

Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State

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"Alien Races" and the "Other Sex"

By presenting some largely unexplored features of women's lives under National Socialism in Germany, this essay considers larger questions about the complex connections between racism and sexism. It does not presume to exhaust the issue or even touch upon all its aspects. Instead, it approaches the issue through the perspective of one part of women's lives affected by state policy: reproduction or, as I prefer to call it, the reproductive aspect of women's unwaged housework. It can be no more than a contribution for two reasons. First, dealing with racism in Germany during this period involves assessing an unparalleled mass murder of millions of women and men, an undertaking beyond the scope of any single essay. Second, this analysis is a first approach, for neither race nor gender, racism nor sexism—and even less their connection—has been a central theme in German social historiography.¹ When historians deal with women in modern Germany, they generally do not consider racism

¹This article is a preliminary summary of ongoing research. Space limitations do not permit me to deal with important aspects of the issues involved, for example, the sterilization procedure, the reactions of the victims of sterilization and their resistance to it, and the racist and sexist use of state subventions for marriage and children. They will be dealt with in my forthcoming book on "Zwangsterilisation und ~~Mutterschaft~~ im Nationalsozialismus: *Untersuchungen zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik.*"

1. The more progressive new generation of social historians in Germany since the 1960s has tended to present racism as a mere ideology, its application as more or less economically/politically "rational" or "irrational," often as merely instrumental, and mostly as an appendage to more important developments, "political" or "economic." See, e.g., Peter M. Kaiser, "Monopolprofit und Massenmord im Faschismus: Zur ökonomischen Funktion der Konzentrationslager im faschistischen Deutschland," *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 5 (1975): 552-77.

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or racial discrimination against women,² while the literature dealing with anti-Jewish racism and the Holocaust generally does not consider either women's specific situation or the added factor of sexism.

The extent to which the racist tradition was concerned with those activities which then and now are considered "women's sphere"—that is, bearing and rearing children—has also not been recognized. Perhaps we might argue even further that a large part of this racist tradition remained invisible precisely because the history of women and of their work in the family was not an issue for (mostly male) historians and theoreticians.³

To make the issue of motherhood and compulsory sterilization the center of discussion places the focus not so much on anti-Jewish racism, on which we have an extended literature, as on another form of racism: eugenics, or, as it was called before and during the Nazi regime and sometimes also in Anglo-Saxon literature, race hygiene.⁴ It comprises a vast field of more or less popular, more or less scientific, traditions, which became the core of population policies throughout the Nazi regime.

Beyond the plain, yet unexplored, fact that at least half of those persecuted on racial grounds were women, there are more subtle reasons for women's historians interest in the "scientific" or eugenic form of racism. The race hygiene discourse since the end of the nineteenth century deals with women much more than do most other social or political theories, since women have been hailed as "mothers of the race," or, in stark contrast, vilified, as the ones guilty of "racial degeneration." Then, too, definitions of race hygiene made at the time show some conscious links between this field and women's history, describing it, for instance, as *Fortpflanzungshygiene* ("procreation hygiene").⁵ In fact, we might con-

2. A rare exception is Marion A. Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of the "Jüdischer Frauenbund," 1904-1938* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979).

3. However, three conferences of women historians on women's history have taken place: "Women in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism," Berlin, 1979; "Muttersein und Mutterideologie in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft," Bremen, 1980; and "Frauengeschichte," Bielefeld, 1981. Some of the workshops of the latter are documented in *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis*, vol. 5 (April 1981). Thus, women's history has been exploring this and similar themes in recent years, but much work still needs to be done, and many questions cannot yet be answered in a consistent way.

4. A good overview on the American and international eugenics movement is Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977). Although there has been, at the beginning of this century, a debate among experts on distinctions between "eugenics" and "race hygiene," I use these terms interchangeably, as does Chase, for I believe the issue dealt with in this article requires my doing so. On this debate see Georg Lilienthal, "Rassenhygiene im Dritten Reich: Krise und Wende," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 14 (1979): 114-34.

5. See Alfred Grotjahn, *Geburten-Rückgang und Geburten-Regelung im Lichte der individuellen und der sozialen Hygiene* (Berlin: Coblentz, 1914; 2d ed., 1921), p. 153 (hereafter

sider that most of the scientific and pseudoscientific superstructure of eugenic racism, especially its mythology of hereditary character traits, is concerned with the supposedly "natural" or "biological" domains in which women are prominent—body, sexuality, procreation, education—the heretofore "private" sphere.⁶

For a third reason, eugenics and racism in general are significant to women's history. After a long hiatus, the result in part of Nazism, interest in the history of women in Germany has seen a revival during the past half-decade or more. However, this interest has focused almost exclusively on the historical reconstruction and critique of those norms and traditions that underlined women's "natural" destiny as unwaged wives, mothers, and homemakers. Those with this perspective see National Socialism as either a culmination of, or a reactionary return to, belief in women's "traditional" role as mothers and housewives; motherhood and housework become essential factors in a backward, pre-modern, or precapitalist "role" assigned to women.⁷

Thus most historians seem to agree that under the Nazi regime women counted merely as mothers who should bear and rear as many children as possible, and that Nazi antifeminism tended to promote, protect, and even finance women as childbearers, housewives, and mothers. It seems necessary to challenge various aspects of this widely held opinion, but particularly its neglect of racism.⁸ Printed and archival

cited as *Geburten-Rückgang*), and the chapter on "Birth Regulation Serving Eugenics and Race Hygiene"; and Agnes Bluhm, *Die rassenhygienischen Aufgaben des weiblichen Arztes: Schriften zur Erblehre und Rassenhygiene* (Berlin: Metzner, 1936), esp. the chapter on "Woman's Role in the Racial Process in Its Largest Sense."

6. Good examples are the classic and influential books by Grotjahn, *Geburten-Rückgang* and *Die Hygiene der menschlichen Fortpflanzung* (Berlin and Vienna: Urban & Schwarzenburg, 1926); Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, vol. 2, *Menschliche Auslese und Rassenhygiene* (Munich: Lehmann, 1921). These volumes had many interestingly divergent editions. I have used vol. 1 (1936) and vol. 2 (1931). For a scientific critique of the pseudoscientific theory of character traits see, e.g., Chase, chap. 8.

7. For a preliminary critique of this view, analyzing housework as no less modern and no less capitalist than employment outside the house, see Gisela Bock and Barbara Duden, "Arbeit aus Liebe—Liebe als Arbeit: Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus," in *Frauen und Wissenschaft: Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Juli 1976*, ed. Gruppe Berliner Dozentinnen (Berlin: Courage Verlag, 1977), pp. 118–99. Parts of it have been translated as "Labor of Love—Love as Labor," in *From Feminism to Liberation*, ed. Edith Hoshino Albach, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 153–92.

8. Dörte Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im "Dritten Reich"* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1977), esp. pp. 42–65, revised this picture by showing that under Nazism employment of lower- and middle-class women was not reduced. This is confirmed by various authors in the anthology edited by Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung, *Mutterkreuz und Arbeitsbuch: Zur Geschichte der Frauen in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1981). Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 11–50, revised the

sources on Nazi policies, passages from Hitler's writings, other often-quoted sources like the Minister of Agriculture Walter Darré's breeding concepts, and documents from the lower echelons of the state and party hierarchy⁹ show quite clearly that the Nazis were by no means simply interested in raising the number of childbearing women. They were just as bent upon excluding many women from bearing and rearing children—and men from begetting them—with sterilization as their principal deterrent.

It is true that the available literature does not altogether lose sight of these latter women. However, they are at best briefly hinted at, between quotation marks and parentheses, as mere negations of the "aryan," the "racially and hereditarily pure"; the general conclusions on "women in Nazi society" usually neglect them further.¹⁰

Although the desirability of a new perspective seems clear, the relative historical singularity of the Nazi Holocaust and the need for more research before "models" can be constructed qualify the extent to which we may compare the interaction of racism and sexism under Nazism and under other historical conditions.¹¹ Yet specific comparative approaches seem possible and necessary: first, to compare the eugenics movements internationally in the first half of this century both with international population policy today and with the new sociobiological "biocrats";¹²

current view of the Nazi image of women. It was more diversified than usually assumed and did not simply stress home and housework, but any "woman's sacrifice" for the state and "the race," including employment. See also Leila J. Rupp, "Mothers of the Volk: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1977): 362–79. In relation to racism, I have tried to revise the picture in "Frauen und ihre Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus," in *Frauen in der Geschichte*, ed. Annette Kuhn and Gerhard Schneider (Düsseldorf: Schwann Verlag, 1979), pp. 113–49; and "Zum Wohle des Volkskörpers: Abtreibung und Sterilisation unterm Nationalsozialismus," *Journal für Geschichte* 2 (November 1980): 58–65.

9. Clifford R. Lovin, "Blut und Boden: The Ideological Basis of the Nazi Agricultural Program," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28 (1967): 279–88, esp. 286.

10. Compare Hans Peter Bleuel, *Das saubere Reich: Theorie und Praxis des sittlichen Lebens im Dritten Reich* (Bern-Munich-Vienna: Scherz, 1972), p. 273; Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), pp. 64, 69, 197.

11. Obviously, approaches exclusively or mainly based on ethnic women's labor-force participation are not useful to the issue of reproduction: e.g., Diane K. Lewis, "A Response to Inequality: Black Women, Racism and Sexism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1977): 339–61.

12. For a critique of the new sociobiology, see Ruth Hubbard, Mary Sue Henifin, and Barbara Fried, eds., *Women Look at Biology Looking at Women: A Collection of Feminist Critiques* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1979); Chandler Davis, "La Sociobiologie et son explication de l'humanité," *Annales, E.S.C.* 36 (July–August 1981): 531–71. For the international dimension of older eugenics, see Chase; Loren R. Graham, "Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920's," *American Historical Review* 82 (1977): 1133–64; G. R. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900–1914* (Leyden: Nordhoff International, 1976); and Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop* 5 (1978): 10–65. It is important to note that, in fascist Italy, race

and second, in accord with new approaches in the United States, stimulated largely by women of color, to conceptualize the connection between racism and sexism not as the mere addition of two forms of exploitation—as a double oppression—but as a manifold and complex relationship.¹³

“Value” and “Invalidity”: Women in the Race Hygiene Tradition

In the late nineteenth century, a theory of the possibility, even necessity, of “eugenic,” “race hygienic,” or “social hygienic” sterilization emerged, which argued that those considered transmitters of “hereditary” forms of “inferiority” (*erbliche Minderwertigkeit*) should be prevented from having children. Presumably lacking in social value and usefulness, they and their offspring were seen as not serving the interest of the folk or the “racial body.”¹⁴ By the end of World War I, when German aggrandizement and stability seemed at its lowest, such sterilization was widely and passionately recommended as a solution to urgent social problems: shiftlessness, ignorance, and laziness in the work force; deviant sexual behavior involving prostitution and illegitimate births; the increasing number of ill and insane; poverty; and the rising costs of social services.¹⁵ Recommendations for sterilization came from elements of the right and of the left, from men and women, from those leaning

hygiene did not take hold. Of course, present policies in the United States and women's campaigns for reproductive rights are immediately relevant to the issue and approach of this essay: Committee for Abortion Rights and against Sterilization Abuse, *Women under Attack: Abortion, Sterilization Abuse, and Reproductive Freedom* (New York: CARASA, 1979).

13. Such new approaches have been presented at the Third National Women's Studies Association Conference on “Women Respond to Racism,” Storrs, Connecticut, May 31–June 6, 1981. Of particular significance seemed to me the presentations by Vicky Spelman, Arlene Aviakin, and Mary Ruth Warner on “Feminist Theory and the Invisibility of Black Culture.” See also Bonnie Thornton Dill, “The Dialectics of Black Womanhood,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 543–55; and Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981). For a differentiated version of the double oppression approach, see Gerda Lerner, “Black Women in the United States: A Problem in Historiography and Interpretation” (1973), in *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 63–82; and *Teaching Women's History* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1981), pp. 60–65.

14. For early sterilization practice and theory, see Otto Kankleit, *Die Unfruchtbarmachung aus rassenhygienischen und sozialen Gründen* (Munich: Lehmann, 1929), pp. 41–45; Hans Harsmen, *Praktische Bevölkerungspolitik* (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1931), p. 84; Baur, Fischer, and Lenz (n. 6 above), 2:270.

15. There was a huge number of writings on this subject in the 1920s, and Chase (p. 349) seems to underestimate the German roots of the movement. Compare, as examples, the works in n. 6 above.

toward theories of heredity, and from those with a more environmental orientation.¹⁶

This type of reasoning, with all its subtle appeal to naive belief in modern science, social rationality, and planning has been called "scientific racism"; it transcends the more traditional and more "gut racism."¹⁷ Based on a polarity between "progress" and "degeneration," its criteria of inferiority had at their center concepts of "value" and "valuelessness" (*Wert* and *Unwert*, *Minderwertigkeit* and *Höherwertigkeit*) that were related to the social or racial "body" and its productivity. The use of eugenic sterilization was intended both to control procreation and, by defining and proscribing its unacceptable opposite, to impose a specific acceptable character on women and men: the hardworking male breadwinner, his hardworking but unpaid housewife, and children who were a financial burden to no one but their parents. This was the "valuable life" as gender-specific work and productivity, described in social, medical, and psychiatric terms. Or, in the more flowery language of gut racists: "German blooded, nordic raced beings: right angled in body and soul."¹⁸

What were the social motives behind these policies and their wide acceptance? The principal and most haunting specter for the "race" was seen not only in the women's movement and in the lower-class uprisings between the turn of the century and the 1920s, but in phenomenon that seemed to encompass both: the unequal propagation of the "talented" and the "untalented," the "fit" and the "unfit," the rich and the poor, the deserving and the undeserving poor, those of social value and the "social problem group."¹⁹ The better-off, the fit, those thinking rationally, the upwardly mobile, those pursuing or competing for hard and honest work, and women seeking emancipation all limited the number of their children. The decline of the German birthrate after the 1870s, reaching an international low point in 1932 and perceived as a "birth-strike" after about 1912, was attributed mainly to women.²⁰ On the other hand, the

16. Marielouise Jansen-Jurreit, "Sexualreform und Geburtenrückgang," in Kuhn and Schneider (n. 8 above), pp. 56–81.

17. Chase (n. 4 above), pp. xv–xxii and chap. 1.

18. *Die Sonne: Monatschrift für nordische Weltanschauung und Lebensgestaltung* 10, no. 2 (1933): 111.

19. The latter term is taken from the address of the president of the British Eugenics Society at the Third International Congress of Eugenics, New York, 1932, cited in Chase (n. 4 above), p. 20.

20. In 1913, 4,000 working-class women assembled in Berlin to hear about the "birth-strike" and attracted much attention. See Anneliese Bergmann, "Zur 'Gebärstreik-debatte' der SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), 1913," in *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Karin Hausen (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1983), in press. Compare also G. Ardersleben, *Der Gebärstreik der Frauen und seine Folgen* (Lorch: Rohm, 1913); and Ernst Kahn, *Der internationale Gebärstreik* (Frankfurt: Societäts-Verlag, 1930).

mentally and financially poor and the restless were seen as copulating and propagating indiscriminately, as in a "witches' sabbath,"²¹ transmitting to their offspring by the mechanism called heredity their poverty and restlessness and their search for income from public welfare funds.²²

Whatever the historical reality of this "differential birthrate" may have been,²³ its social interpretation came to be the double-edged essence of what was defined as "racial degeneration" or "race suicide." The problem stemmed from women, more or less associated with the women's movement, who preferred to have fewer children than their mothers, and from women or couples who raised their children against prevailing norms and at the expense of community and state.²⁴ The proposed remedy was to reverse both trends: to impel the "superior" to have more children and the "inferior" to have fewer or none. The first aim was to be achieved through a heightened public concern as well as financial and social incentives; the latter through sterilization, or, more generally, the "eugenic" use of just those means by which certain women or couples had limited their fertility.²⁵ The rise of this policy—sexist in its demand for state control of procreation, and racist in its differential treatment of "superior" and "inferior" procreation—can therefore be seen as a dual attack against the "birth-strike" of the desirable elements in the population and against the social maladjustment of those who had not enjoyed the modern training in orderliness and the work ethic, the "natural" task of "valuable" mothers. Thus special concern was given to women, often illustrated by suggestive pictures in journals and pamphlets popularizing these ideas (see, e.g., fig. 1). "If we want to practice race hygiene seriously, we must make women the target of our social work—woman as mother and not as sexual parasite," urged the main race hygiene review in 1909. In 1929, a widely known book on *Sterilization on Social and Race Hygienic Grounds* suggested that "the number of

21. Gustav Boeters, "Die Unfruchtbarmachung geistig Minderwertiger," *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zur Leipziger Lehrerzeitung* 28 (August 1928): 217.

22. *Von der Verhütung unwerten Lebens—ein Zyklus in 5 Vorträgen* (Bremen: Bremer Beiträge zur Naturwissenschaft, 1933), pp. 15, 52, 61.

23. The "differential birthrate" is a main issue in all books on eugenics. On social differences in fertility, see John Knodel, *The Decline of Fertility in Germany, 1871–1939* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 223–45; Chase (n. 4 above), pp. 403–5.

24. E.g., Roderich von Ungern-Sternberg, *Die Ursachen des Geburtenrückganges im europäischen Kulturkreis* (Berlin: Schoetz, 1932), esp. pp. 63–75, 174, 203; Grotjahn, *Geburten-Rückgang* (n. 5 above), pp. 316–17.

25. E.g., Grotjahn, *Geburten-Rückgang*, p. 187: "Indeed, we should not underestimate the danger that the methods of birth prevention, which . . . are necessary for a future rational eugenic regulation of the process of the human species, are presently abused for limiting the number of children independently of their value." Therefore he wants "to turn the technique of birth control into the point of departure for an essential control of human reproduction" (*Die Hygiene . . .* [n. 6 above], p. 43).

degenerate individuals born depends mainly on the number of degenerate women capable of procreation. Thus the sterilization of degenerate women is, for reasons of racial hygiene, more important than the sterilization of men."²⁶

"Kaiserschnitt" and "Hitlerschnitt": Nazi Body Politics

Nazi pronatalism for "desirable" births and its antinatalism for "undesirable" ones were tightly connected. On May 26, 1933, two penal laws were introduced that prohibited the availability of abortion facilities and services. More important was the stricter handling of the old antiabortion law, resulting in a 65 percent increase in yearly convictions between 1932 and 1938, when their number reached almost 7,000.²⁷ From 1935

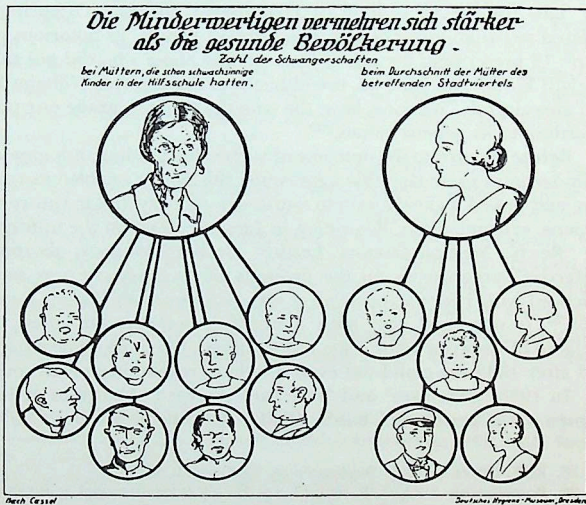


FIG. 1.—This 1926 illustration is entitled "the inferior multiply more than the healthy population." The chart shows two types of women, giving the average number of their respective pregnancies: on the left, "mothers with feeble-minded children in schools for backward children"; on the right, "the average [for] mothers in the same city areas." Source: E. Dirksen, "Asociale Familien," *Zeitschrift für Volksaufartung und Erbkunde* 1 (January 1926): 11–16, esp. 15.

26. Josef Grassl, "Weiteres zur Frage der Mutterschaft," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 6 (1909): 351–66, esp. 366; Kankeleit (n. 14 above), p. 95. These and all other translations from the German are my own.

27. *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1933/1, p. 296 (hereafter cited as RGB); *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 15 (1935): 737, and 19 (1939): 534.

on, doctors and midwives were obliged to notify the regional State Health Office of every miscarriage. Women's names and addresses were then handed over to the police who investigated the cases suspected of being in actuality abortions.²⁸ In 1936 Heinrich Himmler, head of all police forces and the SS, established a "Reich's Central Agency for the Struggle against Homosexuality and Abortion," and in 1943, after three years of preparation by the ministries of the interior and of justice, the law on "Protection of Marriage, Family, and Motherhood" called for the death penalty in "extreme cases."²⁹

The corollary was race hygienic sterilization. Along with the new antiabortion legislation, a law was introduced on May 26, 1933, to legalize eugenic sterilization and prohibit voluntary sterilization.³⁰ Beyond this, the cabinet, headed by Hitler, passed a law on July 14, 1933, against propagation of *lebensunwertes Leben* ("lives unworthy of life"), now called the "Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring." It ordered sterilization for certain categories of people, its notorious paragraph 12 prescribing the use of force against those who did not submit freely.³¹ Earlier, on June 28, the Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick had announced: "We must have the courage again to grade our people according to its genetic values."³²

Before we turn to the outcome of such value grading, it is important to understand some laws that aggravated this policy, enabled its realization, and linked it closely both to antiabortion policy and to future race-hygienic extermination. Beginning in January 1934, on the initiative of the "Reich's Medical Doctors' Leader" Gerhard Wagner, abortion of "defective" pregnancies on the grounds of race hygiene was secretly practiced with Hitler's approval; it was introduced by law on June 26, 1935.³³ It was legal only with a woman's consent, but after being declared of "inferior value," she was sterilized, too, even against her will, and after 1938 she could not even decide to revoke her initial consent.

In 1938 "gene care" and "race care" merged. Abortions of Jewish women were "permitted," but by 1942 it was time to declare: "No more

28. RGB, 1935/I, p. 1035; Stephenson (n. 10 above), p. 68.

29. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 18/5517, pp. 251-52 (hereafter cited as BAK); RGB, 1943/I, p. 140.

30. RGB, 1933/I, p. 296; Eberhardt Schmidt, "Das Sterilisationsproblem nach dem in der Bundesrepublik geltenden Strafrecht," *Juristenzeitung* 3 (February 5, 1951): 65-70.

31. RGB, 1933/I, p. 529; Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), p. 356; Kurt Nowak, "Euthanasie" und Sterilisierung im "Dritten Reich": Die Konfrontation der evangelischen und katholischen Kirche mit dem "Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses" und der "Euthanasie"-Aktion (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), esp. pp. 64-65.

32. Wilhelm Frick, *Ansprache auf der ersten Sitzung des Sachverständigenbeirates für Bevölkerungs- und Rassenpolitik* (Berlin: Schriftenreihe des Reichsausschusses für Volksgesundheitsdienst 1, 1933), p. 8.

33. Broszat, pp. 356-57; Nowak, p. 65.

applications for sterilization of Jews need to be made."³⁴ By that time, not just their "genes" but they themselves were being "eliminated."

In 1933, the government passed a law against "habitual delinquents" that provided for castration (i.e., took sterilization one step further to the destruction of the gonads) in specified cases.³⁵ While it concerned men only (2,006 up to 1940), castration of women by destruction of the gonads (beyond tubal ligation of the ovaries) was introduced in 1936, when sterilization by X-rays, known to have castrating effects, was included in the sterilization law.³⁶ Later, officials favored this procedure as an easy-to-handle method for mass sterilization of camp inmates without their knowledge.³⁷

The law that provided for the enactment of all these policies was passed in July 1934 to create a centralized system of "State Health Offices" with "Departments for Gene and Race Care." Numbering 1,100 and staffed by 1943 with 12,600 State Medical Officials, they became, from 1934 on, the main agents of sterilization proposals and marriage approvals.³⁸ They also were the pillars of another huge enterprise: a centralized index of the "gene value" of all inhabitants of Germany (*Erbkartei*) to become the basis of all state decisions on the professional and family life of its subjects.³⁹

Popular vernacular expressed the situation pungently. Eugenic sterilization was called *Hitlerschnitt* ("Hitler's cut"), thereby linking it to an antiabortion policy which refused abortions even to women who had gone through two previous *Kaiserschnitte* (caesarean operations). Only after three *Kaiserschnitte* did a woman have the right to an abortion, and then only on the condition that she also accepted the *Hitlerschnitt*.⁴⁰ Transcending older political partisanships, prohibition of abortion and compulsory sterilization, compulsory motherhood and prohibition of motherhood—far from contradicting each other—had now become two

34. Decree from March 19, 1942, quoted in Werner Feldscher, *Rassen- und Erbpflege im deutschen Recht* (Berlin-Leipzig-Vienna: Deutscher Rechtsverlag, 1943), p. 123; Stephenson (n. 10 above), pp. 62–63.

35. Law from November 24, 1933, RGB, 1933/I, p. 995.

36. RGB, 1936/I, pp. 119, 122; BAK, R 22/943, p. 234.

37. Léon Poliakov and Josef Wulf, eds., *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden* (Berlin: Arani, 1955), p. 385; Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit* (1948; reprint ed., Frankfurt: Fischer, 1978), pp. 240–48; BAK, R 18/5519.

38. Law from July 3, 1934, RGB, 1934/I, p. 531; BAK, NSD 50/626, p. 10; Arthur Gütt, Herbert Linden, and Franz Maßfeller, *Blutschutz- und Ehegesundheitsgesetz* (Munich: Lehmann, 1937). By the two laws described in the latter official commentary, marriage was prohibited with "alien races" as well as with the "defective" among the "German-blooded." In the "Blutschutz" (Nuremberg) law, marriage prohibition concerned, besides Jews, "negroes, gypsies, and bastards" (Gütt, Linden, and Maßfeller, p. 16).

39. Gütt, Linden, and Maßfeller, pp. 9–10, 283–87.

40. Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p. 332; see also my article on sterilization and abortion (n. 8 above).

sides of a coherent policy combining sexism and racism. Only for descriptive purposes do the following sections deal with them separately.

Forced Labor for Mothers or "Children of Confidence"?

Nazi population planners liked to register the gradual rise of the extremely low birthrate after 1933 (the birthrate of the years 1934–39 was, on average, a third above the level of 1933, thus reaching again the level of the mid-twenties) as "a completely voluntary and spontaneous proof of [the] confidence of the German people in its Reich, its Führer, its future, a confession which could not be more beautiful" than in the form of "children of confidence."⁴¹ Sometimes (and not only in the past) this increase has been considered a proof of the suspicion that women favored rather than rejected the regime and that they redirected themselves toward "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" after their emancipation in the 1920s.⁴² Such an argument, however, confusing as it does childlessness and liberation, motherhood and backwardness, does not seem an adequate instrument for the historical analysis of women's lives. What was the real effect of the pronatalist aspect of Nazi population policy on women specifically as well as on the whole society?

Nazi and non-Nazi demographers agree on the limited extent of the rise in the birthrate.⁴³ More importantly, from the limited evidence we have on women's motives for contributing to its rise, none seems to be the result of Nazi politics and goals. Voluntary births clearly increased as economic conditions improved. Wives of party officials and SS men, who may have been closest participators in Nazi goals (but who, as part of the upper class, had easier access to voluntary birth control) had extremely few children.⁴⁴ From the outbreak of war in 1939 when, mainly under

41. Friedrich Burgdörfer, *Geburtenschwund: Die Kulturkrankheit Europas und ihre Überwindung in Deutschland* (Heidelberg-Berlin-Magdeburg: Vowinkel, 1942), p. 80, and *Kinder des Vertrauens* (Berlin: Eher, 1942).

42. Bleuel (n. 10 above), pp. 21, 45; Grunberger, chaps. 16, 17; Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925–1940: Family, Welfare and Work. I," *History Workshop* 1 (1976): 74–113, esp. 87.

43. For the demographic debate see David V. Glass, *Population: Policies and Movements in Europe* (1940; reprint ed., London: Frank Cass, 1967), pp. 269–313 on Germany and passim for other European countries; Knodel (n. 23 above), Bergdörfer, *Geburtenschwund*; Stephenson (n. 10 above); Mason, pp. 95–105, and "Women in Germany, 1925–1940: Family, Welfare and Work. II," *History Workshop* 2 (1976): 5–32, esp. 12–14; Wolfgang Köllmann, "Bevölkerungsentwicklung in der Weimarer Republik," in *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, eds. Hans Mommsen, Dietmar Petzina, and Bernd Weisbrod (Düsseldorf: Athenäum-Droste, 1977), 1:76–84.

44. K. Astel and E. Weber, *Die Kinderzahl der 29,000 politischen Leiter des Gaues Thüringen der NSDAP* (Berlin: Metzner, 1943); Heinrich Himmler, *Geheimreden, 1933–1945*, ed. Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson (Frankfurt-Berlin-Vienna: Ullstein, 1974), p. 91.

the command of Fritz Sauckel, unemployed (mostly middle-class) women were encouraged or forced to join the war effort in the munitions industries and employed (mostly lower-class) women were forbidden to quit their jobs, hundreds of thousands of women used the only alternative to forced employment open to them: pregnancy. Popular wit called these women *Sauckelfrauen* and their children *Sauckelkinder*, while Nazi leaders accused them of "lack of comprehension for the necessity of war."⁴⁵

However, while women's positive response to pronatalism seems limited, we must also try to relate the rise of the birthrate to the one directly coercive measure of pronatalism: forced labor for mothers through the prohibition of abortion for "valuable," "German-blooded" women. Antiabortion policies are sometimes considered the main reason for the rise in births. In fact, there is some evidence, though locally limited, that after 1932 the rise in births nearly equalled the decline in abortions.⁴⁶ This argument could be decisive, if it were measurable. Fortunately for those women who resorted to abortion, it is not: the relationship between known and unknown abortions and that between spontaneous and induced miscarriages is controversial, not only in democratic societies but even under the tight control and supervision of the Nazi regime.

While abortions are numbered as having been between a half and one million per year between 1930 and 1932, a gynecologist in 1939 counted 220,000 miscarriages in hospitals, of which he estimated 120,000 to be abortions. Criminal police experts estimated that the number of unknown abortions equalled the number that came to their attention.⁴⁷ In the 1930s, very much as in the 1920s, various documents tell of regional "abortion epidemics" in which abortions were performed by pregnant women themselves or by "old shrews."⁴⁸ In 1937 Himmler gave as estimates in various secret documents the numbers of 400,000 and 600,000–800,000 abortions per year.⁴⁹

These numbers seem high, particularly if measured against the rising number of trials and convictions for abortion. Taken together, they permit conclusions that challenge claims of women's easy compliance with Nazi pronatalism. Nonetheless, those who were denied abortion or

45. Leila J. Rupp, "I Don't Call That *Volks-gemeinschaft*: Women, Class, and War in Nazi Germany," in *Women, War and Revolution*, ed. Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1980), p. 43; Bleuel (n. 10 above), p. 81; Winkler (n. 8 above), pp. 72–73. The quotation is from a high government official: Gitte Schefer, "Wo Unterdrückung ist, da ist auch Widerstand: Frauen gegen Faschismus und Krieg," in *Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung*, ed. (n. 8 above), p. 289.

46. Glass, pp. 311–13.

47. BAK, R 18/2957; Atina Grossman, "Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign against § 218 in Germany," *New German Critique* 14 (Spring 1978): 119–37.

48. BAK, R 18/2957.

49. Himmler, p. 91.

who did not want to risk prosecution, even if they did not want children or were endangered by childbirth, had to accept motherhood as forced labor: the labor of childbirth in its modern misogynist form and the labor of additional unpaid housework.⁵⁰

A last consideration helps to answer our initial question. The "qualitatively" neutral birthrate does not tell us about the relation of "undesirable" children to the "desirable" ones so dear to Nazi population politicians. Although it makes little sense to try through numerical count to match one against the other—and thus as a women's historian to repeat the favorite eugenics game called "differential birthrate of the inferior and superior"—we should definitely not assume that all children were welcome.⁵¹ While on the one hand the Nazis became worried around 1937 about something they called *Erbangst*, people's fear of having children because there was so much talk about unworthy genes,⁵² on the other hand there were German (though not "German-blooded") women who succeeded in conceiving desired children during the time lag between their sentence of sterilization and its actual enforcement.⁵³ Most important, Nazi pronatalism excluded from the ranks of honor and allowances every large family found to be "hereditarily defective or racially mixed or asocial, unorderly, [a] drinking family, [with] no orderly family life, [in which the] children [are] a burden: family is only large, but undesirable"⁵⁴ (see, e.g., fig. 2).

"Lives Unworthy of Life"

The sterilization law, meant to prevent children considered *lebensunwertes Leben* ("lives unworthy of life") came into force on January 1, 1934. It listed nine diagnostic causes whereby a person could be sentenced by one of about 250 special "genetic health courts" to sterilization; five categories were related to psychiatric "invalidity," three to physical "invalidity," the last to alcoholism. Authorities gave differing estimates of how many should be sterilized, somewhere between 5 percent and 30 percent of the population; the minister of the Interior recommended 20 percent in his speech of June 1933.⁵⁵ During the

50. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976), chap. 7.

51. Mason (n. 43 above), p. 101; Bleuel (n. 10 above), p. 43.

52. Alexander Paul, "Ist Erbangst berechtigt?" *Volk und Rasse* 16 (1941): 130-35.

53. This is evident from the documents of the sterilization courts on which I am working. See also Theresia Seible (a sterilized German gypsy woman), "Aber ich wollte vorher noch ein Kind," *Courage* 6 (May 1981): 21-24.

54. *Vom Sieg der Waffen zum Sieg der Wiegen* (Berlin: Reichsbund der Kinderreichen, 1942), p. 23. Space does not permit me to deal with an important financial corollary to the race hygienic body policies: "incentives" such as marriage loans and child allowances given only to the "desirables" and only to husbands, not to wives.

55. Frick (n. 32 above), p. 3.

nearly six years preceding the outbreak of World War II, about 320,000 persons (nearly .5 percent of the population) were sterilized under the terms of this law. This figure included some 5,000 eugenic abortions with subsequent sterilizations (under comparable laws in thirty states of the United States, 11,000 persons were sterilized between 1907 and 1930, and 53,000 more by 1964). While men alone determined sterilization cases in court, the victims were divided evenly between men and

Tafel 12.
Nur noch Verbrecher vermehren sich heute im deutschen Volke wirklich.

Es treffen auf:

Männliche
Verbrecher



4,9 Kinder

Eine kriminelle
Ehe



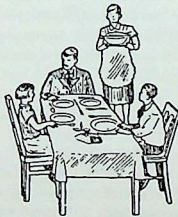
4,4 Kinder

Eltern von
Hilfsschulkindern



3,5 Kinder

Die deutsche Familie



2,2 Kinder

Ehe aus der gebildeten
Schicht



1,9 Kinder

FIG. 2.—The heading of this illustration claims, "Today only criminals really multiply among the German people." The number below each picture identifies the average number of children supposedly born to that social category. Shown in the top row are, from left to right, "male criminals," "a criminal marriage," and "parents of those in schools for backward children"; below are shown "the German family" and "marriage among the well-educated." Source: Otto Helmut, *Volk in Gefahr: Der Geburtenschwund und seine Folgen für Deutschlands Zukunft* (Munich: Lehmann, 1933), p. 31.

women. Three-quarters were sterilized under the law's first two categories: 53 percent (with a somewhat higher share among women) for "feeble-mindedness," 20 percent (with a somewhat higher share among men) for "schizophrenia."⁵⁶ Between 1934 and 1937, about eighty men and 400 women died in the course of the operation.

An attempt to identify the actual victims of race hygienic sterilization may help to illuminate not only their lives and social situations but also the forms and functions of reproductive racism and some links with racism's better known historical "solutions." The majority of those sterilized under the law were not (as in the United States) asylum inmates, or ethnic minorities, but noninstitutionalized persons of "German" ethnicity. The poorer strata of the population had the highest share (unskilled workers, particularly agricultural laborers), and three categories of women were far overrepresented: house servants, unskilled factory or farm workers, and jobless housewives, especially those married to unskilled workers. Many prostitutes and unmarried mothers were among them.⁵⁷ "Deviancy from the norm," from "the average," was the crucial criterion in the courts. The "norm" itself was elaborated ever more clearly as demonstrable through adherence to the work ethic, self-sacrifice, parsimony, and through consequent upward mobility: the "German work character." For women, this ideal was represented by the worker who performed ungrudging housework and efficient labor in outside employment; her antithesis was the slut, the prostitute.

The other sterilization victims between 1934 and 1939 were inmates or ex-inmates (searched out in the old files) of institutions, mainly of

56. For the social and historical significance of the first category, see Chase (n. 4 above), esp. chap. 7; of the second, see Thomas S. Szasz, *Schizophrenia* (New York, Basic Books, 1976). The precise number of sterilizations is unknown. Compare Nowak (n. 31 above), pp. 65, 188, n. 6. In 1967, an interstate commission of the Federal Republic of Germany investigated the number of "those unjustly sterilized under nazism" and on the basis of the law. While the number estimated (300,000–320,000) seems justified, this is certainly not true for the estimate of "unjust" sterilizations (83,000); the document has not been published. The other information is taken from BAK, R 18/5585, pp. 329–31. See Arthur Güt, Ernst Rüdlin, and Falk Ruttke, *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933* (Munich: Lehmann, 1936). For the U.S., see Chase, p. 350; Baur, Fischer, and Lenz (n. 6 above), 2:271.

57. This is a preliminary evaluation of the records of the sterilization courts in three German cities; it agrees, generally, with the results of Gisela Dieterle (Freiburg) who is working on the records of another city, and with Wilfent Dalicho, "Sterilisation in Köln auf Grund des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses, ... 1934–1943" (medical diss., University of Cologne, 1971), esp. pp. 160–65. There has been no research on the sterilization of male homosexuals, mostly performed outside the court procedure of the sterilization law. Lesbian women are hardly ever mentioned in the court records (and very rarely in other archival documents of 1933–45). We must assume, however, that they were strongly represented among the women in the asylums, and from reports given by women who were inmates of concentration camps, we know that many lesbians were among those incarcerated. See, e.g., Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz* (London: Joseph, 1977), chap. 21 (trans. from the French *Sursis pour l'orchestre* [Paris: Stock/Opera Mundi, 1975]).

psychiatric clinics and of psychiatric departments of regular hospitals. More precisely, they were all those discharged from the clinics because of their recovery, or because public funds for the clinics were reduced; their recovery did not, according to race hygienic thought, involve their "genes," which they might pass on to posterity. It is well known that most inmates of psychiatric institutions came from a background of poverty. Patients in specified, sexually segregated "closed institutions" were not sterilized if they stayed there at their own expense.⁵⁸ A considerable number of people used this loophole and entered such an institution if they could afford one. However, this option was closed by the "euthanasia" project "T 4," in which, from 1939 to 1941, up to 100,000 inmates of these institutions were killed outright as "useless eaters"; after August 1941 many more were killed through plain starvation. In another way, race hygienic sterilization was a direct prelude to mass murders: the prohibition against bearing "unworthy" children was expanded into the mass murder of about 5,000 such children, sixteen years and under, between 1939 and 1944. In order to get control over these children, the government would often force their mothers into war industry so that home child care was impossible.⁵⁹ For both sorts of mass murders, a secret and elaborate machinery was set up, resembling in its procedures the nonsecret sterilization bureaucracy.

The transition to still another form of mass murder is clearly visible. Project "T 4" was meant to be kept secret, but the news spread rapidly, arousing fear and the suspicion that sterilization of the "useless" was just a first step. Public opinion and pressure—which was, in 1941, largely led by women, children, and old people—in fact forced Hitler and his SS doctors to stop "T 4" and the planned murder of 3 million "invalids." But the gas chambers, used for the first time in this enterprise, were transported with their entire staff to occupied Poland, where they were installed for the "final solution."⁶⁰ The terror that had met resistance within Germany was exported beyond her frontiers to work more smoothly.

58. According to an addition to the law from December 5, 1933: Gütt, Rüdin, and Rutke, p. 84. For the general poverty of asylum inmates, see Klaus Dörner, *Bürger und Irre* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969).

59. Klaus Dörner, "Nationalsozialismus und Lebensvernichtung," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 15 (1967): 121–52, reprinted in Klaus Dörner, *Diagnosen der Psychiatrie* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1975), pp. 59–95, esp. pp. 76–82; Dörner et al., eds., *Der Krieg gegen die psychisch Kranken* (Rehburg and Loccum: Psychiatric-Verlag, 1980); Nowak (n. 31 above), pp. 77–85.

60. Mitscherlich and Mielke (n. 37 above), pp. 197–205. For the merger between gut and scientific racism in Germany, see esp. Chase (n. 4 above), chap. 15. For the continuity of methods and means, see Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., 1953), chaps. 6 and 7; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), pp. 268–77, and chap. 9.1, esp. pp. 562–63, n. 21.

These links between race hygiene inside and outside the death-and-work and death-by-work camps suggest that only the merger of gut racism with the more scientific, bureaucratic, and planned approach of eugenic racism was able to bring to reality a bureaucratic, scientific, and faultlessly efficient genocide on the scale of the Holocaust.

Connections between these two expressions of racism are evident not only in their methods but also in their victims: along with the “deviant” groups already mentioned, ethnic minorities—specifically gypsies and most of the Germans of black color—were targets for sterilization.⁶¹ The division between those who were and were not eligible for race hygienic sterilization coincided to a large degree with a prior division within the lower classes: between the subproletarian strata including part of the ethnic minorities on the one side, and on the other, the proper and orderly German workers hailed by many Nazis as the hard and hard-working core of racial superiority. Predominantly unskilled, the former were not integrated into the stable “norm” of waged work for men and unwaged housework for women; the official labor movement, which had largely excluded them, had during the 1920s taken a position toward the unskilled and toward ethnic minorities very much like that of the American Federation of Labor.

However, we should not disregard the number, though limited, of middle- and upper-class victims of racist psychiatry and sterilization.⁶² To some extent, race hygiene crosses class lines, as do, to a larger degree, sexism and gut racism (most visibly in the case of anti-Semitism). To the extent that it does, it can be seen as a policy directed against those who “deviate” not just from general social norms but from the norms and expectations of their specific class. Its purpose is to “select” against those who do not fit into the class or the class-specific sex role to which they supposedly belong. In this way, race hygiene contributes to a confirmation of the class structure not just at its lower level, but at all its levels. Thus race hygiene carries over the attitudes and implementation of racism from the social conflicts between ethnicities into social conflicts within an ethnicity. From the perspective of its victims, the terms “ethnic racism” and “social racism”⁶³ might denote the connection as well as the difference between both expressions of racism.

61. See n. 53 above, and Reiner Pommerin, “Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde”: *Das Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit, 1918–1937* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979).

62. Dalicho (n. 57 above), pp. 157–60 (12–20 percent of all victims).

63. These terms are, as might be obvious, not meant to mark the “ethnic” as “non-social” and therefore as “biological.” Clearly, what is meant by “biological” in the racist tradition is plainly “social” and often enough described in plainly social concepts. The above terms are meant to call attention to the links between different historical forms of racism. Moreover, “social racism” seems to me more accurate than “social Darwinism,” as it is usually called, since Darwin certainly did not start it. Even though social history is more complicated than “Malthus started it all” (Chase [n. 4 above], p. 12), it is true that the issues in question have older and/or different roots than Darwin.

Moreover, scientific (and gut) racism had a decisive function in the spread and confirmation of two sexual double standards: assignment of typically modern, sexually differentiated roles and labors to women and men,⁶⁴ and assignment of different roles and labors to "superior" and "inferior" women. According to theoreticians of race and race hygiene, the difference and polarity between the sexes (reason/emotion, activity/passivity, paid work/housework) is fully developed only in the "superior," the "nordic," races; among "inferior races," including those of low "hereditary value," the sexes are less differentiated—and thus heavy and cheap labor is good for both.⁶⁵ These assignments might both appropriately be called aspects of "sexist racism."

"Birth-War" in the World War

With the declaration of war in 1939, another stage of the "birth-war"⁶⁶ was inaugurated, exacerbating previous trends. No more than some main features can be presented here. A decree from August 31, 1939, ruled that the sterilization law was to be applied only in those cases "where a particularly great danger of propagation is imminent."⁶⁷ While this change in policy may give some insight into the earlier handling of this "danger," its principal rationale lay in the war. Sterilization candidates could not be counted upon to be compliant war workers, and the old race hygiene personnel was needed for other purposes.⁶⁸ In fact, the number of sterilization trials was drastically reduced.

Simultaneously, however, sterilization policy was extended and radicalized in three dimensions beyond the 1933 law. Mass sterilizations were executed in concentration camps, mostly on Jewish and gypsy women; many gypsies had the "choice" between sterilization and camp. Such sterilizations in and outside the camps were done mainly for the sake of medical experiments and for population control, that is, in order to impede "inferior" offspring.⁶⁹ Second, many women from the con-

64. Extremely illuminating examples are the race hygiene classics by Baur, Fischer, and Lenz (n. 6 above), esp. vol. 2; and Bluhm (n. 5 above).

65. E. G. Paul Schultze-Naumburg, "Das Eheproblem in der Nordischen Rasse," *Die Sonne* 9 (1932): 20–25. Cf. Karin Hausen, "Family and Role Division: The Polarization of Sexual Stereotypes in the 19th Century," in *The German Family*, ed. Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 51–83.

66. Paul Danzer, *Geburtenkrieg* (Berlin: Verlag Völkischer Wille, 1936; Munich and Berlin: Lehmann, 1937, 1938, 1939).

67. RGB, 1939/1, p. 1560.

68. Manfred Höck, *Die Hilfsschule im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Marhold, 1979), p. 75.

69. See n. 37 above, and Jan Sehn, "Carl Claubergs verbrecherische Unfruchtbarmachungsversuche an Häftlings-Frauen in den Nazi-Konzentrationslagern," *Hefte von Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Państwowe Muzeum w Oświęcimiu [State museum of Auschwitz], 1959), 2:2–32.

quered and occupied territories in the east—about 2 million women had been deported as forced labor—were subjected to compulsory abortion and sterilization for the sake, again, of population control and in order to maintain an efficient work force unhampered by the care of children. Little as yet is known about their lives. It is clear, however, that abortion was “allowed” to them, and that from 1942 on, an eastern working woman’s pregnancy was reported—via management and regional labor offices—to a special regional SS officer who tested her “racially” and decided about the outcome of her pregnancy.⁷⁰

Even less is known about the third dimension of the new policy, the “birth-war” against the “asocials.” “Asociality” had been an important criterion in the sterilization courts; many had been sterilized for such behavior, and “asocials,” including prostitutes, had been proportionately high among those deported to concentration camps during the second great wave of imprisonment from 1936 to 1941.⁷¹ However, this criterion still had smacked too much of the “social” instead of the “biological,” and it had not always been easy to classify such persons under one of the four psychiatric categories of the 1933 law.⁷² But meanwhile, race hygiene theory had established the hereditary character of the disease “asociality” with such efficiency that it had become a central category of racism. After 1940, when many “asocials” were released from the camps to answer an urgent shortage of labor, a new law was being elaborated that provided for their sterilization. In terms of contemporary psychology, the definition of “asocials” was extended from the “psychotic” to the “psychopathic” and the “neurotic,” while the bill called them simply “parasites,” “failures,” “itinerants,” “good-for-nothings.” The legislation was to be enforced right after the war, and many high and low government and party agencies continued to discuss it throughout the war.⁷³

Among women, the good housewife and industrious mother could be sure to evade sterilization. Unwed and poor mothers with “too many” children, women on welfare, and prostitutes could not be so sure. Ever more obviously, the “birth-war” applied typically racist measures that violated the bodily integrity of those considered socially deviant and

70. On foreign women mainly from the east: Ingrid Schupetta, “Jeder das Ihre: Frauenerwerbstätigkeit und Einsatz von Fremdarbeitern und -arbeiterinnen im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Frauengruppe Faschismusforschung*, ed. (n. 8 above), pp. 292–318; Franciszek Polomski, *Aspekty rasowe w postępowaniu z robotnikami przymusowymi i jeńcami wojennymi III Rzeszy, 1939–45* [Racial aspects in the treatment of forced laborers and war prisoners of the Third Reich] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1976); *Documenta Occupationis* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1975, 1976), vols. 9 and 10.

71. Frank Pingel, *Häftlinge unter SS-Herrschaft* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1978), pp. 69–80; Dalicho (n. 57 above), pp. 54, 58, 60, 61, 63, 66.

72. Karl Ludwig Lechler, “Erkennung und Ausmerze der Gemeinschaftsunfähigen,” *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 70 (1940): 293–97.

73. The documents are scattered in many files of such agencies.

linked ever more closely the various forms and victims of racism. In an official, though secret, decree of September 1940, the "Reich's Health Leader" Leonardo Conti granted the State Health Offices permission to perform eugenic sterilization and abortion on prostitutes, on women of "inferior character," and on those of "alien race."⁷⁴ The sterilization law planned for the future was anticipated in practice.

Conclusion: Sexism and Racism

Nazi racism and sexism concerned all women, the "inferior" as well as the "superior." The "birth achievement" demanded of acceptable women was calculated carefully according to the numbers of those who were not to give birth.⁷⁵ And the strongest pressure on such acceptable women to procreate, to create an orderly household for husband and children, and to accept dependency on the breadwinner perhaps came not so much from the continuous positive propaganda about "valuable motherhood," but precisely from the opposite: the negative propaganda and policy that barred unwelcome, poor, and deviant women from procreation and marriage and labeled either disorderly women or single women with too many children as inferior. Thus, racism could be used, and was used, to impose sexism in the form of unwaged housework on "superior" women.

On the other hand, women who became or were to become targets of "negative race hygiene" tended also to be those who did not accept, or could not accept, or were not supposed to accept the Nazi view of female housework, which had been propagated in its main features since the late eighteenth century. Sexism, which imposed economic dependency upon "superior" married women, could be used, and was used, to implement racism by excluding many women from the relative benefits granted to "desirable" mothers and children and forcing them to accept the lowest jobs in the labor-market hierarchy in order to survive. In fact, modern sexism has established, below the ideological surface of theories on "women's nature" and the "cult of true womanhood," two different, though connected, norms for children. The demand was made of some women to administer orderly households and produce well-educated children, the whole enterprise supported by their husbands' money; others, overburdened and without support, were obliged to adopt menial jobs which paid little or nothing while their children, like themselves, were treated only as "ballast." Racist-sexist discourses of various kinds have portrayed socially, sexually, or ethnically "alien" women as

74. The pertinent documents are scattered in various archives.

75. E.g., Burgdörfer, *Geburtenschwund* (n. 41 above), pp. 136-47; G. Pfothner, "Fortpflanzungspflicht—die andere Seite des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses," *Der öffentliche Gesundheitsdienst* 2 (1937): 604-8.

nonwomen, and thus as threatening to the norms for all other women, or as threatening, and therefore as nonwomen: thus the racist view of Jewish or gypsy women as prostitutes, the eugenic sexologists' view of lesbians as pseudo-men, the race hygienic view of prostitutes as asocial and infectious to the "racial body,"⁷⁶ the fantasy of Polish or "feeble-minded" women "breeding like animals." But of course, much more is involved here than (predominantly male) images and symbols,⁷⁷ influential though they may be in determining women's very real treatment and self-image. Women's history needs to concentrate on the lives of those "non"-women without marginalizing them as (male) history has done.

Precisely because of the complex links between sexism and racism and, therefore, because of the relevance of reproductive racism to all women, we should be careful not to term simply "sexism" the demand placed on ethnically or socially "superior" women to have children they may not want, and not to term simply "racism" the ban against ethnically or socially "inferior" women having children, even though they may want them. More strictly speaking, we might call the imposition on the first group of women "racist sexism," since their procreation is urged not just because they are women, but because they are women of a specific ethnicity or social position declared as "superior." Accordingly, we might call the imposition on the second group of women "sexist racism," since their procreation is prohibited not just on grounds of their "genes" and "race," but on grounds of their real or supposed deviation, as women, from social or ethnic standards for "superior" women. Establishing in such terms the dual connection between racism and sexism does not (as may be evident from the context) give different weights to the experiences of racism and sexism, or suggest that racism is primary in one case and sexism primary in the other. Precisely the opposite is true: where sexism and racism exist, particularly with Nazi features, all women are equally involved in both, but with different experiences. They are subjected to one coherent and double-edged policy of sexist racism or racist

76. For lesbian women and their presentation as "pseudo-men" by male psychiatrists since the last third of the nineteenth century, see Esther Newton and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Male Mythologies and Their Internalization of Deviance from Krafft-Ebbing to Radclyffe Hall," and Gudrun Schwartz, "The Creation of the *Mannweib*, 1860-1900" (papers presented at the Fifth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Vassar College, June 16, 1981); the latter is published as "'Mannweiber' in Männertheorien," in *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Karin Hausen (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1983), in press. For male views of prostitutes, see my article "Prostituierte im Nazi-Staat," in *Wir sind Frauen wie andere auch*, ed. Piekie Biermann (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980), pp. 70-106; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. chap. 10.

77. For an approach focusing on such symbols, see Elizabeth Janeway, "Who Is Sylvia? On the Loss of Sexual Paradigms," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 573-89.

sexism (a nuance only of perspective), but they are segregated as they live through the dual sides of this policy, a division that also works to segregate their forms of resistance to sexism as well as to racism.

Attempting to look at the situation of all women from the perspective of "non"-women may help to analyze and break down the boundaries of such segregation. As far as the struggle for our reproductive rights—for our sexuality, our children, and the money we want and need—is concerned, the Nazi experience may teach us that a successful struggle must aim at achieving both the rights and the economic means to allow women to choose between having or not having children without becoming economically dependent on other people or on unwanted second and third jobs. Cutbacks in welfare for single mothers, sterilization abuse, and the attack on free abortion are just different sides of an attack that serves to divide women. Present population and family policy in the United States and the Third World make the German experience under National Socialism particularly relevant. New attacks on free abortion, the establishment of university departments of "population science," sterilization experiments on women and sterilization of welfare mothers without their knowledge, pressure on gypsy women (especially those on welfare) not to have children, xenophobic outcries against immigrants "breeding like animals" and sometimes asking for their "castration or sterilization," all-too-easy abortions and sterilizations on Turkish women, the reduction of state money connected to human reproduction, both private and public, have all occurred in Germany during the last two years.⁷⁸ In the course of the present economic crisis, what will follow from these still seemingly unconnected events is an open question.

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78. "Population Science" has been established in Bamberg and Bielefeld, while women have been, in vain, trying to get women's studies recognized and financed: *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis* 5 (April 1981): 119–27. For other information on immigrant women, sterilization, welfare, and state benefits, see the following issues of *Courage*: 2 (March 1977): 16–29; 3 (April 1978): 14–29; 3 (September 1978): 11; 3 (October 1978): 44–47; 4 (June 1979): 39–40; 4 (September 1979): 27–29; 4 (October 1979): 12–17; 5 (April 1980): 12–13; 5 (May 1980): 12–13; 6 (March 1981): 5–8, 52; 6 (May 1981): 16–33; 6 (December 1981): 22–33; 7 (January 1982): 8–11. See also *Zu Hause in der Fremde*, ed. Christian Schaffernicht (Fischerhude: Verlag Atelier, 1981), pp. 74–75.