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# "No Innocent Victim"?: Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust as Trope in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*

Kerstin Steitz

Old Dominion University, [ksteitz@odu.edu](mailto:ksteitz@odu.edu)

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**“No Innocent Victim”? Sexualized Violence Against Jewish Women During the  
Holocaust as Trope in *Zeugin aus der Hölle***

Kerstin Steitz

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Abstract

This essay addresses how in the film *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, (1965, Witness out of hell) fictional sexualized violence against a female Jewish Holocaust survivor functions as a trope that exposes and rejects patriarchal and misogynist discourses of victimhood, perpetration, survivor shame, and guilt, which reviewers and scholars rightly have critiqued for such discourses' re-victimizing and re-traumatizing effects upon victims. I argue that as a filmic trope sexualized violence served specific functions for its contemporaneous audience—Germans in the postwar 1960s. By means of the trope of sexualized violence, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* confronted contemporaneous West German audiences with gender-specific experiences of women during the Holocaust, the continuing trauma and re-victimization of Jewish Holocaust survivors in postwar Germany, and Nazi guilt.

In fictional accounts of Jewish women's experiences during the Holocaust on screen, sexualized violence figures large: to mind come early Holocaust films such as *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1965, USA), *The Night Porter* (Liliana Cavani, 1974, Italy), *Sophie's Choice* (Alan Pakula, 1982, USA), and the Holocaust blockbuster *Schindler's*

*List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993, USA). This ubiquity gives rise to the question of the specific functions and implications of the depiction of sexualized violence as a narrative and visual trope. Prominent feminist Holocaust scholars, such as Sara R. Horowitz, Pascale Bos, and Nomi Levenkron have argued that depictions of sexualized violence in Holocaust representations serve particular religious and ideological functions for their audiences. These scholars have been critical of the fact that these representations often re-victimize, shame, and place blame on female Jewish Holocaust survivors for atrocities to which the Nazis subjected them.<sup>1</sup>

By way of an analysis of the 1965 German-Yugoslavian co-produced film, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* (Serbo-Croatian: *Gorke Trave*; Witness out of hell, directed by Zika Mitrovic), I show that representations of sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust do not always have the same problematic effect that Horowitz, Bos, and Levenkron note.<sup>2</sup> Using an approach based on one offered by Bos in her essay “‘Her flesh is branded: ‘For Officers Only’: Imagining and Imagined Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust,” I argue that fictional sexualized violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* is a filmic trope that served specific functions for its contemporaneous audience—Germans in the postwar 1960s, including Nazi perpetrators. In *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, the representations of sexualized violence confront contemporaneous West German audiences with gender-specific experiences of Jewish women during the Holocaust. In so doing, Germans, who considered themselves victims of Nazism,<sup>3</sup> and their children were presented with the continuing trauma of Jewish Holocaust victims in postwar Germany. *Zeugin aus der Hölle* confronts West Germans with their guilt and the ongoing suffering of one Holocaust survivor.

The effect of the narration of sexual violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* differs significantly from the critical assessment offered by Horowitz, Bos, and Levenkron. The film's specific German context and its postwar German audience are crucial to analyzing its representation of sexual violence, as is the fact that both screenwriter Frida Filipović and producer Artur Brauner are themselves Jewish Holocaust survivors. Further, as a female survivor, Filipović's intentions appear to be more feminist and progressive than some of the male interlocutors Bos examines. Lastly, the trope of sexualized violence differs in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* from how it is employed in other contexts because of certain characteristics of the narrative, for example in that the female protagonist Lea Weiss tells her own story, reclaims her agency, and explicitly rejects misogynist interpretations of her narrative. In this essay, I show how in the film, sexualized violence functions as a trope that exposes and rejects patriarchal and misogynist discourses of victimhood, perpetration, survivor shame, and guilt—aspects that critics rightly have found fault with for their re-victimizing and re-traumatizing effects upon victims—, discourses that were prevalent in the post-war period, both in orthodox Jewish communities and in postwar West Germany society more broadly (Horowitz).

### **The Trope of Systematic Rape and Forced Prostitution of Jewish Women during the Holocaust**

*Zeugin aus der Hölle* is one of the first West German films to thematize the Nazi atrocities and their aftermath for Holocaust survivors (Loewy 26). Its focus on the traumatized female Jewish Holocaust victim Weiss and her continued victimization in the postwar period makes this film an important document of 1960s West Germany. In it, the

protagonist survives sexualized violence in the camps where she was raped, forced into prostitution, sterilized, and sexually abused during medical experiments. Weiss's character and her story are loosely based on Holocaust survivor Dunia Wasserstrom, who famously testified in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963–65) to the crimes of the defendant Wilhelm Boger, specifically his brutal murder of a little boy in Auschwitz.<sup>4</sup> At the trial, Wasserstrom's testimony caused uproar and was cited extensively by the press because of its depiction of Boger's excessive brutality; it is also featured in Peter Weiss's oratory *Die Ermittlung: Oratorium in 11 Gesängen* (*The Investigation: Oratorio in 11 Cantos*, 1965). Wasserstrom herself was neither a victim of sexualized violence in Auschwitz, nor did she testify to this in the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial. *Zeugin aus der Hölle* modifies and fictionalizes Wasserstrom's story by depicting Weiss's experiences of sexual violence as direct and personal.

The plot line has Weiss serving as main witness in a trial against a Nazi perpetrator, thereby making direct reference to the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial.<sup>5</sup> The film presents the atrocities the protagonist Weiss suffered in the camps solely in terms of sexualized crimes, including systematic rape and institutionalized forced prostitution. It should be noted that the sexualized violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* might be based on occurrences the filmmakers and others believed to be true, but which have since been disproven by historians who argue that there was neither systematic rape of Jewish women nor were they sexually exploited in concentration camp brothels (Sommer). Despite this historical inaccuracy, the inclusion of such fictional aspects in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* illustrates how certain narratives of sexual violence can function ideologically as a trope even if they are not factually true.

It is crucial to distinguish between sexual violence, such as rape, and institutionalized forced prostitution. Robert Sommer points out that “there is evidence that Jewish women were sexually abused or raped by SS guards in extermination camps such as Treblinka, Sobibor, or Belzec” (“Sexual Exploitation” 53). Most scholars agree that SS-men and German soldiers committed sexual crimes; however, the rape of Jewish women in concentration camps was not systematic and institutionalized (Bos 60) in the manner presented in fictionalized form in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, such as, for example, when Weiss is forced to have intercourse with Dr. Berger and other male inmates for his medical experiments (Sommer, “Mythos und Wahrheit” 5).

In addition, the narrative in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* that Weiss as a Jewish woman was forced into prostitution in the Auschwitz concentration camp brothel is also not substantiated by historical evidence (Sommer, “Sexual Exploitation” 53). According to Sommer, women recruited into the official camp brothels were predominantly so-called “asocial” persons, e.g. former prostitutes, who were often recruited with the false promise of being released from the camps after a certain amount of time (“Camp Brothels,” 173). Bos explains that Jewish women were not forced into prostitution due to the fact that

[t]he strict Nazi Rassenschande (“race defilement”) laws, which forbade sexual relations between Aryans and those of ‘inferior races,’ were sufficiently prohibitive as to have made Nazi rape of Jewish women in the context of the controlled environment of the concentration camps and of forced prostitution in SS and Wehrmacht brothels rare or in the latter case, nearly nonexistent. (60)

Sommer traces the origins of the myth of Jewish women forced into prostitution in camp brothels back to the myth of institutionalized, systematic rape in the concentration camps

(“Mythos und Wahrheit” 5). The myth of Jewish women being sexually exploited by German soldiers was reinforced by Yehiel Dinur’s 1955 novel *House of Dolls*; Holocaust scholars such as Omar Bartov and Jeffrey Wallen have questioned the novel’s verisimilitude (Sommer, “Mythos und Wahrheit” 5).<sup>6</sup>

Further, the complexities of the terms “rape” and “prostitution” need to be considered. Bos explains that “rape” and “prostitution” are often used metaphorically rather than in the literal sense of sexual violence and sex work in official camp brothels. She offers a useful approach for reading survivor testimony performatively, seeing such testimony not as historical “truth” per se but as a way for survivors to construct meaning and reestablish a sense of self after traumatic and dehumanizing experiences that attack the core sense of (female) self. Based on this approach, Bos concludes from her examination of early fictional representations of sexualized violence from the 1940s in Palestine and the United States regarding their implications that sexual enslavement in the form described in the literary texts and the *New York Times* report she discusses is not based on historical incidents. Instead it functions as a literary trope or a rhetorical figure intended to evoke specific effects such as shock, horror, and empathy as well as the assigning of guilt, and in so doing might perpetuate or debunk misogynist discourse.

Since the sexualized violence Weiss suffered in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* is fictional and thus acts as a filmic trope with specific functions, Bos’s findings are relevant (61). Her analysis focuses on three texts: a *New York Times* report entitled “93 Choose Suicide Before Nazi Shame” about the fictional story of 93 virgins who, under the threat of being raped by Nazis, commit suicide to maintain their purity; the poem “My Sister on the Beach” by Yitzhak Sadeh; and Yehiel Dinur’s 1955 novel *House of Dolls* (62–64; 67–

68). She emphasizes that these texts are written by male authors and favor the male perspective in that all narrators are men, telling the stories of Jewish women's rape, the only exception being the character Daniella in *House of Dolls* (61).

According to Bos, the literary trope of sexualized violence in these cases functions "in a particular Holocaust discourse on Jewish complicity, which conceived of survivors as implicated in the oppression and violence of the Nazi concentration camp system and as such 'tainted' by (and partly to blame for) their victimization" (61–62). Horowitz's analysis of the myth of the death of the 93 virgins in "The Gender of Good and Evil," its literary adaptation, its reception by the American Jewish community, and the Talmud interpretation of rape, concludes that for women, death is preferable to being raped: "[A] person must die rather than *commit* murder, but a woman must die rather than *be raped*" (169). Nomi Levenkron's analysis of diaries and memoirs as well as fictional texts, in her article "Death and the Maidens: 'Prostitution,' Rape, and Sexual Slavery during World War II," identifies similar sentiments towards female Jewish rape survivors after the war. According to Levenkron, "a violated woman's own community, as well as the enemy inflicts real damage on her" and her only choices are either "a glorious death or a life of disgrace" (15). Bos, Horowitz, and Levenkron's similar findings suggest that rape survivor shaming and guilt exist across discourses.

*House of Dolls*, however, breaks with this misogynist perspective on rape in fictional texts. According to Bos, Dinur's text "correct[s] the deeply demeaning discourse of Jewish compromise and collaboration and of women's impropriety, which was so prevalent at that time and in that context" (73). From that, Bos concludes that the trope of sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust in *House of Dolls* allows

for the Nazi atrocities of the Holocaust to be made more comprehensible for contemporaneous Jewish audiences:

By imagining Nazi violence as sexual in nature, it made it more ordinary and thus easier to comprehend, as there was no historical precedent for such brutality, thus diminishing the foreignness of the Holocaust horror, domesticating it, sparing one from a 'more disturbing confrontation.' Furthermore, outrageous stories of Nazi sexual violence confirmed the enemy as debased, primitive, and uncivilized, offering a simplified image of the Nazis while their motives and actions in reality proved far more sinister, deliberate, and systematic. (74)<sup>7</sup>

In keeping with Bos's conclusions about the effect of *House of Dolls* here, the trope of systematic rape and forced prostitution of Weiss in the concentration camp in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* allows the 1960s postwar West German audiences, predominantly in denial about the atrocities of the Holocaust, to see parallels between the atrocities of the Holocaust and sexualized violence, to be able to imagine the crimes of the Holocaust as well as to acknowledge their guilt and the innocence of the victims.

At first it seems that the trope of sexualized violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* may function in the ways critiqued by Horowitz, Bos, and Levenkron, namely as a way to shame female Jewish Holocaust survivors, thereby perpetuating misogynist and patriarchal notions. Ultimately, however, it interrupts misogyny as well as victim blaming. The film's story is set in the same time and place it was produced, 1960s postwar West Germany. The protagonist Weiss is a wealthy widow with a younger partner, who takes advantage of her money. Out of fear of deportation, she has no permanent residence and instead lives in hotels. Although she changes hotels frequently,

she still receives anonymous phone calls and mail, insulting her as a “whore” and threatening to her murder if she testifies against the Nazi perpetrator Dr. Berger, a former physician in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Her lawyer von Walden, who turns out to be also Dr. Berger’s defense lawyer, hired these people to prevent her from testifying against his client. These phone calls as well as Petrovic’s and Dr. Hoffmann’s attempts to convince Weiss to testify in court against Dr. Berger trigger her traumatic memories of her own experiences and what she witnessed, which are visualized in flashbacks. She is increasingly incapable of distinguishing the past from the present and her hallucinations from reality. Towards the end of the film Weiss first confides in her friend and former partner Petrovic and then later puts on record in an affidavit that Dr. Berger raped her and coerced her into sexual intercourse with other inmates as part of his cruel medical experiments, which among other things involved warming male Jewish inmates to revive them after hypothermia experiments. The truthfulness of her affidavit is confirmed by a traumatic flashback that visualizes her testimony. After this affidavit, her traumatic flashbacks worsen and she commits suicide, believing she will again be deported. Without any sign of remorse or feelings of guilt, Dr. Berger accuses Weiss of owing her survival in Auschwitz to the bartering of her body as a prostitute in the camp brothel. Dr. Berger’s accusation that Weiss was a prostitute in Auschwitz is intended to discredit Weiss as a potential main witness against him, thereby deflecting from his guilt. Weiss’s shame and guilt as a Holocaust survivor and rape victim as well as her complicity with the Nazi perpetrator Dr. Berger are further implied in her refusal to testify against Dr. Berger and the fact that she withholds mention of the atrocities she suffered until the end of the film when she first confides in Petrovic and then prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann.

The trope of sexualized violence in the film's narrative shows the existence of misogynist discourses as identified by Horowitz, Bos, Levenkron, and others. Yet, given the film's specific German context and intended audience, its production time, and the fact that screenwriter Frida Filipović and producer Artur Brauner are Serbian and German-Jewish Holocaust survivors respectively, sexualized violence attains new meanings and implications: it serves as a metaphor for the atrocities of the Holocaust in order to simplify them for a reluctant audience in denial of their own guilt and for the next generation. *Zeugin aus der Hölle* and the fictional texts Bos analyzes may have the trope of sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust in common, however, the meaning of such representations varies significantly in each context.

### ***Zeugin aus der Hölle* as a Mirror of 1960s postwar Germany**

The film at hand and the texts Bos analyzes differ regarding their time and place of origin as well as their intended audience. Sadeh and Dinur are both Jewish and write for Jewish audiences in Israel to educate them about the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> Given Filipović's and Brauner's backgrounds, their intended audience was postwar West Germans in the 1960s, especially the younger generation that was interested in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials and in confronting their parents' generation about the past.<sup>9</sup> *Zeugin aus der Hölle* reflects and comments on 1960s postwar West Germany in which repression of the past was predominant, as historian Devin O. Pendas notes (21). Since the narrated time of the film coincides with its production time, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* functions like a mirror, presenting its postwar West German audience with its current state: the repression of Nazism and the Holocaust and denial of guilt.

While the so-called economic miracle, the *Wirtschaftswunder*, had shown its positive effects by the mid-1960s, it also had its cracks, as the film points out. *Zeugin aus der Hölle* confronted West Germans with the Nazi crimes and their guilt and the continuity of Nazi structures and anti-Semitism in postwar German society covered up by the relative comfort brought by the economic recovery (Schissler). The film presents the audience with the antagonistic perspectives of a German Jewish Holocaust victim and a variety of German perpetrators. The perpetrators consist of anonymous callers, Nazi Dr. Berger, his defense lawyer von Walden, and prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann. When attempting to convince Weiss to testify against Dr. Berger in trial, Dr. Hoffmann, even while having good intentions, nonetheless triggers her traumatic memory.

The producer's and filmmakers' focus on the audience reception is evidenced in their comments, press releases, and interviews before its premiere, as Dillman has shown. These documents illustrate that they had their West German audience in mind and were concerned about the reception of the film, a fact that is mentioned across nearly all pre-release articles about the film (Dillmann 32). Dillmann points to the discrepancy between the official statements about the film by the filmmakers in press releases and interviews on the one hand, and the actual content of the film on the other, the former made to ensure wide viewership among this audience. For example, in an interview, Brauner, the film's producer, speaks of the "shared experience of trauma" between West German audiences and the film's Holocaust survivor protagonist: "It is not the Holocaust that constitutes in the interviews the frame of reference for the psychologically interesting fate of the individual, but rather it is the general experience of war, which the society of perpetrators also can claim for itself."<sup>10</sup> Yet, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* presents only Weiss as

a Holocaust victim and as somebody who is continually re-victimized by her Nazi perpetrator and by German supporters. The film points, thereby, to continuing Nazism in contemporaneous postwar Germany rather than a shared victimhood between Germans and Jews. Thus, the film tied into the criticism that would become a major component of the 1968 German student movement.

In addition, the film's production history reveals some significant concessions to the German audience. For example, originally the title was *Bittere Kräuter* (Bitter herbs), a reference to the nourishment of the Jews in exile on their way to the holy land (Dillmann 29) and one of the central holidays, Passover. The decision to give up the Jewish allusion in favor of the sensationalist Christian concept of hell suggests an attempt to appeal to the German audience (32). Furthering the appeal to its audience, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* follows the genre convention of the *Krimi*, or detective story (Dillmann 32). Crucial information is revealed gradually as the narrative unfolds. For example, neither Weiss nor the viewer know initially who sends the threatening letters or makes the phone calls, Dr. Berger's defense lawyer pretends to serve as Weiss's lawyer, and the specific atrocities Weiss suffered in the Auschwitz concentration camp are only revealed towards the end. While the film was not categorized as a *Krimi*, Dillmann argues that the genre is not artistic and lacks the *gravitas* for such a serious topic as the Holocaust and the survivor's trauma (32).

Yet, considering that Brauner intended on reaching a large German audience with this film, mimicking the genre of the crime story can be considered as a concession to a reluctant and disengaged West German audience whom the film seeks to reach and engage in reflection on the presence of the Nazi past in postwar Germany. The popular

genre allows for the entertainment of many while still being able to impart political messages—the confrontation of German denial of guilt and repression of the past, and the ongoing mistreatment of survivors in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The genre of the crime story disguises the film as entertainment and allows for its appeal to an audience that otherwise might not watch such a political film.

As Holocaust survivors it was crucial for Brauner and Filipović to confront Germans with their crimes by attempting to appeal to a German audience reluctant to work through the past, in denial of its guilt, and disregarding the suffering of Jewish victims. Although Jewish women were not raped systematically nor forced into prostitution in camp brothels, the sexualized crimes Weiss suffers in the film are, indeed, crimes inflicted upon some women. Moreover, Weiss’s suffering points to the overall gendered experience of the Holocaust, which includes both women and men (Horowitz, “Women in Holocaust Literature” 375). In addition, sexualized violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* functions as metaphor for the mass atrocities of the Nazis. This is analogous to Horowitz’s observation that Jean Améry uses rape as a metaphor for torture in his eponymous essay “Torture”: “In using this metaphor—the only metaphor in the entire essay—Améry signals the powerlessness of the tortured to prevent intrusion into or on one’s body, and the realization that one is no longer sovereign over one’s self, over one’s being” (“The Gender of Good and Evil” 176).<sup>11</sup> Sexualized crimes as a trope make suffering more imaginable than the mass atrocities of the Holocaust—for Jewish people and for West Germans alike (Bos 74).

In this regard, the trope of sexualized violence is another concession to the German audience to help them imagine Nazi atrocities. Many Nazi perpetrators defended

their crimes in court by claiming to have merely followed orders, or, as in Dr. Berger's case in the film, by attempting to validate them in the name of science. In contrast, the trope of sexualized violence unequivocally identifies Nazi atrocities as crimes. Many atrocities were difficult to prove as crimes in German criminal courts, especially after such a long time and because they were perpetrated en masse, contributing in different ways and capacities to the totality of the crimes of the Holocaust. In contrast to this relative facelessness, sexualized crimes are one-on-one crimes in which perpetrator and victim are identifiable. Therefore, when utilized as a trope, sexualized crimes emphasize the specificity of broad-based Nazi crimes and guilt. In addition, the allegorical equation of Holocaust and rape victim in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* emphasizes the unacceptability of blaming victims for what they suffered since it specifically depicts the victims' innocence and the perpetrators' guilt.

Weiss's trauma alerts Germans to the fact that although they might consider the Nazi past to be over, for the Jewish victims this period continues to haunt in the form of trauma and ongoing re-victimization. By presenting the audience with the traumatic effects of the Nazi crimes on Weiss, for example through the flashbacks that visualize some of Weiss's experiences in the concentration camp, the film shows that the Holocaust continues for its victims. Depicting the ongoing effects of trauma might allow for the identification with survivors. Brauner explains his intention as follows: "We wanted to show the human tragedy of a survivor, who after twenty years is pushed back into the abyss of memories."<sup>12</sup> This is especially important given that many Germans considered themselves equally as victims of Nazism and Hitler. By visualizing the

longevity of the survivors' suffering long after liberation from the camps, Brauner hoped that Germans might be able to recognize their role in creating this suffering.

In the film, Weiss as a female German Jewish Holocaust victim refuses to testify against her Nazi perpetrator out of fear that her testimony might trigger her traumatic memory. Through Weiss's refusal, Brauner and Filipović draw attention to the difficulty that testifying in German trials, such as the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, presents for survivors. Asked in an interview whether he opposes the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial considering the effects of these trials on Holocaust survivors, Brauner left it up to the audience to judge the legal proceedings' possibilities and risks: "The audience should judge on its own. If this film is able to evoke understanding for people, whom the past does not let rest and who cannot face the present, then it has fulfilled its purpose."<sup>13</sup>

### **Screenwriter Frida Filipović's Feminist Intent**

Just as Brauner's and Filipović's experiences as Jewish Holocaust survivors matter to the making of the film, so does the film's explicit feminist stance towards the treatment of female Jewish Holocaust victims. The screenplay was written by Filipović, a Serbian Holocaust survivor born in Sarajevo in 1913, who also wrote other screenplays and short stories.<sup>14</sup> Not much is known about Filipović's biography and whether *Zeugin aus der Hölle* is based on her own experiences during the Holocaust.<sup>15</sup> The film was directed by Zika Mitrović, Filipović's husband. In a statement by Filipović in a 1965 *Der Tagesspiegel* review, the screenwriter discusses how she intended to present the story of the trauma of a female Holocaust survivor not as a "political problem." Dillmann continues to explain: "[M]ore than that, she wanted to develop the psychological

consequences, which the terrible experiences had on the present life of the heroine.”<sup>16</sup> This is another example of the discrepancy between the filmmakers’ official statements about the film and its implicit political intentions.

Filipović reinterprets the trope of sexualized violence in accordance with her feminist intentions and adapts it in the film for postwar German audiences. One such intent is to underscore the gendered experiences during the Holocaust. Further, as a feminist she rejects misogynist discourses blaming Holocaust survivors in general and female survivors in particular for the crimes inflicted upon them and shaming them for their survival. In *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, Weiss is presented as a strong female protagonist who defends herself eloquently against these discourses as well as ultimately reclaims her narrative and agency. A variety of German men shame Weiss for having survived, foremost among them her Nazi torturer Dr. Berger, in order to deflect from their own guilt. The trope that Bos identifies serves to emphasize the Nazi perpetrators’ sadism and guilt and the innocence of the Jewish women (74).<sup>17</sup> In *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, not only does the presentation of Dr. Berger as rapist show his guilt, but also his decision to shame Weiss emphasizes his amorality. It further emphasizes that he and his circumstances remain unchanged over the past twenty years since the end of the war, as he is still a practicing medical doctor. In a recorded interview, he discloses Weiss’s forced prostitution, long before Weiss reveals what exactly happened to her in her affidavit in the film and to the film’s audience. Yet, the film reverses the chronology and only presents the video recording of Dr. Berger after Weiss tells her own story. This reordering of the chronology of events within the narrative of the film protects Weiss from further re-victimization, strengthens her agency, and emphasizes Dr. Berger’s guilt:

Weiss is allowed to speak first. In so doing, the trope of sexualized violence the filmic narrative presents circumvents survivor shaming and instead alerts viewers to the fact that Jewish Holocaust victims in postwar Germany were re-victimized, especially when serving as eyewitnesses in trials.

**“Nonsense. You, the victim, should be ashamed?”—Rejecting Patriarchal and Misogynist Discourse**

Since Weiss explicitly rejects the misogynist narratives and narrations by her exclusively male German antagonists, she exposes their falsehoods and corrects them. Bos argues that *House of Dolls*, implicitly “rehabilitate[s] rather than judge[s] the female victims for what they were faced with” (72). *Zeugin aus der Hölle* goes even further by taking an explicitly feminist stance in two scenes featuring dialogues between Weiss and Petrovic and between her and Dr. Hoffmann in which Weiss contradicts misogynist interpretations of her narrative, thereby reclaiming her narrative and agency.

*Zeugin aus der Hölle* breaks with the conventions Bos observes in Dinur’s and other texts by male authors, namely that with a few exceptions predominantly male narrators tell the stories of rape of Jewish women (61). In the film, the protagonist Weiss retains autonomy over the narration: she tells her own story and further refuses to testify in court against Dr. Berger since she wants to avoid reliving her experiences, which would trigger her trauma. As narrator, she decides which aspects of her experience in Auschwitz she shares, when, and with whom. She is thereby able to control the interpretation of her story and provide a counter-narrative to the misogynist discourse represented predominantly by Dr. Berger and his defense lawyer von Walden, but also by

prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann. While Weiss trusts her former partner and biographer Bora Petrovic, a journalist, to understand and tell her story, she mistrusts the law to present her narrative truthfully. Due to these suspicions, among other reasons, Weiss initially refuses to testify against Dr. Berger as main witness in court.

As a further way to control her story, thus maintaining the feminist intent of the narration, Weiss had confided in Petrovic as her memoirist after the war. Therefore, Petrovic believes he knows Weiss's entire story and asks Weiss on behalf of prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann to testify against Dr. Berger. However, Petrovic remains oblivious to the sexualized violence she suffered in Auschwitz. Weiss clarifies that after the war, she did not tell him her entire story: "Bora, there is a chapter missing in your first book. You do not know the whole truth."<sup>18</sup> To Petrovic's dismay, Weiss reveals that she used to be Dr. Berger's "Geliebte," mistress or lover. The use of the term *Geliebte* misleadingly implies that their relationship was consensual (Thompson).<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, she was forced into a sexual relationship with Dr. Berger, who also pressured her into sexual contact with other inmates and would have killed her if she had not complied. Their relationship therefore meets the legal definition of rape in effect both during the Second World War and the subsequent trial—and today. Rape ("Vergewaltigung") was defined in the criminal code ("Strafgesetzbuch") since 1872 as extra-marital sexual intercourse under the presence of "violence or threat with actual danger for health and life."<sup>20</sup> In reaction to this disclosure, Petrovic turns away from Weiss. He appears to feel twofold betrayed: as her former partner, he is jealous that Weiss "slept" with other men disregarding that she was raped; as the keeper of her story, he believed to know everything about her past.

The ambiguity of the term *Geliebte* and Petrovic's disappointment allude to discourses Horowitz, Bos, and Levenkron have identified in fictional and non-fictional texts dealing with sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust: the assumption that Jewish women were only able to survive the Holocaust in exchange for sex, and that sexualized violence against women deprived them of their innocence and piety, which made them shameful, guilty, and complicit in the crimes they suffered and thus implied their life is not worth living (Bos 65). Depending on the context, these discourses functioned either to emphasize or to deflect from the actual perpetrator's guilt. Weiss already alludes to this misogynist interpretation that suicide is preferable to life as a rape victim in an earlier scene in which she confesses to Petrovic that she wishes she had committed suicide before deportation by the Gestapo. Jumping from her window on the fourth floor would have been "a beautiful death. Maiden-like and without guilt."<sup>21</sup> While she refers to the misogynist discourse that rape made her "guilty," this is not her opinion. Once she is deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, she has no choices and no agency to make decisions (Langer). The traumatic effects continue to significantly affect Weiss's life, perception, and health more than the misogynist discourse. Her suicide at the end of the film is a result of her trauma, in which she relives the atrocities in Auschwitz—not of her shame.

The patriarchal and misogynist discourse in the scene in which she tells Petrovic her entire story is only alluded to by the use of the euphemistic term *Geliebte* and the avoidance of the term "rape" as well as by Petrovic's aggrieved reaction. In contrast, the subsequent refusal of the implied discourse of what would now be legally considered rape is explicit, thereby emphasizing the film's feminist message to defend rape victims

(acting as metaphors for Holocaust victims and Holocaust rape victims) against allegations that they are responsible for and tainted by the crimes committed against them. Petrovic immediately responds in Weiss's defense: "He forced you."<sup>22</sup> Given the patriarchal origins of this discourse of survivor shaming—whether Holocaust or rape survival, or both—and its perpetuation by German men in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, it is crucial that a man refutes this patriarchal and misogynist discourse. Petrovic's defense of Weiss establishes him as an ally and shows that not all men are misogynists, but can be feminists, too. Compared to the other German men in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, Petrovic thus appears progressive, especially in postwar Germany. By vindicating Weiss, Petrovic also emphasizes Dr. Berger's guilt and that of everyone who engages in this oppressive narrative. Weiss's response—"Of course. He could do anything with me he wanted. Otherwise he would have used me for his experiments like a guinea pig or gassed me"—clarifies that she used the term "mistress" facetiously and thus indicates her awareness of the patriarchal and misogynist discourse, which she rejects.<sup>23</sup> Her knowledge of this discourse might also explain the reasons why she refused to tell her story in the first place—possibly among other reasons out of shame and fear that Petrovic might not believe her or even end their relationship or because it might trigger her traumatic memory.

Weiss does not feel guilty nor does she feel ashamed about surviving. Instead, she emphasizes the power structures and conditions in the concentration camp that deprived the inmates of any freedom of action and choice. In so doing, she anticipates what Lawrence Langer much later would analyze as the basic condition in the death camps as "choiceless choices, where critical decisions did not reflect options between life and

death, but between one form of ‘abnormal’ response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim’s own choosing” (224). Referring to her hopeless subjection and her choiceless choices, Weiss also emphasizes that her survival is not at all attributed to the fact that she was raped and coerced into prostitution—an argument that disregards the violence she suffered and the fact that being raped has nothing to do with favoritism—, but to mere fate. By pointing this out, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* further debunks the suspicion and accusation that Jewish women who survived the Holocaust only did so because they were raped or bartered their bodies in exchange for survival. She corrects this outrageous and false claim by emphasizing that women survived despite these atrocities.<sup>24</sup> Sexualized violence during the Holocaust is presented in addition to other atrocities Jewish women had to suffer and not as the only form of violence to which they were subjected. This shifts the focus from Weiss as a victim to the conditions in Auschwitz that made these crimes possible in the first place and that deprived inmates of any choice and agency. Further, the depiction of Weiss’s trauma and her suicide as a result of what she suffered in Auschwitz alerts viewers to the fact that for many survivors, life was not worth living anymore after the Holocaust. Weiss’s trauma emphasizes that as a victim, the conditions of Auschwitz continue for her in the present day. Therefore, her suicide twenty years after the end of the war is not a choice, but instead another reaction to the Holocaust and the resulting trauma, the effects of which she is unable to control.

Weiss references the misogynist discourse according to which Holocaust rape survivors ought to feel ashamed and guilty of their survival when she explains that Dr. Berger’s defense lawyer von Walden expected that she would be too embarrassed to

testify in court against Dr. Berger. The intrigues in the film, e.g. that von Walden is Dr. Berger's lawyer and pretends to also legally represent Weiss, reveal this misogynist discourse as false and yet another mechanism of oppression, thereby pointing to Weiss's innocence and Dr. Berger's guilt. In addition, the presentation of Dr. Berger as physician and sadistic pseudo-scientist as well as a rapist underscores his unequivocal guilt. Such depiction references directly the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, in which defendants predominantly denied their legal criminal guilt by arguing they only followed orders or by testifying that they could not remember specific events of which they were accused. With Dr. Berger's defense strategy of excusing his human experiments as science, *Zeugin aus der Hölle* points to the fact that a common defense of Nazi physicians who conducted such experiments was to claim scientific advancement.<sup>25</sup> I argue that the presentation of Nazi perpetrator Dr. Berger as rapist in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*—in addition to his other crimes—precludes any defense of innocence since rape is compared to the mass atrocities perpetrated by the National Socialists; rape is a crime that even the majority of those denying guilt by claiming to have obeyed orders would acknowledge as such according to paragraph 177 of German criminal law, *Deutsches Strafgesetzbuch*. It thus further suggests Dr. Berger's perversion and amorality.

As a crime, rape is to a certain extent analogous to the atrocities of the Holocaust, yet simultaneously different. Compared to the mass crimes of the Holocaust, rape is not unprecedented and is easier to imagine. Similar to the crimes of the Holocaust, in the 1960s rape was notoriously difficult to prove; perpetrators often claimed consent and the burden of proof was on the victim to provide evidence she did not have. Testifying in court to these crimes meant for the victims reliving their trauma and further re-

victimization through the law. Petrovic agrees with Weiss: “Nonsense. You, the victim, should be ashamed? Did you believe that?”<sup>26</sup> Weiss explains self-confidently that she neither feels ashamed nor intends to justify how she lived through Auschwitz since survival was her priority: “No, that [shame] was never the reason why I did not want to testify. I do not need to answer to anybody, how I saved my life. I fear something else. I just do not have the strength, to see this man again, this murderer.”<sup>27</sup>

Weiss fears that through her witness testimony and her confrontation with Dr. Berger in court, she will relive her traumatic experience. She wants to prevent another re-victimization at all cost. Reliving the past is worse for Weiss than being perceived as Dr. Berger’s accomplice and guilty of survival. While she cannot escape her traumatic memory, she is enlightened and emancipated enough to eloquently defend herself against this discourse. Her concerns about her trauma are validated in the film. When Weiss agrees to Petrovic’s suggestion of a compromise—that is, agreeing to provide an affidavit and testify against Dr. Berger outside of court in the presence of only Petrovic and Dr. Hoffmann—her psychological condition worsens. She is no longer able to distinguish between the past and the present, between hallucinations and real threats, and therefore commits suicide soon after providing her affidavit out of fear of renewed deportation. Although she does not face Dr. Berger in court, her affidavit in the presence of Dr. Hoffmann and Petrovic functions like a testimony in court since prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann’s interrogation of her triggers her trauma.

### **Weiss’s Re-victimization through the Law**

In the subsequent scene following her conversation with Petrovic, Weiss testifies to prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann. The prosecutor is suspicious of Weiss's detailed knowledge of Dr. Berger's crimes and arrogantly accuses her of lying: "You don't want to talk me into believing that Dr. Berger talked to you, a camp prisoner, about these matters."<sup>28</sup> While it is expected that defense lawyer von Walden might attempt to frighten Weiss in order to prevent her from testifying against his client and to interrogate her in court, the prosecutor's reaction to her testimony is especially surprising given that he begged her to serve as main survivor witness. Although as prosecutor Dr. Hoffmann has to ensure that Weiss's testimony is truthful, his arrogance and accusatory tone seem inappropriate and aggressive. His suspicion of Weiss is in line with the common legal treatment many Holocaust survivors who testified in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial faced and were annoyed by.<sup>29</sup> With his suspicion of Weiss's accessibility to classified information, Dr. Hoffmann as the representative of the law re-victimizes Weiss.

In response Weiss smiles calmly and knowingly since she is aware of the ability of legal discourse to re-victimize Holocaust survivors by legally accepting the-misogynist discourse that she is guilty. Her smile indicates her moral and intellectual superiority towards Dr. Hoffmann regarding the conditions in the concentration camp, of which he seems oblivious, and her resistance to this discourse. As a representative of the law, Dr. Hoffmann appears ignorant and naive to Weiss. Her knowing smile reverses the hierarchy between her and Dr. Hoffmann that he established through interrogation, implying that he is more knowledgeable than she about conditions in Auschwitz. To humiliate him for his ignorance and arrogance, she provokes him further with the ironic rhetorical question regarding Weiss's intimate knowledge of Dr. Berger's atrocities:

“Does that surprise you?”<sup>30</sup> Weiss’s reaction is successful: Dr. Hoffmann is dumbfounded and insecure; Petrovic looks down, ashamed. In response, Weiss rolls her eyes and shakes her head to indicate her annoyance at Dr. Hoffmann’s ignorance regarding Auschwitz. Since Weiss knows that her testimony might be reinterpreted to her disadvantage in court, she confronts him directly with reservations she already presented to Petrovic: “Would you consider it unfavorable if it is mentioned in court that I was Berger’s mistress?”<sup>31</sup> This is yet another provocative rhetorical question since the viewer knows from the previous scene that Weiss is familiar with the legal practices and the possibility that legal discourse might misrepresent her as guilty. With the use of the term *Geliebte* in court, all sexual violence would be denied. Weiss would not be considered a victim and Dr. Berger would not be a perpetrator. In this context, the trope of sexualized violence functions as a metaphor for detailed knowledge of classified information, equating Holocaust survivors’ intimate knowledge of Nazi secrets with physical intimacy, which implies that the victims are accomplices in their own destruction.

Weiss further explains that she will only testify in court if she can tell her entire story: “I will testify. But then the court should hear everything. The whole truth. Then I have to talk about my intimate relations with Berger.”<sup>32</sup> This stipulation implies her knowledge that legal discourse might likely reinterpret her narrative to her disadvantage, misrepresenting her as accomplice of Dr. Berger. Her priority is narrative justice—to be able to put her true story on record—instead of legal justice since she is aware that no punishment would be adequate for the crimes Dr. Berger committed. The chronological order of the film allows her to achieve just that.

Continuing with her callous attitude, indicated by her sardonic smile and raised eyebrow, Weiss explains that “Berger confided in me at night.”<sup>33</sup> Here, Weiss coopts the same sexist interpretation of her survival as does her perpetrator, but here only to show her knowledge of the discourse and its potential risk for her testimony in court since later she refutes this misogynist interpretation of her situation. Further, as a Jewish woman, she also speaks to her role as the object of forbidden desire that was considered by the Nazis to be *Rassenschande*, racial defilement, and a punishable crime. Petrovic, seemingly made uncomfortable by Weiss’s confession, attempts to silence her before she goes into detail about her relationship with Dr. Berger. But Weiss in turn interrupts him, signaling to him that she wishes to continue with her testimony. She is confident and determined when she emphasizes her intention to tell the truth, as the law requires it, although this might have negative effects on the outcome she desires for the trial—the sentencing of Dr. Berger—, just as Dr. Berger and his defense lawyer von Walden expected.

Prosecutor Dr. Hoffman, finally realizing the dilemma that the legal categories and practices are inadequate to address Weiss’s specific case and could be used against her, looks down, helplessly. Weiss continues to provoke him: “You would rather have a pure, innocent victim, an angel, who accuses. But unfortunately, I am not such an angel.”<sup>34</sup> This statement is once again scornful since Weiss neither considers herself at fault in the legal or moral sense nor is she. In contrast, Dr. Berger is guilty in every regard, but he does not display any sense or feeling of that guilt. Her provocation thus encapsulates the prevalent legal and misogynist discourse, which creates a dilemma that did not exist during the Holocaust, since then, Weiss was deprived of any choice and

agency in the concentration camp and, further, was raped. The law assumes a dichotomy between an innocent victim and a guilty perpetrator; misogynist discourse assumes that a rape victim is guilty and tainted. These interpretations of Weiss's situation are irreconcilable and re-victimize her since they attempt to write her narrative and belie the facts.

Weiss shows once more her knowledge of the prevalent discourses from which she has to defend and protect herself. In the same manner as before with Petrovic, Weiss contradicts these discourses. However, unlike Petrovic who preempted Weiss's rejections, Dr. Hoffmann remains quiet. Dr. Hoffmann's helplessness is representative of the law's inability to adapt and respond adequately to Weiss's specific situation. Weiss explains to Dr. Hoffmann that the legal dichotomy of innocent victim and guilty perpetrator as it is understood does not hold if Holocaust and rape victims are considered guilty of their survival and explains again the conditions in Auschwitz for the interned: "Back then I was a human being. A young woman, who was ready to suffer anything to stay alive."<sup>35</sup> This refers again to the discourse Bos identifies in the context of the myth of the 93 maidens and "My Sister on the Beach": death, even suicide, is considered the only appropriate response when a woman is faced with rape. Being familiar with this tacit understanding, Weiss, instead, emphasizes the importance of survival, regardless of the means. Her explanation that survival was her priority makes her later suicide in the film even more tragic since it shows the insufferableness of living with her traumatic memory from which she can neither escape nor protect herself.

Weiss's emphasis on her determination to survive and her insistence that she is no innocent angel in *Zeugin aus der Hölle* might further refer to the complexity of sexual

violence in the camp. Weiss was raped and forced into prostitution in the camp brothel and Dr. Berger attempts to discredit her by calling her a prostitute thereby attempting to ruin her reputation and undermine her credibility as an eyewitness. While forced prostitution and rape are unequivocally displayed as institutionalized sexual violence in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, Weiss's explanation that she would do anything to survive, her insistence that she is no innocent angel, and the suggestion that she was Dr. Berger's mistress might imply that by bartering sex in exchange for survival, she was able to maintain a level of power.

While Langer's insistence that women had no choice in the concentration camps is a crucial strategy against misogynist victim blaming, Weiss's claim that she was "not such an angel" might actually also function as an alternative strategy to combat such discourse by instead underscoring her agency. Anna Hájková analyzes the phenomenon of sexual bartering in the context of the Holocaust in her article "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto." She questions Langer's notion of "choiceless choices":

His [Langer's] view is a version of the assumption that society in the ghettos and camps was a deviation while the external society was the norm. Rather, we should see both as variations of the many forms human society takes. The inmates in Theresienstadt still had choices, even if they were limited; in refusing them the possibility of choice, we refuse them agency. (6)

Hájková's research contributes crucial insights into the role of sexuality in Theresienstadt for the possibility of survival and attributes victims with more agency than does Langer. Focusing on Holocaust victims' agency and accepting conditions in their own right is a

significant aspect in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*. However, given the power dynamic between Dr. Berger and Weiss in *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, their relationship cannot be considered what Hájková calls a “rational relationship” as existed in her example of the Theresienstadt ghetto (6) in which some women bartered sex for food and protection. Dr. Berger threatened to kill Weiss if she refused sexual relations: “Of course. He could do anything with me he wanted. Otherwise he would have used me for his experiments like a guinea pig or gassed me.”<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the ambiguity of Weiss’s statement refers to the complexities of the conditions and relationships in the camps and ghettos during the Holocaust, which according to the film, the law is unable to consider.

Despite Petrovic’s repeated attempts to interrupt and silence her, Weiss continues her story of how Dr. Berger raped and sterilized her, as well as forced her to participate in his human experiments. The incident where Dr. Berger forced her to have sexual contact with hypothermic inmates to revive them is briefly visualized in the film as flashback to indicate the vividness of Weiss’s trauma and to emphasize the persistence of the past in her present.

Weiss’s suicide immediately following her affidavit is not a result of shame—she does not feel ashamed at all—but of trauma that does not allow her to distinguish between hallucinations and actual threats. She is, however, able to distinguish between misogynist interpretations of her suffering in Auschwitz and what factually happened. Triggered by anonymous threatening phone calls, she takes a group of young men who mistakenly knock on her hotel room door to be the Gestapo, returning to deport her again. Reliving the events that led to her deportation in the past through traumatic flashbacks,

she commits suicide by jumping from a window to avoid their repetition. Her dead body is shown from a distance, as Petrovic and Dr. Hoffmann look out the window.

## **Conclusion**

Sommer's work shows that there was neither any systematic rape of Jewish women nor any coercion into prostitution in the concentration camps. The studies of Horowitz, Bos, and Levenkron have shown that the trope of sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust has often functioned to expose Nazi perpetrators as perverted sadists and survivors as shameful and complicit in the atrocities they suffered. In *Zeugin aus der Hölle*, the trope attains significantly different functions given the film's specific context with regard to its production time and intended audience. The Jewish Holocaust survivors Artur Brauner and Frida Filipović made this film for a postwar West German audience in the 1960s, including Nazi perpetrators, who were repressing the past, to confront them with the Nazi atrocities, their continuing traumatic effects for Jewish Holocaust survivors, and the remaining structures of Nazism in West Germany. The trope of sexualized violence emphasizes and exposes the legal and moral guilt of Nazi perpetrators. It further points to the gendered experience of the Holocaust for Jewish women. In addition, it functions as a metaphor for the Nazi's mass atrocities to indicate their lasting traumatic effects on victims and make the crimes more imaginable. The analogy the trope of sexualized violence draws between Holocaust and rape victims is by no means sensationalist as contemporaneous critics have suggested, but instead allows for the filmmakers to expose atrocities and misogynist and patriarchal discourses employed by Nazi perpetrators and West Germans in postwar West Germany that perpetuate

Nazism by blaming and shaming Holocaust victims for the crimes committed against them and for their survival. The exposure and rejection of these predominant conditions serves to protect Jewish Holocaust survivors in West Germany from further re-traumatization and re-victimization.

**Kerstin Steitz** is assistant professor of German in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Old Dominion University. Her research areas are twentieth-century German and German Jewish Studies as well as Holocaust Studies with a focus on Holocaust trials. She has published on Hannah Arendt and the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem and on Fritz Bauer and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial. Currently, she is completing her book manuscript on literary and filmic responses to the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial. She is the recipient of the Gerald Westheimer Career Development Fellowship 2015–16.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Horowitz “The Gender of Good and Evil” and “Women in Holocaust Literature”; Bos; Levenkron.

<sup>2</sup> The film was released in a Serbo-Croatian version with the title *Gorke Trave*, which translates to *Bittere Kräuter* (Bitter herbs) which was the working title of the film.

<sup>3</sup> Historian Rebecca Wittmann points out in *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* that “the majority of Germans blamed the architects and ideologues of Nazism for their program of destruction and saw themselves as victims who had no choice but to comply” (30).

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<sup>4</sup> See Loewy for further analysis of the similarities and differences between Wasserstrom and Weiss (26–28).

<sup>5</sup> It was the first major Holocaust trial against 22 Nazi perpetrators who held different ranks and positions in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Loewy notes that this film, along with *Mord in Frankfurt* (Rolf Hädrich, *Murder in Frankfurt*, 1967, Germany) is the only during its time that thematized this important trial, although it is not explicitly named (26).

<sup>6</sup> See also Wallen.

<sup>7</sup> Wallen observes something similar (12).

<sup>8</sup> For more about Yitzhak Sadeh see Zertal 263–69.

<sup>9</sup> Since the Serbo-Croatian version came out in 1966 (some sources state 1967), it seems that the film was first made in German and that the focus was on the German audience, also because the film is set in postwar West-Germany.

<sup>10</sup> “Nicht der Holocaust bildet also in den Interviews den Bezugsrahmen für das als psychologisch interessant begriffene Einzelschicksal, sondern ganz allgemein die Kriegserfahrung, die auch die Tätergesellschaft für sich beanspruchen kann” (Artur Brauner in an interview with Hans Borgelt entitled “Leiden an der Vergangenheit. *Bittere Kräuter*—ein deutscher Film mit einem kühnen Thema”; qtd. in Dillmann 30). All English translations in the text are my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>11</sup> Horowitz quotes Améry as follows: “It is like a rape, a sexual act without the consent of one of the two partners” (176).

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<sup>12</sup> “Uns kam es darauf an, die menschliche Tragödie einer Überlebenden zu zeigen, die zwanzig Jahre danach wieder in den Abgrund der Erinnerungen zurückgestoßen wird. Ich kenne mehrere solcher Fälle; sie sind grauenvoll!” (Brauner qtd. in Dillmann 29).

<sup>13</sup> “Das Publikum soll sich selbst ein Urteil bilden. Wenn es dieser Film fertigbringt, Verständnis für Menschen zu wecken, die die Vergangenheit nicht ruhen läßt und die mit der Gegenwart nicht fertig werden, dann hat er seinen Zweck erfüllt” (Brauner qtd. in Dillmann 34).

<sup>14</sup> In the scholarship on *Zeugin aus der Hölle* Filipović is only briefly mentioned as the screenwriter without any further biographical information. See, Loewy, Dillmann, and Nagler. According to the IMDB website, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, Filipović wrote a number of screenplays. Her literary work includes “Female,” as mentioned by Celia Hawkesworth in *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia* (222).

<sup>15</sup> In 1998, Filipović recorded her survivor testimony with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Apart from Olga Dimitrijević who mentions film scripts by Filipović in her chapter “Serbia and Yugoslavia” in *Women Screenwriters: An International Guide* (534), there appears to be no scholarship about her writing or film scripts.

<sup>16</sup> “[P]olitisches Problem”; “vielmehr will sie die psychologischen Auswirkungen, welche die grauenvollen Erlebnisse für das gegenwärtige Leben der Heldin haben, entwickeln” (Filipović in *Der Tagesspiegel*, qtd. and paraphrased in Dillmann 30).

<sup>17</sup> Wittmann points out that the presentation of the defendants in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial as “sadists” was problematic since it “contributed to a general public detachment from the defendants” (12).

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<sup>18</sup> “Bora, in deinem ersten Buch fehlt noch ein Kapitel. Du kennst nicht die ganze Wahrheit” (0:59:08–0:59:18).

<sup>19</sup> Throughout history, enslaved women have been euphemistically called “mistresses” instead of the more accurate term “rape victims.” For example, in February 2017, a *Washington Post* article referred to Sally Hemings as Jefferson’s “mistress” (Thompson) which was criticized.

<sup>20</sup> “Gewalt oder durch Drohung mit gegenwärtiger Gefahr für Leib oder Leben” (Mühlmann and Bommel § 177). This phrase remained the same in all revisions of the code from 1872 through 1973; only in 1997 was sexual assault (“sexuelle Nötigung”), defined by “exploiting of a situation, in which the victim is exposed defenseless at the mercy of the perpetrator” (“Ausnutzen einer Lage, in der das Opfer der Einwirkung des Täters schutzlos ausgeliefert ist”), added to the section. See Müting. (Note by editor.) See today’s phrasing in the StGB (“13. Abschnitt”).

<sup>21</sup> “[E]in schöner Tod. Mädchenhaft und ohne Schuld” (00:50:11–00:50:15).

<sup>22</sup> “Er hat dich gezwungen” (00:59:34–00:59:36).

<sup>23</sup> “Natürlich. Er konnte ja machen mit mir was er wollte. Sonst hätte er mich wie ein Versuchskaninchen für seine Experimente benutzt oder vergasen lassen” (00:59:37–00:59:48).

<sup>24</sup> According to the transcript in Hermann Langbein’s *Der Auschwitz-Prozeß*, Wasserstrom emphasized during the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial that her survival was sheer luck and that she was certainly not favored by anyone (375).

<sup>25</sup> Roland Suso Richter’s film *After the Truth* (*Nichts als die Wahrheit*, 1999) thematizes this aspect. Josef Mengele, the infamous medical doctor who conducted human

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experiments especially on twins but who escaped legal prosecution by fleeing to Brazil, is tried in this film and defends himself by claiming that his inhumane experiments advanced science and that his murdering should be considered as euthanasia, as a benevolent act to protect people from torture.

<sup>26</sup> “So ein Unsinn. Du, das Opfer soll sich schämen? Hast du das geglaubt?” (1:00:08–1:00:26)

<sup>27</sup> “Nein, das [Scham] war nie der Grund, warum ich nicht aussagen wollte. Ich habe es doch nicht nötig, irgendjemandem Rechenschaft abzugeben, wie ich mein Leben gerettet habe. Ich fürchte etwas anderes. Ich habe einfach nicht die Kraft, diesen Menschen wiederzusehen, diesen Mörder” (1:00:08–1:00:26).

<sup>28</sup> “Sie wollen mir doch nicht einreden, dass Dr. Berger mit ihnen, einem Lagerhäftling, über diese Dinge gesprochen hat” (1:01:20–1:01:26).

<sup>29</sup> Dunja Wasserstrom was summoned after her testimony in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial to verify its truthfulness, according to Langbein’s transcription (42–422; 882).

<sup>30</sup> “Wundert sie das?” (1:01:27–1:01:29)

<sup>31</sup> “Halten Sie es etwa für ungünstig, dass vor Gericht erwähnt wird, dass ich Bergers Geliebte war?” (1:02:04–1:02:09)

<sup>32</sup> “Ich sage aus. Aber dann soll das Gericht auch alles hören. Die ganze Wahrheit. Dann muss ich über meine intimen Beziehungen zu Berger sprechen” (1:02:18–1:02:23).

<sup>33</sup> “Berger hat sich mir in den Nächten anvertraut” (1:02:24–1:02:27).

<sup>34</sup> “Sie möchten lieber ein reines, unschuldiges Opfer, einen Engel, der anklagt. Aber leider bin ich nicht so ein Engel” (1:02:28–1:02:34).

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<sup>35</sup> “Damals war ich ein Mensch. Eine junge Frau, die bereit war, alles zu ertragen, um am Leben zu bleiben” (1:02:35–1:02:40).

<sup>36</sup> “Natürlich. Er konnte ja machen mit mir was er wollte. Sonst hätte er mich wie ein Versuchskaninchen für seine Experimente benutzt oder vergasen lassen.”

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