



## The Spring 2016 *Geisteswissenschaften International* Translation Prize is awarded to ...

Maren Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen. Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945 (War Relationships. Intimacy, Violence and Prostitution in Occupied Poland from 1939 to 1945)*, S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 2015.

Maren Röger's new book delves into a subject hitherto neglected by historical research – that is, a subject that remains a veritable taboo in Poland and at least in German memory is limited to the rape of German woman by Red Army soldiers in 1945 –, namely the history of sexual relationships between German occupying forces and local women in Nazi-held territories during WWII and, more specifically, in Poland between Polish women and German civil occupiers, soldiers, policemen and members of the SS. In spite of the Nazis' racial policies and laws against contact with local populations, everyday life during the German occupation of Poland led to "Kriegsbeziehungen" – or "war relationships" – that were invariably characterized by a radical power imbalance. In her book, Röger distinguishes between violent contact (i.e. rape and forced prostitution, which affected particularly Polish-Jewish women), commercial contact (prostitution) and consensual intimate contact. In the case of consensual intimate contact, Röger uses documented cases to examine the complicated processes of interaction and exchange between the individuals involved. Indeed, while the women were often seeking material support and protection for themselves and their families, the German occupiers were often simply looking for a sense of "normalcy" and human warmth. In fact, German men occasionally applied for permission to marry their Polish girlfriends, thus taking advantage of very ambiguous and contradictory Nazi ethnic policies in Poland (e.g. vague criteria for "Germanization") to try to get their girlfriends designated as "Volksdeutsch," i.e. "ethnic German", and legalize their relationship accordingly.

Röger's work is innovative and groundbreaking in several ways, especially in the context of ongoing research into the history of National Socialism and Nazi control of the countries they invaded and occupied. This nature of this innovation is exemplified in her selection of subjects, in her methodological reflections, in her exhaustive research into and processing of her sources and, most importantly, in the exemplary and successful manner in which she combines everyday stories, gender issues and the history of sexuality in occupied Poland.

The Jury

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