CHAPTER 2

Ruptured Narratives
German Women and Hitler's Army

In both the popular imagination and much scholarly literature, the Second World War is constructed as an exclusively male endeavor. It is assumed that women were far from the front lines, relegated to the household and nursery by National Socialist policies. In truth, however, the much-touted National Socialist ideal of the housewife was a fiction that soon fell victim to the very real needs of conducting a world war. As Karen Hagemann points out, the Second World War was a total war "that mobilized both the 'front' and the 'homeland.'"[1] Before long, women not only assumed public functions that newly deployed men had left unfilled but also moved closer and closer to the front lines themselves. In doing so, they became complicit in the Nazi war and genocide.

Even though the Nazi mobilization of women lagged behind that of England, the United States, and Russia, it reached proportions that were previously unheard of in German lands.[2] According to Franka Maubach, both the number of women involved in war-related work and the variety of functions women fulfilled are without historical precedent.[3] And yet, to this day, the writings of women who served in Hitler's army have received little attention, their voices drowned out by the blanket assumption that women are "marginal to the military's core identity, no matter how crucial in reality are the services they perform."[4] As I show in what follows, this omission is highly problematic: thinking about war from a different, female, perspective not only corrects androcentric views of the Second World War[5] but also offers insights into the workings of a totalitarian regime. In particular, an analysis of texts by women who served in Hitler's army helps us understand why and how women became complicit in the German war of conquest and genocide and how they account for (or fail to account for) their contribution to the Nazi reign of terror.

In the following, I provide information about the status, functions, and self-perceptions of female army auxiliaries in the service of the Third Reich. In order to do so, I draw on recent scholarship and on a wide range of

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memoirs. I then analyze five autobiographical texts by women who, albeit in different ways, contributed to the success of Hitler's army: a report based on the diary entries of Lore Vogt, written in 1945 and 1946; two memoirs by "Hitler's pilot," Hanna Reitsch; the docunovel *Blitzmädchen* by Hildegard Gartmann, published in 1971; and the memoirs of Ilse Schmidt, written in the 1980s and 1990s. I have chosen these texts because they were written in different decades and thus represent different moments in the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The five texts are also markedly different in how they approach the issue of complicity, with attitudes ranging from blanket denial to remorseful reflection. Since some of these authors have received little critical attention, I provide a summary of the most salient biographical facts. My main interest, however, concerns the narrative strategies employed in these texts: How do these women portray their motivations for enlisting and their experiences during the war? How do they represent their involvement in the Nazi war and genocide? What literary devices do they employ when they justify their actions or express remorse?

In her study of women in Hitler's killing fields, Wendy Lower concludes that the few women who wrote memoirs or spoke about the war at length

> did not admit to themselves or to us, either then or many years later, in courtrooms or their own memoirs, what their participation in the Nazi regime had actually entailed. . . . They failed to see – or perhaps preferred not to see – how the social became political, and how their seemingly small contribution to everyday operations in the government, military, and Nazi Party organizations added up to a genocidal system.[6]

While this is certainly true, it is also important to note that denial comes in many forms. As I show in what follows, the nature, scope, and strategies of such repudiations of responsibility differ markedly depending on the author's personality, social status in the Nazi regime, and time of writing and publication. Because a memoir does not so much express an identity as it creates one, "images of the past are strategically invented to suit present needs."[7] And this act of self-invention will unfold differently in the 1990s from what it would have been like in the 1950s.

The five texts listed earlier allow insights into the motivations of female members of the German army from strikingly different perspectives. My arrangement of these texts traces an ascending line of awareness, beginning with unvarnished enthusiasm for the regime and moving to a focus on German victimization and, finally, to growing insight into one's own complicity. Vogt's text, although it betrays an awareness of potential

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readers,[8] was based on diary entries and not meant for publication. Since Vogt died in 1947, she did not have an opportunity to revise her narrative to bring it in line with postwar discourses of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Consequently, her text allows insights into the worldview of an eager female army auxiliary and devoted follower of Hitler. The discussion of Vogt's text is followed by an analysis of two memoirs by Hanna Reitsch, whose work as a test pilot constituted a significant contribution to the military success of Hitler's Germany. Even though Reitsch, unlike Vogt, had many years to think critically about the Third Reich, she chose not to do so. Reitsch's two memoirs, published in the 1950s and 1970s, defy attempts to identify clear-cut phases in a chronology of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. However, I have included Reitsch not only because her texts remind us that the historical trajectory of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is marked by unevenness but also because her perspective is unique: unlike Vogt, Gartmann, and Schmidt, she was not at the bottom of the totem pole but rather communed with the upper echelons of the Nazi hierarchy. Indeed, much as Reitsch herself seeks to deny it and in spite of National Socialist gender discrimination, Reitsch's access and power were considerable, and her writings are as close as we can come to the perspective of a female "officer."

The following section focuses on Hildegard Gartmann's docunovel *Blitzmädchen*, which was published almost three decades after the end of the Third Reich in 1972 and draws on the author's experience as an army auxiliary. In calling *Blitzmädchen* a docunovel (*Dokumentarroman*), Gartmann, as James Young puts it, "simultaneously relieves [her]self of an obligation to historical accuracy (invoking poetic license), even as [s]he imbues [her] fiction with the historical authority of real events."[9] *Blitzmädchen* does not spout Nazi slogans, but rather casts army auxiliaries as victims. Following a literary tradition that spans from Erich Maria Remarque's bestseller *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) to Heinz G. Konsalik's *The Physician of Stalingrad* (*Der Arzt von Stalingrad*) (1956), *Blitzmädchen* highlights conflicts between common soldiers and their SS officers in order to portray the suffering of ordinary Germans at the hands of the regime while erasing the Jewish victims of genocide along with female complicity. Where Gartmann's docunovel does mention atrocities, it titillates its readers' pornographic imagination by sexualizing Nazi brutality.

The final section focuses on the memoir of army auxiliary Ilse Schmidt, who completed her memoirs in the 1990s, that is, two decades after the publication of Gartmann's docunovel. Of all the authors discussed here, Schmidt is the only one who makes an effort to come to terms with her

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involvement in the National Socialist reign of terror, but even Schmidt ultimately leaves little room for the victims of the war.

Women in Hitler's Army

Despite much Nazi rhetoric about the true domestic calling of the female sex, women's lives in the Third Reich were highly militarized. Members of the League of German Girls were "drilled to march in formation and trained in field exercise and sometimes marksmanship with air rifles"[10] while adult women were recruited to perform various services for the fatherland. On February 15, 1938, Hermann Göring announced the Duty Year (*Pflichtjahr*) for young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, which included farm work and domestic help and was required in order to be eligible for employment in factories or offices.[11] Similarly, as of the spring of 1934, prospective female students were required to participate in the Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*) (RAD) for a minimum of six months.[12] They too worked mostly on farms and as family helpers. Although the RAD became compulsory for all young women aged seventeen through twenty-five in 1939,[13] only 150,000 of the 600,000 girls who were eligible for the RAD each year were actually drafted for service.[14] In 1941, the "Decree on the Further Wartime Deployment of the Reich Labor Service for Female Youth" added an additional six months of "Auxiliary War Service" (*Kriegshilfsdienst*) to this requirement.[15] Starting in the fall of 1943, when RAD members could be employed in armaments factories and even in the army, the RAD, along with the Red Cross, became the primary source for the recruitment of female auxiliaries.[16]

While RAD women worked within the boundaries of the Reich, army auxiliaries could be stationed abroad. Maubach counts 500,000 female helpers with the *Wehrmacht*, 500,000 with the *Reichsluftschutzbund*, 400,000 nurses and assistant nurses with the Red Cross, and 10,000 women who worked in concentration camps.[17] According to Hagemann, there was "one woman to every twenty soldiers. Only one third of these women were performing compulsory service."[18] Women were active in all branches of Hitler's army, and at least 500,000 were stationed in the East.[19] Signal-communication assistants (*Nachrichtenhelferinnen*) were entrusted with the new communication technologies (telephone and telegraph), which became an almost exclusively female domain during the war.[20] Women also served as *Stabshelferinnen*, that is, as secretaries, translators, accountants, or drivers in the army, and as plane spotters

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(*Flugmeldehelferinnen*) in the air force, where they were in charge of reporting activity by enemy planes and calculating a plane's trajectory as well as the likely time of attack. Toward the end of the war, one third of all maintenance work on airplanes was conducted by women, and anti-aircraft defense was handled almost exclusively by women, although leadership positions remained in the hands of men.[21] Although all these women were defined as auxiliaries, that is, helpers, their roles frequently exceeded mere support work.[22]

In theory, the Nazi regime, like the US and British armies, prohibited women from handling guns and participating in armed combat.[23] An ordinance issued by the Supreme Command stipulated that "women and girls cannot be called upon to handle firearms in the fight against the enemy."[24] As the war progressed, however, the Nazis began to consider armed service for women.[25] While many Nazi leaders agreed with Scholtz-Klink that a woman's weapon was the ladle,[26] a minority, including Speer, Göring, and Goebbels, was in favor of arming women. Their efforts, however, were stifled by Hitler himself. Although Hitler never warmed to the idea of women in battle, eventually he too had to bend to the exigencies of the war.[27] On August 24, 1943, Hitler authorized the use of women in anti-aircraft defense where they operated searchlights and handled anti-aircraft artillery and firearms.[28] In February 1945, when it was already too late to implement any changes, Hitler approved Bormann's plan for a female battalion, and in March 1945, the Supreme Command of the army allowed the use of anti-tank grenades by women.[29] Regardless of these decrees, however, it is important to remember that many army auxiliaries did carry guns whether Nazi regulations approved of it or not – some had acquired them secretly; others were equipped by the military "for their personal protection."[30] And, of course, even women who were unarmed themselves were frequently exposed to armed combat, especially during the German army's hasty retreat.

Although female army auxiliaries were employed by the different branches of the military, they remained civilians without proper military standing.[31] Women had the opportunity to rise in the ranks from "*Helferin*, *Oberhelferin*, *Unterführerin*, *Führerin*" to "*Oberführerin*" and "*Hauptführerin*,"[32] but even toward the end of the war, only half of all army auxiliaries wore uniforms, ostensibly because of the need to save fabric[33] and their access to the military infrastructure was restricted. When army auxiliaries were stationed in the Reich, they were given ration cards and sent to civilian hospitals. When they served abroad, they could be treated in military hospitals and received the same meals as the soldiers.

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Ironically, while the Nazis denied these women military status, the Hague Conventions did not: all army auxiliaries in uniform were treated as enemy combatants.

Although the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union were more successful in including women in the war effort,[34] Germany experienced its own version of the Rosie the Riveter phenomenon: in spite of all hardship, the war presented many women with new opportunities and previously unknown freedom. In her pioneering study on German army auxiliaries, Maubach notes that in looking back many auxiliaries considered the war years the most wonderful time of their lives.[35] Toward the beginning of the war, national and individual expansion truly went hand in hand for these young volunteers. Many women who joined the army were motivated by a thirst for adventure, a desire to escape the narrow confines of traditional domesticity, to free themselves from parental authority, to travel and see the world.[36] Lipinski, an air force auxiliary, for example, writes: "I wanted to experience adventures! I wanted to see foreign countries."[37] And travel they did. The bulk of the auxiliaries was sent to the "Generalgouvernement," that is, the German administered part of Poland, and to France, but auxiliaries were also stationed in the Balkans, Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Norway, Italy, and Greece. Many memoirs of army auxiliaries are infused with a sense of excitement as their authors go sightseeing or spend a day at the ocean.[38] Finally, at least in the early years of the war, an office job with the army presented an attractive alternative to backbreaking labor in agriculture, the drudgery of domestic service, and highly unpopular employment in the armament industry.

During the early years of the war, many army auxiliaries enjoyed a level of luxury that they had not known before. They lived in occupied villas and were waited on by local women who cleaned and cooked for them and did their laundry. "We lived like Dubarry," a former army auxiliary comments.[39] Many an auxiliary also took pleasure in her status as one of few women among a large crowd of soldiers and officers. At the time, women who engaged in such romantic and/or sexual relationships were frequently labeled with the derogatory term "officer's mattresses" (*Offiziersmatratzen*).[40] However, we may assume that there was also a darker side to this presumed enjoyment of male attention. In her memoir, army nurse Erika Summ reports that several German secretaries in the Ukraine were the victims of sexual harassment and even rape by their male colleagues and superiors, who exploited their inferior, dependent status.[41] Summ oversaw several abortions that resulted from these rapes. Moreover, there is some evidence that, rather than being universally admired, female auxiliaries were resented by their

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male colleagues and seen as "*un remède contre l'amour*."[42] In his detailed study of the secret recordings of German POWs in American camps, Felix Römer reports that many German soldiers found the idea of a woman in arms unthinkable.[43] Particularly during the rapid retreat of the German army, such resentment could be lethal: some auxiliaries were left behind during the evacuation and even thrown off the trucks to make room for male soldiers.[44]

For many auxiliaries, the initial enthusiasm began to fade during the winter of 1941–1942. In spite of referrals by job centers (*Arbeitsämter*) and widespread recruitment campaigns, particularly by the League of German Girls, there was a dearth of volunteers.[45] Few women who joined the army now were eager to serve, and many were disillusioned even further as the front lines moved ever and ever closer to their quarters. After Stalingrad, the motto of freeing a soldier for the front (*einen Soldaten für die Front freimachen*) turned from a source of national pride into one of guilt and shame as it became clear that the soldiers they replaced were likely to die in the East. Moreover, much as these women loved to see other countries, many came to realize that the local populations resented their presence. Army auxiliary Elisabeth Himmelstoß, for example, who was stationed in France, notes that "many eyes look upon the uniform that I wear with hatred."[46] Others, however, were not bothered by such hatred and rather enjoyed the superiority afforded by their racial and national status.

Since most of the women in Hitler's army did not write memoirs or speak about their experience in public arenas, it is difficult to know how many of them were motivated by genuine enthusiasm for Nazi ideology – even more so since those few who did write about the war were likely to "exaggerate, mislead, self-glorify, or mollify."[47] Typically, female memoirists of the war, who, as part of their formal training had all been exposed to Nazi indoctrination about the final victory and Slavic and Jewish "*Untermenschen*," pay little attention to politics while their personal lives occupy front and center. As one of the women interviewed by historian Rosemarie Killius puts it: "It was war and yet one went to the theater all the same. . . . All in all it was a happy and rich time."[48] Many auxiliaries define themselves as apolitical,[49] which might be a truthful representation of their interests at the time (and a possible explanation why they joined the Nazi cause to begin with), but it may also be a postwar ploy designed to minimize their responsibility in the Nazi war and genocide.[50] Indeed, such a self-imposed exile from politics could be a useful strategy of exculpation. Beate Meyer, for example, discusses the case of a Nazi secretary who was well aware of the genocidal practices of the regime but

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insisted that such policies belonged in the realm of politics, in which she was not involved.[51]

In addition to authors' various strategies of denial, their own preconceptions may prevent readers from grasping the full extent of the complicity of female army auxiliaries. In particular, prevailing gender stereotypes have accustomed us to think of women as victims and of women's work as menial and inconsequential. For example, traditional notions of the work secretaries do are difficult to reconcile with the concept of a female "desk murderer," whose "routine procedures generated unprecedented crimes."[52] And yet, army secretaries not only typed deportation lists but also, in some cases, influenced the composition of these lists. They drafted protocols of interrogations under torture, or conveyed *Einsatzbefehle*, that is, commands for mass executions. Indeed, secretaries were integral to the functioning of the Nazi machine of terror. In the *Gestapo*, for example, 35–45 percent of all employees were office personnel.[53]

In spite of their omissions, memoirs of female army auxiliaries allow insights into the complicity of women in Hitler's army and in the Nazi genocide. Since many auxiliaries served in the East, they had firsthand knowledge of the war and the Holocaust.[54] Army auxiliary Katja Lipinski, for example, witnessed mass executions and merciless brutality toward Jewish and Polish civilians.[55] The responses to such immediate experiences of the Nazi genocide differ vastly. Some memoirists are plagued by their role in the Holocaust; others deny all knowledge of it – often against all plausibility. Most frequently, however, we encounter neither straightforward denial nor anguished remorse but rather narrative ruptures, head-turning at times, as the author transitions seamlessly from horror and cruelty to the enjoyment of everyday pleasures.[56] For example, on the same page, one of the women interviewed by Killius expresses her shock at the bloody execution of deserters and then talks about how much fun she had in Verona.[57] More often than not, we must read between the lines to comprehend an author's true appreciation of the Third Reich. Ruth Kirsten-Herbst, for example, an anti-aircraft auxiliary, emphasizes repeatedly that she was drafted against her will and did not believe in a German victory. In the same breath, however, she insists that the end of the war, rather than Nazi tyranny, signals the true beginning of Germany's moral decline (and of denunciations!).[58] If remembering is indeed, as Connerton maintains, the ability "not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative sequences,"[59] then the task of remembering is accomplished only incompletely in these memoirs. The numerous contradictions of Nazi ideology itself, the felt obligations toward

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the author's family and friends, and the pressures of responding to postwar discourses of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* all produce narrative ruptures that manifest themselves in non sequiturs and logical contradictions, fragmented thoughts and elisions, abrupt shifts in focus and tone. Conversely, in the memoirs of devoted Nazis, an attempt to suture such ruptures is evident in the mantra-like repetition of almost identical stock phrases and anecdotes that function like magical incantations invoked to keep the ideological edifice of National Socialism from crumbling.[60] To many of these women, the war truly was both the best and the worst of times, and their narratives reflect their inability to come to terms with this duality and with their own complicity in the Nazi crimes against humanity. But even if the inability to account for the past is common, denial and narrative fractures come in many shapes and guises. In the following, I parse four different strategies of dealing with one's own involvement in the Nazi regime.

Lore Vogt: The Diary of a Committed Nazi

Lore Vogt's report is based on diary entries made during her time as army auxiliary. It was edited by Jutta Rüdiger, the BDM national leader from 1937 to 1945, who was instrumental in recruiting BDM girls for service in the army.[61] By her own admission, Rüdiger corrected syntax and idioms and omitted passages that she considered unclear, but she appears to have left the bulk of the narrative unchanged.[62] If she had changed it, one would be hard pressed to explain why she produced a text that runs counter to her own agenda: while Vogt relishes participation in armed combat and highlights how well the female auxiliaries performed even in the thick of battle, Rüdiger insists both in the foreword to Vogt's text and in her memoir that women are biologically and psychologically ill suited to withstand the hardships of warfare.[63] And yet, while Vogt's text contradicts Rüdiger's claims about the incompatibility of women and warfare, the emphasis on the enthusiasm of a young volunteer serves her well since it reduces her own culpability in recruiting women for Hitler's war. Even so, I am wary of attempts to shift blame from Vogt to Rüdiger since they so easily align with a tendency to single out a few select perpetrators while ignoring the complicity of the many.

Although edited, the text is still marked by its generic origin as a diary: past-tense narrative and descriptive passages alternate with action-oriented sequences consisting of short, paratactical sentences that read like outbursts and convey a sense of immediacy and emotional intensity.

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Since Vogt died in December 1947 in Garmisch, she never had the opportunity to revise her report to bring it in line with postwar discourses of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, and her editor, Rüdiger, for better or worse, did not see a need to hide the text's anti-Semitic thrust and fervent belief in National Socialism. At the time of writing, Vogt was barely twenty years old and we must assume that she was exposed to a great deal of Nazi indoctrination. We simply cannot know if Vogt would have begun to think critically about her experiences if she had not died young. As it is, her report is a striking testimony to a woman's enthusiastic identification with National Socialist ideology, and readers cannot help but wonder if many memoirs by female auxiliaries would be like this if they had been written in 1945.

Vogt was born in 1924 in Brünn. In 1944, when the German military called for volunteers, the twenty-year-old Vogt, an enthusiastic member of the BDM, stepped up. Originally ordered to join the communication corps, Vogt convinced her superiors to reassign her as an anti-aircraft gunner (*Flakwaffenhelferin*). On November 15, 1944, she boarded a train for Vienna, where she was redirected to Rendsburg in Schleswig-Holstein. This trip via Hamburg and Berlin provided her with firsthand impressions of bombed-out cities. In Rendsburg, she received the uniform with the insignia of eagle and sword and was then transferred to Stolpemünde for basic training in anti-aircraft defense. Vogt and her comrades learned how to determine the type and location of an enemy plane in order to calibrate the trajectory of an anti-aircraft gun. She was excited about her new responsibilities and about swearing an oath to the *Führer*: "with fresh strength and joy we looked forward to what was to come."[64] Throughout, Vogt rejoices in her sense of agency, gladly bears all deprivations, and declares with pride that she is a soldier. Clearly, the Nazis knew how to mobilize women's desire to make a contribution to the national cause for their purposes, and Vogt, like many young women at the time, enjoyed nothing more than the feeling of being needed.

Although anti-aircraft gunners were classified as noncombat personnel, Vogt defined herself as a soldier and wanted to see action.[65] And her wish came true: anti-aircraft auxiliaries typically belonged to the air force and were supposed to remain in Germany, but Vogt's unit of 200 volunteers was on loan to the Waffen-SS and stationed in Prague from January to March 1945. Thus, Vogt, who, according to regulations was not supposed to be anywhere near the front lines nor allowed to handle weapons, was fully armed and in the line of fire. Vogt's story shows that, in a losing war, differentiations between front and rear disappear all too quickly. During

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the German army's rapid retreat in 1944 and 1945, women frequently found themselves in the midst of battle. Vogt and her colleagues not only operated searchlights, radar, and sound-locating equipment, they also learned how to use hand grenades, a 0.8 mm pistol, anti-aircraft guns, and even anti-tank grenades.[66] Since Prague was on the corridor for bomber planes on the way to Munich, Dresden, and Brüx (Most), Vogt found herself in the midst of armed conflict. Much as Nazi policies forbade arming women, the reality of a total war made traditional notions of what is and is not proper for women in the military obsolete – a fact that becomes abundantly clear if we pay attention to the neglected genre of army auxiliary memoirs.

Vogt's report provides ample proof that we are not dealing with an innocent bystander drafted against her will but rather with a committed Nazi. Again and again (and as late as Christmas 1944 and even March and April 1945), Vogt declares with conviction that Germany will win the war: "Still we walked upright and trusted the *Führer*. Germany will not perish."[67] She is proud of her unit and "cheerfully" embraces her work in anti-aircraft defense – a job she describes as "taking these little birds down."[68] When Hitler decides to grant her unit the right to wear the Hitler Youth badge, she is over the moon. When she receives news of Hitler's death, she is devastated but quickly decides to keep fighting.[69] Vogt also wholeheartedly embraces National Socialist racial theory. She calls the Czechs dogs and "riffraff," resents the presence of the Czech people in Prague because they ruin that beautiful city for her, and laments that a British "terror attack" killed only Germans, but unfortunately no Czechs.[70]

When the Czechs start to fight the Germans in May 1945, Vogt's unit is among those who seek to quash the uprising. In a hail of bullets,[71] Vogt and her companions "man" the guns: they fight, tend to the wounded, and feverishly burn documents. With great satisfaction, Vogt notes every Czech-occupied building that goes up in flames and every arrest and execution of Czech fighters by Germans. When she learns on May 8 that the war is over, she comments that her life is now worthless.[72] As Vogt and her unit march out of the burning city, they sing: "Nothing can rob us of our love for and faith in our country."[73] To Vogt, the defeat of the Germans must be caused by treason, and Germans who surrender are by definition traitors and scoundrels.[74] It would appear that Vogt's military prowess is matched only by her ideological fervor. Vogt's memoir suggests that the National Socialist militarization of women's lives from an early age is not simply ornamental, but translates into a very palpable commitment

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to fight for Hitler.[75] While we cannot exclude the possibility that Rüdiger accentuated Vogt's ideological fervor, it is equally possible that Rüdiger chose to publish Vogt's text precisely because the young recruit's *Weltanschauung* matched her own.

Although Vogt's activities so clearly run counter to the supposed non-combat status reserved for female army auxiliaries, Vogt insists that her work does not diminish her femininity: "We were definitely not rough warriors – always only women."[76] It would appear that Vogt has internalized Nazi military regulations that stipulate that women are never soldiers and that one should make allowances for their feminine nature,[77] even if her actions in Prague make a mockery of such notions. Disregarding all contradictions, Vogt seeks to reconcile Nazi gender ideology, her thirst for action, and the very real demands of a total war. She feels fully integrated into her unit and respected by "our men."[78] Indeed, Vogt even makes a case for female soldiers when she reports that the behavior of the army auxiliaries was morale building: impressed with how the auxiliaries handled themselves during the battle in Prague, the male soldiers derived strength from the presence of women.[79]

Vogt joins the trek west as a passenger on an SS tank. Here, her ambiguous status as a civilian on loan to the SS works against her. Since some of the female army auxiliaries wore uniforms and had the SS-specific tattoo of their blood group, the Americans considered them members of the SS. When Vogt is taken prisoner, she accuses her American captors of unfair treatment and hypocrisy.[80] She complains bitterly about her time as a prisoner of war, lamenting that she is treated badly and left to starve.[81] Vogt's memoir ends when she is reunited with her parents. She concludes with a declaration of deeply felt loss: "We will never come to terms with the end of the war: our Germany is no more. Thoughts cannot comprehend it: a people, no more empire, no more *Führer*."[82]

While Vogt highlights her own supposed victimization by the Americans, she does not once refer to the Nazi mass murder of Jews, although she repeatedly mentions Jews in passing.[83] Later on, when she is in captivity, she is horrified at the prospect of being transported in a car marked with the Star of David. When she has to fill out forms, she is upset about "Jews who grin impudently."[84] Back in Munich, she inquires about the new political regime and concludes that the country is now ruled by released concentration camp inmates who rage terribly and steal.[85] Here and elsewhere, Vogt elides the racial ideology that served to justify genocide and instead identifies concentration camp inmates with criminals. It would seem that Vogt's denial is of a different order than that of Nazis who

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wrote their memoirs decades after the war. Vogt, who authored her text in the 1940s, does not feel the need to profess innocence or ignorance. Rather, the genocidal atrocities of the Nazi regime simply remain unspoken – although they haunt the narrative in Vogt's paranoid dread of "grinning Jews."

Like many memoirs by female army auxiliaries, Vogt's narrative is characterized by numerous rifts. However, because it was written in close proximity to the war (1945 and 1946), these rifts are of a different nature. Vogt, who did not intend her report for publication, does not even attempt to downplay her ideological affinity with National Socialist ideology and she does not hide her anti-Semitism. There is no internal or external pressure to reconcile her fervent belief in Hitler with postwar discourses about the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Rather, in Vogt's case the rift that marks her report runs between the ideology she embraced and the historical reality she portrayed. To the contemporary reader, Vogt's unquestioned belief that Germany will win the war, pronounced as late as April 1945, is striking. Similarly, her insistence that she is "no rough warrior" as she shoots her way out of Prague is jarring. Throughout, Vogt's narrative is characterized by glaring contradictions. In many other ways, however, the text is disturbingly consistent. Vogt's belief in the superiority of the German master race and her devotion to Hitler form a coherent whole. In order to achieve such consistency, Vogt relies on stock phrases – "Germany will not perish" – that she recycles throughout. Indeed, the more reality threatens to destabilize her ideology, the more incessantly Vogt relies on her political mantras. If Vogt's narrative is fractured, it is not because of attempts to deny or obfuscate her actions and beliefs during the war but rather because the reality of the war asserts itself and undermines the ideological consistency of her rhetoric.

Hanna Reitsch: *Fliegen, Mein Leben* and *Das Unzerstörbare in meinem Leben*

Unlike the other women discussed in this chapter, Reitsch authored not one, but four memoirs, two of which deal with her life during the Third Reich. *Fliegen, Mein Leben* was written after Reitsch's release from American captivity and published in 1951. Her second memoir about the National Socialist regime, *Das Unzerstörbare in meinem Leben*, was first published in 1975. Tellingly, although there are more than two decades between the publication of these two texts, Reitsch did not change her story one bit. In spite of the growing pressures of discourses of

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Vergangenheitsbewältigung, Reitsch, who, unlike Vogt, did live long enough to adjust her representation of the Third Reich to postwar expectations, made few concessions. Indeed, contemporary discourses about the Holocaust entered Reitsch's memoir only insofar as they strengthened her denial. Published three decades after the war, *Das Unzerstörbare in meinem Leben* relies on the same stock phrases that characterized Lore Vogt's narrative in 1945.

Reitsch was not only more prolific than the other women discussed here, she also exerted considerably more influence during the Third Reich. Where Vogt adored Hitler from afar, Reitsch had tea with him. Where Gartmann's protagonists looked out for enemy planes, Reitsch conducted daredevil tests designed to improve the performance of the entire German air force. In the absence of female army officers, Reitsch's work provides an important counterweight to the perspective of the female auxiliary: the life writing of a woman who moved in Hitler's inner circle, worked with all levels of the German air force, and commented on and even initiated policy proposals, including a plan for German suicide bombers.

Hanna Reitsch was born on March 29, 1912 in the Silesian town of Hirschberg as the daughter of a Prussian ophthalmologist and a Tyrolian mother. She describes her family as happy and harmonious. They traveled, made music, and went on hiking expeditions. Reitsch reports being particularly close to her mother, a devout Christian who admonishes her to do good if she wants to go to heaven.[86] Again and again, Reitsch emphasizes that her education instilled a "firm moral and spiritual foundation," whose cornerstones are respect, dignity, honor, and the fatherland.[87]

From an early age, Reitsch was a tomboy who believed that she had been born a girl by mistake.[88] Even as a small child, she felt a longing to fly. After a lengthy campaign for parental permission, she was finally allowed to take a course at the School for Glider Pilots in Grunau – the Versailles Treaty forbade the use of motor planes – where she met her "pilot father" ("*Fliegervater*") Wolf Hirth. Hoping to become a flying doctor in Africa, she enrolled in the Colonial School for Women in Rendsburg. She then studied medicine in Berlin and Kiel, but dropped out to become a test pilot at the research institute for glider planes in Darmstadt, where she participated in numerous expeditions to exotic locales, including Finland, France, Spain, Argentina, and Brazil. Reitsch interpreted these trips as missions for peace and understanding, but they also served the larger purpose of Nazi propaganda with Reitsch herself as a "symbol of Aryan pride and achievement."[89] When the war started, she tested new planes for the purpose of quality control, identifying any problems that could lead to

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crashes. She writes: "I never knew in the morning if I would still be alive in the evening, but I considered myself the luckiest person in the world, grateful that I was tasked with such great responsibilities."[90]

The main beneficiary of Reitsch's work during this period was the military. For example, the troop-carrying glider DFS-230, whose landing brakes Reitsch helped to improve, was crucially important during the invasion of Belgium in 1940 because it was completely silent and thus ideal for use behind enemy lines. Reitsch also tested the Messerschmidt 321 Gigant, which was intended for use during a potential German invasion of England. Furthermore, she tested a glider that was to serve as a flying gasoline tank, a device to cut the steel cables of barrage balloons, and a catapult for planes with a heavy load and little room to maneuver.[91] In recognition of her accomplishments, Reitsch was bestowed the title of "captain" in 1937, which made her the first female "*Flugkapitän*" in the world. In 1941, Göring awarded her the golden military flight medallion, followed by a reception, where Hitler presented her with the Iron Cross Second Class. In 1942, she became the only woman to receive the Iron Cross First Class.

In 1937 and again when the war started, General Ernst Udet recruited her for the test center for military aircraft in Rechlin, where she worked on improvements for all types of military planes. She also flew a rocket plane, which led to her first severe accident: she had multiple fractures of the skull, and her nose had to be reconstructed. It was particularly hard on her that her reconvalescence barred her from working during a time when the German army started losing: "To my last hour I wanted only to help my homeland."[92] When she was fully recovered, General Robert Ritter von Greim called her to the eastern front, where she arrived in January 1944. Both Greim and Reitsch saw her presence as morale building: "I now knew and had seen it in their gleaming eyes what it meant for the men that I came to them from home."[93] Conversing with soldiers, she took it upon herself to explain the true meaning of perseverance in spite of utter hopelessness.[94] Concerned about Germany's future and the possibility of total capitulation, Reitsch together with SS *Sturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny devised a plan that relied on suicide bombers who would destroy crucial infrastructure in enemy cities.[95] She claims that she suggested this plan to Hitler, who declined because he did not consider Germany's situation serious enough to require such drastic measures.

As this episode shows, Reitsch was on intimate terms with the highest leaders of the Nazi regime, a member of what Trevor-Roper calls Hitler's "oriental court of flatterers and toadies."[96] She appears proud of such

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familiarity with the upper echelons, but also goes to great pains to show that, based on her congenial interactions with the Nazi greats, she could not have suspected anything untoward. Thus, she praises Hitler's easy-going manner and confidence, but then backtracks that their meetings took place in an official context and did not allow any insights into his personality.[97] Similarly, she reports that she visited Himmler in July 1943 to thank him for the flowers and chocolates he had sent during her reconvalescence. Reitsch states that they discussed women's social position in the Third Reich and the importance of Christianity, and insists that Himmler encouraged her to voice her criticism openly in all future conversations. She even claims that she confronted Himmler with "rumors" about gas chambers and that Himmler subsequently placed a disclaimer in German newspapers, whereupon Reitsch disqualified the "rumors" as enemy propaganda.[98] Clearly, Reitsch expects her readers to believe that, even though she moved in the inner circles of the Third Reich, even though her hometown of Hirschberg housed one of the sub-camps of Gross-Rosen, and even though she herself had spent time on the eastern front, she was completely unaware of the Holocaust.[99]

In both memoirs, Reitsch, whose work as a test pilot contributed significantly to the improvement of the German air force, maintains that flying is a completely apolitical activity: "My thoughts belonged to the wind, the clouds, and the stars. The political intrigues of the world did not reach up there."[100] According to Reitsch, flying calls forth a metaphysical experience of unity with nature and allows her to forget all earthly fear and pettiness.[101] In short, she portrays herself as both intimately involved with the ruling elite of the Third Reich and yet completely detached from National Socialist politics.

Surprisingly, Reitsch's self-exculpation gained credence in the postwar period, as Hitler's pilot successfully relaunched her career. In 1959, she taught gliding in India as the personal guest of Pandit Nehru. In the 1960s, Kwame Nkrumah, the autocratic president of Ghana, invited her to set up the National School of Gliding.[102] In 1961, President Kennedy invited her to the White House as part of a reception for the Association of Women Helicopter Pilots, the Whirly-Girls. In 1972, the International Order of Characters, an aviation organization, named her pilot of the year and gave her the nickname "Supersonic Sue." She remained active until her death of a heart attack in August 1979.

It is not an overstatement to say that Reitsch's memoirs are completely devoid of self-reflection. Throughout, Reitsch sees herself as a victim who sacrificed everything for the fatherland, risked her life to save others, and,

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in return, experienced nothing but hardship, particularly during her fifteen-month captivity in an American internment camp. Like Leni Riefenstahl, her equal in talent and lack of a moral compass, Reitsch is convinced that she is totally innocent.[103] She attributes her imprisonment to revenge on the part of the victors, claiming that she was dragged into the political arena where she never belonged.[104] She laments that "libelous" reports – particularly the works of William L. Shire and Hugh Trevor-Roper, who wrote about her infamous visit to Hitler's bunker in the last days of the war – sought to paint her as an important Nazi. She then remarks that *at the time*, that is, in the immediate postwar period, being called a Nazi was tantamount to being a criminal, implying that this equation of Nazi and criminal has since been revised. Again and again, Reitsch insists that she knew nothing about crimes committed by Germans. Rather, her contact with Nazi leaders was simply the result of her professional obligations. In the same breath, she assures readers that she and all young Germans wanted peace even if the world does not acknowledge this and then proceeds to talk about Germany's lack of living space and about how Germany used to be weak and needed to amass arms to protect itself.[105]

As her reference to more space for the German *Volk* indicates, Reitsch's narrative is drenched in National Socialist ideology and rhetoric. She refers to her native Silesia as "German cultural soil" while her family's suicide in the wake of Germany's defeat – Reitsch's father shot himself, his wife, his daughter, three grandchildren, and the maid – is simply a "tragic death in May of 1945."[106] In both memoirs, Reitsch's refusal to confront her past manifests itself in the rigidity and formulaic nature of her language. She repeats certain claims in mantra-like sameness. Several anecdotes found entrance into both memoirs in almost identical prose. There is much talk about destiny and about being guided by a higher power. Reitsch even casts her father's murder-suicide in a gentle, religious light, portraying it as a return to God to avoid falling into the hands of the Russians.[107] *Feldmarschall* Ritter von Greim, whom Hitler appointed as Göring's successor as head of the air force and who also committed suicide in May 1945, is referred to as one of the greatest and noblest officers of the German army and as a father to the Russian prisoners who worked for him. His decision to end his life and not stand trial is justified in her eyes since his responsibilities extended only to purely German affairs and thus ended with the end of the war.[108] Later on, Reitsch implies that all post-1945 judges were Jews who denied Germans justice.[109] She considers it a sign of her magnanimous spirit that she tolerated imprisonment by the Americans

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without hatred or bitterness and even prayed for them: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."[110] Again and again, she draws attention to her positive attitude in spite of everything done to her and professes to speak with complete honesty about her Nazi past in spite of the Allies' censorship after the war. After all, as Reitsch maintains, the Germans think critically while the Americans exhibit a uniformity of thought and tend to be blinded by propaganda.[111]

In spite of Reitsch's abhorrent politics and her complete unwillingness to accept any responsibility for her role in the Third Reich, her memoirs continue to find avid readers: *Fliegen, Mein Leben* was published in its fourth edition in 2001 and *Das Unzerstörbare in meinem Leben* in its seventh edition in 1992. Surely, some of this interest is motivated by Reitsch's access to Hitler and her ability to provide intimate glimpses of the Nazi leadership. In addition, the popularity of Reitsch's life writing may also be due to the fact that the diminutive Reitsch – she was five feet (154 centimeters) tall – succeeded as a woman in an almost exclusively male profession under a notoriously misogynist regime. To be sure, Reitsch experienced gender discrimination throughout her career. When she first took lessons, she was told that girls should stick with pots and pans. When she performed badly at a gliding competition, she was presented with a kitchen scale and a meat mincer. When she learned how to fly big planes, she had to work with officers for whom the presence of women on the tarmac was a red flag and who were looking for excuses to send her home. Throughout her career, she was a target of male resentment, which she claims to have overcome through her task-oriented attitude and excellent performance. Reitsch reports that many envied her and resented her success, and she is aware that her gender had a part in this.[112] Strategically astute, she would rebuff her opponents by pointing out that the needs of the fatherland were more important than male privilege while casting her job as female support work and herself as one of the many women "who helped the brave soldiers on the front . . . in their own way."[113] In Reitsch's account, knitting socks for soldiers and testing rocket planes are practically one and the same. Reitsch, who wore a uniform of her own design because the army would not provide her with one, learned to maintain a precarious balance between minimizing her own role while simultaneously highlighting her accomplishments.

If Reitsch succeeded in spite of all obstacles, it was not only because she enjoyed the patronage of several influential Nazi functionaries, including Ernst Udet and Ritter von Greim, but also because she possessed a singular ability to turn a blind eye to anything she did not want to see, be it gender

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discrimination or Nazi atrocities. In his biography of Reitsch, Piszkiewicz wonders if "Hanna's head injuries might have disconnected her higher cognitive processes."[114] But Reitsch's refusal to so much as mention the Holocaust by name is not caused by cognitive impairment. Rather, her success as a female civilian in Hitler's military and her enormous capacity for denial are two sides of the same coin. Of all women discussed in this chapter, Reitsch is the only one who might, with some justification, be categorized as a perpetrator. And yet, although her contributions to the Nazi regime were far greater than those of Gartmann or Schmidt, her writings lack any hint of an awareness of her own complicity.

Hildegard Gartmann's docunovel *Blitzmädchen*

Hildegard Gartmann's docunovel *Blitzmädchen*, which was published in 1971, presents a fictionalization of the author's own experiences in the war. In designating the text a docunovel, Gartmann frees herself from the need for historical accuracy while still laying claim to an aura of authenticity. *Blitzmädchen* narrates the last months of the war beginning on New Year's Eve 1944.[115] As might be expected given the late date, Vera Fern, the narrator of *Blitzmädchen* – named after the bolts of lightning sewn onto the uniforms of *Nachrichtenhelferinnen* – did not volunteer but was drafted. Before she joined the army, Vera attended art school with the goal of becoming a dance instructor. In the army, she stood guard on a tower sixty kilometers east of Posen, looking out for enemy airplanes and reporting any sightings to the central anti-aircraft command in Posen – a job that could be low key and boring but could also become quite dangerous: Because such towers were located in exposed positions that offer a view of the surrounding countryside, they were easy targets for enemy planes.

Blitzmädchen's style is evocative of works by Vicky Baum and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* of the Weimar Republic. The story is told in present tense by a first-person narrator, and dialogues outweigh descriptive passages by far. Much of the plot focuses on the traditional fodder of Second World War fiction: the conflict between the top brass and the average grunt.[116] Here as in many Second World War novels and films, the distance between leaders and followers is magnified by their differing commitments to the Nazi regime with the clear intent of accentuating the culpability of the upper echelons while minimizing that of the lower ranks. While Vera and her comrades are presented as apolitical, the abusive female group leader Käte Potter is a dedicated Nazi. Tellingly, though, the text does not engage with

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Potter's obsession with Nazi ideology; for the most part, it simply presents it as a nuisance. Rather than discussing and contradicting Potter's views, the *Blitzmädchen* roll their eyes, yawn when they are being indoctrinated, and play pranks on her.[117] Much of the plot is organized as a game of cat and mouse between Potter and her female underlings who are constantly trying to get the better of her and who, much like the good soldier Švejk, feign incompetence to stay out of danger. Whenever their superiors are not around, Vera and her friends abandon their post because they resent that their youth is being wasted: "no cinema, no dance, not even a night out."[118]

Throughout, Gartmann's fictionalization of her experience as an army auxiliary trades in the clichés of the soldier's novel. The female leader Potter is a stereotypical diehard Nazi who is completely devoid of humanity: When Beate, one of the auxiliaries, dies because of a miscarriage, Potter considers her death just punishment for being a whore.[119] Potter is also a hypocrite of the greatest order. Although she herself is guilty of major transgressions, including sexual promiscuity and alcohol abuse, she berates the auxiliaries for minor infractions. Conversely, the *Blitzmädchen* spend a lot of time and energy plotting revenge. When they think that Potter froze to death, they rejoice.[120] And when the drunken Potter passes out, they take photos of her in a compromising position so as to be able to blackmail her if the need arises. As a result, the war waged by Nazi Germany on Russia and on the Jews recedes into the background, along with their own complicity, while conflicts between Nazi leaders such as Potter and their German victims take center stage. It would appear that we are meant to identify or at least sympathize with Vera and the other young women in her unit whose malicious pranks are presented as good fun and legitimate revenge; and yet, in light of their own callous actions, readers might also conclude that the young auxiliaries are themselves profoundly affected and corrupted by the same forces of dehumanization that they purport to oppose.

Paradoxically, Gartmann's protagonist claims to be both uninterested in politics and immune to Nazi propaganda and racial ideology.[121] Since the women in Vera's unit have contact with wounded soldiers in a hospital – at some point they clean up a room containing amputated limbs – they are acutely aware that Germany is losing the war. They also know that the local population hates the Germans – Poles throw rocks at them and call them "Nazi pigs." Consequently, Vera and her friends fear that the Poles might take revenge when the war is over.[122] The text hints at the reasons for this hatred – a soldier tells Vera that the Germans shot 500 Poles because three Germans had been killed – but such sparse pieces of information remain

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background noise, the foil for the conflict that the text is primarily concerned with: the war between the average German and the Nazi leaders: "The fat cats get drunk and we kick the bucket."[123]

Although *Blitzmädchen* alludes to Nazi atrocities, the narrator assumes a stance of "wilful ignorance."[124] Thus, Vera is acutely aware of the "disappearance" of the Jews – when a synagogue in Posen is turned into a public pool, she comments that the synagogue is no longer needed since there are no more Jews in Posen – and of rumors that "they had killed all the Jews." At the same time, she insists that "we did not believe it. Why would they kill the Jews? They did not do anything to us."[125] There is no attempt to reconcile the glaring discrepancy of the complete absence of Jews on the one hand and the refusal to accept a sinister explanation for this absence on the other. Similarly, although the text repeatedly mentions a prison camp that is being guarded by the local SS, *Blitzmädchen* offers next to no information about the inmates of the camp nor does it specify how they are treated. The same holds true for the Polish victims of the Nazi expulsion campaigns in Arthur Greiser's Wartheland where Vera is stationed.[126] There are casual references to resettled Baltic Germans, but no explication of the injustice and terror involved in driving the local Polish population from their homes.[127] Instead, the text adopts the Nazi term "partisan" for any Pole who is killed by the SS and refers to SS actions as counterinsurgency efforts.[128]

Instead of integrating information about the local concentration camp and the Nazi campaigns of ethnic cleansing into the narrative, *Blitzmädchen* seeks to pique its readers' pornographic curiosity by representing sexually perverted SS atrocities. Indeed, *Blitzmädchen* all but identifies political corruption with sexual perversion. When the protagonist visits the SS headquarters, she witnesses and describes in graphic detail the sexualized torture and murder of a Polish woman while emphasizing her own helplessness and inability to rescue her.[129] Later on, *Hauptsturmführer* Keil, the local SS commander and an aficionado of elaborate orgies with abundant champagne and caviar, forces a group of male and female "partisans" to have intercourse under threat of death and then proceeds to shoot them all.[130] Tellingly, not one of the memoirs by female army auxiliaries discussed here sexualizes Nazi cruelty or even highlights sexuality, whereas the consciously fictionalized *Blitzmädchen* endows all SS atrocities with a prurient slant.[131] We do not know if these detailed descriptions of SS perversion were introduced to appeal to a reader's appetite for sensationalized SS porn or if they are in fact authentic.[132] To be sure, Gartmann uses the term "docunovel" rather loosely and does not rely on the technique of montage that many docunovels

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employ when citing historical sources. Regardless of its authenticity, however, the focus on sexual perversion underlines the text's claim that Nazi atrocities were committed by a small group of mentally ill men whereas women such as Vera were not complicit with but rather victimized by the National Socialist regime.[133]

While the text uses the representation of SS orgies to highlight Nazi corruption, it portrays the auxiliaries' sexual transgressions as by-products of the war. In *Blitzmädchen*, the constant fear of death motivates a thirst for life that manifests as sexual desire.[134] As Vera's unit waits for the order to leave their outpost,[135] the front moves closer, and the parties get wilder. Treks pass through town, Vera and her friends are attacked by airplanes and strafed with machine gun fire, and their resolve not to die as virgins grows. When Vera sleeps with Keil's friend Wenk, whom she met in a bar where German officers drink and have sex with Polish women, she justifies it with a reference to the war.

In light of the text's focus on the corrupt nature of the Nazi elite, it is hardly surprising that the final showdown unfolds not as a conflict between Russians and Germans, or between Poles and Germans, but between army auxiliaries and Nazi superiors. Potter kills Ada, one of the girls, and is in turn killed by Margot. Then SS commander Keil threatens to shoot all German refugees in a passing trek.[136] Keil also attempts to shoot Vera and Margot but is himself shot by a POW before he can go through with it. To the end, *Blitzmädchen* highlights the victimization of average Germans by their Nazi leaders while crimes against Poles, Russians, and Jews play a minor role and complicity is conveniently sidelined. On the final pages, Margot blames the SS commander for the misfortune that has befallen her and her friends: "Keil, the beast, I hate him. We are paying for his atrocities against the Poles" – even though, just a few pages earlier, the same Margot, who knew all about Keil's crimes, had a blissful affair with him – a "talented artist" both "in bed and on the piano."[137]

Much like Vogt, Gartmann highlights the natural femininity of her protagonists while insisting that they are fully capable of handling the demands of their job.[138] Vera and her friends define themselves as soldiers, but soldiers in skirts.[139] In some ways, *Blitzmädchen* embraces traditional gender roles, particularly in its representation of Nazi perpetrators. Keil's fanaticism requires no explanation, but Potter's ideological affinity with National Socialism is an aberration because it violates gender expectations: "Gradually we began to doubt whether she is truly a member of the female sex."[140] Repeatedly, Gartmann uses the gender of her protagonists to emphasize their innocence and victimization.[141] And yet, although the

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text tends to present women as naturally peaceful victims, its basic structure casts doubt on such easy dichotomies. After all, Vera and her friends are both feminine and efficient soldiers, and the female leader Potter is both a woman and a Nazi leader.[142] Moreover, when Vera's friend Beate dies of a miscarriage, *Blitzmädchen* offers a critique of the underprivileged status of female auxiliaries in the German army: Beate dies not only because army hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties but also because they are not equipped to deal with pregnant women.

Much like Vogt's account, the fictionalized *Blitzmädchen* is marked by narrative ruptures. Although the text was published almost two decades after the end of the war, its narrative is disjointed and inconsistent. Graphic descriptions of sexualized torture, vague references to prison camps, and lukewarm denial of any knowledge of the Holocaust exist side by side without a discernible attempt to reconcile these disparate perspectives. The text relies on gender to distance its female protagonists from the Nazi reign of terror even as it portrays the young women's intimate involvement with various aspects of the war. Gartmann's docunovel hopes to garner sympathy for protagonists who bristle at the immorality of Nazi leaders, but unwittingly unveils how deeply these women are themselves affected by the dehumanizing thrust of National Socialist ideology. In *Blitzmädchen*, the fact that Margot sleeps with Keil, the embodiment of SS sadism, even though she is aware of his crimes, requires no explanation. Nor does the text ponder whether letting Potter freeze to death is indeed a justified form of punishment for her ideological blindness. We do not know how much of *Blitzmädchen* is authentic and how much is fictional, but we do know that, in spite of its desire to highlight the victimization of Hitler's female helpers and to portray a small group of sick men as responsible for Nazi atrocities, the text ultimately features female protagonists who are themselves corrupted by the Nazi regime. Even though Gartmann marshals gender and rank to obfuscate the involvement of female auxiliaries in Nazi crimes, their complicity emerges in the fissures and ruptures of the text.

Ilse Schmidt: *Die Mitläuferin: Erinnerungen einer Wehrmachtsangehörigen*

Ilse Schmidt started writing her memoir decades after the war. During her years of silence, she had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Random events, such as a whirring fan, triggered panic attacks and caused feelings of anxiety and shame. In an effort to confront her illness and encouraged by Ingeborg Drewitz, Schmidt decided to record

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her experiences during the war. She reports that the process of wading through the "thicket of memories" was accompanied by physical symptoms, including nausea, sleeplessness, and anxiety.[143] She completed a short version in the 1980s, which was stored in the *Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv*.[144] The longer version, published in 1999, is written in present tense; its short sentences and sentence fragments convey the impression that Schmidt is still in the moment – an impression that is reinforced even further as Schmidt repeatedly interrupts her narrative to comment on the difficulty of writing about the war.

Ilse Schmidt, *née* Struwe, was born in 1919 in Brandenburg. She attended a secondary school followed by a trade school where she learned shorthand, typing, and accounting. At home, she took care of her sick mother, who died when Ilse was fourteen, and worked in her father's fruit-and-vegetable store. Her father joined the party for opportunistic reasons, driven by fear of unemployment and loss of status, but her family also included a Communist uncle and Social Democrats as well as diehard Nazis. Like most female auxiliaries, Schmidt notes that she herself was not interested in politics. She was, however, attracted to pretty uniforms and had a short-lived relationship with a *Sturmabteilung* (SA) man.

When an uncle in the employ of the secretary of the navy advised her to join the navy as an auxiliary, Schmidt seized this most welcome opportunity to escape from her stifling home environment. Six weeks after her twenty-first birthday, she happily embarked for Paris where she worked in the navy propaganda department, taking dictation, and archiving newspaper articles. Outside of the office, she availed herself of the many opportunities for amusement.[145] In spite of such professed enjoyment, however, Schmidt's writing is marked by a sort of split consciousness. On one and the same page, Schmidt waxes enthusiastic about French fashion, praising the "delightfully carefree time,"[146] and reports waiting for a date with air force men who do not show up because they were shot down. Clearly, in order to remain "carefree," army auxiliaries had to become habituated to the omnipresence of death in everyday life. But the strenuous effort involved in repressing anything that might interfere with the vision of a carefree life remains visible in the fractures of the text.

After Paris, Schmidt was transferred to the Bordeaux office of the navy newspaper *Gegen Engeland* and quartered in the home of an old French lady. She came to admire French *savoir vivre* and felt uncomfortable with her German companions' nationalism. In June 1941, she was deployed to Belgrade where she lived in a villa and had a Serbian maid. Here too she was assigned to the propaganda department in charge of "informing" the

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German-speaking population about the war. In remembering this deployment, Schmidt reflects on what it meant to be a woman in an army of men. On the one hand, she was aware that becoming an army auxiliary allowed her to escape a life of domestic drudgery. Since all cooking and cleaning was handled by women of the occupied nation, Schmidt was free to pursue her career or enjoy leisure activities. On the other hand, she moved in an environment characterized by rampant sexism: when an officer all but ordered his men to accompany him on a visit to a brothel, Schmidt looked on in silence; when soldiers at a train station started yelling, "fuck her, the old pig," she pretended not to notice.[147] We would do well to take note of this aspect of working in a male-dominated milieu, especially in light of the oft-repeated claims that army auxiliaries enjoyed their minority status as coveted love objects among hundreds of admiring men.

After a bout of scarlet fever followed by a vacation and a brief stint with the theater and dance department in Belgrade, Schmidt was transferred to Rowno in the Ukraine, where she arrived in March 1942. Schmidt remembers that she had a Jewish maid, but cannot remember the exact nature of her work there.[148] She does, however, recall vividly that she observed executions from her bedroom window and that her superior, who noticed her discomfort, advised her not to think about it anymore.[149]

Schmidt reports further gaps in her memory brought on by a nervous breakdown during the German army's rapid retreat after the defeat at Stalingrad. She was left behind by her commanding officer, and barely made her way out. Schmidt, who even at the time was increasingly plagued by memories of her experiences in the East, then worked for Admiral Wilhelm Canaris in the office of counter-espionage in Berlin before applying for transfer to Rome to escape the daily bombing campaigns. Since the Allies had not landed in Sicily yet, Italy was relatively unaffected by the war, but, instead of enjoying the relative calm, Schmidt felt guilty about avoiding the dangers to which others were exposed.[150] She had an affair with a married man, but began to care about politics and realized that her paramour was a Nazi. When the war caught up with her, she experienced a bombing raid on Verona, moved north with the troops, and was taken into captivity by the Americans in May 1945. Friends helped her pretend that she was sick to get her back to Germany, where she ended up working in a POW hospital near Stuttgart, then in a psychiatric hospital near Braunschweig. After the war, she married a lieutenant she had met in Paris who had survived Stalingrad and spent six years in a Russian POW camp.

What stands out in Schmidt's memoir is how difficult the author finds it to talk about the violence, injustice, and murder that she witnessed on

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numerous occasions. Undoubtedly, there are many reasons for this silence: it might be caused by the repression of traumatic experiences, an ardent desire to look the other way, denial, deliberate lies, or the long-term effects of the secrecy imposed by the Nazi regime.[151] Moreover, in addition to the cognitive and emotional mechanisms of repression and denial that helped young women such as Schmidt deal with their complicity in the Third Reich, there are the profound effects of war and terror on all forms of intimacy, including the ability to communicate with and confide in another. During wartimes, strangers quickly become fast friends and then separate again just as easily. Romantic couplings are often fleeting either because the partners are transferred to other locations or because they have previous commitments. (Schmidt's involvement with a married man in Belgrade was one of several affairs facilitated by the man's prolonged absence from his spouse.) In Paris, Schmidt dated an intelligence officer, but they both made a point of never discussing work with each other. Most of the time, Schmidt does not even know if her partners are Nazis. It would seem that both the war and the Nazi regime eroded the kind of trust that would have allowed people like Schmidt to verbalize her experiences. Without such verbalization at the time, however, the task of reflecting on and processing experiences many years after the war becomes infinitely more difficult. As Huyssen explains, "the past is not simply there in memory but . . . must be articulated to become memory."[152]

In addition to the strictures of war and political oppression, individual predispositions and familial background contributed to Schmidt's initial silence. Schmidt herself attributes her inability to speak about the Nazi atrocities to her oath of secrecy, to fears of negative repercussions, and to an upbringing that taught her to ignore unpleasant realities. Her mother's favorite admonishment was "for the sake of dear peace, be quiet" while her father expected unconditional obedience.[153] Schmidt believes that in this her childhood resembled that of many Germans who remained silent and closed their eyes to reality. Thus, familial socialization and the political pressures of a regime in which, as Hannah Arendt explains, "everything plays out between news that nobody dares to talk about and propaganda lies that nobody believes" work together to create a stifling atmosphere of silence and denial.[154] When Schmidt is in Belgrade, she is repeatedly confronted with photos of mass shootings as part of her job, but does not dare discuss such evidence with anybody. After a while, she stops opening the envelopes and simply passes them on to her superior. Similarly, when Schmidt and a friend happen upon partisans who were hanged on lampposts, they do not talk to each other (or anybody else)

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about what they have seen. In the Ukraine, Schmidt observes how a crowd of Jewish men, women, and children are rounded up. She learns later that they were shot, but is afraid to speak out. Instead, she feels depressed and cries uncontrollably. According to Schmidt, the same avoidance strategy also characterized the behavior of her fellow army auxiliaries, all of whom do not talk about the war.[155]

The silence of Schmidt and her contemporaries not only sustained the Nazi regime of terror, it also prevented victims from receiving justice after the war. As Hannah Arendt explains, there is an intimate connection between silence and denial: "Since humans need their fellow men who can understand and confirm what they know and have experienced, for their own knowledge and experience, that which everybody knows somehow but can never say out loud loses all tangible reality."[156] In Schmidt's memoir, such a diffusion of reality and the resultant confusion about her motivations and those of others are plainly evident. At times, Schmidt seems genuinely unsure if her choices were motivated by an aversion to the Nazi regime. Thus, she is uncertain if the failure of her relationship with an SA man had something to do with his time on the eastern front and the fact that, in a letter, he had talked about cutting off the beard of an old Jewish man. Similarly, she wonders if her transfer to Serbia was a form of punishment for her fraternization with the French. With such basic confusion about one's motivations and the consequences of one's actions, however, accountability becomes impossible.

Unlike Gartmann, who portrays female army auxiliaries as victims of the Third Reich, Schmidt makes an effort to understand the significance of her work as an integral part of the Nazi death machine. She mentions an incident in which she explained to her superiors the underlying, critical meaning of a story published in a Serbian newspaper. At the time, she felt proud that she understood what her male superiors did not. Later, however, she realizes that her cleverness may have cost the Serbian writers of the piece their lives because "even the most insignificant cog has a function and many of these cogs make up the whole big machine."[157] Along the same lines, Schmidt begins to understand the importance of army auxiliaries for the Nazi war of conquest. When she is transferred to Poltawa, 600 kilometers from Stalingrad, she realizes that the soldiers whose jobs are now being done by female army auxiliaries were sent to Stalingrad. She wonders, "What am I doing in this male war? Men make war. Men kill. And they need women as hand maidens in their war."[158] As this citations shows, even though Schmidt begins to grasp the impact of her actions in the larger context of the war and even though she ponders her own complicity, she

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still sees herself primarily as a victim. To Schmidt, female army auxiliaries are pawns in a male war, yoked to a cause that they do not fully understand.

Schmidt's memoir suggests that she was no anti-Semite, but rather traumatized by the violence she witnessed and ashamed for her countrymen.[159] At the same time, however, a lot of attention is paid to her own suffering whereas the details of the massacres she was privy to remain vague. In her introduction to Schmidt's memoir, Annette Kuhn speaks of the gaping rift between the horror of the events and the sparse pieces of information given by Ilse Schmidt.[160] Along the same lines, Maubach points out that in Schmidt's account, the number of victims of the Nazi terror is greatly reduced: Schmidt estimates that 300 Jews were held in the Rowno ghetto, even though the actual number of victims is closer to 5,000.[161] Schwarz's critique of the same passage is even more pronounced. Schwarz compares Schmidt's account to that of a contemporary, a German engineer in Rovno, who testified at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. This witness notes that the streets were lined with corpses. Schwarz comments tersely that, in light of this testimony and also of the fact that Schmidt's office window faced the courtyard where executions were routinely carried out, "her dramatically retold story of the deportation loses credibility."[162]

When Schmidt witnesses the preparation for a massacre, her first reaction is to call on the victims to defend themselves more vigorously: "Do more! That's not enough! Defend yourselves."[163] Hours later it occurs to her that she herself does not fight back either. At the end of her memoir, Schmidt asks, "who am I, what should I have done, why did I not do anything,"[164] and concludes that the only thing she is no longer guilty of is silence. Even though at times Schmidt's sense of victimization threatens to occlude her complicity, her trauma is clearly defined not only by her suffering but also by an acute awareness of her own culpability.

In spite of her effort to break the silence and reflect on her experiences, Schmidt's memoir remains marked by the same ruptures that characterized her life during the Third Reich. Memories of her home life, romantic affairs, and acquaintances in the occupied territories are vivid while attempts to integrate the victims of the Nazi regime into her narrative remain incomplete. The narrative flows when Schmidt speaks of her social life and her impressions as a foreigner in other countries. She also conveys a vivid sense of the fear of violence and of the intense panic with which she responded to her growing realization of Nazi atrocities, but she has no memory of the actual work she did in the Ukraine and offers only fleeting glimpses of the Jewish victims of the regime. In one of her short

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comments on the process of writing, Schmidt reports a recurring dream in which she recovers a box that was buried deep in the ground. At first, she cannot open the box, but when she finally succeeds, she finds her hidden self. It would appear that this box is an apt metaphor for Schmidt's book: her narrative is marked by the struggle to understand her former self, to write about feelings she could not verbalize or even acknowledge at the time. But it is telling that it is Schmidt's self, and not, as one might expect, the crimes of the Third Reich that are buried and in need of recovery. In reading Schmidt's memoir, one wishes that Schmidt could have paid tribute to the victims by recovering through research what she failed to notice at the time: by November 1941, 15,000 Rowno Jews had been murdered.[165] As it is, the book remains primarily an exploration of self, with sideways glances at the criminal nature of the Nazi regime. Even so, however, Schmidt's memoir differs from other similar accounts because the author recognizes that, in some small way, her work at the time contributed to the functioning of the Nazi machine of war and genocide.[166] Of all texts discussed in the chapter, Schmidt's *Die Mitläuferin* is the only one that engages in an effort to account for the author's complicity.

Conclusion

In recent years, several scholars have drawn attention to the various strategies that served to minimize women's involvement in the Nazi war and genocide. Kompisch, for example, notes that the demonization and sexualization of a few female perpetrators, such as Ilse Koch, created a safe distance between these monstrous outliers and the average German woman during the Third Reich. Kompisch also points out that whenever women professed ignorance about Nazi atrocities or declared that they were *forced* to participate in criminal actions, their claims were believed all too easily.[167] The motivation for such credulity is all too obvious: because women were barred from leadership positions in the party, they represent the silent majority. Consequently, acknowledging the full scope of women's participation in the Second World War and the Holocaust would be one more step toward recognizing the involvement of everyday Germans in the terror of the Nazi regime. And yet, if we read the memoirs of women who worked for the German army, such everyday involvement is plainly evident. Autobiographical texts by army auxiliaries such as Vogt and Gartmann teach us not only that women were much closer to the frontlines and far more involved in armed combat than is commonly

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acknowledged, they also show that women were informed about the Nazi war and genocide, and, to various degrees, complicit with them.

Neither Vogt nor Reitsch nor Gartmann reflect critically on their role in the Nazi regime. Vogt's and Gartmann's complicity emerges in the narrative ruptures, omissions, and contradictions that characterize both texts. Consider, for example, the extraordinary sense of agency at the time and the growing feeling of victimization after the war. Tellingly, Vogt fondly remembers the "soldier's happiness that we experienced all the same"[168] even as she complains bitterly about being mistreated in American captivity. Or think of Schmidt who is delighted when she alone understands the true meaning of a code used by partisans and who, when she applies for transfer to Rome, declares "that I took my life into my hands for the first time, decided about my future by myself and reacted independently."[169] It is this gap between the positive experience of travel, independence, and action on the one hand and the exposure to violence and genocide on the other, between the author's personal story, the reality of war, and, in later decades, the awareness of discourses of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that produces the narrative ruptures evident in Vogt's, Gartmann's, and Schmidt's texts.

Many young German women longed to be part of a bigger cause and to be needed, and the Nazis excelled at exploiting this enthusiasm for their purpose. Young women such as Vogt and Schmidt appreciated the freedom they gained through their association with the National Socialist Party. As the Nazis began to lose the war, however, the struggle for survival overshadowed any remaining sense of agency. Even so, Vogt, a Nazi enthusiast who volunteered as late as 1944, remained convinced of the righteousness of her cause until the bitter end and consequently felt no need to justify her actions. Vogt spoilt for action and derived her sense of self-worth from her participation in the war. Her text is a shocking testament to the chauvinism and racism that motivated her association with the Nazis. While Vogt's youth is an extenuating circumstance, Reitsch never revised her perception of the Nazis or of her own role in their regime, even though she had plenty of time to do so. Because Reitsch shielded herself from any unpleasant reality even during the Third Reich, her account is marked not by inconsistency but by repetition and stock phrases.

Unlike Vogt and Reitsch, Gartmann's protagonists claim to despise the Nazis. Although they contribute to the war effort on many levels, they see themselves not as cogs in the Nazi machine, but as victims of the Nazis and thus feel no need to justify their actions. Finally, some memoirs are marked

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by remorse and regret. Decades after the war, Ilse Schmidt began to understand that, in some small way, her actions had helped to prolong a criminal war and had even contributed to the persecution and murder of millions of innocents. Of all the memoirs discussed in this chapter, Schmidt's text is by far the most instructive, precisely because Schmidt was neither an avid Nazi nor an opponent of the regime. Her memoir teaches us about the dangers of defining one's own life as apolitical and about the nefarious consequences of silence. Schmidt's memoir suggests that her silence, as well as the silence of her fellow army auxiliaries, lies at the heart of her failure to respond to the atrocities she witnessed. Because she did not verbalize her experiences at the time, her reality eroded. Actual ignorance and willful denial became indistinguishable. There may be little one can do about the gigantic capacity for denial of outliers such as Reitsch, but there is much to be gained by heeding the lessons implied in Schmidt's memoir.

Notes

1. Hagemann, "Preface," ix.
2. Germany never fully implemented the compulsory service for women permitted by the Defense Law of 1935. In January 1943, when the Nazis were losing the war and the need for manpower became dire, they introduced a labor conscription law that targeted women between the ages of seventeen and forty-five (excepting those who had one small or two school-age children), but did not fully implement it as the Nazi leadership was concerned about its impact on the morale of frontline soldiers, the *Wehrfreudigkeit in der Truppe* (Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen*, 262). Because there was no general mobilization of the female sex (Bajohr, *Die Hälfte der Fabrik*, 253), "almost two-thirds of married women of working age were not employed" (Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 54). The fact that wives of soldiers received up to 85 percent of their husbands' previous remuneration and that this allowance was reduced if these wives earned a salary did not help matters. (In contrast, the United States offered a low allowance and did not reduce it if women worked.) All in all, the German labor conscription law did more harm than good: its social injustice led to many complaints since female members of the upper classes – the wives of officers and party functionaries – were typically not pressed to find employment (see Lehker, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 108; Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, xvii; Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 50). In comparison, Britain made war service compulsory for young, single women in 1941 (see Summerfield, "'She Wants a Gun Not a Dishcloth!'" 119). DeGroot writes that nine out of ten single women and eight out of ten married women served in the British army or industry ("Cordite," 100). Finally, while the

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United States, Germany, and England used women in noncombat roles, in the Soviet Union, women were involved in combat "serving as snipers, machinegunners, artillery women, and tank women" (Elshtain, *Women and War*, 178). The Russians also created three all-female air force regiments, one of which, the 588th Night Bomber Regiment, was called "The Night Witches" (Jones, *Women Warriors*, 144; see also Pennington, "'Do Not Speak of the Services You Rendered'"). Koepcke estimates that 800,000 to 1 million women served in the Red Army (*Frauen im Wehrdienst*, 104). According to Conze and Fieseler, the press depicted female soldiers as "isolated cases" ("Soviet Women as Comrades-in-Arms," 222), even though half a million carried weapons and served at the front (212).

3. Maubach, *Stellung*, 10.
4. Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*, 6.
5. See also Hanley, who explains that "unless we undermine the soldier's monopoly on representing himself at war, our memories of war will overtly or covertly serve his interests. We can challenge this monopoly only by redefining what war literature is about" (Hanley, *Writing War*, 124).
6. Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 10–11.
7. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 50. See Prager, who explains that memories are "screens that express perceptions of the past generated by interests that postdate the past experiences" (Prager, *Presenting the Past*, 53).
8. For example, Vogt states that she does not want to bore her audience ("Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 38).
9. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 52.
10. Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 4.
11. See Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 25; Bajohr, *Die Hälfte der Fabrik*, 228.
12. See Benz, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 197.
13. As of 1939, "all girls between seventeen and twenty-five who were not in full-time employment, school, or occupational training and were not needed as 'helping family members' in agriculture must join the Reich Labor Service (RAD)" (Hagemann, "Home/Front," 20–21); see also Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im Dritten Reich*, 57, 85, and 89.
14. Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 9.
15. For more information, see Benz, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 15; Koepcke, *Frauen im Wehrdienst*, 75; Hagemann, "Home/Front," 21.
16. Kompisch points out that many assistant nurses were recruited as army auxiliaries (Kompisch, *Täterinnen*, 217; see also Maubach, "Expansion," 103).
17. Gersdorff offers a precise count of the distribution of women within the armed forces: when the war started on September 1, 1939, 140,000 women were employed in the army; 50,000 of them were white collar workers and 90,000 were blue collar workers; 300,000 women were employed in the reserve army; the infantry employed 8,000 women in communication and 12,500 auxiliaries; the air force employed 130,000 and the navy 20,000 (Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 74).

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18. Hagemann, "Home/Front," 24.
19. See Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 6.
20. For more information, see Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 35.
21. Most anti-aircraft stations were manned by two soldiers and six auxiliaries (see Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 42). See also Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 148 and Hagemann, "Kraft," 100.
22. See Blum, "'Einen weiblichen Soldaten gibt es nicht,'" 47.
23. The United States went to great lengths to confine women to noncombat status: for example, while women controlled "searchlight operations, targeting and hit confirmation" in mixed artillery crews, male recruits had to fire (Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*, 123). Of course, this differentiation is rather artificial. As Annemarie Heinz writes: "Die Befehle, die ich weitergebe, setzen nicht nur die Scheinwerfer in Gang, sie ermöglichen die Zielfindung der Kanonen. … Wir sind zu Handlangern des Todes geworden" ("The commands that I pass on not only turn the lights on, they also facilitate the targeting of cannons. … We are the henchmen of death") (Heinz, *Anna, die Soldatin*, 73). See also Szepansky, *Blitzmädel, Heldenmutter, Kriegerwitwe*, 48.
24. "Zur Bedienung von Feuerwaffen im Kampf gegen den Feind dürfen Frauen und Mädchen im allgemeinen nicht herangezogen werden" (cited in Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 73). Women were also warned that the use of a weapon might expose them to harsher treatment by the enemy (see Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 374).
25. Service of women in the Wehrmacht on a large scale was first suggested at a meeting of state secretaries in the Ministry of Propaganda (Willmot, "Women in the Third Reich," 13).
26. See Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 38.
27. See Maubach, *Stellung*, 17, and Lehker, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 43. In 1936, Hitler declared: "Solange wir ein gesundes männliches Geschlecht besitzen … wird in Deutschland keine weibliche Handgranatenwerferinnen-Abteilung gebildet und kein weibliches Scharfschützenkorps" ("As long as we have healthy men … Germany will not form a battalion of female throwers of hand grenades or a female corps of sharpshooters") (cited in Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 8).
28. See Maubach, "Expansion," 108.
29. See Benz, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 201; Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 95; Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 72, and Kundrus, "Nur die halbe Geschichte," 721. Szepansky points out that some anti-aircraft auxiliaries were instructed in the use of machine guns (*Blitzmädel, Heldenmutter, Kriegerwitwe*, 240); see also Spieckermans, who writes about her "Geschützausbildung" (training in the use of guns) ("Als Flakwaffenhelferin im Einsatz 1944/45," 32).
30. "Ausstattung mit Handfeuerwaffen für den persönlichen Schutz, soweit im Einzelfall erforderlich, auch mit Panzerfaust pp. ist zulässig. Soweit Frauen und Mädchen im Heimatkriegsgebiet zum Wachdienst eingesetzt sind, wird Ausstattung mit Handfeuerwaffen genehmigt" ("Being equipped with

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handguns for personal protection, insofar as it is required in individual cases, also with bazookas is permitted. Insofar as women and girls are deployed for guard duty on the home front being equipped with handguns is approved") (Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 531). See also Koepcke, *Frauen im Wehrdienst*, 76, and Heinz, *Anna, die Soldatin*, 44–45.

31. See Koepcke, *Frauen im Wehrdienst*, 75; Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 60; see also DeGroot on the "inferior, semi-detached status of auxiliaries" who "did not enlist, they were enrolled; they were supervised, not commanded" ("Arms and the Woman," 14).
32. On the ranks for women, see Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 19.
33. "Zur Ersparung von Spinnstoffwaren" (Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 356).
34. "In June 1944, women were 39.4 per cent of the total British workforce" (Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*, 182). While the United States chose not to conscript women for war work, the promotional campaigns of the War Manpower Commission and the Office of War Information were successful: "Germany's labor force increased by only 1% from 1939 to 1944, while the American female labor force increased by 32% from 1941 to 1945" (Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 75).
35. Maubach, *Stellung*, 73. It is also important to keep in mind that Hitler's female army was very young, typically between eighteen and twenty-five years old (see Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 15).
36. As Enloe points out, even today recruitment strategies are designed to appeal to "the private aspirations and needs of those women who have the fewest alternatives for education, income, and autonomy" (Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*, 134).
37. "Abenteuer wollte ich erleben! Fremde Länder wollte ich sehen" (Lipinski, *Frauen an die Front!* 32). Responding to this thirst for adventure, the military authorities, concerned about women who enjoyed their time abroad a bit too much, repeatedly sought to institute strict guidelines: "Von jeder deutschen Angestellten wird erwartet, daß sie insbesondere in der Öffentlichkeit alles vermeidet, was dem Ansehen der Deutschen im besetzten Frankreich irgendwie abträglich sein könnte. Dazu gehört auch der Besuch von Gaststätten über Mitternacht hinaus. In Ausnahmefällen trägt der deutsche Begleiter die Verantwortung. Gelage, Alkoholmißbrauch sind verboten, desgleichen lautes Benehmen und Einhaken auf der Straße" ("Every female employee is expected to avoid everything, particularly in public, that could be detrimental to the reputation of Germans in occupied France. This includes frequenting pubs after midnight. In exceptional cases the German companion is responsible. Wild parties and the consumption of alcohol are prohibited, as are loud conduct or linking arms in the streets") (cited in Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 330). In contrast, there was great sympathy for men who needed to release pressure. Responding to a female complaint about an evening in a casino that referred to male officers as "barbarische[r] Sauhaufen" (barbaric pigs), the authorities insisted that

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"Unsere Offiziere, die täglich ihr Leben für die Zukunft des deutschen Volkes einsetzen, dürfen nicht in die Lage gebracht werden, daß jede verständnislose Gans sie in so entwürdigender Weise kritisiert") ("Our officers who daily risk their lives for the future of the German people should not be put in a position in which every stupid goose can criticize them in such a humiliating way") (cited in Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 334).

38. Harvey's study about German women who participated in the colonization of the East lists the following motivations: "opportunities for sight-seeing and self-enrichment," as well as "reluctant conformity, career-minded opportunism, a patriotic sense of duty, or an ideological commitment to the regime's colonizing 'drive to the East'" (Harvey, "Remembering and Repressing," 276–277). Harvey notes that many women saw the war as "a welcome opportunity to demonstrate their independence and their competence as women, to acquire professional experience and to 'see something of the world'; to escape from familial pressures and the stress of living under Allied bombardment, or a humdrum job" (Harvey, "Remembering and Repressing," 291). See also Winkler, *Frauenarbeit im Dritten Reich*, 123.
39. "Wir haben gelebt wie die Dubarry," cited in Killius, *Frauen für die Front*, 152.
40. See Herzog's comments on the "consensual pleasures made possible by the anonymity and mass mobility of times of war and the accompanying disruptions of traditional constraints and communal and familial monitoring mechanisms" (Herzog, "Introduction," 5).
41. Summ, *Schäfers Tochter*, 130.
42. Cited in Kardorff, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen 1942–45*, 93. Alexijewitsch shows that female Russian soldiers dealt with the same prejudice (*Der Krieg hat kein weibliches Gesicht*, 57, 112).
43. Römer, *Kameraden*, 118. See also Maubach, "Gender Relations," 169.
44. See Szepansky, *Blitzmädel, Heldenmutter, Kriegerwitwe*, 97.
45. In contrast, women who joined before 1941 were volunteers. According to Maubach, there were no forced recruitments before 1941 (Maubach, *Stellung*, 107).
46. "Viele Augen sehen haßerfüllt auf die Uniform, die ich trage" (Himmelstoß, *Und ich konnte nichts ändern!* 131). See also Lipinski: "Manch haßvoller Blick der Einheimischen traf uns. Verständlicherweise mochten sie uns nicht. Wer mag schon Besatzer aus einem 'Herrenvolk' über sich?" ("The locals cast many a hateful glance on us. Understandably, they did not like us. Who likes being lorded over by occupiers from a master race?") (Lipinski, *Frauen an die Front!* 4).
47. Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 152.
48. "Es war Krieg und trotzdem ging man noch ins Kino. . . . Alles in allem war es in Frankreich eine sehr glückliche und abwechslungsreiche Zeit" (Killius, *Frauen für die Front*, 56 and 63; see also 146). See also Ruth Kirsten-Herbst, who writes, "Trotz Krieg und Bomben gefiel es mir ganz gut" ("In spite of war and bombs, I liked it very much") (*Mädchen an der Front*, 7), and Ilse Gräfin von Bredow, who trained horses for the army and whose memoir treats the

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war years as a treasure trove of amusing anecdotes about the folly of mankind while eliding the murderous actions of the regime.

49. Killius's collection contains many statements along these lines, e.g., "Das Politische war zweitrangig, der Beruf, das Privatleben war wichtiger" ("Politics was secondary, one's job, one's private life were more important") (*Frauen für die Front*, 39), or "Es war Krieg. Aber das stand ganz im Hintergrund" ("It was war. But that was completely in the background") (40), or "Ich war auch politisch wenig interessiert als junges Mädchen. Ich war eben jung und hatte andere Dinge im Kopf" ("I had little interest in politics as a young girl. I was young and had other things to think about") (50).
50. See Christiane Grote and Gabriele Rosenthal on women's self-definition as apolitical as a strategy of exoneration ("Frausein als Entlastungsargument für die biographische Verstrickung in den Nationalsozialismus?"). See also Mahr, *Kriegsliteratur von Frauen?* 122.
51. Meyer, "Anpassung, Selbstbehauptung und Verdrängung," 179.
52. Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 99.
53. Kompisch, *Täterinnen*, 84; Zipfel, "Die Welt ist so schön, und wir zerstören sie," 178.
54. See Zipfel, "Die Welt ist so schön, und wir zerstören sie," 174; "Wie führen," 465–467.
55. Lipinski, *Frauen an die Front!*, 16; see also 30.
56. Rosenthal speaks of "Deckgeschichten . . . Erzähllücken" ("cover stories . . . narrative gaps"). She points out that Germans who were not persecuted told stories that presented them as victims, but only hinted at and did not expand on scenes of real horrors, fear of death, the murder and dying of others, persecution, and a failure to help or resist (Rosenthal, *Der Holocaust im Leben von drei Generationen*, 36). See also Sayner, who notes "a tension between a suggested critical awareness by the protagonist and a repetition of positive characteristics of the past" (*Women without a Past?*, 182).
57. Killius, *Frauen für die Front*, 81.
58. "Uns ergriff eine Ahnung davon, was die nächste Zeit bringen sollte: Auflösung aller sittlichen Ordnungen, Mißtrauen gegen jedermann, Denunziationen . . . Neuartigkeit der Situation" (Kirsten-Herbst, *Mädchen an der Front*, 97).
59. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 26.
60. Noting this preference for stock phrases, Maubach claims that what she calls "szenische Erinnerungen" ("scenic memories"), i.e., associative stories or stories of episodes that are rarely told or told for the first time, tend to be closer to the actual events than stereotypical, rehearsed narrative formulae that have become part of the personal repertoires of war stories (*Stellung*, 38).
61. For more information on Rüdiger, see Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 77. Rüdiger claims that the party wanted her to select a group of BDM girls for service while she herself insisted that they rely on volunteers (*Ein Leben*, 125). Since Rüdiger's memoir shows little desire to obfuscate or deny her

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National Socialist worldview – she proudly defends her conviction that Jews are different – it is likely that this is her genuine opinion.

62. Rüdiger was given the manuscript by Ruth Windisch, who had been Vogt's leader in the BDM and then served as her *Flakwaffenoberführerin* in Prague.
63. See Rüdiger, *Ein Leben*, 130; Rüdiger, "Foreword," 7.
64. "Mit frischer Kraft und Freude sahen wir dem Kommenden entgegen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 18). See also Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 21.
65. "Wir wären schon lieber im Einsatz gewesen, um am Kampf teilzuhaben" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 23). See also Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 22.
66. See Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 29 and 42. See also "Seit einigen Tagen stehen Mädel aus unseren Reihen an den Geschützen" ("for several days now girls from our group have been manning the guns") (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 32).
67. "Immer noch gingen wir aufrecht und vertrauten dem Führer. Deutschland wird nicht untergehen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 45; see also 24 and 37).
68. "Frohsinn" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 29); "diese Vögelchen herunterzuholen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 17).
69. Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 47.
70. "diese Hunde" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 56); "Gesindel" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 49 and 58); "das goldene Prag . . . Wie schön wäre es, wenn nicht immer slawische Laute diese Andacht stören würden" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 39; see also 33).
71. "Kugelregen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 53).
72. "Das Leben war ja nun keinen Schuß Pulver mehr wert" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 53).
73. "Nichts kann uns rauben, Liebe und Glauben zu unserem Land" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 54). Indeed, singing is Vogt's default reaction to the sight of urban destruction.
74. Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 66 and 57.
75. See also Lehker, who points out that the militarization of girls began in the BDM, where they were habituated to entrance exams, uniforms, IDs, performance records, and badges (Lehker, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus*, 37), and continued later with military rituals, such as the awarding of the mother's cross (49).
76. "Wir waren bestimmt keine rauhen Krieger – immer nur Frauen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 28).
77. "Trotz ihres soldatischen Einsatzes keine Soldaten . . . auf ihre frauliche Eigenart . . . Rücksicht . . . nehmen" (cited in Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst 1914–1945*, 469).
78. See Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 64.

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79. "Über unser Verhalten in den Prager Kampftagen und bei diesem schweren Marsch gestaunt und selbst dabei Kraft geschöpft" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 64). Conversely, women who do not join the fight and whom "jeder Amerikaner, ja Neger … für eine Tafel Schokolade haben [kann]" ("every American, every negro … can have for a bar of chocolate") disgust her (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 66).
80. "Frieden und Waffenruhe und Kriegsgefangene – gibt es das?" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 60).
81. She does have fond memories of singing in the POW camps with a group of other women who became known as the Pilsener Nordkasernenspatzen.
82. "Über das Ende des Krieges werden wir wohl nie hinwegkommen: unser Deutschland ist nicht mehr. Die Gedanken können es nicht fassen: ein Volk, kein Reich, kein Führer mehr" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 86).
83. For example, she remarks that one of the barracks is being built by Jews (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 37).
84. "Juden, die uns frech angrinsen" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 65); see also Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 61.
85. See Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 77.
86. See Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 18.
87. "Festes sittliches und geistiges Fundament" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 19). See also Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 30.
88. "Als ob ich nur versehentlich ein Mädchen geworden wäre" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 17).
89. Jackson, *Hitler's Heroine*, 49.
90. "Ich wußte damals nie am Morgen, ob ich am Abend noch leben würde, aber ich fühlte mich als glücklichster Mensch der Welt, voll Dank, daß mir solche verantwortungsvolle Aufgaben übertragen wurden" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 79).
91. For more information on Reitsch's work for the military, see Piszkiewicz, *From Nazi Test Pilot to Hitler's Bunker*, 40–41.
92. "Ich wollte nur bis zur letzten Stunde meiner Heimat helfen" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 282).
93. "Ich wußte nun und hatte es an dem Aufleuchten der Augen gesehen, was es für die Männer bedeutete, daß ich aus der Heimat zu ihnen kam" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 291).
94. See Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 292.
95. She even signed on herself: "I hereby apply to be enrolled in the suicide group as pilot of a human glider bomb. I fully understand that employment in this capacity will entail my own death" (cited in Piszkiewicz, *From Nazi Test Pilot to Hitler's Bunker*, 75–76).
96. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, 80.
97. "Seine ungezwungene und einfache Art strömte eine Zuversicht aus, die sich jedem, der in seine Nähe kam, mitteilte"; "Dieser offizielle Empfang konnt

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[*sic*] eine tiefere Einsichtnahme in das Wesen und die Persönlichkeit Hitlers nicht vermitteln" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 268).

98. Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 286.
99. Surprisingly, Jackson's recent biography supports this view. The book contains numerous inaccuracies and problematic statements. For example, Jackson casts Reitsch as a young woman who "made Hitler her ultimate paternal guide" because "her own father sadly committed suicide" (9), even though her father's suicide occurred after Hitler's suicide. Jackson also claims that Reitsch criticized the persecution of Jews during *Reichskristallnacht* and on several other occasions, but does not provide source attribution for these claims. According to Jackson, Reitsch was extremely disappointed when she met Hitler and "locked herself in her room and cried for three days" (88). Again, there is no mention of a source, not even the name of the "friend" to whom Reitsch confessed her disappointment.
100. "Meine Gedanken gehörten dem Wind, den Wolken und den Sternen. Dort hinauf aber reichte das politische Ränkespiel der Welt nicht" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 228).
101. See Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 188.
102. See Piszkiewicz, *From Nazi Test Pilot to Hitler's Bunker*, 125.
103. "Völlig schuldlos" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 100).
104. "Ohne es zu wissen und ohne mich wehren zu können, auf eine politische Bühne gezogen . . . auf die ich nie gehörte" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 97; see also *Fliegen*, 8).
105. See Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 126; *Fliegen*, 9 and 193.
106. "Deutscher Kulturboden" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 11); see also her comments on "östliche Unberührtheit" and "westliche Zivilisation" (Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 131). On her father's suicide, see Piszkiewicz, *From Nazi Test Pilot to Hitler's Bunker*, 118, and Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 11.
107. "Gott zurückgeben" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 92).
108. See Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 93.
109. Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 104.
110. "Herr vergib ihnen, denn sie wissen nicht, was sie tun" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 57).
111. Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 226 and 331.
112. Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 38, 104, 137–138, 194; Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 80; see also Römer, who reports that Reitsch was universally disliked by German soldiers (*Kameraden*, 119).
113. "Die den tapferen Soldaten an der Front, die ihre Väter, Männer, Söhne und Brüder waren, auf ihre Weise halfen" (Reitsch, *Unzerstörbare*, 88); see also Reitsch, *Fliegen*, 257.
114. Piszkiewicz, *From Nazi Test Pilot to Hitler's Bunker*, 86.
115. Gartmann is not the only female author who fictionalized her experiences during the war. Annemarie Heinz's *Anna, die Soldatin* is also based on the

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author's experiences. Unlike *Blitzmädchen, Anna* features a third-person narrator.

116. See Moeller, "What Did You Do," 564.
117. On the text's strategy of turning serious concerns into jokes, see also the comment about the girls' fear of partisans: "Pap sagt immer, wer uns bei Dunkelheit wegholt und dann bei Hellem sieht, bringt uns sofort zurück" ("Pap always says that whoever takes us in the dark and then sees us in daylight will bring us right back") (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 60).
118. "Kein Kino, kein Tanz, nicht einmal Ausgang" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 17).
119. "Lehmann hat für ihr Hurenleben bezahlt, das ist alles" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 113).
120. See Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 35.
121. "Wir scheinen Parolen gegenüber immun zu sein; die Worte bleiben an der Oberfläche unserer Gedanken hängen" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 24; see also 22).
122. "Viele Polen werden sich rächen wollen . . . Und genaugenommen haben sie recht" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 235). See also 244 and 109.
123. "Die Bonzen saufen und wir verrecken" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 207).
124. Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 301.
125. "Man alle Juden umgebracht hatte. Doch wir glaubten es nicht. Warum sollte man die Juden umbringen? Sie hatten uns ja nichts getan" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 68).
126. For information on the expulsion of the Polish population and women's roles in this colonization effort, see Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*.
127. See Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 22, 42, 254.
128. "Bandenbekämpfung" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 83).
129. "Wir dürfen uns nicht einmischen. Es würde doch nichts nützen. Sie würden uns alle einsperren" (Gartmann, Blitzmädchen, 199).
130. See Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 276.
131. See also references to soldiers' brothels with Russian women (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 44).
132. In fact, the auxiliaries' own sexual adventures may have been included precisely because fictionalization allows the author to narrate her experiences without violating her need for privacy.
133. See "mir ist jetzt klar, dass wir von einer ganzen Reihe krankhafter Naturen regiert werden" ("it is clear to me now that we are being ruled by a whole series of sick characters") (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 202); and on Keil: "er ist also krank" ("therefore he is ill") (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 202).
134. "Es ist Krieg, da gelten andere Gesetze . . . Morgen können wir tot sein" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 95). See also "Wer weiss, was morgen ist? Ich jedenfalls will nicht, wenn es sein muss, als Jungfrau krepieren" ("Who knows what will happen tomorrow? I for one, if it has to be, do not want to die a virgin") (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 165). Sexual mores were also undermined by the dire material circumstances of the war. Constantly

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hungry because of their meager rations, Vera's friend Margot sleeps with the local butcher to get meat. She then lies to the butcher about being pregnant to be able to blackmail him into giving her even more meat.

135. Army auxiliary did not receive permission to disband until April 1945 (Seidler, *Blitzmädchen*, 28).
136. "Hilflose Flüchtlinge ... kaltblütig niederzumetzeln" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 266).
137. "Keil, das Vieh, ich hasse ihn. Für seine Schandtaten an den Polen büssen wir" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 302); "begnadeter Künstler" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 90); "im Bett wie am Flügel" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 302).
138. "Sie stehen Wache, erfüllen ihre Pflicht wie Soldaten. Nur des Nachts, wenn sie sich alleine wissen, sind sie keine Soldaten mehr, sondern ängstliche junge Mädchen" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 62).
139. See Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 28, 49, 57.
140. "Wir bezweifeln langsam, ob sie wirklich weiblichen Geschlechtes ist" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 44).
141. "Dieser elende, beschissene Krieg! Wir haben ihn nicht gewollt! Warum lässt man uns hier verrecken?" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 269).
142. "Der ganze Kommiss müsste aus Frauen bestehen, sagt Beate, dann wäre jeder Krieg schnell zu Ende ... Ihr habt Potter vergessen" (Gartmann, *Blitzmädchen*, 26).
143. "Gestrüpp der Erinnerung" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 13).
144. See Maubach, *Stellung* 164.
145. "Ich führe ein angenehmes Leben" ("I lead a pleasant life") (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 23); "Paris ist doch zum Amüsieren da" ("Paris is made for amusement") (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 22).
146. "Herrlich sorglose Zeit" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 24).
147. See Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 48, and "fick sie, die alte Sau" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 98).
148. "Was ich eigentlich damals genau gemacht habe, weiß ich heute nicht mehr" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 63).
149. See Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 63.
150. "Mich läßt das Gefühl nicht los, ich ließe es mir gutgehen, und die anderen liegen im Dreck" ("I cannot shake the feeling that I am enjoying myself and the others are lying in the dirt") (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 109).
151. See Maubach, *Stellung*, 195.
152. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 3.
153. "Um des lieben Friedens willen sei still" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 16); "Mich gegen meinen Vater aufzulehnen wäre mir nicht in den Sinn gekommen" ("It would not have occurred to me to rebel against my father") (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 18). See also Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 33.
154. "Wo alles sich abspielt zwischen Nachrichten, über die niemand zu reden wagt, und Propagandalügen, an die niemand glaubt" (Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, 882–883).
155. See Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 65.

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156. "Da Menschen für Wissen wie Erfahrungen der Mitmenschen bedürfen, die das Gewußte und Erfahrene mitverstehen und bestätigen können, verliert das, was jeder irgendwie weiß, aber nie laut werden lassen darf, alle greifbare Wirklichkeit" (Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, 902).
157. "Selbst das unbedeutendste Rädchen eine Funktion hat und viele dieser Rädchen die ganze große Maschine ergeben" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 46).
158. "Was mache ich in diesem Männerkrieg? Männer machen Krieg. Männer töten. Und sie brauchen Frauen als Handlangerinnen in ihrem Krieg" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 81).
159. When she happens upon a former Jewish professor who is reduced to ironing her friend's underwear, she is ashamed (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 73). In the early years of the Third Reich, she appears to have been genuinely ignorant of the plight of the Jews. For example, she remembers being angry at a Jewish classmate who disappeared one day without saying goodbye (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 74).
160. Kuhn 9; see also von Chamier and Eschebach, "Ilse Schmidt," 67.
161. Maubach, *Stellung*, 166.
162. Schwarz, "We Girls," 134.
163. "Tut mehr! Das ist nicht genug! Wehrt euch!" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 74).
164. "Wer bin ich, was hätte ich tun müssen, warum habe ich nichts getan?" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 164). See also Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 165.
165. See von Chamier and Eschebach, "Ilse Schmidt," 68.
166. Christiansen's statement about the total absence of a critical perspective with respect to Nazi terror in Schmidt's memoir fails to take account of this aspect of Schmidt's text.
167. See Kompisch, *Täterinnen*, 7 and 243.
168. "Soldatenglück, das wir trotz allem gehabt haben" (Vogt, "Bericht über den Einsatz als Flakwaffenhelferin," 76).
169. "Daß ich das erste Mal selbständig in mein Leben eingegriffen, allein über meine Zukunft entschieden und unabhängig reagiert habe" (Schmidt, *Die Mitläuferin*, 106).

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