

POLITICIZING PRONATALISM: EXPLORING THE NAZI IDEOLOGY OF WOMEN THROUGH THE LENS OF VISUAL PROPAGANDA, 1933-1939

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“The mission of woman is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world. This is not at all as rude and unmodern as it sounds. The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches the eggs for him. In exchange, the mate takes care of gathering the food, and stands guard and wards off the enemy.”

- Joseph Goebbels¹

Recent works on women’s roles in Nazi Germany have fueled a maelstrom of contentious arguments that challenge notions of women’s accountability, victimization, agency and resistance during one of the most destructive regimes in modern history. The epistemological currents of women’s roles in the Third Reich converge at one particular point. The general academic consensus is that German women belonged to a sexist patriarchal regime that sought to dramatically increase its population by driving women into the domestic sphere. This episteme, however, is dynamic and constantly in flux, and analyzing these currents generates a conundrum. On one hand, failing to acknowledge the blatant misogyny of the Third Reich is an egregious historical omission; on the other hand, historicizing it treads dangerously close to calling the women of Nazi Germany “victims.” The essence of this conundrum is captured by the drawn-out scholarly rivalry between Nazi women’s historians Claudia Koonz and Gisela Bock, whose opposing arguments about women’s roles in the Third Reich, or lack thereof, establish much of the foundation on which this historical discourse is based. Koonz deems the *Nazi conscience*, a “secular ethos” whose implications extended only

¹ Joseph Goebbels, “The Female Bird,” in *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*, ed. George L. Mosse (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 41 [Originally from Joseph Goebbels’ *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf., 1929), 41].

to “racially pure Aryans,” responsible for the expulsion and extermination of German Jews.² Koonz argues that since German women actively fulfilled the roles of child bearer, provider and worker, they, too, were guilty of the Holocaust.³ She observes, furthermore, that the *Nazi conscience* was developed through a process of relativism that “vindicated [the Third Reich’s] superiority” by means of the widespread anti-Semitic European climate during the interwar period.⁴ Koonz’s arguments directly oppose those of Gisela Bock, who posits that National Socialism did not create equality amongst the sexes in that the gendered policies of the Third Reich were laced with the same biases and prejudices as Nazi racial policies.⁵ From Bock’s perspective, those who believe that National Socialism favored women are most likely confusing “propaganda with actual policies,” an argument that demands further attention.⁶ Although these two dominant strands of discourse have generated much scholarship in the field of gender relations during the Third Reich, their hypotheses fail to fully consider the driving forces behind women’s marginalization in Nazi Germany. Discussing *how* women exercised or were stripped of their agency is certainly no small feat, but it by no means offers complete insight into the reasons *why* the institutionalization of misogyny was successfully carried out during the Nazi Regime.

The episteme generally acknowledges that Nazi policies and ideologies about women and childbirth were harbored in a hyper-masculine environment saturated with misogyny. Yet scholars have failed to consider the power and persuasiveness of National Socialist youth and women’s visual propaganda. They have also failed to analyze the crucial role that Nazi visual propaganda played in politicizing pronatalism. From Bock’s point of view, one ought not to confuse propaganda with National Socialist policies, even though pronatal visual propaganda served

² Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), passim.

³ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 6-7.

⁴ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 6-7.

⁵ Gisela Bock, “Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism,” in *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, and Female Subjectivity*, eds. Gisela Bock and Susan James (London: Routledge, 1992), 82-83.

⁶ Bock, “Equality and Difference,” 83.

as a powerful vehicle of feminine marginalization during the early years of the Third Reich. The abundance of visual material in online archives is testimony to this hypothesis; a search through the German Propaganda Archive, the Bund Deutscher Mädel Historical Research Page and Online Archive, and the Hoover Institution Political Poster Database makes it evident that a great deal of Nazi visual propaganda was created for a female audience and was designed with a specific purpose in mind.⁷ According to art historian Joan Schwartz, visual media such as photographs have “visual agenda[s]” and are thus “social constructs capable of performing ideological work.”⁸ These agendas, Schwartz continues, thus enforce particular worldviews and “serve the interests [of] the photographers who made them, the patrons who commissioned them, the entrepreneurs who published them and the audiences who consumed them.”⁹ Although Schwartz focuses on photographs, this theoretical framework can be applied to visual propaganda as well. Much of the archival visual material relating to women in this context depicts them in the domestic sphere; in fact, it is very difficult to locate sources that depict women outside of the home. In addition, an overwhelming proportion of this visual propaganda depicts certain militaristic, maternal, and agrarian parallels, a trichotomy that Jill Stephenson discusses in *The Nazi Organization of Women*; by selecting the visual material that best reflects these recurring motifs, one can expose the myriad ways that pronatalism was propagated and politicized in Nazi Germany.¹⁰ Hence, a critical analysis of Nazi visual propaganda makes it impossible to ignore that propaganda was designed to marginalize women.

One might consider using *ausschlachten*, a German word that means to exploit or to extract everything from something, as a methodology for visual analysis in that exploiting an image’s potential through thorough visual analysis might yield insight into

⁷ Although the Bund Deutscher Mädel: A Historical Research Page and Online Archive is not an academic archive, it is nevertheless a useful resource and thus forms a solid point of departure from which I have launched my investigation.

⁸ Joan Schwartz, “The Geography Lesson: Photographs and the Construction of Imaginative Geographies,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 22 (1996): 29, 21.

⁹ Schwartz, “The Geography Lesson,” 35.

¹⁰ Jill Stephenson, *The Nazi Organization of Women* (London: Redwood Burn Limited, 1981), 69.

the creator's objectives and the motives behind its circulation.¹¹ In this regard, I use *ausschlachten* to demonstrate that misogyny was generated through a complex *process of politicization* whereby the National Socialist ideology of women was expressed through the convergence of three motifs that dominated pronatal visual propaganda. The first of these motifs is *Lebensraum* or living space for the German people, a crucial theme that reflects Nazi foreign policy through the depiction of shifting borders. The second motif that characterizes pronatal propaganda is the soldier, a theme that will be made especially evident through a comparative analysis of the covers of *Der Pimpf* and *Das Deutsche Mädel*, the respective Hitler Youth publications for boys and girls. The third motif is that of mother and child, a powerful symbol that captures the essence of pronatal propaganda by acting as the binding agent between the German farmer and the German soldier. The goal of this paper, therefore, is to explore the ways in which the tripartite relationship between motherhood, militarism, and agrarianism is visually portrayed in order to prove that visual propaganda acted as a powerful driving force behind the politicization of pronatalism and the institutionalization of misogyny between 1933 and 1939, that is, from Hitler's seizure of power to the eve of the Second World War.

Pronatalism: A Prerequisite of *Lebensraum*

May 1, 1936 marked the beginning of the National Socialist Registry Office's nation-wide distribution of *Mein Kampf* to all newlywed couples for eight Reichsmarks apiece.¹² Hitler hoped that his book would promote the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, a nightmarish fusion of anti-Semitism and anti-

¹¹ The concept of *ausschlachten* was brought to my attention by Dr. Rosemarie Schade, my mentor and supervisor, in Hessen, Germany this summer. I would like to thank Dr. Schade for her endless support, constructive criticism, and invaluable insight. Special thanks also goes out to Dr. Elena Razlogova, whose guidance and expertise played a crucial role in the planning and shaping of this research paper. I would also like to thank Dr. Randall Bytwerk for allowing me to use material from his archive, the German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/>>. Lastly, thank you to Mr. Nick Siekierski for kindly granting me permission to reproduce images from the Hoover Institution Archives <<http://www.hoover.org/library-and-archives>>.

¹² Judith Ryan and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *A New History of German Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 795.

Bolshevism laced with a murderous expansionist policy, *Lebensraum*. Amidst countless threats of war and genocide lies crucial insight into Hitler's ideology of childbirth. He condemned birth control and said that it generated the "obvious desire to 'save' even the weakest and most sickly at any price."¹³ Women were seldom mentioned in his exhaustive, seven hundred page manifesto. The passage above is one of Hitler's few references to childbearing. The overall lack of references to women in *Mein Kampf* is testimony to Hitler's view of childbirth as a eugenically motivated biological process instead of as a socio-feminine phenomenon. His beliefs about women and childbirth reveal themselves throughout his *Second Book* as well. In the chapter "War and Peace in the Struggle for Survival," he argued that peaceful policies would create a "racially weakened" nation state, devoid of its Nordic blood, which would inevitably lead to the collapse of the German nation.¹⁴ Decreasing the national birthrate, he continued, would compromise the essence of *Lebensraum* in that "a reduction in the birth rate eliminates those with superior qualities, while emigration destroys the average quality of the people."¹⁵ This passage reflects Hitler's anxiety about a low birthrate and the consequences he felt would inevitably follow.

Pronatalism was not an innovation of Nazi Germany, however. Fear of low birthrates and depopulation saturated the domestic policies of the Soviet Union and many Western European nations long before the Nazis rose to power. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a great deal of crisis in France, Italy, and the Soviet Union, where issues about reproduction and gender were of paramount importance in the body politic. In "Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context," historian David L. Hoffman argues that the Soviet Union and many western European nations ardently pursued pronatal policies during the turbulent interwar period, although Stalinist policies were radically different from Nazi ones due to the communist regime from which they emerged. The massive loss of

¹³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 131-132.

¹⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg (New York: Enigma Books, 2006), 13, 20.

¹⁵ Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book*, 13, 20.

life resulting from the First World War, Hoffman argues, created a precedent which led European governments to begin emphasizing maternity and childbearing on large scales:

In an age of industrial labor and mass warfare, a large and disciplined population was seen as essential for national power. And in an age when the scientific management of society seemed not only possible but imperative, governments increasingly intervened to raise the birthrate and ensure the healthy upbringing of citizens.¹⁶

This was certainly true of post-First World War France, where painful memories of a bloody war fought on domestic soil fueled anxieties about depopulation and the possible stirrings of a second world war east of the soon-to-be-built Maginot Line. However, a low birthrate was not the only concern of French politicians and policy-makers; widespread fear manifested itself in collective memories of what the Great War had cost them. In fact, French casualties during the First World War were so heavy that half of all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five had died by 1918.¹⁷ Fear of depopulation and Germanophobia were further intensified by *révanchisme*, a national sentiment that had resulted from France's crushing defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 and the consequential succession of the eastern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to the German Empire.¹⁸ These factors created a climate that allowed pronatal policies to flourish during the French Third Republic, which resulted in the introduction of family allowances, financial compensation for first-born children, and intensified efforts to criminalize abortion.¹⁹ The growth of pronatal policies culminated in 1920, when contraceptives were made illegal, and then again in 1923, when a new law stipulated harsher penalties for abortionists and women who terminated their pregnancies.²⁰ In this regard, it has been argued that

¹⁶ David L. Hoffman, "Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 35-36.

¹⁷ Hoffman, "Mothers in the Motherland," 37.

¹⁸ Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 44.

¹⁹ Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 44.

²⁰ Hoffman, "Mothers in the Motherland," 39.

pronatalism coloured the ideologies of both Left and Right in 1920s France, as Aristide Briand, Edouard Daladier, and Georges Clemenceau all shared a strong desire to strengthen the French population demographic regardless of their respective political loyalties.²¹

Fascist Italy was also notorious for its pronatal policies or, as Victoria de Grazia calls them, for its “demographic battles.”²² *Il Duce* Benito Mussolini’s demographic anxieties are most clearly reflected in his Ascension Day Speech to parliament on May 26, 1927. The speech is undeniably militant in character:

Let’s be clear: what are forty million Italians against 90 million Germans and 200 million Slavs? Let us look to the West: what are 40 million Italians against 40 million French plus 90 millions from the Colonies, or against 46 million British, plus 450 millions in the Colonies? [...] Gentlemen, Italy, in order to count for something, must face the second half of this century with a population not inferior to 60 million.²³

The Fascist policies put into place in December 1926 reinforced this anxiety. People who used contraceptives or who performed or underwent abortion were penalized, and unmarried Italian men between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-five were subject to a bachelor tax, a measure Mussolini called a “demographic jolt.”²⁴ Mussolini’s campaign to increase the Italian birthrate had failed by 1938, when the birthrate began to decrease.²⁵ A possible explanation for this decline can be found in the work of historian Paul Ginsborg, who argues that Mussolini’s family policies seem relatively lax in comparison to the “high degree of control and

²¹ Samuel Kalman, *The Extreme Right in Interwar France: The Faisceau and the Croix de Feu* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 135.

²² Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 41.

²³ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd., 2000), 158.

²⁴ Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73.

²⁵ Lauren E. Forucci, “Battle for Births: The Fascist Pronatalist Campaign in Italy 1925-1938,” *The Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 10, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 5.

terror exercised upon families by Hitler and Stalin.”²⁶

The Soviet Union’s pronatal pursuits in the 1920s were radical at best. The Bolsheviks had not initially concerned themselves with family policy, yet abortion laws were nevertheless liberalized after the Russian Revolution of 1917 and were followed by the legalization of abortion and birth control in 1920 and 1923 respectively.²⁷ However, these laws were quickly changed under the Stalinist Regime in order to facilitate an increase in the Russian birthrate.²⁸ The pinnacle of these policies was the Soviet Union’s criminalization of abortion in June, 1936.²⁹ The Soviet Decree of 27 June 1936 also included a pronatal policy that awarded women who had already borne six children two thousand rubles annually for each additional child; the sum rose to five thousand rubles for each child after their tenth child.³⁰ In addition, the Soviet government allotted generous funding to maternity wards, pediatric hospitals, and nurseries.³¹ Most important, however, was the Soviet government’s encouragement of reproduction regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political loyalties, unlike the Nazis who, as I argue, implemented as many antinatal policies as pronatal policies between the years of 1933 and 1939.³² Despite a brief increase in birthrate between 1936 and 1938, the Soviet birthrate then dipped below its 1935 level due to myriad factors including widespread poverty, endemic hunger, and slashes in maternity benefit funding, thus making Stalin’s demographic campaign as unsuccessful as Mussolini’s.³³

It would be an egregious error to assume that because the Third Reich was rife with misogyny, the Weimar Republic must have been an extraordinarily liberal place for women. The Nazi Party is notorious for its total exclusion of women from the political sphere, while the Weimar Republic witnessed one

²⁶ Paul Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family in Twentieth-Century Europe,” *Contemporary European History* 9, no. 3 (2000): 420.

²⁷ Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family,” 414; Hoffman, “Mothers in the Motherland,” 39.

²⁸ Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family,” 414.

²⁹ Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family,” 427.

³⁰ Hoffman, “Mothers in the Motherland,” 41.

³¹ Hoffman, “Mothers in the Motherland,” 41.

³² Hoffman, “Mothers in the Motherland,” 41.

³³ Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family,” 428.

hundred and eleven female politicians in the Reichstag from center and left-leaning parties between 1919 and 1933.³⁴ It is also true that Weimar Germany was the site of a divided feminist movement composed of both a bourgeois women's movement, formed during the late nineteenth century, and a youth movement that promoted equality and comradeship between the sexes.³⁵ Feminist movements were targeted and persecuted after 1933, as women's emancipation was seen as a leftist or Marxist pursuit. Only official Nazi-sponsored girls' and women's organizations were permitted to operate, and the underlying objectives of these approved organizations were, I argue, to confine women to the domestic sphere in order to facilitate a higher birth rate. Despite the seemingly liberal attitude of the "New Woman," Weimar Germany did not condone promiscuity and sexuality, as popular culture often suggests. Abortion was decriminalized in 1927 solely on the grounds that it could only be performed if pregnancy posed a threat to the health of a woman.³⁶ During the same year, Germany passed the Maternity Protection Act, which protected and consolidated the rights of female workers and, perhaps most importantly, made cheap contraceptives readily accessible to the working class.³⁷

These social innovations, however, were short-lived. The Great Depression and newly-appointed Chancellor Heinrich Brüning's disastrous attempts to counter the effects of the Wall Street Crash of 29 October 1929 resulted in the near collapse of the German economy. Simply put, social benefits were neither feasible nor economically sustainable and were curtailed accordingly. Maria-Sophia Quine argues that consequential tax increases, unemployment figures reaching six million, massive funding cuts, and widespread bankruptcy sparked much public disenchantment with the Brüning administration and set the groundwork for "negative eugenics," where people began to label

³⁴ Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (London: Aenold Publishlishers, 2003), 16.

³⁵ Rosemarie Schade, *Ein weibliches Utopia: Organisationen und Ideologien der Mädchen und Frauen in der bürgerlichen Jugendbewegung 1905-1933* (Witzenhausen, Archiv der Deutschen Jugendbewegung, 1996), passim.

³⁶ Maria-Sophia Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth Century Europe: Fascist Dictatorships and Liberal Democracies* (London: Routledge, 2002), 108.

³⁷ Quine, *Population Politics*, 108.

mentally and physically disabled persons as societal burdens.³⁸ She also deems the “collapse of the Weimar welfare state” an intensifying agent in race eugenics in that some believed that “racially unfit” citizens did not deserve to receive welfare and state benefits.³⁹ Another consequence of the turbulent early 1930s, however, was the rise of the Communist *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD) and the Fascist *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP). The latter of these parties, the Nazi Party, was in many ways a continuation of Russian and Western European society’s long-standing tradition of misogyny. Its precedents facilitated its emergence as one of the most monstrous and murderous regimes in history. Certain Nazi pronatal threads can thus be traced from the Weimar Republic into the Third Reich, where pronatalism latched onto domestic policy, intensified, and permeated every element of society.

The National Socialist anxiety about depopulation is perhaps best reflected in Joseph Goebbels’ speech at a women’s exhibit opening in Berlin in March 1934. In this speech, the *Reichsminister* of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda insisted that the German population was drastically declining, though he used this rhetoric to achieve a dramatic and exaggerated effect:

In 1900, two million babies were born in Germany. Now the number has fallen to one million. This drastic decline is most evident in the nation’s capital. In the last fourteen years, Berlin’s birthrate has become the lowest of any European city. By 1955, without emigration, it will have only about three million inhabitants. The government is determined to halt this decline of the family and the resulting impoverishment of our blood. There must be a fundamental change. The liberal attitude toward the family and the child is responsible for Germany’s rapid decline.⁴⁰

The “liberal attitude” to which Goebbels referred was unmistakably that of the Weimar period’s consolidation of women’s liberties, which directly opposed the Nazi ideology of

³⁸ Quine, *Population Politics*, 108.

³⁹ Quine, *Population Politics*, 109.

⁴⁰ Joseph Goebbels, “German Women,” speech delivered at the opening of a women’s exhibition in Berlin, 18 March 1933, in *Nazi Propaganda by Joseph Goebbels, 1933-1945*, German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb55.htm>>.

women. Goebbels' resonating anxieties reinforce my hypothesis that the Nazi Regime intended to propagate pronatalism through the creation of separate masculine and feminine spheres.

Although National Socialist rhetoric was a key tool in promoting pronatalism through speech, repopulation was most effectively politicized through Hitler Youth propaganda publications. The three images below are powerful examples of the ways in which the Nazi Regime fused agrarianism and *Lebensraum* in order to encourage a dramatic population increase. Figure 1, the cover page of the 1 September 1937 issue of *Das Deutsche Mädel*, the official party magazine for German girls, intertwines living space and gender dichotomies to influence the minds of its young readers. The young girl is depicted as a *Hausfrau*, her hair modestly covered. The young boy is portrayed as a farmer, in breeches, boots, and a sunhat, and symbolizes the agrarian paradigm of land expansion for the German *volk*, or people. In addition, both children are carrying schoolbooks, as if to symbolize the embedding of the Nazi worldview in the minds of the German youth. A map of Germany's shifting borders looms imposingly overhead and eerily foreshadows *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria that would take place a mere five months later. Most important, however, is that the territories that had been annexed by the League of Nations and Germany's neighboring countries after the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 have been reincorporated into the Third Reich, including the then-French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, the coal and iron-ore rich Saarland, parts of Belgium, West Prussia, and Upper Silesia. I consider this image's shifting borders a very early expression of Nazi foreign policy.

Figure 2, the cover page of a February 1939 issue of *Die Kameradschaft*, a periodical published in order to dictate the curricula of Hitler Youth leaders, clearly invokes natal imagery. Its title states that "eighty million Germans live on five-hundred eighty thousand square kilometers" of land, and the illustration itself incorporates Austria into the Third Reich, even though *Anschluss* had yet to be carried out. Farmers, housewives, children, and farmland are used to symbolize an overpopulated nation with insufficient living space, a clear attempt to promote *Lebensraum*. This cover page can therefore be considered a lens through which foreign policy is viewed. Figure 3, a 1934 *Bund*

deutscher Osten poster, an unofficial Nazi sponsored group aimed to influence the Hitler Youth, uses similar themes in an attempt to propagate pronatalism as well. Its inscription, “Bund Deutscher Osten,” which means “German Alliance East,” is a blatant admission of the Nazi Regime’s expansionist policies. The image



Figure 1: *Das Deutsche Mädel*, September 1937⁴¹



Figure 2: *Die Kameradschaft*, February 1939⁴²



Figure 3: Hitler Youth Poster, 1934⁴³

⁴¹ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, September 1937, Bund Deustcher Mädel: A Historical Research Page and Online Archive
<<http://bdmhistory.fotki.com/primarysources/ddm/september-1937/37september01.html>>.

shows farmers ploughing the soil in Czechoslovakia and Poland, territories that are shaded green in order to fit the agrarian paradigm of living space for the German people. It uses political imagery to encourage the German youth to carry out Nazi foreign policy. Aggressive expansionist policies were carried out as early as 1938 with the annexation of the Sudetenland in March 1938 and the invasion of Poland in September of 1939, the latter which brought Appeasement to an abrupt halt. That this propaganda targeted the future generation was no mere coincidence. These three images mark attempts to indoctrinate the notion of *Lebensraum* into the German youth's worldview. To military historians, moreover, these images' shifting geographical borders are also unique declarations of Nazi war aims.

Institutionalizing Misogyny in the Third Reich

Between 1933 and 1937, unemployment in Germany was reduced from six million to five hundred thousand people.⁴⁴ What is not widely acknowledged, however, is that inequality between the sexes played a paramount role in this economic phenomenon. On 1 July 1933, Hitler passed the Law to Reduce Unemployment, which included a law on Marriage Loans.⁴⁵ The Marriage Loans policy offered an average of one thousand Reichsmarks, approximately one fifth of a German's average annual salary, tax and interest free, to "racially pure" couples on the condition that the woman left her job and remained in the home.⁴⁶ Section 1 of the "Marriage Loans" law reveals the extent to which Nazi officials tried to remove women from the work force:

Marriage Loans, section I

⁴² *Die Kameradschaft*, 8 February 1939, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/images/hj/ks39-9.jpg>>.

⁴³ GE 1012, 1934, "Bund Deutscher Osten," Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, Stanford University, California.

⁴⁴ Thomas Emerson Hall and J. David Ferguson, *The Great Depression: An International Disaster of Perverse Economic Policies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 132.

⁴⁵ Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29.

⁴⁶ Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2007), 334; Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 40.

1. People of German nationality who marry one another after this law has come into force can on application be granted a marriage loan of up to 1000 Reichsmarks [...] The conditions which must be fulfilled before the grant of a marriage loan are as follows:

[...]

(b) [...] that the future wife gives up her job at the latest at the time of the wedding or has already given it up at the time the application is made.

(c) That the future wife pledges herself not to take up employment so long as her future husband receives an income.⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the policy blatantly sought to confine women to the domestic sphere, seven hundred thousand couples took out the marriage loan between 1933 and 1937.⁴⁸ Driving women out of the workforce and into the domestic sphere was a key factor in the drastic reduction of unemployment between 1933 and 1937. According to Richard Geary, Hitler did not solely reduce unemployment through the creation of new jobs; rather, he removed people from the workforce and did not place them on the unemployment register.⁴⁹ In addition, the Marriage Loan represented a shift from the politicization of sexism to the institutionalization of misogyny, in that they encouraged women to leave their jobs while also discouraging them from seeking employment.⁵⁰

One month later, on 5 July 1933, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage was passed to complement the Marriage Loans law.⁵¹ Driven by financial incentive, the law granted “racially pure” newlywed couples loans of one thousand Reichsmarks; for each child that they had, the couples were allowed to keep two hundred and fifty Reichsmarks.⁵² If the couple had four children, they were no longer required to repay

⁴⁷ Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 365.

⁴⁸ Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler*, 334.

⁴⁹ Richard Geary, *Hitler and Nazism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 57.

⁵⁰ Geary, *Hitler and Nazism*, 57-58.

⁵¹ “Law for the Encouragement of Marriage,” in *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, eds. Noakes and Pridham, 365-366.

⁵² “Law for the Encouragement of Marriage,” 365-366.

the loan. Another measure that the Nazis used to promote childbearing was the “Honour Cross of the German Mother,” the *MutterKreuz*, created in 1938. The *MutterKreuz* used patriotism and pan-Germanism to glorify women who gave birth to many children. In other words, it rewarded them for their biological capacities. A 1938 Christmas Day newspaper clipping from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi propaganda newspaper, reveals the incentive behind the *MutterKreuz* programme:

The prolific German mother is to be accorded the same place of honor in the German Volk community as the combat soldier, since she risks her body and her life for the people and the Fatherland as much as the combat soldier does in the roar and thunder of battle.” With these words, Reich Physician Leader Dr. Wagner, head of the People’s Health Section in the Reich leadership of the party, at the behest of the Fuhrer, announced the creation of a Medal of Honor for prolific German Mothers at the Party Day of Labor. Three million German mothers, on the German Mother’s Day in 1939, for the first time will be solemnly awarded the new badge of honor by the leaders of the party.”⁵³

As this excerpt demonstrates, the Nazi Regime considered childbearing the most important patriotic duty of womanhood, a view that culminated with the *MutterKreuz* programme. Every year, on Hitler’s mother’s birthday, August 12, mothers were awarded a bronze cross if they had four children, a silver cross if they had six children, and a gold cross if they had eight children.⁵⁴ The underlying ideology was that offering national recognition for childbearing would provide women with incentive to remain in the home and strengthen the population demographic. In this regard, the Law to Reduce Unemployment, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage, and the Cross of Honour of the German Mother were all blatant attempts to support pronatalism. These policies likely played a central role in increasing the German birthrate, which rose from 971,174 to 1,261,273 between 1933 and 1935 alone.⁵⁵

⁵³ George Lachmann Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 45-46.

⁵⁴ “Law for the Encouragement of Marriage,” 365-366.

⁵⁵ Richard Bessel, *Nazism and War* (New York: Random House Inc., 2006), 64.



Figure 4: NSDAP Recruitment Poster, date unknown⁵⁶



Figure 5: *NS-Frauen Warte*, August 1938⁵⁷



Figure 6: *Die Madelschaft*, July 1937⁵⁸

⁵⁶ GE 944, date unknown (c. 1933-1945), "Die NSDAP sichert die Volksgemeinschaft," Hoover Institution Political Poster Database.

⁵⁷ *NS-Frauen Warte*, August 1938, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/images/fw/fw7-04.jpg>>.

⁵⁸ *Die Madelschaft*, July 1937, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/images/hj/ms37-7.jpg>>.

A second group of images -- Figures 4, 5, and 6 -- demonstrate the ways in which Nazi propaganda portrayed childbearing as a glorious female duty. Figure 4 depicts a modestly clothed *Hausfrau* cradling an infant in her arms. Her husband, the *pater familias*, looks on protectively as he drapes his arm around his son's shoulder. On the far right, a young girl beams angelically, as if attesting to her family's elation. The valiant and courageous German eagle spreads its wings protectively around the young family as it stares, unchallenged, into the distance, the party name placed symbolically next to its head. This image, its publication date unknown, most likely served as a recruiting poster for the NSDAP. It is a prime example of the NSDAP's attempts to create powerful and persuasive political imagery; by launching a campaign to increase the German birthrate for a future war and *Lebensraum*, it attempted to control and manipulate the thoughts of the German people. Figure 5, a cover from the August 1938 issue of *NS-Frauen Warte*, the official women's magazine, incorporates the themes of *Lebensraum* and childbirth in order to encourage repopulation. A couple is depicted in farmers' clothing, which fits Hitler's agrarian vision for the Reich's future acquisition of living space. Their child, moreover, is a symbol of German women's patriotic duty to produce children who would secure future generations of the Third Reich. The cover of the July 1937 issue of *Die Madelschaft* (Figure 6) also includes typical elements of Nazi visual propaganda. In this example, which is the cover of an instruction manual for the girls' branch of the Hitler Youth, the image implies that a woman will find fulfillment by raising a family and remaining in the home. Its inscription, "so long I live, so long I laugh," suggests that Hitler Youth leaders were to teach girls and women to find happiness and strength through their children. In addition, a common aesthetic thread can be traced through the three images. Each mother is conservatively clothed and is not wearing any makeup or jewelry. The Nazi Party discouraged women from smoking and dieting because of the negative effect that these activities would have on their ability to carry children. They also frowned upon cosmetics and wearing the latest fashions, fearing that these actions would encourage promiscuity and eroticism amongst German women, the anti-thesis of a regime that sought to de-eroticize many spheres of

society.⁵⁹ In this regard, the images above are classic examples of the Nazi Regime's attempt to glorify repopulation through aesthetic and visual means. They also strongly reinforced the heterosexual family unit.

Antinatal Dissonance

Although the Nazi Regime took drastic measures to facilitate childbirth among "racially pure" Aryans, it also enforced draconian antinatal policies in order to prevent the births of "racially impure" children. Goebbels stated that "[t]he goal is not: 'children at any cost,' but: 'racially worthy, physically and mentally unaffected children of German families.'"⁶⁰ As the Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment insisted, "childbearing in itself is, from the race viewpoint, far from being a merit."⁶¹ In this regard, an analysis of the laws and policies designed to prevent the births of "non-Aryans" yields crucial insight into the institutionalization of misogyny between 1933 and 1939. Prior to the Second World War, the German female population was composed of women from varying religions, ethnicities, and political affiliations. In an attempt to prevent "non-Aryans" from having children, Hitler foreshadowed the Marriage Health Law in *Mein Kampf* by stating that "defective people" must be prevented from "propagating equally defective offspring."⁶² This ideology is certainly consistent with Gisela Bock's research findings on the forced sterilizations as well as forced abortions that were inflicted upon two million "Eastern workers," mostly Russian, Polish and Ukrainian women.⁶³ These were ruthlessly executed to prevent German men from impregnating non-German women and fathering *Mischlinge*, children of "mixed blood."⁶⁴

On 18 September 1935, the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People was issued in conjunction with the Law for the Prevention of Genetically

⁵⁹ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 43.

⁶⁰ Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, *Maternity and Gender Politics: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s- 1950s* (London: Routledge, 1994), 240.

⁶¹ Bock and Thane, *Maternity and Gender Politics*, 240.

⁶² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 255.

⁶³ Jeffrey Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," *Politics & Society* 37, no. 1 (2009): 41-42.

⁶⁴ Burds, 41-42; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 255.

Diseased Offspring, also known as the Sterilization Law of 14 July 1933.⁶⁵ Both of these laws prevented physically and psychologically impaired persons from having children. They were only permitted to marry if they possessed a certificate from the Office of Health attesting their racial fitness and were often sterilized if they failed to produce such a certificate.⁶⁶ Men and women were subject to medical examinations and sterilization if they were seen as “racially unhygienic” or as a threat to the purity of the Aryan race. Gisela Bock estimates that between ten and thirty per cent of women who were deemed “racially unfit” were sterilized. According to the head of the party’s Race Policy Office, only ten to thirty percent of women living in Germany were actually “worthy of procreation.”⁶⁷ The Marriage Health Law, therefore, can be seen as a precedent to the Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935.⁶⁸

The Nuremberg Laws, which among other things forbade marriage and sexual relations between Jewish-Germans and non-Jewish Germans, exposed and reinforced the racist intent of the marriage loans and of the *MutterKreuz* programme.⁶⁹ They acted as stark counter-policies to the Marriage Loans Law, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage, and the *MutterKreuz*. In other words, they revealed a much darker side of Nazi eugenics whereby childbearing was made impossible for those who were deemed “racially impure.”

It is important to note that pronatalism was not necessarily equated with pronuptualism, as was the case in Fascist Italy. While most of the Nazi policies seem to either encourage or discourage marriage, a step that traditionally preceded childbearing, the regime made divorce more easily accessible to couples who had no children in July 1938 so that each party could remarry and have children.⁷⁰ Thus, the Nazi Regime denounced marriage and even encouraged giving birth out of wedlock in

⁶⁵ Roderick Stackelberg, *The Routledge Companion to Nazi Germany* (London: Routledge, 2007), 303.

⁶⁶ Stackelberg, *The Routledge Companion to Nazi Germany*, 283.

⁶⁷ Bock and Thane, *Maternity and Gender Politics*, 240.

⁶⁸ Stackelberg and Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, 186.

⁶⁹ “The Nuremberg Laws and Jewish Policy, 1935-37,” *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, 463; “Law for the Encouragement of Marriage,” *Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945*, 365-366.

⁷⁰ Ginsborg, “The Politics of the Family,” 427.



Figure 7: 'Mutter und Kind' Relief⁷¹
Organization of the NS- *Volkswohlfahrt*



Figure 8: Cover of NS- *Frauen Warte*,
1937/1938⁷²

order to increase the population of “racially pure” Germans. Lisa Pine observes a commonly held view of the time: “The National Socialist state no longer sees in the single mother the ‘degenerate’... It places the single mother who has given a child a life higher than the ‘lady,’ who has avoided having children in her marriage on egotistical grounds.”⁷³ By analyzing this ideology alongside the twenty-first clause of the NSDAP’s *25-Points Program* of 1920, which pledged to raise “the standard of health in the nation by protecting mothers and infants,” it becomes alarmingly apparent that childrearing was deemed acceptable in any context as long as the mothers were “racially pure” and “hereditarily healthy.”⁷⁴ The Nazi Regime, therefore, seldom differentiated between children born into families and children born to single mothers.⁷⁵ In addition, the Nazi public welfare organization, the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, provided many types of relief for single mothers. Among these were adoption services,

⁷¹ GE 3869, date unknown (1938-1945), “Hilfswerk Mutter und Kind,” Hoover Institution Political Poster Database.

⁷² *NS-Frauen Warte*, 1937/1938, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/images/fw/fw6-20.jpg>>.

⁷³ Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 39.

⁷⁴ Stackelberg and Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, 64; Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26.

⁷⁵ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26, 39.

foster care, and services to facilitate marriage to the child's father in order to guarantee the child's continued welfare.⁷⁶ On 28 February 1934, the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt* created a sub-organization called the *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind,'* which means "relief organization for mother and child."⁷⁷ The organization provided yet another convenient medium through which Goebbels propagated pronatalism.

Figures 7 and 8 offer insight into women's roles in the Reich. In these images, women are portrayed as mothers who remained within the domestic sphere. Figure 7, a *Hilfswerk "Mutter und Kind"* poster, asks for donations to support single mothers. The seemingly sanctified mother nurses her child, and the golden aura that surrounds her implies that the Nazi Regime did not discourage or condemn illegitimate children. Since Goebbels openly stated that "[m]other and child are the pledge for the immortality of the nation," the purpose of the *Mutter und Kind* organization was clear: the National Socialist state was willing to take extreme measures to drastically increase the population, even if these measures went against the grain of traditional Christian ideology.⁷⁸

The cover of the 1937/1938 issue of *NS-Frauen Warte* (Figure 8) also portrays a single, spouseless mother. The mother holds her baby as a soldier stands behind her, literally shielding her and her child from harm. Figure 7 and Figure 8 both depict farmers ploughing the soil in the background. Both of these images symbolize fertility: the mother and child represent the phenomenon of childbirth while the farmer tends to his fertile land. Hence, nature and nurture are cleverly depicted alongside one another. Both of these visual elements form integral components of *Lebensraum*, the concept of acquiring living space for the growing German population. As Jill Stephenson argues, the depiction of a mother, a soldier and a farmer reveals the ideal trichotomy of Nazi society.⁷⁹ A future generation, a world war, and living space were the Reich's ultimate objectives; superimposing these elements on top of one another expresses the National Socialist worldview and makes this cover of *NS-Frauen*

⁷⁶ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26.

⁷⁷ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26.

⁷⁸ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 26.

⁷⁹ Stephenson, *The Nazi Organization of Women*, 69.

Warte a powerful example of visual propaganda. Although the extent to which *NS-Frauen Warte* propaganda affected practice is difficult to determine, this image nevertheless reveals some of the ways that misogyny was politicized.

The convergence of maternalism, militarism and agrarianism in Figures 7 and 8 also reflects Hitler's intensely anti-Semitic and misogynist worldview. This worldview is reflected in his speech to the National Socialist's Women's League of 8 September 1934, in which he calls the "emancipation of women" an advent of "Jewish intellectuals" and uses his hatred of Jews to politicize pronatalism:

What the man gives in courage on the battlefield, the woman gives in eternal self-sacrifice, in eternal pain and suffering. Every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people. And both must therefore mutually value and respect each other when they see that each performs the task that Nature and Providence have ordained. And this mutual respect will necessarily result from this separation of the functions of each. It is not true, as Jewish intellectuals assert, that respect depends on the overlapping of the spheres of activity of the sexes; this respect demands that neither sex should try to do that which belongs to the sphere of the other.⁸⁰

In typical Hitlerian rhetoric, Hitler juxtaposed masculine militarism with maternalism, and deemed "Jewish Marxism" the underlying driving force behind the Third Reich's depopulation. It is evident that this dichotomous worldview was of paramount importance in visual propaganda, where women were relegated to a separate feminine sphere.

The extreme measures taken to counter depopulation are perhaps epitomized by the implementation of the *SS Lebensborn* programme in 1940, a breeding programme established by the SS Race and Resettlement Office.⁸¹ In an attempt to increase the population at any cost, Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsführer of the SS*, set up buildings around Germany where "racially pure"

⁸⁰ Adolf Hitler, "Speech to the National Socialist's Women's League, 8 September 1934" in *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 2: State, Economy and Society 1933-1939*, eds. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 255-56.

⁸¹ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 156.

married and unmarried women could arrange to give birth to their children anonymously.⁸² Himmler had completely disregarded the traditional social order by creating the *Lebensborn* programme, and endorsed the births of “racially pure” babies at any cost:

I have made it known privately that any young woman who is alone and longs for a child can turn to *Lebensborn* with perfect confidence. I would sponsor the child and provide for its education. I know this is a revolutionary step, because according to the existing middle-class code an unmarried woman has no right to yearn for a child [...] I have therefore created the possibility for such women to have the child they crave. As you can imagine, we recommend only racially faultless men as ‘conception assistants.’⁸³

Lebensborn, which literally means “source of life,” illustrates that the Nazi ideology of women was latent with misogyny. Although *Lebensborn* is an extreme and isolated historical event, it nevertheless reveals an even darker side of Nazi eugenics and racial policies. The other laws and policies that were passed, such as the “Marriage Health Laws” and the “Nuremberg Laws,” acted as controlling mechanisms that prevented the births of “non-Aryan” children. In this regard, these policies were attacks against Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses, members of left-leaning political organizations, women who were deemed physically and psychologically impaired, and women who were labeled “racially unfit.” These marginalized people were not depicted in pronatal visual propaganda. Rather, they were regarded as the antitheses of the “Aryan race” and were treated thus.

Nazi Youth Propaganda Publications: A Dichotomous Gender Order

The extent to which the Nazi Regime successfully created a new dichotomous gender order can be determined through a comparative visual analysis of the girls’ and boys’ official Nazi propaganda publications. The Hitler Youth movement was a powerful propagandist organization that attempted to indoctrinate the Nazi worldview into the minds of the future generation. Girls aged ten to fourteen joined the *Jungmädelschaft* (JM) and young

⁸² Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 156.

⁸³ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 156.

women aged fourteen to eighteen joined the League of German maidens, the *Bund deutscher Mädel* (BDM), which was formed in 1930.⁸⁴ Boys aged fourteen to eighteen joined the Hitler Youth movement, the *Hitlerjugend* (HJ), which was established as early as 1926.⁸⁵ The Hitler Youth law of 1936 made female membership in the BDM compulsory, which resulted in a sixfold increase in membership.⁸⁶ In December 1933, there were 243,750 members in the BDM; at the beginning of 1939, their number had increased to 1,502,571.⁸⁷ Members of the *Jungmadelschaft* were taken on an annual ten-day camping trip to the seaside, where the “indoctrination with National Socialist ideology could be undertaken without any parental influence or intervention.”⁸⁸ The girls’ organizations of the Hitler Youth were thus designed to instill the National Socialist ethos in the minds of young women, who were extensively trained in subjects concerning the home and motherhood. The division between masculine and feminine social realms saturated countless aspects of Nazi youth organizations, including elementary school textbooks such as *Meine Fibel*:



Figure 9: *Meine Fibel*, Excerpt from a Nazi Youth Reading Primer⁸⁹

*The Hitler Youth marches.
Otto is with them.
He has his new boots on.
They are the best of all.*

⁸⁴ “Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend: Die weltanschauliche Schulung im Winterhalbjahr 1938/39,” German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/hjworldview.htm>>.

⁸⁵ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 113.

⁸⁶ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 113-114.

⁸⁷ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism, 1919-1945*, 227.

⁸⁸ “Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend,” German Propaganda Archive.

⁸⁹ *Meine Fibel*, date unknown, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/textbook04.htm>>.



Figure 10: *Meine Fibel*, Excerpt from a Nazi Youth Reading Primer⁹⁰

*And the girls in the BDM
Also take wonderful trips,
And there is always a lot of fun
In their hostels.*

These excerpts reveal an impermeable divide between the girls' and boys' branches of the Hitler Youth. Militarism resonates throughout the boys' stanza and illustration, while the girls' *Bunddeutscher Mädel* illustration is quite domestic in nature.

The dichotomous worldview depicted in *Meine Fibel* is demonstrated in Jutta Rüdiger's article in the November 1937 issue of the German Girl's magazine, *Das Deutsche Mädel*. Her article, "The Tasks of the BDM in the Year 1938," propagated the division of social spheres to German parents and reminded them that "boys are trained to be political soldiers, girls to be strong and brave women who will be the comrades of these political soldiers, and who will later, as wives and mothers, live out and form our National Socialist worldview in their families. They will then raise a new and proud generation."⁹¹ In this regard, "household schools" were established in 1936 in order to familiarize young women with domestic activities and to facilitate their ability to nurture and mother.⁹² Nazi officials had hoped, as Rüdiger insisted, to produce "girls who believe[d] absolutely in Germany and in the Führer" and who would "pass on this faith to the hearts of their children" so that National Socialism and

⁹⁰ *Meine Fibel*, date unknown, German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/textbook04.htm>>.

⁹¹ Jutta Rüdiger, "Die Aufgaben des BDM im Arbeitsjahr 1938," German Propaganda Archive <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/dm1-38a.htm>>.

⁹² Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 130.

Germany would “endure forever.”⁹³

The “National Socialist ideological training of girls,” as Lisa Pine calls it, was centered on “instinct rather than intellect.”⁹⁴ The respective boys’ and girls’ Hitler Youth propaganda magazines, *Der Pimpf* and *Das Deutsche Mädel*, attempted to engrain and reinforce the Nazi *Weltanschauung* in the minds of future German mothers and soldiers. In this regard, a comparative visual analysis of select cover illustrations of *Das Deutsche Mädel* and *Der Pimpf* reveals crucial propaganda elements that were used to dichotomize social spheres in the Third Reich. Figures 11 through 14 set the precedent for a powerful visual analysis. Upon first inspection of these magazine covers (*Das Deutsche Mädel* is on the left and *Der Pimpf* on the right), one is immediately struck by drastic differences in tone and atmosphere. The atmosphere and mood used in the respective boys’ and girls’ magazines are unmistakably contrasting when analyzed on a comparative basis. Each cover of *Das Deutsche Mädel* contains soft, docile colours, is dominated by natural imagery, and depicts girls who are engaged in less radical, more passive activities and pursuits. Each cover of *Der Pimpf* starkly contrasts those of *Das Deutsche Mädel* in that *Der Pimpf* depicts a hyper-masculine, military-charged atmosphere, and the use of its colours are more industrial, aggressive, and command a sense of urgency. These images reflect the Nazi Regime’s desire to breed soldiers and fighters by means of violent visual propaganda.

Both sets of cover illustrations share similar characteristics, however they are depicted in radically different manners. Figures 11 and 12 both portray a procession of uniform-clad German girls and boys who are carrying Hitler Youth flags while marching in straight formation. However, the girls are depicted on a beach in a relaxed, natural setting whereas the boys are portrayed as soldiers in training, their expressions and mannerisms like those of true fighters. Figures 13 and 14 depict radically different nautical themes. The girls are cast in a passive light as they huddle together on a dock and gaze at a wooden ship, a symbol of archaic traditionalism. In Figure 14, a marine makes his way towards a German submarine on the ocean floor;

⁹³ Rüdiger, “Die Aufgaben des BDM. im Arbeitsjahr 1938.”

⁹⁴ Pine, *Nazi Family Policy*, 56.

this propagates active militarism and is rendered aesthetically accessible to the magazine's young readers. A comparative visual analysis of the cover pages of these girls' and boys' Hitler Youth propaganda publications thus provides scholars with crucial insight into the process by which separate feminine and masculine spheres became more rigid in German society. Placing covers of *Das Deutsche Mädel* and *Der Pimpf* alongside one another reveals some of the particular propaganda elements that attempted to influence men and women's societal roles. The boys' illustrations are saturated with militarism whereas the girls' images are peaceful. The latter are depicted as carrying out passive roles whilst the former carry out active, militant activities. In this regard, although the Nazi view of women is inherently reflected in speeches and policies between 1933 and 1939, the Nazi ideology of women is further exposed through a comparison of boys' and girls' youth propaganda. This comparative visual analysis transcends the argument about women's roles in the



Figure 11: *Das Deutsche Mädel*, April 1936⁹⁶



Figure 12: *Der Pimpf*, April 1938⁹⁵

⁹⁵ *Der Pimpf*, April 1938, German Propaganda Archive

<<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/images/pimpf/dp4-38.jpg>>.

⁹⁶ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, April 1936, Deutscher Mädel: A Historical Research Page and Online Archive

<<http://bdmhistory.fotki.com/primarysources/ddm/april-1936/36april01.html>>.

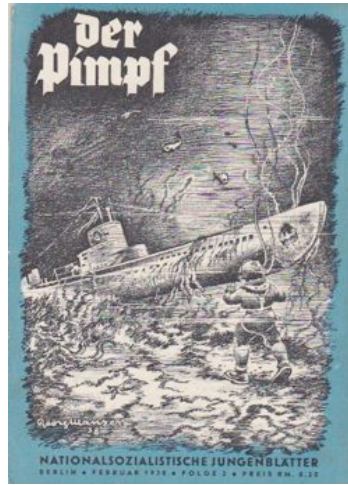
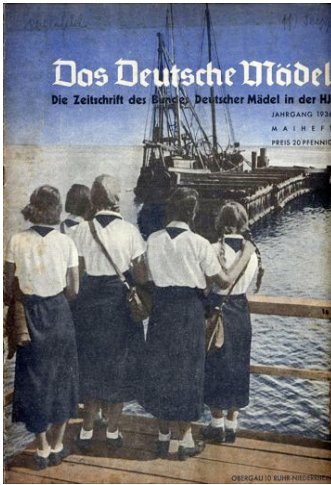


Figure 13: *Das Deutsche Mädel*, May 1936⁹⁷ Figure 14: *Der Pimpf*, February 1938⁹⁸

Third Reich in ways that textual analysis cannot. Visual analysis makes it undoubtedly evident that the domestic and natural settings in which girls are placed are mimetic of their state-assigned roles as child bearers. Only with this visual analysis does it become overwhelmingly clear that women were placed at the juncture of the soldier and the farmer. Only then is it made clear that girls and women were driven from the public sphere during the early peacetime years.

A New Discourse

In an interview that took place fifty years after the collapse of the Third Reich and the Allied and Soviet occupations of Germany, a German woman named Frau Grunhert recalled what it was like to be one of the fifteen million German citizens who were expelled from the eastern provinces of East Prussia and Upper Silesia during the immediate postwar period. She recalls expressing indifference towards the death of Hitler and towards the collapse of a regime in which women “had no rights, were

⁹⁷ *Das Deutsche Mädel*, May 1936, Bund Deustcher Mädel: A Historical Research Page and Online Archive
<<http://bdmhistory.fotki.com/primarysources/ddm/may-1936/36may01.html>>.

⁹⁸ *Der Pimpf*, February 1938, German Propaganda Archive
<<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/images/pimpf/dp38-2.jpg>>.

treated like cattle.”⁹⁹ This research paper has woven together a collection of carefully selected visual propaganda from various National Socialist propaganda publications, such as *NS-Frauen Warte*, *Der Pimpf*, *Das Deutsche Mädel*, and the Hoover Institution Poster Archives, in order to expose the misogynist climate of the Third Reich between the years of 1933 and 1939. By incorporating National Socialist speeches, laws, and policies into my visual analyses, I have demonstrated that visual propaganda politicized pronatalism through a threefold process that used the motifs of maternalism, militarism, and agrarianism to create a new dichotomous gender order in Nazi society. These elements converged to form a powerful driving force behind Hitler’s attempts to repopulate the “Aryan race,” a prerequisite of a future world war and a ruthless expansionist policy, *Lebensraum*. Frau Burchert’s bitter indifference toward National Socialism is certainly testimony to the effectiveness of the pronatal and antinatal laws and policies that were implemented during the Third Reich, whose misogynist and racist intent were politicized through Nazi visual propaganda, a powerful vehicle of feminine marginalization.

⁹⁹ Alison Owings, “Frau Irene Burchert: Learning How Communism Works,” in *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich*, ed. Alison Owings (Chapel Hill: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 148, 150.