

Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany. Edited by Devin O. Pendas, Mark Roseman and Richard F. Wetzell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 (Publications of the German Historical Institute). Pp. xi + 533. \$99.99 Hardback. \$34.99 paperback.

Beyond the Racial State critically revisits the concept of the “racial state”, nearly thirty years after it was introduced by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann (Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* [Cambridge, 1991]). Their proposition that what defines National Socialism is the project of recreating Germany as a community of “blood” and “race”, realized through a complex of eugenic and exclusionary measures (including genocide), has been extremely influential. It has informed both academic and public history, providing a rationale for accounts of the Holocaust that now routinely acknowledge non-Jewish victims of Nazi biopolitics as more than collateral damage and more recently inspiring research and debate on the affinities between Nazism and colonialism. The editors’ introduction reminds us of the concept’s genealogy: It gained intellectual appeal when marxist attempts at providing a unifying interpretation of Nazism appeared exhausted, appealing not least to scholars on the left. But Burleigh and Wippermann differed from those like Detlev Peukert and Zygmunt Bauman, who proposed that the Nazi deployment of science and the instruments of the welfare state in pursuit of the racial project was in keeping with the trajectory of capitalist modernity (Detlev Peukert, *Inside the Third Reich* [New Haven, 1987]; Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* [Ithaca 1989]). They saw the “racial state” as an aberration or divergence from that path. At the same time, the “racial state” paradigm has not been much better at accounting for eliminationist antisemitism than marxist analyses. The essays in this volume unpick some of the connections implicit and explicit in that paradigm and address some of the questions it left open, exploring the components of racial thinking and policy, the vicissitudes of their application in practice and questions of popular sentiment and legitimation. All of the nineteen individual chapters are lucid and authoritative and most draw on new research and/or new readings of the critical scholarship. As such, the volume constitutes a valuable starting point for future reflection on the topic of “race” in National Socialism as well as a very welcome

showcase for current knowledge – though the focus is firmly on the subjects of racial thinking rather than its victims or the everyday spaces of negotiation in which “race” is realized in everyday life.

In the first of four sections, “Comparative Historical Perspectives”, Mark Roseman and Devin O. Pendas address the differences and points of contact between the Nazi pursuit of a homogeneous and exclusive ethnic nation and “racial states” constructed around enduring regimes of racial hierarchy and subordination (like Jim Crow America or apartheid South Africa). Pendas explores in detail the ways in which such regimes developed in colonial and post-colonial societies in order to reflect on the inherent radicalism of the Nazi project of “construct[ing] a racial regime without the aid of the color-line” (136). Pascal Grosse gives attention to Germany’s own colonial history (a topic otherwise little canvassed in the volume) in arguing both that German concepts of race were particularly imbued with biologicistic thinking, and that that in itself does not adequately explain what happened in Nazi Germany. Donald Bloxham explores the murder of European Jewry in its relation to developments in the wider Europe that made mass murder a continental phenomenon and (depending on the local imperatives) could operate either to “accelerate” or to “decelerate” (90) the Final Solution.

The second section focuses on “Race, Science, and Nazi Biopolitics”. Richard F. Wetzell challenges both Peukert’s proposition that there was a “fatal racist dynamic” in the biosciences and Burleigh and Wippermann’s that Nazi racial science “created the conceptual framework” for policy, demonstrating that there was a significant diversity of views among racial scientists and that aspects of policy, notably the treatment of the Jews, had little or no “scientific” rationale. Herwig Czech begins by asking how sterilization and euthanasia were linked with one another and with any notion of race, affirms that socio-economic categories generally provided the rationale for such practices (the legally sanctioned ones, he might have added – recent specialist research on the opportunistic and gradually accelerating genocidal practices against “Gypsies” and black people is not well reflected in the volume), and ends with some reflections on “a political economy of population and race” (231) in dialogue with Foucault. Dan Stone distinguishes between “race science” and “race mysticism” (or unsystematized racial thinking), and explores the ways in which they interacted and

contributed to genocide, drawing on other genocides to inform his conclusions. Christian Geulen invites us to see “race” in action as less a systematic set of categories than an account of human progress through conflict that naturalized exclusion as a form of self-defense.

In the third section, “Anti-Semitism beyond Race”, Jürgen Matthäus outlines the practical complexities of policymaking in the regime’s early years, focusing on the Reich Interior Ministry, while Dirk Rupnow argues that anti-Jewish scholarship played a significant role in legitimating Nazi policy even though it did not contribute directly to specific measures. Richard Steigmann-Gall offers a brief reflection on the power of “the dark undergrowth of religious Jew-hatred” (283).

The section entitled “Race and Society” brings the discussion into the realm of everyday life and popular attitudes, exploring how “race” could motivate consent or active participation. Michael Wildt shows how and why the racial overtones of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* cannot explain its motivating power, while Nicholas Stargardt (nevertheless) takes some historians’ use of *Volksgemeinschaft* to encompass the Nazi racial project as the jumping-off point for a rich and eloquent exploration of what held German society together in wartime. Building on an account of the historiography on women and Nazism, Annette F. Timm calls for a gendered history of emotions which might help us to understand the power of racial discourse. Frank Bajohr analyzes the reports of foreign diplomats posted in Nazi Germany and finds no sign that in its early years they identified racism as a guiding principle of the new regime (as some would after the war). Martina Kessel’s study of the place of Jews in German humor echoes Stone and Geulen in showing racist attitudes of a reflexive (but unreflected) kind at work, with jokes serving to empower and reinforce identity.

Under the heading “Race War? Germans and Non-Germans in Wartime”, Gerhard Wolf, Regina Mühlhauser and Stefan Hördler offer empirically grounded case studies - of Germanization in occupied Poland, German soldiers’ sexual encounters with civilians during the war, and the disintegration of racial categories that ensued as the concentration camp system came under pressure in wartime (respectively). In its sustained focus on practices, which exposes in detail how “race” lost its purchase in the face of the demands of mobilization and active combat, this is in many ways the most illuminating and compelling section of a book that has much to offer.