task.⁹¹ As German expansion moved first to Czechoslovakia, there was an influx of guards from the Sudetenland, and this trend continued subsequently with further enlargement of the Third Reich. It becomes apparent that, within conquered territories, the expansion of the camp system was an impetus for those who were located within close proximity and of German heritage to seek employment therein.

Illustrative of the trend for those in the locale to seek employment are the cluster of guards located close to the Berlin area, in close proximity to the women’s camp at Ravensbrück, with one Guard – Grese – being located less than 10km from the site of the eventual camp.⁹² As such, it is apparent that a combination of local familiarity and closeness to the workplace was a key incentive.

⁹⁰ Brown, *The Camp Women*, p.15

⁹¹ Doris L. Bergen, ‘The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994), p.575.

⁹² Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945). p.248

The presence of several guards within Poland is significant in terms of the traditional view of the Polish population's reaction to the German invasion, presented as wide scale hostility and resistance.⁹³ The presence of several women willing to work within the camps, and who supported the invasion, acts in direct contrast to such beliefs. Applicants must have considered themselves Ethnic Germans; employment as an *Aufseherin* would have been a denial of Polish heritage and support for the expansion of Nazism. The decision to apply to work in the concentration camps and be actively involved in the torture and abuse of those with whom they had shared kinship until 1939 is a noteworthy point. The concentration of these recruits in the Upper Silesia area, and its proximity to Auschwitz, may explain the reasoning of these women. Florentine Cichon, lived within Oberglogau, located 70 miles from Auschwitz, but was aware of the German system of concentration camps from the presence of a forced labour camp in the city.⁹⁴ The importance of familiarity based on distance is further corroborated by Elfriede Seidel, from Lichtewerden, where a sub-camp of Auschwitz was in operation.⁹⁵ In this camp over 300 women worked in the textile industry as slave labourers for Gustav Adolf Buh Und Sohn.⁹⁶ The proximity of the camp was a significant motivator for Seidel to become an *Aufseherin*.⁹⁷ The camp was in the locality and offered the opportunity for a stable job in an uncertain economic climate with good food, which was of increasing uncertainty in Poland, and created an attractive and persuasive employment prospect for many. Furthermore, the location allowed the women to stay close to family, which was of greater importance in the harsher conditions of occupied Poland than

⁹³ David Furber, 'Near as Far in the Colonies: The Nazi Occupation of Poland', *The International History Review* 26, no. 4 (2004), pp.550-55, & Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

⁹⁴ List of SA, SS and NSDAP people, some with pictures. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives)

⁹⁵ Yisrael Gutman, 'Auschwitz- an Overview', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman & Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp.365-67.

⁹⁶ Auschwitz Study, "Lichtewerden." ASG, <http://www.auschwitzstudygroup.com/auschwitz-sub-camps/23-lichtewerden>.

⁹⁷ 'Elfriede Seidel' Members of the Camp Staff, Auschwitz List L-Z Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Angehörige des Lagerpersonald, Auschwitzliste) B162/2680, (BArch) Ludwigsburg.

compared to Germany. Finally, uniquely in Poland, the job allowed the recruits to assert their dominance against a population that was seeking revenge against the German occupiers. Many of the Ethnic Germans within the conquered territories acted on their new role as conqueror and a class above the Slavic population; the camps offered a structured arena in which they could play out these aggressions.⁹⁸

In contrast, within Germany and the areas that were merged into the Reich, proximity to the camp was not the sole defining motivator. Instead, the *Aufseherinnen* were scattered throughout the pre-war territory. Spatial analysis revealed key locations where the recruitment drive was particularly successful. There are a high number of women from the ‘lost territories’ in comparison to those within the borders of the Reich; this is in reference to the areas ceded after World War One.⁹⁹ It is apparent that a kinship to nationalism and an idealised version of the Germany of the past was heavily embedded in these areas, this led to a wider number of women becoming *Aufseherinnen* as a means of pursuing their sense of patriotism and reassertion of their German heritage.¹⁰⁰

Age

Study of the age groups of the *Aufseherinnen* is an important quantitative method of analysis for understanding motivation. Separation of the women into peer groups allows for comparison, chiefly on levels of maturity and the impact that age had upon the guard’s actions within Auschwitz. Many of the younger recruits were heavily influenced by Nazi

⁹⁸ Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff, ‘Ethnic Germans in Poland and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Evaluation.’ *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 2 (2005): pp. 270-76.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Harvey, ‘Pilgrimages to the ‘Bleeding Border’: Gender and Rituals of Nationalist Protest in Germany, 1919–39’, *Women’s History Review* 9, no. 2 (2000), p.208.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Mann, ‘Were the Perpetrators of Genocide ‘Ordinary Men’ or ‘Real Nazis’? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographics’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000), pp. 331-66.

ideals shaped by racism and eugenics from early life and education, Nazi ideology directly influenced the curriculum from 1936-45.¹⁰¹ The same explanation of ideological interference in education cannot be employed for the older women. Age range is important for ascertaining motivation and understanding career progression: was it purely those more advanced in age who were entrusted with more responsibility, or was advancement judged on other criteria within the concentration camp? This can only be realised through discussion of age.

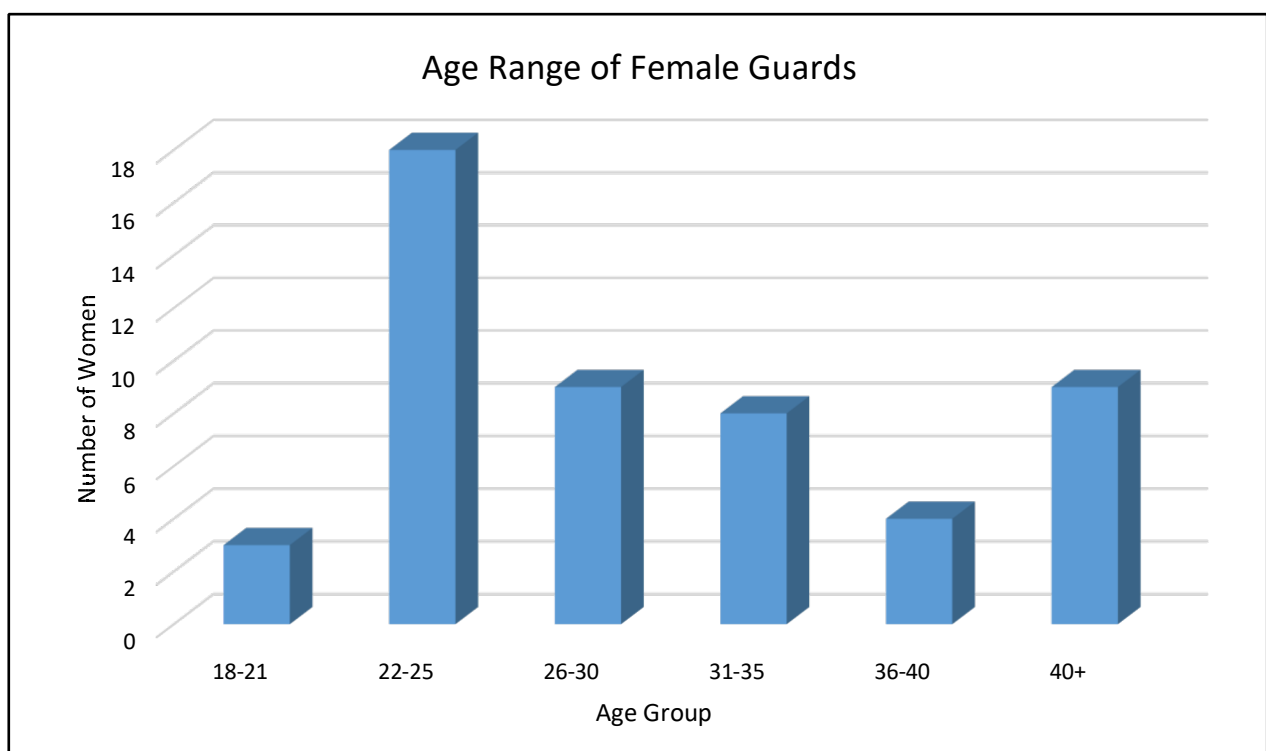


Figure 2 Age ranges of the *Aufseherinnen* serving within the Auschwitz Complex of Camps.

The high proportion of 22-25-year-olds serving within the camp illustrates the influence that Nazi propaganda in education had upon mental development of the young. Programmed to react with horror to the ‘degenerate’ elements of society, many of the indoctrinated young women saw it as their duty to serve their government and *Fuhrer*. The women within this age

¹⁰¹ Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012).

bracket were in education when the Nazis came to power and, had been particularly susceptible to indoctrination from the classroom, the BDM, and the propaganda rampant in everyday society.¹⁰² As the world around them changed dramatically, they were taught to embrace Nazi ideals and fight against those who sought to destroy the Aryan race.¹⁰³ As such, the recruits from this age bracket and younger were strongly motivated by the ideological concerns of the Nazi party.

Ideological influences were also major factors for the guards in the oldest age group, formed of women who were active political supporters and members of the Nazi party. Support was shown through their early involvement in the concentration camps, such as Lichtenburg or Moringen, and at the polls.¹⁰⁴ The number of female opponents necessitated the creation of a solely women's camp, Himmler had decreed that the female prisoners were to be controlled by Nazi women.¹⁰⁵ Several of the older recruits had previous experience working within prisons and could thus transfer these skills over to the Nazi camp system; working within the camps was a continuation of a career within the prison service. For instance, Langefeld – who became the first *Oberaufseherin* at Auschwitz – had previously been a house mother in a workhouse.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Bormann had worked as a mental health nurse as part of the T4 extermination programme before becoming an *Aufseherin*.¹⁰⁷ Their previous experience made them not only eligible for work in the camps but a highly desirable recruit; less training would be required, and an understanding of the penal system already existed. The primary

¹⁰² Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p.29.

¹⁰³ Gregory Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2014), p.15.

¹⁰⁴ Stefan Hördler, 'Before the Holocaust: Concentration Camp Lichtenburg and the Evolution of The Nazi Camp System', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 25, no. 1 (2011), p.114, & Stefan Hördler & Sigrid Jacobeit, ed. *Die Lichtenburg. Ein Deutsches Konzentrationslager: Wehrmacht, Gestapo, SS Und Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009), p.124.

¹⁰⁵ Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, p.88.

¹⁰⁶ 'Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans', RG338-000-50-11.National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), Washington D.C.

¹⁰⁷ Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.207

excuse often utilised - motivation based on monetary incentives - seems secondary to older recruits. Rather, a desire for career progression after the closure of the workhouses and the ending of the T4 programme pushed these women into the concentration camp. For many, transferring to work in the concentration camp was the obvious option to choose. The age range of the individuals at both ends of the spectrum in the above graph suggests (although it was later denied by many of the guards when on trial), that ideological motivation was a hugely significant factor.

The youngest of the concentration camp guards stationed at Auschwitz was Elizabeth Kass, born on the 28th August 1927.¹⁰⁸ She was only 18 when the war ended and joined the camp when just of legal age (you had to be 18 to become an *Aufseherin*). Within her role, she interacted with prisoners, enacted violence and became a cog in the machinery of the Holocaust. The drafting and encouragement of such young women to become *Aufseherinnen*, even as the war became unwinnable and the Third Reich disintegrated, shows the ongoing importance that was placed on the continued running of these institutions of violence in Germany and the occupied territories. These camps were of the highest importance to the Third Reich and it was deemed by the Nazi hierarchy as essential that day-to-day life and functionality continued, regardless of the war situation, whether this be through the continued development of the V2 rockets in the Dachau sub-camp of Dora, the continued extermination of prisoners, or the ongoing output of machinery that was deemed essential to the war effort.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to Elizabeth Kass, the eldest guard working within Auschwitz was Johanna Langefeld, born in 1880. Her comparatively advanced age can be used to explain her rapid rise through the ranks; further, she became a guard with previous experience and a high

¹⁰⁸ TNA: FO 944/965, (1945)

¹⁰⁹ Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, pp.455-456.)

position in corrections. This placed her as the perfect candidate to lead the fledgling camps.

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At the war's close, she was 56, and, since becoming an *Aufseherin* a decade earlier, she had managed to become the *Oberaufseherin* for what was arguably the largest murder facility in the world: Auschwitz.

The differing age groups of the women who decided to take up work within the camps demonstrates that this was a career that appealed to a wide variety of recruits. These were women who were at different stages in their lives and came to the profession from different areas and with different motivations. While, for a single mother, the added income and financial security may have been a huge motivator, this cannot be applied to those who were younger or who already had established careers. Moreover, what analysis of the age data helps to identify is that *ideological* concerns were a huge motivator in career decisions. The women's allegiance and identification with the Nazi party, its ideas of the 'racial' enemies of the Reich, and the inference that service in the concentration camps was necessary for the survival of the Aryan Race, entered the psyche (so to speak) of individual women through indoctrination in places of education; this is especially true for many of the younger women. In contrast to the older women who supported the movement politically through votes and membership, the younger women – in many cases – were influenced through their required schooling. Further emphasis is given to the importance that the wide range of age groups had to practical actions within the camp. The deeds of the Holocaust were not committed by a 'faceless other' as, through careful analysis of ages and names (as seen above), one can clearly see that these women came from far and wide to serve in the camps and, moreover, made the choice willingly.

¹¹⁰ Johanna Langefeld, 'Testimony Given to Americans'. RG338-000-50-11 (NARA)

Motivation

Analysis of database 2 helps to unravel the motivation of the perpetrators, which perhaps presents the most intriguing but difficult aspect of ‘perpetrator research’ - the desire to understand why.¹¹¹ The question of motivation is notoriously difficult to answer, due in part to the sparsity of records from the time but also the sheer unwillingness of many perpetrators to admit to their actions or reveal information about their time working within the concentration camps. Often, this lack of openness was due to guilt or as an attempt to dissociate themselves with the past.¹¹² However, for the study of the women in Auschwitz, it is important to ascertain the reasoning behind the women’s choice to join the camps, for a better understanding on the influence of gender on the Holocaust.

Indeed, the motivations of individual female guards reveal a wealth of information about the women’s political views, background and individual psychology. The ‘why’ helps the scholar to understand the ‘how’. If it is possible to understand *why* women made such a choice, then it is possible to understand the timeline and nature of the camps. Moreover, the motivation of the guards can not only shed light on the camps themselves but also reveal key information concerning the perspective of women in wider German society. In particular, it is important to recognise that the women who served and were actively involved with the Holocaust were a minority of the population.

In the post-war trials, many women claimed to have joined the guards for the financial incentives that were offered. Widely quoted in scholarly texts, this misinformation has

¹¹¹ Jürgen Matthäus, ‘Agents of the Final Solution - Perpetration in Historical Perspective’, in *Holocaust Historiography in Context; Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier & Dan Michman (Jerusalem: Berghan Books, 2008), p.334.

¹¹² Dan Bar-On, ‘Holocaust Perpetrators and Their Children: A Paradoxical Morality’, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 29, no. 4 (1989), p.440.

entered into popular circulation and is often viewed as fact. It is undeniable that women who worked in the camps could earn a much larger sum than in other unskilled and semi-skilled labour, and this was no doubt tempting for many, but it was not enough of a substantial difference for many to leave their homes and families and make a career in murder.¹¹³ It has also been stated that other benefits that came from the job were influential motivators: the post came with a uniform and secure accommodation and was marketed as non-physically straining work. As one typical advert shows:

*You have only to watch over prisoners; consequently, applicants, who should be between the ages of 21 and 45, don't need professional training. The salary of hired Aufseherin, who become employees of the Reich, is determined by TOA IX and a steep raise will be given after a three-month probationary period. Community food allotment as well as a well-furnished official residence and service clothes (fabric and fatigue uniforms) are assured.*¹¹⁴

The perks of the job were meant to appeal to those who were underqualified for many other roles in society, this is apparent in the nature of the applicants; these were not sought-after positions for the educated or wealthy. For many, especially the younger women who were without qualifications and faced the shutdown of the job market (ironically, often due to the Nazi regime's anti-feminist ideological emphasis on hearth and home), the added benefits must have created an enticing offer. The Nazi drive to end unemployment involved the removal of women from the job market, thus freeing up more jobs for men, this was to be achieved through the implementation of a 'Kinder, Kirche, Küche'¹¹⁵ policy. The Nazi aim

¹¹³ Irmtraud Heike, 'Da Es Sich Ja Lediglich Die Bewachung Der Häftlinge Handelt', in *Frauen in Konzentrationslagern*, ed. Claus Füllberg-Stolberg et al (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1994).

¹¹⁴ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Beautiful Beast: The Life and Crimes of SS Aufseherin Irma Grese* (Ventura: Golden West Historical Publications, 1996), p.26.

¹¹⁵ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1986), p.13.

was to restore ‘traditional’ familial roles. Women should no longer concern themselves with work and a career but instead, be at home caring for their family, raising Aryan sons for Germany and abiding by Nazi values. The home was firmly reinstated as the woman’s sole sphere.¹¹⁶ While these ideas of gender traditionalism resonated with many Germans who feared the social upheaval of the Weimar years, many young women from lower incomes, still needed a job to support themselves and their families. As such, they began to look for other non-traditional means of employment, and the jobs advertised in the concentration camps must have been especially appealing to those in financial need; not only was the wage double what they could expect to earn within a factory, but this job also came with the opportunity to move to a new locale along with many women in similar positions, and to gain new experiences in an increasingly stifled environment for otherwise ambitious young females.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, not only did this job offer a higher rate of pay, but it also enticed with the opportunity for career progression, a development that had been taken away in many other sectors.¹¹⁸ Importantly, by taking this role as an *Aufseherin*, they did not have to settle for staying in a minor position forever but could progress, several female guards were placed in charge of the management of an entire camp, with both women and men answerable to them and enjoying an increased rate of pay and status as a result.

As previously argued above, the enticement of the higher rate of pay in the camps cannot be used comfortably as the sole explanation of the motivation behind why women became *Aufseherinnen*. To do this would be to provide a convenient scapegoat for their reasoning and suggest that humans will commit any action against one another for the right amount of money. ‘Ideology’ was surely more important. Thus, for many of the women who joined the

¹¹⁶ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croon Helm, 1975), p.9.

¹¹⁷ Leila. J. Rupp, ‘Mother of the ‘Volk’: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology’, *Signs; Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 3 (1977), p.365.

¹¹⁸ Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, p.44.

SS auxiliary in the pre-war years, the ideological element of the role, which gave the opportunity for women to be involved in the active re-education of hostile elements, was a hugely influential motivator.¹¹⁹ In the early conception of the concentration camps, these spaces were seen by Nazi ideologues as a place primarily for the re-education of those who had not come to realise the ‘benefits’ of National Socialism and, as such, this was a defining reason why many women wanted to involve themselves with the concentration camps. Through work within the concentration camp, the women who the Nazi state sought to remove from positions of influence elsewhere in society were able to play a role in establishing the Third Reich. Through their efforts to re-educate those elements of society who were not ‘falling in line’ with the Nazi vision of Aryan purity, and, at least if not practically then emotionally, to be aligned with Nazi party’s efforts.

For women, employment within the camps provided them with one of the only ways to perform a ‘hands-on’ role, working alongside and in step with the Nazi party and its male dominated hierarchy. As females in German society, they were increasingly pushed to the fringes of employment and felt their status as equals challenged. Women were unable to hold important positions within society, no longer able to be doctors, judges, or lawyers, as well as many other influential jobs.¹²⁰ But the power that they received within this particular type of occupation in the camps made an attractive prospect to regain some lost autonomy. The removal of power from women within many parts of wider society and the subsequent enforced position of inferiority that the Nazi party sought to place them within, cannot be under-estimated as a motivator for employment within Auschwitz. It was from this position of control, which existed solely within the camps that the *Aufseherinnen* enacted out their

¹¹⁹ Brown, *The Camp Women*, p.18.

¹²⁰ Tim Mason, Women in Germany 1925–1940: Family, Welfare and Work.. Part I, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 1, Issue 1, SPRING 1976, Pages 74–113), & Pine, *Nazi family policy, 1933-1945*. Both authors talk extensively about the restrictions placed upon women in regard to mobility and employment under Nazi policy.

frustrations at their own removal from power, their actions were in opposition to the very political ideology that had taken it from them.¹²¹

If the extra money, and the opportunity to enact their will onto their prisoners, was not enough of a motivator, another factor that was no doubt influential for those seeking to join the concentration camps was the prospect of entering into the new Nazi elite through marriage to one of the numerous high-ranking SS men who would be stationed at the camp.¹²² As the Nazi re-arrangement of society saw many of those who had previously been regarded as the privileged elite cast into concentration camps, murdered or losing all their possessions and power; it was the high-ranking officials in the party, or the ‘pure Aryan’ men of the SS, who were now regarded as being the elite of society, if not realised through money then via their claim to embody Aryan purity.¹²³ The opportunity to meet an officer or an SS man regarded as a member of the new elite could change the fortunes of a young girl. Going from obscurity in the country with no education to a prosperous match would help to change their status in society and humble beginnings could be conveniently forgotten in the new class system of the *Volk*. As my research has found, these matches were in high demand in Auschwitz and, although several of the women were able to marry into the SS hierarchy, the majority had to make do with a brief dalliance and then a return to their provincial beginnings at the closure of the war.¹²⁴ The creation by the Nazi party of a new hierarchy, with an individual’s level of worth being measured on their ties to the Volk community, was reflected in the wide array of relationships that were fostered in the camp environment. This was often

¹²¹ Myrna Goldenberg and Amy Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), p. 87.

¹²² Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an Seiner Seite, Ehefrauen in Der SS-Sippengemeinschaft* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), p.14.

¹²³ Brown, *The Camp Women*, p.17.

¹²⁴ Relationships between the SS are spoken about in detail in Chapter 3. The Relationship status of the Aufseherinnen is displayed in Database 2.

based on one's racial status rather than social status. Men who proved themselves loyal to the Nazi racial vision could be expected to rise quickly through the ranks, no longer dependant on previous hierarchies.¹²⁵ This new focus on racial status was seen through the advantageous matches that were created by women in the camps, individual female guards who believed that, by marrying an SS man, they could pave their way into the new upper echelons of society.

The argument put forward in post-war trials i.e. of the 'banality' of motivation for joining the SS by these women, does not hold credibility.¹²⁶ Whilst the *Aufseherinnen's* statements cast themselves as victims co-opted into these roles, through conscription and a need for financial security, these explanations cannot account for all *Aufseherinnen*. While certainly some women may have joined the SS for career progression or seeking to benefit from the higher pay and expected loot of the East, this does not portray the full picture, with the vast majority of *Aufseherin* being younger women with little need to support families. It is important to recognise that women joined as active participants in Nazi ideology, seeking to enact a policy of racial suppression, one which they supported. The opportunities for active involvement in the forceful suppression of those regarded as '*submenschen*' by the Nazi party were limited for women, but the secretive world of the concentration camps offered them the breeding ground to unleash their pent-up fury. It is also worth recognising that, for some, the concentration camps offered an escape from the rigorous social structures forced upon women. For those who ruled the camps, they could enjoy freedoms and adventures that were unavailable in the rigidly structured wider society of the Third Reich.

¹²⁵ Adrian Weale, *Army of Evil: A History of the SS* (New York: Nal Caliber, 2012).

¹²⁶ The idea of the banality of the administrators of the Holocaust was first suggested by Hannah Arendt. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil* Translated by Amos Elon (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

Camp Migration

Understanding the migration of *Aufseherinnen* between different concentration camps provides insights into the development and dissolution of the concentration camps and the impact of the Second World War on the guards working conditions and recruitment. The research undertaken for this thesis found that employment patterns can be broken into two, typical and abnormal. The typical career environment for an *Aufseherin* began in either Lichtenburg or Ravensbrück, and then migrated to newly conquered Eastern territories. Whereas an 'abnormal' career would forgo training and was focussed solely in Auschwitz. These careers were dependent on the progress of the Second World War and the aims of the Nazi hierarchy towards prisoners at the time.

Typically, *Aufseherinnen* began their career at either Lichtenburg, pre-1940, or Ravensbrück. These camps comprised the first and at the time sole female concentration camps (FKL). However, as the territory of the Third Reich expanded, so did the network of concentration camps. This led to the forming of several more FKL, located within every major Camp complex and their subcamps.¹²⁷ Himmler's decree that women should be guarding women meant that *Aufseherinnen* would be required in all these locations. Initially recruits received training at Ravensbrück before they were sent to other camps. Typically, training lasted around three weeks but, as demand for guards increased, this could be shortened.¹²⁸ The migration of guards from Ravensbrück to Lublin-Majdanek and Auschwitz demonstrate the Nazi expansion of territory and the movement of concentration camps to the East where resources could be better exploited and the genocidal policy of the Final Solution carried out,

¹²⁷ Wachsmann, KL: *A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, p.88.

¹²⁸ Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück*, Translated by Gerald Satterwhite (New York: Anchor Books, 1975).

away from German civilian eyes.¹²⁹ The thesis findings suggest that the typical patterns of employment continued in the closing months of World War Two; guards who had been serving in the East were redrafted to camps further West within territory still under German control. The patterns of movement demonstrate the continuing desire of the Nazi party to continue the camps and their extermination policy even as the Third Reich was collapsing.

However, this is not the only path of employment that *Aufseherinnen* followed. From the database presented here it is possible to identify that some guards served only briefly in the camps, and some for only a few months at Auschwitz. These women did not follow typical career progression. Explanations for the short period of service can be for several reasons. There was, for example, the growing drive of the employment office, who pushed women to work in the camps. Many women were unwilling to work within the concentration camps and so left quickly. The changing fortunes of the war and forced transfer to another camp made this much easier.¹³⁰ Other guards went without training due to their home being located in close proximity to a camp. For these guards, it was not practical to journey to Ravensbrück for training and, as such, they were trained in their local environment.¹³¹ Many women were thrown into the role with just a uniform and expected to learn the techniques of intimidation and brutality through practice or by imitating their colleagues. Often these women do not appear at any other camps, choosing to return to their lives rather than follow the career of *Aufseherinnen* into another position at a camp in still active Nazi territory.

¹²⁹ Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (London: Random House, 2014), pp.67-8.

¹³⁰ Elissa Koslov Mailänder, *Gewalt Im Dienstalltag: Die SS-Aufseherinnen Des Konzentrations- Und Vernichtungslagers Majdanek* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009), pp.286-90.

¹³¹ Both Elisabeth Meier who was born in Meckelburg, and Karla Opitz were both trained in their respective home town camps before migrating to other camps. Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps Case, Subseries within TNA: WO 235/12 -24 (1945), WO 235/605 (1945-1949), regarding Opitz and Elisabeth Meier, Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Berlin Document Center (BDC): R 9361-III/ 176102, (Barch), Berlin.

Analysis of the *Aufseherinnen*'s movement between different camps undertaken for this thesis provides information on the impact that the changing fortunes of the German war effort had upon the training methods and careers of the female guards. As German territory and the concentration camp system expanded, the need for women to work as *Aufseherinnen* increased. In the early days of the war, this resulted in recruitment and an institutionalised training program that focussed on racial purity and re-education. This structuralised entry and career-path was the desired process for recruits. This led to many of the *Aufseherinnen* following the same lines of career progression, beginning with training in Ravensbrück and then their dispersal outwards to the East and new German territories. However, as the war progressed, guards were shipped with no training often to their closest camp, where they stayed for brief periods before returning to their pre-war lives as the Third Reich collapsed.

Conclusion

The creation of the databases presented within this chapter fulfils one of the primary aims of the thesis: to compile a comprehensive list of names and key quantitative data on the *Aufseherinnen* that were stationed at the Auschwitz concentration camp complex. This was achieved through an extensive collation of different sources from a wide range of archives. From this wider scope of records, the key work already conducted by other scholars has thus been expanded upon. This database is important for the reconciliation of the actions of the Holocaust with its perpetrators. To give a name back to the *Aufseherinnen* is to begin to recognise the women on an individual level as active agents of murder and violence who existed within the camps. Furthermore, the data presented here can be analysed to present further information on motivation, recruitment and the social make-up of the guards. Through extensive analysis it has been possible to present key trends in age and location of the

Aufseherinnen, patterns which go towards answering questions on the ideological impact that Nazism had upon recruitment, together with the possible roles that location and external environmental factors had upon the women when they chose to become guards. It is now clear that ideological impacts were particularly prevalent upon the young who were educated within Nazi classrooms, whereas for many of the older recruits the suggestion of career progression in the re-imagination of the penal system was an influencing factor. The presence of the concentration camps in many of the Ethnic Germans' hometowns in what is now Poland, can be recognised as impacting their decision to become *Aufseherinnen*, with a desire to stay close to family in occupied territories. In contrast, an anticipation for adventure in the new East was a motivator for the younger German women.

The 'mixed methods' analysis undertaken within this chapter will be further expanded upon, utilizing qualitative data in particular to present the most complete interpretation possible of who the *Aufseherinnen* were, and why their analysis is important for understanding the implications of gender upon the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

Chapter 3: A Social History of the Aufseherinnen at Auschwitz

The aim of this chapter is to offer an original social study into the lives of the *Aufseherinnen* who were stationed at the Auschwitz complex of concentration camps. The chapter seeks to offer important insights into the daily tasks that these individuals carried out as part of their SS duties, and the relationships that formed both with other guards and the prisoners under their control. The focus is on gender and the differing approaches that female perpetrators adopted in comparison to their male counterparts. Through a focus on gender and identity it becomes apparent that women became *Aufseherinnen* for differing reasons and had vastly different experiences in the camp on account of their gender. However, through consideration of gender it becomes possible to highlight the similarities of the women's psyche in regard to their physical and mental reactions to genocide. This information is important for developing new academic perspectives on and knowledge of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and also of the philosophy and policy methods that lay behind the running of the concentration camps.

The Camp

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp complex has become the geographically known and most publicly familiar symbol of the Holocaust, visually representing the Nazi party's attempt to exterminate European Jewry and elements of society they saw as being subhuman or racially corruptive to the Volk. The Auschwitz complex developed substantially during its period of operation, going through many different forms and functions from transit camp, to labour

camp and, finally, extermination camp.¹³² When construction began in 1940, the camp was designed to hold Soviet Prisoners of War and Polish partisans from the nearby area before they were moved to other labour camps. Rudolf Höss, who would be the longest-serving commandant of the camp, arrived in 1940, with the direction to change the old Polish military barracks into a concentration camp expected to hold 10,000 prisoners; a momentous task awaited. The architects and builders struggled to find materials and Höss scavenged the landscape himself, requisitioning barbed wire, stone and buildings from the local Polish population for the use of the Third Reich.¹³³ The original camp was intended as a Class III prison camp for those who had committed serious crimes but could still be rehabilitated.¹³⁴ Less than a year later, however, it became a Class I camp for prisoners that the party intended to exterminate through forced labour. It is clear that already Auschwitz was changing in its functions to fit the developing needs of the Reich and the evolving Nazi ideological attitudes to imprisonment. In less than a year, more land had been seized, expanding the camp zone to include sub-camps concerned with agricultural production and fishing. These would be located in the former villages of Budy, Rajsko and several others where Polish homes had been recommissioned. These agricultural camps would later form key *kommandos* for the female prisoners.¹³⁵

On 1st March 1941, after Himmler's personal visit to the camp, the order for the development of Auschwitz-Birkenau (II) and Auschwitz-Monowitz (III) was given. The camp at Birkenau was to hold 100,000 prisoners of war from the Eastern Front, who would be used as slave

¹³² Yisrael Gutman. "Auschwitz- an Overview." In *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, edited by Yisrael Gutman & Michael Berenbaum. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). & Laurence Rees. *Auschwitz: A New History*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

¹³³ Rudolf Höss. *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss*. Translated by Constantine FritzGibbon, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1959). P. 110.

¹³⁴ Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle* (New York: Owl Books, 1989). August 28th, 1940 reclassified Jan 2nd, 1941.

¹³⁵ Shmuel Krakowski. "The Satellite Camps." In *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman & Michael Berenbaum, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). p. 50.

labour, making armaments and other goods for use in Germany. By the end of July 1941, Höss had been informed by Himmler that the plans for Auschwitz-Birkenau were again changing; whilst the camp would continue to function as a forced labour camp, it would also become a pivotal focus for the 'Final Solution' – the physical mass extermination of the Jews.¹³⁶ Höss, in his memoirs, explained that he followed his duties as an SS man, stifling his 'softness' and thinking, instead, of the creation of an extermination facility as another problem to overcome in Auschwitz:

*The killing of the Russian prisoners of war did not cause me much concern at the time. The order had been given, and I had to carry it out. I must even admit that the gassing set my mind at rest.*¹³⁷

This quote exemplifies the beginning of the period of the camp's life as a mass extermination camp. Signifying Höss's knowledge of and determination to please his superiors in finding a method for mass murder. This began with the first experiments of mass killing using gas, conducted on a group of Soviet prisoners of war in Block 11. The killings that took place at the end of August/early September 1941, marked a key change in the functioning of Auschwitz into an extermination camp. These were the first coordinated experiments to move the mass extermination of Jews into the camps and away from the public eye.¹³⁸ The experimentation with Zyklon B as an efficient killing agent continued on an ever-larger scale, moving from the basement of Block 11 to the crematorium of Auschwitz I, then into specially converted buildings in the Birkenau sub-camp and finally with the construction of gas chamber complexes. In his memoirs, Höss writes that he reacted with relief that a

¹³⁶ Czech. *The Auschwitz Chronicle*. July 30th, 1943.

¹³⁷ Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, p. 147.

¹³⁸ Saul Friedländer. *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007.) pp.56-8

solution had been found for the mass extermination of the Jews: relief that he had succeeded with his job and that the exterminations could now run smoothly.¹³⁹

It was March 1942 before the first female prisoners were received at Auschwitz. Originally, they were held in Auschwitz I in the barracks previously occupied by Soviet prisoners of war, who had since been transferred to Birkenau to begin building the new camp. The women prisoners were separated from the rest of the camp by a solid brick wall, a policy of gender separation that was employed within all of the camps. The segregation of close family members further removed any sense of unity and hope from prisoners. The new inmates arrived accompanied by eight guards from the women's camp at Ravensbrück, with Johanna Langefeld as *Oberaufseherin*. The female prisoners remained under the jurisdiction of Ravensbrück, the first and largest Female Concentration Camp (FKL) for the time-being.¹⁴⁰ This jurisdiction remained in effect until July 10th 1942, when the FKL of Auschwitz was created, placing the female inmates under the control of the Kommandant of Auschwitz from this period onwards.¹⁴¹ With the increasing number of prisoners, especially women within the camp system, and due to the new focus on mass extermination, the decision to move the women's camp from Auschwitz I to Auschwitz II- Birkenau was made in August 1942.¹⁴² The women were originally housed in section B-Ia, which initially consisted of incoming transports of Jewish women, until the transfer from Auschwitz I of existing prisoners was completed. From this location, the women were sent on various working *kommandos* located both inside the camp perimeter and outside. In 1943, due to the ever-expanding number of female prisoners, the women's camp was further enlarged. Until the evacuation of the camp

¹³⁹ Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, p. 155

¹⁴⁰ "Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau)" Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M, (USHMM)

¹⁴¹ Danuta Czech. *Auschwitz Chronicle*, July 10th 1942. p. 195.

¹⁴² Danuta Czech. *Auschwitz Chronicle*, August 5th 1942. p. 211

in January 1945, a women's camp was in constant operation at Auschwitz and the SS *Aufseherinnen* were in direct charge of the prisoners.

Living Conditions for the Guards

Conditions in the camp and the surrounding area could not have been more different for the guards than the prisoners. Instead of the squalid and cramped conditions that the prisoners were forced to endure, the female guards were housed in large dormitory-type buildings outside the physical perimeter of the camp. Whilst these barracks were still being built, many of the *Aufseherinnen* were housed in the *Stabsgebaeude* (Staff House). The *Aufseherinnen* made use of the upper floors for their living quarters, and the basement housed those female prisoners working within the offices and concerned with the needs of the *Aufseherinnen*.¹⁴³ They would share two to a room, with many forging close relationships with their roommates. For some of the younger guards, this was their first time away from home and the support from those who were older created a familial bond between them. The *Oberaufseherin* and those who held a higher rank among the guards enjoyed their own room and more space. Those who had brought families with them or married at the camp, were given a flat or house, usually one that a Polish family had once owned.¹⁴⁴ The *Aufseherinnen* could expect to pay five Reichsmarks per month for lodgings or 15 if they had requested a private room, a much subsidised rate.¹⁴⁵ Throughout the area of camp jurisdiction and interest, all Polish occupants had been removed and the houses repurposed for the use of the Germans working in the camp. Kommandant Höss's house, for example, was once owned by

¹⁴³ Vera Plaskura & Edita Maliarova testimony in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization: Twenty-Three Women Prisoners' Accounts: Auschwitz Camp Administration and SS Enterprises and Workshops*. Translated by Lore Shelley (Lanham; London: University Press of America, 1992). p. 20 & 64.

¹⁴⁴ Piotr Setkiewicz. *The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS*. Translated by William Brand. (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2013). p.70.

¹⁴⁵ Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück*. Translated by Gerald Satterwhite (New York: Anchor Books, 1975) p. 67-8.

a Polish family and overlooked the main Auschwitz camp; his family continued to live there even after he was transferred from the camp.¹⁴⁶ The rooms for the guards were furnished with a bed for each woman, not the pallets that prisoners had to lie on. Most furniture had been re-commissioned from the Poles who had been forced to leave their houses in the camp zone, and some furniture was made in the workshops within the Auschwitz camp.¹⁴⁷ Although the rooms were sparsely furnished and the guards were away from the comforts of home, many of them made themselves comfortable with high quality goods stolen from the incoming transports of prisoners. Survivors who worked as housemaids within the guard's dormitories recount these thefts, some being instructed to do the stealing for their mistresses who didn't want to risk punishment themselves.¹⁴⁸ Although many survivors talk about the practice of 'organising' within the camp,¹⁴⁹ the guards stole for their own sake and to enjoy the finer things in life. This was not out of necessity and was therefore markedly different from theft due to need, practiced by the prisoners. Through their extensive stealing, the guards were able to have the best linens in Europe, having taken expensive silk comforters, bedspreads and homeware that the victims of the Holocaust had bought with them to the camp, assuming they were being 'resettled' and would be in need of these items. Instead, however, it was their Nazi tormentors who benefited from these articles:

*a young pretty SS woman who was pushing her bike past the pile of clothes [...] went over to it and picked out a silver fox fur, threw it elegantly over the handlebars of her bicycle and rode away*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Harding. "Sitting Pretty in Her Auschwitz 'Paradise'." *The Sunday Times*, September 7th 2014. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sitting-pretty-in-her-auschwitz-paradise-ms6s5tfpvvl> (Accessed 2014)

¹⁴⁷ Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History*, pp.52-55.

¹⁴⁸ Setkiewicz. *The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS*. p.42.

¹⁴⁹ The practice of stealing extra food or clothing by prisoners and the swapping these with other inmates. This was vital for prisoners to survive.

¹⁵⁰ Theresa Gericke. "My Story." (London: Wiener Lib Unpub 4289).

The fur and its connotations of luxury offer a stark contrast to the fate of the prisoner who the fur had once belonged to, she would either have perished on arrival or was being worked to death by the very women who now wore her possessions. The guards could also expect to have their rooms cleaned and, if it was not done to their approval, they would unleash a violent tirade against the prisoner. A *Kommando* of prisoners worked solely on cleaning the SS barracks, mending clothes and furniture, and ensuring the complete comfort of the SS guards.¹⁵¹ The *Aufseherinnen*, especially those typically from the lower classes of society, could never have expected to live with servants, and fully utilised all the benefits that Auschwitz could give them in their new status at the top of the German hierarchy.¹⁵² These prisoners were housed separately from the main camp barracks, a rearrangement in living spaces following several outbreaks of typhus in the camp, leading to the death of an SS doctor and the consequent fear that more of the SS would become infected.¹⁵³ This led to the relocation of prisoners who had prolonged and repeated contact with the SS being moved out of the camp proper and into the basement within the *Stabsgebäude*. Provision at Auschwitz had been made to ensure that the female guards could expect a comfortable life; they then sought to further increase their luxury while at the camp through profiteering from their victim's misfortune.

Indeed, in many ways, Auschwitz was completely removed from the usual social constraints that had previously dominated society for these women. As well as enjoying vastly better living conditions than the prisoners, there were numerous other activities that the

¹⁵¹ Vera Plaskura in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization*. p.29

¹⁵² Previous social positions can be seen from the lack of education that many of the women had received and the occupations of their family. Presented in the databases discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ Rudolph Höss, Artur Liebehenschel, Richard Baer. "*Kommandant Memos*." Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO). July 3rd 1942, all SS given Vaccines after the death of an SS Mann.

Aufseherinnen could take part in to disengage with their work and the everyday horrors of the camp. A hairdressing salon was created for the pleasure of the guards, staffed by prisoners who had previously been trained in cosmetology allowing the guards to enjoy professional makeup and hair services.¹⁵⁴ The *Aufseherinnen* also outfitted themselves in the fashionable French clothing that arrived with former wealthy prisoners, indulging in materials and designers they could never have dreamed of in their pre-camp lives. Additionally, the tailors who usually made and mended uniforms, were also available to dress the women guards with beautiful everyday wear and evening gowns.¹⁵⁵ Within the camp, they could continue to indulge in many of their hobbies and interests. Maria Mandl, the *Oberaufseherin* of Auschwitz from 1942-44, organised a female orchestra to indulge her love of classical music and as a means to relax.¹⁵⁶ There was also the opportunity to engage in activities that would have been unacceptable within everyday German life, Mandl and Lisl Hasse, who served as a *Lagerführerin* at Babitz, were twice reprimanded for riding motorcycles without a license; another break in gender norms for the *Aufseherinnen*.¹⁵⁷

To further amuse the guards, there were regular dances and social events held in the SS house to occupy the minds of the staff. Entertainment was often put on by talented prisoners: there was an orchestra, gymnastic displays, and the Ovitz family dwarves, as well as numerous less savoury drunken revelries. Regular performances were given by visiting opera and theatre companies and it was compulsory for SS members to attend.¹⁵⁸ A survivor described the nightly entertainments as being “*like the circus had come to town*”¹⁵⁹ with every prisoner

¹⁵⁴ Rachel Avniel. “And the Sun Is Shining Again.” (London: Wiener Lib Unpub Mem 4265, 1995).

¹⁵⁵ Hermine Hecht in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization*. p.216.

¹⁵⁶ Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz* Translated by J Landry (London: Sphere Books Ltd, 1977) & Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. *Inherit the Truth*. (London: Giles De La Mare, 1996).

¹⁵⁷ Höss. “Kommandant Memos.”, July 11th 1943, July 23rd 1943. (APMO)

¹⁵⁸ Höss. “Kommandant Memos.”, February 18th 1943, performance of the opera Princess Greta by the Moravian Ostra, November 20th 1943, Performance of the play ‘The Stream’. (APMO)

¹⁵⁹ Rena Kornreich Gelissen and Heather Dune Macadam. *Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996). p.102.

who had a talent for entertainment being used by the Nazi guards for at least one night of enjoyment. These amusements were a chance for the guards to socialise with one another and another means for distraction from their everyday work in the camps. They were often fuelled by stolen alcohol, as well as the *schnapps* rewarded to officers who had taken part in an extermination, and large amounts of food prepared in the SS kitchen would be served.¹⁶⁰

Rewards, Benefits and Drawbacks

For the guards who distinguished themselves, there was the opportunity to visit the small Auschwitz sub-camp of Solahütte. Relatively little study has been conducted on this camp, until a photo album was donated to the USHMM. This was due to the lack of source material available. But it is clear that it functioned solely as a means for the guards to relax away from the main camp. Solahütte was a small spa resort and hotel created by the Nazis, situated by the picturesque lake Międzybrodzkie. Located less than 20 miles from the Auschwitz main camp, the resort comprised a large dormitory-style cabin with multiple bedrooms, a sun deck and smaller cabins for the leading officers. The entire complex was built and maintained by Auschwitz inmates.¹⁶¹ It was used as a retreat by the officers stationed at Auschwitz, as a place where they could sunbathe, hunt, swim and hike. It also provided an opportunity to leave Auschwitz when the camp had been shut down due to a Typhus outbreak.¹⁶² The picturesque area offered guards a ‘safe space’ to relax away from the extermination camp without having to travel too far from their post; moreover, the area remained guarded in the hostile environment and featured a contingent of prisoners stationed to provide service for the

¹⁶⁰ Hermann Langbein. *People in Auschwitz*. Translated by Harry Zohn, (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). p.421

¹⁶¹ Edward Liszka. “Deposition.” *First Prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal*, Translated by Dorothea Preslaski, (23 July 1947). <https://www.zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra/publication/3295/edition/3274/content>.

¹⁶² Höss, “*Kommandant Memos.*”, September 11th 1942. (APMO)

guards. In the now-famous Höcker album - comprising photographs of German guards relaxing at Solahütte, including *Aufseherinnen* Volkenrath, Ehlert and Brandl - the guards are pictured in various pursuits and can be seen laughing, listening to an accordion player, and enjoying blueberries; these were activities that took place while, just 18 miles away, exterminations were in full force at Auschwitz.

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 3 Group of Female Aufseherinnen and Helferinnen at Solahütte. Taken from the USHMM Höcker Album ¹⁶³

The photographs of Solahütte create unease for the historian for a number of reasons, offering a view of an altogether different side of life within the camps and showing known perpetrators of genocide outside of the chilling setting that is associated with them. They are

¹⁶³ All images from the USHMM photo archive and readily available on their website. USHMM. "Höcker Album." USHMM, <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museumscollections/collectionshighlights/auschwitz-ssalbum/album>

located in one of the sub-camps of Auschwitz, but instead of being a camp dedicated to the extermination of human beings, this was a camp entirely dedicated to the pursuit of Nazi enjoyment.¹⁶⁴ Further separating the sectors of humanity from one another, they were rewarded as ideal agents of the Aryan Race for destroying 'submenschen'. That these human beings were able to effortlessly use the prisoners as tools and sources for their own pleasure, with complete disregard for their feelings and well-being, is especially difficult to comprehend from a contemporary perspective. The easy laughter of those pictured combined with the knowledge of their actions within the camp, generates a stomach-churning representation of the multifaceted world of Auschwitz.¹⁶⁵ In creating Solahütte as a space for them to relax, Nazi commanders demonstrated that the Auschwitz complex must function not only to destroy elements of society that the regime saw as 'subhuman', but also as a place of amusement for the Nazi guards that were stationed there.

The *Aufseherinnen*, like other military units, were able to request leave and many took regular trips home to see their family, often bringing back items that were hard to find in Germany due to war time shortages, luxuries such as coffee and fruit.¹⁶⁶ They could also take regular trips into Oświęcim (the nearby Polish town, renamed Auschwitz by the Germans), or travel further afield to Krakow during their time off. These trips offered the guards a chance to socialise outside of the camp, either with Germans stationed in the town or with ethnic Germans from the locale.¹⁶⁷ It was on these trips that they could also purchase items or seek services not available in the camp. The town of Oświęcim changed to fulfil the needs of the Germans stationed at the camp and also the nearby Wehrmacht unit. Tellingly, it was increasingly ethnic Germans who sought to profit from their new position in society:

¹⁶⁴ Piotr Setkiewicz. "Das Aussenkommando SS Solahütte." *Hefte von Auschwitz* 25 (2012): p.193-202.

¹⁶⁵ Paul Lowe. "Picturing the Perpetrator." (London: UAL, 2012). p.14

¹⁶⁶ Tillion. *Ravensbrück*. p.64

¹⁶⁷ Alix Christie. "Guarding the Truth." *The Washington Post Magazine*, February 26th 2006.

although they were still regarded as ‘beneath’ Reich Germans, they nevertheless enjoyed greater liberties and chances for promotion over the ethnic Slavs. German-only restaurants and bars were opened within all Polish towns, and shops materialised that were designed to cater to the needs of those now resident in the vicinity.¹⁶⁸ German legislation required German and Polish customers to frequent different shops and, while the Polish ration was designed to starve the populace, the occupying Germans could still enjoy food in plenty.

However, there were some drawbacks for the camp guards. The trips to the town were frequently stopped when the camp was placed on security or disease ‘lockdown’ which often occurred during particularly large outbreaks of typhus in the camp. These measures, which forbade the movement of any personnel outside the camp zone, aimed to limit the sickness to within the camp boundaries.¹⁶⁹ These conditions affected not only the guards stationed in the camp zone but any other family who happened to be visiting, as they were now not permitted to leave the perimeter of the camp zone. This was the case for *Aufseherin* Liselotte Janda whose mother and sister were granted permission to visit but were then not allowed within the camp zone due to a Typhus outbreak.¹⁷⁰ This also curtailed any leave that was planned, with it often being temporarily cancelled and sometimes not reimbursed. The need for a lockdown due to epidemics happened multiple times during the camp’s operation and shows the risks that were often present to the guards.

Yet, in truth, relocation to Auschwitz for many of the guards offered them the opportunity to escape their old lives and what many perceived as the sheer banality of everyday society.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Burleigh. *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich*. (Vol. 8: CUP Archive, 1988). p.106

¹⁶⁹ Within the memos of the Commandant restrictions are often placed on movement for the SS at Auschwitz. July 9th access to Oświęcim was banned due to Typhus 1942, and again on January 21st 1944.

Rudolph Höss, Artur Liebehenschel, Richard Baer. “Kommandant Memos.” (APMO)

¹⁷⁰ Rudolph Höss, Artur Liebehenschel, Richard Baer. “Kommandant Memos.”(APMO) June 3rd 1943

Here the under-educated and lower-class women could enjoy the perks of their new status and exercise the supposed superior qualities attributed more generally to the Aryan Race by Nazi ideology. When stationed in the East the women enjoyed comfort and wages that far exceeded what they could expect within Germany, especially due to war time shortages making everyday life increasingly difficult.¹⁷¹ While the prisoners struggled to survive, the guards profited. For many young women, their service in Auschwitz was a time to enjoy their youth away from parental controls and societal views of ‘appropriate’ behaviour. They regularly socialised with their male counterparts without chaperones, gossiped with their friends among the female guards, and enjoyed activities at the nearby Solahütte resort or in the town of Oświęcim. While the Auschwitz Complex was a place of death and destruction for the inmates, it was evidently a place of increased personal freedom and joviality for the *Aufseherinnen* stationed there.

Health and Relationships

The experiments carried out within Auschwitz are some of the most well documented examples of Nazi barbarity and torture. Helpless victims were maimed and killed in the name of progressing the pseudo-science of eugenics, and the preposterous innovations of scientists determined by Nazi ideology to save the lives of German soldiers on the front. The perpetrators of these undertakings were doctors and nurses who, under the Hippocratic oath, had sworn to care for and cure any human beings; these were not the experiments of mad untrained psychopaths, but rather intelligent men and women with a duty of care, perhaps inducing greater revulsion. However, the primary role of the medical personnel at the camp

¹⁷¹ Paul Steege and Dennis Sweeney. “Everyday Life in Nazi Germany.” *German History* 27, no. 4 (2009): p.565.

was not to conduct experiments, but to provide necessary healthcare for the prisoners and the SS staff. Female guards were able to utilise the doctors and nurses providing care for the SS, not just within the camp but also nearby Wehrmacht soldiers, SS men on other details, and later the SS troop hospital stationed on-site.¹⁷² To fulfil these needs, the *SS Hygiene Institut* was created. Within this institute, blood tests were carried out, and the primary aim was to keep the Germans stationed in the locality fit for service. The *Institut* was first located in a block within the main Auschwitz I camp so as to be close to the SS barracks and be able to make the most use of prisoner functionaries as orderlies. In 1943, due to expansion and the unhygienic conditions within the camp, the *SS Hygiene Institut* moved to the subcamp of Rajsko located around 5km away from the main camp, situated in a former palace building within the village.¹⁷³ No records survive of the *Institut* from the period before 1943, but the time at Rajsko yields an almost complete record set of blood tests of both prisoners and guards. These records are useful for analysis of the medical conditions of the SS *Aufseherinnen* who were stationed within the camp, and, moreover, they are highly informative about the medical implications of working within the Auschwitz complex and how the health of all who came into contact with the camp could be undermined through the conditions of work. In addition, they also reveal to the historian how many of the female guards were plagued with relatively inconsequential worries for which they still sought relief, emphasising how their lives and health were, in their individual mentalities, completely removed from that of the prisoners.

¹⁷² Little work has been completed on the SS Troop Hospital, but an album of photos of its creation was deposited by Peter Wirths the descendant of Dr Eduard Wirths who was a physician at Auschwitz. The albums contents are readily available on USHMM website.
https://collections.ushmm.org/search/?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=ss+troop+hospital+auschwitz&search_field=all_fields

¹⁷³ *SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett. (AMPO)*

Particularly prevalent within the records analysed for this thesis are tests performed to identify typhus within the blood stream, with multiple examinations being carried out on three of the *Aufseherinnen* stationed within the camp.¹⁷⁴ This was not unforeseen: due to the universal spread of typhus within the camp there were frequent large-scale epidemics, making typhus the largest killer within the Auschwitz complex. Typhus disease was spread through the lice that swarmed over prisoners' bodies, clothes and hair. It infected everything within the camp due to the filthy conditions and the lack of sanitation or cleaning for the prisoners, allowing the camp to become a haven for the mice and rats that the lice lived on, to thrive. Although the prisoners were aware of the danger carried by parasites, their condition did not allow them to rid themselves of their pediculosis. The disease caused by bites would eventually invade the circulatory system and heart, leading to a long and protracted death. The camp authorities did little to stop the spread of typhus, mainly due to the epidemics perceived 'benefits' from the Nazi point of view; it was a main measure in keeping the camp population in check. However, this explicitly Social Darwinian stance changed with the death of SS *Hauptsturmführer* Dr Siegfried Schwela in May 1942. Schwela was the chief camp physician in Auschwitz and became infected with the disease through repeated contact with prisoners.¹⁷⁵ The death of a serving SS man within the camp at the hands of typhus, and the frequent contact with prisoners that all SS personnel endured, placed the elimination of typhus from the camp as a top priority. Yet, the eradication of typhus from the camp was never completely achieved, as the actions necessary to improve the camp and stop the epidemic went against the Nazi ethos of work and starvation to death – the prisoners considered sub-human by their captors needed no better conditions in the eyes of the camp authorities. Disinfectant baths were introduced but this became another process of torture,

¹⁷⁴ *SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett. (AMPO)*

¹⁷⁵ Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle*, May 10th 1942. p.165

with prisoners being dumped into the freezing cold baths.¹⁷⁶ The disinfectant was rarely changed and so typhus continued to spread.

Within the sample of records collated for this thesis there are three separate cases of typhus present within the blood tests, including one where the infection is present but lies dormant within the blood.¹⁷⁷ This is indicative of a subject who had recovered from the first release of the infection into the body; typhus could lie dormant and then reactivate into a new state of lytic production.¹⁷⁸ This is a fate that many concentration camp survivors faced, continuing to suffer with the symptoms of typhus several years after leaving the camps, a fact detailed in records recently released regarding claims made by prisoners after the war. It is clear that typhus continued to affect their nervous system and led to respiratory problems later in life.¹⁷⁹ The ongoing symptoms would have continued to affect the guards who had previously contracted the disease, they would continue to endure outbreaks of sickness from the dormant virus. Within the records investigated by this author, there are two cases of women suffering from typhus fever at the stage when the virus was active within the body and present in the blood; as such the effects of the infection would be appearing, first becoming apparent through flulike symptoms. Of the two guards suffering from typhus fever, one made a full recovery (Margot Dreschel), whereas the fate of the other, *Aufseherin* Jacoba Rouloufs, is unknown, this is the only record that places her as serving within Auschwitz.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Michael Thad Allen. *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labour, and the Concentration Camps*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). p.38.

¹⁷⁷ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 7/1 (No.353), Vol 12 (No. 516) & Vol 26 (71/26) and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears (AMPO)

¹⁷⁸ L. Adelsberger "Typhus Fever in Auschwitz Concentration Camp." *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association* 7, no. 3 (1952): p.102-03.

¹⁷⁹ "Miss K McCarthy" TNA: FO 950/1937 (1964-1971), awarded £3000 for trauma in concentration camps including Typhus..

¹⁸⁰ *SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (AMPO) Margot Dreschel's record is *Vol 26 (71/26)* and Jacoba Rouloufs multiple records concerning typhus are *Vol 7/1 (No.353 & No. 75/3)*.

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 4 Record of Margot Drechsel (Drexler) blood test carried out at the SS Health Institut with suspicion of Typhus.¹⁸¹

Typhus is known to have killed several SS operatives stationed within concentration camps as well as their spouses, due to the lack of effective treatment once infected.¹⁸² Also present within the records are precautionary tests given to *Aufseherinnen* to check for the presence of typhus.¹⁸³ In regard to treatment of the SS, any fever or influenza-like symptoms would lead to blood tests being immediately ordered. These symptoms could be the first sign of typhus and, for the SS, early diagnosis could ensure that they made a full recovery. For example, Edith Nestroy – when displaying influenza-like symptoms – was immediately tested for

¹⁸¹ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 26 (71/26) and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (AMPO)

¹⁸² Setkiewicz. *The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS*. p.59

¹⁸³ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 17 & Vol 30 and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (AMPO)

typhus, and no signs of the disease were present within her blood work.¹⁸⁴ The fear of typhus was widespread throughout the camp for both prisoners and guards alike, and many of the SS *Aufseherinnen* increasingly tried to avoid service in Auschwitz on account of its reputation for poor sanitary conditions and high presence of typhus and other epidemics.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, although the threat for guards was high, they could expect comprehensive medical treatment once infected and so had a much higher rate of survival than the prisoners within the camp, for whom the disease was an almost certain death sentence.

The high concentration of typhus among the camp guards is illustrative not only of the conditions within the camp but also of the severe health risks of working within Auschwitz. The threat of disease and serious injury provides the historian with important details concerning the guards' lives and their level of interactions with prisoners. In many of the trial documents and statements given after the war by the SS *Aufseherinnen*, they relate how little contact they fostered with prisoners, and that they rarely set foot within the actual camp grounds.¹⁸⁶ However, the high prevalence of typhus as a medical concern reveals the inaccuracy within these statements. For the transference of typhus on this scale, there must have been frequent prolonged interaction between prisoner and guard; the lice would have had to of been able to move from the bodies and clothes on multiple occasions as, in all probability, not every guard would be infected by a single louse or interaction. This must also

¹⁸⁴ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 2/2 (36/26) and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (AMPO)

¹⁸⁵ This is mentioned in numerous trial documents of the guards, who claimed to have tried to avoid service within Auschwitz. For example, Maria Mandl's testimony in the Cracow trial, she claims that she refused to go to Auschwitz and would rather have stayed at Ravensbrück, however it is only after a discussion with Pohl where she was advised that she would face punishment if she did not accept that she took the role. *Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy. "The Krakow Trial of the SS Garrison."* Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Krakow: National State Archives of Poland, 1947).

¹⁸⁶ *Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy. "The Krakow Trial of the SS Garrison."* Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Krakow: National State Archives of Poland, 1947). Mandl in her testimony claims that as Senior Warden she worked in the office and did not have the authority to enter most sections of the camp. This is further stated by Langefeld in her deposition with the Americans that she was located primarily in the offices and had little contact with prisoners. *"Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans."* RG338-000-50-11. (NARA: College Park. 1946.)

be contrasted to the living conditions of the guards in comparison to the prisoner barracks. Indeed, after the epidemic of typhus that led to SS *Hauptsturmführer* Dr Siegfried Schwela's death, measures were installed regarding the cleanliness of SS staff lodgings and clothing to prevent the spread, with scheduled disinfecting of living quarters and regular washing of linen and uniforms. In addition, there was also the separation of prisoner functionaries that worked with the SS into separate living areas to further limit the spread of infection to the guards.

The records from the institute also indicate the high levels of stress the *Aufseherinnen* experienced, and the further medical effects that work as a guard had upon the women in particular. For example, Angina is present in 7% of the records within the sample, making it the most prevalent medical problem for which attention was sought.¹⁸⁷ Angina – chest pain that is caused by the tightening of the muscles around the heart, restricting blood flow – is particularly amplified by stress. Left untreated, it can lead to heart attacks or strokes. The frequency of angina within the records is significantly higher than typical in samples of the wider population. The national average of people suffering from angina is around 2%, although this was slightly higher in the 1940s, and is routinely more prevalent in men and those above 50.¹⁸⁸ The sample of *Aufseherinnen* from Auschwitz, therefore, exceeds the norm for their demographic.¹⁸⁹ This would suggest that the conditions that these women were working in within the concentration camp was negatively affecting the health of guards due to both the physical and mental stress placed upon them. Although by no means does this present itself as a source of contention to the deeds that were carried out by the perpetrators.

¹⁸⁷ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 11a/b (271) and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears (AMPO)

¹⁸⁸ Thomas A. Kohut. *A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century*. (London: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹⁸⁹ Cardiology, Textbook of. "Chest pain /Angina Pectoris." *Textbook of Cardiology*, http://www.textbookofcardiology.org/wiki/Chest_Pain_/Angina_Pectoris.

The three women within the sample records that developed Angina do not fit within the average statistics of those who face the highest risk in terms of age or gender. Their average age places them at 24 years old, under half the anticipated age of casualties, normally aged over 50 and with a sedentary lifestyle. Not only were these guards much younger than this, but they would have led a highly active lifestyle, walking the vast campgrounds, or accompanying prisoners to work details located several miles away. Many of the female guards without driving ability or a means of motor transport would have used push-bikes to get around, while the others would have walked the long distances.¹⁹⁰ From prisoner descriptions and photographs of the guards taken during and after the war, it is clearly apparent that they were not overweight, further limiting the physical explanation for the prevalence of angina. Unlike prisoners, the guards were fed a sustainable portion of calories giving the required sustenance, and this was further supplemented by alcohol and supplies from stolen red-cross parcels and possessions bought to the camp.

¹⁹⁰ The use of pushbikes is mentioned in numerous records, both scholarly and survivor testimonies, an example of a guard is Irma Grese, whose use of a bike is mentioned in; Daniel Patrick Brown. *The Beautiful Beast: The Life & Crimes of SS-Aufseherin Irma Grese*. (Ventura, Calif.: Golden West Historical Publications, 1996).

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 5 Map of Auschwitz-Birkenau the sheer size of the camp would mean that the guards would have led an active lifestyle carrying out their duties ¹⁹¹

Therefore, the explainable symptom and one that could lead to angina was high levels of stress, both mental and physical. One of the guards who suffered with angina and sought medical attention for her symptoms was Irma Grese. Young at 20 and physically active, she was in charge of the extensive B IIc camp at this time, and it is unlikely that the traditional causes of angina would apply to her. However, in May 1944, she was placed in charge of the large family camp, with 20,000-30,000 prisoners under her charge,¹⁹² it is likely that the growing number of prisoners and duties that she was required to perform began to take its toll on her body resulting in high levels of stress and eventually angina:

¹⁹¹ Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle*, p3.

¹⁹² Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945). p.249-261

*In the beginning when there were smaller numbers of them, and they had sufficient to eat they were quite all right. Later on, when I had twenty to thirty thousand they behaved like animals.*¹⁹³

Grese's testimony emphasises that, as numbers grew, she no longer felt able to deal with the situation and this had a negative impact on her health. The records thus suggest that within this work environment and the constraints of the job, conditions were conducive to the development of angina. As conditions continued to deteriorate and prisoner numbers increased, the health of the guards deteriorated along with them. They were no longer able to cope with the work and, in numerous cases, had reached the end of their mental and physical strength. This can particularly be seen alongside the timeline of the war, with the presence of angina as a medical problem only beginning in 1944 as the Russians approached the camps, and the number of prisoners exceeded the official maximum occupancy.¹⁹⁴ It is clear that, although the guards may have been involved in the sadistic and brutal treatment of their wards, over time their actions and the conditions in the camp had an adverse impact on their mental and physical stress levels, leading to this surge in angina as the war turned against Germany and conditions deteriorated.

Guards not only visited the *Hygiene Institut* for more serious and potentially debilitating problems, but also for minor ailments that, although uncomfortable, were of no comparison to the living hell that the prisoners in the camp faced in the complete absence of any medical assistance. There were several instances of tonsillitis, boils on the nose and a case of cystitis.¹⁹⁵ Ailments such as these appear trivial when compared to the diseases that the

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.251

¹⁹⁴ Rees, *Auschwitz*, p.325.

¹⁹⁵ *SS-Hygiene Institut Vol 2/2 (560) and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett*. Translated by Charlotte Mears, (*AMPO*)

prisoners suffered with, evidence of the disparate worlds that prisoners and guards lived in, further emphasising that guards were able to mentally separate themselves from prisoners. While prisoners would regularly die of malnutrition and pain due to their daily existence, any slight suffering experienced by guards was often too much for these women to bear themselves.¹⁹⁶ That these women were troubled by a boil on the nose when every day that they worked saw them indulging in actions purposely meant to kill prisoners, arguably shows ultimate narcissism – they truly felt that they were members of an upper echelon of human society and that their inconveniences were far more important than the lives of those below them on the Nazi racial scale of humanity.

The cystitis is indicative of wider medical problems that the doctors of the *SS Hygiene Institut* had to deal with in regard to the female guards; women faced their own set of medical problems that required attention, such as cystitis, gynaecological problems and pregnancy. Not only were female medical complaints a cause for concern for the *Aufseherinnen* but also, due to liaisons with their male counterparts in the SS, there was the frequent worry of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, several of which happened at Auschwitz.¹⁹⁷ Although frequent attempts were made to stop sexually transmitted diseases through the licensing of prostitutes and the establishment of brothels at concentration camps, these problems persisted.¹⁹⁸ It is therefore of great importance that analysis of these records discusses not just severe problems such as typhus and how it affected the guards, but also –

¹⁹⁶ Elie. A. Cohen. *Human Behaviour in The Concentration Camp*. Translated by M.H.Braaksma (London: Free Association Books, 1988). p.63-81.

¹⁹⁷ Rudolph Höss, Artur Liebehenschel, Richard Baer. "Kommandant Memos." Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO) January 7th 1944. The construction of a sexually transmitted disease clinic within Auschwitz.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Sommer. "Forced Prostitution in National Socialist Concentration Camps—the Example of Auschwitz." *Forced Prostitution in Times of War and Peace: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls* 160 (2007)

through the ‘normality’ of their ailments – that for many female guards their worries continued to be a part of their everyday lives.

The records used here to examine the health of the SS *Aufseherinnen* within Auschwitz have never before been utilised in a study of the guards’ lives. Through this fresh source work, it is possible to establish new facts about how the women’s health suffered while serving in the camp complex, and the consequences of this in their treatment of prisoners.¹⁹⁹ Through the presence of Typhus, it is clear that there were prolonged periods of contact between prisoners and guards, and that the dire living conditions of the camp inevitably spilled over into the lives of the SS. This interaction is something that was strongly denied in the post-war trials, with many female guards claiming that their role of supervisor rarely took them into the camp.²⁰⁰ However, given the evidence noted above concerning the spread of the disease, such claims simply do not hold credibility. It is apparent from these records that the job of guard was stressful, and that the living conditions and actions expected of the guards may have taken more of a toll on their psyche than had previously been recognised. The frequent stress-based illnesses show that, as the conditions worsened and the *Aufseherinnen* were required to take on greater responsibilities, their bodies were simply unable to keep up.

However, what is of chief importance is the knowledge about the manner in which the guards were able to separate their work from their daily life, that these women sought advice for medical problems in much the same way as when they were *not* in SS service. As prisoners died from the epidemics in the camps and refused to seek treatment due to the fear that a trip to the *Revier* would end in a trip to the gas chambers through selection, the guards saw no

¹⁹⁹SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, *SS Lager-Lazarett*. (AMPO)

²⁰⁰ As previously mentioned, the lack of interaction between guard and prisoner is claimed by both Mandl and Langefeld in their depositions.

problem with maintaining their own health to the highest standard possible. Thus, a further emphasis on how, for many of the women stationed at Auschwitz, they saw their role as a ‘typical’ job and that they viewed their lives as completely separate to the lives of those suffering within the camp due to their status in the Nazi hierarchy.

Relationships

For many of the women stationed at Auschwitz, their journey to the East and territories newly acquired by the Reich presented them with their first experience away from their homes and families. The majority were young, in their late teens and early twenties, in an unknown hostile environment, with increasing demands of brutality placed upon them. Many of the women turned to their fellow guards for reassurance about their actions and for stability from the madness of the concentration camp. Everyone had the opportunity to write to families and friends back in Germany, and did so to varying degrees, notwithstanding that for many of the less-educated, writing was a skill that neither they nor their family had.

Presenting further difficulty was the institution of secrecy and censorship that surrounded the concentration camps; it was expressly forbidden to mention camp conditions, punishment or the extermination process to those outside the system, in part because of the possible shame that their families might feel.²⁰¹ Many also faced disappointment and hostility from their families for choosing to work within the camps, this being an unpopular employment for many Germans who saw this type of employment as outside the ‘respectable’ female realm. Irma Grese’s, an *Aufseherin* within the camp, father forbade Irma from entering the house or

²⁰¹ Irma Grese’s father disowned her upon her enrolment in the concentration camp, this is mentioned by her sister during the trial. It is also of note that many *Aufseherinnen* report a lack of familial structures during the post war years. Brown. *The Beautiful Beast*, p.10.

having any contact with the family when she returned in uniform from her job at the nearby Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. This experience was echoed by many of the women who sought shelter after the war, and who were turned away by their families' due to their wartime actions.²⁰² Although there are reports of some family members taking the time and completing the long journey to visit their daughters at Auschwitz this was highly rare, both due to the distance that needed to be travelled and the reluctance of many Germans to have anything to do with the concentration camps. One of the few examples of a visit to the camp is that of *Aufseherin* Liselotte Janda, who received a visit from her mother and sister in June 1943, for a few days.²⁰³ It is unlikely that the mother and sister would have been allowed inside the camp complex but, rather, they would have enjoyed time in the nearby town and countryside exploring Germany's recently conquered territory. These visits were in the minority and many of the female guards' families chose to stay away for a variety of reasons, through disgust at their daughters' jobs, because rumours of the atrocities taking place in the East had begun to filter through to Germany, or because many felt during wartime that they had neither the time nor resources to make the journey.²⁰⁴ While we cannot be completely certain as to why many families and friends decided to turn their backs on the *Aufseherinnen* located in Auschwitz, what is apparent is that – upon moving to the East – many of the women lost all familial ties to home, forcing them to create new bonds with those who shared their workplace environment.²⁰⁵

The lack of familial relationships, the distance from their loved ones and the destruction of the previous social groups that the women had relied upon prior to the war, led to the

²⁰² Philips, *The Belsen Trial*. p. 247-8

²⁰³ Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle*. June 3rd 1943. p.412

²⁰⁴ Claudia Koonz. *Mothers in the Fatherland*. (New York: St Martins Press. 1987) p.413.

²⁰⁵ Elissa Mailänder Koslov. *Gewalt Im Dienstalltag: Die SS-Aufseherinnen Des Konzentrations- Und Vernichtungslagers Majdanek*. (Hanburg: Hamburger Edition. 2009). p.98.

formation of intense bonds between female guards. Many of the older and more experienced guards formed bonds with the new recruits similar to those between sisters. This acted as a means of creating new social structures to rely upon.²⁰⁶ The tight living and working arrangements continued to foster these close bonds between the guards who, in an environment as unique and complex as the concentration camp, needed to maintain contact and foster dependencies with people who knew of and could relate to their actions without judgement. Significantly, this continued in the post-war period, with many women again relying on these secret bonds to relive their actions with a sympathetic ear and without fear of reprisal²⁰⁷. These bonds were also focussed on the basis of the younger recruits seeking approval and acceptance of those who were more experienced in the Nazi system of torture. The recruitment and training of the guards was considerably shortened during the war as the need for more guards intensified. This created a system of apprenticeship under those with more experience. This process intensified the scrutiny on the new guards, as they had to strive to adapt to the system quickly and under the watchful eye of a chastising *Aufseherin*.²⁰⁸ There was a measure of hazing, with new recruits being given the most unpopular jobs and expected to prove themselves in violence, to be a part of the group. Recruits had to ‘prove’ that they had the strength and inner stamina for the work and, further, that it was worth the guards helping them to acclimatise – if they would become a liability to the *Aufseherinnen* then there was no need to put in the effort.²⁰⁹ Brutality was a cause for praise and could mark a woman out for advancement up the career ladder of the *Aufseherinnen*, but to show too

²⁰⁶ Johannes Schwartz. “*Weibliche Angelegenheiten*”: *Handlungsräume Von Kz-Aufseherinnen in Ravensbrück Und Neubrandenburg*. (Hamburg: HIS, 2018). p.64.

²⁰⁷ Ulricke Weckel Wolfrum & Edgar. *Bestien Und Befehlsempfänger. Frauen Und Männer in NS-Prozessen Nach 1945*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

²⁰⁸ Daniel Patrick Brown. *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System*. (Atglen PA: Schiffer Pub. 2009). p.7.

²⁰⁹ Sarah Helm. *If This Is a Woman*. (London: Little Brown. 2015). p.129.

much relish for the violence too early could displease and repulse the more experienced guards.

That the bonds between guards were important was illustrated by the case of *Aufseherin* Hildegard Lächert, a guard who was regarded by her associates as taking too much enjoyment from the brutalisation of prisoners at Majdanek and, later at Auschwitz, and who was as much hated by the guards as by the prisoners. Lächert was born in 1920 in Berlin and entered into the service of the camps at Ravensbrück in 1942. After her training, she was transferred to Majdanek in Lublin and, after an affair with an SS Mann, to Auschwitz Birkenau. She was prosecuted after the war in the Krakow Auschwitz trial and, after her release from Polish custody, she was prosecuted again in Düsseldorf by West Germany. She served 27 years in prison for her crimes.²¹⁰ The guards held her in little regard due to her violence and lack of control; they saw her as unwomanly and insidious. Indeed, her reputation thus led to her being shunned by other members of the female guard garrison. Her actions and opinions were recounted in revealing source testimony from both prisoners and guards.²¹¹ This is clearly seen in the lack of sympathy towards her and in the quick and easy way her fellow SS *Aufseherinnen* were able, and indeed very willing, to recount details of the horror she inflicted. All the while remaining quiet about their *own* actions and those of the other women that they had created a closer bond with. The bonds formed between guards were a necessary and a fundamental part for the SS *Aufseherinnen* to participate in the actions of the Holocaust and to survive after the war. These close relationships created familial and

²¹⁰ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. Translated by Charlotte Mears, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C. & Trial 432 Concentration Camp Lublin-Majdanek (Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek), No.1/278. Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (HStA Düsseldorf)

²¹¹ This is apparent in Lächert's own trial documents with the witnesses that spoke against her, and the manner in which other guards dismissed her actions. This is present in her own trial but also those that were carried out in Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück.

social constraints to work within that allowed social structures to develop whilst in the camp, creating levels of secrecy and complicity for the perpetrator's actions.

Relationships between female guards created necessary bonds of friendship and reliance, but these were not the only ones formed within the camp. There were also a high number of both short and long-term affairs between male and female SS personnel of various ranks. A minority of women, when they entered camp service, were already married with families. However, the vast majority of the female recruits were single and without ties. In fact, well over 80% of women, when they registered to become *Aufseherinnen*, were either single, or widowed.²¹² As the war progressed married women were more tempted to register for service away from home, due to the loss of their husbands at the front and the split of familial units by distance or death, thus making the camps seem a more attractive prospect. They were located away from the mounting food shortages in Germany and the constant danger of allied bombing.²¹³ Nevertheless, for the vast majority of female recruits, the location in the East was particularly tempting due to its position far away from their families, and as such this meant that the job mainly appealed to single women. The women's single status, coupled with their young age, meant that the camp was a hotbed of sexual attraction, with many women seeking a partner or love match. Especially attractive was the position of the camp, staffed with the new elite of the German guard, the SS, who could provide social mobility and status to the largely working-class girls.²¹⁴ The combination of the locale in the East together with the personal loneliness of the occupation made these favourable conditions for new relationships to develop, with SS employees of both genders seeking solace in the arms

²¹² See the databases in Chapter 2 that present relationship status.

²¹³ Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1999. p.58-59

²¹⁴ Heineman. *What Difference Does a Husband Make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*. p.204

of one another. This created an environment where many short and long-term relationships prospered.

For many of these relationships there is no authoritative record other than vague statements found within survivor testimonies mentioning relationships among the guards; these do not offer enough detail or source material for the historian to authenticate and, as such, are not included in this study. However, for at least four of the *Aufseherinnen* stationed at the Auschwitz camp complex, through source material, it has been possible to verify that the relationships resulted in marriage to their respective partners.²¹⁵ For many of the women who came from rural backgrounds, with little family support and a low income, marriage to an officer within the SS was a highly sought after match, one that offered financial security and progression along new class ranks.²¹⁶ One of these matches was the marriage between Elly Hartmann and *SS-Oberscharführer* Franz Mauer. Hartmann was born in Furstenberg/Havel in 1920 and both met and married Mauer while an *Aufseherin* stationed in the Ravensbrück camp.²¹⁷ They moved together to Auschwitz in 1942 to continue serving in the camps. From this marriage, Elly would have expected to enjoy a greater amount of respect within the camp as a married woman and also to have seen her status rise. Originally from a small farming family in a relatively poor area of Germany, she was now married to a squad leader holding considerable power within the camp. This change in status also improved their living

²¹⁵ Hildegard Lächert's marriage is discussed in the Dusseldorf trial. Hildegard Lächert deposition. *Dusseldorf, HsTa Dusseldorf* (28 August 1973). Aufseherin Hertha Tack's marriage to SS Unterscharführer Friedrich Stiwitz is seen in her depositions to the 1st Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, in the files held at Hessen. Frankfurter Auschwitz Prozess. "HHSTAW Abt. 461 Nr.37638/29." Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Hessen: Hessisches Landesarchiv, 1964). & Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess, "HHSTAW Abt. 461 Nr.37638/30." (Hessen: Hessisches Landesarchiv, 1964).

²¹⁶ Helmut Krausnick. *Anatomy of the SS State*. (London: Collins, 1968). p.99-101

²¹⁷ Elly Hartmann, Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personal documents of the NSDAP / Party correspondence Translated by Charlotte Mears, , (Berlin Document Center (BDC): Personenbezogene Unterlagen der NSDAP / Parteikorrespondenz), R 9361-III/ 129058, Barch, Berlin. Elly Hartmann, Central office of the state justice administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen) Translated by Charlotte Mears, B162/3161. Barch Ludwigsburg

conditions and provided the opportunity for the couple to receive better housing; they would be moving out of the dorms and into a nearby flat or house in which the new couple could aim to start a family. The high number of marriages and relationships that took place within the camp is illustrative of the idea that, although their living situation and workplace had changed, many of the women still expected to carry out the same life patterns and roles that would have been expected within Germany. They had left home, they had a well-paid job, and now they needed a husband and to start a family, thus following the typical pattern for women at the time and the one encouraged by Nazi ideology – that women’s chief goal should be to have a large Aryan family.²¹⁸ Given this, the women stationed at the camp would have concerns that the average young woman could relate to; they would worry about their hair and their clothes, whether or not their boyfriend would like them and if they would be able to make an advantageous match. As *Aufseherin* Margarete says: "we all had boyfriends. The men were allowed to come over in the evenings."²¹⁹

Once they were off duty, the work they carried out was quickly cast from their minds. The desire to relax and separate themselves from their work within the camps was done with the full knowledge and encouragement of the authorities, after all the men and women serving within the camps had the highest degree of Aryan purity and had proven themselves in working for the Reich; the children they produced would be the next generation of Nazis for Germany. It is apparent that within the Auschwitz camp, for the perpetrators of the Holocaust, life went on as normal for the women guards; once they left work they were concerned with the trials of every young woman’s life, concerning friends and relationships.

²¹⁸ Claus Mühlfeld, and Friedrich Schönweiss. *Nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik: Familiensoziologische Analyse Der Nationalsozialistischen Familienpolitik*. (Stuttgart: Enke, 1989).

²¹⁹ Alix Christie. "Guarding the Truth." *The Washington Post Magazine*, February 26th 2006.

This is an unpalatable image of the mass murderer continuing life outside of work in much the same way as a typical 20-year-old girl inside the Reich.

Marriages were not the only outcome of the promiscuity that became an established part of the guard companies located within the concentration camps, especially in the East, as the moral decay of the guards and the camps continued. Shown typically through their brutal actions and increasing violence towards prisoners, this decay was also manifested in their attitudes towards sexual promiscuity, with casual sexual liaisons between guards becoming a frequent occurrence.²²⁰ This led to instances of pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and multiple partners. The sexual liaisons of the guards has largely been removed from the historical record, due to the lack of focus on the woman, and gendered individualism of perpetrators by post-war scholars. Furthermore, there are further limitations due to the lack of documentary evidence that these affairs left behind. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace some of the encounters and their differing outcomes such as pregnancy. One of these instances led to a marriage proposal, with *Aufseherin* Lisl Hasse, marrying SS Mann Schippel just prior to the birth of their baby in 1944, which legitimised the birth and offered Hasse the protection of marriage against moral judgement on her behaviour.²²¹ This was not the fate of the majority of women, who were forced to carry their babies to term, due to the strict anti-abortion laws in Germany at the time forbidding the abortion of Aryan children.²²² At least two babies were born of relationships started within the concentration camps. One was the daughter of Anna Grebe and SS Unterscharführer Leopold Baum, who was conceived during a brief

²²⁰ Wendy Lower. *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. (London: Random House, 2013). p.35, although Lower talks about the environment outside of the camps, as the whole of the east was seen as a 'lawless land' the principles can easily be applied to the concentration camp in the same manner.

²²¹ Ernst Klee. *Auschwitz: Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2013) p.165.

²²² Henry P, David, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn. "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany." *Population and Development Review* (1988): p.86.

relationship. The child was born in a Lebensborn Haus in Vienna and raised by the mother. After the birth of her child, Grebe left the camp service, returning to her family home and, after her death in 1945, Grebe's family raised her daughter. She was permitted no contact with her father, whom the family regarded as abandoning her mother and guilty of war crimes.²²³ The other child that is present within the records is that of Hildegard Lächert, who was excused from camp service due to pregnancy in 1943.²²⁴ No mention is made of the father, but it is likely it was an SS Mann with whom she formed a brief relationship during her time stationed at KL Majdanek. The child died after around two weeks and Lächert was transferred to serve at Auschwitz shortly afterwards.²²⁵ That these women carried their baby to term is not surprising, even without the support of the father. Undoubtedly there were more SS women who fell pregnant during their time serving in the camp and whose records have not survived.

Another aspect of sexual relationships involving female guards, which cannot be fully verified but for which there is evidence in survivor accounts, concerns some SS women who chose to abort their babies rather than face the shame of their family and the illegitimacy of their child. Within Auschwitz itself secret abortion was possible, as there were several doctors who would have been medically able to perform an abortion. However, for them to actually do so would be to commit a crime against the Reich, as only children who were known to have disabilities or were conceived of non-Aryan parents could be aborted. The abortion of healthy Aryan children could lead to punishment and imprisonment not only for

²²³ Jeanette Toussaint. "Mütter Und Väter Als Opfer Und Täter Im Holocaust." In *Mütterlich Macht Und Väterliche Autorität*, edited by José Brunner, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008).

²²⁴ See full database in Chapter 2 and Lächert is further discussed in Elissa Mailänder. *Gewalt Im Dienstalltag : Die Ss-Aufseherinnen Des Konzentrations- Und Vernichtungslagers Majdanek*.

²²⁵ "Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek" Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf

the parent but for the doctors who performed the surgery.²²⁶ It is suggested that to circumnavigate this problem, the female guards made use of the prisoner doctors within the camp instead.²²⁷ Many of the incarcerated women doctors were highly trained and specialised as gynaecologists before the war, and so the guards could rely on an inmate's fear to ensure their silence on the illegal matter; any that aroused suspicion could be disposed of by the *Aufseherin* with ease in such a murderous environment.

In her memoir, Gisella Perl, a survivor from Auschwitz who had previously been employed as a gynaecologist, recounts how she was instructed to perform an abortion on SS woman Irma Grese, knowing that this was illegal both in terms of the abortion and because, as a Jewess, she was not allowed to touch an Aryan. She explains that she did not know the father of Grese's child but that Grese was a bisexual and her promiscuity within the camp was well known.²²⁸ This statement on the termination of Grese's pregnancy by Perl is hard to corroborate, as there are no medical records or any other statements to attest to this incident. The lack of options may have encouraged many of the SS women to relieve the problems caused by their promiscuity in the camp via the doctors who were stationed there. As Perl explains, she thought that after the termination Grese would kill her to ensure her silence. This may have been a contributing factor as to why we know so little of these actions, with other doctors having been killed. However, the sexual promiscuity within the camp suggests that, at times, these measures may have been necessary. If Grese was unaware who the child's father was or did not wish to raise the child alone, abortion may have been the only option she realistically had available to her.

²²⁶ Henry P David, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn. "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany." *Population and Development Review* (1988): p.95.

²²⁷ Dagmar Herzog. "Die Quellen Waren Mit Sexualität Gesättigt." *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 19, no. 03 (2006): p.241-50.

²²⁸ Gisella Perl. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, (Salem, N.H.: Ayer, 1992), p.63.

It is apparent from these records of pregnancies that sexual intercourse was used by many of the guards stationed at Auschwitz to combat loneliness and to seek the solace of understanding from another colleague; in this way, relationships between perpetrators flourished within the territory of the Holocaust. Indeed, the fact that a wide variety of relationships were cultivated between the guards who were stationed within the camp is both undeniable and unsurprising, humans often form circles of dependency, and the need for these relationships would have been heightened in the necessarily insular atmosphere of Auschwitz. The need for these women to seek understanding among their compatriots who shared the same experiences was arguably increased by the knowledge that they acted against wider society's ideals and accepted norms through their active involvement in mass murder.²²⁹ These relationships continued to be utilised and heightened in the post-war period as the full extent of disgust was levelled at their crimes. The relationships further show how quickly and tightly these bonds formed. Different analysis is needed in reference to the developing romances which were created due to a sense of urgency and dependency fostered by the degeneracy and harsh reality of the environment. The creation of life, and the necessity of human connection between the perpetrators, is apparent by the sheer volume of relationships and their lack of longevity; after the war, it is noticeable that many of these romances collapsed. SS *Aufseherin* Herta Ehlert, who married an SS *Obersturmführer* during the war, later divorced him, and many of the fast-paced relationships of the camps trickled out in the secrecy of the post-war years.²³⁰ These relationships had specific needs and characteristics that were based on the conditions of the wartime locale. Many perpetrators aimed to distance themselves from their actions during the war and a spouse who shared

²²⁹ Lauren Elizabeth Wheeler. "Navigating the Multi-Layered Identities of the *Aufseherinnen*: Female Camp Guards During and after the Holocaust." Baylor University (2013).

²³⁰ *Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek*" Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf

culpability was a further manifestation of guilt. The presence of children created by these relationships may only have heightened the emotional trauma of these women's deeds: how could they destroy life when they had made a life within the same environment? Although these relationships had formed a necessary instrument for survival in the Auschwitz camp, these bonds were severed by many after the war, largely as a means to escape from past actions.²³¹ This is in contrast to those relationships between the women, who sought reassurance in the culpability of friends on whose underlying guilt they could depend.

Work

Within the concentration camp system, there were a wide variety of positions that the SS *Aufseherinnen* filled. Working in tandem with their male counterparts, they were expected to guard the female prisoners of the camps and also to extract the greatest production benefit from them for the economy of the Third Reich. To ensure efficiency and control the ranks of the SS, women followed the same pattern as the men. Many positions came with various perks and privileges as they climbed the career ladder; these included better rations, pay, and, unofficially at least, a greater ability to siphon goods from the ever-expanding Auschwitz economy.²³² Indeed, some guards were able to vastly profit from their time working in the camp, holding privileged inside jobs and abusing their access to a wealth of slave labour. In contrast, others were given duties meant as punishment, often located far from the camp and in miserable conditions. Certain *Kommandos* were intended as much for the punishment of guards as of the prisoners. Placements were the prerogative of the *Oberaufseherin* of the camp, the highest rank held by a female at Auschwitz. Her chief concerns revolved around

²³¹ Katharina Von Kellenbach. *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). pp.113-119.

²³² Eugen Kogon. *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*. (New York City: Berkley Books, 1984). p.98.

the female guards, specifically their living conditions, their behaviour both inside and outside the camp, and ensuring their responsibilities were met. The *Aufseherinnen* were not above petty disagreements and, if a woman wanted a better position within the camp, the easiest way to ensure this upwards mobility was through the maintenance of strong links with her superiors. Securing an inside job was just as desirable for the guards as for the prisoners. Guards would have to suffer the inhospitality of the Polish climate while supervising their charges, and also endure the long marches, although, of course, they did so with much better rations and clothing provisions.²³³ The camp was freezing in winter, with heavy snows on the ground and temperatures down to minus 20. Being outside for any period of time was unpleasant and dangerous without the right clothing and, in the summer, the area was humid and foul smelling due to the location on swampy ground, and the subsequent breeding of mosquitos.²³⁴ If a guard fell out of favour or broke any of the numerous rules of the camp, she would be sent to the penal company, which was regarded as a punishment for prisoners and guards alike. A guard punished in this way would be away from the main camp and without the luxuries the guards had become accustomed to; they often showed their distaste at the deteriorating conditions through their treatment of prisoners. Many survivor testimonies speak of the increased brutality of the guards when in this position.²³⁵ An example of the excess is the slaughter of female prisoners in Budy, by German functionaries who were encouraged in their actions by SS guards. The only description of this event is given is by SS Mann Perry Broad who describes the aftermath of the ‘bloody orgy’ that left 300 women dead through bludgeoning.²³⁶

²³³ Nikolaus Wachsmann; *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. (London: Little Brown, 2015), p.53.

²³⁴ Langbein. *People in Auschwitz*. p.109.

²³⁵ No memoirs of female prisoners that were sentenced to the Budy camp could be found, however a male prisoner also in Budy provides description. Zygula, Stanislaw. “Testimony of Stanislaw Zygula.” (Auschwitz Study Group, <http://www.auschwitzstudygroup.com/auschwitz-sub-camps/568-budy-testimonies>).

²³⁶ Perry Broad, “Reminiscences.” In *KL Auschwitz: Seen by the SS*. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon, (Auschwitz: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1945), p.123.

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Figure 6 Map of Auschwitz Zone of interest and some of the over 30 sub-camps within its network. Anywhere within this system where there were female prisoners, there would also be female Aufseherin to guard them. ²³⁷

²³⁷ Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle* p.3

The positions held by women in the camp were stratified in much the same way as their male SS counterparts. However, the female system was not as rigidly enforced; largely because, as SS auxiliaries, there was never as much need for a fully structured system. This was not a military unit and, in consequence, was less formal. Furthermore, with the frequent transference of guards between camps and duties due to the ever-expanding camp system and the placement of female prisoner camps within them, guards were regularly switched in function, depending on the most pressing need at any given time. A list of the titles most frequently used, and the duties associated with them are:

Aufseherin – female guard with no set specific duty; this is the basic rank held by all female SS auxiliaries and most often used as a descriptive rank.

Blockführerin – a guard with control over one or several living barracks for prisoners.

Kommandoführerin – in charge of a working *Kommando* located inside or outside of the camp perimeter.

Rapportführerin – supervisor level; in Auschwitz, there were usually at least two *Rapportführerin* at any one time, due to the number of prisoners. Controlling a complete administrative system, they would regularly have control over multiple *Aufseherinnen*.

Lagerführerin – had control over an entire camp, differing from the *Oberaufseherin* who controlled all *Aufseherinnen* and female prisoners within a complex; these guards were often centred at satellite camps which had sprung from original camps to make use of natural resources or a local demand for slave labour. In the case of Auschwitz-Birkenau, it was necessary due to the size and multiple functions within these sub-camps that there were multiple *Lagerführerin* at any one time to keep the camp running efficiently. This led to the creation of smaller camps within the Birkenau camp as shown in Figure 4.

Oberaufseherin – was in charge of all female guards and female prisoners within the camp; her function changed with the amount of infighting from her parallel male guards who often refused to subjugate themselves to the female in the role,²³⁸ however she held the highest rank possible for an SS *Aufseherin*. An example of the *Oberaufseherin*'s duties, as found in the Ravensbrück Camp Guidelines '*Lagerordnung*', are detailed below. These would have been transferred to other camps with little modification:

'1. The Oberaufseherin is accountable to the Schutzhaftlagerführer. She advises him in all matters related to women and supports and guides him within her area of responsibility. The cooperation of the camp leader and the Oberaufseherin should be purely good. The Oberaufseherin must be strict, just and prudent.

2. The Oberaufseherin reports the daily message to employees and prisoners and gives these to the Camp leader before the beginning of the work day.

3. Each day she must report the food supply from her employees and the prisoners to the administration. She gives a second copy to the kitchen.

4. The Oberaufseherin holds the daily early Appell of the Aufseherin and communicates new orders and regulations. Important orders are to be repeated once a month.

5. The Oberaufseherin checks the barracks of the Aufseherin for cleanliness and order. She supervises and cares for the female personnel to maintain adherence to the house rules and brings previous experience to the reputation of the Aufseherin and reports camp infractions to the camp director.

6. The Oberaufseherin instructs the blockältesten in their jobs and responsibilities.

7. Together with the camp leader, the Oberaufseherin sets the orders for the daily prisoner work commandos. On occasion she controls the work of the external commandos. She

²³⁸ Helm. *If This Is a Woman*. p.17.

submits written complaints to the camp leader. She also checks the blocks daily for cleanliness and correct making of beds.

8. The Oberaufseherin imposes punishments on prisoners and communicates this knowledge to ensure that the punishment is carried out immediately. Through consultation with the camp leader, the Oberaufseherin instructs the blockältesten on prisoner work. She prepares a short written report to the camp leader for the evaluation of prisoners.

*9. The Oberaufseherin reports illness of Aufseherin to the camp leader immediately and notifies the local doctor. Unexcused absences of Aufseherin must be immediately reported to the camp leader.*²³⁹

These ranks were not completely enforced and, at times, guards doing the work of a *Lagerführerin* are referenced as holding a lower rank. This was due to the ever-changing nature of Auschwitz, but also is reliant on the statement of witnesses who may not have understood the precise nature of the Nazi hierarchical system. However, these broad definitions provide an invaluable example of the *Aufseherinnen* structure within the Auschwitz complex.

The lack of scholarly discussion on the differing roles of female guards has led to a widely held assumption that *all* guards within the camp completed the same tasks and had equal involvement in the murderous aims of the everyday work of the camp. Thereby, the common idea has developed that they were all actively participating in selections and working within the system purely to enforce violence and enhance the machinery of extermination in its efficiency. The duties that have been the focus of these studies are the ones that have been transcribed into popular culture: the long Appells, the sauna (the stripping away of humanity

²³⁹ "Lagerordnung." Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives)

from the prisoners along with their hair and clothing), and the extermination process. These all feature heavily in survivor testimony but relatively few female guards were required for these processes. Women guards would have been counting the female prisoners during Appell, but they were always accompanied by a male SS doctor for selections. Similarly, male and female SS were involved in the sauna and registration process and, perhaps most surprisingly, no women guards were physical perpetrators of the extermination by gas process.²⁴⁰ This popular assumption, understandable though it is, has led to a weakness in familiarity with the subject of SS *Aufseherinnen* roles within the camp, and how the women guards actually carried out an array of jobs concerned with both prisoner lives and resource production inside the Auschwitz Complex.

For ease of discussion, the part of this study concerning work has thus been broken down into the hierarchical classes that the female guards occupied. The role of the *Blockführerinnen* was predominantly concerned with the daily lives of the prisoners. In part, their job was concerned with maintaining order and cleanliness within the barracks and, in theory, to ensure that minimum living standards were met. In reality, this was not the case, and the standards of cleanliness, order and nutrition continued to decline rapidly. In 1939, with the opening of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp for women, each female prisoner was to be assigned a bunk and a blanket, clean clothes and a shower every week, but as conditions deteriorated it was officially three inmates to a bunk and a blanket between three, with showers and access to the water supply highly sporadic, if ever.²⁴¹ It was the job of the *Blockführerinnen* to ensure that standards of order were met. However, in reality, overcrowding was far worse, with as many as 1000 women in a barrack meant for 200, and

²⁴⁰ Women were not involved in the gassing procedure itself, and were absent from the application of the chemical Zyklon B. They were, however, instrumental in the control of prisoners, the brutality in the camp and the selection of those who would be exterminated.

²⁴¹ Helm, *If This Is a Woman*. p.89.

many of the SS guards rarely ventured into the barracks due to the smell and the sheer crush of people.²⁴² In actuality, the *Blockführerinnen* delegated many of their tasks to the *Kapos* of each block, selected prisoners who would oversee the distribution of food and bedding space; they would also ensure that the barrack members were out of their bunks and lined up ready for Appell to be counted by their respective *Blockführerin*. The roles of these *Kapos* and prisoner functionaries were of huge importance for the smooth running of the camp and, as prisoner numbers increased, these functionaries grew in importance. Without their help, it would have been impossible to maintain order. While some *Kapos* tried to ease the suffering of those under their charge, many others tortured them mercilessly, making the prisoners' already hard existence even worse.²⁴³ Many of the *Blockführerinnen* would beat the prisoners mercilessly at Appell for any slight infringement of rules, when prisoners took a moment to slouch and warm themselves.²⁴⁴ The lack of order increased frustration, which the guards alleviated with their fists. Further it was at this time, that the guards would search inmates for any possessions they may have been able to organise, such as extra clothes, food or even paper used to stuff clothes for warmth. If any such items were found, it would mean a severe beating, or even death, for the prisoner.²⁴⁵

The role of *Blockführerin* was held by many of the *Aufseherinnen* who went through the camp. It was a task that could be held alongside other jobs, where they were also placed in charge of working *Kommandos* within the camp. For many of the prisoners, a good *Blockführerin* could mean that you had better rations of food, that you would be able to organise better, and that there was less propensity for violence. The *Kapo* of block 25, for

²⁴² Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. pp. 242-253

²⁴³ Jürgen Matthäus, ed. *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). p.22.

²⁴⁴ Anna Paweczynska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis*. Translated by Catherine S. Leach. (London: University of California Press, 1979). p.21.

²⁴⁵ Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*. Translated by Clifford Coch and Paul P. Weiss. (New York: Ziff Davis Publishing Co., 1947).p65

example, was a young Slovakian woman called Cilli, who was well remembered for her arrogance and sadistic violence to those who had already been condemned to die²⁴⁶. However, the duties that the *Blockführerinnen* originally held were increasingly given over to *Kapos*, with the SS guards required to manage multiple barracks. As numbers and duties increased, the staff were unable to keep up, and at any one time there were never more than 80 women serving consecutively at the camp. This reliance on prisoner functionaries created further hierarchies inside the camp, with Germans and long-standing inmates of the camp holding the best positions. Standing at Appell was one of the most vulnerable times for prisoners; any sign of weakness, such as a slight shiver as they stood, or a visible sore from a lice bite, could mean that the prisoner was considered unfit for work and sent to the gas chambers. Further, any possessions that were discovered that had been organised could result in a death sentence. Multiple inmates received beatings and more for having tried to improve their situations with items smuggled from Canada and then exchanged for bread. Olga Lengyel stated that her *Blockführerin* SS Hasse placed her in the group of prisoners to be sent to the gas chamber for having organised some wool, which she had stuffed into her clothes to help keep herself warm.²⁴⁷ This incident, concerning wool that was of no use to the guard and only offered a slight increase in warmth to the prisoner, shows the perversity of human interaction within the camp and the feeble reasons employed by *Blockführerinnen* in their attempts to control the mass of prisoners: they needed very little reason to take life away. The *Blockführerinnen* were crucial in maintaining the German efficiency so often associated with the camps, and it was their chief duty to ensure that all prisoners dead and alive were accounted for. To ensure that the job was carried out correctly, they treated the prisoners with

²⁴⁶ Matthäus. *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor*. p.35.

²⁴⁷ Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*. p.65

sadistic violence and were willing to send women to their death with little feeling or reasoning.

The *Kommandoführerinnen* fulfilled the function of SS supervisor for the various work details that existed within the camp. Auschwitz, unlike the Operation Reinhardt camps, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, was not solely intended for the extermination of human life. Instead, it fulfilled multiple other purposes, such as sustaining various economic programmes through forced labour, and re-education of anti-social elements of society. Inmates could, and were, released from Auschwitz at the end of their sentence, or if it was believed they could again be of use to society.²⁴⁸ These multi-functional goals led to the implementation of the policy of death through labour and led to the manufacture of various products to help with the war effort or for the profit of the SS within the camp complex. Within the network of Auschwitz camps there existed concentrated spheres of work: Auschwitz III, or Auschwitz-Monowitz, was centred around the large IG Farben factory, which had relocated for the sole purpose of exploitation of the cheap labour from the camp.²⁴⁹ There were also plants for Siemens and BMW, as well as many other companies who were able to make vast profits due to their use of cheap concentration camp labour.²⁵⁰ Other work details existed within the camp on a smaller scale. These focussed on numerous projects, including the repair and making of uniforms for German soldiers at the front, rope weaving, the mining of natural resources, and also more experimental work on agriculture which were located in the numerous sub-camps. All of these work details produced valuable resources that the SS could profit from, and they all needed SS guards to supervise them.²⁵¹ Importantly, for the women prisoners involved in

²⁴⁸ Franciszek Piper. "The System of Prisoner Exploitation." In *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, edited by Yisrael Gutman & Michael Berenbaum. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998).

²⁴⁹ Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁵⁰ Rees. *Auschwitz*. p.84.

²⁵¹ Franciszek Piper. "The System of Prisoner Exploitation." p.21

these tasks, it was down to the female *Kommandoführerinnen* to supervise them. However, not all *Kommandos* were interested in resource production; some were focussed on hard labour for labour's sake, such as the penal company, which was chiefly concerned with backbreaking labour for little gain. The aim of these *Kommandos* was not profit, but the destruction of human life. The *Kommandoführerinnen*' responsibility was to ensure targets were met. These rigid targets pushed the already malnourished and exhausted prisoners to breaking point. If, at any point, they stopped for a rest or slackened their pace for a moment's respite, the *Kommandoführerin* and the *Kapos* under her charge would leap screaming and thrashing onto the prisoner to make them work faster²⁵².

The *Kommandoführerinnen* were necessary for the supervision of a wide range of activities within the camp. There were *Kommandos* placed inside the kitchens, both the SS canteen located onsite and the prisoner's kitchen. There was also a *Scheissekommando*, those tasked with cleaning the latrines, together with a roadbuilding *Kommando*, and many others of differing size for every function necessary in the camp.²⁵³ The differing tasks, and the favourable returns that could come from the work, greatly influenced the way in which the prisoners were treated by the guards. There was also a large *Kommando* that worked in Canada, considered a privileged job for both guards and prisoners alike, due to the opportunities for the prisoners to organise vital items, such as warmer clothing and extra food. This position was also favoured by the guards as they were able to steal from the incoming prisoners, especially expensive items such as jewellery or good-quality clothes, which they would help themselves to and wear to parties – items they would never have been

²⁵² Judith Sternberg Newman, *In the Hell of Auschwitz* (New York: Exposition Press, 1963) p.29

²⁵³ The different *Kommandos* are mentioned in a wide range of survivor testimony when detailing the work they were tasked to complete within the camp. Detailed information can be found in; Langbein. *People in Auschwitz*. & Rees. *Auschwitz*.

able to afford themselves.²⁵⁴ Zippi, a prisoner in the camp, recalled how, towards the end of the war, she was tasked with sending a parcel of gold stolen from prisoners by an SS woman to her home in Austria.²⁵⁵ Other *Kommandos* included the laundry, where survivor Halina Birenbaum recalled how SS Woman Kuck bought her an egg when she was in charge of the laundry facility for helping Kuck complete a small job.²⁵⁶ These small acts of kindness were normally given by the *Aufseherinnen* when the prisoners completed a job or service for them, and could be a matter of life or death for many, as the rations provided were not enough to live on and supplements of any kind greatly helped. These deeds and small kindnesses, however, could never be counted on by prisoners, and the female guards in general were a lot quicker to show their displeasure with prisoners. While one received an egg from Kuck, another would tell how she was whipped by her for a small infringement of the rules.²⁵⁷

The most feared and hated of all *Kommandos* within Auschwitz was the Penal *Kommando*. A penal group had been in existence within the camp for male prisoners for as long as Auschwitz had been operational. It was utilised for prisoners who were to never leave the camp, those who had further trespassed on the rules, or somehow had incurred the displeasure of guards.²⁵⁸ With the expansion of the camp grounds and the ever-increasing number of women, a separate penal company was set up in Budy. The women sent to this camp were not intended to ever return and, with smaller rations and even more primitive living conditions, the survival rate of the prisoners was much decreased. Ostracism to the penal camp was not intended as a punishment just for prisoners but also for the SS

²⁵⁴ Kimberly Partee. "Evil or Ordinary Women: The Female Auxiliaries of the Holocaust." In *The Evil Body*, ed. April Anson. (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011). p.21.

²⁵⁵ Matthäus. *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor*. p.23.

²⁵⁶ Halina Birenbaum, *Hope Is the Last to Die* Translated by David Welsh (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc, 1971).

²⁵⁷ Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p209. Bormann argues that her and Kuck were very similar and that she was known for beating women.

²⁵⁸ Zenon Rozanski. *Caps Off...: A Report from the Punishment Company (SK) of the KZ Auschwitz*. Translated by Christine C. Schnusenberg. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012).

Aufseherinnen tasked to guard them. Located far from the luxuries of the main camp, the guard in charge of this *Kommando* would be expected to stay at the camp with the prisoners and would have had limited access to the luxuries of Auschwitz.²⁵⁹ The penal company was representative of how the guards could be punished in a non-official way for ‘improper’ behaviour and for incurring the displeasure of their SS superiors. Sentences to the penal company could be for relatively short periods for the guards, and they quickly tried to improve their situation. Thus, during the time of operation of the camp, several guards were *Kommandoführerin* of the penal company, including Elfriede Runge and Joanna Bormann.²⁶⁰

The focus of the *Rapportführerinnen* was concerned less with individual *Kommandos* and blocks, but with ensuring control and efficiency on a much large scale. In practice, they were supervisors of entire groups, with control over an entire apparatus, such as all the barracks, complete *Kommandos* or work offices. They were also influential in maintaining control within the camp and providing reports on prisoner number fluctuations and production of resources. These were delivered to the *Kommandant* of the camp and the *Oberaufseherin*, who would liaise with the SS Inspectorate.²⁶¹ Margot Dreschel (Sometimes referred to as Drexler), proceeded up the ranks from SS *Aufseherin* in Ravensbrück to SS *Rapportführerin* in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her role placed her in control over all the offices in Auschwitz Birkenau that were concerned with women. Her position awarded her a significant level of security and power and, through her control of the offices and the reports relating to prisoner numbers, she was actively involved in the selections of unfit prisoners. Dreschel would accompany the SS doctor on duty during Appell and to the hospitals located within the camp during selections, to remove women who could no longer be used for production.²⁶² Her

²⁵⁹ Wachsmann. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.104-8.

²⁶⁰ TNA: FO 944/965, (1945). & Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p208

²⁶¹ Wachsmann. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.297.

²⁶² Margit Bachner in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization*. p.120.

purpose was to record the prisoner numbers of the women who were classified as no longer fit for work, so that they could be registered for '*Sonderbehandlung*'.²⁶³ Survivor testimonies assert that she did not merely take on the passive role of recording but also added to the list any prisoners she personally deemed as being 'unfit' or took a personal distaste to.²⁶⁴ She seemed to derive particular delight in sending prisoners to their deaths, often helping them onto the trucks with a beating, further increasing the suffering of women on their way to be murdered. Further she was said to have enjoyed placing prisoners within the standing cell, where they would be imprisoned for several days without food and with little water and were unable to sit down.²⁶⁵ In her role as *Rapportführerin*, she would prepare the orders on work details, prisoner deaths and those selected for Special Treatment or death.²⁶⁶ It would also be up to Dreschel to ensure that accurate prisoner numbers were maintained after roll calls. It is clear from the hierarchy that the role of *Rapportführerin* was essentially a supervisory role in terms of interaction with prisoners and levels of control. They were a necessary cog in the machinery of Auschwitz, ensuring that detailed records were kept and that the camp was able to efficiently expedite resources and dispose of human life that (in line with Nazi racial philosophy) it no longer saw as being necessary.

The last position to be analysed is the role of *Lagerführerin*. Although suggesting complete control of an entire camp, at Auschwitz this position was held by multiple women at the same time due to the sheer sprawling nature of the complex. This translated into a *Lagerführerin* being in control of a sub-camp located separately from Auschwitz-Birkenau or being tasked

²⁶³ Sonderbehandlung was used by the Germans to imply the inmate had been sentenced to death. Often abbreviated to SB on forms.

²⁶⁴ Kornreich, Gelissen, & Macadam. *Rena's Promise*. p.120.

²⁶⁵ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. Translated by Charlotte Mears, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C.

²⁶⁶ Helen Spitzer. "Oral History Interview." By Joan Ringelheim (September 7 2000) RG-50.030.0462 (USHMM)

with running one of the smaller sections that made up the vast Birkenau camp. Due to the previously noted vast nature of the Auschwitz Complex, a *Kommandoführerin* could also be considered a *Lagerführerin* and vice versa if they were located at one of the smaller subcamps in the network, such as Rajsko or Babitz. Some of the *Aufseherinnen* placed in charge of small sub-camps included Florentine Cichon, who worked as *Lagerführerin* of Rajsko for a time, and Elfriede Kock, who was *Lagerführerin* at Babitz. Cichon was an ethnic German born in 1921 in Głogówek. She worked in numerous concentration camps despite her young age, including Flossenbürg, before she became a *Lagerführerin* at Rajsko. As Auschwitz was evacuated, she accompanied a death march. She was never brought to trial for her actions.²⁶⁷ Elfriede Kock, in contrast, was born in 1915 in Frierichsfeld. Again, she served in multiple camps throughout the war and was tried in the Krakow trial of Auschwitz staff and sentenced to three years for her role.²⁶⁸

Although in charge of a large group of prisoners, their position away from the main camp meant that, as well as controlling the working details of the prisoners, they would also be in charge of living conditions and the supply of food for the prisoners. The smaller sub-camps in the locale of the main camp were largely repatriated Polish villages, from which the inhabitants were forcibly expelled as the camp expanded and the buildings ‘recommissioned’ for prisoner barracks and workshops.²⁶⁹ These camps were chiefly concerned with agricultural innovations and experiments, sponsored by Himmler, to generate greater food processes. There was an aim that the camp would become self-sufficient and that these experiments would be implemented with the expansion into the East creating surplus supplies

²⁶⁷ TNA: FO 944/965, (1945).

²⁶⁸ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. Translated by Charlotte Mears, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C.

²⁶⁹ Yisrael Gutman. “Auschwitz- an Overview.” In *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*.

of food.²⁷⁰ Although the camps were able to produce fish and vegetables, it was the SS that benefited from the produce, while the prisoners' rations did not improve.

It is clear that this particular role was held by several women of differing ages and backgrounds. This was due to the ever-increasing demands placed on staff, allowing them to quickly gain authority and responsibility. The position of *Lagerführerin* could also be held when maintaining smaller camps within the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, Birkenau was so large it had been split into several smaller camps for ease. Irma Grese was *Lagerführerin* of BIIb, C Lager, placing her in the position of authority over around 30,000 Hungarian women who were transferred into the camp in 1944.²⁷¹ The vastness of the camp, and the differing functions that prisoners were required to perform, created an atmosphere that made it more efficient to have different managers for each of the several camps. For example, differing conditions within the family camp meant that men and women lived together, or within the quarantine section the prisoners did not work. These differences led to confusion when these groups did mix.²⁷² The duties of the *Lagerführerinnen* centred around the efficient running of the individual camps to meet German needs; they kept records of prisoner numbers, controlled movement, and were the first point of call if any escapes were made or prisoners went missing. These duties also extended to the mechanisms of death that were employed within the camp. The signatures of these women are found on the orders of those being transferred either out of the camp or to the gas chamber.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Peter Longerich. *Heinrich Himmler*. Translated by Jeremy Noakes & Lesley Sharpe. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 87.

²⁷¹ Wachsmann. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.460.

²⁷² Isabella Leitner. *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz*. (New York: Open Road Media, 2016) & Fénelon *The Musicians of Auschwitz*.

²⁷³ Dpr. ZOd/56a pp.172-174. Translated by Dorothea Preslaski, (APMO)

For a camp the size of Auschwitz to run smoothly, there needed to be a delegation of tasks through a complex system of SS *Aufseherinnen* and prisoner functionaries. As the number of prisoners increased, it was up to the SS women to take on more duties and to enforce terror. This is clearly shown through the hierarchy of roles that was adopted within the camp, even though these fluctuated depending on the scale of the assigned task. There was certainly motivation for progression and cruelty with the women's desire to further themselves along their chosen career path. What is clear is that *Aufseherinnen* were a necessary part of the Auschwitz staff to ensure that production ran smoothly and efficiently. They were involved in target-setting and inflicted violence on the prisoners under their control to drain any last energy from them. They also kept meticulous lists and notes on production and people that were utilised to further drive the prisoners. Furthermore, in terms of the nature of the work, what is also apparent is that the *Aufseherinnen* were responsible for a wide array of tasks and were not just present at Appell, as survivor testimonies and popular culture has emphasised. They were also supervisors of work details, in charge of sanitary conditions and housing. Ultimately, they were a key feature in prisoners' lives and fully participated in the brutalisation of the women sentenced to Auschwitz.

Prisoner Relations

The female guards were notorious for their brutality towards prisoners. As agents of the SS, they were an instrumental mechanism of the Holocaust and were, without question, part of the Nazi machinery of brutality. The traces of the Holocaust left behind, and survivor testimony has created an image of them as, without exception, brutally mistreating the prisoners under their charge. However, the reality is arguably more complex. A multitude of

relationships between prisoners and guards did form, both through violence but also through compassion and necessity. These interactions between prisoner and guard were necessary for the continued working of the camp. The most obvious of these is the relationship between *Kapo* and guard. Without the willing participation of the leaders of blocks and work detachments, it would have been impossible to have ensured that targets were met and order was maintained.²⁷⁴ It was therefore necessary for guards to show leniency to the *Kapos* and encourage their brutality towards their charges as it greatly reduced the physical and mental stress for the *Aufseherinnen*.

It is thus imperative to analyse the relationships that formed between guard and prisoner in order to better understand the character of the *Aufseherinnen*. The relationships that are both more conventionally associated with the Holocaust – interactions based on mistreatment and violence – and those that have not been as easily recognised, such as the close, friendly or compassionate relationships that were established. Further it is important for the historian to acknowledge how the guards were able to differentiate between prisoners of use and those that were easily discarded, and the reflection this had upon their treatment. These interactions provide important insights into the guards on a more familiar level, giving examples about the level of their indoctrination in Nazi ideology or whether the driving force of their violence was their own psychological prejudice towards certain inmates in the concentration camp. However, when used collectively, these interactions are of more use to this study and can provide insight into the mental strategies of the guards in the realisation of their actions and how or what differentiated prisoners as worthy of ‘compassion’.

²⁷⁴ Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp*. p.27.

The most common relationship between guard and prisoner within the camps was one of brutal indifference. For many of the guards, the prisoners were no longer human. In their eyes, the prisoners were viewed either through ideological beliefs detailing the ‘inferiority’ of certain types of humanity, the social status of opponents of the Third Reich, or they were reduced to a subhuman state due to their sheer number and the squalid conditions that prevailed within the camp.²⁷⁵ Training for the concentration camp included ideological lectures about why prisoners had been incarcerated, and how they had inflicted these conditions upon themselves due to their racial deformities.²⁷⁶ The prisoners were ‘humans’ at the very brink of humanity, doing anything that they could to merely survive in an inhospitable environment. This limited the interactions between prisoner and guard to nothing more than a relentless drive to maximise the prisoners’ energy and production output until they ceased to be of use to the German economy and could be disposed of. The violence used by the guards in matters of work, in an attempt to gain the most from the prisoners’ sources of energy, has been discussed previously. However, there is another aspect of the violence that was enacted by guards onto the prisoners and this is, perhaps, even harder to understand. It concerns the senseless acts of brutality that were meted out to prisoners and the psychological reasoning behind these acts. This is differentiated from the violence executed due to work or rule breaking. Rather, this is, instead, violence for violence’s sake. This is categorised as such due to the sheer unnecessaryness of the actions and the evident pleasure that some of the guards working within Auschwitz seemed to gain from inflicting this pain.

Many witness testimonies speak about random acts of violence committed by *Aufseherinnen*, based on their dislike of certain categories of prisoners. Jewish or Romani prisoners, for

²⁷⁵ Alette Smeulers. “Auschwitz and the Holocaust through the Eyes of The Perpetrators.” *Driemaandelijks Tijdschrift van de Stichting Auschwitz* 50 (1996): p.31.

²⁷⁶ Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.18.

example, were noticeably the most abused and were the ‘races’ most venomously criticised by Nazi ideology as being unwanted racial blights upon society.²⁷⁷ Other acts of violence were just committed as a reflexive action to combat stress or external circumstances that had nothing to do with the inmates themselves. Edvardson, a survivor, talks about how Maria Mandl would beat anyone who looked her in the eyes, particularly on her Sunday walk.²⁷⁸ This enacting of violence in response to a gesture of acknowledgement is a further assertion of the position of the *Aufseherinnen* as ‘above’ the prisoners. Although this may have been a means to assert dominance over prisoners and clearly complied with Nazi ideology, it may also have resulted from an inability to cope with the actions that the guards took within the camp – in other words, she could not face her victims or have them connect with her on an equal level.²⁷⁹ Making eye contact with prisoners could in fact ‘humanise’ the individual to the perpetrator, making her emotionally unable to cope with her infliction of extreme violence. Thereby, to send these women to their death would be, for Mandl, a means to an end to the conscious debate of the humanity of those imprisoned and how her actions were actually murder.²⁸⁰ Through the destruction of those with whom she interacted with, she no longer had to debate her actions. Noted in many accounts of Mandl is her vehement Anti-Semitism; her particular focus on Jewish prisoners was often a matter of life or death to those who felt the full extent of her rage.²⁸¹ Another example of unnecessary violence within the camps is that of Irma Grese, who was reported as particularly enjoying the sadistic violence entailed in her whipping and beating of prisoners. This was often focussed on the women who retained physical beauty after their months of suffering and, as such, she would

²⁷⁷ Wachsmann. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.19.

²⁷⁸ Cordelia Edvardson, *Burned Child Seeks the Fire* Translated by Joel Agee (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997). p.73

²⁷⁹ Majid Ghorbani, Yuan Liao, Sinan Çayköylü, and Masud Chand. “Guilt, Shame, and Reparative Behaviour: The Effect of Psychological Proximity.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 114, no. 2 (2013): p.315.

²⁸⁰ Smeulers. “Auschwitz and the Holocaust Through the Eyes of The Perpetrators”. p.39.

²⁸¹ Mentioned in numerous memoirs such as; Ruth Gutmann-Herskovitz. “Memoir 1933-1946.” Wiener Library 20360 & Elisabeta Anne Becher. “Deposition.” *Z 77/72 Volume 1* Translated by Dorothea Preslaski, (APMO).

particularly enjoy whipping them, becoming visually excited by the action.²⁸² Grese's preoccupation with violence seems not to have been concerned with racial matters but, rather, was a fixation on the beauty of women and her own narcissistic obsession with her own good looks. Indeed, there are countless hours of testimony on the random acts of brutality on the part of the guards that feature in every memoir, testimony or trial, and this is, often a key focus of primary sources. These acts are often unexplainable and show the propensity for violence exhibited through the behaviour of the guards.

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 7 Illustration made by concentration camp inmate Violette Le Coq of the treatment of prisoners by Aufseherinnen ²⁸³

²⁸² Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*.

²⁸³ TNA: Records of the National Archives (RW) 2/2/2, (1946)

What is also apparent, is that some of the guards did have reasoning behind these seemingly random acts, and that many of these reasons were due to personal bias rather than an action as part of the concentration camp system.²⁸⁴ Some types of behaviour towards prisoners were based on sexual reasons, such as Grese, whose reputation as a sadist suggests she may have been aroused by the violence, in Gisella Perl's testimony she states that Grese became sexually excited by whipping women's breasts.²⁸⁵ They may also have been for the simple enjoyment of violence, a fear of revolt or love of control. Perhaps more simply, they could have been merely a means to subjugate feelings of guilt by removing the faces of their victims. While the discussion of reasoning may be limitless, the actions, and their consequences, are undeniable.

However, also present within the camp, in contrast to random acts of violence, there were also random acts of kindness between prisoner and guard. While these sometimes served an ulterior motive for the guard, often these actions seemed completely random to their recipients. This could be the allowance of an extra slice of bread, warmer clothing, the chance to see a loved one, or even a respite from the gas chamber, usually delivered without rhyme or reason. These actions do not excuse the atrocities committed by the *Aufseherinnen*, but rather offer insight into the human aspect of these women; they have often been depicted as without feeling, but these actions (as limited as they were) suggest that there was still compassion (of a kind) and some understanding of the suffering within the camp. As Edvardson²⁸⁶ details, she was given a package of food by Mandl when she was out on her usual Sunday morning walk, after approaching the *Oberaufseherin* and requesting it.

²⁸⁴ Guenter Lewy. *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). p.83

²⁸⁵ Perl. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*. p.117.

²⁸⁶ Edvardson, *Burned Child Seeks the Fire*. p.73

Edvarson was new to the camp at the time and had been tricked into this dangerous interaction by some other prisoners; if this had been any other Sunday, it is highly likely that Mandl would have killed Edvarson on the spot instead of rewarding her but, on this particular day, she rewarded her. It is impossible to know Mandl's motivation for this random action, but what it does perhaps display is the manner in which outside circumstances may have impacted the duties of the *Aufseherinnen*. It is likely that this was a reflection of a good event in Mandl's life or a happy period. This works as an example alongside many prisoners revealing that, when close to starvation, they had received an extra ration or a potato from the guards, without understanding how or why these brutal guards had changed in their usual attitude so quickly. Margit Bachner recounts how her *Blockführerin* Lotte Klaus would turn a blind eye to when the women in her block were organising.²⁸⁷ It is these acts that show the necessity of luck for survival and that, sometimes, even a small action was able to save a life. Extra food rations or warmer clothing in the camps could be the key to survival for some, and these often came from the guards whose job it was to destroy this life.

These spontaneous interactions of 'kindnesses' on the part of the guards are hard to analyse and comprehend, presenting a further difficulty for historians seeking to understand the multi-faceted world of Auschwitz. It is impossible to pin down the motivation or discern the full extent of this behaviour. However, there were interactions of kindness that were based more on trade, and these *are* possible to analyse – those that fulfilled a purpose within the camp or a specific need. Lucky recipients of such acts could expect to receive a more lenient attitude from the guard regarding the rules, or the opportunity to make their lives a little more bearable through possessions and food from Canada. This form of interaction was officially limited to prisoner functionaries and *Kapos*, although it could occasionally be extended to

²⁸⁷ Margit Bachner in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization*. p.120

those who did particular deeds to benefit the *Aufseherinnen*.²⁸⁸ For example, the women in the orchestra received better conditions and rations than normal camp members, and those who performed particular services, such as hairdressing or dressmaking for the guards, were often rewarded with an extra ration or an item from Canada that could be traded.²⁸⁹ Those who received the most benefits from the guards were the *Kapos* and prisoner functionaries: they not only received preferential treatment in terms of rationing, substituting their own rations with a larger helping than the normal prisoners underneath them, but they also had access to greater food sources from the kitchen and Canada. *Kapos* of various blocks and *Kommandos* were able to help others in their position, building up a kind of network of co-operation.²⁹⁰ They also enjoyed better accommodation, with their own room and blankets, not having to share the disease-ridden bunks five abreast.

However, for these prisoners, remaining in good favour with the *Aufseherinnen* was paramount. If they fell into their displeasure, through rule breaking, or the actions of the prisoners under their control, they quickly could be stripped from their position as *Kapo* and, as such, lose their protection. This would almost certainly result in the death of the *Kapo* at the hands of the prisoners they had abused, a fact which the *Aufseherinnen* knew and often used to their advantage. This ‘power play’ between the different rungs of prisoner within the camp was a measure orchestrated and controlled by the guards, as it served the purposes of the Nazi hierarchy not only in terms of productivity for the camp, but also in terms of control. The guards were untouchable at the top of a vicious food chain that saw all those who were underneath them as dispensable.

²⁸⁸ Livia Bitton-Jackson. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years*. (London: Pocket Books, 1988).

²⁸⁹ Theresa Gericke. “My Story.” (London: Wiener Lib Unpub 4289).

²⁹⁰ This is mentioned by several survivors and is also acknowledged in; Richard Newman, and Karen Kirtley. *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000). pp.275 -280.

Specific information on the scale of the violence enacted by the guards is unavailable. However, based on research undertaken for this thesis, and from what is already known about the conditions within the camp and about the camp personnel, it is possible to argue that *all* the female guards participated in violence towards prisoners. This is largely because it would have been impossible not to.²⁹¹ In itself, violence was at the very heart of the function and mechanism of the concentration camp and refusal to participate in its application ensured the *Aufseherinnen* would face punishment for breaking the rules: this was through flogging, expulsion from the guard service, or being placed in either prison or a concentration camp. SS *Aufseherin* Annemarie Brennermann, for example, was the recipient of this punishment in 1943, when she complained of the corruption of the SS and was reported for treating the prisoners under her charge too leniently and showing favouritism.²⁹² For this, she received 25 lashes with the whip wielded by the *Kommandant* and SS *Aufseherinnen*. She was then sentenced to the prison in Myslowitz, where she later died. Her actions suggest that, while some guards did object to the treatment of prisoners in the Holocaust, this was highly risky; those that did so were severely punished and remained in the minority, as violence was both expected and encouraged.²⁹³ The case of Brennermann also discredits the statements made by many of the guards in their post-war trials that they had acted with leniency to prisoners, or that they had tried to leave the service. Those that objected were not merely allowed to leave the service of the camps: they were imprisoned and were subject to be the recipient of the same actions and conditions that the prisoners endured. Furthermore, it is impossible to say that these guards objected to the conditions in Auschwitz. This is a falsehood. It is far more accurate to say that they were involved in the violence and participated willingly, and if they

²⁹¹ Lewy. *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers*. p.46.

²⁹² Ernst Klee. *Auschwitz: Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2013). p. 51 & Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*.

²⁹³ Thomas Blass "Perpetrator Behaviour as Destructive Obedience." In *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, ed. Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

did not enjoy the work, they were not willing to make the sacrifices to their own health that came with objecting.

The relationship between prisoner and guard was one that was typically entrenched in violence and hatred. The guards sought to extract as much production and energy from incarcerated inmates before they ceased to be of use to the concentration camp economy. This extraction; energy for economy was the primary focus of their employment – they were to guard the prisoners, but also to ensure that the Third Reich profited from them. This is the interaction that is most discussed and easiest recognised: aggression and torture was part of the *Aufseherinnen* job description. However, relationships cannot just be ascribed to following orders and Nazi ideology and, as such, this was not the only violence that was present within the camp. The concentration camps as a system were instinctively violent by nature; every day was a constant battle for survival in an unforgiving environment and this invariably meant that for one individual to survive another victim would have to perish. In this setting of industrial-level destruction of human lives, aggression and brutality became a part of everyday existence and categorised all relationships, not just those between the *Aufseherinnen* and the prisoners.²⁹⁴

Added to the inherent aggression of the camp was the nature of some of the guards, who were often characterised by their propensity to violence. Delivering physical blows with no value, they seemed to revel in the inhumane environment that they had found themselves in and, rather than hindering and controlling such propensities as in everyday society, the unprecedented environment of the concentration camp gave full fruition to this nature and a

²⁹⁴ Langbein. *People in Auschwitz*. p.97.

free leash away from ‘normal’ civilised forms of behaviour.²⁹⁵ Here in Auschwitz they could maim and punish, torture and kill, without fear of retribution or questioning of their actions. The most notorious example of predisposition towards sadism is the *Aufseherin* Irma Grese, who has entered popular culture as the ‘She Beast’ of Auschwitz. Characterised as a woman who joined the camp service as a means to allow her to realise her sadistic sexual needs; the camp gave her an environment in which to indulge her supposed bisexuality and sadism.²⁹⁶ Although these charges can never be proven, as there is no documented evidence of her interactions, it has entered historical mythology as fact, both through media representations and popular culture. However, what is undeniable about Grese is that she participated in extreme violence, specially crafting a whip to enforce further pain upon her charges, violence was not something she backed away from but strived to be a part of.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, it is apparent that women in the camp in a position of power carried out violence for enjoyment. This was not to fulfil a need or their training, but rather the nature of their own psyche and the environment. The only small refraction against this all-encompassing violence is that there were relations between prisoners and guards that were not solely based on violence and economic production. These interactions based on kindness were cited by many of the guards in their post-war trials. Arguing that as *Aufseherinnen* they enacted violence only when following orders, and that in actuality they sought to do everything in their power to help prisoners. Whilst it is true there were random acts of kindness, these were in the minority and, throughout the history of Auschwitz, there was only *one* guard who was ever prosecuted for her leniency towards the prisoners. These acts of kindness, rather than being in opposition to the idea of guards who had no choice but to inflict violence, in fact reveal that these were

²⁹⁵ Michael Mann. “Were the Perpetrators of Genocide “Ordinary Men” or “Real Nazis”? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographics.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000): p.333.

²⁹⁶ Lauren Elizabeth Wheeler. “Navigating the Multi-Layered Identities of the *Aufseherinnen*: Female Camp Guards During and after the Holocaust.” (Baylor University, 2013). p.107-9.

²⁹⁷ Brown. *The Beautiful Beast*.

women who *could* choose their actions and were directly responsible. They could choose whether to inflict pain on the prisoners or to alleviate it, even if this was for only a minute. Through guard/prisoner relationships it is easier to see the self-defining nature of the *Aufseherinnen* and that they continued to operate by their own standards, adhering to their own moral compass.

Conclusion

This chapter was particularly focused on providing a concise social history of the *Aufseherinnen* at Auschwitz. One of the most important factors in this effort to achieve a deeper understanding of the female guards was to discover more primary source information ascertaining to their lives and motivations for joining the concentration camps. This involved visiting a wide range of archives in different locations, as set out in the methodology. It was important to not only visit Auschwitz-Birkenau itself but to spread the network of research wider, using testimonies from the guards that were stored in the National Archives in the UK, The National Archives of the USA, as well as smaller archives in Germany such as Düsseldorf, Hamburg and Dresden that contained information about trials in the post war period. These official documentations were further enhanced by a collection of survivor witness testimonies that gave further information about the actions of the guards from the perspective of the victims. It is through the expansion of the primary sources consulted and the use of multiple source deposits that this thesis sits apart from the previous studies that have taken place on the *Aufseherinnen*. Whilst the previous literature that has featured the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz is a useful and worthwhile addition to holocaust literature the practice of previous scholars to rely solely on one data set creates an unfulfilled narrative, an issue that this thesis has tried to circumnavigate.

Through the social history compiled it has been possible to ascertain and explain the hierarchy of the female *Aufseherinnen* that was established in Auschwitz, and the impact that this had on job roles, duties and interpersonal relationships. Through a deeper understanding of how the women were grouped and the functions they performed in the camp a more in-depth analysis of the work details of the women has been achieved. The roles the women held depicted the different aspects of the camps, the importance of maintaining good relationships with superiors to secure an inside job, and the punishments that guards could face for rule breaking, such as being forced into the penal company. This information provides a gendered narrative of work within Auschwitz itself and further demonstrates the lives of the guards outside of official documentation. In regard to the functionality of the guards the key source material came through official documentation, such as camp records, or the *Lagerordnung* from Ravensbrück.²⁹⁸ These official sources were then supplemented by testimony from both witnesses and perpetrators that allow a fuller impression of the *Aufseherinnen* lives within the camp.²⁹⁹

A key focus of the study was to understand the actions of the guards that had been left out of testimony, how these women were also involved in the administration, *Kommando* control and were a hands-on force within the camp. The chapter has sought not to devalue the trauma of the survivor but to better understand the functionality of the Holocaust, power relations and perpetrator roles. Through better understanding of the roles of the guards and the meanings of the titles they were given, the evidence presented here has further enhanced knowledge into a thorough diagram of functionality. In addition, through analysis of the female hierarchy, it has been possible to understand the complicated system of workings in

²⁹⁸ “Lagerordnung.” Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives)

²⁹⁹ Perpetrator statements about their work within the camp were highly useful, these largely came from the trial records and the depositions given before them. See the Bibliography for all trial documents consulted in this thesis.

the camp, and how the situation progressed as the camp changed function and prisoner numbers increased. The manner of this exploration was not just to focus on the Auschwitz - Birkenau camp, where most of the women were stationed but also to understand how the subcamps interacted with the main camp and how this related to the *Aufseherinnen* stationed there. It became clear that the sub-camps and removal from the solidarity of Birkenau deeply affected the women and that isolation was used as a punishment for *Aufseherinnen* and to display the displeasure of superiors.

Consultation of the medical records at Rajsko, a previously un-utilized resource for the study of the *Aufseherinnen* at Auschwitz, provided new knowledge about the living conditions at Auschwitz and how the environment impacted upon the SS that were stationed there.³⁰⁰ The records depict the medical ailments of the guards and how this relates to their time in the camp. Through detailing the medical conditions which the *Aufseherinnen* contracted, such as Typhus and Angina, allowed the research provided here to contribute new evidence about the general conditions in the camp. It is this nuanced information from which we can especially learn; the degree of Typhus, suggests that guards had a high level of interaction with the prisoners, while the evidence on Angina is able to highlight that the guards experienced stress, to such a high extent it took a toll on their wellbeing. Further, these primary source records also provide the historian with important new information on how guards' lives continued in much the same way, with them seeking treatment for minor ailments such as nose boils. In addition, it can be suggested that many of the women saw their time as a guard in the camp as merely a job; they were unfazed by those dying around them and sought to seek medical care for ailments that were more of a nuisance than a threat to their lives, emphasizing the difference between them as 'human' and the prisoners as beneath them as

³⁰⁰SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett. (AMPO)

‘subhuman’.³⁰¹ The Rajsko records are a hugely important asset for understanding how the *Aufseherinnen* lives and health was affected by Auschwitz which had previously not been used, further study of these records would greatly enhance knowledge of all of the SS stationed at the camp.

Another research facet that has been hugely important to this thesis is the exploration of relationships that the *Aufseherinnen* created whilst stationed at Auschwitz; among each other, among other members of the SS and with the prisoners under their charge. These multifaceted relationships offer insight into the psyche of the guards, detailing how their personalities were impacted by their time within the space of the concentration camp. That they were able to foster deep relationships with each other suggest a sisterhood of guilt or a bonding that is reflected by actions that the outside world could not understand.³⁰² To explain the extermination process to an outsider would have constructed feelings of guilt and certainly critical judgement, however, to decompress after a day in the camp to another *Aufseherin* would be to communicate with someone else engaged in the mechanisms of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the creation of relationships of a romantic persuasion, along with the varied activities for the guards, creates a picture of the ongoing lives of the *Aufseherinnen*. Their lives continued along similar patterns to which they would have if they had stayed in the Reich, they went to dances, the cinema, they socialized and began relationships that led to marriage and children, the natural progression of life for many women at the time, it was just that their lives played out alongside the background of mass murder. It is then recognizable that perpetrators of the Holocaust must be reconciled with their actions outside the camp, through an ability to do this the Holocaust becomes an environment not solely of the

³⁰¹ Lewy. *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers*. p.86.

³⁰² Von Kellenbach. *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators*.

Auschwitz camp but instead has a far wider environmental impact. The occupation of Poland and the extermination policy of the Nazis entered into the towns and landscapes around Auschwitz as perpetrators continued with their lives. This must be put into the narrative of perpetrators to consider the depth of emotional responses to their actions and the Holocaust.

Further, it was important to analyse the relationships between perpetrator and victim. The singular narrative of violence and murder create a one-dimensional impression of the *Aufseherinnen* as monsters, their role as perpetrators is not disputed nor is the aim to relieve guilt or condemnation from them but to recognize them as women and as human. The majority of interactions with prisoners were based on the system of brutality that defined the concentration camp, to categorise the *Aufseherinnen* as monsters reinforces the idea of a faceless mass of perpetrators, which prevents knowledge and disassociates the women from guilt. Furthermore, the ongoing efforts of patriarchal society to have women who commit these crimes seen as monsters is an unrealistic device that removes their human features and them as women.³⁰³ This allows them to be judged separate to their gender, by committing these crimes they have disgraced their femininity and have been cast out of womanhood, as such they will not face trial as women but as 'other'. Through this study it has been possible to see that there were multiple interactions where the guards acted with kindness, or just with indifference to the prisoners, which again marks a change from the brutality. This may have been down to a connection with some prisoners like Mandl and Alma Rose, or with *Aufseherinnen* Brunner who saved Ewa Brewster due to the friendship that she had cultivated with Brewster's mother.³⁰⁴ These connections are then able to recharacterize the *Aufseherinnen* as human, as women and not as 'monsters.' They are not without emotion,

³⁰³ Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*. (New York: Zed Books, 2007). p.15

³⁰⁴ Ewa Brewster in Lore Shelley. *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization*. p.165. & Richard Newman, and Karen Kirtley. *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. p.288.

they are able to establish and maintain friendships, relationships and acquaintances. This does not change their role as perpetrators of the Holocaust, does not diminish their crimes but rather emphasizes the human nature of the women as perpetrators, choosing to commit murder within an extreme culture of genocidal violence.

In sum, through the compilation of this social history, it has been possible to take a closer look at the lives of the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz. The aim of the research was to seek further knowledge about a specific group of women and to better understand their functionality within the Holocaust. This, in turn, enables more scholarly knowledge of the mechanisms of destruction that the Nazis sought to use and, further, how it was possible for ‘ordinary women’ to become mass murderers.³⁰⁵ To add further impetus to this study, and the chapter there has been a focus on utilising newly available resources such as the UNWCC, and the newly released Claims for Reparation records. This has been supplemented by employing established record sets in new ways, such as the tracking of guards through the ITS, and the employment and analysis of medical records for new insights into the conditions experienced by those working within the camps. The study has been further enriched by careful exploration of archival sources at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück and many other national and regional archives in the search for more information on these women. Through this multi-focal methodological approach, it has been possible to assemble a more thorough picture of the lives of the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz. In Chapter 5 the thesis will take the discussion from the general ‘macro’ level into a more ‘micro’ approach, with a series of case studies of selected individual women who worked as guards.

³⁰⁵ In reference to Christopher Browning and his study of the ‘ordinary men’ of Police Battalion 101. This thesis works along the same premise of ordinary German women becoming key cogs in the mechanism of the Holocaust, although within the formalised setting of the concentration camp rather than as part of an Einsatzgruppen. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992).

Chapter 4 – The Guards Post War -Accountability and Justice

At the conclusion of the war in 1945 and after the liberation of the concentration camps, it was down to the Allies to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Holocaust and other wartime crimes. They were tasked to hunt down those responsible for committing actions that were in complete disregard of human life. This was handled in a notably mixed way, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Prosecution trials of ‘high profile’ Nazis were held, both at Nuremberg and local state level across Germany.³⁰⁶ Whilst the Holocaust itself was never recognised as a war crime, violations of human rights and the actions of the Germans towards Prisoners of War in the camps were certainly viewed as unlawful and morally wrong. This theoretically placed the *Aufseherinnen* in the category of criminals for their roles in the concentration camps. However, while attempts were made to bring many of the more notorious guards to justice, in reality, it was only those who held high positions or were particularly remembered for their sadistic violence who were made to answer for their crimes. Overall, only 10% of the women who served within the concentration camps were ever brought to justice.³⁰⁷ This chapter seeks to discuss the trials and activities of the *Aufseherinnen* in the post-war years. Furthermore, it will examine the historical material to assess how gender played a part in these circumstances.

There were three main trials in the immediate post-war years that sought to legally convict concentration camp staff and were concerned with women. These were the Bergen-Belsen

³⁰⁶ Devin O Pendas, ‘Seeking Justice, Finding Law: Nazi Trials in Post war Europe’, *The Journal of Modern History* 81, no. 2 (2009), pp.64-68.

³⁰⁷ This percentage is from both the database which is found in Chapter 2 detailing the after war fate of the *Aufseherinnen* and other estimates that have been made by scholars, such as Daniel Patrick Brown and Wendy Lower in their research work. See Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002), and Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Random House, 2013).

trial, conducted by the British, the Ravensbrück trial, also conducted by the British, and the Krakow trial of Auschwitz staff carried out by the Polish government. There were further smaller trials at local levels that sentenced *Aufseherinnen*. These hearings in the immediate shadow of the war were followed several years later with a renewed sense of consternation over the actions of the Nazis and the failure of the justice system with further trials. These were especially influenced by the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1962, which reignited society's awareness of the Holocaust and a need for greater punishment for the perpetrators. Eichmann's case triggered the Majdanek trial held in Dusseldorf from 1975-1981, as well as the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial from 1963-65.³⁰⁸ However, this drive for conviction of the perpetrators of the Holocaust continued into more recent times with the deportation from America and case against former *Aufseherinnen* Hermine Braunsteiner in 1981, and Elfriede Rinkel in 2006.³⁰⁹

The Belsen Trial represented the British attempt to come to terms with the horrors that they had encountered on the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp. The images and films of the first discovery of over 15,000 corpses and 60,000 severely emancipated humans within the camp had deeply affected not only the armed forces but the general public of the Allied countries, which had thus far not been confronted with the Nazi extermination policy.³¹⁰ It was widely held that someone had to stand trial and pay for the loss of life and torture of people under the Nazi regime. Although the trial was initially intended to pass judgement on the camp personnel situated at Bergen-Belsen, as further information on the methods of mass

³⁰⁸ Don D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial* (WW Norton & Company, 2002).

³⁰⁹ Catherine Elsworth, 'Woman Who Married Jew Exposed as a Concentration Camp Guard', *The Telegraph*, 21st September 2006, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'Is It Ever Too Late to Seek Justice?', in *Holocaust Encyclopaedia*.

³¹⁰ See, for example, 'Killings at Auschwitz', *Western Morning News*, 3rd October 1945, 1, and Stanley Burch, 'Nazis Murdered 1,500,000 Jews', *The People*, 26th November, 1944, 1, as well as numerous other similar reports.

extermination and maltreatment that had been used in the East came to light, the trial took into account actions at the Auschwitz camp as well. Three women were sentenced to death for the roles they played within the Holocaust: Irma Grese, Juana Bormann and Elisabeth Volkenrath. Hertha Elhert, Hertha Bothe and Isle Förester were given prison terms.³¹¹ What is noteworthy about these sentences is that it was only those guards who had served at Auschwitz and been involved in the mass extermination by gas that were sentenced to death.

Questions of gender and public reaction to female involvement in the genocide were especially important to how the perpetrators were depicted to wider society. Their gender marked them out as something ‘other’ to what is typically imagined as a murderer, never mind a mass murderer.³¹² Societal recognition of gender impacted on the way that the female guards in the Belsen trial were treated by both the press and the court system. The three guards were made to embody the negative traits of females and used as an example of the ‘degeneracy’ of Nazi Germany, preaching on how Fascism was a perverting influence on ‘good women’.³¹³ Bormann, who was aged 52 at the time of her trial, was given the stereotype of the bitter old hag, the unmarried woman whose bitterness and resentment had turned her cruel. Described as Gnarled, Hideous and Hunched, it is a clear transformation from woman to witch.³¹⁴ Grese, in comparison to Bormann, took on the other often proscribed negative notion of women and became the symbolic fallen woman, ‘The Whore’.³¹⁵ Her narrative was that of a great young beauty, and the reporters made much of

³¹¹ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945).

³¹² Susannah Herchel, *Does Atrocity Have a Gender? Feminist Interpretations of Women in the SS*, Edited by Jeffrey M Diefendorf, Vol. 6, *Lessons and Legacies, New Currents in Holocaust Research* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004).

³¹³ Hanna Rosin, *The End of Men, and The Rise of Women* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), p.64.

³¹⁴ ‘SS Woman Weeps over Her Cruelty’, *Gloucestershire Echo*, 29th September, 1945, and Kerr McFee, ‘Woman Beaten by Kramer’, *Shields Daily News*, 1945.

³¹⁵ Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), p.42.

her looks and her sexual tastes.³¹⁶ Although unsubstantiated by any official documentation and playing no role in the trial itself, statements from survivors had begun to tell of Grese's deviant sexual actions within Auschwitz, and this was used in popular publications to further condemn her for breaking gender norms. Grese had always desired fame and, for her, the publicity was a way to make this a reality. The different ways in which these two concentration camp guards were portrayed within the media and during the trial illustrates the use of gender roles to condemn women for their actions. The prosecution could have solely relied on their deeds within the concentration camp but, instead, they tried them as women who had stepped out of gender constructs and deserved equal punishment for this. These ideas were exacerbated to provide a commentary on the manner in which the patriarchy expects women to act. Furthermore, it is apparent that gender traditionalism was an important factor in how the women were judged. Not only were they murderers, but they were female, which became a double crime in the eyes of critics.

The trials at Belsen depict the attempts by the Allies to begin to deal with the circumstances of the Holocaust and process how to punish those who, under a deviant ideology, had sought to exterminate another race. Of the countless women who had served at Bergen-Belsen and had been moved to the camp as the front on the East began to close, it was only these three who were sentenced to death. While the other women faced imprisonment, a growing feeling of resentment emerged from survivors: how could those who had been instrumental in the murder of so many be given such short prison terms that they were often released early from?

³¹⁶ Numerous articles were published focusing on Grese's looks and the deviant nature of her actions, an example of which is Vincent Evans, 'The Beast Grins in Court', *Daily Express*, Tuesday, 18th September, 1945, and 'Irma Grese in Tears', *Liverpool Echo*, Tuesday 16th October, 1945.

The next trial concerning *Aufseherinnen* was the Auschwitz Trial held in Krakow, Poland, and administered by the Supreme National Tribunal (Polish Authorities). Five *Aufseherinnen* stationed at Auschwitz were put on trial, including Maria Mandl, former Head Guard. Johanna Langefeld, her predecessor, was also anticipated to stand but was helped to escape by former prisoners before the proceedings could commence. This trial stood as a direct response to the atrocities carried out in the East, held less than 100km from the camp in which these women had served. The Polish population were still living with the scars and trauma of the Nazi occupation. Many had lost family and suffered starvation and brutalisation under Nazi rule. It was here, where the blood of millions had been spilt, that the greatest need for justice was felt.³¹⁷ This trial had a double purpose. It was not only to give justice to the victims but also to portray the invading Soviets as liberators rather than another oppressor to a distrusting populace. Through the Soviet policy of stridently punishing the Nazis, the new Communist authorities sought to seek common ground with the Polish people they now intended to control. It is in these controversial circumstances, fraught with political intrigue, that many of the women were tried.³¹⁸ The women prosecuted were mainly high-ranking *Aufseherinnen*, of whom there had been a concerted attempt to extradite to Poland at the war's end.³¹⁹ The Polish authorities were determined that the architects of suffering at Auschwitz, whether male or female, would answer for their actions.

Mandl was transferred from Austria to stand trial; she had fled back to her hometown after the war's end. Mandl's testimony was a blatant attempt to absolve herself of responsibility for her actions whilst stationed at Auschwitz. This was a typical defence utilised by the defendants in Nazi war trials. In her statements, she claimed to 'have not known about the

³¹⁷ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p.287.

³¹⁸ Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

³¹⁹ TNA: FO 944/965, (1945)

concentration camps and their uses' and that she was merely an administrator in charge of the *Aufseherinnen* and prisoner numbers.³²⁰ Ironically, in her attempt to exonerate herself from guilt, she blamed the gendered nature of society, employing the defence that she had no power because, as a woman, she was restricted in her authority due to the highly patriarchal Nazi system. More generally, the use of gender as a method to explain innocence is arguably symbolic in the way that societal ideas about women could be used as a means of defence, seeking to turn restrictive ideas about women's place and actions to benefit the defendants as a justification for their lack of authority and guilt.³²¹ In this trial, only two women were sentenced to death for their part in the Holocaust at Auschwitz. This is generally a much lower percentage than in other trials carried out in the post-war years and especially in the East, where the need for vengeance was much more widely felt. The Krakow trial shows the attempts by Eastern Europe to bring the perpetrators to justice, but the limited effect that this had; the numbers were far too great, and the political climate had changed into one of tension between East and West, rather than cooperation.³²²

The last large-scale trial held in the immediate after-war period, that involved *Aufseherinnen* that had served at Auschwitz was the collection of seven Ravensbrück trials, conducted by the British in Hamburg. The *Aufseherinnen* were tried in the 6th of these trials from July 1st to 28th, 1948. Ravensbrück, as the main training camp and first specific FKL, had employed many of the *Aufseherinnen* who later worked within Auschwitz and most of the female guards would pass through the camp within their career. It was also back to Ravensbrück that many *Aufseherinnen* were transferred as the Eastern Front took over the concentration camps

³²⁰ Proceś członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C

³²¹ Adam Jones, 'Gendercide and Genocide', in *Gendercide and Genocide*, edited by Adam Jones (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004).

³²² Guenter Lewy, *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.93.

within Poland. This, then, proved a seemingly fruitful location for the trials of female perpetrators. However, only six *Aufseherinnen* were tried in the Ravensbrück trials. Instead, the prosecution focused on the men who had carried out medical experiments and were tasked with the bureaucratic running of the camp.³²³ Whilst Ravensbrück proved deadly for many of the inmates that were imprisoned there, no full gas chambers have ever been reliably identified as being used in this location. Whilst provision was made to ship them from Auschwitz, it is unclear whether this was successful.³²⁴ Of the *Aufseherinnen* that were actually tried during the Ravensbrück trial, only two had previously served at Auschwitz, Luise Brunner and Emma Zimmer.

The trial transcripts give the historian the opportunity to see perpetrator reactions when confronted by their victims. Furthermore, within this trial, it is possible to see how the perpetrators allied together to avoid punishment, and the complex ties of guilt that still drew them together. Patricia Witman, an Austrian Political Prisoner who was held in both Ravensbrück and Auschwitz, was called to give evidence in the trial against Zimmer. She describes watching Zimmer break an old woman's fingers in a door and how she placed a lactating Roma woman in a straightjacket until she went mad.³²⁵ These allegations were denied by Zimmer, who claims she never beat the Roma woman and that, further, it was Hasse who was in charge of the Bunker when these incidents were meant to have happened. The testimony of Witman was further discredited by Eugenia Von Skene, who was on trial for her role as Kapo in Ravensbrück. She describes Zimmer as one of the 'good' ones in reference to the female guards.³²⁶ This was a persistent feature of this particular trial with all

³²³ Jack G Morrison, *Ravensbrück: Everyday Life in a Woman's Concentration Camp, 1939-45* (Princeton: Wiener, 2000).

³²⁴ Sarah Helm, *If This Is a Woman* (London: Little Brown, 2015), pp. 612, 621.

³²⁵ TNA: WO 235/528 (1948)

³²⁶ TNA: WO 235/528 (1948)

of the women who were being tried and, further, other female guards outside the remit of the trial, giving evidence aimed at protecting their former colleagues. This is seen with the mention of Brunner as a good guard and, furthermore, the testimony of Erna Rose, who said that Zimmer was such a caring person that she was known as ‘Aunt Emma’ around the camp.³²⁷ The idea of the collective guilt of the perpetrators is not a new idea. That they would band together to hide their actions and to rationalise them in their mind is well accepted. Within the internal culture of the *Aufseherinnen*, this was used to emphasise the familial bonds that women made, in much the same way as victims created familial bonds to survive within the camps.³²⁸ These methods were then employed by the female perpetrators when they found themselves in hardship, leaning on their networks of shared experience. This idea of ‘sisterhood’ is based on gender ideas. While the male SS certainly tried to cover up each other’s actions to help themselves, the bonds of females appear much more based on friendship and comradeship in a way that is recognised as being a feminine trait.

These three examples are the large-scale trials that feature *Aufseherinnen* in the immediate post-war period. However, there were many smaller trials carried out, usually in the vicinity of where the perpetrators were caught. There were also several examples of vigilante justice from former prisoners, and in the East of brief sham trials in which perpetrators were quickly sentenced to death.³²⁹ From these trials, a concerted effort to bring the women who were responsible for acts of violence and murder within the Concentration Camps was displayed. Yet, the crime they could be tried for was solely violence and murder against Allied prisoners

³²⁷ TNA: WO 235/528 (1948)

³²⁸ Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.105.

³²⁹ Such as Lisl Hasse, who was tried by the Soviets and sentenced immediately to death, or Sofia Henel who was sentenced to death in Prague. Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz - Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde: Ein Personenlexikon* (Berlin: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2018). Unfortunately the trial documents in Prague appear to be missing, after consultation with the National Archives in Prague, the hunt for these files continues. I remain in contact with National Archives, Prague and hope to be able to consult these documents if they are ever found.

and citizens; it should be remembered that the wider impact of the Holocaust as genocide was not officially tried. The mass killings of Jews certainly impacted on the decision-making of the judge, but the Holocaust itself could not be used as a charge.³³⁰ The inability of the prosecution to use the Holocaust as a crime within the trials, unfortunately, limits the information that is known about these women as Holocaust perpetrators. They did not have to answer for these crimes specifically and, as such, they did not have to testify about the methods of annihilation and the parts that they played in them. This change in focus is evident in the later trials of the *Aufseherinnen*, where the Holocaust and the genocide of the Jews is the focus for prosecution.

With the growing tension between East and West in the ‘Cold War’, attempts to bring former Nazis to justice began to fade from importance.²⁵⁵ Rather, the focus was to build up a defence against the supposed impending war between the Soviet Block and the West. This led to a great many perpetrators of the Holocaust being able to escape from justice, as governmental focus turned away from the completed war and towards the new looming threat. This shift in attention further eased worries for the former women guards, who could return to their homes, marry and change their names to avoid detection. Furthermore, these women were not the architects of the Holocaust, they never held high-ranking ideological positions; rather, they were the physical enactors of murder and, as such, the denazification courts were relatively relaxed in their treatment of the previous *Aufseherinnen*. The political situation in the Cold War years, and the warring ideologies of Western Capitalism and Eastern Communism pre-1989, allowed many of the *Aufseherinnen* to escape from accounting for their actions, enabling them to quietly return to their pre-war lives. After German reunification, and the renewed emphasis on war crime trials in light of ethnic cleansing in the

³³⁰ Don D Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial* (WW Norton & Company, 2002).

Balkans and genocide in Africa, there was hope that some of the Nazi female guards would finally face justice, but this was too optimistic.³³¹

The 1960s and 1970s saw a renewed effort in West Germany and further afield to hold former Nazis to account, specifically those that were involved with the Holocaust. As the lack of interest by the Allies in bringing war criminals to trial became apparent, it was increasingly clear that any attempts at justice would be left to the victims of the Holocaust themselves. The post-war period had ignored the recollections of Holocaust survivors, with many of the countries being unwilling to continue to focus on the destructive nature of Fascism. The trauma for survivors continued in Displaced Persons camps, together with an inability to return to their previous lives due to a loss of loved ones, property and a threat of violence from those who remained. This led many survivors to believe that there was to be no accountability for the Holocaust. Yet, the need for reckoning was felt by many and led individuals such as Simon Wiesenthal and Tuvia Friedman to collect depositions and documentation from survivors of the concentration camp to create both a testimonial of the horror of the Holocaust and a resource for later prosecution efforts.³³² Wiesenthal was not the only 'Nazi Hunter' of the time. Without such individuals, who fought for their trauma not to be forgotten and for justice for the millions of Jewish dead across Europe, the later trials that were carried out would not have been feasible.³³³ The work of survivors in the post-war years is particularly evident in the trials conducted in West Germany with the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial from 1963 to 1965, in which no *Aufseherinnen* were tried but several gave evidence, and the Düsseldorf Majdanek trial from 1975-1981, where six *Aufseherinnen* were

³³¹ Dan Plesch, *Human Rights after Hitler: The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes* (Georgetown University Press: Washington DC, 2017)

³³² Andrew Nagorski, *In Pursuit: The Men and Women Who Hunted the Nazis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016).

³³³ Tom Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal: The Life and Legends* (London: Random House, 2010).

tried of which five were employed in Auschwitz-Birkenau.³³⁴ These later cases are presented as separate analysis from the three immediate post-war trials as they emphasise key differences in the way in which Nazism, the Holocaust and genocide as a concept can be put on trial. The definition of genocide, and what is a war crime, was only established into law in the mid-1940s, as the Allies scrambled to find a legal basis with which to try the Nazi hierarchy. The concept of the Holocaust as a crime against wider humanity, when not relating to Allied nationals, had to be put on trial. It is within these legal proceedings that it is possible to see how genocide was tried in a court of law.³³⁵ This change in indictment from perpetrators of crimes against Allied nationals to being tried as perpetrators of genocide is reflected in the testimony of the *Aufseherinnen* when they were put on trial. They were now required to answer for a much wider range of charges and, as further knowledge of the mechanisms of the Holocaust had emerged, claims of ignorance were increasingly difficult to believe.

The Düsseldorf trial of the staff at Majdanek concentration camp was the third mass trial that had prosecuted individuals who had worked at Majdanek. The camp was located near Lublin in Poland. Although this trial was not specifically set to try those that worked at Auschwitz, due to the ever-evolving nature of the camp and the transient nature of serving as an *Aufseherin*, five of the six women that were tried at Düsseldorf had also worked at Auschwitz-Birkenau previously. It should also be of note that although it was Majdanek as the concentration camp that was being put on trial, the whole of the defendant's actions as Nazis and specifically as perpetrators of the Holocaust were assessed. The conclusions of the court, and the lenient sentences given to the women, depict the gendered reaction to violence

³³⁴ *Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek*” Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf

³³⁵ Donald Bloxham, and Tony Kushner, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

and murder that is arguably inherent within society. Three of the women were acquitted and released, even though they had made statements attesting to their involvement in the persecution of prisoners at Majdanek and Auschwitz.³³⁶ Whilst the longest prison term, life imprisonment, was given to Hermine Braunsteiner, she was later released on health grounds. The testimonies within this trial asked different questions of the guards. The prosecution wanted to know more about the exact roles of the guards, how the *Aufseherinnen* interacted, and what their role in violence was. It is here that we have transcripts not only from prisoners but also from guards, describing how they took part in the mechanism of the Holocaust. For example, Charlotte Mayer testified that ‘The Chief Guard was brutal and often beat the women with leather straps’.³³⁷ This willingness to testify about the other *Aufseherinnen* committing violence, and by association their violence against prisoners, suggests that time had worn away the bonds of solidarity and, crucially, their resistance. These women had to admit their involvement in the Holocaust. By admitting the lesser charge of violence, they could shield themselves from the larger charge of murder.

However, what is further illustrated is the continued focus on the *Aufseherinnen* as primarily women and, as such, their removal from the general practice of systematic killing, accentuating that, whilst they were present in the camp, they were still required to live by gender norms. They could not and would not usurp the SS men in terms of power, hierarchy and as aggressors.³³⁸ This is very perceptible, for example, in the issue of the *Aufseherinnen*

³³⁶ *Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek*” Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf

³³⁷ ‘Statement by Charlotte Mayer’ (28th August, 1973). *Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek*” Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf.

³³⁸ Marion Kaplan, ‘Gender, a Crucial Tool in Holocaust Research’, in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators*, edited by Elissa Bemporad & Joyce W. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

carrying pistols whilst on duty. Several SS men viewed women with guns as unseemly.³³⁹ Whilst the SS men tolerated women working in the camp, many of them heavily questioned why this was necessary. Women having the power of the gun, along with its masculine and phallic connotations, became too much for some SS males. The resulting pressure of the men to reclaim this 'male' instrument of power was ultimately successful, and the *Aufseherinnen* were reminded of their place as the secondary sex with its removal. This aversion to women as the perpetrator and societies' continued pressure to cast women as caregiver and mother is shown in the trial through the leniency of the sentences that were given and, moreover, through the closing speeches of the defence. In the latter, the gender of the *Aufseherinnen* was used as a chief instrument to promote the women as innocent, or certainly less responsible than their male counterparts. Overall, it can be argued that the Düsseldorf trial is paramount in understanding why female perpetrators continue to use gender to their advantage when explaining their actions regarding violence. In addition, it is evident that this was accepted by prosecutors and judges; as to question the actions of the violent women through the same lens as their masculine counterparts would be to question gender roles and the patriarchal values attributed to the female.³⁴⁰

The trials at Frankfurt and Düsseldorf represent the last large-scale attempt to bring perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice in a multi-defendant trial. The Frankfurt Auschwitz trial had been viewed unfavourably by the larger German population, who believed it unnecessary to reopen the barely closed wounds of the Second World War.³⁴¹ For many

³³⁹ Alice Orlowski, 'Deposition', *No. 213* (27 August 1973), and 'Statement by Charlotte Mayer', (28th August, 1973). *Gerichte Republik 432 Konzentrationslager Lublin-Majdanek* Translated by Charlotte Mears, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (LAV NRW HStA Düsseldorf), Düsseldorf

³⁴⁰ Paula Ruth Gilbert, 'Discourses of Female Violence and Societal Gender Stereotypes', *Violence against women* 8, no. 11 (2002), pp.1271-1300.

³⁴¹ Devin Owen Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965: Genocide, History, and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.288-295.

survivors, this new vigour in seeking justice was a balm against the years of ignorance of their suffering, compounded by uninterested governments that had viewed the Holocaust as a political disaster, but sought to 'move on' from the topic when rebuilding the new Europe. However, while to the survivor population, these new trials seemed like an attempt to provide justice in whatever small amount was possible; to many in West Germany and Austria, especially those former Nazis who had been able to return without hardship to their pre-war lives, it seemed that the past which they no longer had to interact with was being dragged into the light again. The coming of age of a second-generation who had not lived through the Second World War and had begun to ask questions of their parents and grandparents and their roles during the war, further increased pressure on how the Holocaust was remembered and what had happened to the perpetrators of these acts.³⁴² Nevertheless whilst multi-defendant trials stopped, this did not mark the end of attempts to bring Nazi criminals in front of a court. Rather, subsequent attempts were focused on particular individuals who would be required to answer for their actions during the Holocaust.

In more recent years, a concerted effort has been made to bring former Nazis to trial. There is, of course, a recognition that time is running out if perpetrators are to be prosecuted due to the elderly nature of the accused. This has led to several *Aufseherinnen* who had not previously been tried, or whose sentences were viewed as too lenient, facing prosecution. Elfriede Rinkel, a former dog-handler at Ravensbrück camp, was deported from America to stand trial in Germany at the age of 84 in 2006.³⁴³ The case was eventually dropped due to a

³⁴² Beata Hammerich, Johannes Pfäfflin, Peter Pogany-Wnendt, Erda Siebert, and Bernd Sonntag, 'Handing Down the Holocaust in Germany: A Reflection on the Dialogue between Second Generation Descendants of Perpetrators and Survivors', *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory* (2016), pp.259-63.

³⁴³ Luke Harding, 'Shameful Secret of the Nazi Camp Guard Who Married a Jew', *The Guardian*, Thursday, 21st September, 2006, 24, and Catherine Elsworth, 'Woman Who Married Jew Exposed as a Concentration Camp Guard', *The Telegraph*, 21st September, 2006.

lack of witnesses. Further, in 2015, an unnamed woman was put on trial in Kiel; she had previously worked as an SS auxiliary agent in Auschwitz.³⁴⁴ In addition, in 2014, Gisela Demming was to stand trial for her time working as an *Aufseherin* at Auschwitz, but the charges were dropped as she was deemed unfit to stand trial.³²² The continued insistence on bringing Nazi war criminals to justice can be seen through the persistent cases being brought before German courts. No longer is Germany burying its Nazi past but, rather, it has been seeking a reckoning. The focus on individuals reflects the reimagining of Nazi perpetrators, from the elite who were to be punished in the after-war years, to a recognition of how the individual acted as a murderer. There has also been the idea of ‘collective guilt’ in the camps among all those who worked there, in whatever capacity, as they became institutional mechanisms of the Holocaust.

Conclusion

The percentage of the *Aufseherinnen* that were held to account for their actions and crimes in the Holocaust is dismally small: under 10% of those who served in the camps ever had to answer questions in public, publicly explain their behaviour, or even face the surviving victims. Although the number who were tried is marginally higher for the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz, it is still a markedly smaller number, than many people would feel comfortable with. Through the names that have been recorded for the research in this thesis and the general information about the women, their lives and where they eventually returned to, it is perhaps even more shocking that more was not achieved in the post-war years to seek some form of retribution for the victims. The post-war political climate, of course, rendered this

³⁴⁴ ‘German Woman Aged 91 charged over Nazi Death Camp Allegations’, *The Guardian*, 21st September, 2015.

action difficult due to the division of Germany and the fact that the majority of the crimes had been committed in the East, which was now under Soviet control, while the perpetrators largely remained in Western territories. What is abundantly clear from the trials, though, is that the women, when tried in the immediate post-war years, were held to the same standards as the men. While the Allies could not understand the sheer scale of horror, the magnitude of the crime was easier to recognise in the East where all of the occupied people had felt both the mass terror and murderous intent of Nazism more directly.

However, as the Holocaust has reawakened in the Courtroom in more recent times, gender has become a sticking point on how the *Aufseherinnen* were to be judged. In many ways, the crimes have receded from memory, and the face of the perpetrator is now reimagined as solely the domain of men. Consequently, women have mainly been put back into their role as ‘caregiver’. This has arguably led to relaxed and somewhat more lenient sentencing.

Chapter 5: Case Studies

This chapter aims to delve deeper into the lives of four of the women who served within the Auschwitz camp complex, removing them from the obscurity of generalised Holocaust history. This will be achieved by examining their lives on a much more intimate and penetrating level, thereby returning their free will and consciousness to them. These women, all from different backgrounds and with different ideologies, chose to actively participate in the Nazi policy of genocide. Their individual lives give snapshots into the reasoning why women were attracted to the role of *Aufseherinnen* and how different psyches adapted to the environment of Auschwitz. However, when analysed together, they continue to offer universal experience, offering a picture of the typical personality of the perpetrators. With this in-depth analysis, it is possible to understand more about the *Aufseherinnen* both as perpetrators and as women. Case study analysis also helps to differentiate between the reasoning of their actions and the impact of their experiences. The aim of the analysis as set out in the introduction is to understand not only the lives of the *Aufseherinnen*, but also to understand the manner in which certain women are treated, both by scholars and by popular culture. Uncovering why some of these women have been allowed to fall into obscurity, while others have gained a level of infamy through increased study and prominence within the field of Holocaust history.

Image removed for copyright reasons

*Figure 8 Johanna Langefeld in 1943*³⁴⁵

Johanna Langefeld could be considered the ‘mother’ of the concentration camps; she held the highest available roles and paved the way for further *Aufseherinnen*. She presided over three concentration camps and was instrumental in forming the systems within which the *Aufseherinnen* worked. Despite her early and considerable interaction with the Nazi concentration camps, she never stood trial or faced punishment for her involvement in the Holocaust. As a character, her biography is one of the most challenging, epitomising the difficulties in judging Holocaust perpetrators as solely good or evil. Langefeld was rescued whilst in custody awaiting trial in Krakow by former inmates of Ravensbrück and Auschwitz camps. She was then hidden with great difficulty in a convent for many years before her return to Germany.³⁴⁶ This rescue by former prisoners has led to her portrayal as the one

³⁴⁵ Wladek Jurkow & Gerburg Rohde-Dahl, “The Case of Johanna Langefeld” (Krakow: Arkadia Film Sp., 2019).

³⁴⁶ Sarah Helm, *If This Is a Woman* (London: Little Brown, 2015), p.38.

‘good’ female guard, a victim of Nazism herself, trying to reform the camps from the inside and acting with compassion. However, the facts of her career do not substantiate this. If she really possessed compassion, how did she succeed with such rapid promotion in a system based on brutality? And why, as the situation worsened, were improvements not made to the prisoners’ situation? Langefeld’s life raises important questions about the loss of humanity within the camps, and whether all guards were, without fault, evil.

Before Auschwitz

Johanna Langefeld née May was born on 5th March 1900 in Kupferdreh,³⁴⁷ now a municipality of Essen, Germany. Born into a family of Lutheran Christians, her father was a blacksmith while her mother tended the house.³⁴⁸ She was married in 1924 to Wilhelm Langefeld and moved to Mulheim, Wilhelm died in 1926, no children were born of the marriage.³⁴⁹ From her marriage to Wilhelm, Johanna gained property and made a modest income renting out a room to a lodger. Langefeld became pregnant with a child by this lodger and Peter was born in 1928. There was no continuation with the relationship and Johanna was now a widow with an illegitimate child.³⁵⁰ The child took her married name of Langefeld and together they relocated to Brauweiler, moving further away from her family and any close local connections, in an attempt to escape the shame of having a child out of wedlock.³⁵¹ It is at this time that Langefeld entered into employment for the first time, as a matron or guard, in

³⁴⁷ “Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans”, NAW RG338-000-50-11. National Archives and Record Administration, College Park USA. (NARA)

³⁴⁸ “Johanna Langefeld *“Personal Fragebogen”* Translated by Charlotte Mears, Mahn und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück (RVB Archives).

³⁴⁹ “Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans”, NAW RG338-000-50-11 (NARA)

³⁵⁰ Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Die Erlöschene Flamme: Schicksale Meiner Zeit* (Berlin: Fischer, 2015), p.33.

³⁵¹ Irmtraud Heike. “Johanna Langefeld - Die Biographie Eine Kz-Oberaufseherin.” *Werkstatt Geschichte* 12 (1995).

the former Benedictine abbey,³⁵² which was converted to a *Provinzial Korrektionsanstalt*³⁵³.

This can be compared to a workhouse, the emphasis being not on punishment but on improving the destitute and ‘morally corrupt’, making them of better use for society.

Relocating to a different city was necessary if Johanna was to be able to rebuild her life, away from the judgement of those who were aware of the circumstances of her child’s birth.

It is also likely that these changes in circumstances affected her economic situation.

Langefeld was employed in this facility for several years and was mainly in charge of the ‘Asocials’ that the Nazis would later seek to eliminate from society via the concentration camps. These ‘Asocials’ included prostitutes, alcoholics, and those who could not financially support themselves, later labelled by the Nazi party as ‘workshy’.³⁵⁴ It is within this facility, around the women whom she was tasked with supervising, that Langefeld’s political ideas grew, increasingly aligning with Nazi racial ideas. Langefeld continued working here after the Nazi seizure of power, when the workhouse took on new inmates, women who were charged with working against the party. In reality these prisoners were made up of those with opposing political views, Christian democrats, the SPD and communists.³⁵⁵ Langefeld was employed here until August 1937.³⁵⁶ There is confusion surrounding why Langefeld was dismissed from her position. She claimed that this was due to her lack of membership of the NSDAP. Indeed, her lack of perceived connection to the party through standardised membership and participation raised concerns about her ideological loyalties. She was an unknown entity, and her role in control of perceived enemies of the state for re-education

³⁵² “Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans”, NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁵³ Abtei Brauweiler, “Historie-Zeitafel”, at: <https://www.abtei-brauweiler.de/infos/abtei-brauweiler.html>.

³⁵⁴ Nikolaus Wachsmann, “Between Reform and Repression: Imprisonment in Weimar Germany”, *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 2 (2002), p.431-32.

³⁵⁵ Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung: Studien Zur Errichtung Des Totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933/34* (Springer-Verlag, 2013).

³⁵⁶ “Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans”, NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA)

demanded that she align herself completely with party policies. However, in 1938, Langefeld sought employment as a supervisor at the newly opened Lichtenburg Concentration Camp in Saxony. This presents a discrepancy in reasoning: to leave a workhouse and, instead, serve in a concentration camp whilst still not being a party member was illogical. On further investigation, Langefeld had in fact borrowed 2000 DM from a colleague and failed to repay the debt, thus forcing her to leave her position at the workhouse.³⁵⁷ Langefeld's career within the prison system had begun before the Nazis rose to power, raising questions about her ideological views in relation to Nazism. Was she merely continuing with a role that she had been given as society had turned away from her and her young son, or was her reasoning more ideological? Heike, in her biography of Langefeld, argues that the motivation was her political ideology and a desire to re-educate prisoners, which would fit with how the job of *Aufseherin* was advertised.³⁵⁸ This also supports Langefeld's own statements of her motivation in continuing to work within the reform sector. However, regardless of questions of motivation, it is without doubt that Langefeld actively chose to seek employment at the concentration camp when released from the workhouse, lending credibility to the explanation of ideological support for the party by 1938.

In Lichtenburg, Langefeld quickly rose to the role of chief supervisor, giving her authority over the other *Aufseherinnen*, in regard to training, living conditions and the behaviour of the other *Aufseherinnen*. This may, in part, be due to her previous experience working within the environment of corrections and dealing with 'anti-social' elements of society, in respect of Nazi ideology. Her experience was in contrast to many of the other women who sought employment at Lichtenburg and had come from very different work environments. These

³⁵⁷ "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁵⁸ Heike, "Johanna Langefeld - Die Biographie Eine KZ-Oberaufseherin".

women had been employed as shop assistants, maids and nurses and, as such, possessed different work skills and no credible knowledge on how to engage in the management of human life.³⁵⁹ Langefeld's previous knowledge and experience were utilised by her superiors, and were influential in shaping the way that the guards and prisoners were treated within this new system of Nazi terror, the *FKL* (Female Concentration Camp).³⁶⁰

The *FKL* was expected to work within the established 'Dachau Model' of systematic organised terror. However, due to the sex of the inmates, changes and adaptations were needed to the system. These were organised within the locale of Lichtenburg and Langefeld was influential in the decision making.³⁶¹ Langefeld claimed that conditions at Lichtenberg, whilst being uncomfortable, were satisfactory for prisoners, and that this was to be expected - this was a prison meant for 're-education'. She further alleged that the women's lives were easy, and they had no need to participate in physical labour. Due to the lack of labour, the prisoners would attend to sewing or reading, and the women received more than sufficient food as well as a bed and blanket each.³⁶² These claims were strongly contested by the prisoners who were held in Lichtenburg, and who endured hard manual labour and corporal punishment. Lina Haag, a communist detainee in Lichtenburg, described the back-breaking physical labour that the women were forced to undertake:

*"We had to dig up fallow land, the concentration camp has to show a profit."*³⁶³

³⁵⁹ For example, Volkenrath was employed before the war as a hairdresser, Grese was a farmhand and several others were shop assistants. From testimony given at the Belsen Trial; Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945).

³⁶⁰ Stefan Hördler, "Before the Holocaust: Concentration Camp Lichtenburg and the Evolution of the Nazi Camp System", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 25, no. 1 (2011).

³⁶¹ The Dachau model was the system of government for concentration camps first employed by Theodor Eicke at Dachau. It is talked about extensively in Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015).

³⁶² "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁶³ Lina Haag and Arnold Bender, *How Long the Night*, Translated by E. W. Dickes and Arnold Bender. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1948), p.132.

Langefeld's statements about the camp at Lichtenburg cannot be substantiated, nor are they easy to believe, although they agree with the testimony of other *Aufseherinnen*, particularly that of Maria Mandl.³⁶⁴ The statements directly contradict the multiple sources of both prisoner testimony and official documentation that chart the operation of the castle prison. Conditions at Lichtenburg were not comfortable or satisfactory for sustaining life. It was intended as a harsh, unforgiving environment; even so, these were far better standards of existence than would have been witnessed by Langefeld at Ravensbrück and Auschwitz as the war and her career progressed. It may be that Langefeld was comparing the camp situation of Lichtenburg to those that she encountered later in her career and that, comparatively, the camp conditions are seen with 'rose-tinted glasses' romanticism. As memory fades and more horror encountered, the conditions that once seemed so terrible could now be remembered fondly.³⁶⁵ This may explain the gap in Langefeld's memory regarding the harsh conditions in Lichtenburg and may also help to illuminate her choice to become an *Aufseherin* in the first place. If the concentration camp can be perceived as just another correctional facility, a reimagining of the workhouse (so to speak), then it would have been an obvious choice for Langefeld to seek employment there. Further, if conditions had started off satisfactory and the deterioration was due to war and overcrowding, not through her own perceived fault, then her guilt was alleviated.

The Lichtenburg camp was disbanded and moved to the much larger site of Ravensbrück near Furstenberg in May 1939. The growing expansion of the Third Reich had led to a higher number of prisoners from both inside and outside the Reich territories. As such, there was a need for more space to hold the ever-increasing numbers. Langefeld moved along with the

³⁶⁴ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C

³⁶⁵ Thomas Blass, "Psychological Perspectives on the Perpetrators of the Holocaust: The Role of Situational Pressures, Personal Dispositions and Their Interactions", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 7, no. 1 (1993), p.36.

prisoners to the new camp and began her service as *Oberaufseherin*, placing her in charge of the entirety of the female guards and, in theory, the prisoners, a highly significant step up from her original role as *Aufseherin*. In this position, she reported only to the camp Kommandant and, in terms of authority, she was in theory surpassed only by him when it came to the women imprisoned. Langefeld and *Sturmbannführer* Max Koegel, the camp Kommandant, did not have a good relationship, and Langefeld claimed to have felt consistently undermined by Koegel in matters concerning the prisoners.³⁶⁶ She asserted that while she was concerned with their welfare, he merely saw them as criminals of the Reich who should be treated no differently than their male counterparts. The friction caused between the traditional gender roles exalted in Nazi ideology, and the *Oberaufseherin* constantly vying for more power, did little to help the relationship. Langefeld's objections to his behaviour and skimming of SS profit placed her in direct opposition to Koegel.³⁶⁷ At Ravensbrück, Langefeld enjoyed a much greater deal of authority than at Lichtenburg. She had rapidly risen through the ranks of the *Aufseherinnen* to, in theory, the control of the sole female concentration camp. At this time, the guards were effectively hers to train and lead, and although she claimed in her interrogation that she consistently sought to improve conditions for prisoners, they continued to deteriorate.³⁶⁸

Testimony of Langefeld from Ravensbrück presents a complex character, whilst she is seen by many Polish prisoners as a 'good' woman among the *Aufseherinnen*.³⁶⁹ She was particularly remembered and praised by Polish prisoners for her campaign against shooting the 'Rabbits' - the women who had been promised their lives if they submitted to medical

³⁶⁶ "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁶⁷ Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.98.

³⁶⁸ "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁶⁹ Wanda Póławska, "Interview", by Władek Jurkow & Gerburg Rohde-Dahl, "The Case of Johanna Langefeld" (2019).

experiments. Many of these women considered Langefeld their saviour from death.³⁷⁰ This campaign, as well as a singular instance of selecting German prisoners for early release, and saving the young from capital punishment, appear to support Langefeld's claim that she was the righteous guard. This testimony only provides information on the treatment of a small number of prisoners, however. To others in the concentration camp, Langefeld was as inhumane as the other *Aufseherinnen*. Langefeld actively participated in the 14f13 Aktion which sought to remove invalid prisoners from the concentration camp.³⁷¹ As *Oberaufseherin* she was the key link between the leaders of the euthanasia program and the guards. She also participated in selections. In this role she no longer becomes the 'good' guard described by the Polish prisoners but, rather, an active participant in genocide.

Langefeld's choice to enter the SS system of oppression, at such an early stage of conception, before the outbreak of war and conscription, raises further thorny questions: did she enter due to ideological beliefs or because of having an established career in the penal sector? What impact did her illegitimate child and societal views of unwed mothers have on her decision? It is impossible to fully answer these questions. However, what we *can* say is that Langefeld initially progressed through the ranks of female guards mainly due to her experience at Lichtenburg and the workhouse; she appears to have been the only woman with previous knowledge of the workings of a correctional institution. Her continued employment is difficult to understand, considering her claims that she felt appalled by everything she saw, including the conditions, the treatment of prisoners, and her own actions.³⁷² If these statements were true, why was she not dismissed from service or made to face the punishment that other guards did for leniency? Under the weight of Nazi oppression and her

³⁷⁰ Jurkow & Rohde-Dahl, "The Case of Johanna Langefeld"

³⁷¹ "14f13 Records" Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives).

³⁷² "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

high position as a guard, she not only saw the brutalisation of women prisoners, but would have been actively involved in its implementation.³⁷³ With this verifiable evidence of her continued involvement in the concentration camps, she cannot be portrayed as a shining light, actively involved in reforming the system from the inside. Through her continued employment in the camps and her treatment of prisoners, she was both physically and ideologically involved in the Holocaust from its earliest stage of conception.

Auschwitz

Langefeld was transferred from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz on the construction of the FKL on the site. She immediately took up the role of chief female guard, overseeing the transfer of prisoners and guards to the camp.³⁷⁴ Auschwitz was a very different type of camp to Ravensbrück, with none of the previous luxuries or regimented structures that Langefeld was used to. The camp was still under construction when the women arrived and was intended to fulfil a different purpose to any place where she had worked before. No longer would the sole function of the camp be to operate as a prison; it was forecast to be the site of the mass extermination of prisoners.³⁷⁵ Langefeld arrived accompanied by a small group of female guards and around 100 women prisoners. Langefeld claimed to have refused her new assignment to the East (the reasons for which are not clear).³⁷⁶ At this time, Auschwitz was just another concentration camp in the wide Nazi network, and a new camp and new Kommandant could provide her with the possibility for the change that she had claimed to

³⁷³ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002), p.19.

³⁷⁴ Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle* (New York: Owl Books, 1989). They arrive on the 27th March 1942. p.146

³⁷⁵ Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1959), p.137.

³⁷⁶ "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans", NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

provide at Ravensbrück. At Auschwitz she could try and turn the camp into the facility that she wanted, implementing new systems and rationing; ultimately, this FKL was hers to govern. She was replaced in her role as *Oberaufseherin* at Ravensbrück by Maria Mandl, who is discussed in another case study later in this chapter.

The conditions at Auschwitz for prisoners were even more deplorable than in Ravensbrück, as there were little to no resources for basic housing or food.³⁷⁷ Further, the inhospitable environment and the hostility of the native Polish, who did not relish the arrival of their German oppressors, did not create the image of a happy locale. In addition, when Langefeld arrived at Auschwitz, the sub-camp Birkenau - where the women were to be housed - was not fully built. As a result, the women were housed in recently cleared blocks in the main camp, and the guards found their accommodation unfinished.³⁷⁸ This was in sharp contrast to what many of the guards had expected on their trip to the East. Langefeld faced the early part of her time at Auschwitz with increasing difficulty, as she was tasked with running a camp that did not yet exist. Instead, she was forced to make do with the hastily created living conditions for both prisoners and guards, and to operate within an under-resourced workplace with guards who were increasingly unhappy and often reminisced about their comfortable days at Ravensbrück.³⁷⁹

Langefeld's relationships with her colleagues fared no better at Auschwitz than at Ravensbrück. She found herself in conflict with her superiors, the male guards she worked

³⁷⁷ Yisrael Gutman, "Auschwitz- an Overview", in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman & Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

³⁷⁸ Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle*. p.142

³⁷⁹ Höss talks in his memoir about how the guards were ill-prepared for Auschwitz and many of them wished to return to their previous work at Ravensbrück. See Höss. *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss*, p.135-7. The better conditions in Ravensbrück are also mentioned by numerous *Aufseherinnen* during trials.

with, and Kommandant Höss. According to Langefeld's explanation, this bad feeling stemmed from resentment towards her by both male and female guards alike, due to her desire to maintain ultimate control over the *Aufseherinnen* and the women's camp, a space which she saw as being under her direct personal control.³⁸⁰ This explanation is disputed by some guards, who instead claim that the hostile treatment of Langefeld was due to a lack of trust: she repeatedly broke the bonds of 'solidarity' that formed between the guards. This solidarity was engendered by close bonds of complicity in murder and the stealing of the prisoner possessions a practice that was rampant throughout the camp.³⁸¹ The mounting resentment and ill-feeling led to clashes on her part with both Kommandant Höss and SS Aumier, who, in his role as *Sturmbannführer*, had jurisdiction over the female camp and outranked Langefeld due to gender bias.³⁸²

Langefeld reported to Himmler, during a visit to the camp in 1942, on their perceived interference in her domain, which was in further contradiction to the protocol of secrecy in the camps and damaged her reputation.³⁸³ Through her report she had broken the bonds of loyalty and shared guilt that had been fostered within the camp. Although Himmler agreed that a woman should be in charge of the FKL, releasing a protocol to all concentration camps that amounted to this, in the concentration camp environment this was blocked. Nazi ideas on the roles of the sexes would never allow a man to be inferior to a woman or take direction from her.

³⁸⁰ "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans." NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

³⁸¹ Guenter Lewy. *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). p.84

³⁸² Höss. *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss*. p.137.

³⁸³ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). RG-15.169M. Translated by Charlotte Mears,(USHMM) Washington D.C

Her attempts to gain sole control of the FKL create an image of Langefeld as a career woman who was determined to set herself above the rest of the guards, unafraid of breaking protocol to secure her influence. Her reports to Himmler did nothing to limit the sway of Aumier or Höss and did not curtail the behaviour of the guards within the camp. The beating of prisoners carried on as before, as did the male guards' involvement in the women's camp. Langefeld also faced increasing hostility from the female *Aufseherinnen* under her control, many of whom had begun relationships with the SS men stationed at the camp, and as such wanted to continue to enjoy the benefits of Auschwitz.³⁸⁴ In this environment, these women enjoyed unparalleled freedom away from the restrictive social laws imposed upon young women in Germany. For many, Poland seemed to be a lawless land, with enough alcohol, good food, and expensive items to steal from incoming prisoners, the women could live a life that would have been impossible anywhere else.³⁸⁵ This, however, placed Langefeld's attempts to create order out of the chaos in direct conflict with what the female guards were determined to enjoy. Rather than benefitting her career, Langefeld's attempt to seek change placed her in a dangerous position, ostracised by the other guards, her superiors undermined her and eventually sought her dismissal. She could no longer fit the role or the changing needs of Auschwitz, making her seemingly incompetent for the role. If Langefeld had thought that her relationship with the Kommandant of the camp would improve after her move to Auschwitz, she was very much mistaken. Höss thought little of the female guards that he was expected to work with. He was a fanatical Nazi and the presence of women in the workforce of the camps did not align with his beliefs. Further, he saw the *Aufseherinnen* as spoiled and more of a hindrance than a help to the running of his camp.³⁸⁶ He believed that they were unsuitable for the harsh realities of the camp, and that this was not an environment

³⁸⁴ Relationships between SS men and women at Auschwitz are discussed in Chapter 3.

³⁸⁵ Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Random House, 2013), p.112.

³⁸⁶ Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss*.

suiting to an Aryan woman. Höss was especially disparaging of Langefeld after her direct personal intervention with Himmler, which he felt had undermined his authority. As a result he sought to have her replaced with someone more in line with his own vision of the running of the camp. In Höss's opinion, he had not been sent the best of the guards from Ravensbrück, which is reflected in his utter contempt for Langefeld. Instead, he believed that he had been shipped a woman who was no longer a suitable fit with the camp's goals; no longer were the camps for 're-education' but, rather, they were to exploit and then kill the racial enemies of the Reich.³⁸⁷ This contrast in aims put Langefeld in direct conflict with Höss and many of the other guards; she was no longer a useful cog in the mechanisms of extermination. Importantly, Langefeld was without allies within the camp, and with her too frequent appeals to superiors, it became obvious to the other Nazi personnel that she was not a part of the 'team'. Instead, she was regarded as someone who was to be 'shipped out' at the earliest opportunity.³⁸⁸

Prisoner recollection of Langefeld's time at Auschwitz does not present her in a favourable light. She was described as a committed anti-Semite, her face visibly changing and contorting with rage when faced with Jewish inmates of the camp.³⁸⁹ Her blatant anti-Semitism was further shown in interactions with the Jewish inmates of the camp during selections. Testimony states that she showed no sympathy for these inmates and did not seek to reduce their suffering but rather enhance it.³⁹⁰ Langefeld's actions were in line with the Nazi party ideology of Jews as *submenschen*. Her prejudice against the Jewish population emphasises

³⁸⁷ Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

³⁸⁸ This is shown both in Langefeld's interrogation records, the Auschwitz trial and in Höss's memoir, all of which emphasise the tense relationships that were caused by Langefeld not being regarded as part of the perpetrator network.

³⁸⁹ Buber-Neumann, *Als Gefangene Bei Stalin Und Hitler*.

³⁹⁰ Jurkow & Rohde-Dahl, "The Case of Johanna Langefeld"

that Langefeld was homogeneous in her action with the other *Aufseherinnen*. She believed in the extermination of the Jewish population and acted in ways to make this happen. During her time at Auschwitz, she would accompany Doctors during selections with knowledge that those she selected were destined for death in the gas chambers.³⁹¹ Langefeld's actions work against her affirmations that she was trying to improve the concentration camps for prisoners. Rather, there is direct evidence that she supported the destruction of European Jewry and worked enthusiastically towards this end.

Langefeld, unlike those who later filled her position, did not spend much time within the camp complex where the prisoners were housed. Instead, she concentrated on the guards that were under her control, the administrative tasks concerning rationing, and the recording of prisoners. As such, her contact was limited to those prisoners who had fortunate positions working among the guards and brief interactions with a faceless mass at selections. It is apparent that Langefeld's drive to maintain complete jurisdiction and limit any external male influence led to much stricter control over the guards and domestic issues. Under her tenure, men were not allowed in the women's dormitories, and strict time-keeping was maintained for women's roles in the camps, together with their drinking and eating habits (these measures were all to be relaxed or unenforced under the subsequent *Oberaufseherin*).³⁹²

Langefeld was not noted for her sadistic behaviour in survivor testimony, and her crimes were less about the physical perpetration of violence. Instead, she was a crucial part of the machinery of extermination at both Ravensbrück and Auschwitz. Her lack of documented

³⁹¹ Politische Abteilung, "Sterbebücher" Translated By Dorothea Preslaski, Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu (APMO).

³⁹² "Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans." NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA).

‘hands-on’ involvement in the brutalisation of prisoners, however, does not excuse the fact that she presided over the organisation of the women’s camp, in addition to the actions of the female guards who were directly under her control.³⁹³ Although she may not have told the guards *who* to beat, kill, or torture, she was still responsible for the actions committed by them. Langefeld also ensured that the high quotas were met; in dire labour camps that were killing the prisoners, she ensured that they kept on working. The absence of testimonies that speak specifically of her actions within Auschwitz allowed Langefeld to promote herself later as ‘without sin’. This image was further helped by the lack of trial due to her escape, which facilitated a lack of culpability for her crimes. As such, her claims that she was attempting to promote change from inside the camps and doing her best to make the prisoners’ lives better have entered into the historical record as ‘fact’ from repetitive documentation, but it is not a true picture of her actions. Langefeld presided over multiple concentration camps and was instrumental in the development of the women’s camp at Auschwitz and the horrors that took place within it; lack of documentation or justice cannot deny this.

Ultimately, Langefeld was removed from her role at Auschwitz after repeated confrontations with her superiors. Dismissed because of her leniency towards prisoners and corruption, she was sent back to Ravensbrück. In 1943 she was arrested for leniency towards prisoners and on trumped up charges of stealing gold, she was held within the bunker at Ravensbrück, which she had once controlled. Yet, when tried before the *Hauptamt SS-Gericht* (SS Court Office), she was acquitted.³⁹⁴ The corruption for which she was removed was the very issue that she spoke to Himmler about.³⁹⁵ By trying to resolve a problem among the guards, the

³⁹³ David Estlund, “On Following Orders in an Unjust War”, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2007), p.230.

³⁹⁴ Johanna Langefeld “*Hauptamt SS-Gericht Prozess*” Translated by Charlotte Mears, (RVB Archives)

³⁹⁵ “Johanna Langefeld Testimony Given to Americans.” NAW RG338-000-50-11. (NARA). & Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Washington D.C.

solidarity that she had broken was in fact used against her. In the post-war period, Langefeld was arrested by the American Allied forces in Füssen, where she had relocated with her son. Due to her crimes and the well-known nature of her role in the Holocaust, she was extradited to Poland to be prosecuted in the Auschwitz trial held at Krakow.

However, Langefeld never faced prosecution. Before the trial could begin, she was able to escape with the help of former prisoners from Ravensbrück. Her rescuers were largely made up of the former 'Rabbits' that she had saved from execution. After hearing of her arrest and knowing that she would face death for her crimes, they sought to repay their perceived debt. With the help of a prison guard, Oczkowski, Langefeld was able to escape when working on outside duty. She was first secretly held at a convent within the city, then illicitly moved to a local teacher's residence where she worked as domestic help. In the late 1950s, she returned to Germany and settled in Augsburg where she reconnected with her son. She died in 1976.³⁹⁶ It seems that Langefeld is set to be remembered as the 'good' concentration camp guard. Her escape at the hands of those whom she had previously presided over has helped to establish her image in popular memory as a victim of circumstance, and as the 'angel' of the camp, a woman who was only trying to help those under her control.

Johanna Langefeld poses many methodological and research problems for the historian; her actions in the camp can only be discussed largely through her own testimony, with little documentation to support the facts. That she was in conflict with her superiors is without doubt, but this did not make her the shining light of the camps. It appears that, rather than trying to help prisoners and halt the concentration camp system on its march towards extermination, she was trying to enhance her own personal sphere of influence. Via her own

³⁹⁶ Jurkow & Rohde-Dahl, "The Case of Johanna Langefeld".

testimony, she presented herself as trying to help those under her control. This must be refuted; if it had indeed been accurate, she surely would have received a higher penalty for her leniency than reassignment, and more testimony would have been given in support of her actions. Langefeld must have known that her role was a lost cause, and that there would not be more testimony supporting her actions and how she had helped others. Langefeld's portrayal of her own actions raises the question of how much anyone could have alleviated suffering within the concentration camps, and what kind of woman is capable of operating within such a situation.

Maria Mandl

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 9: Maria Mandl (sometimes spelt Mandel by the allies in after war documentation) at her trial.³⁹⁷

Maria Mandl has been relegated to a footnote in the historical literature of the Holocaust. Once the ‘Beast of Birkenau’,³⁹⁸ she is now largely forgotten. She appears only in the memories of the last few Holocaust survivors and to the most ardent scholars of Holocaust history. Mandl’s neglect in comparison to her male colleagues, who have entered public consciousness, is a direct reflection of the continuing focus on male perspectives within the historical narrative.³⁹⁹ Yet Mandl offers important and valuable insights into the lives of the guards in concentration camps and, in particular, the defining gender-based division of power. Holding the highest position available for women, *Oberaufseherin*, Mandl controlled the lives of hundreds of thousands, under an ideology that sought to remove jurisdiction from women and relegate them to a secondary position. Her ability to gain and retain power in a

³⁹⁷ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

³⁹⁸ Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.18.

³⁹⁹ Gisela Bock, “Women’s History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate”, *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (1989), p.19.

territory that sought to undermine and control women based solely on their gender, presents a character that is necessary study to understand women in Nazi Germany.

Before Auschwitz

Maria Mandl was born on 10th January 1912 in Münzkirchen, Upper Austria as the youngest of four children. Her father Franz was a shoemaker, while her mother Anna was a housewife. The family's finances were modest but stable and, as such, Maria stayed on for two extra years at school. The family was registered as Protestant in the census, but it appears that Mandl stopped practising as a Protestant and converted to the Nazi idea of God without Rome's interference within society.⁴⁰⁰ Within Münzkirchen, as with other small towns of the time, little work was available for women other than domestic servitude. It is likely that Mandl began looking outside of Münzkirchen for work quickly, given the limited opportunities. She made the decision to leave Austria for Switzerland in 1932, as her sister had married a Swiss man, and here she was employed as a chef for 15 months.⁴⁰¹ However, she returned to Münzkirchen in 1934, where she began an appointment as a postmistress.⁴⁰² Her return may be linked to a nervous illness that her mother was suffering from, although this is not completely clear. As the only unmarried daughter within the family, it follows convention that Mandl would be summoned to care for her ailing mother, as the other children were busy caring for their own families. Her abrupt return must have led to her feeling restricted, back within the control of the family, and away from the freedoms that she had previously enjoyed.

⁴⁰⁰ Bezirkshauptmannschaft Schärading, *Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv*: Translated by Charlotte Mears, (Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, 1912-45).

⁴⁰¹ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁴⁰² Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

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*Figure 10 Mandl as a young woman in Münzkirchen*⁴⁰³

Upon the Nazi party's ascent to power in Austria, Mandl was dismissed from her role at the post office. The post fulfilled a vital role for communication and, as such, firmly established ties to the party were required. Mandl had yet to become a member of the Nazi party. It was after this dismissal that she sought employment with the concentration camps. By her own admission, her motivation was the increased pay in comparison to the factories, and the freedom to leave Münzkirchen and her parents' house once more.⁴⁰⁴

Mandl entered into the concentration camp service in 1938, working at the newly opened Lichtenburg Concentration Camp. Designed solely for women, it reflected the increasing number of females regarded as enemies of the Reich.⁴⁰⁵ As an early recruit to the job, all excuses of Mandel being coerced are void. At this stage in the timeline, recruitment was open, and forced war labour was not in place. A reason for Mandl's early entry is based on

⁴⁰³ Miscellaneous Records, "Maria Mandl Early Photo", 200 MTT 1475 J. (NARA)

⁴⁰⁴ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁴⁰⁵ Peter Lambert, "Heroisation and Demonisation in the Third Reich: The Consensus-Building Value of a Nazi Pantheon of Heroes", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 3-4 (2007), p.527.

the belief of Segev that those who entered the camps in the early years were inspired by a deep ideological belief in Nazism.⁴⁰⁶ This reasoning becomes particularly evocative when applied to female recruits. Due to the restriction of work, engaging in the role of guard was one of the few available options for women that provided them with an opportunity to work actively for the Third Reich in an ideology-centred role. This is especially poignant as, in the earliest conception of the *Aufseherinnen*, it was emphasised that the concentration camps were places for the 're-education' of society, not the destruction.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, the *Aufseherinnen* were women who believed in the righteousness of the Nazi cause, and to such an extent that they were willing to enter the concentration camp - an environment perceived as intolerable and feared by many in the nation - all in the hopes of converting those who opposed the regime to its ideological 'truth'.

Mandl's recruitment process was very different from that which her colleagues later encountered during the war. It was much more stringent in the early stages, and loyalty to the party, Aryan purity, and physical fitness, were all tested before training began. Once these tests were passed, including proving that one's racial purity could be traced back over three generations, this was followed by several weeks of on-the-job training, shadowing another *Aufseherin*.⁴⁰⁸ The stringent rules and qualities that the women were made to adhere to were similar to the categories that were employed in general SS recruitment.⁴⁰⁹ This was in line with Himmler's vision for the SS and its auxiliary workers: that it would be made up of the purest and strongest Aryans that Germany had, in order to strengthen Nazi ideology and its

⁴⁰⁶ Tom Segev, *Soldiers of Evil: The Commandants of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), p.269.

⁴⁰⁷ Wachsmann, *Kl: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.24.

⁴⁰⁸ Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.19.

⁴⁰⁹ Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Deaths Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*. Translated by Richard Berry (New York: Coward McCann, 1970), p.46.

values all the more.⁴¹⁰ Teaching focused on controlling but also re-educating prisoners, the aim being to force Aryan enemies to become useful citizens of the Reich through indoctrination and hard labour. However, many of the desired qualities that the *Aufseherinnen* should possess were not followed through, as quantity outweighed quality due to the ever-expanding penal system, number of prisoners and lack of willing recruits. By the end of the war, little to no training was given to recruits, and the job consisted of controlling numbers and inflicting terror; the individual no longer mattered.

In comparison to many of the other concentration camps, little is known of KL Lichtenburg. It operated from a castle in Saxony and followed the model of many early Nazi concentration camps; being that it was an old building that had been re-commissioned for the purpose of imprisonment.⁴¹¹ Lichtenburg served as one of the first female concentration camps, and it was here that Mandl honed her craft of oppression and brutality, the first female guards and prisoners arrived in 1937.⁴¹² The small quantity of witness statements that have survived talk of the sheer brutality of the SS and the dire living conditions faced due to overcrowding, especially in the later years. Lina Haag, a former prisoner in Lichtenburg, wrote about the cruelty of the staff and the tough, demoralising work that inmates carried out. The brutality of Mandl struck Haag to such an extent that she was the only female guard who was mentioned by name:

" At the slightest word from an informer we are whipped; for the whipping we are strapped naked to a wooden post, and wardress Mandel beats us with the dog whip until she can go on no longer". ⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* Translated by Jeremy Noakes & Lesley Sharpe. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.88.

⁴¹¹ Stefan Hördler & Sigrud Jacobeit, ed. *Die Lichtenburg. Ein Deutsches Konzentrationslager: Wehrmacht, Gestapo, SS Und Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009).

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.104.

⁴¹³ Haag and Bender, *How Long the Night*. p. 54.

This provides the earliest testimony of Mandl's actions in her role as *Aufseherin* and characterises the rapid ease with which she took to violence and torture. In comparison to Haag's testimony, Mandl detailed her own actions in a substantially different manner. She contended that she was purely maintaining control for prisoner safety, and that she never implemented violence due to the lack of need; the women were largely elderly, and she was a gentle person.⁴¹⁴ Describing her actions in this way was purely a defence strategy on the part of Mandl, who hoped that her previous violence would be discredited and she would receive a more lenient sentence.

Mandl was transferred, when Lichtenburg closed, to the new camp at Ravensbrück, a purpose-built site around 90km north of Berlin. Ravensbrück presented a new opportunity for Mandl. The camp was new, clean, spacious, and offered plenty of opportunity for career advancement. Further the camp also offered Mandl the location to hone her skills of torture and brutality, methods that had defined her career at Lichtenburg. Placed in charge of the bunker,⁴¹⁵ Mandl quickly rose through the ranks due to the violence and suffering that she inflicted upon prisoners who transgressed the rules.⁴¹⁶ During her time at the camp, Mandl felt the growing effects of the structurization of the women's workforce, with the implementation of military-style uniforms and ranks from 1940 onwards.⁴¹⁷ These helped to clarify the different roles of the *Aufseherinnen* and reinforced the commitment of the higher authorities in their continued persecution of women. Whilst working in Ravensbrück, Mandl was able to climb the career ladder that had materialised and, from April 1940, held the rank of *Oberaufseherin*, a position that placed her in direct charge of the entire group of female

⁴¹⁴ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁴¹⁵ Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p.295.

⁴¹⁶ Alexander Steurer, *Testimonies Volume 57*: Translated by Dorothea Preslaski, (APMO).

⁴¹⁷ Stefan Hördler, "Before the Holocaust: Concentration Camp Lichtenburg and the Evolution of the Nazi Camp System", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 25, no. 1 (2011). p.114

guards within FKL Ravensbrück. It is at this time that she joined the NSDAP which, by her own admission, was due to a questionnaire being sent around the SS and auxiliaries making non-membership a cause for dismissal.⁴¹⁸ Mandl left Ravensbrück in 1942 for Auschwitz-Birkenau, sent to replace Langefeld. By this time, she was used to controlling the fate of the women whom she guarded, and her destruction of life would only increase as she presided over the largest death facility, Auschwitz.

Auschwitz

Mandl entered Auschwitz in the highest position possible for a woman, *Oberaufseherin*, giving her ultimate authority in the women's camp. However, in order to secure her place amongst the infighting and constant vying for promotion, it was imperative that she maintained a group of people who were loyal to her, comprised of both prisoners and guards.⁴¹⁹ The organisational structure of the camp and prisoner discipline were secured through the loyalty of *Kapos*, the prisoner functionaries who were needed to control the vast mass of prisoners. This was maintained by giving life-saving gifts to these privileged few and ensuring that their position as a *Kapo* entitled them to comforts and luxuries. The improved position, and the knowledge of the suffering of the faceless masses, gave Mandl assurance that the rules were enforced with vicious brutality, and that the threat of revolt was limited.⁴²⁰ To appease the *Aufseherinnen* and ensure complete loyalty to her regime, she secured the provision of privileged inside-jobs for her favourites, which removed them from the brutal elements of the Polish winter and long treks with outdoor commandos.⁴²¹ However, if any of

⁴¹⁸ Proceś członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁴¹⁹ Elissa Mailänder, *Gewalt Im Dienstalltag: Die SS-Aufseherinnen Des Konzentrations- Und Vernichtungslagers Majdanek* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009), p.148.

⁴²⁰ Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*. p.112.

⁴²¹ Jürgen Matthäus, ed. *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.21.

the guards displeased her, they would be sentenced to the penal company or back to less fortunate commandos.⁴²² In addition, she allowed the indulgence of rule breaking, such as the procurement of items from Canada. This further bound the *Aufseherinnen* to Mandl through shared guilt and the wish to carry on this exploitation of goods.

While Mandl now had a much higher role and a more demanding position controlling the camp, she continued to terrorise the prisoners under her control personally. She was still active in inflicting first-hand violence on the inmates and continued to act in a manner that became deeply etched into the minds of survivors. Helena Tyrankiewiczowa and Irena Strzelecka, for example, described Mandel and how she operated within the camp:

*"Bloodthirsty, anti-Jewish Mandel...suddenly like a hawk fell on the victim, beat, kicked, plucked hair"*⁴²³

*"a zealous functionary, Mandel treated prisoners with uncommon cruelty"*⁴²⁴

Through prisoner accounts it is possible to gain an insight into Mandl's continued abuse of prisoners throughout her time as an auxiliary officer. Whilst at Auschwitz, Mandl needed to have little contact with inmates. These were the duties of block leaders (*Blockführerinnen*) and those in charge of particular working commandos (*Kommandoführerinnen*), seen with the previous occupation of this role by Joanna Langefeld.⁴²⁵ As such, Mandl's continued involvement in violence was an active personal choice. From witness testimony, it is clear that Mandl continued to actively seek opportunities for violence during her time at

⁴²² Elie A. Cohen, *Human Behavior in the Concentration Camp* Translated by M.H.Braaksma (London: Free Association Books, 1988).

⁴²³ Helena Tyrankiewiczowa, *Testimony Volume 57* (Auschwitz Birkenau Archive)

⁴²⁴ Irena Strzelecka, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Washington DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994).

⁴²⁵ See previous case study on Langefeld for details of her actions.

Auschwitz. It provides an image of her as a vicious, violent woman who embraced the Nazi party's goals and even went over and above those in her abuse of prisoners.

It is during her time at Auschwitz that Mandl took an active part in the genocidal mass killings of inmates and the 'Final Solution' of the Jews. She was an instrumental part of the selections in the women's camp, taking an active role in the decisions of which prisoner would live or die, choosing individuals, based on fitness or her own whims, and determining who would be sent to the gas chamber. A description of Mandl and the selection process was given by survivor Cordelia Edvardson:

*Mandel and Mengle, the blonde camp commandant Maria Mandel in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the dark haired Dr. Mengle, who carried out the selections. The King and Queen of the realm of the dead.*⁴²⁶

The quote is highly evocative, emphasising survivor knowledge of Auschwitz as a place of death, and Mandl's role as their spectre of death. There is further evidence of Mandl being complicit in the gassing of prisoners, an allegation which she later denied at her trial.⁴²⁷

Mandl's signature is on a list of 500 women that were selected for *Sonderbehandlung*, or special handling. This was a code used on administrative documents by the Nazis and concentration camp officials to mean that the prisoner had been selected for death.

⁴²⁶ Cordelia Edvardson, *Burned Child Seeks the Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), p.64.

⁴²⁷ Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

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Figure 11: Mandel's name is here seen on a list of 498 prisoners who have been condemned to the gas chamber.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁸ Death Records Dpr. ZO/56a pp.172-174. (APMO)

This scan offers a primary document of the administration of death. Mandl's signature signifies her authority in sending these women to their deaths. The list includes women who were no longer considered fit for work or of use by the Nazis and, as a result, were considered disposable. Revealingly, it also serves to highlight the involvement of Mandl as an active and direct participant in the mechanisms of death. Moreover, Mandl's work in the concentration camp did not go unnoticed; she received the dubious honour of being awarded the War Cross Second Class for her service to the war effort.⁴²⁹

The active part that Mandl played in the extermination process at Auschwitz is in direct contradiction to wider Nazi ideology regarding a woman's role in society. According to Nazi doctrine, women were to be in the home, providing care to the many Aryan children born in service to the German Reich and to the strong protecting husbands of the Volk. Women were the passive sex, while men were the aggressors.⁴³⁰ This contrast was already evident in the role that the *Aufseherinnen* occupied. They became aggressors but also protectors of the Volk through their work disposing of undesirable elements. They had taken on the man's role, thus turning gender traditionalism on its head and further straying from the mainstays of Nazi ideology. In this situation, it was no wonder that the SS men were not happy with the *Aufseherinnen* within the camp. They could not and would not take on a subordinate role due to the deeply misogynistic view of women but also the place of women within the camp as overseers questioned Nazi ideas of the role of the sexes to the core.

The further extremes and abandonment of womanly values was depicted in Mandl's behaviour towards children within the camp. Several Auschwitz survivors recalled a

⁴²⁹ "Recipients War Cross Second Class", 200 MTT 1475 J. (NARA)

⁴³⁰ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p.63.

particularly poignant interaction between Mandl and a child that entered the camp. Mandl picked a small boy from a group of women and children who had been sentenced to death upon arrival, and ‘saved’ him. She became enthralled by the child, keeping him as a ‘pet’ for a week, dressing him in the best clothes stolen from previous arrivals and led him by the hand everywhere with her in the camp. This account ends with the gender-breaking imagery of Mandl throwing the child whom she had mothered screaming into the gas chambers.⁴³¹

Although it is impossible to know whether Mandl herself killed the child, she gave him up for death, knowing full well that his young life would be ended. It is beyond understanding that Mandl would destroy the life of an innocent child in such a hands-on and practical way after developing a bond with him. Many perpetrators sought to explain their behaviour by commenting that, with the mass of humanity within the camp, they ceased to recognise the individual. They had become desensitised to think of their victims as humans. The smell and the dire conditions reduced the inmates to the brink of humanity.⁴³² Mandl’s interaction with the young boy cannot be classed as just an extension of this, though. Her actions were a specific individual destruction of life and cessation of the sacred mother-child bond. Further, this action decisively acted in contrast to all ideas of German motherhood and female roles. Mandl was revolting against not only the idea of women holding power, but also the very idea of a woman’s role as a mother and care giver.

Of further note regarding Mandl's time stationed at Auschwitz was her creation of the first female orchestra in a concentration camp, consisting entirely of prisoners with previous musical training, and making use of the many instruments that were brought to the camp and

⁴³¹ The incident is described in Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz* Translated by J Landry (London: Sphere Books Ltd, 1977); Yvette Assael Lennon, “Interview” RG-50.918.0014 (USHMM); Ella Lingens-Renier, *Prisoners of Fear* Translated by Ilsa Barea (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1948), 146-47.

⁴³² Lewy, *Perpetrators; the World of The Holocaust Killers*. p.52-8.

then confiscated.⁴³³ The first male orchestra had been set up in Auschwitz in 1940, and several others followed in the many sub-camps. These bands proved to be greatly popular with the SS, both as a means of relaxation and entertainment. They were also put to functional use within the camps, providing support to the ongoing desire to make the arriving prisoners believe that Auschwitz was just another labour camp, and providing a marching rhythm that enabled the efficient counting of prisoners in and out of the camp to work detachments.⁴³⁴ The presence of an orchestra was solely in the men's territory until Mandl arrived at Auschwitz and set up the female-only orchestra in 1943. Many reasons have been proposed for Mandl's desire to set up the women's orchestra. It has been suggested by Kirtley that her motivation was for her own pleasure, to enjoy classical music. Alternatively, and perhaps worth equal credit, is that the orchestra was created as a means of advancement and to support her own career progression in the SS hierarchy. Kirtley also believes that it is through the orchestra that an insight into the more humane side of the guards is possible.⁴³⁵ Mandl's reasoning for starting the orchestra and continuing to be its benefactor is multi-faceted; it cannot be explained as purely for her own enjoyment.⁴³⁶ Her involvement in a successful orchestra, which impressed her SS superiors, allowed her to enjoy greater privileges and a greater status within the camp, bringing her to the notice of higher authorities within the Nazi party. The higher standing that the orchestra provided to Mandl could be seen by the various high-ranking members of the SS that chose to visit and enjoy the concerts. Further, as Mandl was the orchestra's benefactor, it was *she* who effectively gained the credit and any rewards from their enjoyment. Mengele and other high-ranking officers stationed at the camp were regular visitors, but the most important visitor that the orchestra received was

⁴³³ Richard Newman, and Karen Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2000), p.116.

⁴³⁴ Guido Fackler, *Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945* Translated by Peter Logan (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2007), p.19.

⁴³⁵ Newman and Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. p.223

⁴³⁶ Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth*. (London: Giles De La Mare, 1996). p.83.

Heinrich Himmler on one of his numerous visits to Auschwitz.⁴³⁷ Himmler's praise gained Mandl time away at a retreat and the praises of other officers, further bolstering her status.⁴³⁸

Mandl's love of classical music was widely noted and was customary for the time. Although other types of music were gaining popularity, it was normal for popular classical tunes to be widespread and well-recognised. Furthermore, classical music was promoted and exalted by the Nazi party as being of high cultural value, especially German artists such as Wagner.⁴³⁹ Therefore, Mandl's introduction of a female orchestra into the camp seemingly created a distraction that also catered to her own personal taste. The music was a means for Mandl to give herself a reminder of life outside the camp and escape from the horrific deeds that she regularly perpetrated. Fania Fénelon, a singer within the orchestra, claimed that "*Mandl's humanity came back to her when listening to the music*".⁴⁴⁰ It is thus clear that the orchestra members were able to see a different side to Mandl than was apparent to the rest of the camp. They were able to recognise a softer, more 'humane' side to Mandl, within this environment she could be viewed as a woman, rather than as a monster. The orchestra served as a personal release for her, an entity to which she reacted in kindness by giving the members gifts from the Red Cross parcels, allowing better condition in their specialised barrack and regular clean clothes, things that were unheard of elsewhere in the camp.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Mentioned in multiple memoirs of the 'Orchestra Girls' Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Fania Fénelon, Helena Dunicz Niwinska

⁴³⁸ Shown through the many high-ranking guards that came to watch the women's orchestra perform, such as Mengele, Himmler and other officials, it was Mandel who was rewarded for this. This is mentioned in numerous of the 'Orchestra Girls' memoirs. E.g, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth* and Helena Dunicz Niwinska, *One of the Girls in the Band* Translated by William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz- Birkenau State Museum, 2014).

⁴³⁹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (London: Jonathon Cape Ltd, 1986), p.37.

⁴⁴⁰ Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz*.

⁴⁴¹ Susan Eiseheid, *The Truth About Fania Fénelon and the Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.32.

Mandl's own personal devotion to the institution can be seen through her relationship with Alma Rosé, the second conductor of the women's orchestra. Alma was a well-regarded musician in the pre-war era, conducting a female orchestra in Vienna, and came from a large musical family.⁴⁴² Rosé took on the role of conductor and vastly changed the orchestra, creating a much more musically talented and organised outfit that, under her guidance, began to enjoy the same sort of professionalism and regard as the previously far more famous male orchestra.⁴⁴³ Her talent quickly found her within Mandl's good graces and, as such, received privileges, even though - as a Jew - Alma could only expect to occupy the lowest rung in the hierarchy of the concentration camp. Mandl did much to ease Alma's time in Auschwitz; she had her status changed from Jew to '*Mischling*', an important step up the racial hierarchy, giving her the status of having part-Aryan blood. Mandl also referred to her with the respectful title 'Frau Alma'. No other prisoner is known to have received this honour or to have been treated with such respect by an *Aufseherin*.⁴⁴⁴

The relationship between Mandl and Alma raises important questions about the ideological beliefs of Mandl. She openly mourned the death of her "beloved Alma",⁴⁴⁵ even though, according to Nazi doctrine, Alma belonged to a 'sub-human' Jewish race. Mandl was a well known anti-Semite, particularly unleashing her hatred through violent acts on the Jewish prisoners.⁴⁴⁶ Further, she fully supported the Nazi ideals concerning the Jewish populace and the supposed harm that they had inflicted upon the German people. However, Mandl's relationship with Rosé showed a side that indicated she was able to form relationships based

⁴⁴² Newman, and Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. pp.29-37.

⁴⁴³ Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth*.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.81.

⁴⁴⁵ Newman and Kirtley, *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*, p.87.

⁴⁴⁶ Helena Tyrankiewiczowa, *Testimony Volume 57*, Translated by Dorothea Preslaski, (APMO).

on shared interests and passions, disregarding Alma's Jewishness in favour of her musical talent.

Moreover, Alma was not the only member of the orchestra who was able to receive special privileges or enjoy the more 'compassionate' side of Mandl. The girls who played in the orchestra were referred to as 'Mandl's mascots'⁴⁴⁷ by other prisoners, due to the comfortable standard of living that they enjoyed and the relatively privileged position they held within the camp. They were not subjected to the overcrowded conditions or back-breaking physical labour characteristic of most prisoners' experience. In her memoirs, Fânia Fenelon described how, through expressing their discomfort, the women were able to secure extra rations of bread, and each had a blanket and bed, which was unbelievable for the majority.⁴⁴⁸ Further showing their privileged position, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, a cellist within the orchestra, was able to ask Mandl to intervene to save her sister from the general camp population and all the horror that went with it. Even though the sister was a woman who had no musical experience, Mandl obliged and gave the woman a position as a carrier, a job that secured extra rations and better accommodation.⁴⁴⁹ The reaction of Mandl to Anita's request was in direct conflict to other prisoner testimony of the *Oberaufseherin* behaviour. That, as a member of the orchestra, Anita was able to ask for this privilege and did not receive a deadly rebuke, as any other woman within the camp would have experienced, showed Mandl's high regard for the orchestra and its players. In interactions with less privileged prisoners, Mandl had sent women to the gas chambers for so much as making eye contact with her, let alone requesting to help another prisoner. This interaction showed the unusual position that the orchestra enjoyed due to their irreplaceable role in Mandl's vision.

⁴⁴⁷ Helena Dunicz Niwinska, *One of the Girls in the Band*. p.78.

⁴⁴⁸ Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz*, p.193.

⁴⁴⁹ Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *Inherit the Truth*. p.81.

The role that the orchestra played in Mandl's life should not be underplayed in understanding the nuances of perpetrator life within the concentration camp. Through study of the women's orchestra, the historian is forced to accept that Mandl cannot be explained solely as a psychotic and sadistic woman who was solely hell-bent on the destruction of European Jewry. Instead, she was a cultured, developed woman, able to maintain close relationships and take into account the desires and needs of others. This contrasts with other more easily recognisable information of Mandel's career, in which she engaged in the brutal torture and murder of thousands of women. Mandl's relationship with Alma Rosé showed this more complex element to her psyche. Alma, a Jew, should have been someone that Mandl (with her deep-seated racism) was unable to tolerate, let alone build a close friendship with. The orchestra provides knowledge of a different experience within the concentration camp and the deeper emotions of some members of the *Aufseherinnen*. Furthermore, it presents information on the psychological coping strategies of the SS, and their constant drive to retain a level of humanity amidst the Holocaust, as it unfolded around them. When they could no longer accept their murderous actions, they retreated into pre-war pleasures that could temporarily remove them from their situation. Recognised in their participation, be it through the orchestra in Mandl's case, or trips to the cinema and the theatre in other cases.⁴⁵⁰

Mandl's time at Auschwitz was a continuation of a career of violence and oppression, progressing along a path that she had first embraced upon entering KL Lichtenburg in 1938. What can be certain is that, where Langefeld failed at Auschwitz, Mandl excelled. Her treatment of the prisoners was violent and inhumane; she never sought to ease their suffering but, rather, to prolong it. She continued to find the time to involve herself in the hands-on

⁴⁵⁰ Rudolph Höss, Artur Liebehenschel, Richard Baer, "*Kommandant Memos*", Translated by Charlotte Mears, (APMO).

barbarity of the camp, and refused to shy away from the violence, which would have been possible given her role. Rather, she relished the bloodshed and wanted to be a full participant in the torture. As a guard, she did her job, but as a woman, she was highly committed to the Nazi ideology and the brutal oppression of resistance. The only contrast to this image of Mandl's treatment of prisoners was her interaction with the orchestra that she had created. Although she may have treated the women better from this particular block, these women were still little more than slaves being put to their purpose of exalting her character and, simultaneously, working as part of the machinery of death that was fostered within the camp. Mandl did not value these women's lives, but rather the skills that they possessed and how they could be utilised for her own personal needs.⁴⁵¹

Mandl was transferred to Mühldorf, a sub-camp of Dachau, in November 1944. She fled the camp before its liberation.⁴⁵² After the war, she was arrested in Münzkirchen and extradited to Poland to stand trial for her crimes in Auschwitz. Although she employed the 'Nuremberg Defence' of just following orders, she was found guilty, in part due to the many victims who took the stand against her and detailed her actions. She was sentenced to death and executed on 24th January, 1948⁴⁵³.

⁴⁵¹ Helena Dunicz Niwinska, *One of the Girls in the Band*. p.123.

⁴⁵² Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. Museum (USHMM)

⁴⁵³ Her trial and sentence are shown in the Auschwitz trials that took place in Krakow: Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM)

Irma Grese

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*Figure 12: Grese, photographed during the Belsen trial held by the British in Celle, Germany.*⁴⁵⁴

Irma Grese, ‘The Beautiful Beast’⁴⁵⁵ has become, in many ways, the symbol of the *Aufseherinnen*, beautiful, promiscuous, and deadly. Arguably the most notorious of all guards and with the most interest, Grese has entered the history books as the antithesis of feminine behaviour. This case study analyses how her actions and aesthetics were used by the media in the post-war period to symbolise the destructive deviancy of the Nazi state and of women in general. Irma’s early life and entry into the concentration camps followed the same pattern of many of the other women that have formed part of this study; however, it is Grese who has been chosen by popular culture to embody the typical ‘model’ of the Nazi concentration camp guard. Grese’s life has received the most attention and publicity: she has featured by

⁴⁵⁴ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945).

⁴⁵⁵ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Beautiful Beast: The Life and Crimes of SS Aufseherin Irma Grese* (Ventura: Golden West Historical Publications, 1996).

name in many scholarly investigations into Auschwitz, and her life has been extensively used by sensationalist writers aiming to garner interest through humanity's fascination with the sordid and distasteful. This has led to the production of a whole cache of cheap, badly researched books, (easily available on Amazon), aiming to discover the 'truth' behind the beast.⁴⁵⁶ Her rise to notoriety began in the immediate years after the war, with her beauty, young age, and crimes filling newspapers week after week. Grese became the 'star' of the Belsen trial, finally fulfilling her dreams of becoming famous.⁴⁵⁷ However, while her short life came to an end with her hanging in 1945, her fame has continued in a manner unparalleled by any of the other concentration camp guards.

Grese was born on 7th October 1923 in Wrechen, a small village located around 100km north of Berlin.⁴⁵⁸ The village was of diminutive size and heavily focussed on agriculture, offering few employment opportunities or excitements for a young woman. Wrechen is located close to the future site of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp and the Hohenlychen Sanatorium,⁴⁵⁹ which were both set to be important places of employment for Grese in later life. Irma came from a family of five. Although her siblings faced the same influences, none chose to follow her employment choices or fervent Nazi ideology. Her father was an agricultural worker, whilst her mother stayed at home to care for the children. Money was sparsely available to the family, with Irma receiving only a standard education and leaving school to get an apprenticeship at the age of 14. With no specialist training, she worked for 18 months as a farm hand, a job she detested, and transferred to work in a shop in a nearby town for six

⁴⁵⁶ These are the books earlier mentioned in the historiography: Ryan Jenkins, *Irma Grese and the Holocaust* (2014); Robert Jenkins, *Irma Grese and Other Infamous SS Guards* (2015); Raymond Jennings, *Irma Grese and Auschwitz* (2015); Mike Livingstone, *Irma Grese: The Untold Stories of Hitler's Most Brutal Female SS Guard* (2016). For more examples see Appendix 4.

⁴⁵⁷ Some examples of these articles are: "Irma Grese in Tears", *Liverpool Echo*, Tuesday, 16th October; "Irma Grese's Whip", *Times of London*, 18th October 1945, and "'Sensation' Slated for Belsen Trial", *New York Times*, 30th September 1945. There are numerous others.

⁴⁵⁸ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.248

⁴⁵⁹ Helm, *If This Is a Woman*, p.47.

months.⁴⁶⁰ Her formative years were heavily influenced by the rise to power of the Nazi party. Irma was ten years old when the party officially took office and this would have led to a huge upheaval in her schooling and extracurricular activities, with the focus being placed on the importance of the Volk. The emphasis on the high status of those that worked the land and were of German blood was hugely appealing to those in provincial towns and countryside. Gone was the status of the town and cosmopolitan attitudes of the Weimar Republic; instead, the focus had turned back to the soil and traditional living.⁴⁶¹ The party sought to indoctrinate society on all levels, repurposing school teaching and children's sporting groups as a means to infiltrate the outlook of children and bind them to Nazi ideology. Irma joined the BDM against the wishes of her father and remained actively involved with both sporting and educational Nazi organisations throughout her life.

Grese began working in the concentration camps at the age of 18. She had previously applied after her apprenticeship as a nurse had finished but was refused a position due to her young age.⁴⁶² Her deposition in the Belsen trials argued that her desire was to become a nurse, and that seeking employment in a concentration camp had been a last resort. This is substantiated by her time at Hohenlychen, an SS hospital located close to the camp at Ravensbrück. Although Grese was found unsuitable for a job as a nurse in the hospital, she was advised to seek alternative employment at the nearby concentration camp by one of the senior doctors who was making use of the inmates for experimental medicine.⁴⁶³ Her young age and previous experience working with the SS suggests that she did not take the job at

⁴⁶⁰ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.248

⁴⁶¹ Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), and Eric Kurlander, *Hitler's Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich* (London: Yale university Press, 2017).

⁴⁶² Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*.p.248.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.* p.248

Ravensbrück lightly. Throughout her time at the hospital, she was aware of the functions of an *Aufseherin*, and her desire to remain working within the Nazi system highly influenced her career choices. In addition to remaining a party functionary, there was also the privileged position that this post would bring her, providing a large step up from working as a mere farmhand to working for the government. With a larger pay cheque and uniform, the young girl clearly saw her status rising. As Grese actively chose to continue to entrench herself in a politically charged role and work with the SS, this can amount to a confession of her fervent Nazism and passion for the cause of the Third Reich. Many of the guards in later depositions sought to explain their desire to become *Aufseherinnen*, as they wished to ‘re-educate’ prisoners in line with Nazi ideals, teaching them to be productive members of society, and change their beliefs to fit in with the wider ideological consciousness of National Socialism.⁴⁶⁴ This desire could also explain Irma’s motivation. Grese’s work with the SS at Ravensbrück differed greatly from her work within the hospital, however it still allowed her to interact with high level SS men for the Nazi ‘New Germany’, and reaffirmed her position as a privileged member of the Volk.

Grese’s time at Ravensbrück is where she developed her technique of manipulation and violence to control prisoners. Under the tuition of her older and more experienced colleagues, she rose quickly through the ranks and was soon in charge of entire working *kommandos* and blocks of prisoners.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women*. p.12.

⁴⁶⁵ Helm, *If this is a Woman*, pp.194, 310.

Auschwitz

It is Grese's time at Auschwitz, and her sadistic behaviour whilst employed at this camp, that has led to her infamy. In regard to testimony, Grese is most often mentioned by name by survivors.⁴⁶⁶ This prevalence has led to a widely held belief that she reached a much greater rank in the *Aufseherinnen* hierarchy than happened in actuality. She is remembered for her brutality and particularly her sexual deviancy when in charge of the female prisoners. Many accounts allude to relationships between her and the male guards and SS doctors on site, specifically a relationship with Dr Mengele, but many other men are noted.⁴⁶⁷ These are not the only relationships that Grese is supposed to have maintained within the camp, and it is her sexually deviant relationships with female prisoners that have shaped her memory and historical image, particularly as these are further tinged with aggression and sadistic violence.⁴⁶⁸ The actions of Irma Grese, that went beyond the already brutal lifestyle of Auschwitz, are what have been so crucial in ensuring her historical infamy and further adding an element of sexualised horror to the camp.

Violence was a frequent part of the concentration camp, and many memoirs and trials speak of the brutality with which the female guards acted towards the prisoners under their charge. The violent behaviour of Grese whilst at the camp did not set her apart from the other women that she was working with; rather, it established her conformity. There were instances of heinous violence documented from many of her colleagues, and what has ensured Grese's notoriety among them is the evident pleasure that she took in carrying out her actions. In Gisella Perl's memoir, she remarked on how Grese sustained pleasure from whipping the

⁴⁶⁶ Bianka Vida, "Gendering the Holocaust: A Case Study of Irma Grese: Constructing the 'Evil' and the 'Ordinary' through Digital Oral Testimonies and Written Trial Testimonies of the Holocaust Survivors", *Journal of History of Culture, Science and Medicine* 7, no. 13 (2016), p.9.

⁴⁶⁷ Gisella Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* (Salem: Ayer, 1992), p.60.

⁴⁶⁸ Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*, Translated by Clifford Coch and Paul P. Weiss (New York: Ziff Davis Publishing Co. 1947), p.161.

breasts of women, until they became so infected that they had to be operated on. She would become visibly excited through these actions.⁴⁶⁹ In another memoir, her pleasure is illustrated by the smile she wore when she beat women to the floor.⁴⁷⁰ The pleasure from violence contradicts ideas of women as 'mother', as it establishes Grese as an 'other', an oddity that fascinates and equally appals.

The scale of violence Grese inflicted cannot be explained as merely following orders; rather, this was a woman who gained physical and psychological pleasure through her savagery. Her infamy was not created through her violence, which would place her within the same categories as many of the other guards, but rather it was her enjoyment that secured this.⁴⁷¹ She knew that her actions could kill. Witness statements attest that she would beat women to death.⁴⁷² Her aim was not punishment, as she later argued, but rather pleasure.⁴⁷³ The idea of sadistic violence (enjoying inflicting pain on others for sexual gratification) is a violation of traditional norms regarding sexual practices and, further, is a breach of traditional concepts of 'femininity'. The enjoyment of inflicting pain on others goes against societal norms, especially in regard to women's traditional roles and how the patriarchy expects the female to behave. Patriarchal ideas of the sexual activities of women expect them to take on the passive role. If they are to engage in violent sexual practices, then they should be Masochists: the submissive partner of a Dominant relationship, having their private lives mirror the positions which they should take within their public lives.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁹ Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, p.117.

⁴⁷⁰ Jay Robert Nash, *Look for the Woman: A Narrative Encyclopedia of Female Poisoners, Kidnappers, Thieves, Extortionists, Terrorists, Swindlers and Spies from Elizabethan Times to the Present* (London: Harrap, 1981), pp.174-5.

⁴⁷¹ Roy. F. Baumeister, "The Enigmatic Appeal of Sexual Masochism: Why People Desire Pain, Bondage and Humiliation in Sex", *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 16, no. 2 (1997), p.150.

⁴⁷² Ilona Stein, "Deposition", in *The Belsen Trial*, edited by Raymond Phillips (London: William Hodge and Company Ltd, 1945), p.747.

⁴⁷³ Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*, p.251.

⁴⁷⁴ Linda L. Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Brown has attempted to explain the psychology behind Irma's sadistic actions in his book charting her early life and subsequent actions as a reflection of '*Furor Teutonicus*',⁴⁷⁵ wherein the bullied becomes the bully, dispensing of pent-up aggression and rage through feelings of helplessness, when young, on to those who are now in an acquiescent position. Revealingly, in the Belsen trial, Helene (Grese's sister) testified that, in their childhood, Irma would flee from fights due to her timid nature.⁴⁷⁶ These statements were intended as a means to support Grese and prove that she was not inclined to violence; instead, it was utilised to explain how her aggression was projected onto those whom she knew that she could win against. In the environment of Auschwitz, it was *she* who had ultimate power. It is apparent that Grese, within the camp system, was now fully able to exercise her anger and violence towards those that were unable or unwilling to stand up to her. This in turn created a resource of violence for Grese who, facing no resistance or opposition in the camp, was able to unleash her individual aggression on helpless victims for her own pleasure.⁴⁷⁷ When the parameters of society break down, there is no longer a boundary of morality, and it is here, in Auschwitz, with no questioning of her actions, that Grese's sadistic violence was fully realised.⁴⁷⁸

Gisella Perl's account has faced severe questioning on the factual elements. However, the sheer amount of testimony that mention Grese's violence, and her own statement during her trial, admitting to beating prisoners, confirm the accusation that Grese beat women beyond any justification or control and, unlike many of the other guards in post-war trials, she felt sure enough of these actions to openly admit to them in a court of law.

⁴⁷⁵ Brown, *The Beautiful Beast: The Life and Crimes of SS Aufseherin Irma Grese*, p.12.

⁴⁷⁶ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*.p.247.

⁴⁷⁷ Frida Beckman & Charlie Blake, "Shadows of Cruelty; Sadism, Masochism and the Philosophical Muse", *Angelaki; Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 14, no. 3 (2009).

⁴⁷⁸ Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*.

The case of Grese offers the opportunity for the depiction of misconduct, both violent and sexual, by a female guard that other *Aufseherinnen* do not. Survivor testimonies spoke of Irma's bisexuality, affairs that were strictly forbidden under paragraph 175 of the German constitution, which banned homosexual relations. The penalty for breaking this law could result in imprisonment for the guard and, if these relationships were with Jewish women, they would be illegal under *Rassenschande* laws.⁴⁷⁹ In scholarly research concerning male concentration camp guards, sexualised violence was another method to abuse those in their charge.⁴⁸⁰ Although strictly illegal, the male guards faced little retribution from their superiors. Prisoners who could jeopardise their position or whom they grew tired of were easily disposed of.⁴⁸¹ Memoirs suggest that Grese disposed of her sexual victims in the same way. Grese is not the only *Aufseherin* that claims of sexual relations with female prisoners were levelled at. Although mentioned in numerous survivor testimonies, the claims are difficult to prove with no qualitative data on the matter. Grese herself was never questioned about the claims, and there is no official documentation to prove the allegations, nor is there any primary testimony of women sexually abused by Grese, only of her having favourites.

*'She somehow liked me and occasionally gave me some extra piece of salami or a piece of cheese'*⁴⁸²

*'There was a Jewish woman who she loved very much'*⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁹ Geoffrey J Giles, "'The Most Unkindest Cut of All': Castration, Homosexuality and Nazi Justice", *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (1992), pp.41-61.

⁴⁸⁰ Myrna Goldenberg and Amy Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), p.89.

⁴⁸¹ Nomi Levenkron, "Death and the Maidens: 'Prostitution' Rape, and Sexual Slavery During World War II", in *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, edited by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Sidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010).

⁴⁸² Nina Kalecka, Interview 1990, RG-50.030.0101 (USHMM)

⁴⁸³ Hedda Gomba. Interview 109, *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation:1994.

These statements regarding Grese giving extra resources to chosen prisoners can be likened to the earlier discussion in chapter 3 of occasional acts of kindness, formed between *Aufseherinnen* and prisoners. However, it is only in the case of Grese that these acts have come to represent her homosexuality.

Grese's reported sexual activity did not end with her alleged homosexuality. She was further vilified for her promiscuity with numerous members of the SS guard. Grese never married and, whilst it has been widely accepted that there were numerous relationships between male and female guards (proven by the marriages and pregnancies that took place at the camps), there has never been one woman alleged to have had so many lovers in such a relatively short period of time as Grese. Irma is reputed to have had liaisons with Kramer, Höss, Dr Mengele, SS Mann Hanz, SS Mann Fritz, as well as numerous other unnamed SS men and male prisoners within the camp.⁴⁸⁴ By Grese's own admission, she had a romantic liaison with SS *Sturmführer* Hatzinger and requested to stay at Bergen-Belsen to continue the romance.⁴⁸⁵ Her romance with Hatzinger was confirmed by Grese during her trial, although she never confirmed the seriousness of the relationship or whether it was ever consummated. Once more, there is no documented evidence that Grese had relations with SS men, but in the atmosphere of debauchery that prevailed in the camps, it is not unbelievable that such liaisons took place.⁴⁸⁶ What is contentious is the idea that a committed Nazi and anti-Semite would have engaged with male and female prisoners, regarded by her as '*submenschen*'. This ideological barrier was coupled with the practical constraints of these liaisons. Grese, as an

⁴⁸⁴ Lengyel, *Five Chimneys. The Story of Auschwitz*; Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*; George Winston, "Irma Grese - the Blonde Beast of Birkenau and the Most Sadistic Woman in Nazi Germany", at: <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/instant-articles/irma-grese-the-blonde-beast.html>. There are many more such examples.

⁴⁸⁵ Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.261.

⁴⁸⁶ Shelly M Cline, "' Working Girl": Sex Discrimination in Auschwitz", in *Thinking Gender Papers*, at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3tp6t6gb>: (California: UCLA, 2012), p.2.

Aufseherin, would have been forbidden to enter the men's camp, providing limited contact with male prisoners. As such, the allegations of her promiscuity with male prisoners appears highly fictitious. Gisella Perl stated that she performed an abortion on Grese in Auschwitz after she became pregnant by a married SS Mann. This account is unconfirmed and gives the scholar a problematic and challenging detail concerning Grese's life. The abortion has been placed into the historical record to further emphasise the promiscuity and disregard for human life by Irma Grese.⁴⁸⁷ Whether the event actually happened or not it is now of little consequence; rather, in Grese's history, it is a representative symbol of the loss of morality and humanity at Auschwitz. The abortion completes the removal of the image of mother and carer from Grese.⁴⁸⁸

The historical and cultural preoccupation and continued fascination with Grese, which has cemented her as the most notorious of the Nazi female guards, is exemplified in the idea of her break with 'traditional' ideas of the feminine. Her actions cast her as not only a sadist, but a *sexual* sadist. She was able to bring the full multitude of cultural ideas about the 'fallen woman' into one single image. It is not Grese's actions that have made her the most infamous of concentration camp guards but, rather, the fact that she can be held up to the traditional moral standards of femininity and fail. Through her 'failure', she can thus be (and has been) used as a symbol of the fallen woman, becoming the archetypal image to teach women how *not* to behave.⁴⁸⁹ When the public are questioned about Grese's actions, they retell with some bashfulness of her wanton behaviour or sexualised violence. It is the sordid details of her life

⁴⁸⁷ Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, p.81.

⁴⁸⁸ Henry P. Davis, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn, "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany", *Population and Development Review* (1988), pp.110-112.

⁴⁸⁹ Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), p.24.

that have enabled her memory to become a symbol of the Holocaust, and this representation is as a caricature of herself, rather than as a paid perpetrator of the Holocaust.⁴⁹⁰

The creation of Irma Grese into more than just perpetrator of the Holocaust but as a symbol of Nazi deviancy in women is manifested in her aesthetic treatment in the post-war years. Instead of her embodying societal norms about beauty and women, warm and soft, she is depicted as cold and hard. The most mentioned characteristics of Irma are her good looks and how it was a constant shock for prisoners that someone so beautiful could be so evil.⁴⁹¹ Her attractiveness was amplified in the newspapers during the trial of the Belsen guards, and she became the stand-out star.⁴⁹² The newspapers referred to her crimes, but also frequently focussed on her beauty, so much so that Grese held out hopes of becoming a star in Hollywood after the trials.⁴⁹³ Indeed, her growing fame motivated Grese to present herself perfectly coiffed in order to impress those watching. During the trials, and in representations afterwards, Grese became a subject of the male gaze; her life was used to enthrall the public, and create a myth surrounding her that is not substantiated by historical fact.⁴⁹⁴ These changes were a reflection of desire. Rather than being primarily depicted as a perpetrator of the Holocaust, she was, and still is, shown as a woman with a tremendous sexual appetite and deadly streak. It is no surprise that in modern cultural and filmic depictions of Grese, she is always played by classically beautiful women who have no correspondence to her actual looks; by modern standards, Grese would not be considered a great beauty by the media. Grese has become the symbol for sex in the Holocaust, and she must appeal and sexually

⁴⁹⁰ The points on characterization of the Aufseherinnen and their representation is discussed extensively in Appendix 2

⁴⁹¹ Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys: The Story of Auschwitz*, p.81.

⁴⁹² "Bergen Belsen Trial", *The Times*, Thursday, 11 September 1945. This is further mentioned in the earlier cited sources.

⁴⁹³ Brown, *The Beautiful Beast: The Life and Crimes of SS Aufseherin Irma Grese*, p.64.

⁴⁹⁴ Charlotte Barnes, "Lifting the Veil on the Violent Woman", *The F Word*, at: <https://www.thefword.org.uk/2016/10/lifting-the-veil-on-the-violent-woman/>.

excite those that interact with her story.⁴⁹⁵ Viewed in this way, it cannot be any ordinary woman who carried out these crimes and sexual deviancy; it must be an extraordinarily beautiful, alluring woman to make the crime all the more shocking.⁴⁹⁶

Irma Grese was tried in September 1945, at the Bergen Belsen trial conducted by the British in Lüneberg, Germany. The trial lasted a month and had hours of testimony from former prisoners, detailing the abuse and genocidal mass murder of the Nazi regime. Grese was sentenced to death and executed on the 13th December 1945. It is at this time that Grese's notoriety began. She was the focus of several newspaper articles who used her crimes to create sensationalist stories. This, coupled with the focus on her looks, created the image of the dangerously 'sexy Nazi'. It was then that the idea of 'The Beautiful Beast' was first built. Grese was mentioned more than any of the other *Aufseherinnen* on trial and, whilst many of the other guards were described as disagreeable to the eye (Bormann was called old and hag like⁴⁹⁷), Irma received nothing but praise for her looks. The *Daily Mirror* commented that she was an 'attractive blonde who looks like a Hollywood film star', whilst the *New York Times* reported on her "undeniable good looks"⁴⁹⁸. From this moment Irma took on the characteristics of the beautiful killer that have perpetuated in popular memory. Her sexualisation by the patriarchal media created a lasting image of a sadistic promiscuous woman which remains with us today. Whilst patriarchal conceptions look on her with disgust, they also cast her into the role of sexual being. She is viewed through the eyes of the male gaze who warp her crimes into a fetishized desire that can then be devoured by men - the

⁴⁹⁵ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in *Feminist Film Theory*, edited by Sue Thornham (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.63.

⁴⁹⁶ Paige W. Toller, Elizabeth A. Suter, and Todd C. Trautman, "Gender Role Identity and Attitudes toward Feminism", *Sex Roles* 51, no. 1 (2004), p.87.

⁴⁹⁷ Albert Pierrepoint, *Executioner: Pierrepoint* (London: Georg G. Harrap & Co Ltd, 1974).

⁴⁹⁸ Anonymous, "Belsen Blonde", *The Daily Mirror*, 31st July 1945, and Anonymous, "Belsen Woman Guard Weeps and Denies Guilt", *The New York Times*, 17th October 1945.

dangerous *femme fatale*. This trope continues to be used, turning Grese into a being for women to learn from through her violence and outward sexuality, but also for men to enjoy as a deviant sexual fantasy.⁴⁹⁹

The above case study of Irma Grese presents a different character to those of the other *Aufseherinnen*, as it displays how the lives of these women have been, and are still, used to embody ideas of gender traditionalism and entertainment.⁵⁰⁰ Rather than Grese's life and actions being used as an example of perpetrator behaviour creating a discourse on the daily lives of both female prisoners and guards, through her actions and testimony, her image has, instead, been used to titillate audiences and become a figure of the 'fallen woman'. This is part of a wider phenomenon of the male gaze possessing histories and images of women and using them to symbolise the trope of the bad woman, to chastise women to fall into their submissive place. Ultimately, this study seeks not only to further knowledge of the guard through more accurate historical assessment, but, in addition, aims at removing from popular memory the falsehoods created around them, to prevent the *Aufseherinnen* and their actions becoming characters in a fictionalised story.

⁴⁹⁹ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974).

⁵⁰⁰ Stacy Banwell, and Michael Fiddler, "Gendered Viewing Strategies: A Critique of Holocaust-Related Films That Eroticize, Monsterize and Fetishize the Female Body", *Holocaust Studies* (2017), pp.20-22.

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Figure 13 Bormann Mugshot at Belsen Trial⁵⁰¹

Juana Bormann was among the eldest of the concentration camp guards and became an *Aufseherin* at their earliest conception, at Lichtenburg. Her career did not progress along the same lines as her contemporaries, Mandl or Langefeld, instead she remained at the lowest rung of the *Aufseherinnen* and was frequently tasked with the least favourable jobs within the camp. In addition to being among the oldest, she is also remembered by prisoners for her violence.⁵⁰² Her reliance on a dog to provoke terror and retain control within the camp gives a clear illustration of the means that female guards utilised to control prisoners when their stature or age acted as a limitation. Bormann is an example of how the *Aufseherinnen* adapted their lifestyle and actions to the camp system, detailing how they overcame gender boundaries to ensure they were effective in their role as perpetrators.

⁵⁰¹ TNA: WO235/12 (1945)

⁵⁰² Kitty Hart. *Return to Auschwitz*. (London: Granada, 1981), p.93 & Helen Otley. "The Story of My Life." (Wiener Library 20369, 1993).

Before Auschwitz

Juana Bormann was born on 10th September 1893 in Birkenfelde, Germany.⁵⁰³ Prior to seeking employment in the concentration camps, Bormann was employed as a nurse in a psychiatric hospital in Stadtroda, Thuringia. A centre for Aktion T4, the first systematic attempt by the Nazi party to remove unwanted elements of society through euthanasia.⁵⁰⁴ In her supervisory role, it is highly likely that Bormann participated in this *Aktion* and had intimate knowledge of the Nazi party's attempt to rid those with physical and mental disabilities from society. Bormann's transfer to the concentration camps was at a much later age than the majority of female guards; she was 46 when she became an *Aufseherin* and had been employed for many years within the hospital. It is likely that, when the T4 program was halted, her service was no longer necessary.⁵⁰⁵ Working within a psychiatric hospital at this time, her duties were less about nursing the patients, but more around control, the discrimination of the mentally ill, already prolific within society was only heightened under Nazi rule.⁵⁰⁶ Bormann's previous experience of discrimination and discipline of those regarded as '*submenschen*' was quickly transferred to the prisoners of the concentration camps. She needed no change in her psyche to continue with a process of dehumanisation of inmates.

Bormann was first employed at Lichtenburg KL; she claimed as a civilian employee, who worked solely in the kitchens. However, the profession of *Aufseherin* was not formally recognised until 1940, as such none of the women were identified as *Aufseherinnen* or SS

⁵⁰³ Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p. 207

⁵⁰⁴ Aly Götz, Peter Chroust and Christian Pross. *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi Medicine and Racial Hygiene*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994). Stadtroda's use as a T4 site is mentioned multiple times. pp. 66, 90.

⁵⁰⁵ Wachsmann. *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. p.104

⁵⁰⁶ Martin Gittelman. "The Holocaust and the Mentally Ill: Extermination." *International Journal of Medical Health* 35, no. 3 (2006).

auxiliary agents until this date and as such could claim civilian employee status. Bormann's transfer with the rest of the guards and prisoners to Ravensbrück in 1940, and her recognition as an *Aufseherin*, disprove her claim, she had fulfilled the role of guard at Lichtenburg.⁵⁰⁷ Rather than merely working in the kitchens, she was the *Kommando* leader of the kitchens supervising prisoners. Little is known of her behaviour in Lichtenburg, due to a lack of source material as discussed in previous case studies.

Whilst at Ravensbrück, Bormann began to solidify her reputation for brutality. She became notorious for beating prisoners and worked for a time in the bunker, where extra punishment and torture were carried out on the already suffering and emaciated women.⁵⁰⁸ This is similar to the experience of many of the *Aufseherinnen*; however, what sets Bormann apart from her colleagues was her use of a large Alsatian dog to terrify and control the prisoners.

Auschwitz

Bormann was transferred from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz in October 1942, forming part of the second group of relocated guards. Bormann switched between *Kommandos*, a circumstance that was not unprecedented and could represent the staff's changing experience and their relationship with their superiors. An inside job was much more favourable than one on an outside *Kommando* that was several miles walk away and exposed to the elements.⁵⁰⁹ It is unsurprising that when Bormann was transferred from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz in 1942, she was first placed in charge of the Babitz Kommando, a workgroup located several miles

⁵⁰⁷ Philips, Raymond, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.207

⁵⁰⁸ Jack G Morrison. *Ravensbrück: Everyday Life in a Woman's Concentration Camp, 1939-45*. (Princeton: Wiener, 2000). pp.58-59

⁵⁰⁹ Brown. *The Camp Women*. p.18.

from the main camp, prisoners needed to be accompanied to and from the site each day, a journey that was made by prisoners and guards alike.⁵¹⁰ It was whilst working in outside *Kommandos* that the propensity for prisoners' escape was at its highest. This was in part due to distance from the camp, and the lack of physical boundaries. Because of the increased likelihood, it was within these situations that dogs were most often employed.

Bormann was a slight woman weighing only 110lbs and only just 5ft, her diminutive stature and gender placed her at a disadvantage in the control of women. This was only amplified by her advanced age in relation to the other guards and most of the prisoners. The use of the dog creates a physical extension of Bormann's power; she is enlarged and amplified in her force by a trained animal. The dog must have provided added security for Bormann reinforcing her position at the top of the concentration camp food chain. If prisoners failed to keep up with the exhaustive work, took a break or infringed on the rules, the dog would be set to attack the defenceless prisoners. There were many reports of Bormann setting her dog on women for the slightest misdeed, the prisoners were then severely mutilated by the canine. Esther Wolgrunch⁵¹¹ when questioned as a witness at the Bergen Belsen trial, states that Bormann set her dog on the clothes and then throat of a woman in the *Kommando* who fell behind, the dog killed the woman and Bormann boasted of her work. This is corroborated in the proceedings of the Belsen trial by Dora Szafran.⁵¹² These women, in the unsanitary conditions and without medical treatment, would often die from the wounds that the dog inflicted. In 1940, a *Kommando* made up of dog handlers was implemented to supervise the female prisoners, especially those on working *Kommandos* away from the main camp. The dogs were introduced solely to female workgroups; it was believed that women were liable to

⁵¹⁰ Anna Zieba. "Wirtschaftshof Babitz,". "*Nebenlager beim gut Babice,*" *Hefte von Auschwitz* 11 (1970): pp.73-87.

⁵¹¹ Philips, Raymond, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.742

⁵¹² *Ibid.* p. 748

react to the dogs in a much stronger way than the male prisoners.⁵¹³ This reactionary fear would, in turn, help maintain control and order at the most vulnerable times. The brutality of the dogs used by the guards has frequently been mentioned within survivor testimony; the dogs fulfilled their purpose. The dogs were trained to incapacitate those attempting to escape, by dragging them to the ground.⁵¹⁴ However, they were often used for the amusement of the guards and as another way to instil terror. Bormann was particularly noted as being notorious for the dog that she always kept with her inside the camp, and her use of the animal to commit violence. What makes Bormann's dog unusual is that it appears not to have been an official canine, but instead her own 'pet' that she had trained to behave in such a manner.⁵¹⁵

Bormann in her defence at the trial argues that for this reason the dog couldn't be bought into the camp, only trained SS dogs were permitted, however, the sheer amount of witness testimony affirming the presence of this dog cannot be ignored. Rather it seems that these rules were flouted, in much the same way that some *Aufseherinnen* carried guns or whips, in an attempt to feel more secure in their role. Weapons and dogs masculinised the position of the *Aufseherinnen*

*Bormann always had a big dog with her, and on this day she ordered the dog to attack our group. I was the first to be bitten on the leg, and Bormann then ordered the dog to attack Regina, who was standing next to me.*⁵¹⁶

The sheer wealth of testimony and description from both prisoners and guards describing Bormann and her dog is overwhelming and undeniable. Her reliance on the dog was to

⁵¹³ Sarah Helm 'If this is a Woman' p.197

⁵¹⁴ Brown. *The Camp Women*. p.22.

⁵¹⁵ Philips, Raymond, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p. 209.

⁵¹⁶ Philips, Raymond, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.670

counteract her small stature and advanced age in relation to both guards and prisoners. At only 5ft tall and 52 at the time of her death, her reliance on the dog was a tool to physically extend her power and authority. Emphasising that, although women were taking on roles of dominance, they could be impeded in these actions by their physicality.⁵¹⁷ This was only exacerbated by Nazi ideology which reinforced the idea of women as vulnerable and the environment of masculinity that permeated the concentration camp environment. It is for this reason that women felt it necessary to equip themselves with weapons and animals to assert their power.⁵¹⁸

After serving in the outside commando of Babitz, Bormann was transferred to the sub-camp of Budy. At the time of her arrival, a small women's camp was established in the old school buildings, and the work was focused on agriculture. This agricultural work meant hours of back-breaking labour for prisoners, and the conditions were hard and cold in the converted school buildings. The *Aufseherinnen* sent to the camp also lived in conditions that were severely lacking when compared to Birkenau. Facing isolation from the provisions of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the guards exacted their complaints on those whom they were meant to ward, taking out frustrations through limiting rations and corporal punishment.⁵¹⁹

Bormann never rose very high in the camp system in comparison to those who joined at the same stage as her; Langefeld and Mandl both joined the guards at Lichtenburg and went on to be *Oberaufseherin*, while Bormann remained as *Kommandoführerin*. This could be for several reasons. Bormann was described by many of the survivors as stupid.⁵²⁰ Her lack of

⁵¹⁷ TNA: FO 944/965, (1945).

⁵¹⁸ Caroline O. N Moser., and Fiona C. Clark. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence*. (London: Zed Books, 2001). p.12

⁵¹⁹ Wachsmann. *KI: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*. pp.176-180

⁵²⁰ Philips, Raymond, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. p.748

advancement and her intellectual inferiority may be used to explain some of the cruelty that she exacted upon the prisoners, she lashed out to prove her superiority physically when she could not mentally. In her trial, Bormann claimed that she had requested to leave the service in 1943, but this claim cannot be clarified with any reliable sources. What is clear, though, is that Bormann continued to struggle within the system of the camps, frequently being placed in unfavourable locations and commandos and progressing little.

What distinguishes Bormann from the others in this study is her lack of advancement within the camp; this was not through her resistance to violence, which she exhibited in equal measure to many of her contemporaries—confirming that there were other skills necessary to be an *Aufseherin* beyond violence and that Bormann was found lacking. Her advanced age when she joined the camps represents her lack of skill in her previous positions, entering the camps as an *Aufseherin* on the lowest rung and not progressing above this level. Further, Bormann's use of the dog to enact her will against the prisoners illustrates the means that guards utilised to attempt to overcome the physical difficulties of controlling the vast numbers of prisoners. These inadequacies could be overcome through the 'weaponisation' of dogs and the use of whips and other instruments of torture in the camp.

Conclusion

The inclusion of the above four case studies within the thesis adds an essential dimension to the broader study of the *Aufseherinnen*. The case studies are able to return agency to the women who served within Auschwitz, allowing a more profound knowledge of their identity rather than a continuing focus on categorising them as a faceless mass, marked by their indistinct brutality and involvement in the Holocaust. Differing levels of detail are necessary

within the case studies due to the scarcity of records. However, taken as a whole these studies on specific women have allowed an insight into the mechanisms of extermination on an individual level. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of a group of women from different lifestyles and backgrounds of the type presented above challenges the idea of the Guard (singular), as merely one type of woman - Blonde, Beautiful, Aryan and deadly – an often used symbol, an idea that has dominated subsequent popular coverage of Nazi female guards. Instead, through the different backgrounds of the women, and by the manner in which they have been treated by memory, the specialised research set out in this chapter has enabled the creation of different profiles. Together, the case studies within this chapter have provided an insight into the treatment of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and help to explain why some have been forgotten, while others have entered into historical and public consciousness through their infamy.

Through an in-depth analysis of these women's lives, it is possible to trace the timeline of their involvement with the Nazi party. The progression of their careers is of importance when aiming at a better understanding of their reasoning and motivation in becoming *Aufseherinnen*. Although many female guards in the post-war years claimed that they had joined for financial reasons, it is possible to challenge this through a more in-depth investigation and understanding of their lives. For example, Irma Grese was heavily involved with the Nazi party in her childhood against the wishes of her father and worked within an SS sanatorium before working at Ravensbrück. It is evident from this timeline that her motivations were influenced by ideology. The question of motivation is a thread that runs throughout this thesis. These case studies as well as the earlier social history in Chapter 3, make it clear that ideology was of enormous importance. The mental involvement with Nazi ideals explains how the women were able to enact violence on the prisoners and ultimately

why they were working inside the camps; they believed the Nazi doctrine that these women were *unter-menschen* and needed to be removed from the population for the Third Reich to succeed.

For a precise examination of these women and to understand how the physical perpetration of the Holocaust unfolded, scholars must seek to examine individual mentalities rather than focusing solely on the collective group. If there is to be a further progression of thought into the actions of the women and the gendered circumstances of these actions, it is imperative to first understand *a woman*, before *the women*. These case studies allow this process of examining the individual but are best utilised when considered alongside the more comprehensive history compiled in Chapter 3. In this manner, individual experience is placed into the broader environment.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has contributed important new information to the historical narrative of the Holocaust by focussing on an under-researched group of perpetrators, the German Nazi female guards, or *Aufseherinnen*.

Due to the complex role of women in the war, the vast spatial environment of the Holocaust, and the ever-expanding concentration camp system during the Nazi regime, it was necessary to focus on a specific site for this research project. For this purpose, Auschwitz and its subcamps were selected. This choice was due to the multifaceted functions of the camp.⁵²¹ Auschwitz was both labour and extermination camp, continually changing as the war and the final solution developed. Consequently, the *Aufseherinnen* were required to fulfil a variety of roles, ranging from work detachment overseer to murderer. Additionally, Auschwitz was chosen as the environment for the study due to its reputation as the physical symbol of the Holocaust. The camp is the most recognised extermination facility and the largest of its kind. It therefore made sense to concentrate my research on the *Aufseherinnen* as a group at the most well-known site, where it could be supposed the most archival holdings and information would be available. This supposition proved to be correct, as illustrated in the main chapters of the thesis.

The thesis has explored the idea of the ‘ordinary’ perpetrator, an idea put forward by Christopher Browning in his discipline defining work on who formed the criminals of the Holocaust. However, what sets this work apart is the originality of the group that is being

⁵²¹ Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p.8.

studied.⁵²² Whilst there has been a growing awareness of the *Aufseherinnen*, the group at Auschwitz have not been studied in a comprehensive manner. Rather the studies have been singular case studies, or broad analysis of the role without being centered in a defined environment. Perpetrator studies recognise that the agents of the Holocaust can no longer be defined as solely the hierarchy of the Nazi party, but rather responsibility for genocide extends much further down the chain of command to individual soldiers and guards. The broader establishment of guilt has presented new agents of the Holocaust that must be analysed and placed within the apparatus of destruction. This thesis sits among the recent historiography of perpetrator studies by identifying such a group, the *Aufseherinnen*, a previously neglected group of perpetrators discounted for their lack of ingenuity in progressing the final solution and their inferior place within society due to their gender. As the thesis argued, Nazism's deeply misogynistic ideology placed women as inferior to their male counterparts and, as such, determined that they should hold less powerful roles. This was echoed in early academic studies of the Holocaust, women were given the role of victim of Nazism and as such could not be perpetrators. In turn, this misinformation and continued male domination within academia continued the perpetuation of the idea that women were without agency within Nazi Germany.⁵²³ This thesis has sought to challenge such interpretations.

The neglect of the *Aufseherinnen* from previous historical analysis is, as we have noted, due to gender bias in previous research; this has left a void in Holocaust historiography that has placed women in solely the role of victim rather than that of perpetrator. Through an inquiry into the women who occupied an official function of Holocaust perpetrator, it has been

⁵²² Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin, 1998).

⁵²³ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), p.55.

possible to see how gender traditional roles were destroyed within the concentration camps. The cultural construction of gender performed a critical analytical tool for this thesis. Gender, as created by patriarchal society, confers upon women roles of caregiver and mother, the 'weaker' non-violent sex. When women act outside of these roles, they are stripped of their womanhood.⁵²⁴ The *Aufseherinnen* were women who broke gender traditionalism and, as such, had their gender stripped away. In post-war analysis, this was shown through their transition to 'monsters', no longer human, no longer women. This thesis aimed to explore how the actions of the female guards align with gender, and how their breaking of these proscribed actions impacted upon their role as Holocaust perpetrators and as women.

As this thesis has demonstrated, it is no longer feasible to discount the importance of gender in the experience of trauma and the Holocaust.⁵²⁵ Gender bias on the role of women is present in both the perceived actions of the prisoners and the guards. While the female was cast as the victim, helpless and passive within the Holocaust, this is not a viable representation of the *Aufseherinnen*. As previous chapters depict, the guards broke these gender stereotypes with their behaviour. However, to assume that they simply took on 'masculine' qualities of aggression and wilful violence again removes questions of feminine experience from the Holocaust.⁵²⁶ To return agency to the *Aufseherinnen* forces the historian to confront the conundrum that there exists a less than satisfactory history of the Holocaust, which has focussed on the male, leaving historical knowledge bereft of female experience.⁵²⁷ This thesis

⁵²⁴ Paula Ruth Gilbert, 'Discourses of Female Violence and Societal Gender Stereotypes', *Violence against women* 8, no. 11 (2002).

⁵²⁵ Myrna Goldenberg and Amy Shapiro, *Different Horrors, Same Hell: Gender and the Holocaust* (University of Washington Press, 2013).

⁵²⁶ Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), p.15.

⁵²⁷ Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2005), pp. 24-8.

has counteracted the idea of male experience as universal experience through its feminist approach and critical evaluation of gender roles.

The *Aufseherinnen* Reconsidered

With the completion of this research, the author is confident that this thesis contributes new knowledge to the historical record concerning the lives of the *Aufseherinnen* who were stationed in the Auschwitz complex. This environment included the main camp, the secondary camp of Birkenau, and the 30 plus sub-camps that fell under the control of the *Kommandant* of Auschwitz.⁵²⁸ This thesis and its findings are of particular relevance due to the previous lack of scholarly endeavour on the subject, a point expressed in the literature review (see Chapter 1).

It is clear from the analysis of secondary sources that the *Aufseherinnen*'s role within the Holocaust had been forgotten or was regarded as contributing little to wider discussion. While it is true that some of these women have been analysed as individuals (often in sensationalised accounts), as a group of employees of the Third Reich no systematic academic history had been previously attempted. The analysis in this thesis has thus sought not just to challenge sensationalised accounts based on fiction and gossip, but also to return agency to many of the *Aufseherinnen* that, due to lack of balanced investigation, had been lost to time.

⁵²⁸ Rees, *Auschwitz: A New History*, pp.20-25.

The question of gender and its impact upon the women's psyche and experience was hugely important for the analysis. Many historians have hesitated to explore the role of gender in the experience of victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust and have, instead, embraced the outdated idea of shared horror and universal suffering.⁵²⁹ This tendency has manifested in the belief that all those who worked within the complex of Auschwitz shared equal blame for the actions of extermination. The reflexive approach to guilt has resulted in an incomplete picture and has undermined proper understanding of the nuances of perpetrator behaviour.⁵³⁰ This thesis has sought to challenge the aforementioned insular approach by examining the differences of experience of the Holocaust that were due to gender. As such, it acknowledged and investigated the gender repercussions of the *Aufseherinnen*'s actions within the camp. Investigation was aided by the application of a feminist approach to the source material, one that aimed to place women back within their own history.⁵⁰⁹

Furthermore, it was essential to place the *Aufseherinnen* within the context of the profoundly misogynistic Third Reich. Gender as a cultural value shifts continually, always defined by patriarchal society, creating boundaries of how women should behave. Within Nazi Germany, this was manifested in stricter emphasis on women as caregiver and mother. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, the ideological beliefs of Nazi Germany stood in contrast to the actions of the *Aufseherinnen*; women were expected to follow the values of 'Kinder, Kirche, Kuche', remaining in the home, raising Aryan sons for Germany.⁵³¹ The female choice to work within the concentration camps was in direct tension with the core messages of gender separation as dictated by Nazi ideology. This is important. These women were acting outside

⁵²⁹ Joan Ringelheim, 'The Split between Gender and the Holocaust', In *Women in the Holocaust*, edited by Daila Ofer & Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁵³⁰ Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p.294. ⁵⁰⁹ Shulamit Reinharz & Lynn Davidman, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.11- 34.

⁵³¹ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p.11.

of the proscribed roles of their gender within the society that they sought to serve, and thus placed themselves in contradiction to the beliefs of Nazism regarding women. This betrayal of ideology was reflected in the contempt for their position by their male colleagues and peers.

A question that has often frustrated scholars when trying to understand the actions of the perpetrators of the Holocaust is the question of motivation. The *Aufseherinnen*'s choices faced further difficulties in comprehension when research is centred on the role of women, especially those that broke gender roles through their active participation in the Nazi policy of mass murder.⁵³² The use of both quantitative and qualitative sources in the thesis led to a research framework that allowed for insights into the personal realm of these women, rather than just their professional and public profiles. Motivation is a difficult concept to understand as it may leave no trace upon the historical record. While many of the guards in post-war trials used their motivation as justification, their reasoning was solely for financial incentives and forced conscription. This was often a deliberate misdirection to cast aside allegations about their role as committed Nazi ideologues.⁵³³ Economic justification was widely accepted for many years, and there is no denying that there were greater monetary rewards for working in the camps than in other unskilled labour such as factories,⁵³⁴ but this explanation can no longer be comfortably considered as the foremost motivation. Rather, through analysis of the women's' location throughout the Reich, together with the experiences and timeline of their joining, it is instead possible to grasp the core ideological factors that determined motivation.

⁵³² Paula Ruth Gilbert, 'Discourses of Female Violence and Societal Gender Stereotypes', *Violence against women* 8, no. 11 (2002),

⁵³³ Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial*. (London: William Hodge and Company, 1945).

⁵³⁴ Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002).

For analysis of motivation to have been possible, it was first necessary to construct a database of records, seeking to account for the *Aufseherinnen* who worked in Auschwitz. This compilation of primary sources is an original resource created by the author; it expanded on the work of previous scholars, adding over 30 names and creating the most complete register of female guards.⁵³⁵ Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Archives, in conjunction with the organisation 'Truth about Camps', have released a database of the male *Wehrmacht* soldiers and guards that served within Auschwitz. This database was released in 2017.⁵³⁶ However, this project featured no women. This further serves as an example of how the *Aufseherinnen* and the role of women in the Holocaust is seemingly still of secondary importance, with the continuing focus of 'universal' experience being male experience.⁵³⁷ This further emphasises the need for a female perspective on Holocaust perpetrators; women must be analysed and placed alongside their male counterparts for a 'universal' experience to be understood. The current thesis has sought to address and change this historiographical weakness.

Attempts to explain the motivation of the women as purely down to monetary reasoning were naive, and the records consulted for the thesis can no longer substantiate these claims. Many of the older recruits already had established careers, which saw them earning more than the minimum wage of the time. Moreover, in many cases, they had previously shown support for the Nazi party in elections.⁵³⁸ In addition, the younger age of many of the other recruits indicated that they had been ideologically influenced in their preadolescent lives by the

⁵³⁵ The database was built upon the work of Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002), Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz: Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer Und Was Aus Ihnen Wurde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2013), & Fotini Tzani, *Zwischen Karrierismus Und Widerspenstigkeit - Ss- Aufseherinnen Im KZ-Alltag* (Bielefeld: Lorbeer- Verlag, 2011).

⁵³⁶ Truthaboutcamps, 'Zaloga SS Kl Auschwitz', Institute of National Remembrance, <http://truthaboutcamps.eu/th/zaloga-ss-kl-auschwitz/16816.Zaloga-SS-KL-Auschwitz.html>.

⁵³⁷ Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵³⁸ This is exemplified in the case of Johanna Langefeld, who had previously voted for the Nazi party in elections, as well as several of the other *Aufseherinnen*. This data was presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

teachings of Nazism, in both propaganda form and through their school years.⁵³⁹ Through research of the locale, age-ranges and voting habits of the female guards, strong evidence has been established in this thesis that ideological concerns were a major reason for women joining the concentration camp service. This is further supported by the advertising drive for *Aufseherinnen*, where the position was advertised as chiefly concerned with the re-education of prisoners.⁵⁴⁰ In this manner, the role would have appealed to women with strong ideological ties to the party, who agreed and supported the murderous aims and racial bigotry of Nazism. It offered one of the only means for women to interact in an ideological capacity with Nazism, just as women were being forced back into the homes and out of positions of power by economic policy.⁵⁴¹

The thesis was not solely concerned with questions of ideology and motivation, however, but also with securing a greater understanding of the role of *Aufseherinnen* within the camps, through the creation of a social history. This included exploration of what was expected of the women after recruitment and the impact that their time at Auschwitz had upon their wider lives. Through the completion of a social history of the female guards, a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of the Holocaust at Auschwitz has been achieved. It sought to provide a new awareness of gendered experience within the camp and provide new insights into *how* women took on the role of perpetrator in the Holocaust. The social history, which comprised Chapter 3, was divided into sections of the *Aufseherinnen*'s life that would most affect their experience, based on social structures, work, relationships and living conditions - all are important for comprehension of life experience. The social structures that were formed between the female guards and their counterparts proved highly informative to

⁵³⁹ Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p.36.

⁵⁴⁰ Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück*, Translated by Gerald Satterwhite (New York: Anchor Books, 1975), p.135.

⁵⁴¹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (London: Jonathon Cape Ltd, 1986), p.335.

the author for an understanding of how the perpetrators operated, and the emotional impact that their role in genocide had upon perpetrators. It was imperative to understand how this small, insulated community interacted within their social and occupational environment.⁵⁴²

Analysis made it clear that intense relationships were built by the women, due to joint guilt and close living conditions. These relationships are present in testimonial evidence of both the *Aufseherinnen* and survivors. The women built familial bonds and close friendships with their colleagues and were able to rely on their joint guilt to provide justification for their actions, be this involvement in killing, the stealing of possessions, or their racist ideals. This created an unbreakable connection among offenders, all equal in their guilt through involvement.⁵⁴³ The bonds of complicity can be clearly seen in post-war trials. *Aufseherinnen* demonstrated the strength of these connections, by repeatedly defending each other and exalting the good character of one another in an attempt to defend their friends but also themselves.⁵⁴⁴ The environment of the concentration camp was engineered to create ‘sanity’ in the madness of shared experience, creating an understanding through guilt between perpetrators that no one else could.⁵⁴⁵ The rationalisation of the Holocaust, and the violence enacted by the women, was further exemplified with the perks that could be expected for those that performed well, such as the trips to Solahütte, the merit of a War Cross, and extra rations and pay, all designed to maintain the efficient functioning of the concentration camp. For the murderous work of the *Aufseherinnen* to continue, it had to regularly be re-

⁵⁴² Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Random House, 2013), pp.119-24.

⁵⁴³ Dan Bar-On, ‘Four Encounters between Descendants of Survivors and Descendants of Perpetrators of the Holocaust: Building Social Bonds out of Silence’, *Psychiatry* 58, no. 3 (1995), p.244.

⁵⁴⁴ For further discussion of complicity in the post-war period by *Aufseherinnen* please see Chapter 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Thomas Blass, ‘Psychological Perspectives on the Perpetrators of the Holocaust: The Role of Situational Pressures, Personal Dispositions and Their Interactions’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 7, no. 1 (1993), pp.49-50.

established by superiors that the work carried out by these SS auxiliaries was morally justifiable and that they continued to act in a beneficial manner for Nazi policy.

The thesis provided fresh information on the living conditions of the guards, through its incorporation of new source material, such as the Rajsco medical records, which were influential for discussion of the health implications that working within the camp had for the guards.⁵⁴⁶ Investigation of these records created new perspectives on how the health of the *Aufseherinnen* was affected by the camps, revealing that, although as a group they enjoyed a much higher standard of living than the prisoners, they were still at danger from the epidemics that ravaged Auschwitz, such as typhus and cholera. This is evident through the infection of several of the guards with the typhus disease and the death of SS Captain, Dr Siegfried Schwela.⁵⁴⁷ These invaluable records also yielded information on the less serious ailments that the women faced. There were instances of colds, nose boils and cystitis within the records sample. In addition, the records pointed to the mental health effects of work within Auschwitz, through the high levels of stress and the excessive prevalence of Angina. For the sample size in relation to the age and physicality of the woman, it is clear that they were under both physical and mental stress. The Rajsco records revealed a wealth of new information and have been an invaluable resource for this thesis. One can argue that, through greater study of this record set, even further insight could be provided regarding conditions in the camp and the lives of SS personnel that were stationed within Auschwitz.

Whilst the Rajsco records gave information on the potential dangers for the *Aufseherinnen* who chose to work at Auschwitz, the thesis also pointed to the benefits that employment had

⁵⁴⁶ *SS-Hygiene Institut and Log, SS Lager-Lazarett. (AMPO)*

⁵⁴⁷ Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle* (New York: Owl Books, 1989), p.165.

for the SS and their auxiliaries. The women were housed in barracks that were newly completed for their arrival; many of them were stationed in the *Stabsgebaeude* (Staff Building), where they were able to rely on the ‘privileged’ inmates who were to serve their needs and make their life more comfortable. These inmates included cleaners of the barracks, the laundrette on-site, the tailors who were employed to repair and create SS uniforms but were often employed by the *Aufseherinnen* to recreate fashionable items such as dresses.⁵⁴⁸ The hierarchy of the concentration camp considered it key to make the lives of the SS as easy as possible; there were regular entertainments and rewards for those who excelled. The privileged nature of the work extended to the wider environment of Auschwitz where the SS shop at *Haus 7*, was stocked with milk, meat and other luxuries. The shop continued to be well-stocked, even as these items became increasingly hard to acquire in Germany.⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore the *Aufseherinnen* were able to carry the privileged nature of their position into the local towns, such as Oświęcim and, further, to Katowice where they, as occupiers and SS employees, commanded the respect of the Polish and Ethnic Germans of the locality. The exploration into the lifestyle enjoyed by the *Aufseherinnen* enabled the thesis to provide an insight into the benefits enjoyed by the perpetrators of the Holocaust. The lives of these women changed dramatically, and the positions and privileges they enjoyed were completely outside of the realms of what could be expected if they had stayed within Germany and if their lives had not been changed by the war. It is evident that many of the women would have continued along a banal existence of marriage and children within low-income brackets. Here at Auschwitz, they were able to enjoy experiences and items of luxury that would have been unfeasible in any other environment.

⁵⁴⁸ Lore Shelley, *Auschwitz - the Nazi Civilization: Twenty-Three Women Prisoners' Accounts: Auschwitz Camp Administration and Ss Enterprises and Workshops* (Lanham: London: University Press of America, 1992). pp.20-22, 64.

⁵⁴⁹ Piotr Setkiewicz, *The Private Lives of the Auschwitz SS*, Translated by William Brand (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2013), p.27.

To create a social history of the *Aufseherinnen*, it was important to understand more than just indicative data and to comprehend the personal lives and ‘individuality’ of these women. The investigation into the personal realm was accomplished through drawing on a wide range of testimony and records to understand how the lives of the women were impacted through their deployment to Auschwitz, and the effects that this change had upon their behaviour.

Testimony was particularly useful for this endeavour. Whereas official records seek to remain unbiased giving data without emotion, testimony gives a deeply personal reaction to events and personalities. Through this invaluable information, it was possible to understand the systems of entertainment and comfort that were created at Auschwitz for the SS personnel and, further, what was regarded as the key elements for these women in retaining their ‘humanity’ within such an environment.⁵⁵⁰ The creation of institutions for entertainment can be seen through the introduction of a hairdresser, the nightlife that was available, and trips to the cinema or shopping. These all allowed a sense of ‘normality’ for the women who were in the camp. This sense of normality was further supported by the relationships that flourished. For the women, their time at Auschwitz was regarded as a job away from home, a time for ‘adventure’ whilst in loyal service of the Reich. However, it was also a time of loneliness for many; it was some of the women’s’ first time away from home and their familiar social structures. In many cases, it is not surprising that relationships flourished. These relationships fell into two categories: those of quick dalliances in the lawless land of Auschwitz where the normal rules of female sexuality and morality no longer applied, or those more lasting relationships that followed more traditional concepts, which resulted in marriage and offspring. These relationships are able to tell historians about the duality of experience in Auschwitz. Whilst the experience for most was death and destruction, for the *Aufseherinnen*,

⁵⁵⁰ David Furber, ‘Near as Far in the Colonies: The Nazi Occupation of Poland’, *International History Review* 26, no. 4 (2004), p.475.

it was a place of happiness and life. The relationships between SS men and women exemplify that the concentration camp was an integral part of their life experience and that they felt no shame or doubt about their role as perpetrator. Rather, they built their life around their posting at Auschwitz.

The relationship between guard and prisoner was also of particular importance for this study. It revealed not only the role of the *Aufseherinnen* in the physical perpetration of the Holocaust, but also alluded to the different roles that perpetrators undertook based on gender.⁵⁵¹ An increase in knowledge of the actions of the *Aufseherinnen* is important to increase historical understanding of the Holocaust and how it was enacted by women upon women. The new information presented in this thesis has contributed to the discussion of the women's camp as a site on its own, revealing the gender differences in experience. As such, this study has added to the existing conversations concerning gender and the Holocaust. The analysis of prisoner-guard relationships creates a discourse that is able to challenge previously held views on the nature of the female perpetrators and how they are compared to their male counterparts.⁵⁵² The discrepancies on how genders are judged can be seen through blanket statements that previous scholars and commentators have applied to the women through supposition that 'the women were worse' and 'eviler' than their male counterparts. However, what is not addressed by such claims is *who* decides the scale of evilness, *who* is the judge of these women, and *why* does their gender influence this scale rather than solely their actions?⁵⁵³ It is apparent through these debates that it is not the *Aufseherinnen*'s actions

⁵⁵¹ Thomas Blass, 'Perpetrator Behaviour as Destructive Obedience', In *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, edited by Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.95.

⁵⁵² Kimberly Partee, 'Evil or Ordinary Women: The Female Auxiliaries of the Holocaust', in *The Evil Body*, edited by April Anson (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011), p.4.

⁵⁵³ Susan Cernyak-Spatz, 'Recollections of the Holocaust', <https://collection.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irm47955>

that have marked them out for infamy but, rather, their breaking of gender traditionalism and the patriarchal licensed characteristics of femininity.⁵⁵⁴ This point is important, as these women have often been left out of history, and when they are (rarely) included, they are often only included merely to represent the most brazen breaker of rules or as a symbol of the fallen woman.⁵⁵⁵

In regard to female perpetrator behaviour and what is known of their interaction with the prisoners under their control, it is important to remember that, without question, these *Aufseherinnen* took part in the brutalisation and killing of prisoners in Auschwitz. They tortured and murdered women, stole the goods of incoming prisoners and were, without doubt, a key mechanism in the institutional process of the Holocaust. Further, in contrast to the statements of many of the women in the post-war period, they were not lenient towards the women under their control, nor did they continuously object to the extreme mistreatment of the prisoners.⁵⁵⁶ Through the research for this thesis, numerous testimonies were utilised to create a complete picture of the brutality and violence of the *Aufseherinnen*, providing numerous examples of their conduct. This was important for knowledge of the full range of roles that the *Aufseherinnen* undertook as block leaders, *Kommando* leaders and in their active involvement with all aspects of the Holocaust within Auschwitz. This is recognised from their tasks supervising work details to taking an active part in the selection of prisoners for extermination.⁵⁵⁷ The different positions that women could hold in Auschwitz were broken down in Chapter 3, where the functions of each job were explained, and examples given. Through this breakdown, it became clear of the extent to which there were many

⁵⁵⁴ Linda L. Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁵⁵⁵ Anna Hardman, *Women and the Holocaust* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 2000), p.29.

⁵⁵⁶ This is used as the defence by many of the *Aufseherinnen* in their trials in the post-war years. See, for example, Raymond Philips, ed. *The Belsen Trial & Proces członków załogi Oświęcimia* (Trial of the Staff of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau). Translated by Charlotte Mears, RG-15.169M. (USHMM).

⁵⁵⁷ Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015), p.376.

different ways that the *Aufseherinnen* were involved in life at Auschwitz, from a *Blockführerin* beating the prisoners out of bed in the morning to a *Kommandoführerin* who would supervise and control with violence a group of women tasked with digging ditches. These examples all serve to give further insight into the many functions that the women held at Auschwitz and the role of female perpetrators in the Holocaust. Ultimately, the *Aufseherinnen* – these ‘ordinary’ women - were willing participants to the Nazi policy of extermination within Auschwitz Concentration Camp.⁵⁵⁸

The desire to return agency through recognition of the individuality of the female perpetrators was an important objective of the thesis. Due to the nature of previous historical research, many of the *Aufseherinnen* had been grouped into a faceless mass with little to no knowledge available to historians about their individual actions, nor even their names. In a troubling sense, this allowed the actions of the women to fade from history; they were regarded as unimportant to understanding the Holocaust due to their low position in the Nazi hierarchy and supposed gender inferiority. The most pressing need was to return agency to the perpetrators so as to be able to better understand their actions and the suffering that they caused.⁵⁵⁹

Lack of recognition of the individual was addressed through the establishment of a database containing the names of the women who worked as *Aufseherinnen* within the concentration camp; this database was presented and discussed in Chapter 2. The database presented in Chapter 2 was a collation of previous scholars’ work that has then been expanded upon by the author’s own archival investigations. The database allowed for more efficient and detailed

⁵⁵⁸ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin, 1998).

⁵⁵⁹ Guenter Lewy, *Perpetrators: The World of the Holocaust Killers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89.

classification of the women mentioned in testimony and trial documents, shaping them into something more than an anonymous set of individuals. The aim of understanding the individuality of the perpetrator was further extended by the inclusion of four case studies in Chapter 5, which sought to delve further into the lives of chosen *Aufseherinnen* and provide a deeper analysis of their actions. Whilst the overall aim of the thesis was to present a social history on the collective experience of the *Aufseherinnen*, it is important to understand the differing reasons that women chose to enter into a career in the concentration camp and the way that this service affected the individual independently. Whilst it is important to return the *Aufseherinnen* as a group to historical knowledge, it is also important to recognise personal choice and experience. In this sense, the inclusion of the case studies further returned agency through an understanding of the individual experience and the unique impact of Auschwitz.

Chapter 5 contained the case studies of four women; their inclusion in the study was for a number of reasons. As previously outlined, they offer a means to return agency to the individual perpetrator. However, in addition, they demonstrate preconceived perceptions of womanhood that have been imposed upon the *Aufseherinnen*, creating caricatures of the ‘bad woman’. Through the four women included – namely, Johanna Langefeld, Maria Mandl, Irma Grese and Juana Bormann - it became clear that patriarchal ideas of gender roles are conferred upon the *Aufseherinnen*; these are the tropes of mother, monster, whore.⁵⁶⁰ The use of gender traditionalism in previous analysis was particularly evident in the case of Irma Grese. Grese represents the most famous of the *Aufseherinnen* who served at Auschwitz and has had the most study, both scholarly and non-academically. Her case study elucidates that it was the assertion of her sexual deviancy that has held the fascination of the wider public, rather than her role as perpetrator. This is exemplified through the credence given to details

⁵⁶⁰ Sjoberg, & Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, pp.7-13

of her sexuality in texts and popular culture references, details that are based on scant evidence.⁵⁶¹ The focus on sexuality in regards to Irma Grese is made more noticeable when compared to the manner in which her treatment has differed to that of Bormann or Mandel, both of whom have a case study dedicated to them and who were just as prone to violence.⁵⁶² They were both older than Grese and, as such, do not fit the gendered idea of the beautiful, promiscuous and deadly woman. Rather, in Bormann's case, she was made to fit the idea of the lonely bitter hag - to depict the patriarchal idea of what happens to women when they don't have a man to look after them; it twists their mind, and they become violent with bitterness, often taking this out on younger women. This is the character that Bormann has often been made to fit.⁵⁶³

Furthermore, the case studies illustrated the ways in which women have had their femininity excised if they dare to act outside of gender rules, and how this has impacted on Holocaust historiography. Depicted through the case study of Irma Grese 'the whore' and 'monster', she has strayed so far from how women are expected to act that she has lost all idea of humanity as well as femininity. She is instead a monster, something truly 'other'. This change is in contrast to Langefeld, previous *Oberaufseherin* of Auschwitz, a much higher position, who was allowed to keep her womanhood and feminine characteristics due to her characterisation as a lenient and motherly figure in the concentration camps. As such, she possesses the ultimate female trait of 'mother'.⁵⁶⁴ These case studies are of considerable importance for wider analysis on the way in which perpetrator studies have been influenced by gender. They

⁵⁶¹ There are numerous easily found books on amazon, kindle and ibooks that detail unfounded facts and copied Wikipedia pages that seek to highlight Irma Grese as a promiscuous and violent woman. These sensationalist histories continued to dominate knowledge of the *Aufseherinnen*. Examples have been Ryan Jenkins, 'Irma Grese & the Holocaust' (2014), & Robert Jenkins, 'Irma Grese and Other Infamous SS Guards' (2015).

⁵⁶² Harriet Burgess, 'The Framing of the Shrew: A Study of the Sexualisation of the Female Criminal', *Trinity CL Rev.* 17 (2014), p.165.

⁵⁶³ Linda L. Lindsey, *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* (Routledge, 2015).

⁵⁶⁴ Johannes Schwartz, 'Weibliche Angelegenheiten': *Handlungsräume Von KZ-Aufseherinnen in Ravensbrück Und Neubrandenburg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS, 2018), p.362.

seek to question the framing of the *Aufseherinnen* in history and how interpretations have been determined by restrictive and outdated gender roles. These case studies have made it clear that the historiography of perpetrators and the Holocaust continue to be negatively impacted by moralisation on the manner in which women should act.

Through the completion of this thesis, the first social history of the *Aufseherinnen* of Auschwitz has been achieved. This study has made it possible to understand the exact functions that female guards carried out and the key roles they played in the systems of the Holocaust. Through the returning of names, ages and locations, agency has been returned to the *Aufseherinnen*, removing them from the historical blind spot - due to gender bias - in which they previously resided. This has been an important step in rectifying the gender imbalance that exists in both Holocaust and perpetrator historiography. Whilst this thesis has focussed specifically on Auschwitz and its subcamps, this model and methodology could and should be expanded upon for use in research on other concentration camps and, hopefully, for the eventual completion of a history of the entire *Aufseherinnen*. This would allow for further understanding on gender and its impact on the Holocaust. Furthermore, it would lead to a deeper recognition of who the women were that broke gender roles and Nazi ideology through their position as licensed torturers for the Third Reich.

The Importance of the Research

The primary aim of this thesis, to complete the first social history of the *Aufseherinnen* at Auschwitz, has been achieved. This work has provided a wealth of new information on the female perpetrators of the Holocaust, giving an identity to the *Aufseherinnen* that was

previously missing. What makes the group of the *Aufseherinnen* so fascinating is their position as the only females licensed to interact with the prisoners of the Third Reich, thereby giving them Nazi authority to be a part of the Holocaust. In Wendy Lower's book on the *Helferinnen* and nurses that travelled to the East, she examines the manner in which secretaries and wives took part in the Holocaust, either through administration or through a willing choice to become involved in violence.⁵⁶⁵ The *Aufseherinnen* present a different view of female perpetrators. Their choice to enter the concentration camps as guards create the image of the female Holocaust employee. This idea of the willing female perpetrator is what the thesis set out to understand, among other points. Why did these women become guards? What was their experience? And why have they been left out of research? Through the mixed method research tools applied, and the use of a vast array of sources, it has been possible to answer these questions and begin the examination on the impact of gender on the perpetrators as well as the victims of the Holocaust.

The author believes that there is still room for expansion on this research project, through many different avenues. The Rajsko records, detailing the tests and blood works ordered by SS doctors, have arguably been under-utilised by previous scholars and hold a wealth of information. Through a wider interpretation of this record collection, it would be possible to gain further insight into the health effects that working in Auschwitz had upon the guards stationed there, which would provide important insights into the mechanisms of the final solution and the wider environment of the concentration camp. Furthermore, there is still a need for greater research into the *Aufseherinnen*, due to their exclusion from the accepted historiography of the Holocaust for such a long period. A complete study of the over 3000

⁵⁶⁵ Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*.

women who served as guards has never been completed.⁵⁶⁶ This would be a huge research endeavour that could expand upon the issues of gender in general historical research, as well as in the Holocaust. The author believes that this thesis has added important new evidence to the historical record and has elucidated on the dual role of women in the Holocaust, not just as victims but as perpetrators.

⁵⁶⁶ Brown. *The Camp Women*

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Appendix -1

Naziploitation

It would be impossible to fully discuss the representation of female concentration camp guards without discussing such notorious films as *Ilsa: She-Wolf of the SS*⁵⁶⁷ and the Naziploitation genre as a whole. Naziploitation, although focused on the concentration camps and their perpetrators, seeks to offer a different view of the Holocaust to its audience than what has been discussed previously. Rather than the chief concern being the representation of historical fact, the suffering of victims or even the education of viewers, it seeks to provide entertainment of a sexually explicit nature. The genre appeals to the voyeuristic nature of torture and sexual scenes, specifically within the environment of Nazi concentration camps. The films, although less concerned with the factuality of historical events, are highly important nonetheless; The characters' portrayal has been hugely influential upon how Nazis are represented in popular culture, arguably influencing mainstream subconscious images of the *Aufseherinnen* more than any scholarly endeavour.

The films have had a hugely detrimental effect in the transference of knowledge about these women to the wider viewing public. The *Aufseherinnen* have been highly sexualized, becoming little more than empty vessels through which to portray deviant sexual behaviour. The characters within Naziploitation films are based on 'real' people and the films claim to be based on 'true' events, this has led to the circulation of the events depicted within the film

⁵⁶⁷ Don Edmonds. "Ilsa She Wolf of the SS." (USA: Cambist Films, 1975). ⁵⁴⁸ E. Kaplan, *Women and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2002. p.13.

as being based on fact, damaging the historical narrative. However, the image of the guard has been warped by the male gaze,⁵⁴⁸ resulting in the creation of a wanton sexual object, intended merely to entice. The damage does not produce only a morally questionable result but also a huge intellectual dissatisfaction regarding the study of the Holocaust, and the impact that these films have had upon education. Although this thesis does not intend to philosophise or make moral judgements in relation to this subject, to refrain from doing so is exceedingly difficult. That the events of the Holocaust, the mass murder of millions of people from Europe has been morphed less than half a century later into no more than fodder for porn movies and sexual gratification speaks volumes about the society that we live in. That these filmmakers saw no problems using the death and torture of human beings—some of whom were still alive to view this transmutation of their stories—as a means to state the importance of the patriarchal hierarchy gives a damning view on the gender norms that these films seek to perpetuate.⁵⁶⁸ Furthermore, that this imagery of the woman perpetrator has been used by the filmmakers to reflect women's issues may be more damning, as these women do not represent the typical role of women in society or in any way reflect the roles that women played within Nazi Germany or the war effort. The female guards numbered no more than 3000 women in total throughout the war⁵⁶⁹, yet they have been appropriated to reflect the traits of the dominant woman and cast disparaging judgments on feminism. Thereby creating an idealized version of women to enable male filmmakers to undermine women sexually but also politically and socially, as a means to reassert gender traditionalism.

⁵⁶⁸ Tim Cole. *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History Is Bought, Packaged, and Sold*. (Hove: Psychology Press, 2000).

⁵⁶⁹ Daniel Patrick Brown. *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System*. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 2002). p. 4.

Exploitation films have often depicted the worries and fears of societies; however, this study into Naziploitation and its relation to Holocaust history raises the question of the level of taste within society. Are there no longer boundaries regarding what is now a sexual pleasure? If one rejects Nazism as a legitimate sexual practice, does that make one too conservative? And if the fetish is explored safely within one's own home, does that make it legitimate? Is it now an acceptable phenomenon to turn genocide into little more than sexual gratification?⁵⁷⁰ These are questions that are raised by the study of Naziploitation, and further emphasize the realities of this study and how difficult it may be for scholars to remove moral judgement from their analysis.

The Naziploitation films cement the link between the dominance of women sexually and its link with deviant behaviour. This is apparent in the locale of the films, within Concentration Camps, under Nazi rule. Two characteristics that have been accepted in societies mind as perverse, thereby when adding the element of women as the aggressor this is compounded as wrong. This use of a subconscious idea of abnormal is thereby used by film makers to cast wider judgements on society, this is typical for all exploitation genres,⁵⁷¹ but it is women's emancipation and feminism that Naziploitation seeks specifically to warn viewers against. The portrayal of these women as sex objects, wilfully destroying men in pursuit of their own all-encompassing sexual need, is not merely a plot element used to excite and titillate the viewers, it also seeks to offer a commentary on Nazi Germany through parody. This can be seen in numerous ways throughout the films. The most obvious and prevalent is that the Third Reich, through its lack of conformity to polite society's ideals, is the agency of its own

⁵⁷⁰ Lane D Pederson. "Behavioral Analysis." *Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A Contemporary Guide for Practitioners*: pp.150-59.

⁵⁷¹ Eric Schaefer. "*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*": *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

destruction.⁵⁷² Just as the films do not portray the sexual norm, they foresee their own ruin as society foresees there's: it is the degeneracy of Nazism that is being used for a metaphor for the degeneracy of present society. Therein when the traditional social hierarchy is challenged e.g. the breaking of gender traditionalism; that the film and society would both end in ruin is inevitable. The degeneracy within the film is used as a metaphor to show the degeneracy of the whole Nazi system of government. In *'Ilsa: She-Wolf of the SS'*, this depravity is a key theme of the film, emphasising the levels of perversity of life under the Nazis. Ilsa, through the bastardised social hierarchy of the camp, has been placed in a role of dominance over those whom she would normally be subjugated to. Her authority over the male prisoners conflicts with traditional gender roles.⁵⁷³ The film moralises on this conflict; within traditional patriarchal hierarchy, men are superior, and, when or if, women do dare to aim higher and assert themselves via either physical or mental dominancy, they are severely punished.⁵⁷⁴ Gender traditionalism is turned on its head within these films, and the consequences serve as a warning to those who would dare attempt to change the power balance: **Feminists**.⁵⁷⁵ Ilsa's sexual appetite which, within acknowledged cultural boundaries, would be subdued, has been allowed to run rampant within this broken society and, because of this, the camp and Ilsa herself are ultimately destroyed and patriarchal power is restored.⁵⁷⁶

In conclusion, the Naziploitation genre has deeply affected the manner in which

Aufseherinnen are understood by society, and the roles that women continue to be featured as

⁵⁷² Melvin Kalfus. "Phallic Women and Macho Men: Hollywood," the Dread of Woman, and Hillary Clinton." *The Journal of Psychohistory* 21, no. 3 (1994): p.287.

⁵⁷³ Paige W Toller, Elizabeth A Suter, and Todd C Trautman. "Gender Role Identity and Attitudes toward Feminism." *Sex Roles* 51, no. 1 (2004).

⁵⁷⁴ Andrea Dworkin. *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York: Perigee Books, 1983. p.15.

⁵⁷⁵ Caroline O. N. Moser, and Fiona C. Clark. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence* (Zed Books: London, 2001).

⁵⁷⁶ Lorenzo Chiesa. "Of Bastard Man and Evil Woman, or, the Horror of Sex." *Film-Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2012): pp.210-212

in film. It is apparent that their image as the archetypical 'evil' woman has become a by word for deviant woman in general. They are easily inflected with symbolism of society's ills Their inclusion can serve as a moralising lesson for the feminine viewership on the traits of the women displayed, providing guidance on the manner in which they should conduct themselves. This has been used by the genre as a dialogue against strong women. Further it exemplifies that the male gaze alters the manner in which women are viewed even in relation to dark history, that these murders are still as women first subjects for male titillation.

Appendix 2

Aufseherinnen in film

Cinematic depictions of female guards in mainstream media have been hugely influential to the wider understanding of the actions of the perpetrators in the Holocaust and the mechanisms that were employed to create the conditions of suffering for prisoners. These representations have been engaged by various agencies for their own purposes; whilst many may claim to educate the populace in an engaging manner about the genocidal activities of the Nazi party during the Second World War this is contentious. The historical record based on source evidence has been warped and transmuted to represent societal views on women, gender and violence. The image of the *Aufseherinnen* have taken on different meanings, and the subconscious ideas of different media have created preconceived notions about the perpetrators of the Holocaust

The requisitioning of the Holocaust for the depiction of political, social or artistic trends in film making, is dangerous in terms of misrepresentation of the survivors' lives, but also has an impact in changing the way in which the wider Holocaust, and loss of life in the Second World War is memorialised within popular culture. The ideas in these films have been hugely influential in memorialising the actions of the perpetrator. *Schindler's List*, filmed partially on location in Krakow, created a huge increase in visitors to the areas of memorialisation in Krakow itself, such as the ghetto square but also to visitors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau

memorial⁵⁷⁷. It is therefore undeniable that these artistic endeavours have a direct implication on the memorialisation of the Holocaust. As such they must have integrity to the truth. Although there is the often-utilised argument of the need for artistic license within these films, this is a continual frustration to scholars. Academics focussing on all historical periods object to historical facts being warped and misrepresented in an attempt to provide a more entertaining story for viewers.⁵⁷⁸ These changes for entertainment's sake are perhaps more distasteful when related to the Holocaust. Whilst it is without question that throughout history wars have been fought and genocides committed, the presence of the Holocaust within the near memory of humanity, with survivors still being alive as well as second and third generation descendants of survivors, creates a feeling of a fundamental need for truthful representation.⁵⁷⁹ There is a duty that as a depiction of living memory, with many continuing to suffer through the pain of the past and reliving their suffering with the release of these films, that creators should attempt to portray their truth. Not only is this living memory for survivors, but there are also perpetrators of the Holocaust who continue to be brought to justice, with the public increasingly aware of their crimes through newspapers, testimonies, but chiefly popular culture; there remains a duty of care to provide realistic representations for educational purposes, to create an understanding of suffering. Furthermore, in the increasingly digital age, many ideas are disseminated through motion pictures and the internet. For accurate historical knowledge to be spread, these films must depict straightforward evidence of actions especially if knowledge of the Holocaust is not to be lost, and if the suffering endured is to never be forgotten.

⁵⁷⁷ Rudi Hartmann, "Dark Tourism, Thanatourism, and Dissonance in Heritage Tourism Management: New Directions in Contemporary Tourism Research." *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 9, no. 2 (2014): pp.181-82.

⁵⁷⁸ Marcia Landy. *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. (London: A&C Black, 2001). p.7.

⁵⁷⁹ Lynn Rapaport. "Hollywood's Holocaust: Schindlers List and the Construction of Memory." *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002). p.60.

Within these artistic interpretations of the Holocaust it is not only the factual events that are being misrepresented but also the perpetrators of the violence. This misrepresentation is damaging not only to knowledge of the Holocaust but also specifically to the depiction of gender roles concerning perpetrators and, furthermore, how gender traditionalism is an ongoing obstacle in the presentation of the female within cinema.⁵⁸⁰ The female guards employed in the service of the concentration camps were actively involved in all aspects of the prisoners' lives within the camps, and this is extensively documented within primary source material.⁵⁸¹ These women could decide on whether a person lived or died based purely on their whims, they killed and tortured women with impunity within this environment. However, this cruelty, is not the image that is portrayed to the viewer during consumption of these films. Rather they understand the *Aufseherinnen* as confused, frail women who always manage to have an excuse for the work that they carried out or have their humanity returned to them via victimhood. While humanity was stripped away from the prisoners of the concentration camps, it is returned to their oppressors within cinema. Due to the strict gender traditionalism that is found within mainstream films, good women must fulfil the role of caregiver and mother.⁵⁸² This has resulted in the unrealistic strategy in the case of many of the female perpetrators that, although depicted as being women who have gone astray and become deviant through their close links with Nazism, they are still returned to humanity, with kind gestures or through their own suffering. These changes in interactions are an attempt to fulfil the traditional role of women.⁵⁸³ This returning of humanity to the perpetrators allows the patriarchy, the males that are watching, to feel relief that though

⁵⁸⁰ Molly Haskell. *From Reverence to Rape*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974). p.4.

⁵⁸¹ The roles of women within concentration camps, specifically Auschwitz is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁵⁸² Deb Waterhouse-Watson, & Adam Brown. "Mothers, Monsters, Heroes and Whores: Reinscribing Patriarchy in European Holocaust Films." *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 30, no. 2 (2016): p.150.

⁵⁸³ Hilary Neroni. *Violent Woman, The: Femininity, Narrative, and Violence in Contemporary American Cinema*. (New York: SUNY Press, 2012). pp.8-9

women may stray they are ultimately the weaker sex through their connection to motherhood.⁵⁸⁴ As females, they are not able to enact violence in the same way that men can, because ‘biologically’ their femininity and emotional state of being will always restrict them⁵⁸⁵. The depiction of the women as still maintaining their humanity and still enacting good deeds, creates a complex reaction to the mass murder committed. Ultimately the women that are depicted are based on real female guards and, as such, by casting them as multifaceted beings, when only having an hour to explain the Holocaust can lead to justification of their crimes through artistry. As individuals, they felt the full range of human emotion, and therefore there must have been prisoners to whom they could better relate and who they may have cared for; undoubtedly, they felt humanity outside of the camps, building friendships and relationships; but the survivors did not experience this multifaceted personality from their brutal oppression. It is therefore apparent that the prevalence of kindness that is seen within these guards is more of a safeguard and reassurance to the male viewership that women are not without remorse, and that these are unnatural actions for the female to undertake.⁵⁸⁶ The majority of these films are depicted as being from the victims’ point of view, and therefore the depiction of guards maintaining their humanity is unnecessary for the knowledge of the suffering that took place during the Holocaust.

The inference of the male gaze does not only impact the humanity that is displayed within the *Aufseherinnen*, but also how they are depicted on the screen as sexual beings. The role of women within these films as the aggressor is often relieved by their depiction as a sexual object on the screen, most easily understood through the frequent inclusion of nudity and sexual vulnerability on the part of the female. Although the woman as assailant is

⁵⁸⁴ E Kaplan. *Women and Film*. (New York: Routledge, 2002). pp.162-4

⁵⁸⁵ Molly, Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*. pp.19-20.

⁵⁸⁶ Tara Emmers-Sommer. “Adversarial Sexual Attitudes toward Women: The Relationships with Gender and Traditionalism.” *Sexuality & Culture* 18, no. 4 (2014): pp.815-17

domineering towards those on screen, the male viewer has control through the ownership of her body, he has nothing to fear from her.⁵⁸⁷ That she as submissive within traditionalism, must still display herself and provide excitement through her sexuality results in her relinquishing the dominant position the film has placed her in. The use of the male gaze to depict women as sexual beings, present from the conception of film, due to male bias, has translated into films about the Holocaust, showing that male chauvinism, even in relation to genocide, places women first and foremost as articles of amusement to entertain and excite men.⁵⁸⁸ The increasingly sexualised nature of stories about the Holocaust speaks volumes about the continued use of women as images of arousal and pleasure for men and the perversion of history to maintain social hierarchies through sexual control. This is not only damaging to feminism and the representation of women as a whole; women are increasingly diminished by male dominated roles and their characters reduced to primarily entice before being allowed any further characteristics or story.⁵⁸⁹ The prerequisite of woman as sexualised objects is detrimental to the integrity of knowledge about the *Aufseherinnen*; rather than awareness of these women's actions being the fundamental produce of these films, it is the awareness of them as sexual objects that is taken away by viewers. That the male gaze has entered into the psyche of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, has negatively characterised mainstream film media on the subject.

Overall, while there is clear merit to films being produced about the events of the Holocaust, the medium allows knowledge and information to reach audiences who would never have known about the Holocaust in such detail, in a way that academic texts, documentaries and

⁵⁸⁷ Mary Ann Doane. "Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body." In *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley. (London: BFI Publishing, 1988).

⁵⁸⁸ Laura Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989) p.63.

⁵⁸⁹ E, Kaplan. *Women and Film*. p.155.

seminars will never be able to.⁵⁹⁰ It also creates falsehoods of histories that are unsurpassable. Films bring personal levels of connection through shared experiences, presenting history in a relatable manner for many. Through recognisable traits and social situations, the Holocaust can be understood on a personal level. However, the manner in which female perpetrators have been expressed within popular culture has created a negative rather than positive impact on knowledge. The preoccupation with women as sexual objects to be controlled by the male gaze has led to confusion and an undermining of historical integrity. With the prevalence of ideas to recast the dominant brutal woman – realised in historical texts as mass murderers of women and children and experienced by survivors as torturers and oppressors – as little more than a fetishised object of male arousal, has led to a gap in the realisation of woman as *Aufseherinnen*. The continual straying from the truth of actions has entered discrepancies of historical fact into the record of the public's mind, changing interpretations of the Holocaust. The films have enabled the humanity that the guards stripped from their victims to be returned to the perpetrators, with film increasingly willing to excuse the inexcusable and explain the unexplainable.

⁵⁹⁰ Alan S Marcus. *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*. (Charlotte: IAP, 2006).

Appendix 3

Sensationalist Histories of the Aufseherinnen

| Title | Author |
|--|-------------------|
| Irma Grese & the Holocaust: The Secrets of the Blonde Beast of Auschwitz Exposed | Ryan Jenkins |
| Irma Grese & Other Infamous SS Female Guards: The Secret Stories of Their Holocaust & Auschwitz Atrocities Revealed | Robert Jenkins |
| Irma Grese: The Untold Stories of Hitler's most Brutal Female SS Guard | Mike Livingstone |
| Notorious Nazi Women | Stewart Aniel |
| The Blonde Beast of Birkenau and Belsen: The Life and Crimes of Irma Grese | Cynthia Southern |
| Irma Grese: A True Account of the Holocaust's Deadliest Woman | Stephanie T McRae |
| World War 2 Women: True Stories Of World War 2 Women In Action: The Women Heroes And Spies | Cyrus J. Zachary |

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| <p>Of World War 2 (Irma Grese History, Holocaust Survivor Accounts, ... Rescuers, Holocaust Survivor Stories)</p> | |
| <p>WW II: HITLER'S HENCHWOMEN: WINIFRED WAGNER * LENI RIEFENSTAHL * HANNA REITSCH * IRMA GRESE (the Beast) * ILSE KOCH (the Bitch of Buchenwald) ... OTHERS</p> | James Bankes |
| <p>Irma Grese: Angel Of Death At Bergen-Belsen And Oswiecim Concentration Camps</p> | Robert Grey Reynolds Jr |
| <p>Irma Grese - The Holocaust: The Incredible Life Of Irma Grese And The Holocaust: The Intriguing Life And History Of The Blonde Beast: Volume 1 (Irma Grese, Auschwitz and the Holocaust, World War 2)</p> | Wilbur Chindler |
| <p>Irma Grese & Auschwitz: Holocaust and the Secrets of the The Blonde Beast (WW2, World War 2, D-Day, Hitler, Soldier Stories, Concentration Camps)</p> | Raymond Jennings |

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| Irma Grese - The Beast of Belsen & Other Twisted Female Guards of Concentration Camps | Tyler Gibson |
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