Women's Resistance Efforts in Nazi Germany 1939–45: HerStory¹

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Abstract

German resistance to the Third Reich garners much attention in the scholarship of Nazi Germany. Yet the resistance efforts of German women in this period have consistently been devalued, if not disregarded by historians. Examining case studies of women's dissident behaviour in Germany between 1939 and 1945, this essay reassesses women's resistance and argues that their efforts were significant. Despite differing motivations and backgrounds, the Rosenstrasse wives, the women of the Kreisau Circle, Maria Terwiel, Sophie Scholl, Gertrud Staewen, Erna Dubnack and others, undermined Nazi authority and overcame gendered expectations to resist in both the public and private spheres. Through protests, underground movements, aiding the enemy and non-conformity, they gave or risked their lives, resisting the Nazi regime amid an atmosphere of terror and repression. Although accounts of the crimes of Nazism, its victims, perpetrators, collaborators and passive supporters should not be downplayed, stories of women's resistance efforts in Germany during World War II are worthy of historical recognition.

Women's resistance efforts in Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945 receive little scholarly attention. Indeed the majority of female resisters remain nameless, invisible in history.² Accounts of the Kreisau Circle and Red Orchestra dissident groups pay fleeting attention to Countess Freya von Moltke, Countess Marion Yorck von Wartenburg and Maria 'Mimi' Terwiel.³ Herbert Baum is considered more memorable than his wife, Marianne, and Hans Scholl more impressive than his sister, Sophie.⁴ Yet these women and numerous others pitted themselves

1 The term *HerStory* seeks to emphasise that women's lives, deeds and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued in standard histories. See Casey Miller & Kate Swift, *Words and Women* (New York: Anchor Press, 1976), 146.

2 Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, The Family and Nazi Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 332; Sybil Oldfield, 'German Women in the Resistance to Hitler', in *Women, State and Revolution: Essays on Power and Gender in Europe Since 1789*, ed. Sian Reynolds (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 81.

3 David Clay Large, ed., *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59.

4 *ibid.*

against the totalitarian Nazi regime, deviating from expectations of femininity embodied by *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church), in order to resist.⁵ Differing in motivations and means, these women undercut Nazi hegemony, countering the ideology and policies of National Socialism in both the public and private spheres.⁶ This essay offers an account of women's resistance efforts in Nazi Germany by establishing a viable definition of resistance. Through the use of a number of case studies, it offers a critique of the historiography of women in the Third Reich and argues that their acts of resistance were more than a sideshow to the collapse of the Nazi regime. Against overwhelming odds and in appalling circumstances, these women stayed true to their convictions despite their small numbers.⁷

A significant body of scholarly literature has been published regarding resistance to the Third Reich.⁸ Yet the definition, extent and success of resistance in Germany during World War II remains subject to heated debate.⁹ Matthew Stibbe in his work, *Women in the Third Reich*, interprets resistance, or *Widerstand*, to encompass actions of politically organised revolt.¹⁰ This narrow approach does not consider acts of dissent, non-compliance and opposition towards particular Nazi policies to constitute resistance, as they were not aimed at overthrowing the regime.¹¹ In contrast to the occupied nations, such as France, there was little evidence of resistance, as defined in this narrow way, in Germany itself.¹² As a result scholars, such as Robert Gellately and Hans Mommsen, downplay the number of German dissidents and highlight popular support for National Socialism.¹³

5 Oldfield, 'German Women in the Resistance to Hitler', 101.

6 Konrad Kweit, 'Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 24 (1979), 41; See for example, Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 51.

7 For example: 'I am, now as before, of the opinion that I did the best that I could do for my nation. I therefore do not regret my conduct and will bear the consequences that result from my conduct', Sophie Scholl, 'Official Examination Transcripts' (February 1943), Bundesarchiv Berlin, ZC 13267, Vol. 3, <http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/nationalsozialismus/weisse-rose/61044/verhoerprotokoll-sophie-scholl?p=all> (accessed 12 May 2013).

8 Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold Press, 2000), 183; See for example, Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance 1933–1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); Frank McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joachim Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death: The Story of German Resistance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1983).

9 See for example, Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (London: Hodder Education, 2003), 128; Martin Kitchen, *Nazi Germany at War* (London: Longman, 1995), 237; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 183–84; Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent*, 162–63.

10 Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; See for example, John J Michalczyk, ed., *Confront! Resistance in Nazi Germany* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 23.

11 Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 206–07; See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132.

12 As Kershaw notes, in France resistance was synonymous with attempts to oppose an invader. See for example, Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 60; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 184, 198.

13 Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Hans Mommsen, 'German Society and the Resistance Against Hitler', in Christian Leitz, ed., *The Third Reich: The Essential Readings* (London: Blackwell, 1999); See also, AJP Taylor, quoted in Shareen Blair Brysac, *Resisting Hitler: Mildred Harnack and the Red Orchestra* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 223.

Conversely, the broader concept of *Resistenz*, espoused by Martin Broszat, includes partial, passive, ambivalent and broken opposition to the Third Reich.¹⁴ While *Resistenz* undoubtedly enriches the understanding of the complex behaviour of people in Nazi Germany, encompassing their acts of conformity and non-conformity, it has been criticised for diluting the concept of resistance by regarding 'anything short of positive enthusiasm for the regime' as an act of resistance.¹⁵ Nevertheless, while *Widerstand* avoids the problems associated with recognising 'almost any gesture of non-enthusiasm' its narrowness overlooks the complex circumstances affecting German resistance during World War II.¹⁶ As a consequence, this concept unjustifiably diminishes the importance of dissent.¹⁷ In an atmosphere of terror, fear and repression, where a trivial offence resulted not only in arrest but at times imprisonment and execution, acts of non-compliance and opposition should be considered forms of resistance.¹⁸ This view was espoused by former German chancellor Willy Brandt, who suggested the term 'resister' should be expanded to include all persons who took 'serious risks to act illegally in a world where right ha[d] become wrong.'¹⁹ As such, this research regards resistance to be positioned on a continuum between *Widerstand* and *Resistenz*, comprising behaviour ranging from private nonconformity to public acts of refusal, opposition and protest that sought to undermine the totalitarian claims of the Third Reich.²⁰

While Vera Laska vowed in 1945 to 'bring the role of women in the cataclysm of World War Two to the attention of the public,' historiography of World War II has largely dismissed women's resistance efforts in Germany.²¹ Rather, this area of scholarship, for many years affected by Cold War considerations, has focused on military, conservative and political resistance networks and their male leaders.²² This preoccupation with men has effectively obscured and diminished

14 See Martin Broszat, 'A Social and Historical Typology of the German Opposition to Hitler', in Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 25.

15 Richard J Evans quoted in Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 205.

16 Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 143; See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; John M Cox, 'Jewish Resistance Against Nazism', in Jonathon C Friedman, ed., *The Routledge History of the Holocaust* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 330.

17 Ian Kershaw suggests that the definitional problems associated with *Widerstand* and *Resistenz* could potentially be avoided by using the term dissent as it encompasses more appropriately forms of action and the passivity of oppositional feeling. Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 207.

18 'Personal Individual Case Files', *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Gestapo), http://findmittel.its-arolsen.org/R2_Gestapo/index.htm (accessed 12 May 2013); See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; Dan van der Vat, 'Countess Freya von Moltke Obituary', *The Guardian*, 7 January 2010.

19 Willy Brandt, quoted in Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 49.

20 See for example, Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 330; Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 36–37; Jill Stephenson quoted in Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Germans against Hitler, July 20, 1944* (Wiesbaden: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1969), 162.

21 Vera Laska, ed., *Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust: The Voices of Eyewitnesses* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 3. See for example, Oldfield, 'German Women in the Resistance to Hitler', 81; Joyce Marie Mushaben, 'Memory and the Holocaust: Processing the Past through a Gendered Lens', *History of the Human Sciences* 17(2–3) (August 2004), 148; Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 128.

22 Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 329–30.

the role of women, with works such as Theodore Hamerow's *On the Road to the Wolf's Lair*, Hans Rothfels' *The German Opposition to Hitler* and Michael Balfour's *Withstanding Hitler* concentrating, above all, on the resistance efforts of soldiers, bureaucrats and clergymen.²³

This oversight both reflects and reinforces the widely held belief that women were passive bystanders in the male-dominated Third Reich.²⁴ The incidence and form of women's resistance efforts in Germany during World War II was substantially affected by deep-seated Nazi ideology grounded in patriarchy and racism.²⁵ An ideal Nazi woman was a 'wholesome, athletic, peasant ... a domestic mother and helper to her husband.'²⁶ As Hitler proclaimed in the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, the hereditarily healthy 'Aryan' woman's world was 'her family, her children, her house.'²⁷ The *NS-Frauenschaft* (National Socialist Women's Organization), the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* (German Women's Union) as well as the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls) brought large numbers of females into the Nazi fold, encouraging and elevating the duties and responsibilities of motherhood.²⁸ Mother's Day was commemorated as a day of national celebration, while women who bore large numbers of children were awarded the *Mutterkreuz* (Mother's Cross).²⁹ These constructs sought not only to enlist women's support in preserving and expanding a 'racially pure' Germany, but also to further exert state control over women.³⁰ As Jill Stephenson argues, National Socialism denied women free choice and self-determination, confining their activities and duties largely to the private sphere.³¹ Nevertheless, while these pervasive expectations of gender behaviour clearly limited women's ability

23 Theodore S Hamerow, *On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler*, tr. Lawrence Wilson (London: Oswald Wolff Publishers Limited, 1961); Michael Balfour, *Withstanding Hitler: In Germany 1933–45* (Oxon: Routledge, 1988).

24 See for example, Matthew Stibbe, 'Women and the Nazi State', *History Today* 43 (November 1993), 35; 'Support the Welfare Organization: "Mother and Child"', Poster (c. 1935), *German Propaganda Archive*, <http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters2.htm> (accessed 12 May 2013).

25 Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 4.

26 Myrna Goldenberg, 'Lessons Learned from Gentle Heroism: Women's Holocaust Narratives', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 548 (November 1996), 80.

27 The converse implication of state intervention in reproduction saw sterilisation of Aryan women perceived as 'worthless' or 'unfit'. See Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State' *Women and Violence* 8(3) (1983), 403; See also, Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (New York: Longman, 2001), 16 & 23; Adolf Hitler, quoted in Susan Bell Groag & Karen Offen, ed., *Women, the Family and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, 1880–1950*, vol. 2 (Stanford University Press, 1983), 388.

28 Lillian Leigh Westerfield, 'This Anguish, Like a Kind of Intimate Song': *Resistance in Women's Literature of World War II* (Kenilworth: Rodopi, 2004), 38.

29 Mothers of seven children received a gold medal, those with six, silver, and those with five, bronze. Westerfield, *This Anguish*, 38; Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 186.

30 Westerfield, *This Anguish*, 38.

31 Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 19–20.

to resist the totalitarian Nazi regime, the stereotype of the passive, homebound wife arguably shielded females from official scrutiny, as authorities did not immediately suspect women of subversive activities.³²

In reflecting and building upon existing studies of women's resistance by authors such as Nathan Stoltzfus, Vera Laska and Alison Owings, this research seeks to fill this existing historiographical gap.³³ Utilising case studies of women resisters, the discussion comprehensively examines the nature of women's public and private dissident efforts in Germany from 1939 to 1945, assessing their immediate impact and overall significance. This task, however, is fraught with difficulties. Surviving records are limited, rendering it impossible to reconstruct a total picture of women's resistance to Nazi Germany during World War II.³⁴ Moreover, the veracity of the information contained in oral testimonies may be affected by faded memories and attempts to assuage guilt.³⁵ Nevertheless, oral histories in conjunction with memoirs, diary entries, reports by Nazi agencies and documents produced by resisters provide extensive and valuable evidence. These sources support the conclusion that women's resistance efforts are worthy of historical and popular recognition.

In the words of Anna Kienast, 'the Nazis saw women as stupid and only fit to be good housewives and mothers. So my neighbour ... could not imagine me to be anything else than a stupid, insignificant little woman.'³⁶ Amid the principles of female subordination enshrined in Nazi ideology, there are numerous instances of women making a public stand against National Socialism, following their conscience in isolation and even in the face of death.³⁷ While there existed no collective opposition, the experiences of these women demonstrate that Germany between 1939 and 1945 was not a nation of bystanders and criminals.³⁸

A well-known act of public opposition in Germany during World War II, the Rosenstrasse Protest, illustrated that resistance was possible and could be

32 Jill Stephenson and David Large both suggest that 'feminine' characteristics proved useful in resistance efforts, with women transporting illegal information in shopping bags or prams, harbouring printing presses and offering food, shelter and support for underground groups and enemies of the state. See Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 110; Yael G Weinstock, The International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, 'They Each Made a Difference: Teaching about Women and Resistance'. http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/18/main_article.asp (accessed 27 October 2013).

33 See for example, Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Inter marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany*, 1st ed. (New York: WW Norton, 1996); Laska, *Women in the Resistance*; Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

34 Laska, *Women in the Resistance*, 150–51.

35 See for example, Owings, *Frauen*.

36 Anna Kienast quoted in Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 184.

37 Frank McDonough, *Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman Who Defied Hitler* (Port Stroud: The History Press, 2010), 159; Johannes Steinhoff, Peter Pechel, and Dennis Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich: An Oral History* (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1989), 530.

38 *ibid.*

effective.³⁹ As the inscription on the 'Block der Frauen' memorial to the protest reads, 'women [stood] here, defeating death; Jewish men were free'.⁴⁰ Until 1943 Jews in intermarriages (Aryan–Jewish marriages) were exempted from deportation.⁴¹ Yet, in an attempt to make Berlin *Judenfrei* (Free of Jews), 10,000 Jews were rounded up for deportation as part of the *Fabrikaktion* (Factory Action).⁴² Of them, 8000 were murdered at Auschwitz.⁴³ Approximately 1700 — primarily Jewish male spouses of Aryan women — were imprisoned in a building on the Rosenstrasse to await their fate.⁴⁴ For a week their wives protested outside, shouting adamantly, 'Let our husbands go. We want our husbands back!'⁴⁵ As one witness reported, 'the accusing, demanding cries of the women rose above the noise of the traffic.'⁴⁶ This protest gained the attention of the upper echelons of the Nazi regime, with Joseph Goebbels, the Reich minister of propaganda, complaining of the demonstration in his diary, 'a large number of people gathered and in part even took sides with the Jews.'⁴⁷ Although the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) threatened to fire into the crowd and arrested ten women, over a thousand amassed in protest, arguably prompting the men's release.⁴⁸ While the motives behind the internment of the intermarried Jews and their later release continue to spark historical debate, it is clear the Rosenstrasse women had a considerable impact on the decisions of Nazi officials.⁴⁹ Thus, although their opposition

39 Nathan Stoltzfus, 'The Women's Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Berlin', *Nonviolent Sanctions: News from the Albert Einstein Institution* 1(3) (Winter 1989/90), 3.

40 Inscription, 'Block der Frauen' (Block of Women) Memorial, Berlin, 1995, in University of Minnesota: Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 'Berlin Memorials', <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/berlin/> (accessed 12 May 2013).

41 See for example, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'German Jews during the Holocaust, 1939–1945', <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005469> (accessed 12 May 2013); Nathan Stoltzfus, Robert Gellately, ed., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 133; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'The Rosenstrasse Demonstration, 1943', <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008064> (accessed 12 May 2013); Nathan Stoltzfus, 'Dissent in Nazi Germany', *The Atlantic* 270(3) (September 1992), 88.

42 Stoltzfus, 'Dissent in Nazi Germany', 88.

43 *ibid.*

44 See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 137; Stoltzfus, 'Dissent in Nazi Germany', 88; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'The Rosenstrasse Demonstration'.

45 Quoted in Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, xx.

46 Quoted in Stoltzfus, 'Dissent in Nazi Germany', 88.

47 Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942–1943*, ed. and tr. Louis P Lochner, 1st ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), 276.

48 Estimates of the number of women present ranges up to 6000. See for example, Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, 227, 238, 243; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'The Rosenstrasse Demonstration, 1943'.

49 Historian Wolf Gruner contends that the Gestapo never intended to deport the intermarried Jews, but to determine their racial status and select individuals to manage Jewish institutions in place of the *Volljuden* (full Jews) who had been deported to Auschwitz. Yet Gruner overlooks the deportation of 120 intermarried Jews to Auschwitz during the *Fabrikaktion*, speculates in regard to the internment of children and overemphasises adherence to Reich Security Main Office guidelines and dependent Gestapo orders. See Wolf Gruner, 'A "Historikerstreit?" A Reply to Nathan Stoltzfus' Response', *Central European History* 38(3) (2005), 460; Evan Burr Bukey, Review of *Widerstand in der Rosenstrasse: Die Fabrik-Aktion und die Verfolgung der 'Mischehen* by Wolf Gruner, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21(2) (Fall 2007), 310–11; Nathan Stoltzfus, Review of *Widerstand in der Rosenstrasse: Die Fabrik-Aktion und die Verfolgung der 'Mischehen* by Wolf Gruner, *The American History Review* 112(5) (December 2007), 1629.

was personally motivated, the behaviour of the women at Rosenstrasse in publicly supporting a 'subhuman' population at a time 'characterized by an acceleration of violence and terror', was significant.⁵⁰ As Walter Laquer wrote, the Rosenstrasse Protest was an 'extraordinary manifestation of courage at a time when such courage was often sadly absent.'⁵¹

The experience of Marianne Baum, a leader of the Baum Group, is justifiably lauded as a striking example of German–Jewish and Leftist resistance against National Socialism.⁵² Active during 1937–42, the Baum Group comprised approximately 150 individuals, many of them young communist Zionists.⁵³ The dissident behaviour of the group concentrated on the printing and distribution of anti-Nazi leaflets, graffiti and educational evenings.⁵⁴ Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the group's efforts intensified, with pamphlets, slogans and the news-sheet *Der Ausweg* calling attention to injustice and the ramifications of 'total war'.⁵⁵ Marianne Baum's dissident actions culminated in an arson attack on the Soviet Paradise exhibition on 18 May 1942.⁵⁶ In response to the anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet nature of the exhibit, Marianne, her husband Herbert and several associates planted a firebomb which caused minor damage.⁵⁷ This rare act of direct, public resistance quickly led to the discovery and demise of the group.⁵⁸ On 22 May 1942 Marianne was arrested and sentenced to death.⁵⁹ She was executed in Berlin-Plötzensee three months later.⁶⁰ Maria Terwiel, a young half-Jewish woman associated with the aristocratic Luftwaffe officer Schulze-Boysen's Communist group, the Red Orchestra, further exemplified Leftist resistance to National Socialism.⁶¹ As a member of the resistance group Terwiel duplicated several leaflets on her

50 Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, 265, 275.

51 Walter Laquer quoted in Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart*, dust jacket.

52 The Baum Group (or Baum Gruppe) was a primarily Jewish, Leftist youth underground anti-Nazi organisation in Berlin. Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 330.

53 See, for example, Shoah Resource Centre, The International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, 'Baum Gruppe', http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205977.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013); Donald L Niewyk and Francis R Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 250.

54 See for example, John M Cox, *Circles of Resistance: Jewish, Leftist, and Youth Dissidence in Nazi Germany* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 95; Cox 'Jewish Resistance Against Nazism', 330.

55 See for example, Cox, *Circles of Resistance*, 107; Allan Merson, *Communist Resistance in Nazi Germany* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 243.

56 See for example, Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 330; McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance*, 8–9; Marion A Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 215.

57 See for example, Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 330; McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance*, 8–9.

58 See for example, Cox, 'Jewish Resistance', 330; McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance*, 8–9; Cox, *Circles of Resistance*, 133.

59 Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Marianne Baum', <http://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/biographie/view-bio/baum/> (accessed 12 May 2013).

60 *ibid.*

61 See for example, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Maria Terwiel', <http://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/biographie/view-bio/terwiel/> (accessed 12 May 2013); Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 130; Brysac, *Resisting Hitler*, 236.

typewriter, including a 1942 *Agis* pamphlet which was a call to action entitled 'Concern about Germany's future fills the nation.'⁶² Maria also distributed copies of Bishop von Galen's sermons and publications against the Soviet Paradise exhibition, which read: 'The NAZI PARADISE. War, Hunger, Lies, Gestapo. How much longer?'⁶³ Alongside 16 other members of the Red Orchestra, Terwiel was executed on 5 August 1943.⁶⁴ To her friend Krystyna Wituska, she was an inspiration who died 'heroically for her ideals.'⁶⁵

In 1944 Hitler stated that, 'women's political hatred is extremely dangerous.'⁶⁶ In the years following the fall of Nazism and amid the Cold War atmosphere, women involved in Leftist resistance groups continued to be decried as being 'in the service of the enemy'.⁶⁷ Yet divesting themselves of the gendered roles imposed by the Nazi regime, these women operated in the front line of resistance, courageously pursuing their ideological commitments, 'comforted ... by the certainty that victory will be [theirs]; that [they] didn't fight in vain for freedom.'⁶⁸ Although failing to overthrow the Nazi regime, the dissident actions of Marianne Baum and Terwiel put Jewish and anti-Fascist resistance on the record.⁶⁹ Politically and ethnically motivated, the behaviour of these women demonstrated to the wider population that resistance against the National Socialist regime was possible.⁷⁰

Idealistic and naïve, yet fiercely committed to what they believed in, Sophie Scholl, her brother Hans and other members of the White Rose movement publicly rejected the racist militarism of National Socialism, encouraging popular resistance against the regime.⁷¹ From June 1942 to February 1943, the nonviolent group produced and posted leaflets in Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Linz and

62 See for example, Brysac, *Resisting Hitler*, 297; Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Maria Terwiel'; Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945: The German Home Front in World War II* (University of Exeter Press, 1998), 590–91.

63 See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 130; Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945*, 589–91.

64 See for example, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Maria Terwiel'; Reich War Court Document: 'Maria Terwiel', (RKA) III 525/42, http://www.gegen-diktatur.de/beispiel.php?beisp_id=448&tafel_id=9&thema=0# (accessed 12 May 2013).

65 Krystyna Wituska, *Inside a Gestapo Prison: The Letters of Krystyna Wituska, 1942–1944*, ed. and tr. Irene Tomaszewski (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 72.

66 Adolf Hitler quoted in Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 335.

67 See for example, Shareen Blair Brysac, 'At Last, Recognition and Praise for the Resistance in Nazi Germany', *New York Times*, 7 October 2000; Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945*, 582.

68 Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945*, 582; Wituska, *Inside a Gestapo Prison*, 72. See for example, Annedore Leber, *Conscience in Revolt: Sixty-Four Stories of Resistance in Germany, 1933–1945* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 126.

69 John Cox, 'The Herbert Baum Groups: Networks of Jewish, Leftist and Youth Resistance in the Third Reich', in Cora A Granata and Cheryl A Koos, *The Human Tradition in Modern Europe: 1750 to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 152.

70 *ibid.*

71 David Ian Hall, Review of *Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who Defied Hitler* by Frank McDonough, *English Historical Review* CXXVI (522) (2001), 1237.

Vienna.⁷² Each leaflet highlighted Nazi crimes, such as the murder of 300,000 Jews in Poland, urging fellow Germans to rise up in resistance: 'Is your spirit already so crushed by abuse that you forget it is your right — or rather your moral duty — to eliminate this system?'⁷³ Members of the White Rose also drew graffiti on walls of public buildings, scrawling slogans such as 'Down with Hitler!' and 'Freedom!'.⁷⁴ Following the Stalingrad defeat, two more leaflets were published, denouncing the criminality of the Nazis and blaming Hitler for 'leading German people into the abyss'.⁷⁵ It was when Sophie and Hans were distributing pamphlets at the University of Munich on 18 February that they were arrested.⁷⁶ Alongside Christoph Probst, the Scholl siblings were sentenced to death by the People's Court four days later.⁷⁷ They were beheaded within hours.⁷⁸

A sister of the Scholl siblings, Elisabeth Hartnagel encapsulated best the significance of Sophie's nonviolent resistance efforts.⁷⁹ To her, 'Sophie tried to show another way to the German people, that they had a choice. Sophie represents what the German people should have done.'⁸⁰ The life and fate of Sophie is a testament to human possibility, courage and self-sacrifice.⁸¹ She believed it was her moral duty to oppose tyranny and she accepted the consequences, stating during her trial, 'so many people think like we do, only they don't dare speak out.'⁸² As the current German President Joachim Gauck has stated, Sophie and the White Rose 'permit us to believe that at the time not all Germans were mute and cowardly followers'.⁸³

72 Marion Yorck Von Waternburg, *The Power of Solitude: My Life in the German Resistance*, ed. and tr. Julie M Winter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), xix.

73 'The White Rose: Leaflet Two', quoted in McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 188; 'The White Rose: Leaflet Three', quoted in McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 190.

74 Annette Dumbach and Jud Newborn, *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 9.

75 'The White Rose: Leaflet Five', quoted in McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 193; See for example, Hall, *Review of Sophie Scholl*, 1237.

76 See for example, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Sophie Scholl', <http://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/biographie/view-bio/scholl-1/> (accessed 12 May 2013).

77 See for example, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Sophie Scholl'; Transcript of the Sentence of Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst, February 22, 1943, IH 47/43 in Inge Aicher-Scholl, *The White Rose: Munich, 1942–1943*, tr. Arthur R Schultz (Hanover, Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 114.

78 Execution Report for Sophie Scholl, 22 February 1943, BA-ZC13267 cited in McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 151.

79 McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 158.

80 Elisabeth Hartnagel quoted in McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 158.

81 See for example, Hans Scholl and Sophie Scholl, *At the Heart of the White Rose: Letters and Diaries of Hans and Sophie Scholl*, ed. Inge Jens and tr. J Maxwell Brownjohn (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), xix.

82 McDonough, *Sophie Scholl*, 156; Sophie Scholl, quoted in Steinhoff, Pechel and Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich*, 357.

83 Joachim Gauck quoted in Marc Von Lüpke, 'Sophie, Hans Scholl Remain Symbols of Resistance', *DW*, 18 February 2013, <http://dw.de/p/17fjs> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Historian Tim Mason argued that there was a 'high degree of passive acceptance of the regime' among women in the Third Reich.⁸⁴ Yet within their everyday lives, numerous women developed uniquely feminine methods of opposition.⁸⁵ Exploiting their roles as housewives, German women utilised the gender norms prevalent in Nazi Germany as a shield for their private dissident actions.⁸⁶ Women featured prominently among those who risked their lives to rescue Jews during World War II, representing more than half of the 525 Germans given the honorific 'Righteous among the Nations'.⁸⁷ Gertrud Staewen, a member of the dissident Protestant Confessing Church, was involved in various relief efforts for Jews during the war.⁸⁸ She assisted Berlin Jews in hiding: procuring passports, ration cards and accommodation for those she considered the 'most needy among the Brothers of Christ'.⁸⁹ As a 'good Christian' she became a 'criminal', feeling great pressure not because of the substantial risks associated with hiding Jews, but in knowing that she was only able to help a paltry few.⁹⁰ Likewise Erna Dubnack accepted great personal risk in providing a Jewish woman food and shelter for over two years.⁹¹ Offering such assistance at the time was almost suicidal and Dubnack acknowledged that she 'knew it was *verboten*' but 'didn't concern [herself] with it at all'.⁹² Frau Naumann was her dear friend and their personal relationship rendered the danger insignificant, and the personal deprivations irrelevant.⁹³ In the words of Leonard Gross, 'nothing could be more miraculous than the survival of a Jew in Berlin during the last years of the Second World War.'⁹⁴ With anti-Semitism considered central to the Nazi racial *Weltanschauung* (world view), the acts of these women in thwarting the murderous designs of the regime deserve to be recognised as significant efforts of resistance.⁹⁵ As Dubnack asserted, 'we were opponents of the Nazis'.⁹⁶

84 Tim Mason, 'Women in Germany, 1925–1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Part 1', *History Workshop* 1 (Spring 1976), 87.

85 Stibbe, 'Women and the Nazi State', 40.

86 *ibid.*

87 The award of 'Righteous among the Nations' is bestowed on non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem, 'The Righteous Among the Nations Honoured by Yad Vashem by 1 January 2013: Germany', *Yad Vashem*, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/pdf/virtual_wall/germany.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

88 Gertrud(e) Staewen quoted in Steinhoff, Pechel and Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich*, 322.

89 See for example, Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Gertrud Staewen', <http://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/biographie/view-bio/staewen/> (accessed 12 May 2013); Gertrud(e) Staewen, quoted in Steinhoff, Pechel and Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich*, 322.

90 From a television interview with Gertrud Staewen quoted in Renate Wind, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 145; Gertrud(e) Staewen quoted in Steinhoff, Pechel and Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich*, 323.

91 Owings, *Frauen*, 432.

92 Erna Dubnack quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 438.

93 Owings, *Frauen*, 432.

94 Leonard Gross, *The Last Jews of Berlin* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), cited in Owings, *Frauen*, 432.

95 See for example, Dieter D Hartmann, 'Anti-Semitism and the Appeal of Nazism', *Political Psychology* 5(4) (December 1984), 635; Daniel Fraenkel, 'The German Righteous Among the Nations', in *The Lexicon of the Righteous Among the Nations* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007), 2.

96 Erna Dubnack quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 444.

As members of the so-called Kreisau Circle, the actions of Freya von Moltke and Marion Yorck von Wartenburg should not be dismissed.⁹⁷ Meeting at the Wartenburg apartment in Berlin, or at the Moltke estate, the Kreisau group served as a 'spiritual counterpoint to the war' from 1940 to 1944.⁹⁸ United in an attempt to plan for a future Germany, the group discussed how to establish a just and humane political and social order after the collapse of the regime.⁹⁹ The substance of their debates came under the banner of opposition to National Socialism.¹⁰⁰ Although criticised as too hypothetical and philosophical to constitute resistance, the actions of the group in preparing for the fall of Nazism were tantamount to treason.¹⁰¹ Von Moltke knew the likely punishment was death, stating that 'we lived with the feeling that what we did was right. That was much stronger ... we weren't afraid.'¹⁰² Following a failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, the Kreisau Circle was exposed and, while the extent of the group's involvement in the attempt was unclear, many members were executed, including its founders Helmuth James von Moltke and Peter Yorck von Wartenburg.¹⁰³ Although less prominent than their husbands, Freya and Marion belonged to the core of the group.¹⁰⁴ Freya concealed the circle's papers, while Marion delivered messages.¹⁰⁵ Both were intimately involved with the group's discussions and actions, with Marion spending three months in prison following the July plot.¹⁰⁶ At a Berlin church in 2004, Freya said of the Kreisau group, 'even though we had no success ... and even though we were weak, we kept European humanity alive in Germany'.¹⁰⁷ Although the resistance efforts of the Kreisau wives were primarily in aiding their husbands, their contributions were undoubtedly significant.¹⁰⁸ As Marion noted, 'I have

97 The Kreisau Circle was the name given to this group of German resisters by the Gestapo. Van der Vat, 'Countess Freya von Moltke Obituary'; Muriel Cormican, Review of *The Power of Solitude: My Life in the German Resistance* by Marion Yorck von Wartenburg, *South Atlantic Review* 67(3) (Summer 2002), 108; Freya von Moltke, *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance*, tr. Julie M Winter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), xi.

98 Freya von Moltke quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 253.

99 Freya von Moltke quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 253; Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945*, 613.

100 Yorck Von Wartenburg, *The Power of Solitude*, 34.

101 Owings, *Frauen*, 253.

102 Freya von Moltke quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 257.

103 Dorothee von Meding, *Courageous Hearts: Women and the Anti-Hitler Plot of 1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1997), 68; John H Waller, *The Unseen War in Europe: Espionage and Conspiracy in the Second World War* (London: IB Tauris and Co., 1996), 281.

104 Yorck Von Wartenburg, *The Power of Solitude*, 37.

105 See for example, Yorck Von Wartenburg, *The Power of Solitude*, 37; van der Vat, 'Countess Freya von Moltke Obituary'.

106 Marion Yorck von Wartenburg quoted in Steinhoff, Pechel and Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich*, 398.

107 Stephen Miller, 'In Hitler's Wartime Germany, She Planted Seeds of Peace', *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 January 2010.

108 Von Moltke, *Memories of Kreisau and the German Resistance*, xi.

in fact the sense that Peter and Helmuth and Adam Trott and particularly Hans Haefen and all the others, could not have done everything they did without their wives.¹⁰⁹

Even though women who engaged in non-conformist behaviour cannot be considered resisters in the strict sense, they nevertheless showed contempt for the National Socialist regime and its policies at a time when it was dangerous to do so.¹¹⁰ Frau Margarete Fischer and Frau Maria von Lingen both listened to foreign broadcasts during the war, even though they were aware that it was 'forbidden', with Maria interrogated three times by the Gestapo.¹¹¹ The experiences of Ilse Demme and Marianne Elise K highlight the risk of committing these minor offences. A first degree Jewish *Mischling*, Demme was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for alleged violations of the *Heimtücke-gesetz* (Malicious Practices Act) on 18 August 1942.¹¹² It was claimed she had listened to 'enemy radio programs' and passed on information which 'undermin[ed] the people's trust in the political leadership ... through maliciously spiteful comments.'¹¹³ Marianne Elise K was similarly convicted of making 'spiteful remarks' and executed in 1944 for telling this joke: 'Hitler and Göring are standing on top of Berlin's radio tower. Hitler says he wants to do something to cheer up the people of Berlin. "Why don't you just jump?" suggests Göring.'¹¹⁴ Collectively, these acts of women's non-conformity in Germany during World War II undercut Nazi hegemony in a small but noteworthy way.¹¹⁵ In a society where 'even just a dumb remark' could get you shot, refusing to give the 'Heil Hitler' salute, listening to Allied radio frequencies and making anti-state remarks arguably constituted significant psychological resistance to the 'ideology and policies of National Socialism'.¹¹⁶

109 Yorck Von Wartenburg, *The Power of Solitude*, 37.

110 See for example, Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 128; Kitchen, *Nazi Germany at War*, 237; Kershaw *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent*, 183–84; Kweit, 'Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography', 41; Jill Stephenson quoted in Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; Jacobsen, *Germans against Hitler*, 162.

111 Margarete Fischer and Maria von Lingen quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 5, 122.

112 A first degree Jewish *Mischling* was not a member of a Jewish congregation, married to a Jew or a child of a Jewish-Aryan couple, yet they possessed two Jewish grandparents. Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (German Resistance Memorial Centre): Biographies, 'Ilse Demme', <http://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/biographie/view-bio/demme/> (accessed 12 May 2013).

113 *ibid.*

114 See for example, David Crossland, 'New Book on Nazi-Era Humour: Did You Hear the One About Hitler', *SpiegelOnline*, 30 August 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/new-book-on-nazi-era-humor-did-you-hear-the-one-about-hitler-a-434399.html>.

115 Large, *Contending with Hitler*, 51.

116 Wilhelmine Haferkamp quoted in Owings, *Frauen*, 29; Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 313, 331; Jill Stephenson, quoted in Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, 132; 'Personal Individual Case Files: Anna B, Willersdorf — Listening to foreign radio broadcasts, offense under the Treachery Act', *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Gestapo), http://findmittel.its-arolsen.org/R2_Gestapo/index.htm (accessed 12 May 2013); 'Personal Individual Case Files: Berta D, Durnstein — Anti-state remarks, strict state police warning', *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Gestapo), http://findmittel.its-arolsen.org/R2_Gestapo/index.htm (accessed 12 May 2013); Kweit, 'Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography', 41; See for example, Cox, *Circles of Resistance*, 5.

As these case studies demonstrate, the resistance efforts of women throughout Germany between 1939 and 1945 should no longer be overlooked. Whether they were aristocrats, communists, Christians, Jews or students, they overcame barriers specific to their gendered role in society and resisted the Nazi regime. Motivated by personal, ethnic, ethical and political reasons, these women courageously opposed National Socialism, protesting and encouraging popular opposition in the public sphere as well as rescuing Jews, conspiring against the government and resisting the penetration of Nazism through non-conformity in the private sphere.¹¹⁷ Although their efforts failed to overthrow the regime and restore justice, these women played an invaluable role in the secret war against the Nazis.¹¹⁸ In giving or risking their lives in opposition to the Third Reich during World War II, these heroines deserve historical recognition for their efforts in their own right. As the 'Memorial to the German Resistance' reads:

You did not bear the shame. You resisted. You bestowed an eternally vigilant symbol of change, by sacrificing your impassioned lives for freedom, justice and honour.¹¹⁹

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117 Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 342; Kweit, 'Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography', 41; See for example, Cox, *Circles of Resistance*, 5.

118 Dumbach and Newborn, *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose*, 185; Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death: The Story of German Resistance*, 7; MRD Foot quoted in Laska, *Women in the Resistance*, 7.

119 Inscription, Memorial to the German Resistance, Berlin, 1968, in Join Berlin: Advice and Information, 'German Resistance Memorial', <http://www.joinberlin.com/EN/berlin-en/cultural/memorial-german-resistance> (accessed 12 May 2013).

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