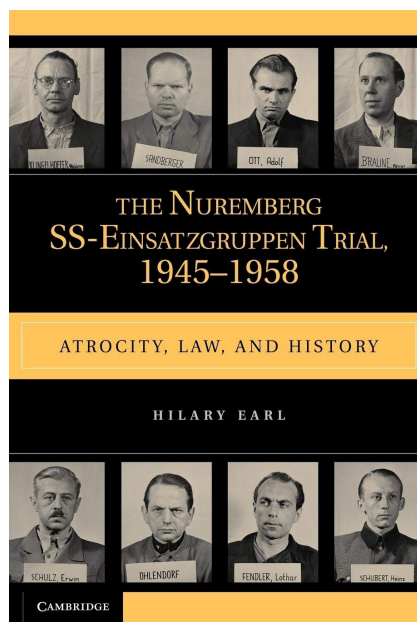


2009 Hans Rosenberg Book Prize Laudatio

Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945-1958: Atrocity, Law, and History* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Hilary Earl has written an original and masterful account of what was described at the time as “the biggest murder trial in history,” the trial of two dozen leaders of the SS Einsatzgruppen at Nuremberg in 1947/48. Her book is the very first comprehensive account of the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen Trial, which, Earl persuasively argues, not only shaped subsequent international war crimes trials, but also left a lasting imprint on our understanding of Nazi perpetrators and the historiography of the Final Solution.



The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945-1958: Atrocity, Law, and History is a deep and richly documented analysis of this neglected chapter in the history of transitional justice. Earl weaves perpetrator, legal, and biographic history to paint a compelling and harrowing picture of the defendants. Her “collective biography” of this group of war criminals demonstrates that most belonged to a cohort of highly educated professionals whose career ambitions were frustrated by economic crisis. As a group, they were too young to have fought in the First World War but old enough to have been traumatized by the defeat. Along the way, Earl uses trial records and testimony to intervene in debates about the timing of the Final Solution. She listens carefully to the testimonies and justifications offered by perpetrators, and to how the prosecution and the defense responded to them, probing deeply into the characters of Otto Ohlendorf, the

commander of Einsatzgruppen D, and Michael Musmanno, the presiding American judge. Finally, Earl analyzes the post-trial fate of the defendants who were not executed. Cold war politics, she argues, led to the release of all of the surviving defendants by 1958.

The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial combines the life stories and crimes of the defendants with cogent analysis of the motivation and meaning of their actions, of trends in Holocaust historiography, and of the tensions between law and history. Earl’s study is based on voluminous research in both American and German archives. It is essential reading for historians of Germany, the Holocaust, and transitional justice, and an inspiring model of ethical scholarship on war crimes and their aftermath.