

Rethinking rescue



Image: Bund group

Description:

I am currently engaged in writing the history of a resistance and rescue group tentatively titled *Rescued from memory*.

With this study, which like my previous ones is written as a crossover book, my aim is to transform the way we think and write about “rescue”. By this I mean first that rescue itself is a concept in need of revisiting. It is not capacious enough as a concept to capture the varieties of assistance – including the self-help that formed an important element of most survival stories. But above all I want to show that our reliance on postwar memory, and particularly our desire to tell morally, politically or religiously useful stories has seriously skewed our understanding of the experience of giving and receiving assistance.

I show how not only “resistance” but also “rescue” come packaged with a set of assumptions, the former necessarily political, the latter preferably nonpolitical. Whereas resistance as a term has had a thorough going-over in the historiography,

and has been weighed against dissent, non-conformity, opposition, and so forth, our use of rescue is still rather naïve. Using a case study of one particular, extremely well documented but largely unknown German group I show how their wartime experience disappeared from view after the war, not only because it did not fit the accepted categories of resistance or rescue, but also because the group itself simplified and skewed its actions in order to meet postwar expectations.

Publications

Books

Rescued from memory. The "Bund", resistance, and rescue in Nazi Germany
(Manuscript in preparation, completion summer 2015)

Articles

„Gerettete Geschichte. Der „Bund“. Gemeinschaft für sozialistisches Leben im Dritten Reich“, *Mittelweg* 36 Vol 16 (February 2007): 100-121

„Gespräche und Lektüren zum Körper“, *BIOS* Vol20, Special Issue („*Kritische Erfahrungsgeschichte und grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit. The Networks of Oral History*“), (2007): 75-81.

‘Ein Mensch in Bewegung. Dore Jacobs, 1894-1978’, *Essener Beiträge. Beiträge zur Geschichte von Stadt und Stift Essen* 114 (2002): 73-109

Book chapters

“The pleasures of opposition: leisure, solidarity, and resistance of a life-reform group” in Corey Ross and Pamela Swett, eds., *Pleasure and Power in the Third Reich* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 256-277

“Surviving undetected: the Bund, rescue and memory in Germany” in Jacques Semelin, Claire Andrieu, Sarah Gensburger (eds.) *Resisting Genocide. The multiple forms of rescue* (Columbia University Press 2011), pp. 465-480

„Survivre dans la clandestinité: le « Bund » dans l’Allemagne nazie » in Jacques Semelin and Sarah Gensburger (eds.), *Pratiques de Sauvetage en Situations Génocidaires* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po., 2008), pp.475-490

“The body’s resistance: Körperbildung and the creation of Anti-Nazi identities” in Willem de Blécort (ed.), *Sisters of subversion. Histories of women, Tales of Gender. A Festschrift* (Amsterdam: AMB Press, 2008), pp.181-190.