Politicizing Pronatalism: Exploring the Nazi Ideology of Women through the Lens of Visual Propaganda, 1933-1939

Katherine M. Rossy

Abstract

Recent works on women's roles in the Third Reich fuel a maelstrom of contentious arguments that challenge notions of women's accountability, victimization, and active and passive agency during one of modern history's most destructive regimes. Although the discourse about German women and National Socialism generally acknowledges that Hitler's regime was intensely misogynist, the discourse fails to consider one of the most potent and effective driving forces behind the institutionalization of misogyny in the Third Reich, that of visual propaganda as a vehicle of feminine marginalization. In this regard, this research paper will argue that misogyny was harboured through a process of politicization whereby the National Socialist ideology of women was reflected and promoted by three themes that dominated visual propaganda. First, it will analyze the ways in which Lebensraum and pronatalism were depicted in conjunction with one another. Then, it will explore the tripartite relationship between motherhood, militarism, and agrarianism through visual media. Finally, it will expose the ways in which the genderization of social spheres was propagated through the official girls' and boys' Hitler Youth publications. Thorough visual analysis will demonstrate that these three themes formed the basis for the politicization of pronatalism, which, in turn, acted as the driving force behind the institutionalization of misogyny between the years of 1933 and 1939.

Keywords

pronatalism; visual propaganda; German women; Nazi Germany; The Third Reich

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