

# Memory of the Third Reich in Hitler Youth Memoirs

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I, Tiia Sahrakorpi, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.



# Abstract

This thesis examines how the Hitler Youth generation represented their pasts in memoirs written in West Germany, post-unification Germany, and North America. Its aim is two-fold: to scrutinise the under-examined source base of memoirs and to demonstrate how representations of childhood, adolescence and maturation are integral to reconstructing memory of the Nazi past. It introduces the term ‘collected memoryscape’ to encapsulate the more nebulous multi-dimensional collective memory. Historical and literary theories nuance the reading of autobiography and memoirs as ego-documents, forming a new methodological basis for historians to consider.

The Hitler Youth generation is defined as those individuals born between 1925 and 1933 in Germany, who spent the majority of their formative years under Nazi educational and cultural policies. The study compares published and unpublished memoirs, along with German and English-language memoirs, to examine constructions of personal and historical events. Some traumas, such as rapes, have only just resurfaced publicly – despite their inclusion in private memoirs since the 1940s. While on a public level West Germans underwent *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), these memoirs illustrate that, in the post-war period, private and generational memory reinterpretation continued in multitudinous ways. For example, even after the 1995 German Wehrmacht exhibitions, cohort members continued to express a fondness for the Waffen-SS or Wehrmacht in their writings. This thesis dialogically juxtaposes public and personal memory, also exploring how individuals experienced and represented controversial memories of Nazism.

Overall, the cohort members employed three main narration methods: they normalised their childhood experiences; they silenced uncomfortable aspects of their past; and they cast themselves as victims as a coping mechanism, in order to achieve closure. This thesis argues for a more nuanced reading of Nazi-related memoirs and makes the

case that public memory is not necessarily reflected on a personal level.

# Impact Statement

This thesis will benefit academic and public debates on the success and failures of Germany's attempts to come to terms with the Nazi past. It assesses how children, who are now in late adulthood, had to find ways to cope and master the past, arguing that more ought to be done in the future to ensure children and young people transition into non-wartime daily life. The results indicate that children need support from psychological, educational and societal structures and professionals in order to learn and find vocabulary to talk about traumatic and negative memories. Therefore the thesis will benefit not only academics who are interested in modern German history, but also others working closely in conflict areas where children are being rehabilitated for postwar life.

The impact of this research will hopefully become a monograph and journal articles. It also has the possibility of gaining wider interest through its interdisciplinary nature, and to create connections between children in war studies, German history, and current events in the Middle East and Africa with children in war.





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# List of Abbreviations

**BDM** *Bund Deutscher Mädel*

**DJ** *Deutsche Jungvolk*

**DTA** Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emmendingen

**FDJ** *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, Free German Youth

**FRG** Federal Republic of Germany

**GDR** German Democratic Republic

**HJ** *Hitlerjugend*, Hitler Youth

**JM** *Jungmädel*

**JV** *Jungvolk*

**KLV** *Kinderlandverschickung*

**NS** *Nationalsozialismus*

**NSDAP** *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*

**NSF** *NS-Frauenschaft*

**POW** Prisoner of War

**RAD** *Reichsarbeitsdienst*

**RAF** Royal Airforce

**SA** *Sturmabteilung*

**SED** *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*

**SS** *Schutzstaffel*

**USAAF** United States Army Air Forces



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Former Nazi elite school student Klaus Kleinau, born in 1927 and educated in a *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt* (NPEA, or commonly abbreviated to Napola<sup>1</sup>), published his life narrative in 1999 to correct his peers' misconceptions about the Nazi period. As a member of the Hitler Youth generation, Kleinau's life narrative shows how we employ narrative techniques to make sense of our past, at different life stages. He writes:

It was only late in life that I realised, in regard to this education and recent experiences, that these false ideals are still stuck in the mindset of former classmates and teachers. I have tried to empathise (*hineinzudenken*) with my long gone experiences to reflect on them myself and thus, especially for young people, to make them transparent.<sup>2</sup>

What is striking here is how, in 1999, Kleinau reflects on his past in an attempt to understand his younger mind-set during the Nazi period. His memoir indicates that dissensions within the cultural memory of his cohort spurred him to record his own memories of the period.<sup>3</sup> Further, it reflects his need to give testament to his life, as he reaches late adulthood. Stories like Kleinau's, alongside unpublished and published works, are the basis of my study. Memoirs such as his underscore the importance of the Hitler Youth generation in terms of the cultural memory of Nazism—thereby calling attention to the discrepancies between members of the cohort, in accounts of the past.

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1. Harald Schäfer, *Napola: Die letzten vier Jahre der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalt Organienstein bei Diez an der Lahn 1941-1945: Eine Erlebnis-Dokumentation* (Frankfurt am Main: R.G. Fischer Verlag, 1997).

2. Klaus Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt* (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 1999), 7.

3. Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2006), 35f.

The Hitler Youth generation has been the focus of many oral history studies, but their written accounts have not been adequately scrutinised. Oral historians Alexander von Plato, Lutz Niethammer, Dorothee Wierling, Gabriele Rosenthal, and Heidi Rosenbaum have interviewed members of the Hitler Youth generation—studying their lives in the Third Reich, as well as their postwar lives in East and West Germany.<sup>4</sup> Texts by Melita Maschmann (born 1918), writing in 1963, and Alfons Heck (born 1928), writing in 1984 and 1989, are often referred to in chapters about the Hitler Youth organisation.<sup>5</sup> Richard J. Evans’s *The Third Reich in Power* uses Maschmann as a ‘typical example’ of a girl’s experience in the Hitler Youth organisation.<sup>6</sup> Reading Maschmann’s 1963 publication, *Fazit. Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch*, temporally contextualised, offers an alternative reading to Evans’s reading. She claims to regret her behaviour, but still exonerates herself as the protagonist.<sup>7</sup> These life narratives were not written in a vacuum, but rather take part in a wider conversation about the Nazi past.

## Research Questions and Sources

This thesis will focus on how the Hitler Youth generation understood their experiences and processed the past through life writing.<sup>8</sup> The main purpose of this study is to understand how people remember the past at a micro-level. It argues that the Hitler Youth generation use victimcy, or tactical agency, to portray themselves as children or adolescents to avoid and silence possible feelings of guilt or responsibility. Further, it examines the motivation behind the Hitler Youth generation’s writings, and the extent to which these post-1989 accounts influenced National Socialist memory. All of this,

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4. Lutz Niethammer, *Die volkseigene Erfahrung: eine Archäologie des Lebens in der Industrieprovinz der DDR: 30 biographische Eröffnungen*, in collab. with Alexander von Plato and Dorothee Wierling (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991); Dorothee Wierling, ‘The Hitler Youth Generation in the GDR: Insecurities, Ambitions and Dilemas’, in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch, trans. Eve Duffy (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 307–325; Gabriele Rosenthal and Claudia Gather, *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation: biographische Thematisierung als Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1986); Heidi Rosenbaum, “Und trotzdem war’s ’ne schöne Zeit”: Kinderalltag im Nationalsozialismus (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 2014).

5. See chapter on the Hitler Youth organisation in, Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap, 2003).

6. See Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 275.

7. See Joanne Sayner, ‘For Whom Does One Remember?: Autobiographical Perspectives on Fascism in German Literature’, *New Readings* 6, number 1 (2000).

8. Mannheim’s definition of a generational cohort will be used for this study. Karl Mannheim, ‘Das Problem der Generationen’, in *Wissenssoziologie*, ed. Karl Mannheim (1928; Berlin: Luchterhand, 1946), 509–565; See, for definition of life narrative in, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

along with questions of memory, falls within the scope of the larger historiographical question: who is the intended audience of memoir? I will consider this question from many angles by examining childhood, family life, education, the Hitler Youth organisation, the Second World War, and the post-war years as a transition period. My main focus remains the present, however, and how today's cultural memory has sparked discussions of the Third Reich. Through qualitative analysis, this thesis evaluates the usefulness of the Hitler Youth generation's writings to deepen our understanding of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('mastering the past') and *Schlussstrich* ('blotting out the past') from the 1950s to the 2000s.<sup>9</sup>

Since they had no memory of the Weimar Republic, and were under Nazi rule from infancy to adolescence, this study considers those born between 1925 and 1933 in Germany. A more elaborate discussion of the varying definitions of this generation is in the third section, as part of the broader historiography. The Hitler Youth generation is difficult to study.<sup>10</sup> Being only children during the Third Reich, they were tainted with, but not guilty of, the crimes of Nazi Germany. Some of them feel responsible for the Holocaust, and confess that guilt in their life narratives. Indeed, it would be worth considering how much Second World War participation traumatised the cohort. Aleida Assmann argues in *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* that only victim memory 'could ever be considered traumatic'.<sup>11</sup> However, as Bill Niven writes in a review of her work, perhaps Germans were both the 'perpetrators and victims, not traumatised and traumatised'.<sup>12</sup> Assmann attributes the term *Tätergedächtnis* to Germans and *Opfergedächtnis* to the victims of bombed cities, which contrasts with her own definition.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps this is how the Hitler Youth generation should be viewed, as tactical agents of their narratives. This idea needs

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9. The definition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is from Maier, who writes: 'mastering the past-coming to terms with the searing of the past of World War II'. in Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.

10. Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 481; Konrad H. Jarausch, 'Zeitgeschichte und Erinnerung: Deutungskonkurrenz oder Interdependenz?', in *Verletztes Gedächtnis: Erinnerungskultur und Zeitgeschichte im Konflikt*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002), 27.

11. Bill Niven, 'On the Use of 'Collective Memory'', *German History* 26, number 3 (2008): 431; Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, 81.

12. Niven, 'On the Use of 'Collective Memory'', 431.

13. Niven, 'On the Use of 'Collective Memory'', 431; Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, 81, 184.

further exploration within my dissertation, as well.

Within these narratives, our understanding of the author must come through the author's second self, or the narrative voice of the text. As with any other source material, using children's accounts as a source sheds light on a whole new aspect of society. These sources should be looked at 'with the same critical scepticism and respect' as other historical sources.<sup>14</sup> Most of the authors were approaching middle age or late adulthood when they began writing, and it is possible that they viewed writing as a kind of therapy. The difficulties of the Nazi past, including the training and education of children in Nazism, haunts the memoirs of the Hitler Youth generation. In many ways, their life narratives are an attempt to bestow historical wisdom on the reader—even though this wisdom is often the product of censored memory and conflicting ideas about self-implication.<sup>15</sup> Despite these complications, adult recollections of childhood may lend insight into childhood feelings.<sup>16</sup> Joanne Michlic's study on Holocaust survivors' adult writings on childhood shows that 'testimony today can offer us a gateway to past child experiences'.<sup>17</sup> Jane Humphries's study on child workers of the British industrial revolution and Nicholas Stargardt's *Witnesses of War* treat children in the same manner.<sup>18</sup> Both historians consider autobiographies and memoirs of children to be useful sources. As such, the following treatment of the Hitler Youth generation's life narratives follows that methodology, reading works as a product of memory and, sometimes, personal failure.

Defining the boundary between 'childhood' and 'youth' within the narrative scope is another challenge altogether. Conventional Western European definitions understand childhood to be 'infancy and six to 10 year olds, but also 10-14 year olds and sometimes

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14. Benita Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 12.

15. Hamida Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child: Grief and the Unspeakable in Youth Literature about Nazism and the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 24.

16. Jürgen Reulecke, 'Zur Einführung in Teil III: Kriegskindheit als Gegenstand von Geschichtspolitik und erinnerungskultur,' in Döring-Ernst von Gottberg, *Eine Jugend in Hitlers Reich: Erinnerungen eines Zeitzeugen* (BoD – Books on Demand, June 4, 2013), 203.

17. Machteld Venken and Maren Röger, 'Growing up in the Shadow of the Second World War: European Perspectives', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, number 2 (March 4, 2015): 204; Joanna Beata Michlic, "'The War Began for Me after the War' Jewish Children in Poland, 1945-1949', ed. Jonathan Friedman (London: Routledge, 2011), 484-499.

18. Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 16-17, In his work 'German Childhoods: The Making of a Historiography', *German History*, 16, 1 (1998), 1-15: 12.

even older teenagers'.<sup>19</sup> Experiences during the war often forced children to grow up quickly and assume adult roles, which are mirrored in their life narratives. The end of childhood is often seen as a turning point: a time to start school or join the Hitler Youth. Ultimately, childhood ends by the time World War II begins. Struggling with adult themes as a child and fighting in the war unifies all dimensions of self: from childhood, to adulthood, to late adulthood. This idea ought to be elaborated in the history of children in war.

This project utilises unpublished life narratives (meaning memoirs and autobiographies) by male and female writers, born between 1925 and 1933, who were part of the Deutsche Jungvolk (DJ, German Youth, boys aged 10-14), the Hitlerjugend (HJ, Hitler Youth, boys aged 14-18), the Jungmädel (JM, Young Girls' League, girls aged 10-14), or the Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM, League of German Girls, girls aged 14-18). Collectively, the secondary literature has dubbed these people the 'Hitler Youth generation', and I will continue to utilise that term throughout this piece. As the introduction will show, the distinctions between memoir and autobiography are not clear-cut. In addition, many writers situate their Hitler Youth organisational experiences within the wider context of their life narratives. Their childhood and adolescent experiences become the focal point of their narration and self-conception, both of which are essential to life writing.

Why search for answers in these life narratives? Life narratives are often evidence of a failure to remember, and may demonstrate a childish understanding of greater historical events. They may be riddled with ideology, or written with an intention to mislead or misinform the reader. It is these failures that make life narratives worthwhile sources, particularly for a study of the Hitler Youth generation. Life narratives 'are one of the few ways in which ordinary men and women recorded what happened to them or what they perceived happened to them'.<sup>20</sup> Studying a large sample of written works can provide us with a clearer, more reliable history of the Hitler Youth generation and the postwar period. These sources are complex, as they might be interpreted in several different ways: a) as the past which is written about; b) as the past that the writer remembers; c) as the present, in which the writer writes. I will elaborate on

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19. Venken and Röger, 'Growing up in the Shadow of the Second World War', 201.

20. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*, 6.

these approaches in my methodologies section. Each chapter will have its own thematic questions, detailed below. The purpose of this thesis is to show how later time frameworks and life stages impact life narratives and conceptions of the self.

My source selection includes archived and published life narratives of former Hitler Youth members; my controlled variable is that they lived in Germany until at least the end of the Second World War. The archival source basis for this study is the collection of unpublished life narratives from the Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emmendingen (DTA). Reading texts from a gendered perspective will help us understand gendered performance.<sup>21</sup> Gender is defined as an ‘identity instituted through a *stylised repetition of acts*’.<sup>22</sup> Gender, Butler further argues, is a ‘constructed identity’: no-one has a core identity. Gender is an ‘act’ that is performed and its meaning is constituted repeatedly by performers. Identity is a ‘compelling illusion’—an ‘object of *belief*’.<sup>23</sup> Another important aspect to note is the differences between gendered narratives. Oral history studies showcase the ways in which narrative structures are complex and gendered.<sup>24</sup> These binaries are not always set in stone, as patterns of socialisation vary from culture to culture. Therefore, in remaining sensitive to gender differences, these sources ought to be carefully considered. Differences in representation and remembrance are crucial to note and discuss. Moreover, they present a view of the social and cultural gender relations in the Third Reich and in the two postwar Germanies.

In this particular case, the life narratives offer new insights into how the Hitler Youth generation worked as a textual community through communicative memory. Whilst the study does not utilise fiction works, fiction does provide key context to these writings, and is important in terms of the overall cultural framework. Whilst this cohort most likely produced numerous unpublished and undocumented works from 1958

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21. See Summerfield’s usage of Butler’s ‘gendered performance’ in, Penny Summerfield, ‘Concluding Thoughts: Performance, the Self, and Women’s History’, *Women’s History Review* 22, number 2 (April 1, 2013): 346; Further, Summerfield’s work on the loss of female testimony because of cultural memory, see, Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, *Cultural and Social History* 1, number 1 (January 1, 2004): 65–93; See, also, Linda Dégh, *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centered Study of Narration* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1995).

22. Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, *Theatre Journal* 40, number 4 (1988): 519.

23. Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’, 520; See, also, Kristin M. Langellier and Eric E. Peterson, ‘Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women Storytelling’, in *Performance, Culture, and Identity*, ed. Elizabeth Calvert Fine, Jean Haskell Speer, and Jean Haskell (London: Praeger, 1992), 164–166.

24. Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 119.

to 1983, we know that a number of the Hitler Youth generation wrote and published autobiographical fictional accounts of their experiences. With few exceptions, such as Ilse Koehn's *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (1977) and Max von der Grün's *Wie war das eigentlich?* (1980), the works from this period are mostly fictional. The majority are written for a young audience of eight to twelve-year-olds. Many of the fiction works play a part in the larger West German debates of 1968, but their viewpoints are found in works written in the mid- to late 1970s.<sup>25</sup> For example, both autobiographical fiction authors Horst Burger and Barbara Gehrts address the 1968 debate about succumbing to Nazism. They respond to the accusation in two different ways. Through a fictional father/son relationship—in which the son asks the father four questions—Burger argues that there is no way to resist ideological manipulation, because a person's unconscious thoughts and beliefs have been altered.<sup>26</sup> Gehrts, on the other hand, uses a third-person narrator to show how the Germans, particularly her family, resisted Nazism through different means.<sup>27</sup> The majority of the published works (both fiction and non-fiction) follow a set formula: they provide the necessary background on family life; then, they discuss early childhood, school education, the Hitler Youth organisation, the beginning of the Second World War, and the effect the war had on them.

The majority of unpublished narratives written by the Hitler Youth generation were released from the early 1990s to the early 2010s. They also use a similar formula to discuss events—however, the narration is not always linear, nor does it reproduce the climax of a novel. Sometimes writers will focus extensively on family life and the histories of their relatives, whilst pushing themselves to the background. In others, the narrator is featured, but re-cast as a character in the third-person with a pseudonym. Some of the unpublished life narratives were written for living family members, and contain glued-on photographs with handwritten names, dates, and places. Other writ-

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25. Barbara Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon* (DTV, 1975); Hermann Glaser, editor, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, Tribüne-Bücher (Frankfurt am Main: Tribüne-Verl, 1975); Ilse Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (New York: Green Willow Press, 1977); Dietrich Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach: Roman* (Recklinghausen: Bitter, 1977); Horst Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?: Vier Fragen an meinen Vater*, Auflage: 24 (Reinbek: rororo, 1978); Renate Finckh, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit* (Baden-Baden: Signal-Verlag, 1979).

26. Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?*, 69.

27. Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*; See newspaper article on Gehrts's father: Ingrid von Saldern, 'Heldentöchter', 1997, [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/heldentoechter.700.de.html?dram:article\\_id=79362](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/heldentoechter.700.de.html?dram:article_id=79362).

ings were an attempt to record the history of a community, or the history of individuals' service to a community. One of the most common and important features of these texts is that they often span the writer's entire life course, rather than just the Third Reich and immediate postwar period. This addition of information allows us to see how the Nazi past is reinterpreted and recycled to build a life and career in the postwar period. One of the main differences between published and unpublished works is the inclusion of additional material interpreting the postwar period, which adds new material that has not yet been analysed.

Historians use autobiography to understand quantitative and qualitative information about the past and to see commonalities within communities. Indeed, most historians facing the issue of fragmentary records have to decide whether these can be considered representative of a wider population.<sup>28</sup> In considering this point, Feinstein and Thomas's strategy is helpful: 'For some sources this can be done by comparing key characteristics of the surviving records to some known attributes of the population. If these characteristics are generally consistent, this may be enough to establish representativeness'.<sup>29</sup> Vincent also suggests it might be useful to 'aggregate certain aspects of the autobiographies in order to gain some idea of the relationships of the group to the known qualities' of the group in question'.<sup>30</sup> Similar to *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, this thesis is concerned with the ways in which people understood their experiences within the time-frameworks of writing. Importantly, my chapter layout plays on the strengths of the narratives as the authors all write about family life, educational experiences, the Second World War and—as in the case of unpublished works—on the post-war period. However, unlike published sources, unpublished ones do not give equal focus to these themes (and vice-versa). Thus there are necessary exclusions in some chapters, as the framework of the sample shifts.

The means by which the individual self is constructed and upheld is unique to

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28. S. Hopkins, 'The Chronicles of Long Kesh: Provisional Irish Republican Memoirs and the Contested Memory of the Hunger Strikes', *Memory Studies* 7, number 4 (October 1, 2014): 425–439; W.S. Howard, 'Miners' Autobiography: Text and Context', *Labour History Review* 60 (1995): 89–98; Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth-And Early Twentieth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, June 19, 1999); Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *Closer to the Truth Than Any Fact: Memoir, Memory, and Jim Crow* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2010); David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1982).

29. Charles H. Feinstein and Mark Thomas, *Making History Count: A Primer in Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 118.

30. Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, 10.

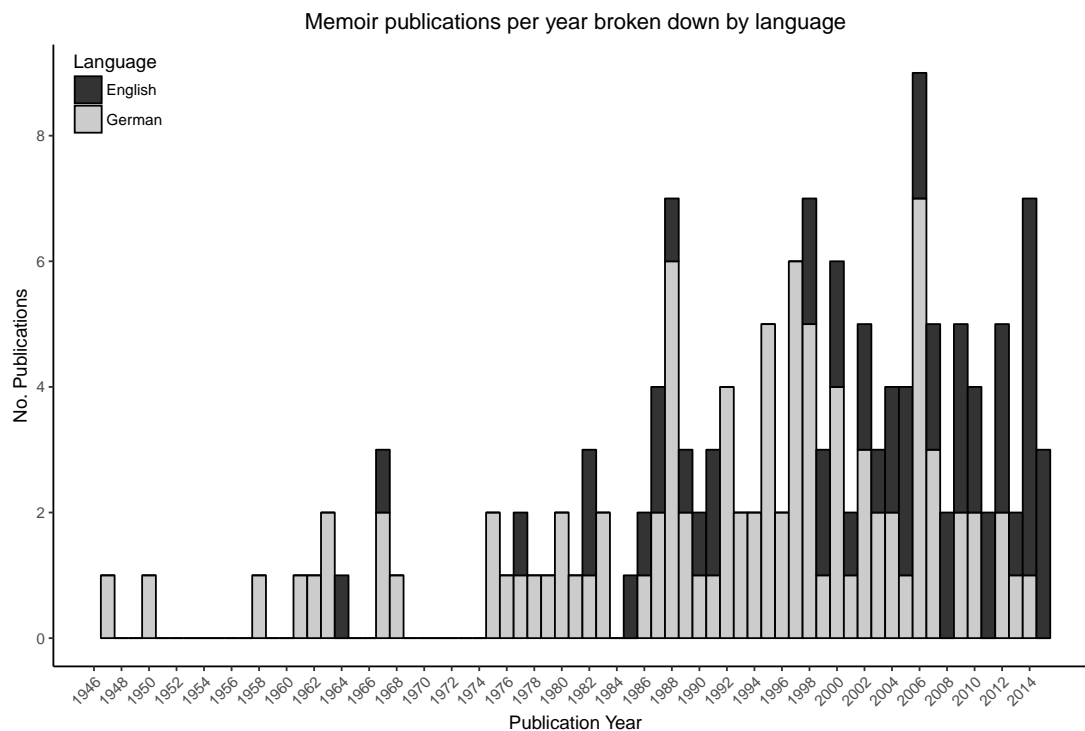


each ego-document. When using individual accounts to better understand the Hitler Youth generation, it is important to note that no individual perfectly followed a strict formula. As Tom Harrisson argues, ‘the word “typical” is no longer suitable. No-one is privately typical of anyone else’.<sup>31</sup> The Hitler Youth generation wrote life narratives for many different reasons — from recording their family history to recording their importance in the local community.<sup>32</sup> The sum of these narratives may only represent those who had the motivation to record their life stories in writing. This representation can never claim to be wholly representative of an entire generation. When documented events are diverse from the historiography, these events will be highlighted and the fallacy of memory and purposeful misrepresentation of the facts will be discussed. Analysing both published and unpublished life narratives is arguably more representative than analysing only published material. For example, Irmgard Hunt’s memoir was published because she lived in the village where Hitler’s summer villa was located. Although these life narratives offer exceptional cases, certain content, such as education, family life, and war, are typical Hitler Youth generation experiences. Each of the individuals will have had a unique understanding of these events, but they will have partaken in typical activities, such as going on Hitler Youth marches, going to *Heimatabends*, being involved in the war effort, having children, and getting married. The analysis of the life narratives is qualitative and relies on thick description, making it difficult to guarantee that these experiences are typical ones. Exceptional cases are, for example, parents’ political stances influencing the narrator (Ilse Koehn, Henry Metelmann, Max von der Grün) or having a special position in the Hitler Youth hier-

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31. Tom Harrisson, *Living through the Blitz* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 254.

32. See oral histories on the Hitler Youth generation for representation of those who did not write: Rosenbaum, “*Und trotzdem war’s ’ne schöne Zeit*”; Rosenthal and Gather, *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation*; Mark Roseman, *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); See oral history interviews in, Niethammer, *Die volkseigene Erfahrung*; Alexander von Plato and Wolfgang Meinicke, *Alte Heimat, neue Zeit: Flüchtlinge, Umgesiedelte, Vertriebene in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR*, U Buch (Berlin: Verlags-Anstalt Union, 1991); Alexander von Plato and Nori Möding, ‘Nachkriegspublizisten. Ein Erfahrungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung’, in *Biographisches Wissen: Beiträge zu einer Theorie lebensgeschichtlicher Erfahrung*, ed. Peter Alheit and Erika M. Hoerning (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1989), 38–69; Alexander von Plato and Nori Möding, ‘Siegernadeln. Jugendkarrieren in BDM und HJ’, in *Schock und Schöpfung. Jugendästhetik im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Willi Bucher and Klaus Pohl (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986), 292–301; Lutz Niethammer, ‘*Die Jahre weiss man nicht, wo man die heute hinsetzen soll*’: *Faschismuserfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet*, 2nd edition (Berlin: Dietz, 1986); Alexander von Plato and Lutz Niethammer, editors, “*Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten*”: *auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag J.H.W. Nachf, 1985).



**Figure 1.1:** Graph showing the number of fictional and non-fiction life narratives published between 1950 and 2014. Publications in English are shown in orange. Publications in German are shown in green.

archy (as Armin Lehmann’s role as a Hitler Youth in Hitler’s bunker or Alfons Heck’s role as a Hitler Youth Bannführer).

Like oral histories, life narratives outline the evolution of the memory culture of the Third Reich in West Germany. They also allow for insight into specific historical moments, ‘but they might also shed light on general truths that go beyond one isolated era’.<sup>33</sup> Following unification in 1989, more East Germans were ready and able to explore their Nazi pasts.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the added East German voice gives another side to the story. In the United States, the Hitler Youth generation’s life narratives show how emigration and isolation from political and cultural debates in West Germany might affect remembrance. In addition, they illustrate that whilst interpretations of World War II and the Third Reich evolved in the public sphere, there was still an urgent need to document those stories.

The structure of this thesis is based upon themes found in most of the Hitler Youth life narratives. Typically, the narratives follow a thematic trend: from discussions of

33. Wallach, *Closer to the Truth Than Any Fact: Memoir, Memory, and Jim Crow*, 23.

34. See, for example Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emmendingen (DTA) Reg. Sig. 3511,1

family to the end of the Second World War, and beyond. My structure is built around my sources, mainly the non-fictional sources from the early 1980s onward.

Inputting the published writings of the Hitler Youth generation found in major historical works and library search catalogues into a database generates an intriguing, visual representation of German cultural memory (see Figure 1.1). Translated works are included as well, to illustrate the frequency with which influential works were translated and made accessible to English audiences. Moreover, a small minority of Germans left Germany in the immediate postwar period, and later published life narratives of their own. Writings of the Hitler Youth generation increased exponentially during the 1990s and 2000s, and the number of English-language publications increased as well.

## Historiography

Within historical scholarship, the Hitler Youth organisation is a well-documented aspect of Nazi society and has been surveyed since the 1960s. Since the 1980s, with the rise of the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*), more scholarly works deal with the Nazi youth organisation. Detlev Peukert's *Inside Nazi Germany* has a chapter on youth, which focuses on the indoctrination of youth as an integral part of life in Nazi Germany. From a young age, children were indoctrinated with 'extreme racist ideology' and 'militaristic norms of behaviour involving incorporation and subordination within hierarchical structures of command' with the intention of making loyal Hitler Youths rise in the National Socialists' ranks.<sup>35</sup> Education in the Third Reich was also Nazified, and incorporated ideological teaching to ensure full immersion of the young people.<sup>36</sup> In similar vein, H.W. Koch's study *Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45* (1975) traces the Hitler Youth movement from its origins to the end of the war, and concludes with a short analysis of the Hitler Youth generation in the post-war period. Arno Klönne's *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, analyses primary source documents concerning the movement, and Michael Buddrus's two-volume study provides in-depth

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35. Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1989), 145.

36. Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); Kurt-Ingo Flessau, Elke Nyssen, and Günter Pätzold, editors, *Erziehung im Nationalsozialismus: "- und sie werden nicht mehr frei ihr ganzes Leben!"* (Köln: Böhlau, 1987); Rolf Eilers, *Die Nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik. Eine Studie zur Funktion der Erziehung im totalitären Staat* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963).

archival research into the movement.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, Koch provides foundational knowledge of the movement to an English-speaking audience. He details the means by which the Nazi party created the Hitler Youth organisation, making it into a nation-wide scouting movement—albeit militaristic. Richard J. Evans's *The Third Reich in Power* also gives an account of Nazi education and the ways in which it shaped young people in the Third Reich.<sup>38</sup>

From the 1990s onward, studies of the Hitler Youth organisation have revolved around cultural history, in terms of how the Hitler Youth organisation functioned as a cultural entity. At a micropolitical level, Kathrin Kollmeier analyses the ambiguity of National Socialist propaganda and the idealisation of youth, as she examines the legal discourse and disciplinary techniques of the Hitler Youth organisation.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, using documented youth culture as his primary source, Arndt Weinrich argues in *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher* that the First World War memory culture of the late 1920s helped propagate Nazi propaganda, with the image of the undefeated German soldier.<sup>40</sup> Sven Steinack's *Der Staat als Erzieher* has a detailed section on Nazi Germany's youth, and his section on the radicalisation of the Nazi family shows the extent to which Nazi ideology impacted families and children.<sup>41</sup> All of these contributions to historiography spark discussions about the nature of the Hitler Youth organisation and emphasise its importance to militarism and a sense of 'place' in Nazi society.

It is also important to consider how we define the Hitler Youth generation. Historians offer different definitions with regard to which *Jahrgänge* (year groups) ought to be included. Sociologist Helmut Schelsky defines the 'generation' as those born between 1930 and 1943 in Germany, whilst Ulrich Herbert sets his boundaries from 1925

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37. Arno Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich: die Hitler-Jugend und ihre Gegner : Dokumente und Analysen* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1982); Michael Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg: Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik*, volume Bd. 13/1-2, *Texte und Materialien zur Zeitgeschichte* ; (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2003).

38. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*.

39. Kathrin Kollmeier, *Ordnung und Ausgrenzung: die Disziplinarpolitik der Hitler-Jugend* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

40. Arndt Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher: Jugend zwischen Weimarer Republik und Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2012).

41. Sven Steinacker, *Der Staat als Erzieher: Jugendpolitik und Jugendfürsorge im Rheinland vom Kaiserreich bis zum Ende des Nazismus* (Stuttgart, 2007).

to 1935.<sup>42</sup> Heidi Rosenbaum's study of the earlier Hitler Youth generation considers those born from 1923 to 1927 exclusively, and does not account for the differences between age cohorts within the generation.<sup>43</sup> Mary Fulbrook writes that they are 'those born from the mid-1920s through the early 1930s, who were socialised entirely within the framework of Hitler's Third Reich'.<sup>44</sup> Her definition is used in this thesis as well, which defines the Hitler Youth generation as those born between 1925 and 1933. If we were to include those born after 1933, their memories of the Hitler Youth organisation and the impact of Nazism are brief. In addition, those born in 1935 would not have been as extensively involved in the Hitler Youth organisation, compared with citizens born ten years before them.

As a generation, the Hitler Youth generation is often referred to in historiography as the 'sceptical generation'. As Helmut Schelsky argues, the manner in which this group navigated the post-war landscape indicates that this was a generation which 'has established itself on survival'.<sup>45</sup> H.W. Koch states that this generation had a tendency to remove themselves from contemporary politics, following indoctrination; similarly, he points out that:

Never in German history at least, has there been a time in which German youth paid a higher price for such an attempt, a price of personal sacrifice and physical as well as mental injuries sustained, than in the era dominated by the symbol of the rune and the swastika.<sup>46</sup>

Fulbrook's *Dissonant Lives* and Thomas A. Kohut's *A German Generation*, both of which emphasise the repercussions of Nazism on multiple German generations, note the influence of this generation on post-war Germany.<sup>47</sup> This thesis explores many of these influences by looking at how self-representation shifts over time and place.

The most influential contemporary studies on childhood in wartime Germany are by Stargardt and Kater; this study aims to expand upon those. From the standpoint

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42. Helmut Schelsky, *Die skeptische Generation- eine Soziologie der deutschen Jugend* (Munich: Diederichs, 1957); Ulrich Herbert, 'Die politische Generationen im 20. Jahrhundert', in *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Reulecke (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), 102.

43. Rosenbaum, "Und trotzdem war's 'ne schöne Zeit", 23.

44. Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 8.

45. Schelsky, *Die skeptische Generation- eine Soziologie der deutschen Jugend*, 488.

46. H. W. Koch, *Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45* (London: Macdonald and Janes, 1975), 266.

47. Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 254; Thomas A. Kohut, *A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010), 7.

of childhood studies, few historians have carried out an in-depth analysis of childhood as a concept during the Third Reich. Childhood was marked by Nazism's attempt to 'shape children and youths by diminishing the power of traditional institutions of education-family and school-in favour of newly established organisations' such as the Hitler Youth organisation and BDM.<sup>48</sup> Schools underwent major changes to accommodate Nazi ideology, teaching racial theory, and 'scientific' anti-Semitism.<sup>49</sup> The youth experience in Nazi Germany has been covered in oral history interviews, but there has not yet been an adequate study of younger children.<sup>50</sup> More recently, historians have researched mainstream family policy in Nazism, and the treatment of troubled children in correctional institutions.<sup>51</sup> Nicholas Stargardt, in *Witnesses of War*, provides a multi-faceted account of childhood during the Second World War as he examines children of various backgrounds affected by Nazism. His primary sources include memoirs, which are a unique source-base compared with previous material.<sup>52</sup> He differentiates them according to their memories: 'between those who remembered it as a time of normality and those who recalled...with fear and horror, the exact events'.<sup>53</sup> In sum, childhood, the family unit, and adolescence require further attention—Stargardt has provided the useful foundation. This dissertation will build upon his work, by examining the postwar period through time frameworks.

Studies of the Hitler Youth generation in the postwar landscape provide crucial

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48. Dirk Schumann, 'Childhood and Youth in Nazi Germany', in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, ed. Paula S. Fass (London: Routledge, 2012), 451.

49. Gregory Paul Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 182-187; and volume 2 in Wolfgang Keim, *Erziehung unter der Nazi-Diktatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

50. Dagmar Reese, *Straff, aber nicht stramm - herb, aber nicht derb: zur Vergesellschaftung von Mädchen durch den Bund Deutscher Mädel im sozialkulturellen Vergleich zweier Milieus* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1989); Dagmar Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Dagmar Reese, 'The BDM Generation: A Female Generation in Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy', in *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1968*, ed. Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 227-249; Kiryl Sosnowski, *The Tragedy of Children Under Nazi Rule* (New York: Howard Fertig, December 1983); Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

51. Michelle Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945*, Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Edward Ross Dickinson, *The Politics of German Child Welfare from the Empire to the Federal Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

52. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*.

53. *Ibid.*, 10ff.

information on how that generation rebuilt postwar Germany.<sup>54</sup> With a team of oral historians and a series of interviews in *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation*, Gabriele Rosenthal considers how the end of the Second World War impacted the Hitler Youth generation. Her conclusion acknowledges the importance of networks established during adolescence on adolescent development during the post-war period.<sup>55</sup> From the end of the Second World War, this generation was dubbed a ‘community of silence’ in both Germanies, yet developed differently in each. Those who found themselves in the new German Democratic Republic (GDR) joined the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ, or Free German Youth), states Alan McDougall, for pragmatic reasons—though some were attracted to the similarities between the HJ and FDJ.<sup>56</sup> There were a few HJ groups that actively resisted the FDJ in the early post-war years; still all HJ groups were subsumed under the FDJ.<sup>57</sup> Whilst young people actively joined the FDJ, their past involvement with Nazism is often at the forefront. In statements gathered in October 1945, many East German youths stated that they could not be held responsible or considered ‘guilty of everything’.<sup>58</sup> This attitude prevailed during the existence of the GDR, as official party rhetoric discouraged public discussion of the topic.<sup>59</sup> I aim to add to this historiography by providing a counterpoint to how the generation represents their engagement with the postwar period in narrative.

Alexander von Plato has conducted numerous oral history interviews that provide insights into the lives of ex-Hitler Youth members.<sup>60</sup> His findings show how former Hitler Youth members lived in the post-war landscape. As he and oral historians Dorothee Wierling and Lutz Niethammer discovered, many of these former Hitler Youth members ended up in high-ranking positions in post-war Germany.<sup>61</sup> In East

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54. Kimberly Ann Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow: Remembering Youth in Postwar Berlin* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004); Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

55. Rosenthal and Gather, *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation*, 23, 75, 254.

56. Alan McDougall, ‘A Duty to Forget? The ‘Hitler Youth Generation’ and the Transition from Nazism to Communism in Postwar East Germany, c. 1945–49’, *German History* 26, number 1 (January 1, 2008): 24–46.

57. *Ibid.*, 34.

58. SAMP-BArch, NY 4036/726, fo. 202-7. These statements were collected as a response to KPD chairman Wilhelm Pieck’s speech in August *Offene Tore für die Jugend* (‘open doors for the young’).

59. McDougall, ‘A Duty to Forget?’, 44.

60. Alexander von Plato, ‘The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States’, in *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1968*, ed. Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 210–226.

61. Niethammer, *Die volkseigene Erfahrung*.

Germany, many found employment through the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and ascended to positions of power.<sup>62</sup> These studies were conducted through oral history interviews, which differ from memoirs in that oral accounts are interactive between interviewee and interviewer. Whilst oral histories provide a wealth of information, life narratives are equally instrumental in helping us understand life during and after the Nazi period.

Using the Hitler Youth generation's life writing as its foundation, literary studies tend to focus less on the surrounding historical context, which in some instances weakens their argument—that is, when their argument pertains exclusively to history or intention, as opposed to a study of style or rhetoric. 'Memory and Identity in Autobiographical Texts by Günter Grass and Dieter Wellershoff' by Katja Fullard, focuses on the Second World War and analyses two authors' use of German collective memory in describing their Hitler Youth experiences.<sup>63</sup> Fullard comments on the masculine culture that permeated Nazi society, without taking into account the larger historiographical implications and debates on this topic.<sup>64</sup>

Other studies of the Hitler Youth generations' writings are found in literary analyses. In his study *On Their Own Terms*, Helmut Schmitz devotes a section to the analysis of two Hitler Youth fictional autobiographies. Before beginning his assessment on Ludwig Harig's *Weh dem, der aus der Reihe tanzt* (1990) and Martin Walser's *Ein springender Brunnen* (1997), Schmitz comments on the 'paradox of the experimental continuity of the self' in autobiographical fiction, as he finds that most writing about the Nazi era is 'still infused with enormous extra-textual significance and thus the questions of authenticity and responsibility'.<sup>65</sup> There was much discussion amongst literary critics following the publication of Zohar Shavit's *A Past Without Shadow* (original Hebrew edition: 1999, English edition: 2005), in terms of its treatment of fictionalised representations of the Third Reich.<sup>66</sup> In response, Hamida Bosmajian examines the

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62. Angela Brock, 'Producing the 'socialist Personality'? Socialisation, Education, and the Emergence of New Patterns of Behaviour', in *Power and Society in the German Democratic Republic*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (London: Berghahn Books, 2013), 220–252.

63. Katja Fullard, 'Memory and Identity in Autobiographical Texts by Günter Grass and Dieter Wellershoff', *Rocky Mountain Review* 64, number 1 (2010): 71–85.

64. *Ibid.*, 75–76.

65. Helmut Schmitz, *On Their Own Terms* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, 2004), 153.

66. Zohar Shavit, *A Past Without Shadow: Constructing the Past in German Books for Children* (London: Routledge, 2005).



same set of texts from a different angle. Both works scrutinise Richter and Burger quite intensely.<sup>67</sup> They illustrate the power and influence these writers had in depicting the Third Reich to younger Germans.

The present state of historiography underscores the importance of studying the life writings of the Hitler Youth generation. This work contributes to the historiography in several ways: first, it deepens our understanding of cultural memory and its development; second, it broadens the scope of previous studies in its consideration of childhood and family life, prior to the Second World War, as well as the Hitler Youths' transition into adulthood during the postwar period; and finally, it draws attention to the changeable nature of 'memory' by considering the timing of publications. Near the end of their lives in the 2000s, many Hitler Youths began writing and publishing their memoirs. My source base is new, largely unexamined, and ought to be studied by literary critics and historians alike. The next section looks at cultural memory and individual remembrance through the concept of a 'collected memoryscape'.

## Collected Memoryscape

Life narratives rely heavily upon memory and cultural codes to transmit ideas to readers. To understand how this transmission occurs, scholars of memoir have coined various concepts and terms: national memory, public memory, vernacular memory, and counter-memory. These terms show the impact of the 'memory wave' which has become increasingly popular in the twenty-first century.<sup>68</sup> Here, memory is defined as an individual's recollection of the historical past, in which they themselves were active agents.<sup>69</sup> LaCapra describes memory as a 'fixation on the past that inhibits action in the

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67. Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*.

68. James J. Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (Cambridge, MA: ACLS History, 2009); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Roy Rosenzweig, David Paul Thelen, and David Paul Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, 'Collective Memory - What Is It?', *History and Memory* 8, number 1 (1996): 30–50; counter-memory is a Foucauldian term, seen for example in, John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 106–123.

69. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 235.

present oriented to a more desirable future'.<sup>70</sup> Memory is connected to the past, present, and future, but history ought to be separated from memory.<sup>71</sup> Continuing Maier's discussion of memory and Nora's 'opposition between memory and history', LaCapra classifies two types of memory: primary and secondary. He identifies these types of memory because of his interest in traumatic memory. Primary memory is the initial memory of a person who has witnessed events, and secondary memory is the result of 'critical work on primary memory'. As LaCapra explained, this may be the person who 'had the relevant experience' or 'an analyst, observer, or secondary witness'.<sup>72</sup> Indeed memory 'is not identical with history'. It is also possible for people to recreate memories of a family member's past as their own postmemories. A postmemory is defined as the memory of an event after it occurred, regardless of whether one was an active part of it. Marianne Hirsch theorised that only those born after traumatic events, such as second or third generation family members of Holocaust survivors, engage in a 'traumatic transfer' of postmemories.<sup>73</sup> Further, she defines postmemory as 'not an identity position but a generation structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation'.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of memory used in this study relies on LaCapra's definition because it is discrete from history.

Jan and Aleida Assmann's theory of cultural memory is a useful starting point in our discussion of life narratives. Collective memory is formed and culturally determined by the process of remembrance.<sup>75</sup> The precondition for cultural memory is individuals, who form cultural memory by having access to narratives that determine their identity. The identity of the individual is constructed by society, which in turn creates cultural memory. Communicative memory includes concepts of collective memory, and consists of every day communication which is 'characterised by a high degree

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70. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 14, 16; See, in contrast, Nora, who looks instead at collective memory as something which remains of the past in the present within a group. This terminology is a useful starting point, as LaCapra furthers Nora's work. Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, 3 volumes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–1998).

71. LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 16.

72. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

73. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

74. *Ibid.*, 35.

75. Jan Assmann, 'Das kollektive Gedächtnis zwischen Körper und Schrift, Zur Gedächtnistheorie von Maurice Halbwachs', in *Erinnerung und Gesellschaft. Hommage à Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945)*, ed. Hermann Krapoth and Denis Laborde (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2005), 78.

of non-specialisation, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganisation.<sup>76</sup> Oral historians, for example, elucidated these ‘peculiar qualities’ of every day collective or ‘communicative memory’.<sup>77</sup> Life narratives by the Hitler Youth generation form a part of this communicative memory, as they are the externalised memory of a cultural community.<sup>78</sup> They perform the role of communicative memory in forming the cultural memory of the Third Reich. Cultural memory, therefore, results from the distance between history and memory.<sup>79</sup> When discussing the cultural memory of the Nazi past, we assume that that memory has already been formed. However, this is not necessarily the case with these life narratives, as they are still being published and written privately for families and local communities. Kansteiner believes that they no longer exert an influence on German political culture, but that communicative memory remains.<sup>80</sup> Prolific authors, such as Günter Grass and Joachim Fest, who published their life narratives in 2006, shows that discourse of the Nazi past is not yet over. Deliberative questions about what has been forgotten and what ought to be remembered are ongoing.<sup>81</sup> Collective memory, as a concept, is also integral to studying these writings.<sup>82</sup> First used in 1925 by Maurice Halbwachs, its meaning has been contested by many historians because the nature of its definition is itself problematic.<sup>83</sup> Frances Bartlett objects that collectives do not have a memory and that the social dimension of memory leads to collective remembering.<sup>84</sup> Collective memory, according to Peter Novick, is outside of history as ‘memory ... has no sense of the passage of time’ and it projects ‘eternal truth’

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76. Jan Assmann, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, trans. John Czaplicka, *New German Critique*, number 65 (April 1, 1995): 126.

77. *Ibid.*, 127.

78. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), 132.

79. For further reflections on this topic, Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations* 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory 1989): 7–24.

80. Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics After Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 80–82, 187f.

81. Waltraud Wende, ‘Medienbilder und Geschichte - Zur Medialisierung des Holocaust’, in *Geschichte im Film. Mediale Inszenierungen des Holocaust und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, ed. Waltraud Wende (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 8.

82. See also, Sigrid Weigel, ‘“Generation” as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945’, *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 77, number 4 (January 1, 2002): 265.

83. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

84. Frederic C Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

and gives ‘eternal identity for the members of the group’.<sup>85</sup> Lyn Taylor remarks that it ‘shap[es] memory of a shared event, circulated in the group and may shape individual memory’.<sup>86</sup> Collective memory, which describes the artificial process of gathering memories together, is the term I will use to describe the final, compiled group memories.<sup>87</sup> Although Kansteiner highlights the difficulties of distinguishing collective from individual memory, the writings of the Hitler Youth generation should be viewed as a collective, as they complement one other stylistically.<sup>88</sup>

Public collective memory is the foundation for most studies of twentieth-century Germany.<sup>89</sup> Alon Confino argues that when ‘culture and identity are seen everywhere, they lose their ability to explain, and we lose our ability to understand change and causation and to identify’ why certain aspects are different in various countries. Therefore, he believes that we should exercise caution when examining the link between memory and culture.<sup>90</sup> Studies of public memory of the Third Reich and the Second World War provide insight into how we remember the past. Robert Moeller’s *War Stories* looks at how the Third Reich and Holocaust studies have added to memory studies, through both a recognition of the Nazi past and a distancing from the past.<sup>91</sup> Pieter Lagrou looks at the impact that war experience had on German postwar memory in *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation*.<sup>92</sup> Its main concern is the ‘social history of the consequences of the Second

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85. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 4.

86. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*; See, also Stefan Berger and Bill Niven, editors, *Writing the History of Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

87. See James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

88. Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies’, *History and Theory* 41, number 2 (May 1, 2002): 180.

89. Christa Hoffmann, *Stunden Null?: Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland 1945 und 1989* (Berlin: Bouvier, 1992); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Hi Hitler!: How the Nazi Past Is Being Normalized in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich: Beck, 1996); Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005); Thomas C. Fox, *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 1999).

90. Alon Confino, *Germany As a Culture of Remembrance: Promises And Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 189-190; See also, Alon Confino, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method’, *The American Historical Review* 102, number 5 (1997): 1386-1403.

91. Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

92. Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

World War' and 'how *they* shaped postwar memories of national recovery'.<sup>93</sup> Further work should consider the Second World War, thus 'linking the experience of war with the memory of the war and private memories with public memories'.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the term 'collected memoryscape', discussed further on, is useful in connecting public and private and experience with memory. Histories of German memory should be 'an investigation that methodologically takes the intentions of people to represent memory in public as its point of departure' whilst taking into account differences 'between individual and collective, private and public, celebratory and every day, and official and underground memory'.<sup>95</sup> In other words, memory is accessible in different formats. The inclusion of life narratives expands an aspect of memory studies and provides a new framework for working with the memory of a social generation.

Memory reinterpretation occurs when a person is writing a life narrative or diary. When using life narratives as a source base, memory may be defined as 'autobiographical memory'. It is 'the construction of a coherent narrative woven from the fleeting memories of our past experiences'. Such memories are created by re-telling our past experiences and evolve over a stretch of time. Autobiographical memory is memory 'beyond the individual to include how an individual life is understood, modulated, and transformed through socially and culturally constructed narratives'.<sup>96</sup> In historiographical discussions of Holocaust memory, scholars such as James Young problematise translating Holocaust memories into fiction or into non-fictional texts. Indeed, Young thinks that this process should be viewed as a kind of 'historical exegesis'. Memory is not only dependent upon the self, but also evolves and changes over time. Communicative memory is what causes individual memory to evolve and be re-interpreted—although writing it down has its own difficulties: 'diarists and memoirists also fear that the empirical link between their experiences and their narratives is lost in literary con-

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93. *Ibid.*, 3.

94. Confino, *Germany As a Culture of Remembrance*, 201-202.

95. Alon Confino, 'Telling about Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture', *Journal of Modern History* 76, number 2 (2004): 406.

96. Robyn Fivush, 'Subjective perspective and personal timeline in the development of autobiographical memory,' in Dorthe Berntsen and David C. Rubin, *Understanding Autobiographical Memory: Theories and Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226; See also, A.J. Lambert et al., 'How Does Collective Memory Create a Sense of the Collective?', in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, ed. P. Boyer and J. Wertsch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 194-222.

struction'.<sup>97</sup> Michael Bernard-Dolands writes that memory and forgetfulness should go hand in hand, as both are needed to document inexplicable events.<sup>98</sup> Within the Hitler Youth life narratives, some writers reinterpret the past based upon the present, and attempt to change discourse about the past through communicative memory.

Whilst all of the terms listed above are important tools for analysing and understanding individuals' memories, a more sophisticated term is needed for the sources in this study. I use the term 'collected memoryscape' to address collective memory, cultural memory, communicative memory, and public memory simultaneously.<sup>99</sup> The word 'memoryscape' comes from the word 'memory', with the suffix '-scape', making it a kind of mental landscape, or scene. Toby Butler defines it as a 'landscape interpreted and imagined using the memories of others'.<sup>100</sup> The landscape is a useful metaphor for understanding the collected memoryscape which, like a landscape, is composed of three parts: time, space, and geography. Here, geography could be said to subsume place and space. The physical environment, or memoryscape, is at once tangible and intangible; the more intangible passage of time influences a person's memories just as their tangible environment shapes their perceptions.<sup>101</sup> The concept of the collected memoryscape is critical to our understanding of the Hitler Youth Generation, who all grew up under Nazi rule and are attempting to process it through writing. 'Autobiographical memory' can help us to understand the emotional dimension of the collected memoryscape, as collective memory alone seldom achieves this. Autobiographical memories, simply put, are those memories which define an individual and

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97. James E. Young, 'Interpreting Literary Testimony: A Preface to Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs', *New Literary History* 18, number 2 (January 1, 1987): 412.

98. Michael Bernard-Donals, 'Forgetful Memory and Images of the Holocaust', *College English* 66, number 4 (March 2004): 380; Michael F. Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).

99. For example, the concept may be used to analyse life narratives by men who experienced both the First and Second World Wars in Britain; writings by former slaves in the U.S.; memoirs by participants in the Finnish civil war, etc.

100. Toby Butler, "'Memoryscape': Integrating Oral History, Memory and Landscape", in *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed. P. Ashton and H. Kean (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 223.

101. Catherine Compton-Lilly, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Past, Present and Future Timespaces', in *Time and Space in Literacy Research*, ed. Catherine Compton-Lilly and Erica Halverson (London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

help form a foundation for how we talk about ourselves and our experiences.<sup>102</sup>

Some scholars utilise the concept of ‘collective guilt’, which not only assumes a shared understanding of what ‘guilt’ is, but also that it must be dealt with.<sup>103</sup> The ambivalent nature of German guilt ought to be considered when studying these texts. Many writers use the generational ‘we’ when referring to themselves or their peers, and many employ the same stylistic techniques. This generation has a community of writers which, however similar, remain distinguishable by their geographic backgrounds (East Germany, West Germany, North America) and publication dates. Indeed, the concept of the collective memoryscape might be useful in studying generational cohorts within textual or oral communities.

The collected memoryscape is therefore the most utilisable and comprehensive term we can use to discuss the Hitler Youth memoirs, in all their complexity. It allows us to study this generation and its textual communities as an entity. A collected memoryscape contains both the remembered past and the present. The remembered past is situated within a wider cultural context, which includes cultural codes, and the private and public self. As Smith and Watson argue, the style of the memoir allows narrators to perform ‘rhetorical acts’, which produce understandings of the ‘meaning of life’.<sup>104</sup> As with any source text, it is crucial to consider the influence of gender and race.<sup>105</sup> Through these lenses, some memoirs could be reinterpreted as ‘performative acts’ that

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102. See Kansteiner’s criticism towards using individual memory to study collective memory without further understandings of what memory is in, Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, 185; See, also, A.J. Lambert et al., ‘How Does Collective Memory Create a Sense of the Collective?’; See for study of how emotions affect story narration and telling to an audience Joe Lambert, *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (London: Routledge, 2012), 58; Also worth of note is William and Conway’s discussion of autobiographical memory networks and how individuals gain autobiographical memory: Helen L. Williams and Martin A. Conway, ‘Networks of Autobiographical Memories’, in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, ed. Pascal Boyer and James Wertsch (Cambridge: Cambridge Psychology Press, 2009), 33–61.

103. Lars Rensmann, ‘Collective Guilt, National Identity, and Political Processes in Contemporary Germany’, in *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, ed. Nyla R. Branscombe and Bertjan Doosje (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 169–190; Gian Vittorio Caprara, Jorge Manzi, and Marco Perugini, ‘Investigating Guilt in Relation to Emotionality and Aggression’, *Personality and Individual Differences* 13, number 5 (May 1992): 519–532; Michael J. A. Wohl, Nyla R. Branscombe, and Yechiel Klar, ‘Collective Guilt: Emotional Reactions When One’s Group Has Done Wrong or Been Wronged’, *European Review of Social Psychology* 17, number 1 (January 1, 2006): 1–37.

104. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 10.

105. Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure’, 74.

attempt to re-create their authors through writing.<sup>106</sup> The collected memoryscape is dual in nature: *what should we think* and *what I personally believe* come into conflict in these texts. It is much easier to access the notion of what should we be thinking ('we' meaning the Hitler Youth generation). What the individual believes, however, is often less accessible because the Hitler Youth generation, as an in-group, has possibly reached a consensus about a memory or past event. The term 'cultural circuit' is used to describe the memories which public images and individual perceptions shape.<sup>107</sup> As an extension into the larger collected memoryscape, geographical and time locations alter memory, as well as public perceptions and discourse. For example, the content of memoirs seems to differ based upon the geographical location (typically in Germany or the United States) or time of publication.

## Postwar Germanies and Publications by the Hitler Youth Generation

This section briefly outlines the relevance of major works of the Hitler Youth generation, in terms of studying private and public memories. I will analyse these works further in later chapters. It is impossible to provide a single description that details every argument about and discussion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* here; indeed, there are entire books dedicated to the subject.<sup>108</sup> Other important studies, such as Niven's *Facing the Nazi Past*, and Helmut Schmitz's *A Nation of Victims?*, provide analyses of the cultural, social, and political climates in which Germans processed their guilt and victimhood.<sup>109</sup> The Nazi past affected both Germanies, but each dealt with the war in different ways, and with varying repercussions. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the SED ascribed National Socialism and the Second World War to be the re-

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106. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'; also Jaques Derrida, 'Declarations', in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001*, ed. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 49.

107. Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure', 68.

108. See Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*; William John Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002); William John Niven, *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Frei, *1945 und wir*; Helmut Schmitz, *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

109. Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*; Schmitz, *A Nation of Victims?*, 67.



sults of capitalism; anti-fascism was a common response.<sup>110</sup> Discussing the Nazis was a ‘collusion of the older generation with the regime’s official myth which was not openly challenged’.<sup>111</sup> The West German attempt at confronting the past was a ‘pious public confession of collective responsibility’ in ‘a passive voice’.<sup>112</sup> Both states responded to National Socialism differently in the postwar period because the constructed narratives were cultural, with specific ends. The following section considers *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* alongside the main published narratives of the Hitler Youth generation.

As West Germany began its recovery after the Second World War, many wrote autobiographical accounts of their wartime experiences. The earliest autobiographical publications concerning National Socialism began appearing in 1945. Many of these were accounts of surviving fascism, and peaked and declined after 1950 as the discussion shifted to victims of Nazism.<sup>113</sup> Norbert Frei’s *Vergangenheitspolitik: die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (1996) critically outlines West Germany’s transition from National Socialism to a federal democracy: for example, by undermining the Nuremberg trials and reinstating members of the civil service who were, previously, Nazi collaborators.<sup>114</sup> The 1950s were a period of myths of victimhood, and the Nuremberg trials facilitated this interpretation.<sup>115</sup> This allowed for the general populace’s ‘mass exculpation’, as the people began to see themselves as ‘Hitler’s first victims’.<sup>116</sup> In the 1950s, the West German military was advertised and promoted through film, which portrayed the Wehrmacht and the German people as victims of Nazi politics. In films such as *Stalingrad*, soldiers were cast in a positive light, with the film conveying the notion that true Nazis were the elite, and therefore not representative of the nation. The same can be said of *Der Arzt von Stalingrad*,

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110. Ruth Wittlinger, *German National Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Different Republic After All?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18.

111. Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 156; see further Niethammer, *Die volkseigene Erfahrung*.

112. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 59.

113. H. Peitsch, ‘Autobiographical Writing as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Mastering the Past)’, *German History* 7, number 1 (January 1, 1989): 51ff.

114. Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*.

115. R. Wittlinger, ‘Taboo or Tradition? The ‘Germans as Victims’ Theme in West Germany until the Early 1990s’, in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. William John Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 62-63.

116. Wittlinger, ‘Taboo or Tradition? The ‘Germans as Victims’ Theme in West Germany until the Early 1990s’, 63; Ole Frahm, ‘Ein deutsches Trauma? Zur Schamlosigkeit deutscher Opferidentifikation’, *German Life and Letters* 57, number 4 (October 2004): 372-90.

which presents a Cold War narrative with aggressive Soviets.<sup>117</sup> Much of this period was influenced by ideas of German victimisation and few were willing to discuss the past.

During this period, what might be considered the first novel by a member of the Hitler Youth generation, Günter Wagner's *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod*, was published in 1958. Advertised as a novel, Wagner's work is based on his life experiences as a student in *Reichsschule der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP)*, in Feldafing.<sup>118</sup> The protagonist, Rolf Lüdecke, is a fanatical young Nazi who tries to save his village from Allied invasion at the climax of the novel. German victimisation is present throughout the book, and is confirmed in the *Der Spiegel* interview. The focus is primarily on the Nazi victimisation of young people, and the difficulties this presented for them during the war and afterwards. The article stated,

The education of inhumanity takes place without restricting the good conscience of the educated. The totalitarian state educates youth to traditional ideals—in the Nazi state, for example, this meant honour, people, loyalty—which, of course, it corrupted for its own purposes.<sup>119</sup>

Centring on forced Nazi education and brainwashing, both the article and the book highlight the fanatical aspects of this period. This fanaticism made it difficult to openly discuss growing up during the Third Reich, and complicates any attempts to situate it within the larger, victimisation narrative.

German victimhood was challenged during the 1960s, as the discussion was 'much more widespread and open', acknowledging 'responsibility for crimes committed by Germans which was in clear contrast' to the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>120</sup> The mid-1960s was a turning point, as 'Nazism came back into the German public sphere through trials and new form[s] of discourse which w[ere] associated with Adorno's critical theory and the Frankfurt School, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich'.<sup>121</sup> For Hitler Youth

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117. Helen Wolfenden, 'The Representation of Wehrmacht Soldiers as Victims in Post-War German Film: *Hunde, Wollt Ihr Ewig Leben?* And *Der Artzt von Stalingrad*', in *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 71-80.

118. Günter Wagner, *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod* (Hamburg: Classen, 1958).

119. 'HITLER-JUGEND Der Trick', *Der Spiegel*, September 10, 1958.

120. Wittlinger, 'Taboo or Tradition? The 'Germans as Victims' Theme in West Germany until the Early 1990s', 65.

121. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, *Memory and Political Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 37.

life narratives, little changed during the 1960s. The most prominent works were by Hans Peter Richter, Melita Maschmann, and Heinz Küpper. All three attempt to discuss the Nazi past in different ways. Maschmann's autobiography is the only one that is not autobiographical fiction. Both Maschmann's *Fazit. Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch* and Heinz Küpper's *Simplicius 45* appeared alongside Hanna Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* in 1963, after the end of Eichmann's trial in 1961.<sup>122</sup> This trial, in conjunction with the Frankfurt trials of 1963-1965, sparked conversations about Nazism and German victimhood.<sup>123</sup> Although Maschmann falls outside my working-definition of the Hitler Youth generation, her work was significant at the time. She claims that the book was not just an autobiography, but also the birth story of a nation. It was republished in 1979 'amid intense public debate' about the Holocaust, which suggests it was Maschmann's direct address to her contemporaries.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, the publisher reprinted it seven times between 1964 and 1987 in Germany.<sup>125</sup> Küpper's autobiographical fiction novel was less popular, whilst Hans Peter Richter's *Damals war es Friedrich* (1961) travelled as far as England. These works therefore contribute to the broader debates of the 1960s, even though both Richter and Küpper are writing autobiographical fiction.

A number of cohort members reacted strongly to the student protests of 1968 by writing apologist autobiographical fiction novels, justifying their inaction and resistance of the regime.<sup>126</sup> Many of these novels, which appeared some ten years after the 1968 protests, show how 'memory contests' were used to placate young people in 1968.<sup>127</sup> This trend continued until the 1980s, as Hardy Krüger (born 1928) writes in 1998, 'It took me almost forty years before I could write about it—at least in novel

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122. Peitsch, 'Autobiographical Writing as Vergangenheitsbewältigung (Mastering the Past)', 51.

123. Davin O. Pendas, "'I Didn't Know What Auschwitz Was': The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial and the German Press, 1963-1965", *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 12, number 2 (2000): 397-446.

124. Sayner, 'For Whom Does One Remember?', 213.

125. Sayner, 'For Whom Does One Remember?'; Joanne Sayner, "'Man muß die bunten Blüten abreißen': Melita Maschmann's Autobiographical Memoires of Nazism", *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41, number 2 (2005): 213-225.

126. Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach*; Renate Finckh, *Sie Versprachen uns die Zukunft: Eine Jugend im Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd edition (Würzburg: Arena-Taschenbuch, 1995); Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?*; Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*.

127. See Detlef Siegfried, 'Understanding 1968: Youth rebellion, Generation change, and Postindustrial society,' in Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980* (London: Berghahn Books, 2005), 59-81; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Random House, 2011), 390ff; Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 171.

form and with an unfamiliar name'.<sup>128</sup> Küger's novel, *Junge Unrast* (1983), details his student experiences in a Napola school. In this sense, the author hides behind the curtain of 'fiction' to exculpate himself from real-life consequences.<sup>129</sup> In some novels, such as those by Hans Peter Richter and Heinz Küpper, an anonymous narrator allows the reader to sympathise with and become the protagonist, facilitating a justification of the protagonist's actions during the Third Reich.<sup>130</sup> This anonymity or pseudonym usage may be the effect of distancing one's current self from one's former, Nazi self. For example, the narrator of *Simplicius 45* is motivated by a desire to normalise Nazi life in Germany, making the war less about ideology than simple military conflict. Therefore, the breaking point of Nazism comes rather abruptly, or is not directly addressed: the main point of the work was to justify rather than reinterpret past memories.

The 1970s were a decade of attempts at commemoration and discussions of guilt. This was the decade in which West German Chancellor Willy Brandt fell to his knees, at the monument memorialising the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, where Germans killed thousands.<sup>131</sup> The German broadcasting of the American television series *Holocaust* (1978) was a 'turning point' in terms of public awareness about the Holocaust and genocide.<sup>132</sup> Often cited in contemporary research on the Hitler Youth organisation, Horst Burger's *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?* tackles the Nazi past in new ways. First published in 1978, it is a dialogue in which a son asks his father, who is also the narrator, four questions about the Third Reich. Burger's narrator's values conflict with public perception of the Hitler Youth organisation and the Nazi regime. He is similar to Barbara Gehrt's narrator in *Nie wieder ein Wort davon* (1975), as both struggle with a desire and a reluctance to conform. Both authors were influenced by the debates of the late 1960s and early 1970s; the 1968 student movement demanded answers from the older generation, complaining of alienation and confusion, as well as

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128. Hardy Krüger, 'Von der Ordensburg nach Babelsberg' in Johannes Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler': ehemalige Zöglinge der NS-Auslaufeschulen brechen ihr Schweigen*, 2. Aufl. (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhring, 1998), 55.

129. Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*.

130. Hans Peter Richter, *Damals war es Friedrich* (Nürnberg: Sebaldu-Verl, 1961); Hans Peter Richter, *Wir waren dabei* (Freiburg i. Br: Herder, 1962); Hans Peter Richter, *Die Zeit der jungen Soldaten* (Freiburg i. Br: Alsatia-Verl, 1967).

131. Wittlinger, *German National Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Different Republic After All?*, 22.

132. Assmann and Shortt, *Memory and Political Change*, 38.

silences within the family.<sup>133</sup> Those in West Germany were either in one of two camps. Though this is perhaps an oversimplification, the younger generation identified most with the victims of Nazi Germany, and were no longer proud of their German heritage; the older generation maintained a more outlook on German identity.<sup>134</sup> Even this was problematic, and did not help with ‘overcoming the past’, Fulbrook argues, but only ‘exacerbate[d] an obsession’.<sup>135</sup>

A number of historians writing in English have utilised English-language Hitler Youth memoirs in their studies, yet there have been few comparative studies on how geographical location influenced the reinterpretation of memory in memoir writing. There are also noticeable structural differences between English-language and German-language publications, with the English writers mirroring the format of American memoirs about the Vietnam war.<sup>136</sup> Vietnam war memoirs shifted the ‘war memoir mould’ into a ‘tripartite structure of before, during and after as participants testify to the transformative nature of war’.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, most English-language memoirs follow this style, along with archived memoirs. Although published in English only a year after its publication in Germany, Melita Maschmann’s 1964 *Fazit*, translated into English as *Account Rendered*, seems to have made little impact on the cohort members living in the United States. Reviewed by *The New York Times* as ‘not a typical case’, but as ‘one of the most literate accounts we can ever hope to have from a woman whose entire life was shaped by Nazi ideology’, the book does not seem to have received much media coverage by nationwide newspapers.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, her memoir is an exploration of how she has changed since the Nazi period—a theme upon which many of the memoirists touch.<sup>139</sup>

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133. Dorle Klika, ‘Barbara Gehrts: Nie wieder ein Wort davon?’, in *Das Dritte Reich im Jugendbuch: Fünfzig Jugendbuch-Analysen und ein theoretischer Bezugsrahmen*, ed. Ernst Cloer (Braunschweig: Agentur Pedersen, 1983), 99–104; Uta Hinz, ‘“1968” in Context: Protest Movements in the 1960s’, *Contemporary European History* 20, number 2 (2011): 233–242; Heinz Bude, ‘The German Kriegskinder: Origins and Impact of the Generation of 1968’, in *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany 1770-1968*, ed. Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 290–305.

134. Assmann and Shortt, *Memory and Political Change*, 38.

135. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 172.

136. Bettina Hoffman, ‘On the Battlefield and Home Front: American Women Writing Their Lives on the Vietnam War’, in *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Alex Vernon (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005), 215.

137. Philip Dwyer, editor, *War Stories: The War Memoir in History and Literature* (London: Berghahn Books, 2016), 3.

138. J. P. Bauke, ‘The Voices Are German: The Voices The Voices Are German’, *New York Times: BOOK REVIEW* (New York, N.Y., United States), April 11, 1965, BR3.

139. Sayner, ‘For Whom Does One Remember?’

These memoirs, however, are rarely studied as a collective body of work, nor are they compared with one another. The majority of English-language cohort members emigrated to the United States or Canada in the 1950s, usually having received funding and admission for studies in higher education. These memoirs often distance themselves from German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* discourse, because few returned to Germany after they left. Indeed, because they are removed from West German social and political culture, both of which exhibited a growing historical self-awareness, these memoirs are more unselfconscious in their portrayal of childhood during the 1930s and 1940s. Regardless of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, many writers depict themselves as victims of the Third Reich and place their suffering above that of the Jewish people.

The earliest English-language non-fiction publication is Ilse Koehn's *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (1977); her publication came at a time the Holocaust is beginning to gain traction in public. However, in an interview given to *The Washington Post*, she argues for understanding of the perpetrator side, even in the face of writing of her negative experiences in three KLV camps. In an interview which is cited in *The Washington Post*, Koehn stated:

I wanted to show that the victims of war are ordinary human beings, individuals, whose concerns are the same as anyone else's, even though they are the enemy to others. Fortunately, few of us in life are faced with 'your-life-or-mine' decisions, and my book is not about martyrs or monsters. It's about people responding to the less dramatic decisions they have to make daily in a war situation.<sup>140</sup>

Koehn's response indicates that she is attempting to create and shape the collected memoryscape of childhood in Nazi Germany. Because of her status as a *Mischling*, Koehn chooses her words carefully in order to position herself and her family as victims of the regime. The amount of writing in the early 2000s on the suffering of the Germans, Niven notes, 'has taken on an obsessive dimension'.<sup>141</sup> Anna Fuchs notes that works follow a similar pattern of 'triumphant recovery of unofficial private memories of the Nazi period'.<sup>142</sup>

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140. Reviewed by Daniel Bloom, 'Ilse Koehn's Story: Growing Up in Nazi Germany: Book World MISCHLING, SECOND DEGREE: My Childhood in Nazi Germany. By Ilse Koehn (Greenwillow. 2-10 Pp. \$7.03)', *The Washington Post* (1974-Current file): *STYLE People/Entertainment/The Arts* (Washington, D.C., United States), November 5, 1977, B2.

141. Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 8.

142. Anne Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse: The Politics of Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.

As this section details, the Hitler Youth generation's collected memoryscape reflects changes that were happening with the public and in public. Still, the Hitler Youth generation's writings ought to be contextualised within the postwar years. In addition, those works published since the 1990s ought to be taken into account. This includes the unpublished archival material, of which this study makes use, in addition to published sources.

## Distinctions: Autobiography and Memoir

Historians use a variety of ego-documents, such as diaries, letters, memoirs, CVs, court documents, and autobiographies, as personal testimonies from ordinary people.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, these documents are invaluable to historians.<sup>144</sup> However, one of the difficulties of working with ego-documents lies in methodological approaches. From a methodological standpoint, most of the material used in this thesis is identifiable as a 'life narrative'; however, this necessarily requires a definition of 'life narrative' as a genre.<sup>145</sup> Both memoir and autobiography are terms commonly associated with life narratives, but there are key literary differences between the two. As James Olney states, 'the subject of autobiography produces more questions than answers, more doubts by far (even of its existence) than certainties'.<sup>146</sup> This section outlines the methodological implications of using life narratives as sources. It also explores the differences between the genres of autobiography and memoir, as ego-document sources, which I subsume under the umbrella-term 'life narrative'. A familiarity with the differences between these genres allows historians better insights into how these sources illuminate the self as a historical self.<sup>147</sup> The sources document changes within the self, in relation to historical and contemporary developments, in specific times and places.

As sources outside of official archives, ego-documents (such as diaries, letters, and

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143. Dagmar Günther, '“And now for something completely different”: Prolegomena zur Autobiographie als Quelle der Geschichtswissenschaft', *Historische Zeitschrift* 272, number 1 (2001): 25.

144. Irina Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', *Russian Review* 63, number 4 (October 1, 2004): 561–573.

145. Jeroen Blaak, *Literacy in Everyday Life: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Dutch Diaries*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Boston: Brill, 2009), 33.

146. James Olney, 'Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 5.

147. Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 69.

life narratives) enable historians to understand individuals living in a particular time period.<sup>148</sup> Narratives of the past are by nature diachronic and retrospective, enabling individuals and society to tell stories of the past.<sup>149</sup> A 1945 study by Louis Gottschalk et al. argues that autobiography is integral to historical research because it is ‘in a very real sense human and personal’.<sup>150</sup> Coined by Jacques Presser, the ego-document gained traction in the mid-1950s, used to describe multiple sources written by people about themselves.<sup>151</sup> Winfried Schulze expands this concept during the 1960s, arguing that court cases, *curricula vitae* and other official documents are ego-documents as well.<sup>152</sup> Although German scholars and historians of the early modern and eighteenth-century periods continue to debate on the value of ego-documents, it is generally agreed that they illuminate personal experience and the concepts of ‘self’ for the writer.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, the use of ego-documents has flourished in Russian studies, as more research on communist rule references Soviet-era diaries and letters.<sup>154</sup> Therefore the use of life narratives as a microhistorical source incorporates new voices and opinions into the discussion.

In light of these sources and with the aim of understanding the historical self, I adapt Kirsti Salmi-Niklander’s methodology of memory knowledge research (*muis-*

148. Jochen Hellbeck, ‘The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian’s Critical Response’, *Russian Review* 63, number 4 (October 1, 2004): 621–629; Blaak, *Literacy in Everyday Life*; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Andreas Lixl-Purcell, ‘Memoirs as History’, *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 39, number 1 (January 1, 1994): 227–238; Adam Hochschild, *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1995).

149. Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, ‘Tapahtuma, kokemus ja kerronta’, in *Muistitietotutkimus. Metodologisia kysymyksiä*, ed. Outi Fingerroos et al. (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 199–200.

150. Louis Gottschalk and Louis Reichtenthal, *The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology, and Sociology* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1945), 6.

151. Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, ‘In Relation: The ‘Social Self’ and Ego-Documents’, *German History* 28, number 3 (January 9, 2010): 264.

152. Winfried Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an Den Menschen in Der Geschichte* (Berlin: Akademie, 1996).

153. See for example, Eva Kormann, *Ich, Welt und Gott: Autobiographik im 17. Jahrhundert*, volume Bd. 13, *Selbstzeugnisse der Neuzeit*; Bd. 13 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004); Elspeth Graham, *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989); Gabriele Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis. Beziehungskonzepte in Selbstzeugnissen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002); Claudia Ulbrich and Gabriele Jancke, *Vom Individuum zur Person: neue Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von Autobiographietheorie und Selbstzeugnisforschung*, volume Bd. 10, 2005, *Querelles: Jahrbuch für Frauenforschung*; (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005).

154. Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone, ‘Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective’, *Slavic Review* 67, number 4 (December 1, 2008): 967–986.



*tiitetotutkimus*).<sup>155</sup> I make use of this narrative theory because it outlines a series of useful questions for studying textual narratives. It is not different from other interpretive methodologies, but rather a useful tool. Those who rely upon diaries as sources have also relied upon literary theory as a means of scrutinising them.<sup>156</sup> In the case of life narratives, oral history theory is sometimes used to elucidate concepts of the self. Oral history theory is a tool for historians studying narrative, and may be applied to documents outside of oral history.<sup>157</sup> Salmi-Niklander's *muistitietotutkimus* narrative methodology provides a list of questions, as well. One might apply this framework to the Hitler Youth life narratives: why is this writer documenting their life; how does the narrator report on these events; does the cohort employ any typical narrative stance? More broadly, an examination of narrative events reveals the author's motivations—that is, that the gaps or silences in the text are just as important as the content. Further, we must consider the style and tone of the narration.<sup>158</sup> As a basis for source criticism, the theoretical discussions of narrative theory are essential. That is not to say that other forms of source criticism are not useful, however.<sup>159</sup> All of this is important to consider when analysing narrative texts, as they provide a framework for examining the Hitler Youth life narratives.<sup>160</sup>

Another aspect of life-narrative studies is the emotional interplay between the present and historical self, as the writer grows through time. In historical writing, it is typically the historian who supplements emotion and self-awareness—things that, in fiction, a first-person narrator protagonist would provide. Using autobiography as source material, the historian effectively carries out an 'empathetic reconstruction' of

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155. English-language 'oral history' is considered a sub-category of *muistitietotutkimus* in Finnish historiography, and as such methodological frameworks are adopted more widely, see Outi Fingerroos and U-M Peltonen, editors, *Muistitietotutkimus: metodologisia kysymyksiä* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 9.

156. See for her way of conceptualising narrative as a social transaction Barbara Herrnstein Smith, 'Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories', *Critical Inquiry* 7, number 1 (1980): 221-236; Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 115; Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 1-42; See, Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time', *Critical Inquiry* 7, number 1 (1980): 169-190.

157. See Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 106ff.

158. Salmi-Niklander, 'Tapahtuma, kokemus ja kerronta', 201.

159. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1984); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

160. See also, Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate, and Roger Woods, *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century* (London: Camden House, 2010), 33-35.

the past, which better elucidates the historical subject.<sup>161</sup> This reconstruction through life narratives tells us much about those ordinary people, more specifically adolescents and children, who lived during the Third Reich.<sup>162</sup> Studying the history of emotions therefore gives us a better sense of how the self changes through time and place.

Philippe Lejeune's *pacte autobiographique* (autobiographical pact) is useful in distinguishing novels from life narratives. His work enables the historian to recognise whether a life narrative is a work of fiction or non-fiction. According to Lejeune, the autobiographical pact 'presupposes that the reader believes in the identity of the author of the autobiography', therefore implying that the narrator and author are the same person.<sup>163</sup> He illustrates two means by which this pact is fulfilled: the 'vital statistics' of the author must be the same as the narrator (date and place of birth); and the 'implied contract or 'pact' [that] exists between the author and publisher attest[s]' to those statements.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, he perceives biographical and autobiographical texts to be potentially truthful, as they are 'referential': in other words, they relate truth in a manner that differs from fiction. The text may not necessarily provide an accurate account of the events, or represent the author in an objective manner; still, it reveals itself to the reader through narration, in the way that the author intends.<sup>165</sup> For historians, autobiographies and memoirs are 'evidence' of past events. We must rely upon them as means of understanding the past, whilst acknowledging the fine line between

161. Jennifer Jensen Wallach, 'Building a Bridge of Words: The Literary Autobiography as Historical Source Material', *University of Hawaii Press* 29, number 3 (2006): 448-449.

162. See also Dominick LaCapra, *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 66-67ff; 'Mourning and Melancholia' Sigmund Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement. Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, in collab. with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, trans. James Strachey, volume XIV, *The Complete Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 243ff; Sarah Pinto, 'Emotional Histories and Historical Emotions: Looking at the Past in Historical Novels', *Rethinking History* 14, number 2 (June 1, 2010): 198; Harvie Ferguson, *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Soren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology* (London: Routledge, 2005), 19; Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*, 72.

163. Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Éditions du Seuil, 1975); Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Paul John Eakin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse*, 161; Similar in thought is Fish's reader-response theory Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Louise Michelle Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1995); Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

164. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 8.

165. Dahlke, Tate, and Woods, *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, 6; Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 10.

history and fiction and our capacity to falsify history.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, as source material, autobiography and the known historical past must not compete with one another: they ought to be studied in tandem, in order to enrich our understanding of the past.<sup>167</sup> Although the autobiographical document is itself subjective, Gabriele Jancke argues that by categorising life writing as either ‘true or false, complete or incomplete, does not make full use of the material’.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, it is important to consider how the writer constructs a sense of self within the historical past, and not become preoccupied with the truthfulness of the account.

Unlike Lejeune’s blurring of autobiographical fiction with life narratives, this thesis strictly divides them into two sets.<sup>169</sup> Dorrit Cohn, in *The Distinction of Fiction*, places emphasis on the first-person narrative in novels and autobiography. She argues for the differentiation between ‘real and fictional self-narration’ because other literary theorists do not strictly define the genres.<sup>170</sup> Cohn emphasises that ‘first person narratives are not as a rule either written or read as semi-autobiographies or demi-novels’ and argues against Georges May, who does not believe there is a difference between novels and autobiography.<sup>171</sup> In similar vein to Cohn, Ruth Klüger remains adamant about the differences between fiction and autobiography.<sup>172</sup> She writes that although she intentionally avoids whitewashing and illustrative anecdotes in her memoir (*Erinnerungsbuch*), it has nevertheless been mistaken for a novel.<sup>173</sup> As such, it is important to distinguish here between fiction and truth in storytelling.

The term life narrative is used in my study of the self as a changing historical person. The term is used for both autobiography and memoir, as life narrative is defined here as narratives written by people ‘about their own lives (even when they write about

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166. See Dominick LaCarpia, ‘Rhetoric and History’, in *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), 15-44.

167. Roger Woods, ‘The Purposes and Problems of German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century’, in *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate, and Roger Woods (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 8; Gabriele Jancke, ‘Autobiographische Texte - Handlungen in einem Beziehungsnetz’, in *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, ed. Winfried Schulze (Berlin: Akademie, 1996), 76.

168. Woods, ‘The Purposes and Problems of German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century’, 6.

169. Here, I am using Cohn’s definition, as sources which are ‘autobiographically inspired works’ Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: JHU Press, October 26, 2000), 30.

170. *Ibid.*, 31.

171. *Ibid.*, 35.

172. Ruth Klüger, *weiter leben : Eine Jugend* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004).

173. Ruth Klüger, *Gelesene Wirklichkeit: Fakten und Fiktionen in der Literatur* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 88,145.

themselves in the second or third person, or as a member of a community) and do so simultaneously from externalized and internal points of view'.<sup>174</sup> Life writing is another term commonly associated with this genre, but the term life narrative is a narrower definition more suitable for this source base. Smith and Watson define life writing as a 'general term for writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer'.<sup>175</sup> As suggested by Stephen Spender, life narratives also contain characteristic personae: first, the 'social, historical person with achievements, personal appearance, social relationships'; and second, the self which is invisible to the outsider. Spender writes that we:

are seen from the outside by our neighbors; but we remain always at the back of our eyes and our senses, situated in our bodies, like a driver in the front seat of a car seeing other cars coming toward him. A single person ... is one consciousness within one machine, confronting all the other traffic.<sup>176</sup>

Smith and Watson use the same metaphor to differentiate the biographer from the life narrator: the biographer sees the traffic, whilst the life narrator drives the vehicle. Life narrative is used as the main term because autobiography and memoir both have certain implications, and life narrative narrows the definition.

As a term, autobiography is difficult to define. Most literary theorists turn to Lejeune's definition of autobiography as the 'retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality'. In other words, to be considered autobiography, the text must centre on the individual and tell his or her life story through narration. Lejeune states that autobiography must fulfil the following four conditions: '1. *Form of language*: narrative, in prose; 2. *Subject treated*: individual life, story of a personality; 3. *Situation of the author*: the author and the narrator are identical'; and '4. *Position of the narrator*: the narrator and the principal character are identical'.<sup>177</sup> In this view, memoirs do not necessarily fulfil the second requirement because the subject is not an

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174. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 4-5.

175. *Ibid.*, 4.

176. Stephen Spender, 'Confessions and Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 116.

177. Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, 4.

individual life story, but often a piece about a historical era. This is a bold assumption to make without further proof—though Lejeune agrees that the subject of an autobiography may be, in part, ‘the chronicle and social or political history’.<sup>178</sup> This unsettles the place of the modern memoir within the category of autobiography, as many memoirs emphasize the ‘story of a personality’.<sup>179</sup>

We also might define autobiography according to William Howarth’s definition, which classifies it as a kind of ‘self-portrait’. Howarth argues that autobiography presents a tailored image of the narrator for the viewing pleasure of the reader. He proposes that we study the autobiographical self by examining three different elements of autobiography: character, theme, and technique. These elements can also be used to understand the narrator of the memoir.<sup>180</sup> As a genre, autobiography has stricter writing conventions, and so to be classified as an autobiography, a work must fulfil the requirements which Lejeune and Howarth outline. As a consequence, literary theorists such as Donald Winslow and Paul Eakin use the term *life writing* to describe other forms of autobiography, or ‘the *hybrid forms of autobiography* that in turn *arise from discussion of autonomous versus relational concepts of identity*’.<sup>181</sup> These two definitions provide only a glimpse into the current scholarly discussion about autobiography, but illustrate the complexities of working within the genre-specific tradition of these ego-documents.

The memoir (*Erinnerungen; Memoiren*) is a term used in everyday conversation, and yet it remains difficult to define. As George Fetherling, in his 2001 introduction to his collection *The Vintage Book of Canadian Memoirs*, states: ‘people may not agree what a memoir is but they know one when they see it and they create a demand, which writers and publishers rush to satisfy’.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, memoirs have become wildly pop-

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178. *Ibid.*, 5.

179. See also, Elizabeth W. Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

180. William L. Howarth, ‘Some Principles of Autobiography’, *New Literary History* 5, number 2 (January 1, 1974): 365.

181. See Donald J. Winslow, *Life-Writing: A Glossary of Terms in Biography, Autobiography, and Related Forms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995); Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3; Woods, ‘The Purposes and Problems of German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century’, 3.

182. Fetherling George, editor, ‘Preface’, in *The Vintage Book of Canadian Memoirs* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001), vii.

ular in the twenty-first century.<sup>183</sup> In Germany, oral history interviews conducted by historians have complicated the events of the Third Reich, acting partially as autobiographical or memoir-like accounts.<sup>184</sup> There are many memoirs and written accounts that deal with the Holocaust, being a part of the Nazi regime, working for Hitler, or even resistance movements in occupied countries—many of which found a market in the English-speaking world.<sup>185</sup> The increase in memoir writing has led Leigh Gilmore to call this period the ‘memoir boom’. In her work, *The Limits of Autobiography*, she notes that memoir is directly linked to war-related trauma, which may indicate why it is now more popular than ever.<sup>186</sup> In Germany, the memoir provides a historical account of *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday life) as opposed to autobiography, which is more aesthetic.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the more informal structure of memoir opens up space for the voices of ordinary people. In the case of Germany, the style of the memoir lends insight into people’s everyday life experiences during the Third Reich.

There are many different types of works by the Hitler Youth generation: published autobiographical fiction, published autobiographies and memoirs, and unpublished memoirs. We can and ought to study these as a collective. Remaining mindful of these varying genres, the corpus forms the overall collected memoryscape. We can con-

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183. Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 8,22; Niethammer, *Die volkseigene Erfahrung*; Günther, ‘And now for something completely different’; Kerstin Mueller Dembling, ‘Opa Was a Nazi: Family, Memory, and Generational Difference in 2005 Films by Malte Ludin and Jens Schanze’, *The German Quarterly* 84, number 4 (October 1, 2011): 477-495.

184. Annett Gröschner, *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1998).

185. See for example Herbert Arthur Strauss, *In the Eye of the Storm: Growing Up Jewish in Germany, 1918-1943: A Memoir* (Fordham Univ Press, January 1, 1999); Margaret Baacke, *Tainted Blood?: Memoirs of a Part-Jewish Girl in the Third Reich 1933-1945* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, January 17, 2007); Eycke Strickland, *Eyes Are Watching, Ears Are Listening: Growing Up in Nazi Germany, 1933-1946*, Second edition (Eycke Strickland, May 10, 2014); Susan Dworkin, *The Nazi Officer’s Wife: How One Jewish Woman Survived The Holocaust* (New York: William Morrow, 2012); Rena Kornreich Gelissen and Heather Dune Macadam, *Rena’s Promise: Two Sisters in Auschwitz*, Kindle Edition edition (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2011); Lucy Lipiner, *Long Journey Home: A Young Girl’s Memoir of Surviving the Holocaust* (Usher Publishing, December 7, 2013); Pearl Fichman, *Before Memories Fade* (Self-published e-book, 2011); Anne Frank and Eleanor Roosevelt, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, Reprint edition, trans. B. M. Mooyaart (London: Bantam, 1993); Dietrich von Hildebrand and John Henry Crosby, *My Battle Against Hitler: Faith, Truth, and Defiance in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (New York: Image, 2014); Gerda Weissmann Klein, *All But My Life: A Memoir*, Expanded edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Traudl Junge, *Hitler’s Last Secretary: A Firsthand Account of Life with Hitler*, ed. Melissa Muller (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011).

186. Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, Cornell paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

187. Anne Rothe, ‘Between History and Memory in Schumann’s Being Present: Growing up in Hitler’s Germany’, *Comparative Literature and Culture* 11, number 1 (2009): 3.

sider the fictional texts as ‘memory texts’ which belong to ‘a larger framework for examining the sheer diversity of modes, motivations and effects of their engagement with the past, particularly one which moves beyond dismissing affect’.<sup>188</sup> In other words, the author voices his concerns and assumptions within the novel, including his or her opinion of history and historical events. This framework allows us to study fictional works as background context. Indeed, omitting these works would not accurately represent this community of writers.<sup>189</sup> As they do not always aim to represent the ‘truth’ nor will they be a part of contextual analysis, fiction here would help buttress the study by providing a helpful evaluation of the themes of period, reflection of political, social and cultural issues surrounding their memory of the Third Reich as a result of the time framework in which the autobiographical fiction is published.

This section has discussed the differences between autobiography and memoir as literary terms and as ego-documents. It provided a working definition which I will use to analyse the material in this study. The theory of *muistitietotutkimus* helps us interpret these sources and, by extension, address the broader research questions which this study engenders. Whilst fact and fiction are sometimes indistinguishable in autobiography, it is still important that historians have the writers’ biographical information to determine whether they ought to include the text as a source. Indeed, the historian should use autobiographical fiction to contextualise life narratives if the author is part of a greater, defined generational cohort.<sup>190</sup> Though life narratives should take precedence, autobiographical fiction can help to contextualise the historical period of this study. Fiction may provide illustrative or documentary type information on a social period, with the help of New Historicism.<sup>191</sup> Whilst the name of the main character differs from that of the author, the protagonist’s experiences often mirror the experiences of

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188. Kate Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4.

189. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*.

190. In his work, Spengelmann attempts to combine the historical self with the autobiographical self, but his study is limited as he only focuses on the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment periods, William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

191. Julia Reid, ‘Novels’, in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London: Routledge, 2009), 162-163; see debates on new historicism in, Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

the Hitler Youth generation.<sup>192</sup> Owing to the problematic nature of autobiographical fiction, the historian ought to pay special attention to the differences and similarities between sources.

## Representing Childhood, Adolescence and Growing Up in War

Whilst this thesis uses Mannheim's understanding of a generation, it expands the discussion to include further life stages in modern Germany. Growing up and adolescence influence how the Hitler Youth generation perceives and writes about its time in Nazi Germany. Those who were a part of the so-called Flakhelfer generation did not have a *Jugendphase* (phase of youth).<sup>193</sup> Assmann characterises this generation as a 'generation without a self-designed concept of youth that was forced to adopt to the needs of adulthood'.<sup>194</sup> However this generation was forced to grow up and face the physical and psychological collapse of the regime. Their memoirs, consequently, try to re-instate a lost *Jugendphase* or adolescence. One of the most important things to stress here is that it is very difficult to categorise this generation as either 'perpetrators', 'victims', or 'bystanders'. As such, historians need to reconsider these categories and their features. Ian Buruma describes the Hitler Youth generation as:

an odd one-too late to be Nazis, early enough to be educated as Nazis ... Late birth has given them perhaps the most complicated perspective on the past of all generations: too young to be responsible, yet tainted with guilt.<sup>195</sup>

Redefining adolescence as a concept, and considering how cohort members portray themselves, helps us understand the Hitler Youth Generation and their qualities. Further, child soldier theorists help us to understand why and how individuals use their life narratives as testimonials. The Hitler Youth generation all experienced Nazism as children. Often their parents and siblings were involved in the Nazi party at a local

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192. See Shavit, *A Past Without Shadow*; Hamida Bosmajian, 'Nightmares of History: The Outer Limits of Children's Literature', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 8, number 4 (Winter 1983): 20–22; Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*.

193. Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis: Von der individuellen Erfahrung zur öffentlichen Inszenierung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007), 44.

194. *Ibid.*

195. Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Atlantic Books Ltd, 2015), 245.



level, were members of the civil service or de-facto party members, or involved in a Nazi organisation.<sup>196</sup> These memoirists are therefore complex political perpetrators, who use various tactics of victimcy, silence, avoidance, and indifference to preserve self-identity and self-worth.<sup>197</sup> Baines coined the term complex political perpetrator to describe young adults and children whose agency remains questionable, but whose behaviour is criminal.<sup>198</sup> Victimcy means tactical agency, and is used by children of war to create narratives to suit their current audience and needs.<sup>199</sup> At heart, memoirs are family stories, and writers use these stories to recreate their identities and understand themselves within history.<sup>200</sup> Through autobiographical memory, narratives allow us to ‘simultaneously shape how we subsequently remember the past’, and are actively used by cohort members to communicate their life stories.<sup>201</sup> This thesis adapts Fivush and Merrill’s concept of ecological systems to family narratives, which highlights the importance of intergenerational networks and narration between family members at micro- and macro-levels.<sup>202</sup> I also adopt McLean’s theoretical framework for analysing family narratives to study growing up and adolescent identity.<sup>203</sup>

Corsten takes issue with ‘why the “age” of adolescence is so important for the crystallisation of generation self-thematization’.<sup>204</sup> Indeed the notion of adolescence, growing up, and childhood are important for the cohort memoirists: ‘It was a war in which I, my classmates, and my Jungvolk friends, boys that we were, were expected to behave as adults and soldiers and were treated as such,’ recounts Jurgen Herbst in

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196. Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 98.

197. Erin K. Baines, ‘Complex Political Perpetrators : Reflections on Dominic Ongwen’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, number 2 (2009): 163–191; Teresa Puvimanasinghe et al., ‘Narrative and Silence: How Former Refugees Talk about Loss and Past Trauma’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28, number 1 (January 3, 2015): 69–92; Jay Winter, ‘War Memoirs, Witnessing and Silencing’, in *War Stories: The War Memoir in History and Literature*, ed. Philip Dwyer (London: Berghahn Books, 2016), 27–47.

198. Baines, ‘Complex Political Perpetrators’.

199. M. Utas, ‘Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman’s Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone1’, *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, number 2 (2005): 403–430.

200. Paul Connerton, ‘Seven Types of Forgetting’, *Memory Studies* 1, number 1 (January 1, 2008): 59–71.

201. Robyn Fivush et al., ‘An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives’, *Memory Studies* 9, number 3 (July 1, 2016): 306.

202. Robyn Fivush et al., ‘The Making of Autobiographical Memory: Intersections of Culture, Narratives and Identity’, *International Journal of Psychology* 46, number 5 (October 1, 2011): 321–345.

203. Fivush et al., ‘An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives’, 312; Kate C. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self: Family Stories and the Construction of Personal Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

204. Michael Corsten, ‘The Time of Generations’, *Time & Society* 8, number 2 (1999): 250.

1998.<sup>205</sup> The concepts of adolescence and growing up are pivotal to these life narratives; however, they give rise to a twofold methodological issue: how and where do we situate these memories within the historiographical context of German memory of the Second World War; and how do we discuss adolescence as part of the memory of war.<sup>206</sup> G. Stanley Hall, a North American psychologist, popularised the term ‘adolescence’ in the early 1900s. Since then, adolescence is widely regarded as the life stage ‘comprised between physiological puberty and the recognition of the adult status’.<sup>207</sup> Hall wrote in 1915, ‘Adolescence is like a second birth, it is the time when the highest and most complete human features appear. The emerging qualities of mind and body are totally new. The child gets back to a remote past’.<sup>208</sup> A working definition of when adolescence occurs has changed dramatically—from the Middle Ages. The medieval philosopher, Isidore, believed that this life stage started at 14 and ended at anywhere from 25 to 35. Now, in the twenty-first century, the consolidated definition is from 12 to 18.<sup>209</sup> Adolescence is not only tied to biological changes, but also to cultural ideals of what it means to grow up.<sup>210</sup> Growing up during wartime and living with the trauma of war have not been part of German historiography until recently.

Baldur von Schirach’s statement in *Der Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt* (1934) parallels the Nazi definition of childhood. His understanding and definition of what constitutes ‘childhood’ in the new Nazi state shapes his interpretation of growing up. Whilst restricts his definition to boys, it is easily applied to all memoirs: ‘By “children”

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205. Jürgen Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past: A Boyhood Among the Nazis*, Reprint edition (Paw Prints 2008-06-05, June 5, 2008), 128.

206. See Michael Heinlein, ‘Das Trauma der deutschen Kriegskinder zwischen nationaler und europäischer Erinnerung: Kritische Anmerkungen zum gegenwärtigen Wandel der Erinnerungskultur’, in *Narratives of trauma: discourses of German wartime suffering in national and international perspectives*, ed. Helmut Schmitz and Annette Seidel-Arpaci (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 111ff.

207. Carles Feixa, ‘Past and Present of Adolescence in Society: The ‘Teen Brain’ Debate in Perspective’, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, *Passing the Knife Edge in Adolescence: Brain Pruning and Specification of Individual Lines of Development*, 35, number 8 (August 2011): 1634–1643.

208. S.G. Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Psysiology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1915), xiii.

209. See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick, Peregrine books (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 37; Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Psysiology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, xiii; Lerita M. Coleman, ‘Language and the Evolution of Identity and Self-Concept’, in *The Development of Language and Language Researchers: Essays in Honor of Roger Brown*, ed. F. Kessel (New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1985), 319–338.

210. Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (London: Pimlico, 2008); J.M. Tanner, ‘Growing Up’, *Scientific American*, September 1, 1973, number 3, 34–43; Corsten, ‘The Time of Generations’, 263; Ross Macmillan, *The Structure of the Life Course: Standardized? Individualized? Differentiated?* (London: Elsevier, 2005), 29ff.

we refer to the non-uniformed beings (*Wesen*) of lower ages who have never attended a home evening (*Heimabend*) or a retreat (*Ausmarsch*). We do not want to be misunderstood: *Jungvolkpimpfe* are not supposed to be men'.<sup>211</sup> When a boy is ten-years-old, he is meant to be self-reliant: 'In earlier times the young German was viewed as a child. He did not have political duties toward Volk and state. ... Today the ten-year-old Pimpf learns among his comrades that he has to do service (*Dienst*) for Germany'.<sup>212</sup> The end of childhood seems to correspond with the Hitler Youth laws of 1936 and 1939, which required children to join the Jungvolk/Jungmädel at age 10.<sup>213</sup> However, this connotation is more noticeable in male memoirs than female ones. For women, the line between adulthood, youth, and childhood is less distinguishable. Whether consciously or not, many writers use the Nazi definition to mark the beginning and end of their childhoods. The concepts of adolescence and growing up form key parts of life narratives, but form a two-fold methodological issue: how and where to place these memories into historiography of German memory of the Second World War and how to discuss adolescence as a part of the memory of the war. At first glance, Detlev Peukert's argument about childhood in 'Youth in the Third Reich' is sound, as he divides children into three groups based on which year each group entered adolescence. For this study, Group 2, who became adolescents in 1936-1939, and Group Three in 1939 to 1945, are the main focus. Peukert defines Group Three as being the most 'coercion and drill' oriented, and during the time in which the regime was at its most 'far-reaching' yet 'repellent' stage.<sup>214</sup> Whilst these groups help us understand the cohort's war involvement, they do not help us define adolescence in its complexity. Peukert addresses adolescence more from a biological perspective, but does not emphasise enough the surrounding cultural and social context. His work underscores a further need for a more nuanced study of adolescence from a socio-historical perspective.

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211. Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, 1934), 87.

212. Reinhold Sautter, *Hitler Jugend: Das Erlebnis Einer Großen Kameradschaft* (Munich: Carl Röhig-Verlag, 1942), 18-19.

213. Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 23.

214. Detlev Peukert, 'Youth in the Third Reich', in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24-25.

## Outline of Thesis

The second chapter (or first main chapter) considers the ways in which family narratives help buttress and build identity, in order to normalise life in the Third Reich. Few scholars of German history have studied family dynamics in the Nazi period, nor those of the twentieth century, from a child's perspective. This chapter contributes to the historiography on the German family unit during the Nazi period by looking at how family dynamics were perceived by cohort members. Family stories play an important part in Hitler Youth memoirs because each writer uses the family as a kind of Genesis story: to tell the reader where they came from. Because family and family culture are aspects of self-worth, cohort members struggle to confront the reality that family members were active Nazi party members.

The third chapter deals with three aspects of joining the Hitler Youth, elite school education, and the influence of age and geographical location. Using victimhood as a starting point, I show how the perceived readership or audience shapes the writers' portrayal of the Nazi education system and the Hitler Youth organisation. This chapter adds to the historiographical study of education in the Third Reich, partly by evaluating past sources as well as new ones. Writers have various, conflicting memories of the Hitler Youth Organisation: some cohort members explicitly state that they enjoyed their time in the Hitler Youth, whilst others express their doubts. Female and male cohort write about their experiences differently; a number of male writers only provide factual information and fail to engage emotionally or privately with the past. Women do not actively compare the JM/BDM with the male DJ/HJ, reflecting the organisation's collectivist sentiment. The cohort members who went to Nazi elite schools (Napolas or Adolf Hitler Schools) form their own sub-cohort because of their distinct style and representations.

The fourth chapter argues for a distinction between cohort age groups: those who went to KLV camps (born c. 1930-1933) and those who went to the RAD (c. 1925-1929). It is during the latter period that cohort members recall the end of childhood and wartime. It also examines the bombing of German cities, and how cohort members remember and understand the destruction of their homes. English-language memoirists focus on the emotional impact of the bombings as representations of the home front, whilst only a small number of German writers engage with the bombings. I also ac-

count for the geographical location of cohort members during the war in my analysis. I examine the RAD, Landjahr, and Pflichtjahr service experiences, which were often excluded from memoirs. As highlighted by Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt's expose in *Die Zeit*, many cohort members felt compelled to provide a positive reinterpretation of the labour service. The last section of this chapter focuses on how place and time shape public memory.

The fifth chapter expands upon the fourth chapter by focusing on wartime experiences, especially those of male cohort members at the war front. It begins with an analysis of how cohort members remember their fathers during war time. For the most part, cohort members born after 1930 have a harder time recollecting their fathers, as they were often too young to remember them properly. Some older male cohort members recount conversations they had with their fathers—especially to do with the nature of war or the desire to support Germany until the very end. The second part of this chapter attempts to understand traumatic events and why cohort members avoid discussing war experiences. It uses the concept of victimcy as well as the idea of the 'complex political perpetrator' as a means to methodologically define and approach war memoirs. By looking at cohort members' writings in this manner, the chapter situates their experiences within the broader framework of war memoir historiography.

The sixth chapter begins with the beginning of the end: the collapse, denazification, and attempted creation of postwar normality. Most cohort members remember where they were and what they felt when the war came to an end. Many of these writers discuss similar themes, such as religion, the POW camps, the last days of the bombings, and the refugee camps. This chapter argues that cohort members attempt to normalise the past through narrative, especially when discussing the postwar period. The postwar period's distance from the events of the war also allowed for more open discussion of rape, as the topic was no longer 'taboo'.

The seventh chapter, titled 'Facing the next generation' deals with the Nazi past and public discussions of the Holocaust. It asks how memorialisation of the Holocaust and the Jews is dealt with during different decades, and how genocide is discussed. Although these life narratives do not necessarily demand a discussion of either topic, the Holocaust remains one of the most traumatic events of recent history, and part of German twenty-first century national historical identity and discourse. As such, in a

thesis which considers the self-representation of the German people, it is necessary to consider the transformation of public discussion from the 1950s to the early 1990s.

The final section engages with the question ‘for whom does one remember?’ by considering it from a broader generational and cultural perspective.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study utilises the Hitler Youth generation’s life narratives to complement and speak to other studies on the same subject. The use of both published and unpublished life narratives fleshes out our current understanding of the Hitler Youth generation and the Nazi era. Through autobiographical theories, along with theories of emotion and children in war, this study examines the dialogue between Hitler Youth Generation writings and German cultural memory of the Third Reich.

## Chapter 2

# Growing Up: Remembering Family Life

Writing in 2009, Jutta Schreiner tells the story of her father's return from a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. She begins with a memory of her and her mother, running late at night to a lake near their home town: 'The sky was not quite dark, and under a blanket of twilight we carried my father's large saber, his adorned dagger and his pistol sheathed in a leather pouch—proof of his Nazi sympathies and his high rank in the army'.<sup>1</sup> For Jutta and her mother, throwing these belongings into the river would 'protect our family from association with the Nazis if our father returned from the war.' Her father had been 'a mechanical engineer, was a General in the German army and had been a staunch supporter of Hitler for many years', she writes.<sup>2</sup> When they returned home, they burned all the photographs of her father wearing his Nazi uniform, to deflect questions about his association with the party.<sup>3</sup> After recounting this memory, Jutta remains silent about her family's role in National Socialism. Her account illustrates the importance of family in the construction of the self, even at later life stages. This chapter analyses the HJ generation's self-interpretations of childhood memories, and argues for a more nuanced understanding of the twentieth-century German nuclear family. Family life narratives are demonstrably influenced by audience, geographical location, and age; cohort members use various tactics, including self-censorship and silence to represent themselves as either victims or eyewitnesses.

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1. Jutta Schreiner, *The Signature Call* (Xulon Press, July 30, 2010), 1.

2. *Ibid.*, 2.

3. *Ibid.*, 3.

Many of these childhood recollections include descriptions of everyday life and representations of the cohort members' parents as they can be performed either privately or publicly, depending on the audience. In life narratives especially, representing family members is inherently problematic. From a cultural perspective, cohort members write with a sense of propriety, as families expected their children to behave respectably in public.<sup>4</sup> When writing for a public audience, the cohort member may restrict themselves based on family values and expectations, performing the 'social self'.<sup>5</sup> Fundamentally, boys and girls were expected to act differently and perform different tasks at home; however, cohort members often overlook this distinction.<sup>6</sup> Further, the gaps within the text illustrate the selective and subjective nature of remembering and writing life narratives. More often than not, difficult subjects are glossed over or blanketed in silence. This chapter examines the relationship between the collected memoryscape and the discussion of Nazism on an individual, private level, in life narratives. Age and geographical location often impact how the writer remembers or refuses to remember.<sup>7</sup> As Radstone et. al argue, memories can be triggered by other experiences—even decades after the initial memory.<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth H. (born 1933), in an attempt to reconcile her father's involvement with the Sturmabteilung (SA) and her mother's dislike of the party, copes with Nazism by omission.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the way daily life is written about is temporally, culturally, and geographically dependent upon the writer's self-image at the time of writing.

Twentieth-century German historians have not adequately studied parental influ-

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4. See Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 1999), 11; Dan P. McAdams, 'The Psychology of Life Stories', *Review of General Psychology* 5, number 2 (2001): 100–122; D. Oyserman and Hazel Rose Markus, 'The Sociocultural Self', in *Psychological Perspectives on the Self: The Self in Social Perspective*, ed. J. Suls, volume 4 (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1993), 187–220.

5. Diane Bjorklund, *Interpreting the Self: Two Hundred Years of American Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29f; Robyn Fivush, 'Remembering and Reminiscing: How Individual Lives Are Constructed in Family Narratives', *Memory Studies* 1, number 1 (January 1, 2008): 51; Oyserman and Markus, 'The Sociocultural Self', 188.

6. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900*, 6; Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 43–44; Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 204; Marion E. P. de Ras, *Body, Femininity and Nationalism: Girls in the German Youth Movement, 1900–1934*, Routledge research in gender and society ; (New York: Routledge, 2008), 14.

7. Fivush, 'Remembering and Reminiscing: How Individual Lives Are Constructed in Family Narratives', 54.

8. Susannah Radstone, Rosanne Kennedy, and Maria Tumarkin, 'Crumbs of Memory: Tracing the 'More-than-Representational' in Family Memory', *Memory Studies* 6, number 3 (July 1, 2013): 311; they adopt Hirsch's theory: Hirsch, *Family Frames*.

9. DTA Sig. Nr. 13,2.



ence on cohort members' identity and lives. The historiography on German family life focuses mostly on governmental policy, administrative action, and statistical data.<sup>10</sup> Vaizey's study of the exchange of letters between husbands and wives during the Second World War examines, conversely, parents' perspectives on how children and young adults dealt with the war.<sup>11</sup> Pine's study of Nazi family policy outlines the declining birth rate of German children. Claudia Koonz in *Mothers in the Fatherland* argues that 'Nazi leaders relied on the sheltering family (or its myth) to keep alive an ersatz sense of decency in men who would work most closely with mass murder.'<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, Gisela Bock argues Nazis wanted to ensure that the right type of children were born, by prioritising Aryan motherhood.<sup>13</sup> Hitler's attempt to increase birth rates in order to populate areas intended to be conquered for *Lebensraum* is reflected in twentieth-century historiography; amongst historians, it becomes increasingly popular to study the policies rewarding women who gave birth to pure Aryan Germans, in the form of loans and tax breaks for newlyweds.<sup>14</sup> A paucity of historiographical focus has been given to the German family unit—with even fewer historians considering the family from the child's perspective.<sup>15</sup> Lutz Niethammer's study '*Hinterher merkt man, dass es richtig war, dass es schiefgegangen ist*' reveals that families were similarly described by the 'Jahrhundert' cohort, particularly in terms of culture and religion, but this is not the main focus of this study.<sup>16</sup> Thus, few scholarly works properly contextualise how a

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10. Hester Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk*; Charlotte Glück-Christmann, *Familienstruktur und Industrialisierung : der Wandlungsprozess der Familie unter dem Einfluss der Industrialisierung und anderer Modernisierungsfaktoren in der Saarregion 1800 bis 1914* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1993); Elizabeth D. Heineman, 'Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Un-speakable?', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, nos. 1/2 (January 1, 2002): 22–66; Jens Flemming, Klaus Soul, and Peter-Christian Witt, editors, *Familienleben im Schatten der Krise : Dokumente und Analysen zur Sozialgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1988).

11. Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, 11f, 89ff.

12. Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the fatherland : women, the family and Nazi politics* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987), 414.

13. Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986).

14. Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, 30; Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1997).

15. Nicholas Stargardt, 'German Childhoods: The Making of a Historiography', *German History* 16, number 1 (January 1, 1998): 1-15; Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall, 'Familienerinnerungen. Kriegererlebnisse in den Geschichten dreier Generationen', in *Eine offene Geschichte: Zur kommunikativen Tradierung der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit*, ed. Harald Welzer and Elisabeth Domansky (Tübingen: edition diskord, 1999), 57–73.

16. Lutz Niethammer, '*Hinterher merkt man, dass es richtig war, dass es schiefgegangen ist*': *Nachkriegserfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet*, volume 2, *Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930 bis 1960* ; 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1983).

family member remembers the past and comes to terms with it.<sup>17</sup> This chapter offers a new perspective on the twentieth-century German family unit from the HJ generation's perspective; it considers, primarily, the role of parental influence and its impact on the performance of the self within the collected memoryscape.

The concept of 'family' is important to our discussion of the memory of family life during the Third Reich because the meaning of family changes over time. Today, for example, the concept of 'family' is traditionally equated with the concept of the nuclear family: comprising a father, a mother, and their children. Yet as today's society shows, there are a range of identities and roles which a family unit can take. The most recent concept of the nuclear family, such as who lives with whom and who takes on the roles of mother, father, children, and relatives, is culturally and historically different in various societies, periods, places, and cultures.<sup>18</sup> Family can also mean those outside the biological definitions of what is considered family; it can also encompass a range of 'social and economic influences'.<sup>19</sup>

In Nazi Germany, the family unit follows the traditional definition, with the expected, traditional gender roles and political infiltration within the family home.<sup>20</sup> This family is a nuclear family, with parents and children at its hub.<sup>21</sup> The gender roles in Nazi Germany followed conventional lines: men were breadwinners, whilst women were wives and mothers of future German children.<sup>22</sup> Assistance programs and support for pregnant woman were used as a means to control women, in order to guarantee racially pure babies.<sup>23</sup> Whilst these traditionalist ideals and policies are not often at the forefront of life narratives, they continue to influence them in the background.<sup>24</sup> The paternalistic nature of the regime is visible within these life narratives, as children more often recall memories of their fathers than their mothers when discussing family life.

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17. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*; Jürgen Kleindienst, *Lebertran und Chewing Gum: Kindheit in Deutschland 1945-1950: 55 Geschichten und Berichte von Zeitzeugen* (Berlin: JKL Publikationen, 2001); Ulla Roberts, *Starke Mütter - ferne Väter* (Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005); Ingeborg Bruns, *Als Vater aus dem Krieg heimkehrte: Töchter erinnern sich* (Frankfurt am Main: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 1991).

18. Andreas Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 3rd, Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte (Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2013), 1.

19. Richard J. Evans and W.R. Lee, editors, *German family : essays on the social history of the family in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 17.

20. Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Routledge, May 12, 2014), 47ff.

21. Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, 14.

22. See for its roots: Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 10.

23. Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 37; Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State', *Signs* 8, number 3 (1983): 404ff.

24. Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 8.

The emblems of Nazi racial profiling are also visible, as some cohort members remember their mothers receiving the Honour Cross of the German mother.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, a number of archived, private memoirs argue against the politicisation of the family unit. This illustrates an attempt at self-censorship on the part of the collective memoryscape, in terms of what ought not to be expressed outside the collective.

Identity construction determines and defines a person's daily life: the stories we tell shape who we are and who we become. As McLean states, identity is tied to 'the stories that your family tells, as well as stories that belong to the culture-at-large'.<sup>26</sup> This idea first appears in Erik Erikson's early studies on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the 1950s, in which people lost their self-identities. The people he studied questioned who they were in the past and present; the goal of the study was to illuminate how individuals create self-identities.<sup>27</sup> The notion that identity is something constructed, with parts fictionalised on a whim, is unique. Most studies argue that people know who they are, and that this sense of self does not often change 'across time and context'.<sup>28</sup> In a life narrative spanning 1995-1998, Adolph D. (born 1927) re-assesses his self-identity as a family member. Writing near the end of his life, he discovers from the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* that his father had been a Nazi — even though they had openly discussed the Third Reich prior to his father's death. Storytelling forms us as individuals, and we are shaped not only by the stories we tell, but also by the stories we hear. In this way, identity construction is not autonomous and we do not actively construct identities ourselves.<sup>29</sup> In the HJ life narratives, family stories are used as a means of illustrating active identity construction to the reader.

As in oral histories, identity construction in memoirs is performed through storytelling of family small group culture.<sup>30</sup> However, these stories also showcase childhood

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25. Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 31; Armin Lehmann and Tim Carroll, *In Hitler's Bunker: A Boy Soldier's Eyewitness Account of the Führer's Last Days*, New Ed edition (Mainstream Digital, 2011), 28.

26. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self*, 19.

27. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd (New York: Norton, 1963).

28. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self*, 3-5.

29. *Ibid.*, 12.

30. We identify ourselves in relation to others, see further: John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1: Attachment*, volume I (New York: Basic Books, 1969); P. Blos, *On Adolescence: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1962); Jefferson A. Singer and Pavel Blagov, 'The Integrative Function of Narrative Processing: Autobiographical Memory, Self-Defining Memories, and the Life Story of Identity', *Social Cognition* 22, number 5 (2004): 127ff.

— they can be idealised and embellished, yet at the same time, painfully truthful.<sup>31</sup> As Harald Welzer points out, perspective is everything: ‘stories that are remembered and re-narrated by every single member of a family from the complete inventory of familial stories of the past are always different from those that would be told by a different member of the family’.<sup>32</sup> When told by different people, family stories reveal secrets; silence, in turn, is often used to protect an individual’s self-identity.<sup>33</sup> In this way, identity construction determines which family stories are told and how they are told.<sup>34</sup> An important aspect of childhood memory is that it is often impressionistic — meaning that a child’s perspective is fragmentary by nature.<sup>35</sup> Each memoir is unique in what it offers to the broader collected memoryscape. As all families function differently, this chapter does not claim to be statistically representative, nor does it represent all families from all social classes and geographical locations. Rather, this chapter outlines the nuances of memory and emotion in processing the Nazi past through writing. Historiography does not often account for these nuances, as most studies of childhood focus on recreating the period as lived experience instead of memory.<sup>36</sup>

Before a more formal analysis, the memory of family life, as a concept, ought to be defined. Langellier and Peterson argue that the family unit is its own small group culture. Family is the first culture we learn as children, and family stories are the foundations of family culture.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Stone, one of the first to study family stories, illustrates how they imprint themselves upon individuals and ‘how thoroughly invisible they [are] to everyone else’.<sup>38</sup> Family stories are important identity markers for individuals. These stories transport and convey ‘information that tell (and remind) one

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31. For example, see Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (London: Virago, 1986).

32. Harald Welzer, ‘Re-Narrations: How Pasts Change in Conversational Remembering’, *Memory Studies* 3, number 1 (January 19, 2010): 6.

33. See Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

34. Kristin Langellier and Eric E. Peterson, *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 35–37.

35. See for a psychologist’s viewpoint: Douglas Davies, *Child Development, Third Edition: A Practitioner’s Guide* (New York: Guilford Press, July 23, 2010), 352; Whilst outdated, Erik Erikson’s study also offers primary insights into the study of childhood: Erikson, *Childhood and Society*.

36. For example, see Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*; An attempt in this direction is noticeable in: Helen Roche, ‘Surviving Stunde Null: Narrating the Fate of Nazi Elite-School Pupils during the Collapse of the Third Reich’, *German History* 33, number 4 (2015): 570–587.

37. Langellier and Peterson, *Storytelling in Daily Life*, 35;

38. Elizabeth Stone, *Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins: How Our Family Stories Shape Us* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 7.

another of *how we are* and *who we are not*'.<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler's theory of performativity is useful here in that storytellers embody the practice of telling stories about family as individuals embody 'sex'.<sup>40</sup> In a number of unpublished life narratives, we see family stories recorded so that members can re-read and remember once the author has passed away. Some writers avoid discussions of Nazism and the family's role in World War Two, but these 'silences and secrets may contribute to family survival as surely as telling family stories'.<sup>41</sup> Family secrets also influence the writing process: what is the memoirist willing to reveal and what are they determined to conceal? Unlike Victorian Britain, where secret-keeping was a correlative of social class, Nazi Germany's political climate forced all families, whether victims or perpetrators, to adopt a certain degree of secrecy.<sup>42</sup> Remembering and recording the past can leak those secrets to the reader. Still, this is not always the case; there are many texts in which the autobiographical pact is ignored, or the writer toes the line between silence and truth.<sup>43</sup> Whilst not all the life narratives in this study concern family stories, they have had considerable influence on how family stories are told. Whether or not they have been included in the narrative, family members often determine the structure and tone of the work, either consciously or unconsciously.

Families are made up of individuals, and interactions between family members are indicative of self-representation and its formulation. Looking at the group, or the family life, gives new perspectives on the individual, as Gloria Bria and Keith Melville assert: 'Families are made up of individuals, each of whom experiences stress from a unique viewpoint. The individual reactions of family members either facilitate or hinder how the family collectively handles stress'.<sup>44</sup> Within a historical context, studies of the self allow us to know individual emotional lives on a personal level.<sup>45</sup> From a post-structuralist viewpoint, life histories provide a 'resource' for studying personal and

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39. Tina M. Harris and Alberto González, editors, *Mediating Cultures: Parenting in Intercultural Contexts* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 36.

40. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Psychology Press, 1993), 1; Langellier and Peterson, 'Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women Storytelling', 36.

41. Langellier and Peterson, *Storytelling in Daily Life*, 51.

42. See: Cohen, *Family Secrets*.

43. Connerton, 'Seven Types of Forgetting'.

44. Gloria Bird and Keith Melville, *Families and Intimate Relationships* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 343.

45. See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

political selfhoods.<sup>46</sup> Julie-Marie Strange suggests that studying the family acts as an ‘interface that highlights how individuals constitute the self as an ideological subject’ and ‘[where they] learn about power and structural inequalities’.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Michael Roper comments on the importance of familial relationships and bringing masculinity to the foreground when studying the family unit.<sup>48</sup> More broadly, self-representation is formulated by family experiences in conjunction with family memory.<sup>49</sup>

## Constructing Identity Through Family Stories

Narratives can help us make sense of the past, but they can never explain the full workings of an entire life.<sup>50</sup> The cohort members who deposited their memoirs into the archives—either by themselves or posthumously by their relatives—most likely wanted to represent themselves in accordance with their audiences. Audience matters greatly, as depictions of extended relatives or family members hinge upon cultural inclusion and help foster a sense of community. Some cohort members, such as Friedrich H. (born 1927), avoid discussing family life; Friedrich instead details his time in the Waffen-SS.<sup>51</sup> Archived memoirs also contain images of family members and of the cohort member, linking the past with the present. In his memoir, Theodor R. Wengler recalls a family story of his mother encountering SA men on her way to a choir meeting. Finding the road blocked, she threatened and cajoled the SA men into letting her pass. A week later, she gets a summons to the Police station, and is reprimanded by the policeman for her actions. However, Wengler notes that she got off lightly, for ‘the police man seemed to still be of the old stock and had been very jolly’.<sup>52</sup> Memoirists recreated their family by representing them in an overtly positive way, and relegating Nazism to the background. As identity is often more settled during late adulthood, these self-consciously selected family stories often reflect the collected memoryscape.

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46. Michael Peplar, *Family Matters: A History of Ideas about Family since 1945*, Women and men in history (London: Longman, 2002), 13–14.

47. Julie-Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 12, 214.

48. Michael Roper, ‘Slipping out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History’, *History Workshop Journal*, number 59 (2005): 67.

49. Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse*, 43.

50. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self*, 24.

51. DTA Sig. Nr. 1953.

52. Theodor Richard W., *Ein Ruckblick: Lebenserinnerungen von Theodor Richard Wengler* (Fall 2008), 11 from Deutsches Gedächtnis archive, Fern Universität in Hagen.

This highlights the importance of group cohesion within the collected memoryscape, with the in-group keeping itself together through silence. Individual identity is therefore partially at odds with the group, but only if the group and individual disagree on the narrative. The desire here is to bury the past, without suffering the consequences on either the private and familial, or public and societal levels.

Family members are crucial to the narrative. Grandparents often reside close to the cohort member, exerting their influence and traditions. Alfons Heck (1927), for example, lived with his grandparents whilst his parents raised his younger brother; Herbert K. (born 1933) lived with his mother and grandparents, whilst his father worked several towns over in a factory; and Rolf M. spent a year living with his grandparents.<sup>53</sup> In upper-class families, children had less contact with their parents, and were often raised by servants or the hired help.<sup>54</sup> As the war advanced, families had to move or evacuate due to aerial bombardment, and sometimes aunts and uncles moved in for this reason.<sup>55</sup> Family dynamics changed with the tides of war, as violence and uncertainty increased. Although cohort members recall these changes, they often decline to comment on anti-Semitic policies, including the relocation of entire families to concentration camps. In most cases, discussion of euthanasia is avoided; one rare instance is in Karin Finell's (born 1933) brief paragraph on her aunt Margaret: 'Oma suspected' that she had been killed in an 'extermination hospital', and 'the knowledge of her death adds to my struggle with my background'.<sup>56</sup> This brief mention still remains uncomfortable, and reflective of other cohort members' reluctance to speak on such issues.

The stories of how parents met, along with their political leanings, give structure and direction to the narrative and allow for discussions of Nazism within the family. Self-representation and sense-of-self can make the narrator more comfortable in discussing these topics. Catholic Margaret W. (born 1931) makes herself the omniscient narrator of her family story, rather than the protagonist. Although the memoir, *Erinnerungen aus die Familie Luzeier, 1800-1984*, begins over a hundred years before the

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53. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216; DTA Sig. Nr. 3238; Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985).

54. DTA Sig. Nr. 1063; Regina Maria Shelton, *To Lose a War: Memories of a German Girl* (SIU Press, 1982); Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*; Karin Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids: A Childhood Lost in Hitler's Berlin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, October 15, 2006).

55. DTA Sig. Nr. 1266 Christa H.; DTA Sig. Nr. 1510, Renate B.; DTA Sig. Nr. 1550, I, Hans T.

56. Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 112-113.

Third Reich, her account of the 1920s and 1930s binds her family story to culture and history. The family story is somewhat generalised, although it depicts all family members in a positive light. Margaret describes her grandmother, Freida, as a woman who ‘gave birth to many children’ and who survived a “terrible famine” by eating herbs they gathered in the forest’.<sup>57</sup> She tells a story of her mother, who was a ‘technically skilled’ girl, who learnt how to sew underwear and later founded a sewing school; she later married a Catholic priest, named Karl S., on 30 September 1930. Then, the narrative takes an abrupt turn:

Politically, they were troubled years, as we had just gotten a big inflation after leaving the earlier inflation behind. 1927/28 followed a terribly cold winter, in which the houses simply froze many with freshly laid water pipes. The damage was huge. Nature recovered very late of this ‘cold shock’. In Austria, a man stood up; he promised loudly and pretentiously of new golden years. He dreamed of the 1,000-year Reich and his mission as the Führer.<sup>58</sup>

Margaret W.’s strange shift effectively re-represents the family, and reconstructs her identity. The family that is portrayed during the war years, with the baptism of the youngest family member in 1941, shows no signs of war nor any symbols of Nazism. Propriety is promoted by the family culture, and through the family’s religiosity. The family is presented as being the victim of its environment—something which they cannot control.

Family narratives are also shaped by the surrounding mass media culture, along with religious systems, stories, and myths. In many of the life narratives, Christmas celebrations, baptisms of siblings, First Communion, and confirmations are discussed in great detail. Marking life stages with religious rites creates a sense of stability, despite the instability of war; for example, in a few of the life narratives, cohort members comment on how Nazism persuades the father to change the family religion to *gottgläubig*, which altered the family’s religious traditions.<sup>59</sup> Dorothee K. (born 1932) recounts her father’s NSDAP membership and the conflict between him and his wife (which was overheard by the neighbours) over the state of prisoners of war.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps a means of

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57. DTA Sig. Nr. 1017.II, 16

58. DTA Sig. Nr. 1017.II, 16.

59. Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 218ff.

60. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533.1, 9



retaliation against her husband's insistence to conform, her mother secretly baptised her sister:

Later, my mother let my sister get secretly baptised. Father's political appearance lost its effect in the Russian "Mittelabschnitt". Because of father's party membership, we were only "gottgläubig" in the Third Reich ... It was lip service, it had nothing to do with God and the Holy Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, Dorothee K. felt pressured to conform to Nazi ideology—especially in public spaces. She recalls that her teacher disliked her, even though she was both *gottgläubig* and had the stereotypically Aryan blonde hair and blue eyes.<sup>62</sup> She does not indicate when she found out that her sister was secretly baptised, as it was most likely after the war. Rebellion, political uncertainty and angst are common themes in many of these life narratives. In contrast, other cohort members highlight the importance of religion throughout the 1930s, and emphasise their pastor fathers and ties with the local Catholic Church. Once she turned seventy, Maria B. (born 1930) wrote a life narrative of her family and childhood memories. Instead of family stories, her narrative centres on her role at the local Protestant Church. She provides next to no descriptions of her family and their response to Nazism. Instead, she discusses the extensive bombing of Freiburg and volunteering to dig trenches for troops with her church group. Her father's not being drafted into the Wehrmacht is mentioned and emphasised:

It was November of the year 1944 when the last human reserves were brought by to possibly save what actually seemed pointless to the most people. My father was lucky to be made "uk" by his company, which means "unabkömmlich" [indispensable]. The company was classified as an arms factory.<sup>63</sup>

This passage echoes a number of other memoirs, which offer minimal information about politics or war effort involvement, and tell the reader little about the father or the nature of his war work.<sup>64</sup> There is no attempt to elaborate or evaluate how Maria felt, yet another silence or gap in the narrative. In this sense, silences are just as powerful as words, as they indicate that the collected memoryscape is still unable to deal with the past.

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61. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533.1, 9.

62. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533.1, 9-10.

63. DTA Sig. Nr. 3411, 82

64. Also found in, Hilmar von Campe, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie: A Former Hitler Youth Warns America* (Crane, MO: HighWay, 2008), 30.

Controversial family members who were party members come into conflict with cohort members' identity construction, making silence a useful tactic. Kurt W. uses Nazism as a backdrop for his life narrative, and rarely elaborates or evaluates the effects it had on his family. He provides only one brief anecdote on a Nazi uncle:

From the life of a soldier. He was stationed in Munich and one must know that the so-called Waffen-SS was an elite formation next to the actual "Wehrmacht". He had to demonstrate this on and on later in the war as the dreaded "Feuerwehr" (fire brigade) came under high losses. He had nothing to do with the guarding of political convicts in the concentration camps. He was an eye-catcher in Geroda in his black uniform with the sleeve-stripes symbolising "Standarte [SS-unit] Deutschland".<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, the writer expresses no desire to learn why his uncle Albert was motivated to join the Waffen-SS, nor what he did after the war. Nevertheless, he is keen to distance his involvement from the concentration camps. Kurt W. wrote sporadically between 1989 and 1997. He begins and stops infrequently, and there are places where biographical information is given twice. The writing is often jarring and broken, with little discussion of difficult topics like the HJ. Conversely, family Christmas celebrations are discussed at length for up to ten pages.<sup>66</sup> Happy, normal events were a source of comfort for Kurt W., who clearly took greater pleasure recounting these special family celebrations; it also illustrates his desire to normalise the 1930s, by emphasising the positive aspects. Kurt W. seems to have difficulty expressing his emotions, failing to articulate or reflect upon more controversial narratives and instead focusing on events, which would have taken place in peacetime.

Irmgard P., recalling her experiences from 1926 to 1964, avoids negative or painful family memories, as in this short segment describing her uncle's anti-Nazism:

Uncle Siegfried lived in the small neighbouring city of Brätz, as a practising vet. He could not make friends with those who believed in Nazi ideology and did not make a secret of it. Sometimes father cycled with me the 4 km from Altenhof to Brätz. Meanwhile the man prophesied the Nazi reign of terror, which I held harmless, in the big berry garden. Uncle Siegfried always had cookies in tin cans. A visit to him was always worthwhile. – Because of his political attitude he was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp the whole war.<sup>67</sup>

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65. DTA Sig. Nr. 2135, 24-25.

66. DTA Sig. Nr. 2135, 10-20, 46.

67. DTA Sig Nr. 891 p. 21

This is not only an instance of identity-construction, but of pure childhood idealisation and the inability or unwillingness to understand what the Nazi regime truly meant for dissidents. Irmgard P. indicates that her nuclear family was silent on the issue, and dismisses her BDM and *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (RAD) experience as commonplace and normal.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the reason that more shameful Nazi involvement is excluded is because family members already knew about it. The performance of family storytelling actively avoids negative or morally-ambivalent stories, especially in the case of traditional family events or celebrations. In another source text, a mother's suicide prompts the writer to centre her story on the abusive relationship she experienced at the hand of her stepmother. Both parents were verbally abusive towards her, but the criticism is mostly directed at her stepmother. Interestingly, she presents a much fuller image of her father and attempts to redeem his character in the text:

As already mentioned, my father was employed by company Merck in Darmstadt. He was a quiet, solid, and industrious man who made unpaid overtime during his lifetime, but he thought nothing of it, for then it was quite self-evident and customary.<sup>69</sup>

Nazism remains unexamined, as it is deemed irrelevant to the narrative, where the abusive family culture is foregrounded. In these two instances, traumatic events—death and abuse—are used as means of avoiding discussions of Nazism in the family. Instead, family members are evaluated through these criteria, and thus discussions of Nazism are neglected.

Narratives tend to be personal, avoid larger topics concerning Nazism, show shared cultural memory and repress memories of family members. As this section explains, different Nazi experiences are often brushed aside or only briefly mentioned. Bronfenbrenner, an early narrative theorist, points out that individuals' personal stories are linked to the experiences and stories of immediate family members. Cultural and historical moments play significant roles as well, because they determine which stories get passed down.<sup>70</sup> These life narratives describe family events and foreground the memories which cohort members want to represent. Class differences and religion are influential but, more often than not, they are used as a means of avoiding difficult

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68. DTA Sig. Nr. 891, p. 32.

69. DTA Sig. Nr. 690, 7.

70. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self*, 19.

topics. By focusing on family christenings and baptisms, for example, the memoirist is able to create a religious self-identity that is removed from Nazism. This identity can be particularly significant when examining the way parents are remembered or silenced completely. Therefore, sub-cohort groups make up an important aspect of the collected memoryscape.

## Remembering and Silencing Parents

Most memoirists begin their narratives by recounting their birth and how their parents met, as a means of illustrating individual identity; still, the ways in which they treat their parents, who were either Nazis or believed in Nazism, demonstrates a continued personal difficulty with the Nazi past. Most had living grandparents, although the deaths of nuclear family members leave gaps in the text where these family members might have contributed to a fuller account. Redding notes in *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* that her respondents 'rarely explain parents' political leanings or responses to Nazi policies'. Many respondents conveyed their frustration with their parents as they 'simply refused to answer questions about a growing list of taboo subjects'.<sup>71</sup> Redding does not give an actual list of taboo subjects, nor does she elaborate on how, as adults, her respondents searched for answers. She concludes, without further reflection, that gaps in the post-war period influenced how children remember. In life narratives, some members of the HJ generation readily explain parents' political leanings or how their parents reacted to policies. In the majority of the unpublished life narratives written for family members, most writers are silent about their involvement in Nazism. Over half of the writers state the purpose for writing a life narrative is to preserve the memory of relatives and to tell family stories to children and grandchildren.<sup>72</sup> About forty per cent of writers discuss their family's involvement with Nazism, as through an uncle who joined the Schutzstaffel (SS) or SA. Yet almost none of these writers were writing their memoirs for their relatives or grandchildren. This may be an important distinction to make, as it demonstrates that a reader's prospective audience influences the recording and interpretation of history. A key point, illustrated by Fulbrook, is that parents had different ways of coping with Nazi policies and their influence on private life; children

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71. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 5.

72. See DTA Sig. Nr.s: 630, 1250, 909, 1017, II; 1063, 1216, 1266, 1552, 1560, 169.

may not have been privy to this information, and even if they did overhear, their interpretations of their parents' behaviour were probably an attempt to paint a positive picture of their character.<sup>73</sup> Theodor Holländer (born 1925) does something similar in his life narrative:

Experiences and questions lead to discoveries. It would almost have come to my first political realisation, had not the adults just laughed at my question. I had heard them talking about Nazis. From this, I could not conceptualise it. Well, I was told that Nazis were wearing uniforms like soldiers, but with a brown colour ... The people in my little circle thought the Nazis to be peculiar, at least as different as they were themselves.<sup>74</sup>

This quotation illustrates the distances from Nazism through family narratives, exemplified through the collected memoryscape. Cohort members have the means of conveying and juxtaposing the past and present in their writings. At this point, roles had changed; however further study is needed to identify the extent to which childhood interpretations are challenged by memoirists.

In this context, silence is a rhetorical and written method used to communicate.<sup>75</sup> Whilst some HJ generation writers may not have lost family members during the war, most write near the death of their parents, or after their parents have passed away. As such, they may feel this loss even more acutely whilst writing. Describing the small group culture of the family unit is an integral part of life narratives. More often than not, the small group culture allows the reader to understand the narrator's self-representation. Hans H. depicts his family's small group culture through images and descriptions of material wealth, highlighting his parents' determination to provide him and his three siblings with a nourishing environment.<sup>76</sup> The Nazi family framework and its emphasis on traditionalism becomes the scaffolding for most of these narratives—even when there is no discussion of the Nazi regime. Keeping silent is, in and of itself, a kind of utterance, as withholding information reflects a writer's 'increasing concern with self-control'.<sup>77</sup> Silence has many motivators: 'if sharing negatively impacts upon self-identity and self-worth, the tendency to avoid or repress is further validated' in loss

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73. Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 98.

74. Theodor Holländer, *Jung betroffen* (Essen: 1979), 1.

75. Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir, 'The Narrative of Silence', *Life Writing* 7, number 1 (2010): 37–50.

76. Hans H., *Nobody 26 Jugendzeit 1926-1946*, 7-33 from Deutsches Gedächtnis archive Fern Universität in Hagen.

77. Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (John Wiley & Sons, April 25, 2013), 123–4, 140.

and past-trauma narratives.<sup>78</sup> Even if we do succeed in identifying these silences, we can only offer guesses as to why they exist; indeed, our desire to fill in the gaps may even help us pinpoint the missing pieces in a narrative.<sup>79</sup> The writer may have kept silent out of an unwillingness to explore conflicting feelings or to confront negative experiences. Often these silences and gaps within the narratives are relatively easy to locate. There is no formulaic metanarrative of Nazi Germany and the rise of Hitler, or what jobs the parents had—nor is the HJ organisation mentioned, nor the war discussed. Indeed, different motivations for silence, such as pure avoidance or the omission of certain topics, illustrates that a silence is not always a ‘silence’. We are seldom privy as to why silences occur where they do. Still religion, age, or geographical location can provide some insight into the small group culture of German families, and why certain information is left out.

Adolph D. (born 1927) is typical in his repression of memories of guilty family members, yet he is atypical in his attempt to understand the silence surrounding his family. Haunted by his family’s controversial Nazi past, he narrates his family’s story mainly for himself. He does not have the framework to properly interpret his family’s story, thus falling back on exclusion and silence. After visiting the *Wehrmachtausstellung* in 1995, Adolph D. decides to uncover his family’s past.<sup>80</sup> Gathered into one volume, Adolph D.’s son provides an abridged *Lebenslauf* (cover letter) detailing his father’s life. The *Lebenslauf* reveals that after having a ‘life crisis’ in the 1970s, Adolph D. changed the spelling of his name from Adolf to Adolph. He begins his own tale by retelling his grandfather’s life story, and then proceeds to tell us about his father and mother. He writes a detailed report on his grandfather’s life and legacy, a kind of testament to the family stories which have, undoubtedly, been passed down from generation to generation. The family came from a small village named Heimburg in central Germany—a village that would later become a part of the GDR. They were

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78. Puvimanasinghe et al., ‘Narrative and Silence’, 70, 78.

79. See Winter, ‘War Memoirs, Witnessing and Silencing’.

80. Chloe E. M. Paver, ‘Ein Stück Langweiliger Als Die Wehrmachtausstellung, Aber Dafür Repräsentativer’: The Exhibition of Fotofeldpost as Riposte to the ‘Wehrmacht Exhibition’, in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse Since 1990*, ed. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote (London: Camden House, 2006), 107-25; see also, Alexander Pollak and Ruth Wodak, ‘Crime Scene: Wehrmacht Exhibition’, in *The Discursive Construction of History: Remembering the Wehrmacht’s War of Annihilation*, ed. Hannes Heer et al., trans. Steven Fligelstone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 207–226.

prosperous, owning both a large farm and a house. Both parents were members of the Nazi party, however Adolph was relatively unaware of this until later on in life. The narrative is non-linear, and does not proceed chronologically. Adolph D. returns to the topic of his education at various points, between discussions of his Nazi mother. There are long chapters on his relatives and his memory of them during holidays. The thematic arrangement of experiences allows him to reflect on his family's path to power through the Nazi party. Portraying his father as a lonely man who joined the war-effort in search of *Geistesbildung* (a spiritual education) during World War One, he is shocked to discover his NSDAP membership.<sup>81</sup> He writes:

Only much later I learnt that he had become a member of the Nazi party. However, he did not have a brown uniform. Apparently he had an emotional aversion, as he had been against that mischief, but he did not decisively state his position, as he still took part.<sup>82</sup>

Here, Adolph attempts to reconcile the memory of his father's decision to join the Nazi party. Later, it appears as though Adolph and his father discussed his father's involvement with the Nazi party, which is rather atypical in most accounts.<sup>83</sup> His father was apparently 'only' a party member because that was the thing to do in those days; as Adolph's revelations indicate, the gap between him and his father widened later in life. This precipitates the question of whether Adolph D. was able to come to terms with his father's Nazi party membership, or whether he preferred to remain silent and make excuses for his father.

Likewise, the memory of his mother, Anne Marie D., and her active involvement in the Nazi party, caused Adolph a lot of personal turmoil later in life.<sup>84</sup> His mother had been a part of the official Nazi Women's League, or the *NS-Frauenschaft* (NSF). Whilst the NSF enabled women to work outside the private sphere, it still upheld traditional notions of women's work.<sup>85</sup> As a women's leader, Anne Marie was entrenched in Nazi ideology; she forced her children to adhere to Nazi ideology and practises, such as joining the HJ, and so Adolph D. blames her most for his indoctrination. As he writes in

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81. Walter Flex, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten: ein Kriegserlebnis* (München: C.S. Beck, 1920), 7.

82. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 8.

83. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 9-10.

84. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 45-47.

85. Dagmar Reese, 'The BDM Generation: A Female Generation in Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy', 235; see also, Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany*, 84.

his memoir, his submersion and unquestionable belief in Hitler can be attributed to his ‘good mother with all her powers of persuasion and morals’. She told her children stories from a ‘beautiful book’, by nineteenth century author Franz Schneider who, in her words, was ‘from the Führer himself’.<sup>86</sup> Adolph D. recounts, ‘That was a cheesy story of how the good Lord had laid a grain for Hitler’s later leadership in the soul of a boy, and then, how this soul grew and how it was our Führer who emerged’.<sup>87</sup> The depiction of his parents reflects Adolph D.’s tortured and conflicted memory of the Third Reich—memories of a father who hid his Nazi affiliation until late adulthood, and a mother whose involvement in Nazism haunted Adolph D. his entire life. Even the memory of his father, whom he had admired for his political restraint, is tainted. Because he is unable to represent his family, due to their complicity in the Third Reich, Adolph D. defaults to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* to narrate and recreate his self-identity.

Whilst Adolph’s account does not attempt to minimise his parents’ political involvement, Hans F. (born 1932) depicts his Nazi parents as victims. There are a number of similarities between Adolph D. and Hans F.: both sets of parents were active Nazis who lived in the GDR with their families, and both men wrote their memoirs during the late 1990s. Hans F.’s curiosity about his parents was piqued, like Adolph D.’s, by the re-unification of Germany. He wanted to understand what had happened to his parents. Hans F.’s parents were both Nazis, and therefore at risk because of the denazification that was happening in the GDR.<sup>88</sup> The reason for their affiliation was their love for the local gymnastics club, which was then overtaken by the SA—forcing both parents to join. The early postwar period, Hans F. writes, was ‘for my parents a struggle for human dignity and for most basic [human] rights.’<sup>89</sup> He does not even consider juxtaposing his parents’ ‘struggle for human dignity’ with the Holocaust, and does not discuss the criminality of the Nazi regime.<sup>90</sup> His father was sent to Crimmitschau, and the rest of the family travelled to Dessau, however the reason for their separation remains undisclosed. He also believes his parents’ became affiliated primarily because his father was

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86. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 45.

87. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 45.

88. Timothy R. Vogt, *Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany: Brandenburg, 1945-1948* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2-3.

89. DTA Sig. Nr. 64, 7.

90. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 155ff.



unemployed and desperate for work.<sup>91</sup> Whilst there are commonalities between these two writers, their approaches are remarkably different. Hans F. tells his family story by casting his parents as victims, and consequently seeing himself as a victim of Nazism. Adolph D. does not outwardly express the same level of sympathy for his family. As such, two individuals with highly similar backgrounds show that there are many ways of remembering.

In a similar vein to Adolph D., Klaus Kleinau, born in 1927 and author of *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt* (1999) uses tactical silence of the collected memoryscape to avoid narrating the uncomfortable and shameful family past. Kleinau went to a Napola school; his father was also a local Nazi party leader. He employs yet another approach, which is to remember the past by recounting cultural, societal, and gendered norms, whilst remaining silent on his family's Nazism.<sup>92</sup> He writes about not being allowed to play with Jewish children, the emphasis placed upon militaristic behaviour and training, and his unquestionable belief in Nazism. He fails to offer analyses or reflections on the majority of his experiences, despite the fact that this is his stated purpose. What is perhaps most striking about his memoir are his experiences in a Nazi elite school at Napola Ballenstedt im Harz and role in the Waffen-SS during World War Two. Perhaps it is because of his boarding school upbringing that Kleinau writes little of his parents. Although his father was a *Ortsgruppenleiter* (local group leader) in the NSDAP from 1932 onwards, he does not explain his role, nor does he discuss whether his mother worked or stayed at home. Kleinau's father was the main motivator for his Napola school enrolment, and Kleinau stayed at that school until he joined the war effort.<sup>93</sup> Both parents were anti-Semitic, Kleinau writes, having their son repeat the mantra: 'Mit Juden spielt man nicht'.<sup>94</sup> Based on this bit of evidence, we can assume that Kleinau's parents held the

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91. DTA Sig. Nr. 64, 31.

92. On a similar note, see: Campe, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie*.

93. See similar experiences of fathers and sons in: Lehmann and Carroll, *In Hitler's Bunker*; Also, found in autobiographical fiction novel written by a cohort member: Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach*, 15-17; Dieter H. B. Protsch, *Be All You Can Be: From a Hitler Youth in WWII to a US Army Green Beret* (Trafford Publishing, July 6, 2006), 20; Hartmut Vahl, *Napola Schulpforta: 1943-1945, Erinnerungen eines Schülers* (Hamburg: Libri Books on Demand, 2000).

94. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 11.

Nazi party in high regard before Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. Other than these few glimpses, Kleinau transcribes some letters he sent his parents, detailing his time in a HJ camp. At the end of his memoir, he writes that his mother knew of an euthanasia centre not far from their house; this seems to have troubled Kleinau:

Only once did my mother tell me something about busses, which usually went out early in the morning, with the winds slipped to Bernburg, and that it had smelled so odd at the west wind. That was the smell of cremation from the crematorium. The mentally impaired ... 'unworthy life', as the Nazis called it.<sup>95</sup>

His mother and father are not quoted anywhere in the text, which may reflect a sense of propriety. Although Kleinau writes with the intent of addressing silences and negative connotations, he remains unable to do so.

Representing family members is emotionally disruptive, as parents are preferably remembered as loved-ones and role-models. It is often tempting, therefore, to silence the negative memories of Nazi family members and focus instead on more pleasant memories, such as family outings, celebrations and religious festivals. Discussing his father's initial reaction to him joining the HJ, Hans H. does something similar: 'After one week, my father gave up his resistance, heavy of heart, but most likely following his better judgement that one day his attitude would serve to his honour and be uncomfortable only for me'.<sup>96</sup> Using nondescript language, and writing his account in the third person, Dieter E. (born 1930) recounts his family life and war experiences. In his unpublished memoir, written in Canada from 1995 to 1998, near the end of his life, he opens with the memory of returning home with the HJ. Dieter E. does not discuss his family life in much depth; he only briefly mentions having an older sister.<sup>97</sup> He addresses family life through Sunday walks with his parents by the Warthe river: 'Dieter loved being with his parents and in particular going on their Sunday morning walk with his father who took them along almost every Sunday'. The walks were commonplace, even though they did not happen each week. Each time, they would take a different route.<sup>98</sup> These walks encompass the family culture, and the passage details the family

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95. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 90.

96. Hans H., *Nobody 26 Jugendzeit 1926-1947*, 35.

97. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 4.

98. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 6.

collective memory of collecting stamps. There seems to have been tension between him and his sister, but the relationship is dropped after this point—another silence used to mask family discord. Further, the description of his older sister, Traudel, is of a girl with darker facial features and hair colour, compared with Dieter's 'blond with blue eyes'. Dieter E. was also excited to join the HJ, as the next chapter will illustrate, and this aspect of his childhood identity remains at odds with Germany's defeat. Here, Nazi racial policy seems to have embedded itself in the text. However Dieter E. is hesitant to evaluate his father's political stance on Nazism, even though he hints at it:

When [Dieter] came outside his father was there waiting for him and Dieter sensed something extraordinary must have happened. He did not have long to wait until his father explained in an excited voice that their beloved Führer Adolf Hitler was on his way through the city and that mother had reserved a place on the street for them. ... Dieter's mother had always predicted with a gloomy voice that things would not go well. His father on the other hand upheld the good points of the regime looking to his children for support.<sup>99</sup>

There was certainly some tension within the family, if Dieter E.'s recollection can be considered accurate and representative of its small group culture—even as Dieter E.'s adult-self grapples with his parents' political decisions. His mother is often quoted as openly critical of the regime, with his father attempting to silence her.<sup>100</sup> The emphasis on his parents' personal and political conflict indicates that, even in the postwar period, Dieter E. was struggling with his identity, hindered by his parents' conflicting opinions. This is visible in Dieter E.'s account of his parents' discussion about the beginning of the Second World War:

At home mother was saying to father: 'You'll see, this is not going to end well. Even a blind person can figure out what's going on. Day and night the troops are moving on the railroad toward the east. They can say what say [sic] like, I don't believe a word of it.' 'Don't,' father replied, 'not so loud if anybody heard you. The troops are moving to manoeuvres. A war is definitely not in the offing.'<sup>101</sup>

As the memoir continues, the focal point of the family shifts away from the father who went for walks with his son, towards the mother who kept the family together

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99. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 6, 16.

100. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 10.

101. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 10.

and refused to believe in war propaganda.<sup>102</sup> Near the end of the war, it is Dieter E.'s mother who refuses to allow her brother to murder the family to save them from the Allies.

His [the uncle] proposal on that fateful day had been to shoot all them and then take his own life. He was still carrying his service revolver around with him. Once the enemy has conquered Germany, there is no hope for any of us, he had said. ... Mother had vehemently argued against being shot, together with her children and said that she would take her chances. This was the second time in as many months that such a proposition was made to her.<sup>103</sup>

Dieter E. hears this story later in life, in the form of a family joke about taking death lightly. To the reader, it makes little contextual sense; however, the story illustrates how a serious situation and a propagandised impression of the end of the war can be warped into a family story. Dieter E. hardly engages in any form of self-examination; still, he attempts to redeem himself through accounts of his mother's anti-Nazi political opinions, which outnumber those of his father's Nazi worldview. Silencing his father's role in the war is Dieter E.'s attempt at a positive self-representation, as he applauds his mother's actions and condemns his father's.

Women have a complex relationship with their parents' Nazi pasts. Often, they talk about wanting to join the BDM, yet later in life, are relieved that they were not very involved. A number of female cohort members were aware of their parents' political struggles with Nazism, or felt victimised due to their parents' anti-Nazi stance. Still these narratives may have been added by cohort members to excuse their ignorance or denial of the regime's darker aspects. Ilse Koehn (born 1927) recalls being taken into a different room when her father's friends would visit; this would prevent her from hearing controversial discussions or negative thoughts on the regime:

It sounded as if something dreadful had happened. There was feeling a terrible depression and impending doom. I wanted to find out more. But Alla, as if sensing my thoughts, firmly led me away. 'Come on. Grownups always talk about such depressing things.' ... After the war I found that Erwin had been through in Boergermoor concentration camp because he had been overheard calling Hitler an idiot.<sup>104</sup>

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102. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 49.

103. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 49.

104. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 17.

Koehn's parents were forced to separate. Whenever she visited her father's flat, he and his group of friends would be discussing politics and how they might take a stand against the regime.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the actual layout of the house was made to stop children from overhearing political conversations.<sup>106</sup> Helga Brachmann, on the other hand, claims that her family did not discuss politics in front of her as a child.<sup>107</sup>

The challenge for cohort memoirists is in navigating the effects that Nazism has had on their families, whilst simultaneously upholding family morals and standards of behaviour — expected not only within families, but also within the collected memoryscape. As a result, cohort members do not always directly engage with Nazism and this makes coming to terms with the past challenging. There are many motivations for this, including preserving the family's dignity and their own, by extension, as well as the family legacy for future generations. Margot O. (born 1927) downplays her family's ties to Nazism:

I wanted to continue to tell about my youthful dreams, but the current year of 1939 left little room for this. Again and again, the worried faces of the grown-ups came to us. We heard many words that were not intended for our ears, and we felt something was in the air, which had to do with bad things.<sup>108</sup>

Here, 'bad things' are not discussed explicitly, and she tends towards silence in order to protect her family. This quotation complicates family silences, as Margot O. does not tell us who spoke 'many words' (manche Worte) nor exactly what was spoken. Here, the end of childhood is connected with the beginning of the war, but is not elaborated upon; however this point is significant for the collected memoryscape, as cohort members use their age to claim victimcy. Perhaps remembering the war brings back memories of what childhood might have been, and perhaps Margot O. was not ready to deal with that regret or loss of innocence. This suggests that her impressions have remained the same throughout time, or that perhaps she did not feel comfortable excavating the past. Either way, the memory remains unexplored. Indeed, sharing every

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105. Ibid., 21.

106. See case study of Gisela P. in Roberts, *Starke Mütter - ferne Väter*, 204-214.

107. Helga Brachmann, "Wie ich den Nationalsozialismus erlebte: Ein Bericht von Helga Brachmann, Leipzig", Arbeitsgruppe Zeitzeugen des Seniorenstudiums, accessed January 20, 2015, <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/hagen/Zeitzeugen/zz123.htm>.

108. DTA Sig. Nr. 3727,1, p. 13.

detail might reflect poorly on her past and present self-representation.<sup>109</sup> In keeping with propriety, Anna B. attempts to redeem her parents' belief in Nazism. She begins by reassuring the reader that she is a reliable narrator:

I wish you a lot of fun with the reading. Since it is a biography, all that is written here is the pure truth, even if many things sound completely unbelievable. I have not added a word, On the contrary, since I am a nice person, I have spared some of my best friends and other dear contemporaries.<sup>110</sup>

This quotation is almost surreal, with Anna B. hoping that her reader retains a good memory (*gute Erinnerung*) of her after reading the memoir and promises only to relate the nicest anecdotes. Immediately, the reader finds herself in Germany, in the immediate postwar period. As the last of the bombings of Freiburg end, Anna's father is on the floor below her, burning his copy of *Mein Kampf*, 'so nobody would think that we were Nazis.'<sup>111</sup> Her parents play a major role throughout the life narrative, primarily as victims of the war. The narrator, however, remains in the background. When her parents' house is bombed, Anna B. skims over her own reaction, centring on her parents' perspective. Placing her parents at the focal point of the narrative, Anna B. provides generational continuity; however, she neglects her own role within the broader collected memoryscape.

Similarly, Kurt W. (b. 1928), writing from 1989 to 2003, recounts his father's and uncle's careers as policemen. His father opted to join the NSDAP, and he notes that the *Bürgermeister* began to wear an SA-uniform (although he does not state in which year).<sup>112</sup> Yet on the following page, he declares to the reader: 'Us boys did not pay attention to politics'. This means that he may have discovered this information after the war ended, or that he is using this as a means of exonerating his childhood self. Otto P. has an impressionistic understanding of Nazi propaganda. Reflecting on his parents' reaction to his early politicisation, he writes:

My parents, who think differently, do not deal with my ideas, especially as I do not talk with them. They may have thought at the beginning that I was too small for political discussion. Later, the fear of being prosecuted for critical criticism and being forced into prison may have kept them away.<sup>113</sup>

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109. DTA Sig. Nr. 3272, 1, p.17ff.

110. DTA Sig. Nr. 630, i.

111. DTA Sig. Nr. 630, 3.

112. DTA Sig. Nr. 2135, 24-25.

113. Deutsches Gedächtnis archive, Fernuniversität Hagen, Otto P., *Opa als Schüler und Pimpf*, 75.

Each family coped with the political changes differently, and each child remembers them differently. It is possible that family involvement in politics led to shame and silences in memoirs; alternatively, that some children of Nazi Germany were largely unaware of Nazism and its impact on ordinary family life. Only later in life do these representations become relevant, because ‘as much as people tell stories about their lives, they also live the stories they tell’ in postwar Germany; indeed, our stories makes us what we are.

Still, it would seem that parents’ political perspectives did matter to some children; after all, parents are hugely influential on a child’s self-image. Few historians have considered the extent to which children value their parents’ political views. Although Richard Evans, through Social Democratic observation reports, argues that ‘the younger generation were losing touch with the values of their elders and falling prey to Nazi ideology under the impact of the HJ and indoctrination in schools’, this thesis argues that one-sided reports do not offer a rich or complex understanding of family culture.<sup>114</sup> Both children and parents were forced to adapt their worldviews to the new National Socialism. Indeed, there are some writers who actively engage with these issues. Nevertheless, the historiography often perpetuates an image of HJ in schools or ordinary contexts, but few accept or even admit to their involvement. Dietrich Strothmann (born 1927), for instance, uses his parents’ supposedly apolitical stance in this manner:

Erika Mann had already stated in 1938 in her investigation that this youth had stood up with the Hitler salute [Hitler-Gruß] and had gone to bed with him, that her whole life was for her a single indoctrination. I have experienced my youth differently. Because it was highly unpolitical, in a different sense precisely because of this, it was highly political: cut off from reality, withdrawn from ordinary horror, kept away from everyday horror. ... Who’s pointing to such parents?<sup>115</sup>

Politics are important: particularly when family politics conflict with mainstream politics. In Nazi Germany, children often felt ostracised by their peers if they were not allowed to wear HJ uniforms.<sup>116</sup> Most often, family politics revolved around this kind

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114. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 278.

115. Dietrich Strothmann, ‘Alltägliche Jugend,’ in Jakob Benecke, editor, *Die Hitler-Jugend 1933 bis 1945: Programmatik, Alltag, Erinnerungen : eine Dokumentation*, Materialien zur historischen Jugendforschung, 212.

116. See also, DTA Sig. Nr. 344.

of peer pressure, as children expressed a desire to wear the HJ uniforms whilst their parents resisted. As Ursula Sabel recalls,

My father was a public servant and as such, he was required to join the Nazi party in order to keep his job, but he somehow managed to stay out of it without getting in trouble. Because of my parents' opinions about the whole thing [National Socialism], I was not allowed to purchase and wear the uniform, even though they allowed me to attend meetings.<sup>117</sup>

For Sabel, it was important to fit in with her friends, and having the proper uniform was important, regardless of its political or ideological connotations. Children could be critical of their parents for not enabling their full participation, whilst others resented their parents' acceptance of Nazi ideology.

Hans Otto G.'s life narrative (born 1929) also explores the anti-Nazi sentiments of his parents. He recalls his father's dismissal from a banking job because he was not in the Nazi party; conversely, there is another account of him attending a Hitler rally with his family. Later on, he tells of a stranger reprimanding his mother for allowing her sons to buy shoes from a Jewish cobbler. He is teased at his local HJ group for looking more Jewish than Aryan. These memories, which are inextricably bound up with emotion (in this case, the embarrassment and shame that stems from a parent's actions) are indicative of the complex relationship between parents, children, and politics. They also show the range of relationships and issues which the cohort experienced. Whether or not parents were supportive of the Nazi ideology, politics posed problems for these cohort members, as they try to situate themselves within the family culture and collected memoryscape.

## Age and Geographical Influence

The context of writing is important to consider in these narratives as well, as the age and time of writing influences what is narrated and how it is recollected. Identity seeking is an aspect of growing up. Writing a memoir often serves as a means of clarifying one's identity; as such, it is important to consider the influence of time and space when studying life narratives. A young adult's self-representation can change in later life because

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117. Ursula Sabel, 'Gerade auf LeMO gesehen: LeMO Zeitzeuge', <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/ursula-sabel-erlebnisse-im-bdm>.



of the way autobiographical memory develops over time.<sup>118</sup> The relationship between Nazism and the family unit engenders changes which are contingent upon time and space. The narrativisation of the Third Reich and the Second World War likely took years to become a fully-developed self-narrative or memoir. For instance, many of the writers detail the positive effects of Nazism and suddenly jump to its negative aspects; thus, even in the immediate postwar period, the memory of National Socialism was contradictory, complicated, and subtle.<sup>119</sup> Some aspects of Nazism become part of the created self-image of late adulthood writings. Comparing life narratives from the late 1940s to English-language sources from the 1970s, and onward to 2016, means examining memories that are entrenched in time and geographical contexts. The earlier writing revolves around the hub of family experience; this is especially noticeable in discussions of war in Haß's collection. Geographical distance, in turn, allows the narrator to re-examine their family and themselves from a different cultural climate. The result is a diversity of representations from individuals with similar, if not identical, geographical and cultural backgrounds which are then encompassed within the collected memoryscape.

One of the earliest published collections of life narratives is Haß's collection of Abitur writings from 1950. Many historians use this collection in their studies, but fail to locate the texts within a wider historical context.<sup>120</sup> Comparing these life-writings to later narratives illustrates the development of family stories and identity over time. Though they are not wholly representative, they can still serve as formulae or clues as to how stories develop over time. The majority of the contributors were eighteen to twenty-one years old during the 1947-1949 period. Their age and timing facilitates detailed recordings of the war. Many German families were forced to deal with the aftermath of the war when it ended. The postwar period was a time of reflection, resulting in the writing of many life narratives. As young people began to process the war, they began to reflect on their families and childhoods.

Family dynamics ebbed and flowed during the war based on physical proximity to different parents. Males from the collection write little about their families; most write

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118. Williams and Conway, 'Networks of Autobiographical Memories', 33-61; Berntsen and Rubin, *Understanding Autobiographical Memory*.

119. Similar found in : Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 18.

120. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 276-278; see footnotes in chapters 2, 3 Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 38; Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 136-137.

about being at the Front and being a POW. Females, for the most part, stayed at home within the nuclear family. Because of their proximity to their families, females focus the most on familial relationships. Ilse B., however, writing at the age of eighteen, only mentions her family near the end of her narrative, as the Red Army advanced on the Eastern Front:

And then came the Russians. –It was another Sunday, 25 February. We were sitting with our quartered soldiers at the cafe, when the city was suddenly shot down. We ran to the yard. At the same moment, a projectile shot straight over the roof. My mother shrieked, her hands clasped, and rushed back into the house. The soldiers brought their bazookas in silence. Then we knew enough. Russian tanks!<sup>121</sup>

Noting her mother's shriek underscores her mother as emotional. In contrast, Ilse B. seldom recounts her own emotions. Only when she returns home does she 'want to cry'. Realising that there is more work to do, she keeps herself occupied. The life narrative offers, concomitantly, intimate and public, emotionally charged accounts of history. In this account, the bond between the two women is especially striking, as they attempt to keep each other safe. Facing a common enemy (however propagandised) unites mother and daughter. They work together to survive through bombings, pillages, and refugee status.<sup>122</sup> Eva-Maria J., Ingeborg P. and Renate M. feel resentment and disgust towards the Russians and their treatment of them and their families. They exemplify the anti-Russian propaganda of wartime Germany and, simultaneously, a naivety with regards to the influence of this propaganda.<sup>123</sup> Ingeborg P. writes:

We were helplessly exposed to the will of these Mongol hordes. The robbery and looting took no end. How we breathed, when the Russians left the city in July of the year, did not know that the worst was to come, the Polish occupation.<sup>124</sup>

By equating the Russians with 'Mongol hordes', the Russians become the barbarians who are plundering Germany. Indeed, other female writers hint at sexual abuse by the Russians, but never quite accuse them of it. In passages such as these, we see cohort

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121. Report 26 Kurt Haß and Albrecht Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal. Lebensberichte junger Deutscher 1946 - 1949*, 1. (Christian Wegner, 1950), 92.

122. Report 26 in: *ibid.*, 88–99.

123. See: Atina Grossmann, 'A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers', in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, volume 13 (New York: Garland, 1999), 162–185; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 240.

124. Report 25 in: Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 81.

members become active agents, assuming the role of a parent or adult in responding to threats against the family. These texts echo family representations in early texts: that is, the idea that the family ought to be protected on the home front, far away from the onslaught of battle. This reading goes against the historiographical understanding of Nazi ideology, which separates young people from their families.<sup>125</sup>

This shift in focus, away from parent/child relationships, is a correlative of growing up and increasing independence post-World War Two. Losing the war necessitated not only a complete disassociation from Nazism, but also a re-negotiation with lost or distant family members. In discussions of the post-war period, some writers emphasise the discord between Nazism, post-war politics, and their families. Interestingly, only female writers discuss this topic. This may be, in part, because men felt it was difficult to reconnect with families after the war. One woman writes that she had felt isolated since the collapse of the Third Reich: ‘Here I experienced the collapse of Germany and with it the collapse of everything that lived in me: faith, enthusiasm, devotion to ideals’.<sup>126</sup> After the war ended, her father became unemployed and her mother’s occupation goes unmentioned. The writer decides to pursue an education in order to find a place for herself in society. Other reports written by women are similar, where education became a means of advancement in post-war West Germany.<sup>127</sup> Some detail inner conflict, and express resentment that their parents could not possibly understand what they were going through. As Gerd W. writes: ‘The experiences of war and imprisonment shattered my idealistic world view. I saw the cruelty of life and saw with my own eyes how many people in the misery of captivity sank to a savage level’.<sup>128</sup> Here, reality shatters Nazi propaganda and false images of war.

As these examples illustrate, in the early post-war period, reactions to Nazism are nuanced and varied, and contain various emotions. They show that the post-war period was tremulous, with families attempting to establish a sense of normalcy wherever and however they could. When family members were found dead or missing, the task was even harder. As Eva-Maria J. recounts,

Dear friends and relatives, even my best friend went out of my life, lost

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125. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 279.

126. Report 27 in Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 101.

127. Reports 31, 22, 28, 23, 19 *ibid.*, 112-114, 72-76, 103-106, 77, 68.

128. Report 44 *ibid.*, 175.

her life to epidemics and became victims of starvation. During this time, enclosed from the whole world, abandoned to arbitrary defencelessness, I found solace and edification alone in the books.<sup>129</sup>

Facing the death of loved ones and becoming a famine victim during the war, she turns to reading as a means of coping with the trauma. This shows how trauma victims are inclined to rebuild their self-image through story. Another writer, Hannelore Sch. faces a related problem: her parents disappeared during the war. Her writing expresses the grief she must have felt at losing her parents: 'But I never saw them again!' She continues, with remorse:

With this message, my life has been completely overthrown. Hitherto guarded and cared for by incomparable parents, life is now approaching me in its crudest and most terrible form, and sometimes I think I am sinking into the worries and sorrows of everyday life. I am responsible for my siblings.<sup>130</sup>

This quotation might be considered representative of the feelings felt by other young people, in comparable situations, being forced to assume an adult role along with new and unexpected responsibilities. This collection of life narratives also contains divergent family life experiences; some showcase the more extreme effects that Nazism had upon the family. At 18, Waltraut St. recounts his father's arrest by the Gestapo, on 7 April 1942. Throughout the text, he struggles to understand his father's dissidence:<sup>131</sup>

On June 23rd 1943 came the hardest day of my life: the farewell to my father, who had been condemned to death by the rulers of the People's Court [Volksgerichtshofes]. Our confession at that hour took my sister in the simple words: "Father, we shall never be ashamed of you."<sup>132</sup>

One can only imagine the overwhelming sense of despair he must have felt; there was so little time to come to terms with what was happening. As the war came to a close, Waltraut St. spent time in a re-education camp, turning to Christianity for redemption and guidance. His experience is wholly unique in this sample of 71 narratives: he is the only male writer to have written in such detail about the loss of a single parent; further, he is the only one to report Gestapo infiltration into private life. Whilst they

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129. Report 24 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 78.

130. Report 20 *ibid.*, 69.

131. See also autobiographical fiction novel by Gehrts, which has a similar story: Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*.

132. Report 30 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 110.

may not have written about it, many young people suffered the loss of their parents or loved ones. Waltraut St.'s account is perhaps indicative of what other late adulthood writers might write, or how they might portray family members in a moment of despair or devastation.

This collected memoryscape constitutes transmissions of family life, which crosses languages and borders; yet each transmission is a different way of remembering a shared past. Whilst published English-language memoirs are similar in content to their German counterparts, there are still noticeable differences. As they were published for a foreign audience, the expectations of the audience mattered. If one of the author's parents was not a visible Nazi supporter, often uncles, or other relatives were. However, some writers discuss this past more effectively than others. Not only do family stories reflect the larger World War Two context, they also exemplify post-war notions of German victimhood, outside of Germany. Anne Rothe's analysis of Willy Schumann's 1992 memoir critiques his unwillingness to accept Germans as perpetrators.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, Schumann, who emigrated to the United States in 1950, writes of his awareness of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and *Historikerstreit* debate, stating: 'It would have been unreasonable to expect us as students to have developed a similar historic awareness in the year 1950'.<sup>134</sup> Yet he demonstrates an awareness of what was happening in Germany during his childhood. Although rather singular in his denial of German war crimes, his writing shows how responses to the war can be predicated on geographical location and, therefore, tie into culture and public memory.

English-language life narratives often break away from the collected memoryscape's silence, instead assuming an authoritative self-image in discussions of family life and the regime. By claiming to be figures of authority, memoirists are also able to create victim narratives, where they persuade the audience to sympathise with them.<sup>135</sup> Thamm, for example, argues for German victimhood by listing all of the Germans who were killed by Soviet forces: 'They were the innocent, the old, the infirm, the sick the too young. The guilty, the Nazi party bosses, the executioners, the concentration camp

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133. Rothe, 'Between History and Memory in Schumann's *Being Present: Growing up in Hitler's Germany*'.

134. Willy Schumann, *Being Present: Growing Up in Hitler's Germany* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991), 192.

135. See memoirs: Eric Kreye and Norma R. Youngberg, *Under the Blood Banner: The Story of a Hitler Youth* (TEACH Services, Inc., June 1, 2005).

managers'.<sup>136</sup> Some authors position themselves with authority figures, with some, like Willy Schumann, claiming that they have a better understanding of the period than historians. Anne Rothe, a literary critic, analyses Schumann's writing as using a 'pseudo-positivist rhetoric of fact, objectivity and truth in order to establish an authority over the depicted events no autobiographical author-narrator can logically possess, that of an omniscient narrator'.<sup>137</sup> Schumann recreates himself as an omniscient narrator, even though he is writing in the first person. Although Rothe highlights the variability and silences in Schumann's memoir, she does not question why he writes in this manner. Other male memoirists' employ a similar style—although in English. For example, Alfons Heck, Dieter H.B Protsch, and Dieter E. use various literary techniques to create the illusion of authority. It is perhaps worth considering the motivation behind this type of writing. Redding shows that there are few psychological studies of the HJ generation, making it difficult to assess the authority of those cohort members.<sup>138</sup> Adopting James Young's argument of the United States as a 'culture of competing catastrophes', memoirists might continue to see themselves as victims of the Third Reich, as they reinterpret their childhood memories and represent their families.<sup>139</sup> It is likely that amongst these German emigrants, there were those who wanted to disseminate what they perceived as suffering under Nazism, and writing a memoir became a way to claim victimhood and persuade a wider audience.

In Ilse Koehn's English-language life narrative, Nazi education serves as an escape from her maternal family's traditionalism, and their struggle to comply with Nazi doctrine. Drafted around the same time as Gehrts's autobiographical novel and originally published in the United States, Koehn's *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (1977), is one of the only life narratives within the collected memoirscape written outside of Germany from this period.<sup>140</sup> Koehn (1929-1991) was a writer and graphic artist, who moved to the United States in 1958. She does not use a

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136. Gerhardt B. Thamm, *Boy Soldier: A German Teenager at the Nazi Twilight* (Jefferson, N.C. ;London: McFarland, 2000), 3.

137. Rothe, 'Between History and Memory in Schumann's Being Present: Growing up in Hitler's Germany', 3.

138. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 16-17.

139. For example, see Herbert J. Rissel, *From Hitler's Oppression to American Liberty: My Journey Through Personal, Political, Economical, and Historical Adventures* (AuthorHouse, June 2012), 30; Adi Gordon and Amos Goldberg, 'An Interview with Prof. James E. Young', *English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst*, May 24, 1998.

140. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*.

fictional protagonist, but directly addresses her family's struggles and her experience as a 'Mischling'—a Nazi term for someone with Jewish ancestry. Her background makes her both a victim of her father's Jewish family, and an active member of the Nazi regime. Perhaps Koehn's background is what facilitates her meticulous documentation of teachers and experiences in the *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV).<sup>141</sup> Koehn represents herself as having no agency in the text, expressing an unwillingness to become a HJ group leader. She is morally conflicted about this leadership position, as her father forbade her from accepting the role.<sup>142</sup> She also struggles with traditional gender roles throughout the text: her maternal grandmother, a Christian, does not see the point of education past Volksschule; her paternal grandmother does, however. This difference between the two families drives the narrative, with the maternal family represented as practical and mundane, as opposed to the more intellectual and cultured paternal family. Nevertheless, Koehn is an obedient daughter, and strives to meet and surpass her family's and the KLV camp leaders' expectations. Writing in the late 1970s, her memoir comes fifteen years after Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and she is visibly critical of her mother's suffering:

Grete [Koehn's mother] cried for a bit, but she knew her parents too well to have shared the choirmaster's hopes for her. Dutifully she became a seamstress and tailor's apprentice in a Berlin fashion house. She was not unhappy. Earning money would soon allow her to be independent of the parents she feared.<sup>143</sup>

As this shows, Koehn looks down on her mother's gendered existence, which led her to work tirelessly to provide for all the family members. Her father is also depicted as hard-working, but her mother's sacrifice is noted above all.

In similar vein, writing in 1991, Elsbeth Emmerich (born 1934) depicts her family members as victims of Nazism. The style of her writing is simple and straightforward, as though it were a storybook for young readers. The opening passage begins as follows: 'This is the story of my childhood in Germany during the war of 1939 to 1945.

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141. Eva Gehrken, *Nationalsozialistische Erziehung in den Lagern der Erweiterten Kinderlandverschickung 1940 bis 1945* (Braunschweig/Gifhorn: TU Braunschweig, 1997); See also, Jost Hermand, *Als Pimpf in Polen: erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung 1940 - 1945*, Orig.-Ausz. Fischer-Taschenbücher, 11321 : Geschichte : Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verl, 1993).

142. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 154.

143. *Ibid.*, 2.

It's about all the things that happened to me and my close family—my mother, my father, my two sisters, and my grandfather and grandmother.'<sup>144</sup> The reader is made aware of the family culture early on through family photographs and postcards inserted into the memoir. Whilst appearing apolitical, her family was silently resisting Hitler. Indeed, the Gestapo's arrest of her grandfather shows the extent to which her relatives were participating in anti-Nazi activities. Emmerich states: 'He had been known to them since before the war for his anti-Nazi activities, and being a union shop-steward and a member of the Communist Party.'<sup>145</sup> Emmerich describes how, in the post-war period, she discovers that her father was mobbed by fascists (1930), before her parents married. Still, she contests that it 'would have been too dangerous to let children in on the truth about these things at the time'.<sup>146</sup> As the earlier section on German-language life narratives illustrates, some families remain open about politics. Others may not have heard their parents' political opinions during the war, and so their families existed within an a political vacuum. Some, after the war, had no desire to know what their parents had done, perhaps due to their own ideological conflicts. The apolitical and political culture of families influenced self-interpretations of childhood memories, which in turn shows the conflicted, contested nature of family life in the collected memoirscape.

In the early 2000s, there is a noticeable shift as more English-language writers represent their families critically, compared with their German-language counterparts. One variation that exists in English-language memoirs is a critical assessment of parents and their actions during the Third Reich. Out of ten life narratives, four write extensively of their families and their involvement with Nazism. In these memoirs, 'involvement' is defined as being an active member of the SA or SS, or their (lack of) female equivalents. If family members were not active members, they otherwise actively supported Nazism by endorsing their children's understanding of Nazism as a positive political movement. The four writers who focus on the negative connotations of Nazism are Ursula Mahlendorf (2009), Armin Lehmann (2004/2011), Werner Schumann (2015), and Jurgen Herbst (1999). Each writer presents different negative aspects of Nazism and its effect on the family unit. The recollections are ambiguous, however,

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144. Elsbeth Emmerich and Robert Hull, *My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (Hove: Wayland, 1991), 4.

145. *Ibid.*, 26.

146. *Ibid.*



as memories of Nazi-inclined family members are mixed with positive memories of the HJ organisation.

Compared with the collected memoryscape, Ursula Mahlendorf (born 1929) is especially critical of her parents. Before her father's untimely death in 1935, Mahlendorf writes that he was an SS member, and reflects on the fact that his death was timely:

I do not know how actively my father participated in SS activities (apart from the torchlight parading and attendance at meetings) or even how much of its racist ideology he shared. Nor, for that matter, do I remember ever seeing him in the coveted black SS uniform. . . . When I discovered . . . what the role the SS had played in the establishment and running of the concentration camps and the German police state, I began questioning my mother about my father's membership in the SS and his knowledge of its function. As usual during such questions on my part, her answers remained general and evasive. She asserted that in 1933-1934 neither of them knew much of anything about the organization's function . . . It was always awkward: I was bothered by what I thought were evasions, but fearing her punitive silences I did not press her . . .<sup>147</sup>

Mahlendorf frequently questions her own identity throughout her discussions of family life. As her role in the JM and BDM becomes increasingly important during the war, she attempts to convince her mother to join the NSF for her own promotion and benefit. Her mother declines, saying that she cannot 'afford the time'. After the war, 'she [the mother] told me that she had worried about my being so enthusiastic about the HJ. Her belated concern angered me. You are too late to worry, I thought sarcastically. I took care of myself just fine'.<sup>148</sup> Further on in the text, she expresses guilt and shame for her passivity and inability to prevent the horrors of the regime. Due to lack of funds on her mother's part, she ended her education after Volksschule, and instead devoted her time to the JM and BDM. Mahlendorf not only attempted to cajole her mother into the NS-Frauenschaft, but also tried to enrol in a leadership training course. Her mother refused, however, saying that the savings were for her dowry. Whether out of a sense of propriety, or purely strategic silence, this text exhibits the writer's inability to synthesise her competing memories of the Third Reich. The generational differences between children and parents, and the complex ways in which children view their parents, also determine the content of a memoir. Mahlendorf's assessment contradicts Redding's

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147. Ursula R. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival: Working through a Nazi Childhood* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 25.

148. *Ibid.*, 115.

initial finding that family involvement in Nazism was not openly discussed by cohort members. To the contrary, Mahlendorf's recollection is an attempt to engage with and create a communicative memory within the historical family group. Her representation of a mother who refuses to engage with the past demonstrates that post-war discussions are often also silenced.

Family stories are also a common theme, and revolve around fathers and their characteristics, as opposed to those of the mother. The concept of the mother is stereotyped here: she is the caregiver, the selfless family member. English-language life narratives tend to be more openly critical of family life and parental figures, perhaps because language, geographical distance and time facilitate reflection. Werner Schumann (born 1928) and Armin Lehmann (born 1929) negatively represent their fathers, who are depicted as overbearing in their desire for their sons to fulfil their political and gendered duties.<sup>149</sup> Both writers contrast their father's dominating personality with their mother's softer demeanour. Moreover, both openly reject their fathers' political views, but in a different manner. As Lehmann writes:

[My] father was an authoritarian so perhaps it is understandable that he admired the new regime. But my mother was a loving and as caring a person as you can possibly imagine. She too admired Adolf Hitler. She too thought Hitler had been anointed by God to lead Germany to its historic destiny as the greatest nation on earth. Most Germans did.<sup>150</sup>

Here, Lehmann contrasts his father's personality with his mother's, denoting their traditional gender roles. Further, Lehmann demonstrates an awareness of Adorno's Frankfurt School and the concept of the authoritarian personality, which is often linked to the acceptance of radical, authoritarian leadership. Whilst focusing on his father's personality and local Nazi party membership, he seems reluctant to admit his mother's admiration for Hitler because it does not fit into the Frankfurt School model. Lehmann represents his father as a Nazi brute—a failed business owner who blamed the Jews and, possibly his son, for his personal failures: 'he used to regularly whip me for telling lies and for even the smallest infractions.'<sup>151</sup> Whilst perhaps enjoying a less tremulous father-son relationship, Werner Schumann is also critical:

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149. See also Wolfram Siebeck, 'Meine Kindheit unter dem Hakenkreuz', *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), February 12, 1982,

150. Lehmann and Carroll, *In Hitler's Bunker*, 10-11.

151. *Ibid.*, 30.

Vati's avocation was his association with the *Sturm Abteilung* (SA), the Nazi brownshirt organization. He also was a member of the *National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (NSDAP), Hitler's Nazi party. I don't know when or why he joined (it could have been to provide employment opportunities), but I heard him vehemently argue the party point of view on at least one occasion. Likewise, I don't know when he joined the SA and whether he ever participated in the harassment of Jews for which the organization was known.<sup>152</sup>

Indeed, 'Vati was the dominant figure in the family but was involved with us only on holidays and to some extent on weekends.'<sup>153</sup> Both writers represent their fathers through stories, which is unique compared with other unpublished German memoirists. Schumann tells the reader that he did not know why his father joined the SA, and that he did not question it; this supports Redding's initial findings. In contrast, Lehmann presents his family as politically open; his father, however, does not escape criticism, whilst his mother, also an ardent Nazi, remains in focus. In both cases, the mother is largely overlooked, existing as the selfless mother of the family group, flattening her character and diminishing her support for the regime. This section illustrates how time and geographical location can impact what is written in life narratives, with English memoirists being more critical of their parents and the silences within family culture.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that identity-construction through nuclear family stories plays an important part in HJ memoirs, as indicated by the variety of narratives. Memoirists reflect on family relationships in various ways, with the relationship between fathers and mothers evolving over time. When writing in German and for a public audience, or for a family privately, negative memories and unflattering imagery are typically excluded. In contrast, writing in English seems to allow writers more flexibility in identity-construction through family stories. Many writers also contextualise German culture and traditions based on family dynamics. Men's writing tends to favour the mother figure, as many highlight their mother's Mutterkreuz medals and their constant presence throughout the war years. Daughters are similar, typically sympathising with their mothers; however, they also attempt to provide an objective, holistic impression

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152. Werner Schumann, *From Brownshirt to Turtleneck: Memoir of a Documentary Filmmaker* (Lulu Publishing Services, February 24, 2015), 14.

153. *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 170.

of their father before he left for war.

The writers' identification and presentation of family politics, especially in childhood memories, provides new insights into Nazi family life and the nature of memory. Sometimes negative presentations of family life, or overtly positive ones, reveal the narrator's own ideological failings. Guilt and shame over the parents' struggles are uncommon, with many writers opting to represent family members positively. Relationships between parents and their children are varied, some hostile, some excellent, and the majority somewhere in-between. Collecting memoirs into different time frames allows us to assess how, and if, post-war discussions influenced memory. Time and distance allows for different focuses and representations of the Nazi family.

Identity-construction is sometimes threatened by negative family stories about Nazism. Age and geographical location complicate identity-construction: with age, different memories take precedence; with geographical distance, family secrets are revealed and shared with a wider audience. Although not all childhood accounts were happy, many writers highlight the importance of childhood and detail the homes, furnishings, games, and places they visited. These memories contrast with the HJ organisation many joined at the age of ten, and the adult world it represented—as the next chapter shows. Memories of family members and their relationships determine how fathers are remembered and depicted; this will be elaborated upon in chapters four and five.

## Chapter 3

# Education and Joining the Hitler

## Youth

Writing in the United States in 1986, Alfons Heck (born 1928) blames his Nazi education and beliefs on his parents' generation's failure to critique Hitler and his politics. He attributes most of the flaws in his formative thinking to his teacher, Herr Becker, 'the good party member and pious Catholic [who] was most influential in forming our picture of the world'.<sup>1</sup> His grandmother, however, he presents in a much more favourable light: she was not impressed by Hitler's politics. Yet Heck represents her as having little influence on his political beliefs, lamenting:

all children are defenceless receptacles, waiting to be filled with wisdom or venom by their parents and educators. We who were born into Nazism never had a chance unless our parents were brave enough to resist the tide and transmit their opposition to their children.<sup>2</sup>

The way in which Heck represents his Nazi education enables him to re-position himself as a victim of the system. Like the previous chapter, this chapter uses the family story narrative framework. The collected memoryscape utilises the concept of normalcy and victimcy to downplay individual choices when it comes to childhood, education, and joining the HJ.

Historians have studied Third Reich schooling systems extensively. This study expands on these by considering the ego-document accounts of education. Besides this study, Peukert's classic *Inside Nazi Germany* is one of the few to use life narra-

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1. Alfons Heck, *The Burden of Hitler's Legacy* (Frederick, CO: Primer Publishers, U.S., January 1, 1988), 49.

2. *Ibid.*, 44.

tives; more recently, Lisa Pine's *Education in Nazi Germany*. This chapter builds upon Peukert's initial work on youth in *Inside Nazi Germany* by analysing the relationship between depictions of childhood, elite schools, and context. Peukert's focus is mainly on those who rebelled against the system, rather than those who conformed with it. As Peukert suggests, the diverse Nazi approaches to education are reflected in life narratives, where memoirists recount their varying experiences of Nazi education. There are no female voices in Peukert's chapter. The following chapter attempts to remedy this.

First, this chapter will discuss the use of victimcy in representing education more generally; secondly, in representing Nazi elite school education. Finally, it will compare representations of Nazi and Hitler Youth education according to age and geographical distance. In varying degrees, the boundaries between childhood and adulthood shift depending upon the memoir. Cohort members' representations are geared towards a prospective audience or readership. In this way, autobiographical memory and audience response affect representations of Nazi education. Cohort members navigate the complex post-war political context by normalising or victimising their educational experiences. These representations are nevertheless called into question, however, over time and with the deterioration of memory.

In researching Nazi youth indoctrination, historians have considered educational structures, policies, and school material.<sup>3</sup> As primary sources indicate, Nazi education was intended as life-long education, spanning from the cradle to the grave (*Wiege bis zum Grabe*). Children begin to think at three years old, and it is at this point that 'they must carry the flag' (*die Fähnchen zu tragen*), writes Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labour Front. This is the life path of the National Socialist: proper schooling in the Hitler Youth, then SA training, and eventually SA military service (*Wehrdienst*).<sup>4</sup> Baldur von Schirach, the head of the Hitler Youth from 1933 to 1939, expounds upon this in his 1930s writings.<sup>5</sup> As Ley and Schirach imply, National Socialist thought had to be instilled at an early age. As the life narratives in this chapter demonstrate, the

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3. Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*; Hans Jürgen Apel and Michael Klöcker, *Die Volksschule im NS-Staat* (Colgone: Böhlau Verlag, 2000); Kurt-Ingo Flessau, *Schule der Diktatur : Lehrpläne und Schulbücher der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Ehrenwirth, 1977); Erhard Naake, 'Zur Theorie und Praxis der Erziehung in den Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten und ähnlichen faschistischen "Eliteschulen"' (Jena University, 1970).

4. Robert Ley, 'Vom Wesen des Städtischen Aufbaus', *Nationalsozialistische Monatsheft*, 1933, 390f.

5. Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*; Baldur von Schirach, 'Hitlerjugend, die neue Idee in der neuen Gestalt', *Wille und Macht*, April 1, 1933, number 7, 1–3.

Nazi education system profoundly impacted and, in many ways, determined identity-formation during the postwar period.

Nazi education and the Hitler Youth were meant to complement one another within the Nazi state, as education was not only a pedagogic interaction in the traditional sense, but also a private one which infiltrated domestic lives. As Schirach states, ‘School is education from the top down, the HJ from the bottom up. At school the college of teachers educates, in the HJ it is the youth leadership’.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, there was often tension between the Hitler Youth and schools.<sup>7</sup> There are multiple instances where teachers excuse students from lessons, in order to participate in Hitler Youth marches or rallies.<sup>8</sup> Historian H. W. Koch suggests that the schools and the Hitler Youth were antagonistic.<sup>9</sup> In life narratives however, this relationship is rarely confrontational.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the relationship between the two is often coloured by the perspective bias of the writer. As part of their daily life, German youths would attend *Heimatabends* on Wednesdays and Saturdays for political indoctrination purposes.<sup>11</sup> On Sundays, instead of attending church services, the Hitler Youth would participate in marches—which served to isolate them from religious influences.<sup>12</sup> The Hitler Youth narratives highlight specific autobiographical memories in order to create a sense of normalcy during the Third Reich.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the Hitler Youth historiography does not consider the Hitler Youth generation’s life narratives, nor does it examine the impact that Nazi education had on individuals in later life. This is apparent in Detlev Peukert’s *Inside Nazi Germany*, in which autobiographical fiction and non-fiction memoirs are equated and subsumed into one category—regardless of how these works differ under the broader umbrella of commu-

6. Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 169.

7. Report of the Upper Presidium of the Province of Brandenburg on conflicts between school and Hitler Youth, November 29, 1933 in BBF/DIPF/Archiv: GUT SAMML 199. *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade), 1933-1939* (Salzhausen, 1980), vol. 2 (1935), 698.

8. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 40; Michael Wortmann, *Baldur von Schirach, Hitlers Jugendführer* (Cologne: Böhlau-Verlag GmbH, October 1989), 127-130.

9. Koch, *Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45*, 167-170.

10. Heinz Küpper, *Simplicius 45*, trans. Martin Secker (London: Panther Books Ltd., 1967), 28-30; Henry Metelmann, *Through Hell for Hitler: A Dramatic First-Hand Account of Fighting with the Wehrmacht* (Wellingborough: Stephens, 1990), 99-100; Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 80.

11. *Die Kameradschaft*, issue 7, April 15, 1936, 1f.

12. Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 69; See also, LAV NRW, Abt. Rheinland, RW 18 Nr.3, Bl. 240 on attempts to subsume religious youth organisations into the Hitler Youth.

13. Robyn Fivush, "Subjective perspective and personal timeline in the development of autobiographical memory," in Berntsen and Rubin, *Understanding Autobiographical Memory*, 226.

nicative memory.<sup>14</sup> Michael Kater's *Hitler Youth* does not define or consider the nature of life writing, although he does use memoirs to study various adolescent activities.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the monograph, memoirs are used as supplemental illustrations for various thematic topics; he does not consider them in their own right. For example, in his second chapter 'Serving in the Hitler Youth', some of Kater's sources overlap with those in this chapter, including: Max von der Grün, Joachim Fest, Heck, and Ilse Koehn. However, there is no attempt to date these sources.<sup>16</sup> In his following chapter, which examines girls' BDM experiences, Kater ends with a discussion of how they made themselves 'obvious targets' to party officials during World War Two, 'who thought the girls were theirs for the taking'. He argues that 'very few girls ... were strong enough to resist what they experienced in the Hitler Youth in a serious way'.<sup>17</sup> The problem here is that women of this period are represented by men through a subjective lens, tainted by gender norms and historical context: namely, as passive agents unable to defend themselves or voice any opinions. This statement is a troubling, sweeping generalisation that fails to consider any cultural or sociological influences. Female experiences are almost exclusively considered by Ilse Koehn, Manschmann and Haß's texts; further, none of these authors place the sources within a historical or gendered context.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in failing to situate these texts within a time frame, historians run the risk of misinterpreting them from their own biased, historical positions.

## Childhood, Education, and the Hitler Youth

The 1920s and 1930s were times of political change and upheaval in the modern nation state, and education was, undoubtedly, influential. Long-term, nationwide educational changes reveal how perceptions of education have transformed over time. From the Kaiserreich period onward, for middle-class families, Day Gymnasium allowed for 'school monopolized intellectual training' and the development of a male-based youth culture, with societal homeschooling.<sup>19</sup> The trend of dividing social and intellectual

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14. See chapter on youth and related footnote number 4 in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 267.

15. For example, see Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 56-57, 90-91.

16. See footnotes 63, 67, 91, 93, 100, 130, 138, 149, 152, 159, 162, 164 for chapter, in *ibid.*, 13-69.

17. *Ibid.*, 112.

18. See footnotes 37, 44, 45, 73, 75, 79, 81, 82, 88-91, 102, 118, 144, 146, 165 for chapter three 'German Girls for Matrimony and Motherhood', in: *ibid.*, 70-112.

19. John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations 1770-Present* (New York: Academic Press, 2013), 117.



education for children continued until the 1920s, slightly regressing in the 1930s. On a societal level, adolescence was a phase that occurred between school and work. The 1930s Nazi ideological framework attempted to monopolise free time and direct youths towards activities which were deemed politically important. The postwar period saw an exponential growth in children's education and training.<sup>20</sup> These changing pedagogical goals have altered representations of education in the postwar period. The early to mid-twentieth century was a period of 'reactionary modernism': Germany modernised aspects of the nation state in response to neighbouring states, whilst maintaining traditional values.<sup>21</sup> The rise of youth movements in European countries during the 1920s, and the radicalisation of those movements affected the functioning and development of the Hitler Youth organisation. For the first time, 'adolescence' became a commonly used term that implied a period of 'transition between school and work and marriage' alongside beginning an important 'secondary socialisation'.<sup>22</sup> With the word 'teenager' gaining traction in the mid-1940s, cohort writers adopted it for their life narratives. Modernisation sparked interest in the younger generation, and the potential to use their energy for the advancement of the nation state. As a result, young people believed they had more sway at a national political level. However, National Socialism was 'too vague to function as a self-sufficient educational objective'.<sup>23</sup> The mixed messages, which Peukert defines as National Socialism, were 'fragments of ideas of racial and national arrogance, mingled with traditional pedagogic humanism; the model of the front-line soldier' an attainable, valuable German culture; a yearning for the romantic agrarian past and 'enthusiasm for modern technology'.<sup>24</sup> These life narratives are similarly fragmentary, particularly in their accounts of Nazi education and ideology.

The cohort members' accounts differ in terms of how they define the end or transition from childhood to adolescence or, alternatively, from childhood to adulthood (without adolescence). The Hitler Youth Law of 1939 defines adolescence as 'age 10 to 18', but this definition is not widely used by cohort members. Adolescence and

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20. Ibid., 134.

21. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

22. Mike Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London: Routledge, 1985), 15-16, 24.

23. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 145.

24. Ibid., 146.

‘growing up’ are largely determined by class and gender in these narratives; perhaps the subjective nature of growth is partly why this definition is disregarded. In other historiographical works, the definitions are not nearly as nuanced. In her chapter ‘The Swastika in the Heart of the Youth’ in *The Nazi Conscience*, Claudia Koonz bases her analysis of Hitler Youth identities on educational sources; she uses a few published life narratives to support her argument. Koonz argues that the Hitler Youth created a collective identity for themselves using their ‘moral mandate’ to ‘honour the Führer, expel aliens, sacrifice for the Volk, and welcome challenges’. Her focus on educational policies and the implementation of Nazi ideology is insightful and incorporates the current research. Her chapter does not provide any new analyses of life narratives; she fails to examine representations of education in memoirs. Koonz quotes from Alfons Heck and Melita Maschmann, both well-known memoirists. Further she neglects to make use of the literary analysis of Maschmann’s life narrative, which would have contextualised this source.<sup>25</sup> Maschmann and Heck should not be taken as representative examples of the Hitler Youth; their unique backgrounds make them unsuitable to represent the effects of education in the Nazi period. Evans’s *The Third Reich in Power* lists Maschmann as an example of a BDM girl; however she is far from exemplary.<sup>26</sup> In her analysis of the SPD reports, Evans emphasises the failures of Nazi education to entice youth, owing mainly to their varying experiences of Nazi education.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Evans cites Kater and Klönne to bolster the main argument on youth experience, without consulting primary sources. Additional ego-documents would significantly strengthen Evans’s findings.<sup>28</sup>

Memories of childhood are tied to family stories. Wolfgang Goettig (born 1928) connects adventuring with his brother outside after school with punishments from his parents.<sup>29</sup> For Elisabeth H., (1933), ‘childhood’ means the time before World War II: ‘Our childhood had thus come to an abrupt ending to us girls. In a radical and irrevoc-

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25. Sayner, ‘For Whom Does One Remember?’; Sayner, “Man muß die bunten Blüten abreißen”: Melita Maschmann’s Autobiographical Memoires of Nazism’; Bosmajian, ‘Nightmares of History: The Outer Limits of Children’s Literature’.

26. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 275.

27. *Ibid.*, 277-80.

28. See footnotes 196-245 on chapter 3 in *The Third Reich in Power*.

29. Wolfgang Goettig, *From Hitler Youth to American Hero*, 1 edition (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, December 14, 2014), 6.

cable manner, we matured rapidly into adults'.<sup>30</sup> In general, cohort members include school education as a part of childhood, even though Jungvolk (JV) or JM membership was a step towards adulthood and independence. Therefore, many of the life narratives are split along these lines, where home and school defined childhood, and Hitler Youth events were an expression of independence. Cohort members looked forward to joining their local Hitler Youth group, and many coveted the uniform. In this way, the uniform itself became a symbol of independence and a move away from childhood.

As noted in Chapter 2, childhood is nevertheless manipulated to deflect responsibility, using victimcy to mask negative self-worth. Cohort members use notions of childhood and innocence to their advantage. Christa H. (born 1931) describes her childhood as a 'kurze Kindheit', whilst focusing intently on her fondest childhood memories.<sup>31</sup> Ursula Martens' (born 1929) life narrative is similarly conflicted:

[Sometimes it] seemed like I had grown up too quickly; one day I was just a child, happy and carefree, and the next a young woman who wanted to fire a Panzerfaust and kill people who were my enemies even though I didn't even know who they were. My hate had escalated, and for a child, this is tragic in itself, for no child should hate like I did or like millions of others in the Hitler Youth did'.<sup>32</sup>

Here, Martens uses victimcy in order to preserve her innocence and avoid confronting her own opinions and actions. She projects the image of a wholesome childhood through controlled representations of the Nazi education system. The younger the cohort member, the easier it is for them to use victimcy tactics to shield themselves from outside criticism. Annemarie Poole (born 1932), in a 2009 interview for *The Sentinel* newspaper, states that her 'age group' had 'no idea what was happening', although, 'At school, Hitler's portrait was in every classroom – "Heil Hitler" before we started lessons and the same at the end. Hitler was praised, and we fell in love with him. We adored him and showed great respect'.<sup>33</sup> Memoirists who were born after 1930 often use the year of their birth to deflect responsibility and present themselves as victims;

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30. DTA Sig. Nr. 13,2, 34.

31. DTA Sig. Nr. 1266

32. Ursula Martens and Mark Shaw, *Stations Along the Way: Spiritual Transformations of a Former Hitler Youth Leader* (Xlibris Corporation, July 31, 2014), 113.

33. Anonymous, 'Growing up in Shadow of Hitler's War Machine: Colette Warbrook Finds out What It Was like to Be a Child in Germany during the Second World War', *The Sentinel: News* (Stoke-on-Trent (UK), United Kingdom), December 19, 2009, 33.

as indicated, the collected memoryscape uses identical techniques regardless of year or gender to deal with negative memories.

Despite their educational differences, most of the cohort memoirists represent their teachers as good or bad ‘typical Nazis’ to normalise classroom experiences and schooling. Teacher caricatures appear in numerous works, perhaps in an attempt to de-legitimise their lessons, with certain teachers depicted as evil Nazis.<sup>34</sup> In published written accounts, teachers are often described as stupid, power hungry, or fanatical.<sup>35</sup> Based upon historiography and contemporary sources, ardent Nazi teachers not only stigmatised ‘unwanted’ children, but also Aryan Germans.<sup>36</sup> This literary trope is also present in autobiographical fiction from the 1970s.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, some teachers are remembered fondly, as either helpful or insightful mentors, counterbalancing the image of the disliked Nazi teacher.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, certain memoirists express dissatisfaction with their teachers, particularly Peter K., whose Nazi teacher plays a central role.<sup>39</sup> The head teacher was a *Zellenleiter*, the lowest-ranking member of the NSDAP. Still, he managed to use his title to justify his actions. Nicknamed ‘Plääte Heini’, he made Peter K. teach the 4th and 5th year students multiplication tables, whilst neglecting to teach Peter K. geometry. The teacher’s response: “‘Your brother can teach you all of this,” he said. My brother Willi, who was in his eight grade at the time, knew the entire syllabus by heart, maths and geometry’.<sup>40</sup> Further, Peter K. notes that ‘Plääte Heini’ did not know any grammar, as he awarded Peter K’s essay, ‘Das Getreidekorn erzählt seine

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34. Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*, 59f; compared to Sara Buttsworth and Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *Monsters in the Mirror: Representations of Nazism in Post-War Popular Culture* (Oxford: Praeger, 2010), 134.

35. See examples in, Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, trans. Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt (London: Virago, 1982), 98; Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 49; Irmgard A. Hunt, *On Hitler’s Mountain: Overcoming the Legacy of a Nazi Childhood*, Reprint edition (Harper Perennial, 2011), 131, Deutsches Gedächtnis Archive, Fernuniversität Hagen, Theodor Richard Wengler, *Lebenserinnerungen von Theodor Richard Wengler* (Fall 2008), 19. In contrast, see Otto Peters, *Opa als Schüler und Pimpf: Berliner Erinnerungen aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Hagen, 2005), 202-205.

36. Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 149-50; Henry Metelmann, *A Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Germany in the 1930s*, New Ed edition (Staplehurst: The History Press Ltd, April 19, 2004), 89-90, *Deutschland-Berichte*, Jg. 1936, Nr. 10, Part A, 1301 ff.

37. Shavit, *A Past Without Shadow*, 137-77.

38. DTA Sig. Nr. 256 *writtenin*1997, 9, 11. DTA Sig. Nr. 842 *nodate, possibly*mid – 2000s, 6.; DTA Sig. Nr. 1560, 4 *written* 2006. Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 68; Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 32-3; Schumann, *Being Present*, 10; Joachim C. Fest, *Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood*, Reprint edition (Other Press, February 11, 2014), 104-5.

39. Peter K. was born in 1930, and spent the war in a KLV camp, and was an accountant from the 1950s onward.

40. DTA Sig. Nr. 3634, 2, 22.

Lebensgeschichte' with full marks and featured in a *Goldenes Aufsatzbuch* despite the fact that it was riddled with errors.<sup>41</sup> Peter K.'s writing criticises his educational experiences by highlighting his teachers' tendency towards discrimination. By representing teachers in this manner, some cohort members shift the blame away from their families and onto teachers, representing the children as passive receptacles of Nazi ideology.

Missing female voices, when taken into consideration, alter our understanding of Nazi educational representations. Whilst Peukert's analysis touches on a number of important issues, he does not acknowledge the limits of his male-dominated space.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, there are social consequences to textual representations. The BDM movement is hardly discussed in the 1980s and early 1990s; however, the 1992 publication of Henry Ries's *Abschied meiner Generation* (Farewell My Generation) is an early attempt at gathering male, as well as female, voices. Compiled by the *New York Times* photographer Henry Ries (1917-2004), the collection focuses on Germans born between 1917 and 1924.<sup>43</sup> There are a few interviews with women, some of whom were active Nazis. As they were born outside the date range for this study, they will not be examined in-depth, however.<sup>44</sup> What is noticeable here is the lack of female voices and experiences; still, the text does account for GDR residents.<sup>45</sup> Nazi education and involvement in the BDM are not discussed beyond supplying a few pictures for the collection and a few introductory sentences. Whilst we know from historiography that girls generally stopped attending BDM meetings after they finished compulsory education (at age fourteen), the Nazis enticed them to join the *Glaube und Schönheit* BDM group.<sup>46</sup> In one life narrative on BDM experience, a former group member, Ursula Söllner, recalls, 'This consisted of courses with various topics such as sports, gymnastics, dance, sewing, cooking, art and of course political education — in preparation for the "marriage of the German woman"'.<sup>47</sup> Söllner does acknowledge that she taught *Rassengesetzen*; however, minimises her involvement stating that she was a youth then,

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41. DTA Sig. Nr. 3634, 2, 22-3.

42. The only example used is Maschmann: Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 151.

43. Henry Ries, *Abschied meiner Generation* (Berlin: Argon, 1992).

44. Out of 36 texts, eight are by women, and four co-written by couples.

45. In particular, Gisela Hemmann and Ursula Söllner

46. DTA, Sig. Nr. 842 Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 97; Baldur von Schirach, 'Glaube Und Schönheit', *Das Deutsche Mädel*, February 1939, 8f; See also, Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*.

47. Ursula Söllner, 'Glaube und Schönheit' in Ries, *Abschied meiner Generation*, 113.

and could not have known the impact of her teaching.<sup>48</sup> Ursula Marten's (born 1929) statement about her education alters our understanding of education during the Nazi period and gender expectations: 'I accepted that being a housewife like my mother was my life's goal'.<sup>49</sup> The group's motive was to instil Nazi values in women, enticing them through comradeship and continuing education.<sup>50</sup> However, because writers limit their discussion of this group, and the BDM in general, male narratives remain the focus during this period. Even in the 2000s, little space is given to women's experiences in the collected memoryscape.

Although the Nazis legally defined adolescence, many female writers conceive of childhood as a transition into adulthood. In women's unpublished life narratives, an absent 'adolescence' is often a correlative of how much the family valued education. Erika Z. (born 1928) offers an account of her education, claiming that her teachers made fun of her for her parents' communist leanings:

It was easier for me, but she was a great follower of Adolf Hitler. In spite of me not supporting it, I had to work hard to deliver in this subject. She had found out, that our family was not supporters of the NSDAP. I suddenly liked the subject. When she told us of Hitler's life, for example, I listened with enthusiasm. At the end it was said 'now write an essay about it.' At home, I wrote a five page long essay, was very enthusiastic myself of my achievement. But the next morning, when the teacher looked at it, she only said 'you copied this' and I received a 5.<sup>51</sup>

She uses her social status and parents' political beliefs to portray herself as victim of circumstance. Her stepmother wanted her to begin working after she left *Volksschule*, and during her final year at school, she focused on handiwork. At this point, she stops attending the BDM meetings, at the insistence from her parents that she begin working as soon as possible. Dialogue is rare in this source text. When she is quoted, her mother's justification of why school was no longer important is even more powerful: 'we are not learning anything anymore anyway'.<sup>52</sup> During her last year of education, she learned mostly handiwork: 'We crocheted, first an oven glove, then a place mat,

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48. Ursula Söllner, 'Glaube und Schönheit' in Ries, *Abschied meiner Generation*, 114.

49. Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*, 33.

50. See life narrative by Ursula Phillip, born in 1920, in Ursula Philipp, 'Zur Kritik wurden wir nicht erzogen', in *Kindheit und Jugend unter Hitler*, ed. Helmut Schmidt et al. (Berlin: Siedler, 1992), 101–147.

51. DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 8.

52. DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 31.

in addition, I crocheted tea-cosies and covers for cloth hangers'.<sup>53</sup> Thus for her, continuing education is considered unnecessary, as she is expected to assume the role of mother and wife in the post-war period.

Helga Brachmann (born 1928), who lived in the GDR, recounts only the positive aspects of her BDM experience, without contextualising them within the larger frameworks of childhood and growing up. She recounts her BDM experience positively because she became a pianist in the GDR. Nevertheless, she uses victimcy to avoid difficult conversations with her son:

So, you joined just to get some money, and became part of all the horrible things that happened during the holocaust. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' To this I replied that I was eleven years old by the time war broke out, and that I didn't hear about the concentration camps or the other things that happened until after the war was over and everything came to light.<sup>54</sup>

Like other cohort members, she uses childhood as a means of avoiding agency or knowledge; whether she was aware of the disappearances of neighbouring Jews remains uncertain. She cultivated her talents through BDM concerts and special music events.<sup>55</sup> However, in 1942 during German lessons, she notes the racist content of her education. Yet she did not see 'that the explanations of Nordic race and Nordic skull shapes in biology were not propaganda explaining the superiority of the Germanic race'.<sup>56</sup> These examples suggest that the BDM left different impressions on girls depending upon their social class, skill, intelligence and status as women. Still, there are a number of differences: these women do not express regret for having left school, but instead perceive it as a token of their fate. This means that women who lived in the post-war East or West Germany may have represented their education differently; thus perhaps women's memories contain a cultural circuit.

The middle class Elisabeth M. (born 1926) also discusses childhood in her memoir. Her family culture was strict: 'Every day followed the same pattern: school, lunch, homework, helping with housework and garden, or shopping'.<sup>57</sup> If she was late walking

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53. DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 27.

54. Helga Brachmann, 'Wie ich den Nationalsozialismus erlebte: Ein Bericht von Helga Brachmann, Leipzig', <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~hagen/Zeitzeugen/zz123.htm>.

55. She was born in 1928. Brachmann's son was a member of the GDR band Klaus Renft Combo, which was banned for its anti-socialist sentiments. *ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 15.

home from school, her parents would punish her, having her write ‘fifty or a hundred times: ‘I can not dawdle on my walk to school’ [ich darf auf dem Schulweg nicht bummeln].<sup>58</sup> Clearly, her family placed a high value on education, regardless of its Nazism. Once she finished Volksschule, she takes her Pflichtjahre like other thirteen-year-old girls:

Because I wanted to be as far away from home as possible, I had decided for the Landjahr scheme. In addition, at the age of 13 I was supposed to decide on a future profession. My choice of profession was to be seamstress, because it would have fitted my talents. My grandmother advised against it, because the potential earnings were so low.<sup>59</sup>

Here, she expresses her desire to move as far away from home as possible, and to be gone for a year. Although she does not label it as her adolescent period, she enters the workforce when she returns. Born into a middle class family, she visibly struggles as to whether or not she should continue her education. She lists financial hardship as one of the reasons not to continue, being unsure as to whether her parents could afford it.<sup>60</sup> Using earlier definitions of adolescence and the ideological purpose of the Pflichtjahr, the compulsory year of service, can be understood as a transition away from childhood and family, towards adolescence, the nation, and personal emancipation.

Within the female-centred collected memoryscape, depictions skip adolescence and instead jump from extended childhood straight to adulthood. This allows the cohort member to claim victimcy, as the naivety of childhood negates feelings of guilt about the Nazi period. The consequences of Nazi education are rarely discussed outright; Margarete H., writing in 2005, is similarly reluctant to discuss life in the BDM. She describes only one Nazism-related memory, concerning a school Christmas production:

How intensively National Socialism influenced daily life can be seen through a small example from my first or second year in school. There was a Christmas party at Hetlands Hall, to which I should contribute. So I was on the stage, tender looking with my blond and curly hair, wearing a red knitted dress presenting a poem with great emphasis:

‘Hark! I saw the child of Christ, it came out of the forest with its little cap full of snow.’

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58. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 16.

59. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 19.

60. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 15.



Strangely, I had to raise my hand for the 'Hitlergruß' even by presenting this complete non-political text. I was only a child of 6 or 7 years.<sup>61</sup>

The imagery here, of the blonde curly hair and the red dress respectively, represent gender expectations and childhood innocence. Here, Nazism diverges from ordinary life, in memory. Whilst it is unclear from the text whether she was conscious of doing a Hitler salute at that age or later, she clearly remembers that moment. She does not discuss the consequences of her education, as the majority of the life narrative focuses on her family's suffering during the Second World War. However, Margarete H. became an English teacher later in life, indicating that she enjoyed leadership positions. Such positions, taken up by many others of her generation, were encouraged and valued by Hitler Youth groups.<sup>62</sup>

Male cohort members writing in unpublished life narratives about their Nazi education want either to forget it, or avoid it altogether. In his unpublished life narrative written between 1995 and 1998, Adolph D. attempts to forget, rather than remember, his education and the Hitler Youth organisation. He was not able to get the same Hitler Youth uniform and was chastised for not having the correct vest.<sup>63</sup> Adolph also claims to have lost his memory following the death of his younger brother in 1937. After joining the JV in the same year, he quickly lost interest in it 'as for this Jungvolk I had a bad conscience, when I had not turned up for duty at times and did not know exactly whether I still belonged or wanted to belong anymore. I was so small, that I hang back at the tail of the marching track, went unnoticed and ended up staying away'. He lost his younger brother in the same year and blurs his sense of loss of a sibling with forgetting his Nazi childhood.<sup>64</sup> Adolph D. represents himself awkwardly, as someone who could not fit into the Third Reich. Interestingly, he changed the spelling of his name from Adolf to Adolph in the 1970s—perhaps an indication of his discomfort with the Nazi regime and his upbringing. Adolph D.'s alleged memory loss of the early years shows that education was often a contested and unwelcome topic, which made him feel uncomfortable.<sup>65</sup>

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61. DTA Sig. Nr. 1829, Margarete H., 5.

62. Other writers of this generation who became educators include Hans Peter Richter, Barbara Stern, Ursula Mahlendorf, and Willy Schumann.

63. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 44.

64. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511,1, 8-10

65. See, also, DTA Sig. Nr. 539 (written 2000), DTA Sig. Nr.630 (date unknown), DTA Sig. Nr.825 (written 2002), DTA Sig. Nr.1049 (written 2001), DTA Sig. Nr. 1215 (written 1997)

On the other hand, some writers recount their education and Hitler Youth experiences with the use of historical facts, without providing reflections or more personal anecdotes. Hans F. (born 1932) and Peter W. (born 1929) give similar accounts, with both emphasising their Hitler Youth duties. Hans F., writing in 1998, recounts two significant events that happened when he was ten: ‘Firstly I joined the children’s organisation of the Hitler Youth the ‘Jungvolk’, then secondly, came the entrance exam at the Goethe school in Dessau’.<sup>66</sup> He later becomes a drummer in his local Hitler Youth, even though he professes to have no musical talent.<sup>67</sup> In his unpublished life narrative written in 1998, Peter W. (born 1929) expresses the excitement he felt in joining the Hitler Youth and being accepted into middle school when he was ten years old.<sup>68</sup> Later in life, Peter W. became an author, after having attended a Gymnasium. He also served as a Hitler Youth leader.<sup>69</sup> Most sources represent the Hitler Youth and the educational system as positive aspects of growing up.<sup>70</sup> Whilst the historiography and contemporary sources make a distinction between the Hitler Youth and the general education system, this difference is not evident within these life narratives.<sup>71</sup> Peter W. confirms the historiography which tells us that meetings were Wednesdays and Saturday afternoons, with his school accommodating Hitler Youth evenings by giving no homework on those days.<sup>72</sup> For the most part, Peter W.’s text indicates that he remembers this time well. He writes extensively about his involvement, remembering the name of his youth leader, as well as his leader’s birthday.<sup>73</sup> Only one cohort member (born 1929) actively defends his participation in the Hitler Youth, stating: ‘Who is surprised, when the sensitive heart of a ten year old is ignited by all these things. I am not ashamed to admit that at the time I was very much in agreement with the good things. But I find it almost ridiculous when one wants to now accuse us for that.’<sup>74</sup> As these cases show, the nature of remembering is different, based upon individual experiences. Adolph D.

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66. DTA Sig. Nr. 64, 12. (Written in 1998)

67. DTA Sig. Nr. 63, 12.

68. DTA Sig. Nr. 745, 28-9.

69. DTA Sig. Nr. 745, 29.

70. See also similar events in DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 9, 111; DTA Sig. Nr. 586, 5; DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 6; Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 68. Joachim Fest, *Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood*, 104-105. Schumann, *Being Present*, 10-11.

71. See similar issues in men’s and women’s narratives from this time in DTA Sig. Nrs. 344; 1560; 842; 825; 586; 3634 vols. 1-3; 891.

72. DTA Sig. Nr. 745, 30; DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, 12.

73. DTA Sig. Nr. 745, 31.

74. KA BIO 2855, Hans-Kaspar Reinke (1991), 11 from Deutsches Gedächtnis.

attests that both in childhood and adulthood, he cannot remember much, whilst Hans F. provides a much more detailed description of his school life.

In contrast to Protestant cohort members, Catholic cohort members are more critical of the HJ in their life narratives and more often portray themselves as victims of the regime.<sup>75</sup> Retired Catholic priest Kurt Flasch (born 1930) gives a scathing account of his childhood education and experiences in the Hitler Youth. He separates these accounts into two chapters and, without explicitly connecting them, reveals their ideological similarities. For Flasch, Nazi school education was the ‘the forced honour of a man, the forthright diction, the commanded sport, all of that was repulsive to me: I learned little more than not to draw attention to myself; I dived under’.<sup>76</sup> He says the same of the Hitler Youth movement, drawing attention to the paramilitary nature of the group and expressing his distaste for the Nazi party.<sup>77</sup> Flasch presents himself as a victim of his education and the brutalities of Nazism. In the text, Nazi education, depicted in all its militaristic glory, is contrasted with Catholic values. It is possible that religious life motivated Flasch to distance himself from his education. Other texts demonstrate that Nazi education clashed with farming community values, as Catholic agriculturist Elmar G. notes. His teacher’s Nazi ideology came into conflict with the daily life of farmers:

The teacher, a strict national socialist man, did not like our performance at all. He did not like it either when we missed the Hitler youth duties. With the excuse that I had to help at the farm, father applied for leave from duty for the boys when necessary.<sup>78</sup>

Religion seems to have impacted political views, especially in the Catholic-dominated country villages.<sup>79</sup> The collected memoryscape of Catholic experiences and the impact of religion on postwar representations of Nazism are significant, but require further

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75. Thomas Brodie, ‘The German Catholic Diaspora in the Second World War’, *German History* 33, number 1 (January 3, 2015): 80–99.

76. Kurt Flasch, *Über die Brücke: Mainzer Kindheit, 1930-1949* (Mainz: Universitätsdruckerei H. Schmidt, 2002), 22.

77. Flasch, *Über die Brücke: Mainzer Kindheit, 1930-1949*, 56-7; see, also Siebeck, ‘Meine Kindheit unter dem Hakenkreuz’.

78. Elmar G. was born in 1925, and was an agriculturalist in life, working on farms. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, 11.

79. For further information, see section on the Hitler Youth in a catholic village: Rosenbaum, “*Und trotzdem war’s ‘ne schöne Zeit’*”, 586-92; See, also, Daniel Horn, ‘The Struggle for Catholic Youth in Hitler’s Germany: An Assessment’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 65, number 4 (October 1, 1979): 561–582.

study.

Militarism is commented upon and remembered negatively in a number of memoirs, but the reason for the extensive militarism of Nazism and in the Hitler Youth is not discussed nor extrapolated. In his life narrative, Herbert K. also expresses a dislike of militarism; rather than associating militarism with school, however, he connects it with the Hitler Youth. He writes in 2005:<sup>80</sup>

The teachers also had more and more military topics and national socialist slogans in their program. The teachers became increasingly strict in the direction of the education. All boys from age 10 onwards were admitted to the Pimpfs of the Jungvolk, one of the sub-organisations of the Hitler Youth.<sup>81</sup>

His reflection on how skillfully the Nazis enticed younger members is particularly striking. By the time Herbert K. joined the *Jungvolk*, membership would have been mandatory. Indeed, he is very critical of the school's militaristic nature and the accompanying Nazi slogans. However, this conflicts with memories of playing 'war' with his friends—indicating that, to some extent, militarism was enjoyed and glorified.<sup>82</sup> He never divorces this fictional experience from the reality of actual warfare.<sup>83</sup> We find out a few pages later that he disliked the Jungvolk because of the Hitler Youth leader (*Jungschafftsführer*):

One day I arrived late to the Pimpf meeting, which was a good pretext for the leaders of the group who liked showing off their power to harass others. He had thought out a nice punishment for me. I had to grab a chair by the front legs and do 50 squats with it to the triumphant cries of the other boys.<sup>84</sup>

Here, Herbert K. highlights the exclusion and unfairness he felt from the Jungvolk.<sup>85</sup> Like other cohort members, he criticises his overtly masculine and militaristic education, where he never felt as though he fit in.

Cohort members often blame their fathers for the negative impacts that Nazi militarism had on their education; they are often resentful and feel that they were forced to

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80. Born in 1933, Herbert K. lived in the GDR until the end of the regime, and worked as a construction engineer (*Bautechniker*).

81. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216, 7.

82. Siebeck, 'Meine Kindheit unter dem Hakenkreuz'.

83. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216, 11-12; See also Hans F. in DTA Sig. Nr. 64, 10 (written in 1998).

84. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216, 14.

85. The same is noted in DTA Sig. nr. 1552, I&II, 33 of KLV camps by the male writer, writing in 2006.

join the Hitler Youth. Armin Lehmann, for instance, felt compelled to join because of his father's influence. Writing in 1982, Wolfram Siebeck recalls how he was pressured into joining the *Jungvolk* a year early because his father enlisted him. However, his frail nature and young age made it hard for him to fit in: 'Twice a week in the afternoons, I had to join the line of children in a different part of town, who I did not know and had to sing songs, of which I did not know the lyrics and was exposed to rough games, which I feared'.<sup>86</sup> The extreme masculinity of Nazi education is most noticeable in accounts of Nazi elite schools. For instance, certain Nazi propaganda messages, such as the superiority of the SS, made their way into those schools:

In cinema, books and school, we had been indoctrinated always, that in the SS the best of Germany's sons were serving. Everywhere we had been warned of the awful 'Bolshevik danger'. And we wanted to help to defend Germany against that. When young people today idolise celebrity footballers or youth bands, our idols were Werner Moelders, Guenther Prein or Otto Skorzeny, these were legendary fighter pilots.<sup>87</sup>

Here, Lucks used victimcy to deflect responsibility and compare himself to contemporary young people, as a means of appealing to them and in order to create a sense of intimacy or comradeship. For some boys, this atmosphere enabled them to succeed; for others, it proved detrimental to their mental and physical well-being. The next section focuses on representations of Nazi elite school education and the ways in which former elite school students dealt with the outcomes of their education. Even though circumstances changed, cohort members resort to victimcy when describing their Nazi education. This can be seen in women's representations of themselves as children, rather than adolescents, or their tendency to avoid discussing their BDM experience, and normalising Nazi teacher caricatures. They often reference Catholic rituals as a means of distancing themselves from the HJ. Whilst they often object to parts of the Hitler Youth, they rarely reject the organisation as a whole.

## Representing Nazi Elite School Education

One of the challenging aspects of the collected memoryscape of the late 1990s is a renewed interest in elite school education: particularly, its difficulties, which often had

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86. Siebeck, 'Meine Kindheit unter dem Hakenkreuz'.

87. Günter Lucks, *Ich war Hitlers letztes Aufgebot: Meine Erlebnisse als SS-Kindersoldat* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: rororo, 2010), 55.

lifelong consequences. As this section will demonstrate, the nature of elite school education makes memories painful and potentially harmful to self-worth and self-identity. As such, the past becomes especially contested.<sup>88</sup> Whilst both Napola and non-Napola cohort members form part of the collected memoryscape, they differ in their discussion and understanding of Nazi education and its goals, especially when considering their education and career paths.<sup>89</sup> They are also geographically different, making comparisons rather slight. Nevertheless, the interest in elite schools seems to have begun after the *Alltagsgeschichte*; secondary literature on the Napola and Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS) remains sparse. Still, as a topic, the elite schools have become popular with researchers.<sup>90</sup> Research on elite schools and published Napola life narratives began to appear around the same time, likely sparked by the first fiction novel of the Napolas, by Gunther Wagner, in 1958. Subsequent publications, as well as the profiling of public figures who went to these schools, also had an influence. Communicative memory only accumulated from there. The Nazi elite schools emphasised exclusivity: when children turned ten, they underwent a racial, physical, and mental examination if they wanted to attend a *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (NPEA, or commonly abbreviated to Napola) or an Adolf Hitler School.<sup>91</sup> Bernhard Rust established the first Napola school in 1933, and its competitor, the Adolf Hitler School, was given as a birthday present to Hitler from Robert Ley in 1937.<sup>92</sup>

Napola schools were the training ground for the new Nazi (male) elite, guarantee-

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88. A useful collection, albeit an oral history is Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*; In 1994, Schörken's work looks at thirty-two autobiographies and includes two works by former Napola students Rolf Schörken, *Jugend 1945: Politisches Denken und Lebensgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994).

89. In recent years, more works have been written about this particular group of 'war children' Arne Heinich, *"Niemand entgeht seiner Zeit": Leben in der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalt (Napola) Bensberg bei Köln* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2007); Klaus Montanus, *Die Putbusser: Kadetten unter dem Hakenkreuz, Ein Napola-Schüler erzählt* (Frankfurt am Main: R.G. Fischer Verlag, 1995); Hans Müncheberg, *Gelobt sei, was hart macht: Aus dem Leben eines Zöglings der NAPOLA Potsdam* (Berlin: Morgenbuch, 1991); Vahl, *Napola Schulpforta: 1943-1945, Erinnerungen eines Schülers*.

90. Helen Roche, *Sparta's German Children: The Ideal of Ancient Sparta in the Royal Prussian Cadet-Corps, 1818-1920, and in the Nationalist-Socialist Elite Schools (the Napolas), 1933-1945* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2012); Roche, 'Surviving Stunde Null: Narrating the Fate of Nazi Elite-School Pupils during the Collapse of the Third Reich'; Schäfer, *Napola: Die letzten vier Jahre der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalt Organienstein bei Diez an der Lahn 1941-1945: Eine Erlebnis-Dokumentation*; Barbara Feller and Wolfgang Feller, *Die Adolf-Hitler-Schulen: Pädagogische Provinz versus Ideologische Zuchtanstalt*. (Weinheim: Juventa Verlag GmbH, 2001); Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010).

91. Roche, *Sparta's German Children*, 181; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 74ff.

92. "Verfügung Adolf Hitlers zur Errichtung und Namensgebung der Adolf-Hitler-Schulen (17 January 1937)" in VHB. HJ. Bd. III, 1942, 1862.

ing their alumni prestigious political careers following graduation.<sup>93</sup> Their educational aim was to provide, as Reinhard W. writes in his unpublished manuscript, in 1992:

‘What does one achieve in a NPEA?’ BUT: a singular education, which is permeated by national socialist ideals in every area, based on a coherent training of character, body and soul, with the highest goal to produce best performance, decisive willpower, clean outlook and unwavering loyalty towards the people, the Reich and the Führer.<sup>94</sup>

Reinhard W., a former Napola school student, narrates his manuscript in the third-person, and calls his narrator Martin. He states in his introduction that he could not write this work in the first person because the person he was and the person he currently is remain two different people. This admission reflects how contested the past really is, for some cohort members; it also shows how they manipulate the collected memoryscape to create a victim narrative. His work is written for his family as a testament to his life; it is intended for his grandchildren, to answer their questions about the past.<sup>95</sup> Begun by Wagner and Seiffert through autobiographical fiction, Reinhard adds to the collected memoryscape by carefully documenting the teachings and ideologies presented in Napola schools.<sup>96</sup> The elite schools trained male youths to endure all kinds of physical hardships through sports and classroom education. The Napola school curricula were specifically tailored to militarism, even though it was comparable to the normal *Gymnasiums* in syllabus.<sup>97</sup> Possibly due to the lack of eligible teachers with suitable backgrounds, the first heads of the Napola institutes and Oberstudiendirektor were former ‘*alte Kämpfer*’ (old fighters) from the SA or SS, without any teaching experience.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, the Napolas often tried to emulate the English public schools through their emphasis on self-governance, the importance of sport and community, and ‘headmasters’ as the heads of institutions.<sup>99</sup> The life narratives of former Napola

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93. There were a few female Napola schools that had varied success. See, Gregory Paul Wegner, ‘Mothers of the Race: The Elite Schools for German Girls Under the Nazi Dictatorship’, *Journal of Curriculum & Supervision* 19, number 2 (Winter 2004): 169–188.

94. Reinhard W., *Mein Sein als Scheinen*. Vier Jahre Jungmann in der NPEA Rottweil. 1992. Unpublished manuscript, 24. Verified in Zempel, *Des Teufels Kadet*, 47.

95. Reinhard W., *Mein Sein Als Scheinen*, 3.

96. Wagner, *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod*; Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach*.

97. Roche, *Sparta’s German Children*, 181.

98. Erwin Schmidt and Hans Kasdorff, editors, *1968: Hundert Jahre Erziehung der Jugend auf Schloß Plön: 1868 - 1968* (Plön: Internatsgymnasium Schloß Plön, 1968), 84; Roche, *Sparta’s German Children*, 181.

99. Roche, *Sparta’s German Children*, 104; Horst Ueberhorst, editor, *Elite für die Diktatur. Die Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten 1933 - 1945. Ein Dokumentarbericht* (Düsseldorf, 1969), 38-40. See also, Bundesarchiv Lichtefelde, R2/12710.

elite school students tell us what examinations and day-to-day activities were like, compared with ordinary school curricula. Further, they demonstrate the contestable nature of memory: namely, that it had both positive and negative effects in the postwar period.

Each author's understanding of the Napola schools and their examinations impacts their memory and, ultimately, their life course. Different versions of the examinations continue to appear until as late as 2007; this underscores the how memory is fallible and multifaceted. Consequently, it shows that life narratives offer multiple interpretations, even when written within the same ten-year period. Historiography tells us that both types of elite schools valued athleticism, courage, and ideological correctness, and that the candidates had to demonstrate these by performing various feats. Moreover, the historiography reveals that candidates had to be racially sound: SS doctors would measure their skills, and check their eye and hair colour using racial charts. These examinations lasted one week.<sup>100</sup> Although party members would attempt to ensure their child's acceptance, there was an emphasis on judging fairly and impartially.<sup>101</sup> The selection process is different in each life narrative, and dependent upon individual memory.<sup>102</sup> We see varying degrees of detail in terms of how examinations and life in these institutions changed over time. In Leeb's *'Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler'* (1998) some of the interviewees discuss the examination process. Hardy Krüger (born 1928), a child movie star in the Third Reich, distinguishes between the Napola and Adolf Hitler School selection processes. In a Napola exam, he says, participants had to jump from a ten-meter board into water. However, in his Adolf Hitler School selection exam, Krüger had to dive into an ice hole cut into a lake for ten metres, and emerge from the second hole.<sup>103</sup> Whilst this example is rather extreme, the same story is re-told in the 2004 film *Before the Fall* but as an early morning exercise performed by the stu-

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100. Roche, *Sparta's German Children*, 181; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 74ff; Stepanie Jodda-Flintrop, "'Wir sollten intelligente Mütter werden': Nationapolitische Erziehungsanstalten für Mädchen 1938/1939-1945' (Heinrich-Heine-Universität, 2010), 49.

101. Quite interestingly, this is not only mentioned in: Dietrich Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach* (Hamburg: rororo rotfuchs, 1980), 19; But also in *Der Pimpf* magazine, which was a magazine for Pimpf and Jungvolk-aged Hitler Youth boys: 'Der Adolf Hitler Schuler', *Der Pimpf*, November 1938; 'Auf der Adolf-Hitler-Schule', *Der Pimpf*, September 1937, 17.

102. Hans Worpitz, *Roter und schwarzer Moloch: Erkenntnisse des Napolas-Schülers Benjamin, Russische Kriegsgefangenschaft, 1945-1950* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2005), 26-27; Hans Günther Zempel, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund* (Frankfurt am Main: R.G. Fischer Verlag, 2000), 42.

103. Krüger, "Von der Ordensburg nach Babelsberg," in Leeb, *'Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler'*, 50.



dents.<sup>104</sup> Armin Lehmann writing in 2000 remembers practising essay questions for an examination with his father, writing formulated answers for, ‘Why I am Proud to be a German’.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps having seen the Napola film, or wishing to reveal the ‘true’ nature of the exams, Karl Dürschmidt provides a much longer explanation than Krüger, writing in 2004. His explanation is similar to Vahl’s:

One day, young officers came to school and presented the National Political Education Institutions in an exceptionally positive way. Precondition to be accepted were good academic and athletic achievements. I was totally fascinated by the advertised offerings of these schools, that’s why I spontaneously signed up to take part in the recruitment course. However, I needed hours to persuade my parents. I told my parents, only after passing the selection course, they would decide about my final admission. I concealed the fact, that I had already applied. Therefore the recruiters could already make the necessary inquiries to invite me for the recruiting course. The week-long recruiting course took place in Ploschkowitz/Sudentenland and included exams of school and athletic performance, our occurrence in public and our eloquence to speak. I passed everything including the investigations by military doctors.<sup>106</sup>

Dürschmidt’s interpretation highlights the silences and avoidance tactics, in this attempt to behave like an adult—despite youthfulness and innocence. As he notes, he signed up for the examination independently, without asking his parents’ permission. He talks about ‘military doctors’ doing health checks, when often they would be SS doctors, who ensured that the candidates were racially sound. Napola education is depicted positively, and the true nature and purpose of the schools remains a secret. This account is unique compared with earlier life narratives. Kleinau, writing in 1999, does not describe the examination in much detail at all.<sup>107</sup> It seems that until the mid-2000s, there may not have been a clear description or agreed-upon collected memoryscape. In 2007, Arne Heinich provides a full chapter on his entrance examination, which took place from June 8 to June 13, 1941. He seems to feel an overwhelming need to dis-

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104. ‘NEW YORK STATE OF MIND: “G21 INTERVIEWS: Dennis Gansel”’, <http://generator21.net/g21archive/nystate56.htm>. In the interview, the director notes: ‘[The adviser for the film] was 14 when he attended the Napola schools. He knew everything’.

105. Lehmann and Carroll, *In Hitler’s Bunker*, 35-36, Lehmann, 1928-2008, moved to the United States in 1953. He taught at the United States Armed Forces Institute from 1955 to 1957. Afterwards, he worked in the tourism industry, writing tourism guidebooks. Lehmann wrote two versions of his experiences in Hitler’s bunker: the first in 2000, followed by a 2004 version.

106. Karl Dürschmidt, *Mit 15 in den Krieg: Ein Napola-schüler Berichtet* (Stuttgart: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 2004), 10-11; See also, Vahl, *Napola Schulpforta: 1943-1945, Erinnerungen eines Schülers*, 9.

107. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 18.

cuss the past in detail, as he notes in his introduction, ‘the future is a time with no end in sight’.<sup>108</sup> His way of writing, which includes quoting Goethe, is likely a product of his elite school education, grounded in militarism and Gymnasium teachings.<sup>109</sup> Heinich’s version of the examination describes sporting practise, exams in ‘German dictation, essay and oral, arithmetic, geography [*Heimatkunde*] (geography, History, Descriptions of Nature), drawing, music, athletics and gymnastics’.<sup>110</sup> The intensity of entrance examinations distinguishes this particular group from the overall cohort members, who wrote from the 1990s to the early 2000s. Distance from the war seems to have created new avenues for sharing memories, whether positive or negative. As these examples show, there is no consensus with regards to entrance examinations until the 2000s, when there was a collective effort to formalise it. This may have been due, in part, to the 2004 film which sparked interest and discussions within the collected memoryscape. Perhaps the reason these differences exist is because writers assumed that week-long examinations were common knowledge; this indicates that these works were written to cement an agreed-upon memory in the collected memoryscape, whilst presenting a positive image of examinations to outside readers.

The regimented Napola school life overemphasised the normalcy of educational teachings in the collected memoryscape. Education is positively represented and rarely critiqued by most writers. Many started school at the age of ten, and had trouble transitioning to boarding school life, as the CEO of ENKA GmbH Hans Günther Zempelin (born 1926) recalls in his 2000 life narrative.<sup>111</sup> He classifies his educators into three strata:

Let stay with Biology. Noteworthy is in retrospect, that the notorious racial doctrine, did not play a big role in the upper school lessons that I attended. We had to learn the Mendel’s rules of all the plants and animals and know the difference between the Dinaric and Nordic races, but without political-ideological infiltration.<sup>112</sup>

Just as some non-Napola students were more inspired by their teachers, some Napola

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108. Heinich, *"Niemand entgeht seiner Zeit"*, 9, Heinich does not provide any further autobiographical information about himself.

109. Roche, *Sparta’s German Children*, 181.

110. Heinich, *"Niemand entgeht seiner Zeit"*, 28.

111. Zempelin, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 40, ENKA GmbH was a rayon fabrics company until Zempelin’s retirement in 1985.

112. *Ibid.*, 75.

students were more swayed by National Socialism than others.<sup>113</sup> Most life narratives about Napola schools or the AHS give a typical school day schedule.<sup>114</sup> Special days would include dancing lessons, sports practise, or military drills.<sup>115</sup> As these examples show, Napola education is perceived as unextraordinary, and hardly anyone mentions racial lessons.

From an outsider's perspective, as Jewish Solomon Perel's Napola school experience indicates, the consequences of education are especially visible in the post-war period. Within Perel's life narrative, *Ich war Hitlerjugend Salomon* (1992) we find discussions of racial teachings and how they affected young people during the war, as well as how teachers attempted to justify those teachings.<sup>116</sup> Perel's story is rather unique: he was a German Jew escaping the advancement of the German army, pretending to be an Aryan German only to find himself in a Napola school:

He [the teacher] also said that not only were physical traits inherited, but also psychological and mental ones, such as will power, and, at the other extreme, laziness. Therefore, sterilisation of the genetically impaired elements of society would make it possible to, once and for all, eliminate mental illnesses, chronic diseases, deafness, blindness, physical handicaps and so on.<sup>117</sup>

Perel's discussion of racial teachings in the Napola classroom is unique, as no other Napola life narrative addresses it so bluntly. This is most likely because Perel, a German Jew running eastward with his family in the midst of war, joins the Wehrmacht after pretending to be a native German on the Eastern front. Somehow, Perel becomes a Hitler Youth boy enrolled at a Napola school. Being Jewish allows Perel to express his discontent for that education and expose its racist elements — more so than other

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113. This is particularly noticeable in Leeb's collection. See writings by Ernst-Christian Gädtke compared to Horst Janssen (1929-1995), a German painter and graphics artist, who does not seem to have enjoyed his time in the school. Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*, 45, 105.

114. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 21ff; Wagner, *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod*, 58; Dürrschmidt, *Mit 15 in den Krieg: Ein Napola-schüler Berichtet*.

115. Dürrschmidt, *Mit 15 in den Krieg: Ein Napola-schüler Berichtet*, 18; Ernst Esser, 'Ich war stolz auf meine Zeit in Feldafing', in Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*, 60; Heiner Schmidt, 'Von der "Napola Zackig" bis zu den NKWD-Verhören' in Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*, 76.

116. Perel was born in 1925, and he moved to Israel after the Second World War, where he works as a motivational speaker and author.

117. Sally Perel, *Ich war Hitlerjunge Salomon*, trans. Brigitta Restorff (Berlin: Jugendfilm-Verleih, 1992), 98; Stephen Engelberg, 'A Life Stranger Than the Movie, "Europa, Europa," Based on It', *The New York Times: Movies*, February 19, 1992, The first edition was printed in France in 1990 as a translation from Hebrew, and made into the film *Europa Europa* (1990). The German translation was published in 1992, and in 1995 the English translation came out (based on the German translation).

German life writers. Further, this book became the basis for a film made in 1990. It is rather curious that instead of addressing the racial aspect, it is ignored and silenced. Zempelín's work is perhaps the first attempt at addressing racism. Instead, he attempts to normalise the concept that there are different races ('Dinaric and Nordic') and that this was an important part of biology.<sup>118</sup> As this comment infers, racial teaching was not central to the curriculum, and did not impact the pupils' perception of non-Aryan Germans. This is startlingly different than Perel's statement, showing that Zempelín wants the reader to think racial teaching was unremarkable in the Napolas. However, Zempelín's use of racial slurs indicates that this lesson had political and ideological ends. Indeed, this denial of racism within the schools is ironic, as the Napolas themselves were racist by nature in only training Aryan Germans.<sup>119</sup> The suggestion that the Napola and AHS collected memoryscape is not a racist one is supported by the fact that the positive aspects of Nazi education outweigh the negative—namely, alumni benefits obscure the harmful, racist ideology. Most life narratives shy away from the hardships of boarding school life, and instead focus on the more positive aspects of the program. This often serves as a coping mechanism, in order to process the controversial nature of elite school education at later life stages. It is easier to mask and normalise the political components of education than to deal with their racist elements.

## Age and Geographical Influence

The earliest Hitler Youth generation writings are mostly nostalgic about the end of the Hitler Youth. They are less preoccupied with retrospective discussions about the organisation and reasons for joining. Whilst most of the young men write about the war, young female accounts of the BDM are perhaps the earliest attempts at understanding education and the fall of Nazi Germany.<sup>120</sup> Some former BDM girls, aged 19 to 20, have difficulty coming to terms with the idea that the BDM no longer exists.<sup>121</sup> Only a small number discuss their experiences of the Hitler Youth organisation and education. It may have been the proximity of the war and its trauma which led to preoccupation

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118. Zempelín, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 50.

119. Similar to findings of the racial teachings in Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 147; See, Koch, *Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45*, 179ff.

120. Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*.

121. Report 21, 18, 27, 68 in *ibid.*, 70-71, 66-67, 100-102, 233-234.

with the war itself. Many of the accounts deal with loss and isolation; however, males and females tend to focus on different memories. Here, a male student writes about the collapse of the regime, and how ‘betrogen’, or betrayed, he feels about losing his education:

When the system collapsed, I felt totally empty. Everything we believed in for eight years, should now be false? With this thought inside of me, more than only the belief in the new movement collapsed inwardly. Who to believe in now? Was what we have learned not real and right? The belief we would have gone through fire and water for should now be only lies and deceit? I stood before the abyss. Is it possible to believe someone after this experience? My belief in the whole of humanity came to falter!<sup>122</sup>

Deceit and betrayal are at the forefront; he no longer knows what to believe about the past, present, or future and is left confused.<sup>123</sup> As Elisabeth G. (born 1928) writes at the age of twenty:

I was an enthusiastic Jungmaedel. It had given me so much joy to sing with the other girls, to wander with them in nature, and to play sports games. Diligently, we handmade things (gebastelt) for the Christmas markets. Because of the many holiday camps, I got to know my homeland (Heimat) Schleswig-Holstein better. The ‘Segenberger Pfingsttreffen’, I liked the most, because thousands of girls and boys wore white blouses and brown shirts, sat in the stadium of the ‘Kalkberg’ and you could hear the blaring trumpets. And suddenly everything that meant something to me, should now be gone? A great façade broke just before my eyes. I was completely disoriented, also because my Christian faith could not help me as well. Completely desperate, I faced life.<sup>124</sup>

Here, Elisabeth G. specifically remembers singing songs; like the previous writer, she too feels isolated. Identifying herself as a ‘begeistert’ Nazi youth, she expresses the bewilderment she feels after the fall of the regime. In this particular case, it would seem that her experience of Nazi education was positive during the Third Reich, however it ended quite negatively. Although her statement links the past with the present, she floats aimlessly somewhere in-between. The tone of the work is sad and ostracised; she realises that she has no role in the community, as she ceases to be a BDM leader. She also loses her place as an equal among other young men and women, without the

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122. Report 23 *ibid.*, 63.

123. See further examples in, Schörken, *Jugend 1945: Politisches Denken und Lebensgeschichte*, 157ff.

124. Report 66 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 228.

opportunity to play sports or enjoy nature. In this case, Hitler Youth membership was empowering for Elisabeth G..

In another account, Karin K. proudly remembers wearing her uniform and participating in parades, just like the young men (*Jungenhaftes*). She laments further, ‘Wir konnten damals noch nicht erkennen, daß das Gute, nämlich das ehrliche Streben und die Bereitschaft zum vollen Einsatz, mißbraucht wurde’.<sup>125</sup> Another memoirist notes that she did not view her work in the BDM as political activism, but rather as a period of enjoyment and collaboration with fellow BDM members: ‘I was enthusiastic about playing, singing, and sports. At the beginning I enjoyed discipline and order. This time gave me good hours in the community of similar-aged people and I never thought to look at this work politically’.<sup>126</sup> Whilst unrepresentative of the cohort, these examples illustrate how difficult it is to write about traumatic experiences. There is a conflict here between a desire for inclusion in the Hitler Youth, and an underlying fear of future governments—particularly after a totalitarian regime.<sup>127</sup> The proximity of the Second World War affects how writers process the past. These writings support Alan McDougall’s conclusions on adolescent victimisation in the GDR, from 1945 to 1949. In both cases, the writers’ feelings about the end of the regime are similar.<sup>128</sup> There is a lot of parallel imagery within this collected body of writing. Many liken it to standing on the edge of an abyss, losing their identity and tumbling over the edge, into isolation. Overall, the Hitler Youth generation feels emotionally uncertain in the early post-war period. Most are disillusioned with National Socialism and education, further exacerbating the isolation and despair in early post-war life narratives. Female cohort members express a sense of loss because the HJ took up most of their free time and was a major commitment; it also create a false sense of equality between girls and boys which was now threatened; and the sense of empowerment was gone. These concepts filter through the collected memoryscape, often downplaying the impact of the HJ. This might stem from a desire to avoid negative memories and preserve self-identity in the

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125. Report 35, Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 214.

126. Report 28, Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 216; see also Report 27, Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 100.

127. See Inge Scholl (1917-1998) reflections on the Hitler Youth in comparison Inge Scholl, *The White Rose: Munich, 1942-1943*, trans. Arthur R. Schultz (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, June 1, 2011), 7; See reports 62, 23, 27 in Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 214-221, 77, 100-102.

128. McDougall, ‘A Duty to Forget?’

postwar period.

From the 1960s and 1970s, early autobiographical fiction exhibits an inability to reconcile with the Nazi past, especially in terms of childhood, education, and the Hitler Youth organisation.<sup>129</sup> Overall, the most direct engagements with the past are non-fiction works, whose publication peaked during the early 1980s. Krüger's novel, *Junge Unrast* (1983), details his time in a Napola school.<sup>130</sup> In this sense, writers hide behind the mask of 'fiction' to escape real-life consequences.<sup>131</sup> In some novels, such as those by Hans Peter Richter and Heinz Küpper, the anonymous narrator attempts to make the story more relatable, allowing the reader to become, and therefore sympathise with, the protagonist.<sup>132</sup> The nameless protagonist enables the author to distance his current self from his former, Nazi self. For example, the narrator of the autobiographical fiction novel *Simplicius 45* wants to normalise Nazi life in Germany, making the war less about ideology than military conflict. Many of these fiction works are directed at younger generations of readers, seen namely in Barbara Gehrts's (1975) and Horst Burger's (1977) novels. Works of fiction provide insight into later life narratives, as similar topics are discussed in both. In these texts, education is taken at face-value and rarely critiqued.

Turning towards the published English-language memoirs in North America, there is an abundance of source material on the Nazi education system. This suggests that English-speaking audiences were more keen to read about this topic. Ursula Mahlendorf (born 1929), a university professor of German literature in the United States, notes her perceptions of the BDM (as do other unpublished texts). She comments, '[the] Jungmädel ... provide[d] an illusory feeling of equality, of being just as valuable [as my brother] was'.<sup>133</sup> This brother was allowed to continue on to the gymnasium, whilst Mahlendorf's mother decided that she should earn a living wage as a seamstress. Soon after, Mahlendorf is admitted into teacher training, thanks to her BDM connections.<sup>134</sup>

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129. Richter, *Damals war es Friedrich*; Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt, *Sonderappell: Roman* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, November 1, 2002); Finckh, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*; Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?*; Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*; Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, 1. Aufl (Berlin Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976); Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach*.

130. Hardy Krüger, *Junge Unrast* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1983).

131. Schmitz, *On Their Own Terms*, 153.

132. Salmi-Niklander, 'Tapahtuma, kokemus ja kerronta', 201.

133. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 92.

134. Her father died abruptly in 1935, leaving their mother to care for the family. *ibid.*, 23, 163ff.

Mahlendorf reflects on her Nazi education throughout the text. In it, she also analyses Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959) and the main character, Oskar, who refuses to mature past the age of three during the Nazi period. She is greatly moved by this character, stating that, 'It was a perspective possible for members of my generation, the Hitler Youth generation that experienced Nazism as children and young teenagers. We did not feel responsible then, but now feel the weight of responsibility for what we saw and lived through'.<sup>135</sup> Although she attempts to illustrate the guilt and shame she feels over her involvement, she is still hesitant to critique the BDM because of how she benefited. Mahlendorf's perspective is rare; most of her contemporaries see themselves as victims of their education and refuse to acknowledge their involvement, even later in life.

Similarly, the consequences of Nazism are at the heart of Werner Schumann's life narrative, who blames his education on his father. Moving to the United States in the 1950s, Schumann became an award-winning documentary filmmaker.<sup>136</sup> His focus is mainly on the dysfunctional dynamic of his family, which he blames on Nazism. With his family at the nexus, Schumann is less concerned with his actual school experiences. His descriptions of the Hitler Youth organisation are generic:

The Hitler Youth was organised in order to imbue young people (there was also a female version) with Aryan ideals and Nazi loyalties. Its activities also focused on physical strength and militarism. I proudly wore my brown shirt with the swastika armband and the Sam Browne belt.<sup>137</sup>

His account is similar to earlier sources, where his uniform takes precedence as a symbol of adulthood and source of pride.<sup>138</sup> This description is similar to those found in other English-language works, but the word 'Aryan' is not commonly used. Schumann depicts Nazi militarism in the same manner as Flasch and Herbert K. In his eyes, his SA father forced his involvement in the Nazi youth organisation; his commitment only lessens once his parents divorce. Schumann's small frame and weak physical appearance made him a target for bullies.

My acceptance, if not enthusiasm, for Nazism was not sufficient for me to

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135. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 27.

136. On the IMBD database, there is a list of Schumann's works: (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0776740/>)

137. Schumann, *From Brownshirt to Turtleneck*, Kindle Locations 366-370.

138. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.



be happy in the Jungvolk. Again, as in school, I was the runt of the litter, physically not as capable as my peers. In addition to political indoctrination, much focus was on learning certain skills, perhaps somewhat similar to Boy Scout training, as well as sports and troop drilling. I had no trouble staying in step when marching and following various drill commands, but I hated the whole idea of regimentation. As time went by, I became less and less enthusiastic about attending the meetings.<sup>139</sup>

Here Schumann highlights the importance of male physique and strength in the Nazi school curriculum, which he felt unable to fulfil. His schooling eventually led to film production; his involvement in a local Nazi children's choir got him a place as a child extra in propaganda films, which he does not discuss in great detail—perhaps because he is ashamed of his involvement, even though it helped him in his own career. Whilst Schumann does provide a detailed description of his Hitler Youth experience, he is not nearly as reflective as Mahlendorf.

Unlike Werner Schumann, other male writers speak more positively of their Nazi education, when writing for English-language audiences. Perhaps their post-war military careers in the United States motivated them to do so. However, few actually reflect upon their experiences, and often depict themselves as victims: not because of their education, but because of how the Allies treated the German soldiers. Like Willy Schumann, Wolfgang Goettig makes his Hitler Youth involvement seem incredibly innocent: 'We had meetings at least once a week, we learned how to march and salute, we participated in parades, we sang marching songs, we had sports events, we went camping, we helped the elderly, we helped farmers'.<sup>140</sup> He states that at camping trips, if 'anyone screwed up ... few of us would grab him at night, tie him to a flag pole, pull his pants down and paint his ass with black shoe polish', as though such treatment was acceptable and common.<sup>141</sup> There is no subsequent reflection on whether this was a harsh game to play—suggesting a reluctance to reflect critically on his activities in the HJ. Joe Volmar, a U.S.-born man with German parents, moved back to Germany in 1939, and therefore had a split educational experience. However, he refrains from commenting on German education under Nazism. Willy Schumann, in contrast, describes changes to school curricula and his teachers' fervent Nazism. He writes a detailed account of his school days and Hitler Youth meetings, but 'by far the most demanding and time-

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139. Schumann, *From Brownshirt to Turtleneck*, Kindle Locations 398-402.

140. Goettig, *From Hitler Youth to American Hero*, 11.

141. Similar event mentioned in: Metelmann, *A Hitler Youth*.

consuming part was school'.<sup>142</sup> In his Gymnasium, 'every lesson began with the Hitler salute'. However, he does 'not remember that any of these professional pedagogues went out of their way to infect us with NS ideology'.<sup>143</sup> This description, compared with Heck and Koehn's, raises a few questions: either Heck and Koehn are both downplaying Nazi brainwashing in schools; or Schumann's case is an exceptional one; or Schumann is protecting his educators for towing the party line. Schumann defends his (Nazi) teachers for their academic excellence, which might be another example of selective memory.

Irmgard Hunt's (born 1933) 2011 life narrative *On Hitler's Mountain* also contains Nazi teacher caricatures. Moreover, it discusses family members and their roles. As Hunt writes in her conclusion, 'Slowly the stigma of being German has receded and I am coming to terms with the memories of my life as a girl on what for a short dark time was Hitler's mountain'.<sup>144</sup> Hunt lived in the village where Hitler's summer villa was, and many party members would visit it during the summer months. Using this as a basis for her narrative, she explores her family's experience of Nazism. In terms of school, she describes her Nazi teacher, Fräulein Stöhr, who was interested in 'Prussian obedience, order, and discipline as well as blind submission to Nazi ideology'. To illustrate her strictness Hunt recalls, 'In these efforts she was aided by two canes cut from a filbert bush. My light colouring, rather good High German, and the fact that I was Gottgläubig could not save me entirely from Fräulein Stöhr's wrath'. She remembers being caned at least four times for helping others, and soon lost 'enthusiasm for anything having to do with school'.<sup>145</sup> She only discusses her BDM experiences very briefly:

My pleasure in being a Jungmädel was greatly enhanced by the fact that one afternoon a week was I free from homework, chopping or gathering wood, weeding or watering our two stony gardens, fetching the milk, or most often, standing in line in response to rumours of available food. Mutti, Ingrid, and Hardi just have to cope without me, I thought gleefully. In addition to marching drills we Jungmädel trained for sports competitions, hiked, sang a great deal, and listened to many lectures and speeches by senior leaders. They always said that every boy and girl had to do his

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142. Schumann, *Being Present*, 19.

143. *Ibid.*, 20.

144. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*, 318.

145. *Ibid.*, 130-131.

or her share to win the war and that we must believe that the Führer was invincible and Germany's only salvation.<sup>146</sup>

The use of 'they' here illustrates her passivity towards the JM, as well as her attempt to deflect responsibility. Hunt writes that the BDM activities allowed her to escape from the daily chores, and enabled her to carry out the same activities as the boys. Thus the BDM was a break from gender expectations. The regime gave 'every boy and girl' agency in that it allowed them to contribute to the war effort and assume a naive understanding of their participation—comparable with other youth organisations abroad. Still, curiously, memoirists are unwilling to represent themselves as agents of war. They instead use victimcy to deal with painful or negative memories.

English-language memoirs are more open to discussions of Nazi education and mass organisation. This might be because they were written for an entirely different audience than German-language memoirs. As in the case of Schumann and Mahlen-dorf, they are more authoritative and pedagogic in tone, as though they are teaching their readership the history of the Third Reich. Women's writing, such as Mahlendorf and Hunt's, grapples especially with gender roles.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that education and joining the HJ are downplayed, silenced, and normalised in the collected memoryscape in order to maintain a childish and innocent understanding of the Third Reich. Cohort members generally have similar understandings of the Nazi past which preserve their self-identity and self-worth. Context is especially important here. English-language writers are more willing to discuss their experiences, but also rarely exhibit a sophisticated understanding of the political consequences of their education and training in the HJ. Instead, late-adulthood writings discuss education as though it was learnt within a vacuum. However, accounts from the late 1940s indicate that National Socialism and its effects were at the forefront of people's minds. Therefore, the collected memoryscape shifts with various life stages, as priorities and memories change. Here, the collected memoryscape is male-centric, as male voices make up most of the source texts, and therefore often define what is worth remembering. This suggests a 'cultural circuit' of forgetfulness, which silences

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146. Compared to Elisabet M. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 16 who did similar work daily, but did not attend the BDM. *ibid.*, 198.

women's experiences.<sup>147</sup> As Dagmar Reese notes, this may be due to the 'failed feminism' of the Third Reich in the postwar period.<sup>148</sup>

More women have shared their perspectives in recent decades, mainly in unpublished writings. Some women also portray their personal history differently from men, resulting in alternate life paths which offer different interpretations of Nazi education. As this chapter argues, Haß's 1950 collection reveals that some women saw their freedoms revoked with the end of the BDM. Comparing these to more recent texts from the 2000s, the BDM is hardly mentioned, if at all. It is only in the published English-language writing that the BDM is discussed in any depth. The lack of sources by women from different social classes is especially noticeable in both Evans and Kater. As such, gendered male and female performances enrich our understanding of gender in the latter part of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Life narratives from different times and places lend more or less emphasis to curricula, historical events, or historical figures. These inconsistencies show how representations of education can impact memories of war and the postwar period.

In terms of unpublished works, there is a conflict between memory and historiography in the collected memoryscape. Perhaps there was a clear distinction between school and Hitler Youth that was assumed by the cohort, and therefore never officially clarified, reflecting the complexities of autobiographical memory. In contrast, the timing of events and the age of the participants also limits any accounts we might have. Moreover, the experience of Nazi elite schooling creates a conundrum for certain writers: there is a conflict here between positive childhood experiences and ideological influence. Racial teaching is silenced, in favour of the benefits of an elite education. It is possible that this is a scripted narrative, a reinvention which helps the reader sympathise and learn from the narrator's mistakes.<sup>149</sup>

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147. Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure', 68.

148. Dagmar Reese, 'The BDM Generation: A Female Generation in Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy', 232.

149. Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child*, 24.

## Chapter 4

# Remembering War Experiences on the Home Front

The Nazi government prepared for war more efficiently than the German government during the First World War. The government introduced rationing quickly, mobilising its youngest citizens to participate in the war-effort using the Nazis' Winter Relief programme and local Hitler Youth community activities.<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines how cohort members represent growing up on the home front; specifically, it focuses on memories of aerial bombardment, the Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD), and the KLV. Growing up and adolescence are often the focal points of these memories. Indeed, it is usually during this life stage that cohort members discuss the militaristic culture and norms of Nazism as they represent their home front experiences—but not necessarily the implications of that culture and its norms. For clarity, the cohort ought to be divided into two groups, consisting of those who experienced the RAD (1925-1929), and the KLV (1930-1933) camps.<sup>2</sup> In both instances, there is a shift: either from child to adolescent to adult, or child to adult. An underlying tension between the concepts of growing up and grown-up permeates writings about the home front. This, coupled with idealised descriptions of the home front in the collected memoryscape, betrays the cohort's overall inability to articulate or comprehend their KLV and RAD experiences, as well as aerial bombardment.

The term 'home front' is used retrospectively in this chapter, as there is no equiv-

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1. Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-45* (New York: Random House, 2015), 31; Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (Arnold, 2003), 120-124.

2. The KLV cohort includes those born until 1935.

alent that might be drawn from the life narratives. Recent work on the First World War, within the fields of urban and gender studies, assesses how surrounding city and countryside environments shifted during the war, and thereby deconstructs the terms ‘home’ and ‘front’.<sup>3</sup> In Germany, one of the traits which distinguished the Second World War from the First World War was the blurring of the home and war fronts.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the home front was also a political space, heavily influenced by Nazi wartime policies, the political dimension of wartime life is often missing from the cohort narratives.<sup>5</sup> Nazism’s connection with war is partly what defined it as a political movement; this relationship, in turn, resurfaces in life narratives.<sup>6</sup> The regime perpetuated militaristic ideals, with many of the First World War veterans heavily involved in the party.<sup>7</sup> The resulting German culture placed a high value on war, militarism, camaraderie, and sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> Himmler and Hitler had similar ideas when it came to the importance of the home front, in 1937. Himmler stated, ‘We have to be absolutely clear in our own minds, that the enemy in a war will be in the military sense an enemy, but also in the ideological sense an enemy’. In addition to war on the land, seas, and air, there would be a ‘fourth arena of war: inside Germany’.<sup>9</sup> With the onslaught of war in 1939, the Blitzkrieg’s successful invasion of Poland and France left many cohort members complacent and blissfully unaware. The war changed course with Germany’s failure to occupy the Soviet Union in late 1942. Once Joseph Goebbels officially declared ‘total war’ on 18 February 1943, the home front became a war front.<sup>10</sup>

Most cohort members collectively remember the beginning of the Second World War, and are able to recount where they were when it began. It was a warm summer, and many remember their summer vacations. ‘But then, on the 1st of September, 1939,

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3. Krisztina Robert, ‘Constructions of ‘Home’, ‘Front’, and Women’s Military Employment in First-World-War Britain: A Spatial Interpretation’, *History and Theory* 52, number 3 (October 1, 2013): 320-21.

4. See Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914-1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1984); 65f Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent And Coercion In Nazi Germany*, New Ed edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, May 16, 2002).

5. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 21-55.

6. Richard Bessel, *Nazism and War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), 15.

7. See Andrew Donson, ‘Why Did German Youth Become Fascists? Nationalist Males Born 1900 to 1908 in War and Revolution’, *Social History* 31, number 3 (July 18, 2006): 337–358.

8. Bessel, *Nazism and War*, 17; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 30-31.

9. Himmler’s address to the Wehrmacht, originally published in *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*. See Trials of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunals, xxix. 206-34, Document 1992 (A)-PS cited in Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 65.

10. Joseph Goebbels, ‘Nun, Volk, Stef Auf, Und Sturm Brich Los! Rede Im Berliner Sportpalast’, in *Der Stelie Aufsteig* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944), 167–204.

after a wonderful summer, during which I often played with other children ... I sat still in front of our *Volksempfänger* and [heard] the news of the beginning of the war', recalls Helga Z. (born 1927).<sup>11</sup> Those born circa 1932-1933 are too young to remember it themselves, but recall something was about to change. In this way, age differences impact how the home front is remembered and represented in the collected memoryscape. The collected memoryscape confirms many individual accounts of the beginning of the war, with many cohort members sharing memories. Perhaps the regimented nature of Nazi institutions helped consolidate wartime experiences, and therefore memories: hence a general consensus within the memoryscape. All of the young people were obligated to a land year or a year of service, and those who were too young would go to the party-organised KLV camps in the countryside, away from areas under bomb threat.<sup>12</sup> For many, this year of labour service features heavily in narratives, yet understanding this service in life narratives is conflicted.

Most of the historiography on Germany's involvement in the Second World War focuses on the war front and adult wartime experiences.<sup>13</sup> This chapter, instead, focuses on the cohort's memories of specific wartime events which are often briefly discussed in Stargardt's work. Historiography depicting the early days of the Second World War shows that recent memories of World War One meant that many were concerned about going to war again soon.<sup>14</sup> According to Wolfgang Benz, Germans were unwilling participants in the war; unfortunately, he does not expand this idea any further, nor does he analyse young people's perspectives.<sup>15</sup> At the time, German adults could remember the First World War, not only because of the death toll of over two million German soldiers, but also because those deaths had a profound impact on the home front.<sup>16</sup>

During the postwar period, the German public has dealt with the memory of the

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11. DTA Sig. Nr. 1925, 63.

12. BArch NSD 43/35 'Mitteilungsblatt für die erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung: Herausgegeben von der Dienststelle Reichsleiter v. Schnarch.'

13. See for example: Gellately, *Backing Hitler*; Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State 1933 - 1945* (Wiley, August 27, 1993); Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (Pan Macmillan, March 22, 2012); Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War: How the Nazis Led Germany from Conquest to Disaster*, Reprint edition (London: Penguin, 2009).

14. Stargardt, *The German War*, 16; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 70ff; Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany*, 112.

15. Wolfgang Benz, *Concise History of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 155ff.

16. Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 237; Kocka, *Facing Total War*.

Second World War in various ways. In *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949*, Jeffery Olick argues that the early postwar period enabled the construction of a counter-narrative to collective guilt, by emphasising memories of the Allied bombings of German cities.<sup>17</sup> Memories are similarly skewed in the collected memoryscape: cohort members view themselves as victims of the Allies and Allied treatment. As documented in Robert Moeller's *War Stories*, in postwar West Germany, the public memory was largely one of victimhood. Moeller describes how perpetrators craft victim narratives by ignoring crimes and dwelling upon stories of their own suffering. Indeed, 'they represented a Germany doubly victimised, first by a Nazi regime run amok, then by Communists, and they allowed all West Germans to order the past in mutually exclusive categories in which perpetrators and victims were never the same people'.<sup>18</sup> War is a disruptive experience for children, as it interrupts and often stops education, whilst also changing daily routines.<sup>19</sup> During the Second World War, home front experiences were formative for many of the cohort members, because they forced them to grow up and assume adult roles, inducing cohort members to rely upon victimcy in processing wartime memories. This chapter, along with chapter 5, examines private and individual memories of experiences ranging from 1939 to 1945; its motive is to illuminate the most powerful wartime memories as well as what people 'thought they had been doing during the war'.<sup>20</sup> Stargardt's *Witnesses of War* (2005) is one of the few historical works which considers German wartime experience through children's eyes.<sup>21</sup> This chapter expands upon what we already know about the RAD and KLV organisations; its aim is to provide a micro-level perspective on these organisations; further, it examines how the cohort remembers the past through the lens of growing up.

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17. Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 136ff.

18. Moeller, *War Stories*, 173; Plato and Meinicke, *Alte Heimat, neue Zeit*.

19. Kendra E. Dupuy and Krijn Peters, *War and Children: A Reference Handbook* (ABC-CLIO, 2010), xii-xiii, See notions of this in Günter Fillmann, KA BIO 3114 Kempowski, 1,3.

20. Confino, *Germany As a Culture of Remembrance*, 200.

21. See also an attempt at this in: Elke Kleinau and Ingwill C. Mochmann, *Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Stigmatisierung, Ausgrenzung, Bewältigungsstrategien* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, August 11, 2016).



## Representing the Home Front

Within life narratives, representations of the home front are dependent upon time, location, and gender. Growing up during the Second World War was not without its challenges, as the stress of the war and the constant bombings took their toll on daily life. There is a gap in the historiography, and in psychological studies, when it comes to the impact of war on children: in particular, the emotional repercussions of growing up in Nazi Germany during war time.<sup>22</sup> The latest research indicates that children create various coping mechanisms to deal with stress-causing environments and situations. Those who remained ignorant of the war and its events experienced more anxiety than those who were cognisant of the situation. Emotion-focused coping, defined as ‘avoidance and distraction strategies’, resulted in fewer postwar stress reactions.<sup>23</sup> This framework allows us to understand how autobiographical memory and emotion are affected by experience, and how they are represented or misrepresented, or not represented at all in war memoir writing.

Most of the cohort members represent the war positively, most likely stemming from the influence of Nazi propaganda and ideology.<sup>24</sup> Further, they remember the war’s impact on daily life in similar ways: for example, Regina Shelton, born in 1928 to an upper class family in Silesia, writes in 1982: ‘Hardly settled into the routines of the school year 1939-40 in our new school, we are caught up in a different kind of excitement. Germany is at war!’<sup>25</sup> Gerhardt Thamm, who also grew up in Silesia, writes about his father’s conscription to the Wehrmacht and the soldiers’ parade. Thamm is not particularly reflective: ‘We only knew Father and his neighbors were fighting for a just cause. ... Germans had to act to save fellow Germans’.<sup>26</sup> Koehn in *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (1977) saw both sides of the war. She tells us that, at school, her classmates exclaimed: ‘We’ll show those dirty Poles! They can’t do this. Not to us! We’ll avenge every atrocity that every Pole committed

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22. Lewis A. Leavitt and Nathan A. Fox, editors, *The Psychological Effects of War and Violence on Children* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum, 1993), 78; Whilst a useful starting place, Stargardt’s study does not focus on growing up: Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*.

23. Laura A. Payne et al., ‘Emotional Disorders: A Unified Transdiagnostic Protocol’, in *Clinical Handbook of Psychological Disorders*, 5th edition, ed. David H. Barlow (New York: Guilford Press, 2014), 253.

24. Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 144.

25. Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 32.

26. Thamm, *Boy Soldier*, 20-21. See also, Deutsches Gedächtnis archive, Fernuniversität Hagen, Joachim K., *Ein Leben voller Harmonie?*, 4.

against a German!’ Yet at home, Koehn heard ‘the exact opposite’.<sup>27</sup> Whilst propaganda permeates most of these memories, many of the writers remain unaware of the implications. Generally speaking, many were excited about the prospect of war. Here, family narratives become cultural narratives, as many recall their parents whilst recording their memories. This excitement about the war is rarely juxtaposed with knowledge of the end of the war, nor with the Holocaust.

During the Third Reich, German society was heavily influenced by First World War militarism, as well as Germany’s colonial past.<sup>28</sup> Those who experienced four years on the front during the First World War, otherwise known as the ‘front generation’, were hard-pressed to engage with the younger generation. Many Nazi party members wanted to preserve Great War myths through print media.<sup>29</sup> Arndt Weinrich cites two key socio-psychological influences for this generation: an absence of male role models, and a lack of personal experience as soldiers. Male war fantasies and the *Männerbund* concept were also major influences; these images trickled into popular literature which the Nazi party adapted.<sup>30</sup> Some memoirists mention reading Walter Flex’s *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* (The Wanderer Between Two Worlds, 1916), which idealises German soldiers. The novel details the main character, Ernst Wurche and his adventures during the war, which included swimming and sunbathing.<sup>31</sup> This Weimar period propaganda was later adapted by the Third Reich, and is sprinkled throughout children’s and young adult literature. Novels published during the Nazi period prioritise war and battle, and attempt to replicate war stories passed from fathers to sons.<sup>32</sup> Thomas Kühne argues that although, as a theme, militarism remained the same, it changed from a ‘soft’ militarism, which focused on camaraderie between soldiers, to a ‘hard’ militarism, which emphasised heroism and the *Volksge-*

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27. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 34.

28. Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher*; Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871-1914*, First edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Manfred Messerschmidt, ‘Das neue Gesicht des militarismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus’, in *Schule der Gewalt: Militarismus in Deutschland 1871 bis 1945*, ed. Wolfram Wette (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 272.

29. Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher*, 32-33; George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 53ff; Hubert Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler’s Rise* (Routledge, September 13, 2013).

30. Dagmar Herzog, editor, *Sexuality and German Fascism* (London: Berghahn Books, 2005), 40.

31. Flex, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten*, 46.

32. See, for example SS history book for children: *Natur ist Alles: ein Buch zum Lesen, Anschauen und Nachdenken* (Berlin: Ahnenerbe, 1943).

*meinschaft* ('people's community').<sup>33</sup> Third Reich children's literature gives us some idea of the indoctrination and propaganda during this period.<sup>34</sup> Although militarism dominates many memoirs about Nazi Germany, early twentieth century colonial culture and popular concepts of war are also present in these texts.<sup>35</sup>

The Hitler Youth uniform, alongside other Nazi uniforms, represents a transition from childhood to adulthood, from admiration to militarism. In Nazi Germany, militarism is normalised and apoliticised in life narratives; few writers reflect on the more negative connotations of the uniform. Uniforms enabled young people to occupy adult spaces during the Second World War: whether as soldiers, nurses, or volunteers.<sup>36</sup> Wearing the proper uniform, especially during wartime, helped some boys feel like they were part of the war effort on the home front.<sup>37</sup> Certainly this helped them feel equal to adult soldiers; in this sense, it would seem that soldiers symbolised manhood in Nazi Germany. In English-language memoirs, the militaristic culture of Nazi Germany is openly discussed and used to victimise cohort members. Such is the case with Volmar, for example, who lived in the United States as a young boy before moving back to Nazi Germany in 1939. Volmar claims that his grandmother's stories about the glories of the Prussian army were the main reason why he so readily accepted Nazi militaristic ideology.<sup>38</sup> For boys, joining the Hitler Youth often symbolised the end of childhood, even though they could not renegotiate their role with adults, or parental figures. As von Schirach indicates in *Die Hitler-Jugend*, uniforms distinguished children from Jungvolk.<sup>39</sup> During the war, the boys who were drafted into the Volkssturm were given uniforms to distinguish them as soldiers. This had its own issues, as Willy Schumann recalls:

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33. Thomas Kühne, *Männergeschichte, Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, Reihe "Geschichte und Geschlechter" ; 14 (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 1996); Thomas Kühne, 'Male Bonding and Shame Culture: Hitler's Soldiers and the Moral Basis of Genocidal Warfare', in *Ordinary People as Mass Murders*, ed. Olaf Jensen and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 55–77.

34. Juliet Kinchin and Aidan O'Connor, *Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900-2000* (New York, N.Y.: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 125ff.

35. Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher*; Donson, 'Why Did German Youth Become Fascists?'; Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire*.

36. See further, Stargardt, 'German Childhoods', 231.

37. Protsch, *Be All You Can Be*, 7-10.

38. Joe Volmar, *I Learned to Fly for Hitler* (Dundee, Mich: Kron Publications, 1999), 2; see, also: Schumann, *Being Present*, 5; Lehmann and Carroll, *In Hitler's Bunker*; Herb Flemming and Timothy King, *From Hitler Youth to American Soldier*, First edition (Winchester, Va: Golden Morning Publishing, April 30, 2009), 39, 59.

39. Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 87.

Some of my classmates and I were not fully grown. At that time I was about five feet four inches tall and weighed 125 pounds. That supply depot simply did not carry uniforms for such lightweight soldiers. Thus we had to accept uniforms that were three sizes too big, and in which we looked like scarecrows. It was a trivial concern, but for sixteen-year-olds appearances mattered greatly.<sup>40</sup>

This is confirmed by Dieter E.; he too feels distinguished from the rest of the home front, when he and his classmates leave for their designated trench digging job: ‘Dressed in their uniforms carrying enough equipment for a long stay they marched, led by a military band through the streets lined with cheering people throwing flowers to them. How elated they had felt, how proud they were’.<sup>41</sup> As these excerpts illustrate, memoirists distinguish childhood from joining the JV or the JM, both of which marked the transition into adulthood. Being in uniform was also a way of defining oneself as adult; however, as Schumann’s memory shows, it is hard to define oneself as an adult when the uniform is ill-fitting. It is worth noting that wearing the uniform does not imply that one has been influenced by adults. As Dieter E. writes when meeting his peers as Jungvolkfürher:

On time he met with his young subordinates and marched to the railroad station. From all sides they came, these youngsters smartly dressed in their uniforms and eager to go. Deep in the forest they assembled and marched, proudly singing, through fields and meadows and then deeper and deeper into the woods.<sup>42</sup>

The scene is walled-in by children, who remain separate from the adult world. The uniform is what creates that separation. The Hitler Youth uniform was coveted by the majority of the cohort members; made by adults, it was a political and militaristic symbol—a gateway, of sorts, to the adult world.<sup>43</sup> In the surrounding militaristic culture, which pressured young boys to become men through war, the uniform was not just a political statement, but rather a symbol of growing up.<sup>44</sup> For girls, the uniform

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40. Schumann, ‘Childhood and Youth in Nazi Germany’, 122.

41. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 21.

42. DTA Sig. Nr 344, Dieter E. P. 11.

43. Alexander von Plato, ‘The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States’, in von Plato, ‘The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States’, 213,216, DTA Sig. Nr. 90-1 (85-II,1 ), Helene S., pp. 39-40.

44. Koch, *Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45*, 120; Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 247-250.

was tied to an adult, mature appearance and therefore to growing up.<sup>45</sup> Helene S. (born 1929) expresses a desire for a BDM uniform—albeit a home-made one, as her family could not afford a store-bought uniform: ‘I did not get the authentic uniform that was available for purchase’.<sup>46</sup> Erika S. affirms this, as she ‘with the little children in our street played a game about the BDM, where I was the leader’.<sup>47</sup> This interpretation of the uniform also delineates gendered space, in this case, male from female. Moreover, receiving a watch as a birthday present, as advertised in *Der Pimpf* magazine, seems to have been another rite of passage.<sup>48</sup> The uniform was therefore a symbol of power, independence, and adulthood during wartime Nazi Germany.

In discussions of the home front, the image of the male soldier is often featured. Male memoirists represent themselves as young idealists, who respect the Wehrmacht and want to join it. Sometimes, their ideals are not explicitly mentioned perhaps wishing to avoid negative memories, illustrating the tensions which existed between reality of the warfront and propaganda created by the Nazis.<sup>49</sup> In representations of Nazi elite schools, the uniform and masculine culture are synonymous with growing up or transitioning into adulthood. In Klaus Kleinau (born 1927)’s memoir, which is a story about his experience in a Napola school, Kleinau does not differentiate between childhood and adolescence, but instead sees his time at the Napola as a transition period into adulthood.<sup>50</sup> Due to the hierarchical framework of a Napola school, it was natural to feel segregated from upper-classmates (*älteren Jahrgangen*). Children were expected to conduct themselves as adults, with the more effeminate boys being labelled as ‘Schwächlinge und Muttersöhnchen’. When boys turned fourteen, a ceremony marked their transformation from Pimpfs to Jungmann; this rite of passage celebrated their initiation into the Volk.<sup>51</sup> The importance of this ceremony is highlighted in Kleinau’s memoir: ‘Especially for our parents’ visit we had dressed up: hair was cut

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45. Ursula Sabel, ‘Gerade auf LeMO gesehen: LeMO Zeitzeuge’, accessed 8 October 2014, <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/ursula-sabel-erlebnisse-im-bdm>.

46. DTA Sig. Nr. 90-1 (85-II,1 ), Helene S., 40; Ursula Sabel; DTA Sig. Nr. 2291 (1925) Helga Z., 69.

47. DTA Sig. Nr. 3087, 24.

48. *Der Pimpf* issues between 1936-1939; Küpper, *Simplicius* 45, 55.

49. Propaganda implies otherwise: Herbert Schierer, ‘Deutschlands Jugend an Der Inneren Front’, *NS Montashefte*, January 1940.

50. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*.

51. *Ibid.*, 33-35.

even shorter than usual, and we wore a clean *Winterdienstuniform*, a clean-padded padlock and shoes, in which one could see one's reflection.'<sup>52</sup> After the ritual, those who graduated could lead their own Jungvolk groups; Kleinau himself led a group of boys who were from the same town as his Napola.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, for Napola students, adulthood meant taking on leadership roles and increased responsibility. In Kleinau's case, however, the children in his group were challenging, as they came from the rougher area of Duisburg. As a fifteen-year-old, Kleinau sees himself as equal to the school teacher (*Klassenlehrer*) and berates himself for being allowed to behave in such a manner: 'The class teacher should have interfered more often when I ordered something unthinkingly and self-indulgently, but I had learned at the Napola that "praised be what hardens you"'.<sup>54</sup> Kleinau's KLV account showcases his unsuccessful attempt at occupying adult spaces, mainly due to his immaturity—despite the Napola ceremony and his Hitler Youth uniform. There is a tension here between the idea of growing up and actually growing up.

For female cohort members, the home front experience is similarly complex. Besides their BDM duties and involvement in other Nazi-related events, these girls grew up during a tumultuous period: watching their families being split apart, as male family members were conscripted.<sup>55</sup> For Irmgard Hunt (born 1933), who lived in southern Bavaria, the home front was split along two lines: whilst she had to perform numerous chores for her mother, such as waiting in line for food, for her, the BDM was an escape that allowed her to avoid adult responsibility and be with girls her own age. As she states, 'One afternoon a week I was free'.<sup>56</sup> Other girls, who lived in the countryside and who were born between 1930 and 1933, did not directly experience the war until the Red Army invaded, or until the so-called hunger years began. For example, living in the countryside, Erika S. (born 1933) had no firsthand experience of the war until 1943.<sup>57</sup> Aged six when the war began, Erika S. categorises herself as a child-victim of

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52. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 35.

53. *Ibid.*, 38-47.

54. *Ibid.*, 50.

55. Anneliese Friedmann, 'Motiviert und missbraucht' Alfred Neven DuMont, editor, *Jahrgang 1926/1927: Erinnerungen an die Jahre unter dem Hakenkreuz* (Cologne: Piper Verlag, 2007), 24-29.

56. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*, 197.

57. Similar to DTA Sig. Nr. 1266, 2. Christa H. (born 1931) who did not experience the war until her family had to evacuate their village.

the war; it is not until 1945, when she experiences some form of starvation, that she transitions from childhood to adulthood. With her father drafted into the Wehrmacht in 1939, she only saw him twelve days a year. In contrast with her mother, Erika's father plays a minor role in the life narrative because of his conscription.<sup>58</sup> Thus many German families were estranged during wartime, and many German children had to fulfil the duties of their fathers in this estranged postwar life.<sup>59</sup> Occupation and the lack of food stuffs due to Russia's advancement prompts Erika S. to declare: 'I was no longer a child, I did not remember where I was going, I was hungry'!<sup>60</sup> This is the moment where she has to transition into adulthood, in fending for herself. Allied occupation is one of the more common, shared home front experiences. Indeed, it forced female cohort members to re-assign and re-align their self-identities with the changing political and cultural landscape.

Despite similarities in age and geographical location, each female writer has their own distinct memory of the home front. Female narrators offer more information on how the home front changed from a familial perspective, and often focus on the immediate aftermath of war in their life narratives. With total war beginning in February 1943, the home front slowly became a war front; many had to evacuate their homes whilst their schools relocated to other areas. Young men and boys were sent to training camps to prepare for war after their RAD. A few write about their war-related jobs on the home front, such as Eva-Maria J. (born 1929) writing in 1947. After finishing her compulsory education, Eva-Maria J. worked at a timber company, and subsequently became a nurse in a city hospital: 'The matron helped us in every way, so I worked on each ward to help the sick and the needy and ease their pain, which was a beautiful and satisfying task! After my home town was encircled, I did my duty in a military hospital.'<sup>61</sup> She describes this job as a 'duty' for the war effort, and focuses on the suffering of her family and friends at the end of the war. Whilst thematically, many of these life narratives are similar, they are stylistically very different. Some place more emphasis on certain autobiographical memories, which seem to have been more emotionally im-

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58. See also, Emmerich and Hull, *My Childhood in Nazi Germany*.

59. Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 293-352.

60. DTA Sig. Nr. 3087, 33.

61. Report 24 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 78.

pactful than others.<sup>62</sup> Cohort members remember different aspects of their home front experience with varying levels of emotional intensity; however service, dedication, and sacrifice underline most of the early accounts.

Representations of the home front vary based on gender, as males and females experienced the home front differently. However, cohort members do not compare their gender-specific experiences. Women's experiences centred on the home and threats to family members, as well as chances of survival following defeat. Men do not compare their experience with women's experience, and vice versa. There is little reflection on the militarism of Nazi culture; indeed, the militaristic nature of the regime is often seen as apolitical. As such, cohort members normalise experiences of the home front and fit them into the existing victim narrative.

## Memories of Aerial Bombardment

Recounting wartime experiences often triggers memories of aerial bombardment, as Allied air attacks forced younger cohort members to go to KLV camps or flee the city with their families. From the 1980s onward, most life narratives discuss the impact of aerial bombings on the surrounding environment, including families and cities. The second half of the war uprooted many people's lives in Germany, as civilians spent more nights in air-raid shelters, bunkers, and cellars.<sup>63</sup> Air raids and bombings blurred the boundary between war and home front, which increasingly became one and the same. Between 1943 and 1945, an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 people died as a result of Allied bombings.<sup>64</sup> The mass-evacuation of cities, such as Hamburg, due to bombing, is why many cohort members born between 1930-1933 were sent to KLV camps in the countryside. Children under the age of ten stayed with local families, and by 1943 many cohort members were staying in camps for extended periods of time. The bombardment had a lasting impact on the German memory of war; some of the remnants of old buildings are still visible today.

Historiography on the aerial bombardment of cities rarely examines how the bombings were remembered by children. Stargardt's discussion of the emotional impact of bombings and their effect on German children can act as a starting point for

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62. Reports 25, 52 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*.

63. Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 455-456.

64. Mary Nolan, 'Air Wars, Memory Wars', *Central European History* 38, number 1 (March 2005): 8.



this section, which focuses on how bombings are represented in life narratives written in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>65</sup> Aerial bombardment also raises questions of retribution and punishment, in terms of whether it should be considered a war crime or a justifiable act of war, in the German case.<sup>66</sup> The historiography on modern air warfare in both West and East Germanies, whilst relevant, will not be discussed at length here due to space limitations. By the 1990s, historiography on aerial warfare in the two World Wars turned towards moral and ethical questions. In Mary Nolan's 2005 article, 'Germans as Victims of the Second World War: Air War, Memory Wars,' one of the central questions she brings forth is, 'Has this debate reshaped German understandings of the past?'.<sup>67</sup> W. G. Sebald (born 1944), a German writer and academic writing in 1999, comments:

The destruction, on a scale without historical precedent, entered the annals of the nation only in the form of vague generalisations as Germany set about rebuilding itself. It seems to have left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness.<sup>68</sup>

For him, postwar literature does not address the bombings in any significant way. Herzog argues that people in their communities were unable to articulate their experience. Indeed, this is linked to the larger question of whether perpetrators have the right to be concerned about their own people.<sup>69</sup> The shame and guilt of Germany's past weighs heavily upon Sebald's mind—although perhaps differently from the Hitler Youth generation's, seeing as Sebald was born near the end of the war. The publication of Jörg Friedrich's *The Fire* was one of the first public acknowledgements of the bombings and their devastating effects. Scholars have since argued that a collective silence about the Air War existed, and that the Germans readily self-identified as victims. However, this silence remains questionable; Niven attests that most historical writings deal with public discussions of German city bombings.<sup>70</sup> The German press has showed interest in the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg in recent years; as such, public discussion of

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65. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 236ff.

66. Randall Hansen, *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany, 1942-45* (Doubleday Canada, 2008), 269.

67. Nolan, 'Air Wars, Memory Wars', 7.

68. Quoted from Peter Schneider, 'The Germans Are Breaking An Old Taboo', *The New York Times: Books*, January 18, 2003,

69. Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 81.

70. Niven, *Germans as Victims*, 16-17.

these bombings has facilitated German victimisation.<sup>71</sup> Wittlinger argues that with this silence, the subject of the bombings became taboo; it was not until recently that Germany took an interest in these events.<sup>72</sup> Renegotiating the past allows for a discussion of the victim and perpetrator dichotomy on both public and private levels. This is just as pertinent now for German culture as it was immediately after the war.

The impact of the war on daily life is most visible in the early accounts, suggesting that there was never complete silence on this topic. Renate B. (born 1933, died 1947), writing in the summer of 1945, writes about the bombings and having to hide in the cellar. This memory defines her home front experience. Uprooted from home and school, Renate B.'s experience of the war is individual and personalised; however, it is not a full account of growing up. In Haß's collection, the home front acts as a backdrop; as Renate B.'s account illustrates, the home front actually becomes the war front after 1943. As Chapter 2 of this dissertation illustrates, family stories are most often at the forefront, helping to foster and shape identities. Redding's oral history study of the cohort reveals that those living in Berlin restrict memories of 1943 and 1944 to 'idyllic memories'.<sup>73</sup> However, many life narratives emphasise nightmares, death, and the chaos of war—all of which deviate from Redding's data. The emotional impact of the war is present in both early and late accounts as narrators focus on personal trauma.

Haß's collection from 1950 includes sixteen life narratives out of the sixty in the collection, all of which comment on aerial bombings in varying degrees. Whilst descriptions of the bombings vary, they are all fairly succinct. Dieter Sch. describes the aerial bombings as 'nervenzerstörenden Bombenkrieg', whilst Eva D. reinterprets them through a religious context: 'and above all I felt the omnipotence of God throughout the bombings, where I realised how small and powerless we humans are in front of God, and how entirely dependant we are of His will and His grace.'<sup>74</sup> Although the sources from Haß's collection may be from the same geographical region, those who experienced bombings or heard of them wanted to record those particular memories.

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71. Gilad Margalit, 'Dresden and Hamburg - Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the Two Germanies', in *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 125–180.

72. Ruth Wittlinger, 'Collective Memory and National Identity in the Berlin Republic: The Emergence of a New Consensus?', *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 14, number 3 (December 1, 2006): 201–212.

73. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 13.

74. Report 34 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 122.

Emotional responses to the bombings can be found in writings from the 1990s onward, as the bombing seem to have caused long-term stress and PTSD for individuals. Nevertheless, the depiction of bombings in memoirs and their impact on self-identity varies. The collection of life narratives from 1950 illustrates how memory develops over time: in the case of the contentious memory of aerial bombardment, new narratives of victimcy emerge throughout people's lives.

The intensity of the bombings is elaborated upon and their long-term effects are discussed with the reader. Some writers fail to mention which of the Allied Forces was bombing them, and often talk of generic 'enemies' attacking.<sup>75</sup> Franz von der Kemp, in contrast, records in detail each aeroplane type and which country's air force bombed Bonn, showing a very specific understanding of what planes caused the most damage. His family experienced continuous bombings from 1941 until 1943.<sup>76</sup> Erika Z. (born 1928) distances herself from the war and the weekly air-raids, which would have disturbed daily life. The bombing of Wuppertal on 31 May 1943, which caused a fire storm, is her most visceral memory: 'I myself still had my father's suit over my arm and ducked into a corner and thought only that I might be slightly protected by this suit when the ceiling came down'.<sup>77</sup> This image of hiding from the bombs in the basement is rather striking, calling into question her emotional states—both at the time of writing, and during the event. In terms of the fire storm itself, Erika Z. writes:

Everything was in flames. The houses of the entire Rotter Place were burning, the air-raid helpers (*Luftschutzhelfer*) came and told us we had to leave the house, as the flames from the other houses were closing in over ours too. Beforehand, we went upstairs to see how it looked and 'oh bother' ... I took our Sunday roast and my doll and ran back into the cellar.<sup>78</sup>

After the bombing ended, she went to see if her uncle and aunt had survived: all she found was rubble. In another unpublished life narrative, Dorothee K. remembers the loss of her father's factory during the bombing of Berlin; however, she does not discuss

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75. See for example: DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 27; Hans H., *Nobody 26 Jugendzeit 1926-1947*, 49 (from Deutsches Gedächtnis Archive, Fern Universität in Hagen), Giselle Vesco, 'Feuersturm über Dresden', in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 2017-13.

76. Franz van der Kemp, *Achtung Achtung! Ende Ende!: Geschichte einer Kindheit und Jugend in dunkler Zeit, 1932-1951* (2003), 125-149.

77. DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 36.

78. DTA Sig. Nr. 842, 36.

the effects of the bombings on the city, nor her personal feeling about the bombings.<sup>79</sup> In reference to German-language writers, the emotional impact of the bombings is often difficult to decipher. There may be a number of reasons why this is the case—perhaps because personal or general public memory of the bombings has been suppressed. One cohort member writes of the ‘terror and fear’ his family members felt, but does not incorporate his own fears into the narrative.<sup>80</sup>

English-language memoirs do not shy away from discussions of bombings—particularly when it comes to their impact on the surrounding environment and their own mental state. However, only a small number of cohort members record memories of bombings. Indeed, many of the unpublished memoirs are more open to discussing evacuations from the east and what is now considered Poland. Koehn’s *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, for example, talks about air raids in Berlin during war time. Going to KLV camps was the only way to avoid the bombings.<sup>81</sup> Writing in 1992, Willy Schumann reflects on the bombings of his town Brunsbüttel, which ‘had indeed been an error’. Apparently, ‘the raid has been spontaneously initiated by an individual commander, for which, according to the rumours we heard, he was court-martialled’.<sup>82</sup> Hearing that his home town had been under heavy bombardment, Schumann writes: ‘I had never before and never since felt so much fear, horror, and helplessness’.<sup>83</sup> Schumann readily presents himself and his fellow townsman as victims, but he does not extend the same sympathy and feelings of horror towards those who suffered in the Holocaust. Jutta Schreiner (born 1933) recalls having lessons occasionally take place in the air raid shelters. One of her strongest memories is an air raid she experienced during a school trip to a Baltic Sea beach. She writes:

Our teachers ordered us 700 students to take cover in the Stranddorn bushes and in the beach sand. At first, I was excited—the thrill of wartime, for children, did not immediately trigger fear. I dug myself into the sand as an escalating roar of aeroplane engines droned ahead. As the British and US drew closer, I began to feel uneasy, which quickly developed into unadulterated fear.<sup>84</sup>

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79. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533, 23.

80. Van der Kemp, *Achtung Achtung! Ende Ende!: Geschichte einer Kindheit und Jugend in dunkler Zeit, 1932-1951*, 142.

81. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 46-7, 106-7.

82. Schumann, *Being Present*, 129.

83. *Ibid.*, 128.

84. Schreiner, *The Signature Call*, 40.

This account of the bombings by the RAF and USAAF is the only instance where Schreiner actively identifies who the enemy was. Indeed writers are rarely concerned with who the perpetrator was, but rather with recounting the damages to property or the death of family and friends.<sup>85</sup> Brushes with death, like Dieter P.B Protsch's, when his local Hitler Youth group attempted to dismantle an unexploded ordnance, remain vivid memories throughout the writer's lifetime.<sup>86</sup> There are only a few instances where writers represent themselves as trauma victims of those experiences. After experiencing the collapse of her flat block in the summer of 1943, Finell (born 1933) writes in her English-language memoir, 'I could not laugh. My forced smile looked like a grimace. Nor could I make the silly faces that had amused my little brothers'.<sup>87</sup> Even six months after the bombing, she 'had [...] flashbacks'. She also 'often dreamed of flames chasing me through blackened and deserted streets, and I would wake up sobbing'.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, she continued to attend school and her JM group, until she was evacuated to a KLV camp. Karl Heinz Schlesier (born 1928) represents his wartime work as a Flakhelfer by transforming his diary into a memoir. Reading about the air raids on Hamburg, he writes how learning about the event 'left us with a doomsday feeling. This had been the worst attack on a single German city so far'. His company was concerned about where the German fighter planes were—though 'not deeply'. The boys felt confident because they were 'but little cogs in the apparatus'.<sup>89</sup> Experiences of aerial bombings in cities are treated similarly in all the life narratives, and especially in works post-2000, focusing on their personal impact—whether on the memoirist or on their families. Cohort members, regardless of context, repeatedly fail to understand the circumstances of war in political terms, relative to their own personal suffering.

## Representations of the RAD

Representations of the labour service (including here the RAD/Landjahr/Pflichtjahr), in the context of the Second World War, reveal the controversial nature of growing

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85. Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*, 71; Wolfgang W. E. Samuel, *German Boy: A Child in War*, Reprint edition (Broadway Books, October 16, 2001); Flemming and King, *From Hitler Youth to American Soldier*, 100-110.

86. Protsch, *Be All You Can Be*, 8-11; 21-22.

87. Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 95.

88. *Ibid.*, 97.

89. Karl Heinz Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier: Memoir of a Boy Soldier, 1943-1945* (Helion and Company, June 19, 2014), 52; see also, Volmar, *I Learned to Fly for Hitler*.

up in Nazi Germany. The RAD experience allowed cohort members to assume adult roles and adult work: whether as farmhands, factory workers, or caretakers of large families. Representations of the RAD seem contingent upon public memory and media discourse, as few writers are critical of their RAD experiences. A number of cohort members of this sub-cohort are silent about their experiences, and only a small number provide longer descriptions of the work that they did. Memories of the *Landjahr*/*Pflichtjahr* are similarly represented in younger cohort members' narratives. Representations from the 1980s onward include more negative memories, but overall those who disliked the RAD are silent and avoid this topic. This silence illustrates how cohort members use victimcy to protect their identities and self-worth.

From the Hitler Youth cohort's perspective, memories of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (Reich Labour Service), *Landjahr*, or *Pflichtjahr* do not play a large role in historiography of the organisation, and have been given little German or English scholarly attention.<sup>90</sup> Studies often consider adult experiences of the RAD, and youth experiences have not yet been explicitly researched.<sup>91</sup> Rosenbaum provides oral history evidence of the RAD service, and concludes that it may have given young people more opportunities, as did the Hitler Youth leadership programmes.<sup>92</sup> The labour service was a Weimar era concept, meant to tackle unemployment; however, it was exploited by the Nazis to further their racial and ideological dream of *Lebensraum*.<sup>93</sup> It was also used as a way to entice girls to work in rural environments, away from city corruption.<sup>94</sup> The *Landjahr* service was created in 1934 as a means to target 14 to 15 year-olds, who were recent *Volksschule* graduates, but who had failed to secure an apprenticeship or a job.

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90. Kiran Klaus Patel, *Soldiers of Labor. Labor Service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933–1945*, trans. Nicole Kramer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Manfred Göbel, *Katholische Jugendverbände und freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst 1931–1933*, volume Bd. 103, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte. Reihe B, Forschungen ; Bd. 103 (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2005); Michael Hansen, 'Idealisten und gescheiterte Existenzen. Das Führerkorps des Reichsarbeitsdienstes' (Universität Trier, 2004); Detlev Humann, "*Arbeitsschlacht*". *Arbeitsbeschaffung und Propaganda in der NS-Zeit 1933–1939* (Göttigen: Wallstein, 2011); Henning Köhler, *Arbeitsdienst in Deutschland: Pläne und Verwirklichungsformen bis zur Einführung der Arbeitsdienstpflicht im Jahre 1935.*, Schriften zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte ; Bd. 10 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1967).

91. For exceptions, see: Michael E. O'Sullivan, 'An Eroding Milieu? Catholic Youth, Church Authority, and Popular Behavior in Northwest Germany during the Third Reich, 1933–1938', *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, number 2 (2004): 236–259.

92. Rosenbaum, "*Und trotzdem war's 'ne schöne Zeit*", 233; Matthew Stibbe, "'Und trotzdem war's 'ne schöne Zeit': Kinderalltag im Nationalsozialismus", *German History* 33, number 2 (January 6, 2015): 317–319.

93. Patel, *Soldiers of Labor. Labor Service in Nazi Germany and New Deal America, 1933–1945*, 2ff.

94. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 84.

Hitler Youth leaders considered this part of the process of becoming a full member of the Hitler Youth.<sup>95</sup> The Landjahr/Pflichtjahr/Landdienst service would last anywhere from six months to two years, and often would take place during the summer months. Youths were not paid for their service, which Kater calls ‘ruthless exploitation of unpaid menial labour, in the country as much as the households’.<sup>96</sup> Those who served in the RAD after 1941 were paid 45 Reichmarks per month for their service, as the Reich was suffering from a lack of workers.<sup>97</sup> Collections of memories of Second World War labour service have been published in Germany, but otherwise remain undisclosed. As such, it seems necessary to examine the Landjahr/Pflichtjahr/RAD memory as an instance of silence and avoidance within the collected memoryscape.

Discussions of the RAD service or the Landjahr programme have been almost non-existent in German media during the postwar period.<sup>98</sup> In July 1941, the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* painted the image of the girls’ war service as one which helped ease men’s deployment, by aiding ‘in particularly important spheres’. It went on to state that girls could expect ‘happy camp comradeship with its many joys both large and small’.<sup>99</sup> The accuracy of this premise remains questionable; still, the idea lives on in the cohort’s collected memoryscape until the late 1970s when, in 1976, Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt (born 1927), a journalist and novelist, wrote about her experiences in the RAD as an *Arbeitsmaid* as part of a commemorative project for *Der Zeit*. Her article is later published in the form of a novel called *Sonderappell*, which features a protagonist, Charlotte, having the same RAD experiences as Schönfeldt.<sup>100</sup> In 1985, Schönfeldt addresses the long-standing criticism of her novel, with regards to more negative depictions:

many female readers wrote back: ‘Yes, that is exactly how it was, that’s the book of our generation and I bought it so that my children know, how we lived then’.<sup>101</sup>

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95. Müller, ‘Jugend im Kampfe des Alltags’, *Wille und Macht*, August 15, 1934, 25. See further, Hermann Koepp, ‘Junge Generation’, *Wille und Macht*, February 14, 1934, 5-7.

96. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 85.

97. *Ibid.*, 87.

98. Robert Beyer, ‘Hitlerjugend, einsatzbereit!’ Jürgen Kleindienst, *Wir wollten leben: Jugend in Deutschland, 1939-1945*, volume 5 (Berlin: JKL Publikationen, 1998), 138.

99. Doc 1135 ‘Girls’ War Service’ in *Nazism 1919-1945, Volume 4* ed. Noakes, 340.

100. Schönfeldt, *Sonderappell*.

101. Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt, ‘Ich war Arbeitsmaid’, 1985, <http://www.zeit.de/1985/39/ich-war-arbeitsmaid>.

Many readers and critics wanted her to clarify her accusations by providing accurate names and details of all the individual leaders; Schönfeld responds by claiming that she cannot remember them. It also seems, as Schönfeld writes, that there are 'souvenir books describing the old organization in which in essays by ex-RAD maidens and female leaders the image of the - as it is usually called - "most beautiful time of my life", in any case "meaningful activity" is summoned'.<sup>102</sup>

Comparing Schönfeld's responses to the negative feedback on her novel and her portrayal of the RAD camps, another life narrative from 1947 illustrates the point further:

I don't like to think back to that time. Exactly because I brought so much joy and inner readiness to this new task, I was double disappointed by the military drill and excess of education at the time. Although I was used to living in a community and adhering to authority of a superior, I now realised that personal interests and attitudes, yes, overall what makes every individual character, was pushed into the background. Everything I had up to now held high as my ideals, I now saw deformed and negative.<sup>103</sup>

Here, the depiction of the RAD is based upon a memory from about twenty-five years prior to Schönfeld's commentary. This contradicts the responses she received for sullying the past. Indeed, some aspects of the collected memoryscape have shifted here in terms of the RAD. These interpretations of memory are harmful, as 'nowhere can this insight be found, that they belonged to those who were responsible, that year after year of young girls had been fed the wrong ideals'.<sup>104</sup>

Female memoirists often discuss relationships they had as *Arbeitsmaiden*, showing the impact that this life experience had on the cohort. Generally speaking, women place a larger emphasis than men on collective or group identity.<sup>105</sup> The first year of the war mobilised over nine million girls and young women to work various jobs.<sup>106</sup> BDM girls would help by mending soldiers' clothes, making slippers out of straw, and were employed in armament factories.<sup>107</sup> Although in the life narratives, there is little

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102. Schönfeldt, 'Ich war Arbeitsmaid'.

103. Report 25 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 79.

104. Schönfeldt, 'Ich war Arbeitsmaid'.

105. Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice', in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 72.

106. Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 131.

107. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 91; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 33.



discussion about mending clothes or making slippers, many women write about their experiences in either agriculture, factories, or familial settings. Elsbeth M. is one of the rarer examples of a RAD *Arbeitsmaiden* whose job was to look after around 100 camp girls in 1940, instead of doing a purely domestic role. She writes,

We girls were divided into working groups, namely the house group, washing group, kitchen group, sewing group and field service at the farmer's. Every 4 weeks there was a rotation, so we got to know all the work involved. In my memory, a lot was asked of us children.<sup>108</sup>

In a way, having responsibilities away from home shows that she was able to carry out tasks independently—although menial and house-hold based. The feeling as though one's time in the camps was meaningful and equal, was significant in terms of equalising men's and women's experiences; therefore all young people were called to the service of their country. Irmgard P.'s memory of her RAD service reflects this sentiment:

The landscape was preparing for winter. Fog was spreading over the meadows. Finally I am standing in front of a camp of barracks and I reported immediately as per regulation to the camp authority. Like the male colleagues, all female colleagues carry brown-grey uniforms, also with their rank badges, no unfamiliar sight to the women of this time and with National Socialist conscience.<sup>109</sup>

Sharing her 17-year-old perspective with the reader, Elsbeth Backofen recounts her first day of service on a farm: "Work is work and free time (Feierabend) is free time", said the farmer already on the first morning to dispel any misunderstandings. We wanted to work—for the victory'.<sup>110</sup> At the time, she wanted to do the work for the 'Endsieg', but does not connect this with Third Reich propaganda. She continues to describe her work on the farm, and does not comment on the political aspects of the work. In this way, she presents her life as apolitical so as to distance her involvement. Shelton also writes of her RAD camp experiences. As an upper-class girl, physical labour and cooking seem to have shocked her. As all the girls arrived at the *Lager*, she remarks that it was difficult to distinguish between social classes until campers became acquainted: 'girls of similar

108. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 20.

109. DTA Sig. Nr. 891, 32.

110. Elsbeth Backofen, 'Lohnender Einsatz' in Elsbeth Backofen, 'Lohnender Einsatz', in *Wir wollten leben: Jugend in Deutschland, 1939-1945*, ed. Jürgen Kleindienst, volume 5 (Berlin: JKL Publikationen, 1998), 159.

mind and like background find each other. The artificial depersonalisation lasts only as long as everyone is a stranger amongst strangers; it is quickly overcome by budding personal alliances'.<sup>111</sup> Most of the girls seem to have gotten along, although Shelton's inexperience became problematic in official RAD activities, because she was not used to the physical labour.<sup>112</sup> The best parts of her service seem to have been evenings 'singing and folk dancing': 'we forget our involuntary service and let high spirits reign; we learn to live for the present, for one day at a time'.<sup>113</sup> The emphasis on friendship over service shows that Shelton's memory is selective. There is little reflection on or acknowledgement of the political nature of their service; the involuntary aspect of the service is silenced and overwhelmed by the more positive aspects.

Ursula Mahlendorf seems to have participated in the Landjahr programme, but she describes it as voluntary work at her uncle's farm. Her fervour in the BDM increases with the progression of the war, and she begins to feel increasingly alienated by her uncle's family and living in the countryside. Working the fields with the farm aides Wanda and Anita, she recalls:

remembering Fräulein Pelzer's sermonising when we had harvested potatoes the previous fall together with guest workers and forced labourers, I knew that I, a proud German girl, should not fraternise with Poles (Italians, being allies, were still acceptable), and acted as most of the adults did: I denied to myself that Wanda was Polish and befriended her.<sup>114</sup>

In another memoir about farm work, Loni Krause (born 1928) describes the work as demanding. She provides another example of the ambiguous relationships farm hands might have with workers:

Stefan was a calm, diligent, and handsome young man, who spoke good German. I was a little bit in love with him, but that's how it is when you are fourteen. He was often sad. He often helped me with heavy work. Due to him, the farmer had drawn the best lot. Stefan himself came from a farm in Poland.<sup>115</sup>

Krause writes of the strained relationship between the SA-man, the village policeman,

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111. Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 53.

112. *Ibid.*, 54-55.

113. *Ibid.*, 55.

114. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 116.

115. Loni Krause, 'Ein Mäusenest in meinem Strohsack' in Loni Krause, 'Ein Mäusenest in Meinem Strohsack', in *Wir Wollten Leben: Jugend in Deutschland 1939-1945*, 2nd edition, ed. Jürgen Kleindienst, volume 5 (Berlin: JKL Publikationen, 1999), 100.

and the head of the farmstead, who let all his workers eat at the same table. The SA man threatened further action, if the fraternisation persisted. These memories reveal the fragile nature of the memory of POWs in Germany—especially when these writers realised that propaganda diverged from reality. Female representations of the Landjahr/RAD are often removed from politics and instead filled with personal anecdotes.

Similarly, the RAD experience is often excluded or briefly described by male cohort members, who were excited to go to the front and fight in the war.<sup>116</sup> Heinz Beck (born 1925) apprenticed at a business school, and was later drafted into the RAD in Tannheim, after which he joined the Wehrmacht and was stationed in France. This drafting, as he recalled was ‘From March 10, through June 2, 1943 I belonged to the Tannheim/Tyrol Reichs-Work Group, Josef Ennemoser’s unit, number 3/330. We were assigned to different troops according to size. I was assigned to the 2nd Platoon, 6th Troop’. Although not part of the youth rebellion, the Edelweiss pirates, they wore ‘with pride ... the traditional insignia of the Edelweiss’ on their hats.<sup>117</sup> He provides little commentary on his experiences, however this period seems to have been a hiatus from ordinary life.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, not long after his service, he is drafted into the Wehrmacht. Cohort members from the Haß collection have similarly brief anecdotes about the RAD.<sup>119</sup> Only Hans-Jürgen F. had an extremely positive experience, writing about the ‘genuine camaraderie’ that he felt during his time at camp and seems to glorify the ideological message of the RAD:

There was a Spartan discipline and man breeding (Manneszucht) throughout all duties and work, especially in education. I learned to be disciplined, to suppress any special desire, to deliver heavy manual labour and to be obedient without question.<sup>120</sup>

Clearly, some cohort members appreciated the RAD’s militarism and camaraderie, whilst others found it difficult to endure; Ingeborg B., in particular, disliked the mili-

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116. See DTA Sig. Nr. 3511.1, Adolph D.

117. Heinz Beck, “‘No One Lives For Himself’ Memories 1925 – 1945: A Biography in Essay Form”, 2003, <http://www.wiilectureinstitute.com/stories/beck.htm>.

118. The neutral expression of the experience is also seen in: Zempelin, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 122; see also, Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 60-62.

119. Reports 12, 26, 37, 25 in Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 40-41, 87-99, 142-143, 79-86.

120. Report 12 *ibid.*, 40.

tarism and communal living—although eventually she seems to adjust to it.<sup>121</sup>

Napola school students write more actively about their time in the RAD than other memoirists, perhaps because they felt that they had more power, retrospectively. Part of this power might have stemmed from the benefits they enjoyed after their Napola education, or their ability to decide what the cohort should or should not discuss openly. Hans Worpitz (born 1929) was not interested in his RAD service, which began in January 1945: ‘Ich hatte nur ein Interesse, möglichst bald wieder zur Anstalt zurück-zukehren’.<sup>122</sup> Similarly to Kleinau, Worpitz felt that he and his fellow Napola boys were ‘well trained’ (trainiert) and ‘already “trained” (abgerichtet) for war’, making the RAD service unnecessary. Even when warnings of the bombings would not deter the boys to quit work: ‘Oftentimes we had been warned, and all warnings - even those warnings from next of kin - blew away with the wind. We just did not want to believe that we well-trained youth should not be up to the rigours of the front’.<sup>123</sup> Hans Günther Zempelin, also a former Napola school student, writes about working in a steel factory, as opposed to working as a farming aid. Written in interview format, Zempelin’s friend asks various questions about the difficulties of his labour service. Zempelin details his work, stating that whilst he and other boys were used to hard work, they still struggled to survive on rationed food. Work began at 5 A.M., with a march to the factory, Zempelin explains.<sup>124</sup> Zempelin is asked to elaborate upon the work situation of prisoners of war, who worked in the factory. Like his round-about explanations of racial Napola lessons, Zempelin does not answer the question, but rather shifts the emphasis to focus on other workers. He mentions witnessing a few incidents, yet he does not describe them, except for a single event:

It turned out to be about the rape of a 72-year-old woman. It was a long deliberation about whether the low sentence had been due to the age of the victim or whether my mates should have chosen a younger one.<sup>125</sup>

He does not consider the implications of the rape accusations nor the severity of his words, illustrating how such instances of violence can be considered normal. In con-

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121. Report 25 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 79.

122. Worpitz, *Roter und schwarzer Moloch: Erkenntnisse des Napolas-Schülers Benjamin, Russische Kriegsgefangenschaft, 1945-1950*, 36.

123. *Ibid.*, 37.

124. Zempelin, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 123.

125. *Ibid.*, 124.

trast, Elmar G. talks about avoiding the SS officers who came to his RAD camp, in order to find suitable recruits:

out of the blue, SS officers came five weeks after my drafting to select people for service. I had to be concerned that I might be found able. The thought of being drafted to the SS was entirely unbearable and I tried to find means and ways to avoid it.<sup>126</sup>

This excerpt may be fictionalised, with Elmar G. attempting to include his present self-identity. Be that as it may, he and his brother had no qualms about fighting in the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe, which they joined after the RAD. Of his time in the RAD, Elmar G. recalls that his leader had a ‘sadistic lust for torture and harassment’.<sup>127</sup> Kleinau, Worpitz, and Zemplin were all Napola boys who expected to serve the fatherland through military service, and who did not link the RAD with war work—although, in reality, they were linked.

The RAD/Landjahr experience is silenced in public memory, perhaps because it is both contentious and important to cohort members. Although collectively memoirists do not acknowledge the mandatory nature of this service, there may be a subtle tension concerning the nature of the work and being a part of the labour service. The service is largely ignored or silenced in the narratives, perhaps to avoid negative connotations and misgivings. We must also consider that some may have found the service period so ordinary, that they did not deem it worth mentioning. In either case, scholars ought to consider the impact of the RAD/Landjahr experience, and its role in public memory.

## Private Memory of the KLV

Stories about growing up without adult supervision abound in the *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV) camp collected memoryscape. These life narratives are an emotionally complex landscape.<sup>128</sup> Although this study mainly focuses on those born before 1933, a sample of writings by those born between 1934 and 1935 are used as supplementary material because only a small number were found. As Allied bombing increased in the summer of 1943, many children living in cities were sent to the countryside.<sup>129</sup> Nazi

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126. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, ELmar G. 27-28.

127. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, ELmar G. 30.

128. See Benz, *Concise History of the Third Reich*, 180.

129. Gerhard Kock, *Der Führer sorgt für unsere Kinder–: die Kinderlandverschickung im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1997), 140-143.

propaganda depicts children enjoying idyllic camp life through gender-based activities. Memoir imagery frequently diverges from this, as there was quite a discrepancy between camp experiences.<sup>130</sup> There is often little discussion of how the narrator, who experienced the KLV camps, places themselves within the larger narrative of the Second World War.<sup>131</sup> Historical work on KLV activities in different regions of Germany is the focus of numerous studies; yet narratives and ego-documents have been neglected systematically. This section hopes, in part, to remedy this gap, and illustrate how pivotal this experience was to self-identity and growing up in Nazi Germany. Indeed, this memory is fairly new to the collected memoryscape; there is still no common narrative within this sub-cohort.

Even in the historiography, the KLVs are often undermined by other topics.<sup>132</sup> The only exceptions to this are actual studies of the KLV camps—as in, for example, Gerhard Kock's 1997 study, which only utilises Jost Hermand and Ilse Koehn's life narratives as main examples of KLV camp experiences. Kock unfortunately fails to consider his exemplars' motivations for writing, nor does he situate their experiences within a wider historical context.<sup>133</sup> Kock mainly analyses the camps from a macro perspective, focusing on adult experiences.<sup>134</sup> These camps affected thousands of children—an estimated total of up to 5 million from 1933 to 1945, with most participating from 1940 to 1945. Children who participated in the camps were born between 1927 and 1934, and were living in cities targeted by Allied air raids.<sup>135</sup> For some individuals, these camps were apolitical and offered a break from living under the constant threat of bombard-

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130. Propaganda included: films as *Außer Gefahr* (1941), and Sautter, *Hitler Jugend: Das Erlebnis Einer Großen Kameradschaft*.

131. Jost Hermand, 'Fifty Years on: German Children of the War Remember', in *European Memories of the Second World War*, ed. Helmut Peitsch, Charles Burdett, and Claire Gorrara (London: Berghahn Books, 2005), 285ff.

132. Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 450-51; Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 12.

133. Kock, *Der Führer sorgt für unsere Kinder-*, 310–15.

134. Section E, on various KLV camps in different regions provides only statistical data. Section G, which provides some first hand accounts of KLV camps, only provides 5 pages for youth experiences, the rest of the chapter focuses on teachers, parents, and the Nazi party leadership. *ibid.*

135. The figures are still considered controversial. See Carsten Kressel, *Evakuierungen und erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung im Vergleich: das Beispiel der Städte Liverpool und Hamburg* (Hamburg: P. Lang, 1996); Dabel sites 2.8 million participants in Gerhard Dabel and Dokumentations-Arbeitsgemeinschaft KLV, *KLV: Die erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung* (Freiburg: Schillinger, 1981), 7; Griesmayr and Würschinger talk of 3 million: Gottfried Griesmayr and Otto Würschinger, *Idee und Gestalt der Hitler-Jugend* (Leonie: Druffel-Verl, 1980), 263; Larass states a total amount of 5 million: Claus Larass, *Der Zug der Kinder: KLV, die Evakuierung 5 Millionen deutscher Kinder im 2. Weltkrieg* (Munich: Meyster, 1983); Klönne suggests a much lower amount in: Klönne, *Jugend im Dritten Reich*, 39.

ment.<sup>136</sup> As historian Jost Hermand argues in the introduction of his memoir (1993), few scholars have considered the camps and their place in the memory of the Second World War.<sup>137</sup> Hyperbolically, Guido Knopp, in *Hitler's Children*, describes the camps as political breeding grounds, since the regime had unprecedented access 'to get their hands on young people' and draw them away from parental influence.<sup>138</sup> Cohort members use victimcy, silence, and avoidance when discussing their KLV camp experiences; the degree to which these tactics are used is time and location dependent.

The memory of German war children (most broadly defined as those born between 1930 and 1945) garnered interest in 2004, and has since caught the attention of the German media. Sabine Bode's 2004 collection of war children interviews does not enquire about the benefits of Nazism; it focuses mainly on the more negative impacts of the regime.<sup>139</sup> Eva Gehrken argues that the children and adolescents who were involved in the KLV camps should be considered victims of circumstance and age:

had most likely self-evidence of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*, in which they grew up, unconsciously and unreflectedly internalised, before they reached the camps. Their primary socialisation had occurred within the National Socialist state.<sup>140</sup>

The cohort born between 1927 and 1934, Gehrken argues, had a paucity of experiences, compared with adults during this period, placing them at a disadvantage when dealing with the past. Adults, on the other hand, were just as eager to accept Nazi ideology as they were to let it go when the war ended.<sup>141</sup> Only through time, Gehrken notes, 'could the possible effects of the NS education be worked through'.<sup>142</sup> This inability to discuss and master the past, using victimcy tactics, forces us to engage with historical individuals as complex beings—beings who were capable agents of war at a young age, whether or not they were conscious of such agency. Both Margarete Dörr and Bode view war

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136. Keim, *Erziehung unter der Nazi-Diktatur*, 154; Rissel, *From Hitler's Oppression to American Liberty*, 34-35.

137. Jost Hermand, *A Hitler Youth in Poland*, trans. Margot Dembo (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, February 28, 1998), xxviff.

138. Guido Knopp, *Hitler's Children* (Stroud: Sutton, 2002), 185.

139. Sabine Bode, *Die vergessene Generation: Die Kriegskinder brechen ihr Schweigen* (Berlin: Klett-Cotta, 2012).

140. Gehrken, *Nationalsozialistische Erziehung in den Lagern der Erweiterten Kinderlandverschickung 1940 bis 1945*, 83.

141. Roche, 'Surviving Stunde Null: Narrating the Fate of Nazi Elite-School Pupils during the Collapse of the Third Reich', 576.

142. Gehrken, *Nationalsozialistische Erziehung in den Lagern der Erweiterten Kinderlandverschickung 1940 bis 1945*, 299.

children as victims of Nazism, but fail to provide a critical assessment of how many children believed in the war or benefited from the system.<sup>143</sup> Focusing on documenting memory, both Dörr and Bode provide starting points for further investigation.

Historiography has painted KLV participants as victims. Cohort members readily identify with this, and often use their victimcy to de-politicise their KLV experience. The camps were diverse, and they differed greatly depending on geographical location and atmosphere. The sexual assaults Jorst Hermand experienced and recounts in his life narrative may be singular, but it is difficult to say how common they actually were. In addition, women record different camp experiences, indicating that memory of the camps is largely gender-dependent. For example, Eva A. (born 1934) writes that she missed her mother terribly as a child and was not happy at camp. Regardless, she attempts to downplay her feelings by stating: ‘We were always fed, had a roof over our heads, lived without fear in the company of those of the same age, were cared for and allowed to learn and play. And the air raids and nightly haste to air shelters did not exist here!’<sup>144</sup> In some accounts, male cohort members write about what it was like growing up in such a masculine-centred environment. Women, however, often present their experiences apolitically. Cohort members do not compare male and female camp experiences, suggesting they did not consider gender separation remarkable or problematic.<sup>145</sup>

For the most part, early life narratives cast the KLV camps in a negative light, where they typically represent the end of innocence, or childhood. Children often took long train journeys to camp, without active correspondence with their parents. Writing in 1947, a male cohort member recounts his experience in the KLV camp in Bansin. Bansin, a seaside resort town in northern Germany, may have initially seemed like an idyllic location for a camp: however, the experience quickly proved nightmarish for Dieter Sch.<sup>146</sup> In his narrative, Dieter Sch. writes:

Only rarely had I been away from my family home and on my own. It was difficult for me to fit into the order and rules of the camp. In addition, I had reached the age, where a child changes into a young man. I realised how

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143. Margarete Dörr, *“Der Krieg hat uns geprägt”: Wie Kinder den Zweiten Weltkrieg erlebten*, 2 volumes (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2007).

144. DTA Sig. Nr. 1358-3, 52.

145. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 78.

146. Report 46 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 159-161.



childhood collapsed in me. Everything I loved wanted to fall away from me. In this new place a long fight ensued for my former self. It was my task to find a new way. Without parents, who would have surely helped, it had to happen, to follow independently and strongly the newly awakened drive for life.<sup>147</sup>

Realising that he must be independent for the first time, he expresses the emotional struggle he felt in recounting this experience. Dieter Sch. records his time at the KLV camp with painful clarity. His childhood came to an end rather suddenly, but he does not explain why it ended. Although many cohort members use the beginning of the Second World War as the distinguishing factor, this text was written almost a decade later, which may have impacted his perception and his struggle to mark the turning point in growing up.

In accounts from the 1990s and 2000s, most male writers only record positive camp experiences; however, this indicates that there may be gaps in the text, as historian and former-KLV camper Jorst Hermand suggests. Hermand experienced life in a number of KLV camps, first joining a camp with his classmates and teacher, along with local Hitler Youth leaders. Through the many months of isolation, certain boys became depraved. Hermand, a physically and developmentally weak and meagre boy, was raped by fellow camp members. Hermand explicitly narrates the painful events of his time in various KLV camps: 'I remember most vividly factual details of various camp situations. Some of these are relatively easy to talk about. But I shy away from describing those that involve sexual sadism'.<sup>148</sup> As Dieter Sch. illustrates, growing up, or transitioning from childhood to youth or adulthood in this environment was lonely and emotionally unbalancing.<sup>149</sup> After his 1943 camp experience, he was drafted into Wehrmacht, where he felt much more comfortable.<sup>150</sup> Other male writers detail positive camp experiences, and the better aspects of camp are highlighted in most texts. For example, Gerhard Stamme (born 1931) remembers having much more food than at home, and therefore counted his blessings.<sup>151</sup> Still, male writers are a bit more willing to engage with the political side of the KLV camps, or acknowledge the Hitler Youth and

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147. Report 46 *ibid.*, 159.

148. Hermand, *A Hitler Youth in Poland*, xxx. See also DTA Sig. Nr. 1552 I, 36.

149. Larass, *Der Zug der Kinder*, 212.

150. See Rempel, *Hitler's Children*.

151. Auszug aus den Erinnerungen von Gerhard Stamme, damals Klasse 2 bzw 3: Hans-Jürgen Feuerhake, *Die Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung in Hannover 1940-1945: Erinnerungen - Tagebücher - Dokumente* (Freiburg: Projekt-Verlag, 2006), 199.

Nazi influences. Hermand and Dieter Sch.'s experiences in boy KLV camps discuss the range of relationships within male camps. Both express difficulty in processing trauma and integrating within the camp society. Franz Ottler writes that, for these reasons, personal maturity and character mattered in the camps: 'In all, the KLV was something positive to me. I was always an independent person, I would say. I rarely experienced homesickness. That is worth a lot'.<sup>152</sup> Camp experiences are especially complex because of the young age of the cohort members; this, in turn, ought to be considered in the case of post-war *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

English-language writing on the KLV camps is rare; however, the few examples we have are diverse and colourful. The published English-language memoir by Karl-Heinz Schlesier (1927-2015) provides a different, more positive view of the KLV camp. Schlesier begins his memoir by recounting his last few days in a KLV camp in Bad Einsiedel. For him, it has been a 'pretty enlightened and relaxed camp [compared to the one he attended in 1942]. The only concession to demands made by the government was the flag raising ceremony in the morning. Formal events that required us to wear the regular Jungvolk uniform were rare'.<sup>153</sup> The boys read Shakespeare plays and performed them, and played games and went hiking in the woods. When it was time to leave the camp, everyone was upset: 'the chief cook, a heavy-set, warm and friendly woman, was crying. Some of us tried to make jokes to take the sting out of our farewell. The rest of us stood rather frozen, hiding emotions'.<sup>154</sup> Schlesier represents camp life as highly depoliticised, remembering his earlier camp experience as stricter and more regimented.<sup>155</sup> After his KLV experience, Schlesier was old enough to become a Flakhelfer, and was enlisted.<sup>156</sup>

Koehn's (born 1929) three KLV camp experiences have been actively documented in secondary literature, most likely because of her depiction of the political environment within the camps.<sup>157</sup> She tends to represent herself as a victim in the KLV camp. Residing in Berlin during the bombing, Koehn discusses the three KLV camps in which

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152. Trude Pisani-Neumann, editor, *Verschickt: Kölner Kinder-Landverschickung in der Nazi-Zeit* (Ausburg: MaroDruck, 2000), 103.

153. Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier*, 16.

154. *Ibid.*, 17.

155. The same sentiment is found in KA BIO 3114 Günter Fillmann (born 1927), 4-5 from Deutsches Gedächtnis Archive, Fernuniversität Hagen.

156. See Chapter 5 for more.

157. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 106-7.

she participated. In those camps, girls had to clean their rooms regularly for inspection, sang songs, and received minimal schooling. Koehn provides a detailed and varied description of the camps, from menial day-to-day activities to physical labour. Further, Karin Finell (born 1933) also discusses the political influence she felt at camp. Christmas, for example, was celebrated in a pagan fashion by rolling a pine tree down a hill.<sup>158</sup> For both women, leaving camp for home was a relief. Representations of KLV camps as politically-charged environments where children have little contact with the outside world is rare. Schlesier is silent about his less-than-positive camp experience; Koehn, on the other hand, uses victimcy to justify her active participation in the camps. As these examples demonstrate, different tactics are used by English-language cohort members, with some actively engaging with the political landscape of the KLV, with others passively ignoring it.

Historians ought to study female experiences of the KLV camps further, as there is a gap in the historiography. Even Dagmar Reese's *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany* does not consider the BDM/JM involvement in KLV camps, considering the length and depth of the study.<sup>159</sup> Women's KLV camp experiences share some qualities with Hermand and Dieter Sch.'s accounts, all of which present the KLV as a difficult time for women. Whilst former BDM leader Jutta Rüdiger makes the camp sound idyllic, many camps differed based on location and leadership.<sup>160</sup> Hilde S. (born 1928), writing in 1947, hated her time in the KLV camps because she did not feel that she belonged to the community—this might have been her way of distancing herself retrospectively from involvement; the irreligious holiday celebrations also bothered her: 'as the childish joy of such festivals was lost to me very early, I continued to feel with what was offered to us, without sympathy, more filled with aversion than joy. I did not learn what community meant here and I could not learn here'.<sup>161</sup> In contrast, Trude Pisani-Neumann compiles later narratives, which focus on the excitement cohort members felt in attending a KLV camp.<sup>162</sup> Women responded differently to the camp environment

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158. Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 73.

159. See footnote 67 in Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 82.

160. Jutta Rüdiger, *Die Hitlerjugend und ihr Selbstverständnis im Spiegel ihrer Aufgabengebiete: Studienausgabe* (Schnellbach: Schnellbach, 1998), 297.

161. Report 63 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 223; see also Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 72.

162. Pisani-Neumann, *Verschickt: Kölner Kinder-Landverschickung in der Nazi-Zeit*.

and more readily remember the social, non-political aspects of camp life.

In many female life narratives, the political life at camp is often silenced. As Anne Frambach's (born 1934) account of mornings at camp illustrates:

Everything was very militaristic. Before breakfast was the morning call (Morgenappell): this meant raising the flag and singing the usual songs. Whether rain or snow, storm or any weather, we had to take turns with one girl to pull the flag attached to a wire. We cried often because it was very cold in the mornings and we had no gloves or hats. We had only short socks and black skirts and white shirts, and wore a cardigan. Only depend on yourself, never on others.<sup>163</sup>

Although Frambach concedes that camp life was militaristic, she does not link this to Nazi politics, nor with the indoctrination of children away from their parents. She does not discuss what types of songs were sung, and the clothing she wore was a typical BDM/Jungmädel uniform. Extracting this information leaves a memory that is untainted by Nazism, which becomes her deliberate way of distancing herself.<sup>164</sup> Writing in 2006, Helga Z. (born 1927) remembers her KLV camp experience as generally enjoyable, because she and her friends stayed in a fancy hotel in the Czech Republic.<sup>165</sup> They had a chef who made opulent dishes; Helga was also eager to participate in the camp activities. Yet, within the text, there is a jarring critique of the lack of news reporting. The underlined words and extensive use of exclamation marks dramatises the account:

We never saw any newspapers nor did we hear the radio. Our teacher might have been able to, but not us. One day in June, however, it was the 21st – our teacher called us in with a serious face and declared that the war with the Soviet Union had started. This was a shock to us all. My feeling: now everything is over! *Why* had Hitler started the war or at least *stopped* after the war with Poland or France?<sup>166</sup>

However, this excerpt indicates that Helga Z. believed in Nazi policies, showing the success of indoctrination—at least until the Soviet campaign of 1941. Although Hilde S. and Helga Z. were born within a year of one another, the camp experiences indicate

163. Anne Frambach, 'Verlass dich nie auf andere, nur auf dich selbst,' Pisani-Neumann, *Verschickt: Kölner Kinder-Landverschickung in der Nazi-Zeit*, 58.

164. See also Trude Pisani-Neumann, 'Meine Kinder-Landverschickung 1942/3'; Gerda Wilken, 'Man war eben ein Ferienkind'; Elisabeth Skutta, 'Es war überall wie weißer Sand' in *ibid.*

165. DTA Sig. Nr. 1925, 74.

166. DTA Sig. Nr. 1925, 75. (Emphasis original)

the difficulties of growing up in unusual environments.<sup>167</sup> The misinformation about the war effort and the shock about the Eastern front show Helga Z. re-positioning herself within a victim narrative. In light of subsequent discussions, Ruth H. (born 1928) enjoyed her time in the KLV camps because she was a camp leader. Her experience in the camp only became exacerbated with evacuations as the war ended. She helped organise the transportation of children back to Germany through Denmark which, as she recalls, was no easy feat.<sup>168</sup> Women's experiences in the KLV were diverse, as some cohort members helped orchestrate activities as BDM leaders, whilst others participated as campers. Overall, politics play a minor role even though camp experiences were political and focused on ideological teaching. The cohort exhibits an inability to deal with this experience, either whitewashing the experience or forgetting it.

Historians ought to research the way private and public memory of the KLVs has changed over time. The historiography mainly focuses on the function and organisation of the camps, and not on how children and youths perceived them at the time and afterwards. As a historian, Hermand has the chance to contribute to both the public and private memory of the KLV camps in narrating his experience. The extent to which Hermand's experience was shared by other male cohort members is impossible to gauge because of the taboo nature of this topic. As this section demonstrates, many cohort members avoid negative discussions of camp life; females especially are silent on the political aspects of their KLV life. Engagement with memories of the KLVs varies, depending upon time, gender, and location. Within the past fifteen years, historians have become increasingly interested in understanding this memory in terms of both the public and private spheres.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that cohort members wanted to represent the home front as an idyllic, apolitical experience, even though it later sets the war and home fronts at odds with one another. Members express an inability to relate and engage with their individual and generational pasts, using memoirs to create a sense of normalcy. There is tension

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167. Frau Lotichius, 'Zwischen Existenzängsten Und Einer Fröhlichen Kindheit/Jugend Meine Kindheit Und Jugend Im Dritten Reich', Kollektives Gedächtnis, accessed 16 June 2016, [http://www.kollektives-gedaechtnis.de/texte/vor45/haji/haji\\_sonia\\_10c.html](http://www.kollektives-gedaechtnis.de/texte/vor45/haji/haji_sonia_10c.html). See, also DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 19-20.

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between growing up and being grown-up; the following chapters will elaborate upon this tension, which often emerges at the home front, and only resolves itself later, either at the front or at home, after the war ends. Cohort members simplify their stories about the home front in an attempt to resolve this tension, but this only betrays the conflict they feel between their understanding and experience of war time.

In Nazi Germany, the home front was also a war front, and it was political. The political is silenced, illustrating a tendency to downplay the Third Reich's role in the war. This allows for cohort members to recount their wartime memories in a victim-based narrative. Still, cohort members use the symbolism of the Hitler Youth uniform to create a sense of unity—albeit with unmistakably militaristic undertones. Both men and women idealised militarism, and cohort members actively sought military life. Whilst not all cohort members actively participated and engaged with militarism, it is ever-present in life narratives. Representing the uniform as the ultimate cultural symbol, both in terms of political ideology and adulthood, cohort members create the space in which they grow up or appeared to grow up.

The influences of age and geographical location make only a marginal difference, in terms of home front memories and their representation. There are a number of similarities between 1950s and 2010s accounts: a distress at the upheaval of war, and an emphasis on the emotional impact of aerial bombings. Even with time, there is little concern about Germany's victims. Accounts of the bombings are also found in early works; however, discussions about the long-term emotional impact are more prevalent in works from the 1990s onward. Especially in English-language life narratives, we see the impact of the bombings on people and the surrounding environment. Perhaps inspired by Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction* (original 1997, English translation 2003), along with novels such as *Im Krebsgang* by Günter Grass, cohort members are more comfortable with assuming the victim narrative. Growing up during wartime is emphasised more in later English-language life narratives; this shows the cultural influence on autobiographical memory, and the reinterpretation and re-presentation of self in memoir. Thus, writers only see growing up on the home front as a particular life stage, when they are looking back and writing retrospectively.

Representations of the RAD and KLV in life narratives are in dialogue with public discourse and historiography. The positive aspects of these experiences are most often

highlighted. Gender roles also had an impact: women and men were segregated and performed different duties in the RAD. Relatively few historians have studied the RAD outside Germany, and only in select publications; there is also a paucity of accounts by cohort members of the RAD. Those who offer longer accounts of their experiences in the land service express either a pride in taking part, or resentment and distaste. Some condense an entire year's worth of experiences into a single sentence. This is perhaps indicative of the collected memoryscape of the RAD: the group had similar experiences, therefore there is no need to repeat them. The KLV experience, as Sabine Bode demonstrates, is easy to rewrite as a victim narrative. However, the camps were also a place of growing up, where members assumed new identities as either adolescents or adults. KLV camp experiences varied widely—from Hermand Jorst's traumatic childhood experience of repeated rape to Helga Z.'s idyllic hotel stay, with gourmet chefs.

English-language life narratives offer a much more diverse and colourful account of the RAD and KLV—compared with unpublished archival memoirs, which focus instead on family stories. English-language narratives attempt to engage with their audiences by showing the daily influence of militarism, which was not altogether negative. In this way, English-language cohort members use the home front as a backdrop for their limited understanding of the war front. Representing militarism as the 'norm' allows them to justify their choices and actions during the war, both at the home and war fronts.

The next chapter builds upon these themes by considering the transition from these organisations to the war front.





## Chapter 5

# Remembering and Normalising Wartime Identities

In 2006, Günter Grass's *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* made headlines. Grass revealed that he was a former member of the Waffen-SS. To the eyes of the German public, it led to Grass 'forfeit[ing] the right to pass moral judgement on others', and questioning his moral authority.<sup>1</sup> Released a few months afterwards, cohort member Joachim Fest's (born 1929) *Ich nicht* details his father's anti-Nazi stance, and his disappointment at Fest for joining the air force. Fest claims that he did this in order to avoid being drafted for the SS.<sup>2</sup> Both memoirs articulate some of the broader issues and complexities faced by those cohort members who chose to write about the war. Even before Grass's 2006 revelation, his 2002 novella *Im Krebsgang* questions the need to 'make sense' of the past and to normalise it.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, making sense of the war years through normalisation becomes necessary, as writers attempt to negotiate their own subjectivity and identity within those events. As earlier chapters have understood, by normalisation, we mean a German revival of the post-national identity, or *Verfassungspatriotismus*, and a normalcy grounded in the *Gedächtnisgemeinschaft*, which 'acknowledges German suffering, appreciating that a consensus on the past cannot be achieved for as long as this aspect is taboo'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, normalisation can be defined as the narration of

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1. Niven, 'On the Use of 'Collective Memory'', 429.

2. Joachim Fest, *Ich nicht: Erinnerungen an eine Kindheit und Jugend*, 1. Aufl (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 225.

3. Kathrin Schödel, "'Narrative Normalization" and Grass's *Im Krebsgang*', in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature Into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (London: Camden House, 2006), 199.

4. *Ibid.*, 167.

events which the collected memoryscape accepts as a common telling of those events regardless of their historical accuracy.<sup>5</sup> The concept of normalisation ties together with changing perceptions of the Wehrmacht, especially after the 1990s. Even within the past decade or so, many ‘Germans believed their nation was a victim of the war, not its perpetrator’.<sup>6</sup> Themes of normalisation, reinterpretations of memory, and processing the past are present in many life narratives as they attempt to understand growing up in the war.

In light of new historical research on the Wehrmacht in the 1980s, along with public dissemination of that research through the Wehrmacht Exhibitions, starting in Hamburg from 1995 to 1997, it became increasingly difficult for cohort members to reshape and redefine public memory of the Wehrmacht’s role in the war. Both Hans Heer and Gabriele Rosenthal take issue with German discourse on the role and memory of the Wehrmacht. In Heer’s *Vom Verschwinden der Taeter: Der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber keiner war dabei*, he argues for a separation of age cohorts between 1915-1924, 1925-1929, and 1930-1935; individuals, he says, discuss the experience differently based on what they witnessed and where they served. The 1925-1929 cohort were less likely to have participated in war crimes due to their age.<sup>7</sup> Rosenthal argues that the ‘eye-witness’ generation—meaning those who lived through the events of 1941—might discuss the war, but still fail to mention the crimes they committed or witnessed.<sup>8</sup> In her work *Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts mehr zu tun*, she demonstrates the ways interviewees create apolitical narratives in order to dissociate themselves from Nazi crimes.<sup>9</sup> As many memoirists used in this study wrote after 1990, and also belong to the 1925-1929 age cohort, they too tend to distance themselves from war crimes and what they witnessed. As is the case with many war narratives, there is a tendency to distance oneself from eye-witness events, and a failure

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5. Mary Fulbrook, *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 3.

6. Alon Confino, ‘Traveling as a Culture of Remembrance: Traces of National Socialism in West Germany, 1945-1960’, *History & Memory* 12, number 2 (2001): 97.

7. Hannes Heer, *Vom Verschwinden der Taeter: Der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber keiner war dabei* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2004), 226-230; see also: Pollak and Wodak, ‘Crime Scene: Wehrmacht Exhibition’.

8. Gabriele Rosenthal, *Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts mehr zu tun: Zur Gegenwärtigkeit des 'Dritten Reiches' in Biographien* (Opladen: Springer-Verlag, 2013).

9. See Gabriele Rosenthal, *“...wenn alles in Scherben fällt...” : von Leben und Sinnwelt der Kriegsgeneration : Typen biographischer Wandlungen* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1987).

to acknowledge one's role as a perpetrator. This shows that despite the fact that the Wehrmacht Exhibitions of 1995 to 1997 impacted collective public memory of the war, Hitler Youth generation life narratives continue to uphold the Wehrmacht myth in the collected memoryscape. Cohort writers change *how* they discuss their role in the war, continuing this narrative trend of normalisation.

Few historians write about the use of boy soldiers during the Second World War. Stargardt also includes a section on boy soldiers enlisted by the HJ and Wehrmacht to fight in Berlin.<sup>10</sup> Paul Fussell notes in *Wartime* that a 'notable feature of the Second World War is the youth of most who fought it'. Melville's poem, 'The March into Virginia' states: 'All wars are boyish and are fought by boys'.<sup>11</sup> This illustrates a side of war that is often forgotten about or overlooked. Indeed, Fussell argues, 'the soldiers played not just at being killers but at being grown-ups'.<sup>12</sup> To be a soldier is to be in a state of constant metamorphosis, meanwhile enacting a complex performance of gender. Although Fussell's main focus is on Great Britain and the United States, he briefly mentions the HJ: 'Once defending Berlin at the last, unarmed because there were not enough rifles to go around, asked what he was supposed to do. Cheer, he was told'.<sup>13</sup> Whilst the validity of Fussell's source is questionable, it nevertheless prompts more questions about youth, boyhood, and growing up in wartime. In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Geisen writes about the Hitler Youth cohort members in Siberia POW camps, who 'stressed the discipline and the spirit of sacrifice' and the 'militaristic and practical virtues' as these 'provided the backbone of their wartime experience'. They were wholly unaware of it being an ideology; similarly, the petite bourgeoisie cohort members remember only the 'honesty, reliability, and industriousness' of their war experiences. I would argue that the conclusions we might draw from Geisen's work are more complicated than they first appear; his conclusion tends to eradicate individuality and personhood from those experiences.<sup>14</sup> Cohort memoirists can be further subdivided into age cohorts, which better reflect their participation in the war. Those born between

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10. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 293-316.

11. Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 53.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 125.

1925 and 1928 were more likely to be drafted than those who were born between 1929 and 1933. As argued in the Introduction, Peukert's division of adolescence into groups ought to be reassessed because his groupings are vague.<sup>15</sup> Emotions and, occasionally, the ensuing trauma, also affect remembrance of the war at various life stages. The use of emotional terminology in the text is fairly indicative of how cohort members remember the Second World War. Many memoirs focus on the war; as such, for the Hitler Youth generation, the Second World War was an integral part of growing up. This necessitates a consideration of current child soldier theories to interpret models of categorisation; these theories allow us to understand these people and rehabilitate them into society. Modelling enables us to comprehend how memories of war have been interpreted or reinterpreted in these life narratives as coping mechanisms. In turn, all of this ties into the overarching theme of growing up. This begs the question of why memoirists are focused on narrating growing up during wartime.

This chapter argues that cohort members attempt to normalise their war memories through various self-representations during the postwar period: normalising their fathers' war experiences, in conjunction with their own; reinterpreting the innocent Wehrmacht myth; and justifying their age. Current literature on child soldiers, which uses concepts of 'victimcy' and 'complex political perpetrators', elucidates why self-representations occur. To illustrate my point, I shall argue for a more nuanced reading of cohort memoirs, utilising concepts of childhood, adolescence, and growing up—all juxtaposed with memories of fighting in or experiencing war. First, this chapter will assess the father and child relationships in wartime life narratives by comparing early writings, from 1950, to texts from 1990 onward. Second, it will extrapolate on the connections between terms, such as: trauma, emotion, and memory. Lastly, it will include a detailed analysis of war memories in memoirs.

## **(In)visible Fathers in Memory**

One central social factor of the postwar period, which historian Lu Seegers labels 'Dead Dads', is how memory narratives of war are related to discussions of fatherlessness in Germany. One sticking point with these memoirs is the manner in which memoirists represent their fathers during wartime; indeed, this leads us to wonder why telling sto-

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15. Peukert, 'Youth in the Third Reich', 28.

ries about fathers is important for the redefinition of self in war. Although Seegers studies those born from 1935 to 1945, her approach facilitates a productive analysis of the generation before. From a historiographical standpoint, some of the most work with impact on fatherlessness (*Vaterlose*) was done during the post-war period. Jürgen Reulecke studies the societal impact of this fatherless generation in the twentieth century, and Barbara Strambolis studies how fatherlessness impacts the memory of fathers for the generation of girls born between 1935 and 1945.<sup>16</sup> Strambolis conducted her study in 2005, sixty years after the war ended; for her, the study was timely. In an interview for *Deutschlandfunk* in 2011, she argues that people have an ‘unexpectedly intense yearning’ to uncover what happened to their fathers:

Central is rather the need to feel close again to this father, whom they did not know and maybe find a way to to visit his grave, to find it anyhow, to say goodbye somehow and mourn. Because they had no time for the grief in their childhood, and often their mothers are the same as well.<sup>17</sup>

This desire for closure or communion between children and their deceased fathers is more noticeable in cohort memoirs, but few studies are dedicated to studying the memory of fathers who survived the war. In *Surviving Hitler’s War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, Vaizey includes a small section on husbands and fathers who return home after the war, and the resulting estrangement felt at home.<sup>18</sup> Frank Biess shows that, in the postwar period, male authority was weakened due to the effects of war on men: ‘children remembered their fathers as emotionally disengaged, ill tempered, and irritable, and they often attributed these unpleasant characteristics to their fathers’ experiences of defeat’.<sup>19</sup> However, scholars ought to consider how cohort members remember these relationships, and how their perception of their fathers changed over time. This section highlights the memory of fathers during wartime, showing how cohort members wrote about their fathers, not as perpetrators of Nazi crimes, but as victims—or as per-

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16. Jürgen Reulecke, *“Ich möchte einer werden so wie die–”: Männerbünde im 20. Jahrhundert*, volume Bd. 34, Reihe “Geschichte und Geschlechter”; (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2001); Barbara Strambolis and Jürgen Reulecke, *Good-Bye Memories?: Lieder Im Generationengedächtnis Des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1. Aufl. (Essen: Klartext, 2007).

17. Isabel Fannrich, ‘Kinder des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Eine Studie über vaterlose Töchter und ihre Verlust Erfahrungen’, September 15, 2011, [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kinder-des-zweiten-weltkrieges.1148.de.html?dram:article\\_id=180823](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kinder-des-zweiten-weltkrieges.1148.de.html?dram:article_id=180823).

18. Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler’s War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, 123ff.

19. Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 125.

forming their duty for the fatherland. A few cohort members grapple with non-heroic imagery of their fathers, suggesting that Seeger's thesis impacted the 1925-1933 cohort, as well. This section argues that fathers were instrumental in allowing cohort members to process the war: for male writers, to help them contextualise their own war experiences; for female writers, to explain why family life had changed. In all of this, we see a continued normalisation of wartime experiences within the collected memoryscape. Recounting family narratives of fathers' roles in the Second World War disrupts the narrative of normalisation imposed by the collected memoryscape as cohort members try to navigate troubling memories of fathers in war.

In the earliest (1950s) life narratives, the memory of the Second World War is especially raw, due to temporal proximity. Albeit this varies slightly with both the age and gender of the cohort members.<sup>20</sup> Based on the collection by Haß, a large number of fathers were POWs or went missing in action.<sup>21</sup> A small number of fathers were captured and murdered by the Gestapo. Ingeborg P., for example, writes of her father being a POW in a Karelian camp—an area of Finland which was seized by the Russians. His time in the camp was merely 'sad'; she is reticent about her deeper feelings. Ursula G. felt isolated during the war because her 'parents had their own worries'.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Ernst P. felt lonely 'for me and mother' because his father was unable to attend his confirmation.<sup>23</sup> Eva-Maria J. lost her 'Dear friends and relatives, even my best friend went out of my life, lost her life to epidemics and became victims of starvation'.<sup>24</sup> Fathers play a variety of roles in these early narratives, both on the home and war fronts; however, fathers are rarely cast in a negative light—indeed, they are often represented as heroes. These cohort members focus on their parents in general, rather than a single parent's experiences. Only those with exceptional circumstances record what happened to individual family members; often, they represent them as victims.

As the majority of writers entered adolescence during the Second World War, a rift grew between family members. The realities of war conflicted with Nazi propaganda,

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20. Comparing diary entry from 1944 and its emotional take on the war to memoirs: Arno Klönne, *Gegen den Strom; Bericht über den Jugendwiderstand im Dritten Reich*. (Hannover: O. Goedel, 1957), 143-144.

21. Reports 36, 28 (father fought), 21, 22 in Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 137-141, 103-106, 70-71, 72-76.

22. Report 27 *ibid.*, 101.

23. Report 1 *ibid.*, 13.

24. Report 24 *ibid.*, 78.

and aspects of this conflict are visible in some representations. In certain cases, the father of the family would be too old to be called for active service; therefore, sons would represent their fathers, without knowing the true cost of war. Karl Schlesier (born 1927) notes his father's lack of emotion and finds himself unable to relate to his parents after spending many months as a *Flakhelfer*.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Albin Greger dedicates an entire chapter ('My Father') to his father, Karl Greger, whose last known whereabouts was a Russian POW camp, in 1946. Albin writes of the last time he saw Karl, which was 'a few weeks before my eighteenth birthday ... before leaving to join the *Heimatschutz*. He stood besides my mother in front of the white walls of the house that had until then been our home. My mother cried quietly, my father smiled his gentle smile'.<sup>26</sup> Albin's father fought Slovakia, in order to defend the town where the family had lived previously. As the Russians advanced, he was taken as POW because he had been the local German Party leader. Karl's death as a POW had a profound affect on Albin, most likely due to a lack of closure. Growing up with estrangement from fathers is an issue in a number of narratives, but is given little attention by cohort members. Fathers were witnesses to both Schlesier and Greger's transgressions as soldiers, neither of whom confront or fully admit to that fact.

Wartime fathers do not occupy much space in *Napola* narratives, indicating that the writer's experience is more intimately known than the father's role. Generally, fathers' roles remain mysterious in *Napola* memoirs, as in Harmut Vahl's, where he attempts to normalise yet also memorialise his father, who had a controversial role in the SS. Vahl (born 1932), a former *Napola* school student, remembers his father Herbert positively, despite him being a *Divisionskommandeur* of an SS-Panzer-Polizei-Division, in Greece. Herbert Vahl was responsible for organising troops to fight against 'Partisanen und Banden'. Hearing of his death, Vahl's relatives came to a different understanding of what happened. His aunt believed that his death was not an accident; Vahl seems to agree with her, stating, 'An officer comrade of my father later said that Father had known too much, and might have had to leave life in a similar way as General Rommer [sic] did in his day.'<sup>27</sup> In writing about his father, Vahl remembers him fondly, despite having been a high-ranking SS officer who, most likely, killed

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25. Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier*, 117.

26. Albin Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, ed. Christoph Greger (2015), Kindle location 441.

27. Vahl, *Napola Schulpforta: 1943-1945, Erinnerungen eines Schülers*, 26-27.

civilians:

Father's death meant a big break in my life. The self-confidence which had been severely impaired in the boarding school by constant helplessness (Ausgelieferstein) and repression was further and fundamentally shaken by the loss of father, my role model and idol.<sup>28</sup>

Spending the majority of his late childhood and youth in a Napola, his time with his parents would have been rather limited. Vahl was never on the front, due to his age; perhaps this is part of the reason why he dwells extensively on his father's death. In the volume, the owner glued an image of Vahl's father in his SS uniform, with an iron cross around his neck. Further he added a photograph of the open casket at the funeral, with Herbert Vahl surrounded by Wehrmacht soldiers. He avoids the controversial role of the SS and the Wehrmacht, indicating his inability and unwillingness to engage with any other memory framework—besides the ones crafted by his family and his father's friends.

Silence is more often broken in English texts, owing to geographical context. Jurgen Herbst (born 1927), whose father went to fight in Poland and Ukraine, only narrates his experiences on the front once Jurgen tells him about the maltreatment of Poles he witnessed during a HJ Camp. In the text, his father attempts to cope with the horrors and realities of war in 1941: 'He did not speak much of his military assignments. He spoke mainly of his soldiers; how he had come to cherish the confidences and trust of his men'.<sup>29</sup> Further, Herbst's father was stationed in Ukraine and, according to him, reacts as follows: 'Father talked to Ukrainians in the village they had conquered, how they had suffered under the Soviets; now, the father replied, "We are doing to the same to them"'.<sup>30</sup> 'My father had asked me not to worry my mother', Herbst writes, on visiting home; as such, he did not tell his mother.<sup>31</sup> It was the first time his father 'admitted to me that there were things not right in our country, that there was corruption and brutality, that not all our leaders were honorable men and brave soldiers'. Herbst adds, 'and the armed SS are among the worst of them. We in the army shall have to call them to account. But ... that will have to wait until the war is won'.<sup>32</sup> Herbst's father later

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28. Vahl, *Napola Schulpforta: 1943-1945, Erinnerungen eines Schülers*, 27.

29. Herbst, *Requiem for a German Past*, 112.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 113.

32. Ibid., 117.



died in combat in 1942—a devastating blow to his mother and, likely, Herbst. Herbst portrays his father as an heroic man who was against the regime; however, he does not discuss coming to terms with his father's death at the front.

The relationships between fathers and sons who went to war is a sensitive one. Some writers are trepidatious in representing fathers because it challenges family small group culture when they are attempting to normalise the experience. Unlike Herbst, Karl H. (born 1925) focuses on what, rather than on who, his father was as a person. Writing after 1990, his account is an attempt to make sense of himself and the effects of the war. Perhaps the impact of his father's death and the senselessness of it motivates him to circumvent his father's wartime experience. He spends the majority of his memoir discussing his own Landjahr experiences. He frames his short chapter, 'Vater im Krieg', which details his father's wartime experience, in the following manner:

So he came to the Westwall and had to feign troop movements by constant seesaw during the last war days in Poland. ... Father was 41 years old and was dismissed after being promoted to private just before the French campaign in 1940. ... What did he get from life? An orphan, a baker's apprentice, assistant, called in on the first day of war and then dies in Poland as an infantryman for the Führer, *Volk*, and fatherland. C'est la guerre.<sup>33</sup>

Karl H.'s emphasis on the pointlessness of war effectively distances him from his father, and enables him to cope with his father's occupation and his death. The father is given no further attention in this memoir, with Karl H. diverging to write about his Landjahr, the HJ, and other war activities. There is a notable silence, and what might even be labelled a disengagement with this topic. His father is at once a hero and someone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Erich Loest, a GDR novelist, records his time as a *Reserveoffizier* and *Werwolf* member, within the context of his father's First World War experience, as a soldier.<sup>34</sup> These examples illustrate how fathers were later reinterpreted as heroes, regardless of changing understandings of the Wehrmacht's role during the late 1980s and 1990s. In this way, the militarism and war propaganda, which focused on making heroes out of soldiers, is visible in these postwar writings.

The memory of the relationship between fathers and daughters during the war is sporadic. As the previous chapter reiterates, females also remember their war years as a

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33. DTA Sig. Nr. 878, 113.

34. Erich Loest, 'Der Werwolf', in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 117–126.

period of growing up. Self-representation is tied to societal expectations, where women assume many roles within the family.<sup>35</sup> Narratives about fathers who did not die at the front often diminish the father's influence on family life. In Jutta Schreiner's English-language memoir, whose over-arching plot involves her father returning home from a French POW camp, Schreiner does not discuss her relationship with her father. She narrates family stories of her father's escape from a Soviet march to an American POW camp, to his transfer to a French camp, and his subsequent arrival at home, in a weak condition, but does not engage with any other negative representations, such as her father's Wehrmacht activities.<sup>36</sup> Fathers were also absent for long periods of time and so, naturally, female authors tend to focus on their own lives.<sup>37</sup> This can be attributed, in part, to their overwhelming number of new duties: finding employment to supplement income, waiting for rations, and tending to household chores. In terms of their fathers, the amount of information varies from narrative to narrative—even in memoirs written in late adulthood. Marianne G.'s (born 1927) three older brothers fought in the war, and she records their various fates in detail.<sup>38</sup> Of her father, however, she writes little. Her father had been the village teacher, and taught her in Volksschule; he was also a film enthusiast. He was called for war service in the winter of 1944. She writes simply, 'My father was on duty as a paramedic at *Hauptverbandsplatz* (main station for medical treatment)'.<sup>39</sup> This may indicate that there were other sides to her father, upon which she did not wish to elaborate. In Elsbeth Charlotte H. (born 1933)'s narrative, the war itself is completely erased, as her memoir ends with the beginning of the war. This silence provokes many unspoken questions about her father, who was the head of her village's SA group.<sup>40</sup> Cohort women represent wartime as a period in which they assumed additional duties, beyond helping around the house. Representations of fathers during wartime consequently fall to the wayside possibly because of the negative affects they have on family identity and concepts of postwar self-worth.

Age plays an important factor in how fathers are remembered and represented in

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35. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*, 138?; Finckh, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*; Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*.

36. Schreiner, *The Signature Call*, 77-82.

37. Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*, New Ed edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 143.

38. DTA Sig. Nr. 876, 19.

39. DTA Sig. Nr. 876, 25.

40. DTA Sig. Nr. 13,2.

life narratives. Younger cohort members, born in 1934, negligently portray their fathers as heroes.<sup>41</sup> Eycke Strickland and Elsbeth Emmerich, both born in 1934, write emotional life narratives of the war years. Strickland provides anecdotes of her father's fleeting presence in the family home; the family's move to a former Polish ghetto area now Aryanised; and her mother's resilience in raising five children, one of which died in infancy. She hails her father as heroic: after the war, she finds out that he was helping Jews escape concentration camps.<sup>42</sup> Emmerich's father died on the Eastern front, and her and her family's grief collectively transform him into a man of kindness and introspection.<sup>43</sup> Writing in 1997, Elsbeth M. (born 1926) remembers her father going to Poland in September 1939 as a military dispatch rider (*Kradmelder*). He returns home for her confirmation in the spring of 1940. She recalls that he brought food from Poland for the festivities.<sup>44</sup> Elsbeth M. writes only briefly of her father's role in the war, silencing his overall role: 'My father was called in at the beginning of the war although he was already 39 years old. He had to hand in his motorcycle. Because he could drive the motorcycle, he was used as *Kradmelder* in the Polish campaign.'<sup>45</sup> She is more inclined to write about the shared memories between her and her mother, such as receiving lace from her father during his furlough, from Poland.<sup>46</sup> Not all fathers were honourable fighters for the Wehrmacht or the Volkstrum, as Anna B. remembers:

When the Americans stood in front of Darmstadt, my parents left everything behind and my father ignored his summons to the Volkssturm, the last reserves of our "Führer". He was absolutely right, of course, but he would have been hung up immediately if he had been caught. They left the town on their bicycles in the night and flew to Brombachtal to wait for the end of the war.<sup>47</sup>

Anna B., looking back, is proud of her father for not joining the war; still, she is hesitant to endorse her father's choice because it had negative connotations at the time. Fathers are often silent background figures. This supports our findings on family silences in Chapter 2, where war stories and wartime are swept under the carpet to avoid controversy in the collected memoryscape, normalising the past in a desire for acceptance.

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41. See also Samuel's memoir. He was born in 1934: Samuel, *German Boy*.

42. Strickland, *Eyes Are Watching, Ears Are Listening*, 287.

43. Emmerich and Hull, *My Childhood in Nazi Germany*.

44. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 19.

45. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 19.

46. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 20.

47. DTA Sig. Nr. 630, 31.

## Trauma and Emotions in Memoirs

The collected memroyscape of the Second World War is an emotional narrative as much as it is one of avoidance and silences. Male cohort members experienced war through a variety of lenses and at different ages, providing complex narratives of war. Emotions play an important role throughout this chapter, as war memoirs provide a micro-perspective on individuals and their individual trauma. It is important to avoid committing anachronisms, however, when discussing trauma in these memoirs; the cohort members in this study lived and breathed before these terms were in common usage.<sup>48</sup> The field of the history of emotions is theoretically complex; how we define, interpret and understand emotion can be highly subjective.<sup>49</sup> Some may suffer from PTSD, as the survivors' memories 'are continually (re)constructed and in no way provide a true "snapshot" of history'.<sup>50</sup> To discuss these events, individuals need to have a solid grasp of the language in which they write. They also need to have a sharp memory, in order to recall the 'events', or rather their versions of them. As Samuel Hynes in *The Soldier's Tale* argues, 'no man goes through a war without being changed by it, and in fundamental ways'. How individuals navigate this change illuminates their relationships—not only with themselves, but with others, in conflict. He argues that although not always explicitly stated, this change 'will be there'. Inner change motivates writers, as it is about 'not only what happened, but what happened to *me*'.<sup>51</sup> Whilst Samuel Hynes provides a helpful method of analysis for war memoirs, his work is only based upon interpreting war memoirs from an Allied perspective.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, from the Allies' perspective, the Second World War was influenced by the 'anti-myth of the

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48. See Svenja Goltermann, *Die Gesellschaft der Überlebenden: deutsche Kriegsheimkehrer und ihre Gewalterfahrungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 1. Aufl. (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2009).

49. Nicole Eustace et al., 'AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions', *The American Historical Review* 117, number 5 (January 12, 2012): 1487–1531; Ute Frevert, *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling, 1700-2000*, Emotions in history (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found / Ute Frevert.*, Natalie Zemon Davis annual lecture series Y (New York: Central European University Press, 2011); 115 Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2006); Susan J. Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of Emotions', in *Doing Emotions History*, ed. Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 41–56; 48,50 Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

50. Pamela Ballinger, 'The Culture of Survivors: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Memory', *History & Memory* 10, number 1 (Spring 1998): 122.

51. Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 3.

52. See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Basic Books, 2000).

Western Front' through such works as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). The Nazi regime continued to reproduce and idealise German militarism, based partly on the stab-in-the-back myth. Many male cohort members read works by authors such as Karl May, which would have shaped not only their understanding of war and adventure, but also the style of their narrative. Hynes makes a strong case that earlier writing influenced the next generation, and this is exhibited by the Hitler Youth memoirs. Omar Bartov disagrees with this argument, positing that 'individuals can and do become brutalised in the course of fighting', and it is dangerous to equate individuals soldiers' experiences without looking at the wider context, namely in which war that soldier was fighting.<sup>53</sup> Whilst Bartov's argument is valid and necessary in our assessment of the Wehrmacht, it is still imperative that we consider why cohort members remember the Wehrmacht and the SS in a particular way; further, we must ask what aspects of war they readily recall from autobiographical memory. The narrator chooses which aspects of war fit their self-concept. The silences and gaps within these memories are sometimes indicative of a need for self-control; this self-control may stem from PTSD, uncomfortable memories, trauma, or shame about the memories in question.<sup>54</sup> It might also reflect an inability to come to terms with the Holocaust or the brutality of the Wehrmacht. The narrator controls the narrative by eluding certain questions and diverting the reader.

In terms of memory and its relationship with war, remembering often prompts a myriad of emotions, which may manifest themselves through trauma. Trauma theory, as its premise, discerns that there is an 'unattainability of the original experience which gave rise to an array of psychological and behavioural pathologies suffered by the victims' after an event.<sup>55</sup> Trauma theory builds upon medical theory and 'psychological responses to the past'.<sup>56</sup> As Laub argues, this changes the relationship of trauma and history on a fundamental level: history is now a 'crisis to whose truth there is no sim-

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53. Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 12.

54. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

55. Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż, *Reimagining the War Memorial, Reinterpreting the Great War: The Formats of British Commemorative Fiction* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 161.

56. Sokołowska-Paryż, *Reimagining the War Memorial, Reinterpreting the Great War: The Formats of British Commemorative Fiction*, 161; Cathy Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience: Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.

ple access'.<sup>57</sup> The narrative now possesses a healing power for its victim.<sup>58</sup> Memories of trauma transform not only how one remembers the past, but also change how the present is understood and lived. History is not left behind, but continues to cause re-experiences of the lived event.<sup>59</sup> In *Die vergessene Generation*, Sabine Bode writes about trauma and PTSD as concepts experienced by the 'forgotten generation' of war children; she provides a case study of a man who attempts to undergo therapy for his trauma as a child of war.<sup>60</sup> Studies on autobiographical memory show that people have the capacity to recall strong emotions over a period of time, yet the more often individuals recall these memories the less they recall the emotions of the memory.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, there may be many reasons why the memories in these life narratives often lack emotional vocabulary: perhaps the writer has recalled this memory too many times; he or she may be unable to articulate their feelings; or he or she may not want to discuss feelings at all.

Trauma can surface when writers are recalling difficult memories—as noted in multiple studies on emotions in the First World War.<sup>62</sup> Sigmund Freud theorised much of early trauma theory. He was a proponent of the hysteria theory and also developed psychoanalytic theory. Freud's work, *Mourning and Melancholia* (*Trauer und Melancholie*) is considered fundamental by Paul Ricoeur to understanding the relationship between collective memory, blocked memory, manipulated memory and abusively controlled memory.<sup>63</sup> Defining what trauma precisely is, is rather complicated and has been the focus of numerous studies. Generally speaking, trauma can be defined as either physical or mental pain, which causes the mind to repeatedly return to the origin of the trauma through 'fears, impulses and anxieties'. The event of trauma 'overwhelms existing defences against anxiety in a form which also provides confirmation of those

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57. Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57.

58. Ibid.

59. Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience: Introduction', 10.

60. Bode, *Die vergessene Generation*, 217-224.

61. Martin Conway, Jefferson Singer, and Angela Tagini, 'The Self and Autobiographical Memory: Correspondence and Coherence', *Social Cognition* 22, number 5 (October 1, 2004): 491-529; Ali R. Moradi et al., 'Specificity of Episodic and Semantic Aspects of Autobiographical Memory in Relation to Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)', *Acta Psychologica* 127, number 3 (March 2008): 645-653.

62. Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Cultural history of modern war (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

63. See the full argument in Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time', 73ff.

deepest universal anxieties'.<sup>64</sup> Giving victims a voice helps them to process and understand their trauma, as seen in studies on Holocaust victims.<sup>65</sup> Overall, what is important to highlight here is the subjectivity inherent in memoir-writing: how do cohort members understand the emotional experience of the Second World War when remembering and writing life narratives?

What we now categorise as trauma might explain why certain accounts lack emotional language, or have difficulty delineating events clearly. Paul Fussell attributes World War II soldiers' sense of kinship and camaraderie to a 'collective memory tool' borrowing terms and concepts used to create a communal sense of recollection.<sup>66</sup> Pamela Ballinger writes that PTSD blurs the line between history and memory; individuals can create false memories of what happened or repress their memories.<sup>67</sup> Hunt's study of war's impact on memory and ageing suggests that the strongest emotional memories of veterans are battles. It is these particular memories, he argues, which can lead to 'psychological difficulties on the part of the veteran'. However, the strength of the memory does not necessarily correlate to the trauma of the original experience.<sup>68</sup> Dori Laub's work may provide a starting point for our understanding of how the memory of war affects the narrative. Borrowing his concept of the oral transference of traumatic memory, we see how the reader can also become a 'participant and co-owner of the trauma' through narrative retelling. He argues that trauma 'is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after', and is a 'reconstruction of historical reality'.<sup>69</sup> The trauma experienced by the victims of the

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64. Caroline Garland, editor, *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach*, Tavistock Clinic series (London: Duckworth, 1998), 9-11; See, also: Mark E. Bouton and Jaylyn Waddell, 'Some Biobehavioral Insights into Persistent Effects of Emotional Trauma', in *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41-59; Further, the current definitions of trauma and PTSD found in the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) 2005 guidelines lend themselves as useful: 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Management (NICE)', <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG26/chapter/1-Guidance>.

65. Dori Laub, 'On Holocaust Testimony and Its 'Reception' within Its Own Frame, as a Process in Its Own Right: A Response to "Between History and Psychoanalysis" by Thomas Trezise', *History & Memory* 21, number 1 (2009): 127-150.

66. Fussell, *Wartime*; Pamela Ballinger, 'The Culture of Survivors: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Memory', *History & Memory* 10, number 1 (1998): 99-193; Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*; See further, Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

67. Ballinger, 'The Culture of Survivors: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Memory', 100-109.

68. N.C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 143.

69. Laub, 'Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening', 57-58, 69.

Holocaust has greatly influenced trauma historiography, and only recently have scholars begun to question and understand perpetrator trauma. Trauma is emotional, even for the perpetrators. Levi Bar-On's *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* supports this claim through recorded interviews with children, whose parents were concentration camp Nazis.<sup>70</sup> The issue is also explored by Bernhard Giesen, who analyses how Germans deal with the memory of perpetration and its collective trauma.<sup>71</sup> He notices that many members of the Wehrmacht claim simply to have followed military orders (*Befehlsnotstand*), as a means to 'relativize their guilt' during the immediate postwar period.<sup>72</sup> Looking at writings from the 2000s, there is less of an attempt on the part of the Hitler Youth generation to relativise guilt; however, their experiences are often relativised and normalised to fit with the narrative of the collective 'wir'. Roger Luckhurst is also interested in memoir-writing as a genre which explores trauma. He argues that the memoir gained popularity in the 1990s because of 'its re-organisation around trauma'.<sup>73</sup> Interpreting trauma often involves interviewing the survivors and bearing witness to the physical ramifications; however, trauma can also be interpreted by reading memoirs and analysing written accounts of war experiences: noticing which experiences are mentioned, repeated, or ignored, and what visceral responses are described in the text.<sup>74</sup>

Some of the men who discuss their military experiences prioritise logic over emotion in their narratives, and yet the text remains at its core a complex emotional narrative that deals with growing up and the creation of an adult self-identity. The original language of transcription also seems to effect the style and tone of the writing, as men writing English-language memoirs tend to write more about their emotions than those writing in German.<sup>75</sup> In his unpublished memoir, Elmar G. (born 1925) factually details his attempt to join the army, his rejection, and subsequent enlistment in the Luft-

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70. Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*.

71. Bernhard Giesen, 'The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity', in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 112–154.

72. *Ibid.*, 122.

73. Roger Luckhurst, 'Traumaculture', *New Formations*, number 50 (2003): 36.

74. For example, see Pollak and Wodak, 'Crime Scene: Wehrmacht Exhibition', 215–17.

75. Samuel, *German Boy*; Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*; Lehmann and Carroll, *In Hitler's Bunker*; An emotional German-language account, in which Hermand comments on this: Hermand, *Als Pimpf in Polen*; Indeed, fiction presents more of place for emotional language and situations: Wagner, *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod*; Hans Peter Richter, *The Time of the Young Soldiers*, New edition (London: Armada, 1989).



waffe.<sup>76</sup> He recounts his military training (Ausbildung) and the swiftness with which the Wehrmacht trained him and his squadron. More men were needed at the front, he claims.<sup>77</sup> At the time, Elmar glorified the war as a grand adventure. Indeed, he writes mostly of his comrades and their friendship, just as in Flex's novel.<sup>78</sup> Of his own participation in the war, he writes:

Although I was not a 'hurrah soldier', because I lacked the faith and enthusiasm for Hitler, I always tried to be correct and dutiful. Certainly that was the reason why in recent days I had been promoted to a sergeant by the Battalion Commander at the instigation of the company commander.<sup>79</sup>

This self-reflection boosts him up in the estimation of the reader: although not a zealous Nazi, Elmar remains a decent soldier. Guilt and shame both play a role in Schlesier's memoir, written in English (2014), which depicts his KLV and Flakhelfer experiences.<sup>80</sup> He recalls meeting a boy from his school, who was a year younger than him; the boy had recently joined the Flakhelfer, and was asking how Schlesier was doing:

I said, 'Good'. I just said it automatically. It didn't mean anything and it wasn't even true. Then I looked into the face of a woman standing next to us. She had heard me. She stared at me with huge, empty eyes. ... I felt like a heel, a coward. Why was I still here? All my buddies were in the war, all the younger people I had known, many already dead. Everything was collapsing and here I was, biding my time. ... She probably didn't mean anything by the way she looked at me, or didn't understand how it made me feel. But suddenly I was ashamed that I was hiding. I had to go where the others were, regardless of what happened.<sup>81</sup>

There is a different emotional quality here, compared with Elmar G.'s writing. He represents his younger self as feeling shame for not doing more for the war effort, but later guilt for being a part of the war effort. Schlesier, writing in 2014, attaches more negative emotions to his memory, whilst Elmar G. highlights the more positive aspects of his service. Elmar G. also did not have a period of forced rest as Schlesier did, thus Schlesier—regardless of his earlier conscription as a Flakhelfer—allows his negative emotions to take precedence. Further, Schlesier's writing is more emotionally open, compared with Elmar G.'s.

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76. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, 30.

77. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, 31-32

78. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, Elmar G., 50-58; see also Otto Peters, *Opa als Schüler und Pimpf*, 243.

79. DTA Sig. Nr. 1082, 78.

80. See Chapter 4 on his KLV experience.

81. Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier*, 121.

The emotional impact of the war on boys and young men is more visible in earlier cohort writings than in later ones. Perhaps age and time alter the emotional intensity of memory, even if the memory in question was not, by definition, traumatic. It is difficult to explain why emotional language shifts over time—perhaps emotional stress or a sense of resiliency becomes more distant over time. Indeed, cohort members may have dealt with the memory of the war by making it more difficult to recall memories. Writing in 1947 at the age of eighteen, Ernst P. (born 1929) has a nuanced self-representation:

But the horror of these last days of war has impressed itself on my mind indelibly. I had to see comrades die next to me, others lying in their blood, and those terrible pictures will always be in my mind, when the horror of this war is said. I became more serious and thoughtful about it.<sup>82</sup>

In a similar vein, Günther H. writes of his *Luftwaffenhelfern* experience during a bombing. Witnessing mass death weighs heavily on his mind:

Tired and laid-back, we fell on hard straw sacks, one last thought of the loved ones in the distance, the blankets drawn even tighter over the head, then the sleep brought a brief forgetfulness. But what was that? Freezing, we were startled, the air-raid alarm! So that was the reception in the old port city. There were already the first fir-trees in the sky, and suddenly the bombs howled and burst around us. Next to the rails, clawed to the ground, was a heap of boys, almost children, awaiting his fate.<sup>83</sup>

This passage shows Günther H.'s response to the bombing of his barrack town after he is made a *Luftwaffenhelfer* in January of 1944. Witnessing the death of a group of young boys on the train tracks seems to have had a major impact on him; this image is foregrounded, despite the many other deaths he must have witnessed or caused. The phrase 'Freezing, we were startled' (*Frierend schreckten*) demonstrates how he felt remembering this memory only a few years afterwards. This theme continues in other reports in Haß's collection, as Hans-Jürgen F. (born 1929) writes: 'I went back to the front, but not as a fanatic for an ideal, but as a soldier and an upright German.'<sup>84</sup> It is important to recall Hans-Jürgen F.'s interpretation of the Wehrmacht in 1947, which illustrates how quickly the myth of the Wehrmacht as 'innocent' became grounded in public memory. His mention of 'shock' and how he was 'mentally almost broken'

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82. Report 1 in Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 14.

83. Report 36 in *ibid.*, 137.

84. Report 12 in *ibid.*, 40.

reflects the impact that war has had on his psyche. Another male narrator (born 1928), aged twenty, writes something similar about his war experience: „The experiences of war and captivity broke my idealistic worldview“.<sup>85</sup> In their early writings, male cohort members express the emotional turmoil they felt not only at the end of the war, but also in discovering the purpose of that war. They are not able to deal with the implications of agency and losing.

Writing about their memories of the Second World War, male cohort members claim a sense of pride in being in the military, idealising their bravery at the front.<sup>86</sup> Felix Römer's analysis of Catholic German interview transcripts, captured by the Americans during the latter half of the war, has HJ generation members commenting on how proud they were of being in the military that they would have received promotions, had they not been captured; that they were proud of belonging to the Waffen-SS; and that they were proud of being German.<sup>87</sup> In contrast, many memoirists writing after 1990 are reluctant to express their pride in the Wehrmacht or belonging to the Waffen-SS. In a published collection of war memories, young men allude to military pride, however indirectly.<sup>88</sup> Emotional stress or responses to bombings are excluded from these self-presentations. Perhaps distance from these events, gender, and a soldierly disposition influenced self-representation.

In memoirs from the 1990s onward, cohort members use emotional manipulation and concepts of masculinity, tied to camaraderie, to idealise the war and to justify their actions to the reader. In terms of memories of war and the role of cohort members in the Wehrmacht, many male cohort members idealise the war in their writings. Militarism in the Third Reich was closely tied to a hardened concept of masculinity, which meant most boys grew up in an environment which emphasised militarism, bravery, ca-

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85. Report 44 in *ibid.*, 157.

86. See Klaus Granzow, *Tagebuch eines Hitlerjungen, 1943 - 1945* (Bremen: C. Schüneniann, 1965), 96-7, 102-3, 117-18, 137-38.

87. Although Römer does not define who is included in his definition of the 'so-called Hitler Youth generation', his work helpfully highlights reflections from this sample. Felix Römer, 'Milieus in the Military: Soldierly Ethos, Nationalism and Conformism Among Workers in the Wehrmacht', *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, number 1 (2012): 139-141.

88. See narratives by Heinz Gernert, Hans Schmidt, Robert Beyer, Dieter Biedekarken in Helmut Schmidt, Loki Schmidt, and W.J. Siedler, editors, *Kindheit und Jugend unter Hitler*, Auflage: 2 (Munich: Pantheon Verlag, October 22, 2012).

maraderie, and sacrifice.<sup>89</sup> As a result, the Wehrmacht, which idealised militarism and masculinity, is often featured in the male memoryscape of war. A number of English-language male memoir writers, for example, joined the U.S. military in one way or another because joining did not require new skills. English-language writers tend to avoid discussions of the Wehrmacht; however, they continue to see the Wehrmacht as infallible and incorruptible. This is visible in post-war period accounts, as a number of cohort members use their military skill-set to find jobs—even though many had good educational opportunities in Germany after the war. Cohort members exhibit difficulty in representing the complexity of the war in which they took part.

There is a noticeable change between the sentiments the writer feels at the beginning, as opposed to during the war. Gert S., for example, calls the beginning of the war ‘heroic’ and ‘typical German-like organised’.<sup>90</sup> By the end, he is emotionally distraught by all the death he has witnessed:

In my memory, these dead are all still laughing people. On April 8, in the middle of Halberstadt, I experienced the inferno of fire and destruction. The few things, memorabilia from last days, which I had found a few days before between the rubble of my parents’ house in Wehrstedt, were irrevocably lost there.<sup>91</sup>

The personal experience is not juxtaposed with the suffering of the Nazis’ victims, showing the limitations of self-reflection. As a result, narratives which detail joining the Luftwaffe are often distinguished from joining the Wehrmacht and, by extension, from German war crimes to create artificial distance from events. In their writings, male cohort members argue that cultural circumstances inevitably drew them all towards the military.<sup>92</sup> Zempelin, who tends to avoid responsibility as a Napola student in his memoir, readily states that many of his classmates joined the Luftwaffe because „they believed that they would most likely achieve fame and honour as fighter pilots (*Jagdflieger*)“.<sup>93</sup> He does not critique this thinking, only seeing it as a result of the

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89. Römer, ‘Milieus in the Military: Soldierly Ethos, Nationalism and Conformism Among Workers in the Wehrmacht’, 141-142; Felix Römer, *Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht von innen* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2012), 141-157.

90. DTA Sig. Nr. 557, 38.

91. DTA Sig. Nr. 557, 39.

92. Johann Voss, *Black Edelweiss: A Memoir of Combat and Conscience by a Soldier of the Waffen-SS* (The Aberjona Press, July 2002); Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*; Schumann, *Being Present*.

93. Zempelin, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 138.

cultural influences and period.<sup>94</sup> Wolfgang Goettig, writing in English for his grandchildren in 2015, does not offer an explanation as to why he joined the Luftwaffe; perhaps it was obvious to him why a person would want to join. He exerts more self-control on his writing with the insertion of a Wikipedia article on the Kassel bombings as reason for joining the Luftwaffe. In Goettig's self-published memoir, he explains, 'Before we graduated from 8th grade every student had to decide, with the help of a counsellor, what trade he or she wanted to learn'.<sup>95</sup> He was interested in becoming a Luftwaffe pilot: 'Before I could be accepted to the pilot school in 1942 I had to provide proof, going back four generations, that in fact I was a true red blooded German'.<sup>96</sup> This type of attempted normalcy through unquestioned authority is typical in these life narratives, and remains an aspect of the collected memoryscape. However, his time in the Volkssturm was cut short, as American troops quickly surround him and his friends:

During the night of 14-15 April 1945 we slept in a barn in a small village somewhere between Wuppertal and Remscheid on the Rhine. As we woke up in the morning we saw U.S. troops coming out of the forest and approaching the village. It was at this time that the farmer claimed to have received a message from the advancing troops to give up any German troops in the village or the village would be destroyed by the U.S. artillery.<sup>97</sup>

Here, we see the strength of camaraderie, with the young people fighting together until the end: the strength of the bond is only truly tested when faced with defeat. Other than this small excerpt, Goettig does not write about his wartime efforts, perhaps in an attempt to redeem himself in his own eyes and in the eyes of the reader. The memoir was written for his family and, to a certain extent, his community—all of whom are still constrained by their self-identity as victims.

Albin Greger, who was a Sudetenland German, lived in a village that was generally supportive of the Nazi regime. Emotions run high throughout Greger's memoir, as he attempts to master his past: whether he is successful or not, remains doubtful: 'War wounds those it does not kill. For me, this memory is a wound that has not healed'.<sup>98</sup> The memory Greger is alluding to here, is his memory of aiding Einsatzgruppen-H kill

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94. Ibid., 137.

95. Goettig, *From Hitler Youth to American Hero*, 14.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid., 28.

98. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle location 157.

Jews in his home town.<sup>99</sup> Greger describes the event as such:

We arrived at the place where the execution was to take place. A young man, in a smart looking uniform whose rank and unit I didn't recognize, was presiding; there was another soldier [*sic*] as well, one whom I recognized as a boy from my neighborhood, home on leave. A number of other members of the home guard were in civilian clothes, though armed. Later on I found out that the young man in the smart looking uniform was an officer of the SD, or *Sicherheitsdienst*, the dreaded security police of the SS. The prisoners were ordered to start digging.<sup>100</sup>

As locals looked on, the officer became increasingly agitated. He ordered the locals to help the Jews dig, so Greger 'volunteered immediately, silently hoping that that would eliminate me from being ordered to the shooting'.<sup>101</sup> Once the hole was dug, 'the SD officer threw away his cigarette and with one quick motion drew a machine pistol from his hip. He unfolded the stock, raised it to his shoulder and fired'.<sup>102</sup> Greger assumed that once all the Jews were dead, they would be free. They were next ordered to 'run back and see where the others were'. On the way back into town, he ran 'into the "others"'. Attempting to withhold his emotions and account for his actions, Greger states:

They were an old woman, a young woman leading a little girl by the hand and a teen girl surrounded by men of the home guard. I reported to their leader and hold him that they were to hurry up. As I walked alongside the group I noticed a boy from the home guard, who started to beat the old woman with a stick as she stumbled along. I asked him why he was doing that. He told me angrily that she had called him a 'dirty Schwab'.

Knowing what was going to happen and not wanting to be a part of it or even watch it, I walked slowly away from that place, hoping I wouldn't be noticed. ... My thoughts were in a turmoil. Could human beings really do such things? I heard the hammering of the machine pistol followed by a few single shots, and I knew it was all over.

But my arrival was greeted with jeers. I was asked if my stomach was so weak that I couldn't take such things. Feebly I tried to defend myself by saying that I was out looking for partisans.<sup>103</sup>

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99. This is assumed based on known historical information: Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 416; See, also Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

100. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle location 125.

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, Kindle location 135-145.

This memory is recounted at the beginning of his memoir, before it jumps back in time, to his happier childhood. The event is never contextualised, nor is it dated. It provides merely an emotional account: the reader is called to empathise with Greger's sense of injustice, and to feel his unease—both mentally and physically. For a short period, Greger was a POW for some resistance fighters, as part of the Slovak National Uprising in 1941-1942; during this time, he witnessed the death of many of male cohort members and villagers. This experience may have led to him helping the *Einsatzgruppen*, but he does not make this connection himself. Whilst Greger does not regret taking part, he later questions the brutality of it all—although does not consider whether the act, in and of itself, was morally justified. Further, choosing to open with a discussion of the crime and his participation in it shows the extent to which time can impact eye-witnesses. It also illustrates how emotions are manipulated for the sake of self-justification, or to explain away witnessing or participation. The emotional appeal of the text helps to normalise the event: either by citing trauma-type symptoms, or exhibiting emotional vulnerability in the account.<sup>104</sup>

In some cases, emotional reactions can be attributed to what was experienced and where. In 1944, Friedrich S. (born 1927) was drafted to the Waffen-SS. Here he writes of his first experience of armed conflict:

Since all recruits like me were already pre-military trained and thus 'war-like', after our short time in the partisan mission, we had the worst of all wartime experiences. Already at that time I was of the opinion that – compared with a part of the Balkan inhabitants – the group of beasts of prey designated as beasts behaved actually still very humane.

Only after having found three of our own comrades, with their feet hanging from the trees, an extinguished fire under a charred head, can one understand that – in case of unavoidable staying behind at the place of action (wounding) – often the best buddy was asked for the 'mercy shot' to exclude such expected tortures.<sup>105</sup>

This quotation not only problematises attempts to justify perpetration, but also using emotions as an attempt to rationalise the shooting of partisans. Friedrich S. provides

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104. Rosenthal's works look at the 1980s, attitudes have most likely changed since then, yet attitudes of the de-politicisation are still present in a number of memoirs. Rosenthal, "...wenn alles in Scherben fällt..." : von Leben und Sinnwelt der Kriegsgeneration : Typen biographischer Wandlungen; Gabriele Rosenthal and Christiane Grote, 'Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts mehr zu tun': zur Gegenwartigkeit des 'Dritten Reiches' in *Biographien* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1990).

105. DTA Sig. Nr. 1953, 5.

other examples of having his comrades ‘murdered’ by local Balkan villagers, leading to retaliation and revenge on the villagers where the troop was stationed.<sup>106</sup> Recounting witnessing the murder of innocents, cohort members use tactics of silence and avoidance to claim victimcy.<sup>107</sup>

In contrast, Schlesier’s life narrative contains no emotional reaction to his involvement in the war as a *Flughelfer*. He only briefly discusses the emotional impact of regional air raids as a *Flughelfer*. As he tells the reader, he ‘was more concerned about [his] upcoming birthday’ party than whether there had been bombings. Where one would expect passages detailing fear and worry over working in an anti-auxiliary unit, he only expresses shame over having a *Flughelfer* uniform, for his father disapproved of Nazism, but his sense of commitment to protect Germany overrode this feeling of shame.<sup>108</sup> At this point in his life, Schlesier’s self-representation may indicate an unwillingness to engage with emotions from that time. This type of dis-engagement with the past is found in other memoirs: Paul W. (born 1927) gives very factual recordings, such as, ‘We arrived there on 2 June 1944. On 6 June the allies landed’.<sup>109</sup> Such short statements may be indicative of trauma, but it is difficult to attribute a direct cause to stylistic choices. The representation of the collected memoryscape in public and private memory reflects this cohort’s challenge in coming to terms with the emotional and sometimes traumatic memories of wartime experience. Context plays an important role, as the English-language writers indicate more of a willingness to engage with the past through emotional language, to incite sympathy from the reader. German-language writers, however, depend more upon a silent understanding between cohort members, with regards to what is taboo and what is up for public discussion.

## Growing Up in War?

Some narrators have difficulty acknowledging their agency in war, indicating that new coping mechanisms were needed. As Robert Beyer contemplates his maturity as a *Flakhelfer*: ‘And how old were we? 14, 15 or 16 years old. I don’t believe we were

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106. DTA Sig. Nr. 1953, 6.

107. Heinz Beck, ‘No One Lives For Himself’ *Memories 1925 – 1945: A Biography in Essay Form*; Wolfgang Venohor, *Erinnerung an eine Jugend* (Munich: F.A. Herbig, 1997), 209ff.

108. Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier*, 44.

109. DTA Sig. Nr. 2146, 2



any older than that'.<sup>110</sup> To keep the boys engaged, they were belittled by generals of their age, who suggested that their parents were trying to encourage them to leave. Their reaction was unsurprising: 'That was out of the question for us! We did not want more!'<sup>111</sup> There is a processing pattern that can be seen across the collected memoryscape, evidence of a more widespread normalisation of memory. Historian and journalist Harald Stutte's recent book, co-authored with Günter Lucks (born 1928) and entitled *Hitlers vergessene Kinderarmee* (Hitler's Forgotten Child Army) (2014), raises some of the bigger issues with regards to perpetration, compliance, and child soldiers. In a *Der Spiegel* article, Stutte writes about those who served in the SS: 'But those who served in it were not always automatically criminals, but sometimes victims themselves—like these forced juvenile recruits'.<sup>112</sup> He stresses that the sheer number of young people who participated, and their efforts, have largely been forgotten. However, his analysis lacks more recent terminology, which might label these young adults 'complex political perpetrators'; indeed, in Stutte's view, they are victims swayed by auxiliary forces. A number of memoirs struggle with self-representation, but not all men openly discuss this or even acknowledge it to be an issue. The continuous use of the collective 'wir', found in most of the unpublished and published narratives, not only generalises the experience, but shifts the agency (or in this case, blame) from the individual to the group.

This ties in with changing interpretations of the Wehrmacht, both in public as well as private memory, during the postwar period. The concept of the innocent Wehrmacht was born a few days before the end of the war, with a radio broadcast stating the Wehrmacht fought honourably until the end.<sup>113</sup> In *The German War* (2015), Stargardt argues that the

convenient Cold War excuse of the 'good' Wehrmacht and the 'bad SS'—  
which helped underpin the rearmament of West Germany as a full mem-

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110. Robert Beyer, 'Hitlerjugend, einsatzbereit!' Kleindienst, *Wir wollten leben: Jugend in Deutschland, 1939-1945*, 142.

111. Dieter Hildebrandt, 'Den Führer entsetzen', in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 69; Robert Beyer, 'Hitlerjugend, einsatzbereit!' in Kleindienst, *Wir wollten leben: Jugend in Deutschland, 1939-1945*, 143.

112. SPIEGEL ONLINE Germany Hamburg, 'Zwangsverpflichtete der Waffen-SS: Hitlers Kindersoldaten', <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/hitlers-kindersoldaten-wie-die-ss-minderjaehrige-rekrutierte-a-958278.html>.

113. Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 165.

ber of NATO in the mid-1950s—became unsustainable by the mid-1990s, thanks in no small part to the travelling exhibition of ‘Crimes of the Wehrmacht’. The exhibition showed photos of public hangings and mass shootings taken by ordinary soldiers.<sup>114</sup>

In *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, Wolfram Wette argues that the Wehrmacht leaders perpetuated a myth in the early post-war period that the Wehrmacht was clean, and not involved in the last phases of the war. Wette argues that this itself was the Wehrmacht’s ‘greatest victory’, even though the war was lost.<sup>115</sup> This motivates the country to remember the Wehrmacht fondly, and for individuals to modify their memories. More recently, Omer Bartov questioned Germany military historiography and its inability to deal with the Wehrmacht during the Holocaust, pointing to a number of areas which ought to be studied on social and historical levels.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, when the Wehrmacht crimes came to light to the public, memoirists had to alter, silence, or challenge their narratives to enable normalisation; not only did the collected memoryscape have to accept this cultural challenge, but also age and growing up were ample justification for the Wehrmacht crimes.

Using written accounts to analyse the war’s effect on memory, academic literature on child soldiers presents various coping mechanisms which cohort members use to rehabilitate themselves and deal with everyday violence. In the case of the Hitler Youth generation, memory is especially complicated and has undergone multiple reinterpretations as a consequence of the the Wehrmacht exhibitions. Changing public perceptions, which revealed the atrocities committed by average soldiers, also affected the collected memoryscape. This exhibition, which has had an impact on public discourse, may have changed this generation’s construction and use of coping narratives. Individuals use a number of coping narratives in their self-representations, three of which Utas identifies as the most prevalent: *la débrouille*, submission, and ‘victimcy’.<sup>117</sup> In terms of the Hitler Youth cohort and their writings, the most popular self-representation and war coping mechanisms are ‘tactical agency’ as a form of ‘victimcy’, and Baines’s categorisation of ‘complex political perpetrators’. Tactical agency allows children to

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114. Stargardt, *The German War*, 2.

115. Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, 165.

116. Bartov, *Germany’s War and the Holocaust*.

117. See discussion on *la débrouille* in Claudia Seymour, ‘Everyday Violence and War in the Kivus, DRC’, in *Childhood, Youth and Violence in Global Contexts: Research and Practice in Dialogue*, ed. Erica Burman et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 162-163.

create coping mechanisms to deal with war-based environments, but is a short-term response to the state's social structures. This term may, for example, be found in the earliest life narratives.<sup>118</sup> Returning to the previous examples from Haß's collection (Ernst P., Günther H., and Hans-Jürgen F.), we can see how the young men use tactical agency in their writing. Consider, for instance, the following line: 'I went back to the front, but not as a fanatic for an ideal, but as a soldier and an upright German', from Hans-Jürgen F.'s narrative. Here, the writer remembers his experience two years later, and positions himself as an agent of his actions; however, he re-frames his response to fit the (new) German state's social structure (fighting 'not as a fanatic for an ideal') of Nazi Germany. The term 'victimcy', used by Mats Utas in his work with the Liberian youth, is defined as 'a form of self-representation by which agency may be effectively exercised under trying, uncertain, and dis-empowering circumstances'.<sup>119</sup> In other words, young people present themselves as victims to negotiate survival and war, and to get help. These acts are especially noticeable in secondary source literature on the early aftermath of the Second World War; it was during this time especially that cohort members had to find a means of coping with perpetration and complicity.<sup>120</sup> In von Plato's research, respondents highlighted how 'they had been involved in useful and socially meaningful activity'. Still, von Plato does not discuss the effects of war on the generation—other than highlighting how many felt that they 'had been misled and ill used by the Nazis' and 'how easily the individual can be manipulated'.<sup>121</sup> Using this terminology, von Plato's respondents demonstrate tactical agency: cohort members use different connotations to represent themselves as either victims or agents. These same tactics appear in life narratives as coping mechanisms, adopted by memoirists to deal with war when creating self-representations. This expands upon von Plato's explanation of the warscape as having immediate and long-term impacts on self-representation.

In these memoirs, many cohort members changed their self-representations from

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118. Alcinda Honwana, 'Innocents et Coupables: les Enfants-Soldats Comme Acteurs Tactiques', *Politique Africaine* 80 (2000): 58–78.

119. Utas, 'Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone1', 408.

120. For example, see McDougall, 'A Duty to Forget?'; Wierling, 'The Hitler Youth Generation in the GDR: Insecurities, Ambitions and Dilemmas'; von Plato, 'The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States', 212ff; Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*.

121. Von Plato, 'The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States', 214, 217.

child to adolescent, or from adolescent to adult during the war. Therefore, Baines's concept of 'complex political perpetrators' is useful in navigating these complex and visceral self-representations.<sup>122</sup> Baines draws on other theories of agency, and the issue of the 'choiceless choice' in the environmental surroundings of children in war.<sup>123</sup> Although the term is useful, her usage of it does not include age justification, which is an important factor in analysing the cohort. This term allows increased flexibility when studying children, or people who grew up in a warscape. McMahn critiques Baines's theory by attesting that it has the possibility of diminishing agency. However, the term is useful in studying life transitions, as it allows for the adult author to provide a self-representation of themselves as a child/adolescent. In the memoirs, there is no consensus on the exact age that one transitions from a child to an adult. To complicate the matter further, German writers were more likely to consider the change from child to adult, whilst those writing in the U.S. were more preoccupied with the shift from childhood to adolescence. Male cohort members seem to have more difficulty self-representing themselves as a child or adult; their self-representations are more often rooted in victimhood, even if they were perpetrators in the war.

In many male memoirs, growing up during wartime is often the focal point: either the actual combat or assuming the role of a father within the family unit. In published English-language memoir titles, such as *Requiem for a German Past: A Boyhood Among the Nazis*, *In Hitler's Bunker: A Boy Soldier's Eyewitness Account of the Führer's Last Days*, or *Boy Soldier* the words 'boy' and boyhood are repeatedly used. How do cohort members, who committed acts of violence as teenagers, represent themselves in writing? Discourse on child soldiers is integral to our understanding of these texts, because we often see 'children as vulnerable, passive beings who need to be protected and cared for, rather than as active members of their communities'.<sup>124</sup> Only recently have scholars shifted their discussion of children in war from one of victimhood to one of agency. Cook and Wall argue, 'it is clear that in the case of adults during war, victimhood and resourcefulness, as well as trauma and resiliency are complexly

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122. Baines, 'Complex Political Perpetrators'.

123. Baines, 'Complex Political Perpetrators', 165; See, further: C. Coulter, 'Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War: Challenging the Assumptions?', *Feminist Review* 88 (2008): 61.

124. Carola Eyber and Alastair Ager, 'Researching Young People's Experiences of War: Participatory Methods and the Trauma Discourse in Angola', in *Children and Youth on the Front Line*, ed. Jo Boyden and Joanna de Berry (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 189–208.

and variably intertwined'.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, children too can exhibit these complex emotions and as adults, create an understanding of what they experienced. Here, agency is defined as 'involv[ing] an ability to adjust to and take advantage of new and changing circumstances as well as the capacity to constructively engage with one's environment and society'.<sup>126</sup> Cohort writers use conceptions of age to their advantage, as many men who wrote about their war experiences were often under eighteen years of age. They often portray themselves as boy or teenage soldiers, to victimise their narrative—regardless of political indoctrination or belief in Germany's ultimate victory. Swaine argues that often adolescents are ignored as a social group in conflict and grouped with adults. Indeed, the categorisation of cohort members into 'children', 'adolescents' or 'adults' is complex.<sup>127</sup> The rhetoric of victimhood argues that because the cohort members were only children, they could not have known any better, even though they committed adult crimes. As Cook and Wall state, it is useful to consider the multifacetedness of children at war: they have agency and make decisions; as such, they can be victims, due to their agency. Indeed, cultural agency is paramount, as Judith Butler notes—emphasising the importance of language itself as a form of agency, in social relations. Cultural expectations and the self-construction of agency play a role in how cohort members define, articulate, and understand their role in war: 'Construction is not opposed to agency; It is the necessary scene of the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible'.<sup>128</sup>

Compared with early accounts before 1950, accounts from the 1990s onward call for differentiation between the Wehrmacht groups, the SS ranks, and the HJ. This change is most likely the result of the Wehrmacht exhibitions. The relationship between the HJ and the SS is addressed in historiography, however scholarly research has failed

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125. Daniel Cook and John Wall, editors, *Children and armed conflict: cross-disciplinary investigations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.

126. Seymour, 'Everyday Violence and War in the Kivus, DRC', 161; See, also: J. Boyden and G. Mann, 'Children's Risk, Resilience, and Coping in Extreme Situations', in *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience across Cultures and Contexts*, ed. M. Ungar (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 3–26; S. Arnfred and M. Utas, *Re-Thinking Africa: A Contribution to the Swedish Government White Paper on Africa* (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2007).

127. Aisling Swaine, 'A Neglected Perspective: Adolescent Girls' Experiences of the Kosovo Conflict of 1999', in *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*, ed. Jo Boyden and Joanna de Berry, in collab. with Thomas Feeny (London: Berghahn Books, 2005), 63–86.

128. Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 11.

to consider memories of this relationship and, by extension, growing up.<sup>129</sup> Jon Savage argues that, as the war continued, SS involvement in the HJ and BDM became more ‘aggressively ideological’.<sup>130</sup> He gives several hyperbolic statements about the Napola schools, stating that the ‘Waffen-SS represented the crowning pinnacle’.<sup>131</sup> Lacking, as they do, further source-based evidence, his statements ought to be reconsidered, when considering the relationship between the SS and the Napolas. Historiography, instead, focuses on the devastation of the final months of the war. Rempel uses Bartov’s framework of the ‘barbarisation of warfare’ found on the Eastern front to discuss the final months of war, as children and adolescents were exploited to fight.<sup>132</sup> He states, ‘after the Stalingrad disaster, bewildered HJ leaders and determined SS officers conspired to generate a children’s crusade to shore up crumbling defences and offer thousands of teenagers as a final sacrifice to the god of war’.<sup>133</sup> The SS presented itself as an elite group, and one which many adolescents idolised. The uniforms being a mark of adulthood and maturity, they might have swayed young people to enlist as a point of pride.<sup>134</sup> Johan Voss’s (born 1926) memoir represents less of a need to distinguish between SS groups in early works. Writing in English, he writes about his younger self, a Waffen-SS who was part of the 6th SS-Gebirgsdivision Nord. There is a tension here, between the Allied and German perspectives—further, Voss’s attitude reveals a conflict between his understanding of truth and his former enemy’s:

This character of the world in which I live during the day is determined by fundamental truths that have resulted from the outcome of the war and are uncontested, as a whole, even among my German fellow prisoners. The basic truth here is that the war against Germany was a crusade against the arch evil, embodied by ‘Hitler and his henchmen,’ the SS in particular.<sup>135</sup>

His disbelief in the Allied interpretation of the SS and of the Wehrmacht prompts several interpretations. Voss implies that he does not understand or know why the SS are treated so badly. He might have written this to avoid self-implication, whilst refusing

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129. See Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*; further, chapter three in David M. Rosen, *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

130. Savage, *Teenage*, 340-341.

131. *Ibid.*, 343.

132. Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941-1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 1-6, 142-156.

133. Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 233.

134. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 208; Bernd Wegner, *Hitlers Politische Soldaten: Die Waffen-SS 1933 - 1945: Leitbild, Struktur und Funktion einer nationalsozialistischen Elite*, 9th edition (Paderborn u.a.: Schöningh Paderborn, 2008), 217-241; Rempel, *Hitler’s Children*, 206, 2014.

135. Voss, *Black Edelweiss*, 66.

to fashion a self-identity complying with his captors' version of events. His experience is similar to many cohort members, as men were drafted in the Waffen-SS rather suddenly; although a number say that they did not see criminal practises nor did they themselves participate in what they deemed 'criminal'.

Memoirists writing in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century distinguish between different SS groups, possibly as a means of distancing themselves from the postwar stigma of the SS. In their writing, they illustrate the differences between the top ranking SS, the Gestapo, and the lowest rank: the Waffen-SS. This framework is used in self-representation, as a means of lessening their sense of guilt within the broader context of war.<sup>136</sup> Rainer L. (born 1930), writing in 1994-1998 of his wartime in a KLV camp, voices his opinion on the Waffen-SS:

This troupe was surrounded by a dark myth in which admiration mixed with terror. The troupe was associated with arrogance, meddling, discipline, fanaticism, recklessness. Who joined the troupe, crossed a line. Nobody would have dared to utter what was generally thought: The SS: a highly disciplined mafia with the spirit of rudeness. Anyone who put his cross here stood apart from the rest of the others. There was no joking with him anymore.<sup>137</sup>

As this quotation demonstrates, although the SS was always considered worse than the Wehrmacht, we can see how much Rainer L.'s view of the SS has changed. More often than not, the SS is referred to positively by cohort members; however, Rainer L.'s reinterpretation shows that there are still contested areas within the collected memoryscape. In a similar manner, Hans-Peter Sch. (born 1928) notes the irony in joining the SS: 'Officially, only ideologically stable volunteers with a minimum size and healthy people were welcome. Those who were not already volunteered for another branch of service had to expect to be a 'volunteer' for the SS.'<sup>138</sup> Although he presents a negative view of the SS, at the end of his memoir, he provides documents from the German Federal Archive about his regiment and war duty. In addition, he inserts a data sheet with statistics of the total number of German adolescents who went through RAD, Volkssturm, and HJ possibly as a means of recreating himself as a statistic or number. This may indicate that whilst he now condemns the SS in writing and was relieved to serve in the

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136. DTA Sig. Nr. 1202-2(1144-2), 13-14; DTA Sig. Nr. 473-1(557-1), 36.

137. DTA Sig. Nr. 301-1, 59.

138. DTA Sig. Nr. 1067, 12.

Luftwaffe, that may not have necessarily been the case at the time.

In memoirs, the writer's distinction between which part of the military they joined allows them to create self-representations which absolve them of any moral wrongdoing. As the Waffen-SS played a prominent role in many memoirs written by former Nazi elite school students, many write about their time serving and dealing with the implications. Therefore, a reinterpretation of the role of the SS was necessary to normalise their war narratives. Otto Schuster (born 1925), for example, writing in 1997 recalls at his Napola how an SS recruiter came to enlist his classmates. Schuster tells the reader that he decided instead to enlist in the Luftwaffen, which in turn allows Schuster to distance himself from not only his educational background, but the Waffen-SS.<sup>139</sup> Schuster also distinguishes between the different areas of the Wehrmacht, separating what he deems to be bad and good Wehrmacht units. Zempelin writes about the SS recruitment in his Napola, how SS uniformed men came in to convince school boys to join:

The rest of the branches sent young officers of majors or captains' rank, all decorated, of course, with the Knight's Cross, for advertising purposes in our school. Only the Waffen-SS sent two: one with a Knight's Cross and one with glasses and Kriegsverdienstkreuz II. Klasse. The Knight's Cross bearer spoke of valour and final victory, the eyewear man of the political soldier, I recall the conclusion of his (very refined) lecture: who wants to go to sea, who goes to the Navy, who wants to fly, goes to the Air Force. That's fine. Who does not want both, has the choice. Either he is a whole guy, then he goes to Waffen-SS, or he is a wimp, then he goes to the army. Of course this person did not say that, but that's how it stuck with me (and not just me). From our institution nobody reported to the Waffen-SS in two graduating classes in a row, which had not gone unnoticed in Berlin. Not, as you might expect, for political reasons. No, simply because he had observed that classmates were often underfoot in the Waffen-SS, whilst their comrades from the army proudly wore a lieutenant's uniform.<sup>140</sup>

Even though the tactic worked on the other cohort member's HJ group, Zempelin states that it did not work on him nor his classmates because of the military ranking they would receive. Both examples illustrate the attempts by the SSs to appeal to young men through uniform and elitism, intimidating them to join. Recording these memories in writing illustrates how the generation uses victimcy in narratives shape the collected

139. Otto Schuster, 'Mein Eltern waren strikt dagegen' in Leeb, *Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*, 89.

140. Zempelin, *Des Teufels Kadet: Napola-Schüler von 1936 bis 1943: Gespräch mit einem Freund*, 139.



memoryscape—they may have felt pressured by recruiters to join the Waffen-SS, or pretended that they were pressured.

The relationship between the SS and HJ is depicted as contentious in historiography, and it is therefore hard to draw conclusions about how changing perceptions of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS impacted the collected memoryscape. Indeed, many adolescents saw the Waffen-SS as the prestigious upper-class of the nation; their uniforms captured the imaginations of many.<sup>141</sup> However, the community did not always honour joining the SS; sometimes it actually caused friction between local HJ groups and the SS. In a postwar account, a cohort member claims they were bullied to join the SS, in March 1945:

All the HJ Home Guard [*Volkssturm*] members were assembled in a common room which was then locked and a guard placed outside! Our HJ district leader (Bannführer) made a speech in the presence of the instructors. He declared that, according to a secret order from the Führer, all offers to volunteer for active service were no longer valid except for those for the SS and for the one-man torpedo weapons. ...[I]t was, he said, a matter of honour to do so. ...[A]nyone who didn't sign up for the SS would be sent straight to a 'recruitment camp'.<sup>142</sup>

All the boys were forced to stand at attention for up to eight hours, each interrogated separately, using 'the most aggressive tone of command'. If a person refused to do so, calling the SS 'an ideologically motivated troop', the response was, 'what a pious Christian you are'. The boys 'had to sign a statement on oath that he would remain silent about the day's events'.<sup>143</sup> As this account shows, the HJ were also part of the *Volkssturm*: boys ranging from the ages of sixteen to nineteen, not in uniform, who near the end of the war participated in guerrilla warfare against the Allies.<sup>144</sup> The SS, the Wehrmacht, and the HJ *Volkssturm* play an important role in male memoirs, and ought to be considered in our study of how self-representation is altered by memories of the Second World War. Age is used as a tactic by the adults to coerce cohort members to fight, allowing them to shift blame onto adults.

Joining the SS was a means of transitioning into adulthood, as Kleinau's memoir

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141. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 208; Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 206, 214.

142. Karl-Heinz Jahnke and Michael Buddrus, *Deutsche Jugend 1933 - 1945: Eine dokumentation* (Hamburg: Rezension, 1989), 405.

143. 405-406 *ibid.*

144. Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 233, 235; Stargardt, 'German Childhoods', 313-314, 316; Bessel, *Nazism and War*, 148.

suggests. After spending months as a KLV camp leader and doing his yearlong RAD service, Kleinau joined the Waffen-SS, which was the pinnacle of his adult career. His classmates also joined the Waffen-SS, and the Christmas of 1944 was the last he spent with his family. Kleinau states, 'To be a soldier in the Waffen-SS: only this seemed to be important at this point'.<sup>145</sup> His experiences on the front reveal discrepancies in his memory. In a rather telling passage, he writes that his students asked him, after watching *Die Brücke* (1959), why nobody defected the Waffen-SS—even when the Americans were approaching. For him, it seemed absurd that anyone would defect—the SS were trained to not do that. As the Americans attempted to get the group of young men to cease fire, Kleinau tells us that:

He knew that they faced a unity of the Waffen SS; but he also seemed to know that at the age of 17 we were at the front for the first time because he almost implored us to accept the offer that night. He also said that this was the last chance and the artillery would prepare for the tanks' attack early in the morning. In response, our machine gun fired a salvo across the railway embankment, and we both in our marksman's hole enjoyed ourselves deliciously.<sup>146</sup>

Throughout the memoir, Kleinau presents himself as an adult who is acutely aware of his place as an elite student. However, he does not willingly admit to the role of the SS in the Holocaust. He states that it was only after the war that he discovered the atrocities of the SS.<sup>147</sup> Kleinau admits he believed that the Holocaust footage was Allied propaganda; it was only after discussing things with his mother, and noticing the strange smell coming from the near-by 'factory', that he accepted its truthfulness. Whilst Kleinau presents himself as an adult, he sees his decisions as belonging to the collective, not himself as an individual. However, rather than explicitly claiming that he was a victim of National Socialism, Kleinau tells the reader that he learnt how to change his mindset.<sup>148</sup> Through the collective *wir*, Kleinau treads the line between childhood and adulthood, innocent and perpetrator.

Grass's claim that his Waffen-SS involvement differs from his fellow cohort members in his difficulty or reluctance to accept and account for his involvement, what this

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145. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*, 74.

146. *Ibid.*, 78.

147. *Ibid.*, 103.

148. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

past means for his self-identity as an adult. Grass's admittance that he was part of the Waffen-SS situates him within the larger collected memoryscape of his cohort, however reluctantly. Whilst his memoir differs stylistically from the rest in this chapter, Grass writes of his HJ involvement quite candidly. However, he does not go into much detail, which might be an attempt to reconstruct his self-identity as a narrator. For example, he writes: 'As a "Hitlerboy", I was a young Nazi. I was faithful till the end.'<sup>149</sup> Grass's memoir is problematic in other ways, in terms of his confessional needs as an autobiographical writer. Whilst unapologetic for his fervent Nazi attitudes during the Third Reich, he claims to be ashamed of his Waffen-SS past. This portion is ill-framed and out-of-place, as though Grass wrote it down as fast as he could to get the whole thing out of the way. He gives no justification for being in the SS, nor does he detail his involvement in the HJ. On joining the SS, he writes: 'I would rather have seen the Waffen-SS as an elite unit, which was used in each case, when a front collapse sealed off. For the boy, who saw himself as a man, the weaponry would have been especially important.'<sup>150</sup> Talking of his SS involvement, Grass states that he lived in a 'recurrent sense of shame' (Scham verschweigen), and that no matter what he did the 'burden remained', whilst 'no-one could alleviate it' (niemand könnte sie erleichtern).<sup>151</sup> He is one of the only memoirists who directly states this within the narrative of the memoir, making the sincerity and reconciliation with the Waffen-SS questionable.

English-language memoirists are also more willing to indulge in positive aspects of the Wehrmacht, ignoring the negative images of the Wehrmacht Exhibitions. Themes found in Greger's memoir, which distinguishes between different SS branches and connects SS involvement with adulthood, remain unchallenged in many English-language memoirs. Greger was recruited to the Waffen-SS in 1945, when he was seventeen years old.<sup>152</sup> Before he joined, Greger tells us that his neighbour was drafted into the SS Totenkopfverbände. He writes, 'He was in the black uniform of the SS Totenkopfverbände, in shining black riding boots and with all kinds of silver on his collar. I was very impressed. He was still the same fellow, though, smiling placidly and saying little'.<sup>153</sup> Greger 'found out after the war' that the SS Totenkopfverbände was 'in charge of the

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149. Günter Grass, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2006), 43.

150. *Ibid.*, 126.

151. *Ibid.*, 127.

152. See Lucks, *Ich war Hitlers letztes Aufgebot*.

153. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle location 677.

concentration camps where such terrible things happened' and he could not imagine his 'mild mannered and slow witted childhood friend in the role of a brutal prison guard. But a uniform and a little power have changed so many men before'.<sup>154</sup> Greger illustrates an inability to reconcile the individual he knew with the crimes he committed and witnessed, and does not attempt to reconcile the issue in writing.

Age is used to justify aspects of the cohort members' involvement in the Wehrmacht, perhaps indicative of the complexity of political perpetration for cohort members. In Beck (born 1925) and Greger's (born 1928) English-language memoirs, the killing of partisans is not considered taboo, and is openly discussed.<sup>155</sup> Both Beck and Greger do not suggest anywhere that they later researched partisan groups, suggesting that their motive in writing is to create distance and justify their actions. After returning from his furlough in January 1944, Beck writes:

As soon as we got back we went on a hunt for Partisans. Planes had left a supply of material as well as more men for the Resistance on the Plateau of Langres. We had to move fast. Military vehicles were not available so all sorts of different vehicles including drivers were gathered from the French.

... As we approached to capture the Partisans, some of them acted as suicide bombers. We didn't shoot anyone. Interrogation of the prisoners led to the location of one off their hideouts [*sic*]. It was a restaurant in Sens near a bridge that crossed the river Yonne. I apprehended one of the Partisans during the raid and handed him over to the Military Police. The imprisoned Partisans sat in our barracks with bread and water. For other necessary 'business' they were taken, cuffed together, across the barracks-square to the Donnerbalken. Guards pulled down their pants and even cleaned their butts!<sup>156</sup>

In another instance, Beck states: 'We were in an area infested with Partisans'. Again, later in the war: 'On my way back to the Unit the partisans could have killed me one hundred times but I had a guardian angel'. These instances show how Beck uses his memory of partisans on the Western front to absolve himself of guilt and legitimise his actions in the war. Using this tactic, his self-representation relies upon the idea of being an eye-witness who 'didn't shoot anyone'.<sup>157</sup> Beck acts both as a perpetrator and

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154. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle location 681.

155. See also Campe, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie*.

156. '12. Time As Recruit In France' in Heinz Beck, "No One Lives For Himself" Memories 1925 – 1945: A Biography in Essay Form'.

157. *Ibid.*

eye-witness to the front, indicating that war memoirs are used to re-write and justify the atrocities of war.

Resistance fighters captured Greger and some of his fellow villagers, making them dig trenches in captured territories. Labelling them as ‘anti-German partisans’, Greger witnessed the death of many of his friends and relatives of friends during his time in captivity. The Germans were able to gather enough formations, consisting mainly of SS forces, to ‘contain and crush the insurgents’ in 1942.<sup>158</sup> Greger’s village was ‘caught in the middle’. The town ‘was taken over by partisans, as the guerillas were called in. Several communist sympathizers joined their ranks’.<sup>159</sup> Being pressed for more men, the Waffen-SS began to recruit Greger and other boys from the town. Greger defends the SS:

The Waffen SS is often portrayed as group of fanatic killers committing many atrocities all over Europe. No doubt a lot of this is true. However, I did not personally encounter any such atrocities while I was a member of the Waffen SS; most of my time in the corps was spent in desperate retreat from the encroaching Soviet forces. Besides, I was only 18 and wanted to survive.<sup>160</sup>

This story of aiding the *Einsatzgruppen* to kill the Jews, as well as the malnourishment and mistreatment by the resistance, allows Greger to justify his part in the Waffen-SS and assume a guiltless position. This enables him to position himself as a moral person. Both memoirs use age in different ways: Beck, already 20 by 1945, cannot use age as a justification for his actions; whilst Greger is able to avoid responsibility through victimcy.

Helmut Altner also uses victimcy to cope with everyday violence in his memoir. Altner (born 1928) uses victimcy just as Greger does. Altner’s published memoir ought to be contextualised: the memoir’s translator Tony Le Tissier found a copy of the transcript, which had been originally published in 1948 in Germany, forgotten, and re-published by Le Tissier in translation. The translator mentions how there was no word for ‘teenager’ in German in 1945, but does not discuss the importance of this statement.<sup>161</sup> Again, what is rather striking is the shift in the text from the individual ‘ich’

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158. David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933-1949* (London: Macmillan, 2016), 742.

159. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle Location 862.

160. *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 1703.

161. Helmut Altner, *Berlin Dance of Death*, 1st Edition edition, in collab. with Tony Le Tissier (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers and Book Distributors, 2002), 8.

to the generational, collective 'wir' in his narrative, and the inner dialogue concerning his forced growing up:

There is a special SS imprinting in a bookshop. 'Happy Youth' stands in large letters above a picture of a Hitler Youth carrying a large kettle drum. This annoys me. Yes, that was indeed my 'happy youth', marching behind such a drum and such a drummer. Our youth was as dull as the thud of the drum from the day we started school right up to now. Will it always be like this?<sup>162</sup>

In this quotation, Altner's self-representation contrasts the propaganda image of a happy young boy with himself: tired and dirty from fighting. Altner, who participated in the Battle of Berlin from 16 April to 2 May 1945, is an especially complex political perpetrator due to his young age as compared with his wartime experiences. The narrative contains modes of victimcy which show Altner creating self-representations of himself as an adult. He makes only one mention of having a mother or any relatives.

Age also plays an important role in Thamm's published English-language memoir (born 1927) and Dieter E.'s unpublished English-language memoir. Thamm, who was a few years old than Dieter E. (born 1930), fought at the Front in 1944 and 1945. His self-representation hinges on the use of his diary entries and drawings, which he uses to propel the story forward. Living in Sudetenland, on the Eastern front, Thamm witnessed, and possibly took part, in fighting 'splinter groups' of Soviet soldiers: 'I could not believe that I was in the middle of this chaos. I no longer felt the heroic defender of my home, only a terribly frightened boy'.<sup>163</sup> Again, Thamm is a complex political perpetrator because of his involvement in the war; moreover, he relies on age to position himself as a victim in his writing. On the following page, a blurry image of Thamm and his friend, Lothar Scholz, who also served on the front, gives pause. In the middle of the memoir, during which Thamm discusses his training for the front, he depicts himself and his friend, a few days before leaving for the front. The edges of the photo look burnt, with large black spots on the right-hand side. The photograph itself is blurry, with Thamm and his friend standing close together—their hands almost touching. Both young men are wearing clean suits. Standing so close together might indicate a kind of collective responsibility for going to war; further, the civilian clothing

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162. Altner, *Berlin Dance of Death*, 30-31.

163. Thamm, *Boy Soldier*, 99.

may signify an attempt to normalise wartime. Thamm's self-representation continues to fluctuate throughout the memoir: at the pre-military training camp he talks of him and 'several hundred boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen ... already getting basic combat training'.<sup>164</sup>

Dieter E. and Gerhardt B. Thamm's memoirs highlight the ambiguities in remembering childhood during the Second World War. Dieter E. (1930) portrays himself as a HJ poster boy. As we saw in chapter 3, he enjoyed his activities in the HJ and prefers leading his own Jungvolk group. Eager to help in the war effort and demonstrate an independence from his parents, Dieter E. and his classmates were enlisted to dig trenches: 'They had trembled with excitement when they found that they would be send to the eastern front to dig trenches. At last their fatherland needed them to participate in the final victory, they thought'.<sup>165</sup> There is a sense of resentment here, towards those already fighting; clearly, Dieter E. was a boy who idealised heroism and militarism. Once they began their work in earnest, they were given meagre rations to live off of, and were treated, in Dieter E.'s memory, poorly: 'The work was hard and boring, causing some of the more aggressive boys to come up with all sorts of mischief. Of course the leadership did not look upon this very kindly and severe punishment followed'.<sup>166</sup> Going to this HJ training camp, and surviving the harsh environment with little food, gives him purpose, not unlike those fighting on the front. Even though, as the years passed, it became increasingly obvious that Germany was in retreat, he regrets not being able to serve properly in the military: 'Dieter, by now fifteen, envied him greatly and resented the fact that he was still considered too young for active service in the army. He watched as the village filled with retreating German soldiers'.<sup>167</sup> Here, Dieter E. expresses a desire to grow up and act like an adult in serving the fatherland. Moreover, his restraint is a preemptive foreshadowing that it is best to stay behind—in view of how the war ended. Yet as illustrated by current child soldier literature, Thamm and Dieter E. were both complex political perpetrators: Thamm, in fighting on the front, and Dieter E., in yearning to fight. Whilst Dieter E. claims to have wanted to grow up faster to join the war effort, Thamm revels in being a boy and not a man. Both men

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164. *Ibid.*, 105.

165. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 21.

166. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 22.

167. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 48.

position themselves as victims, as they normalise their narratives in various contexts.

The geographical location and the time of writing both play a role in how the Wehrmacht, the SS, and other less savoury aspects of the war front are represented and narrated within the collected memoryscape to create the illusion of normalcy. Concepts of childhood and adulthood are at play throughout the memoirs, in both German and English. Many cohort members treat their wartime experiences like survival stories, performing feats of heroism and cunning at the centre.<sup>168</sup> The age of the cohort member during the war is used as a means of avoiding perpetration labels; moreover the crimes of the Wehrmacht are not discussed in these narratives. In English-language memoirs, the innocent Wehrmacht myth seems to live on—its place in the larger collected memoryscape remains unquestioned. In turn, in German-language narratives, authors use silence and avoidance as a means of concealing their negative self-worth in face of the crimes committed by the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS. Dieter Biedekarken, Robert Beyer, and Schlesier do not retrospectively question their Flakhelfer work, but rather underscore the honourable difficulty in performing such tasks. It appears as though working as a Flakhelfer for the Luftwaffe allowed cohort members to selectively remember positive wartime memories. These omissions and silences allow war experience self-representations to go unchallenged, enabling them to maintain their preferred self-identity.

## Conclusion

This chapter raised theoretical issues concerning the analysis and interpretation of men's memoirs of wartime, and representations of the war front in different times and locations. Growing up continues to play an important role, as it did for those who stayed on the home front. Growing up and becoming an adult is actually more of a backbone to memory of the Third Reich than sacrifice or reliability, and is characteristic of memoirs from the 1990s onward. These qualities of stability, sacrifice, and discipline are downplayed in recent works because of current anti-war sentiments. This shows that the collected memoryscape wants to remember war experiences through narratives of normalisation and victimcy. These writers are, using Baines's term, complex political perpetrators. There is some potential in using trauma theory to illuminate our under-

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168. Robert Beyer Kleindienst, *Wir wollten leben: Jugend in Deutschland, 1939-1945*, 138-140.



standing of what these men went through during the war. These life narratives illustrate how self-portrayals can change over time, as well as war emotions, and how they are expressed.

One area which is given less attention in the collected memoryscape is the way that partisans, the Wehrmacht, and the Waffen-SS are represented in life narratives. Partisans are not dealt with in a meaningful manner in the memoirs; cohort members, who fought against partisans, do not contextualise their activities nor question why they did what they did. Although the Wehrmacht exhibitions made the crimes explicit and helped retrench the innocent Wehrmacht myth, cohort members who faced combat either praise or do not reflect upon their experience.

Further, this chapter argued that fathers who did not die during the war were treated positively in cohort members' collected memoryscape. Gender does not seem to be a determining factor in discussions of relationships with fathers, as both boys and girls were emotionally and physically distant from fathers. Fathers who fought in the war or, as in Anna B.'s case, evaded the Volkssturm draft, are remembered as heroes for either participating or avoiding the draft. It seems that military rank did not matter to cohort members, as few readily recall their father's military ranking. Fathers are rarely featured in great detail, but are rather subsumed within the family group with memories of mothers. It also seems that age did not have much of an effect on how fathers were remembered—although more emotional vocabulary is used in earlier writings. Male memoirists' self-representations as soldiers were dependent upon a number of set factors: whether they thought of themselves as children or adults, to which section of the German military they belonged, and how they depicted their fathers. Further, their ability to deal with negative or controversial memories—such as the killing or murder of partisans—varies based upon their use of victimcy. Strikingly, those writing in English seem more willing to record their involvement or witnessing of criminal acts than their German-language counterparts. English-language memoirists are more willing to engage with negative identities; they try to lessen their culpability by writing their memories in the style of an *exposé*.



## Chapter 6

# Representations of the End of the Third Reich

‘We did not understand until much later, how much we were abused, we the former Hitler Youth’, writes Dorothee K. (born 1932) in her unpublished 2014 memoir.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Second World War not only meant the defeat of Hitler, but also the end of a regime that many had known since birth. Analysing what the end of the Third Reich meant to this cohort and its representation in memoirs allows historians to see how, on a private level, writers collectivised this memory. The end of the war also meant that a number of cohort members moved abroad to the United States, which engendered a new collected memoryscape. Cohort members emphasised different aspects of the end of the war, which I analyse in this chapter to show common trends and variations. As Jarausch sees it, representations of the war often involve ‘an odd contest over victimisation’ with the cohort vying for victimhood.<sup>2</sup> This chapter argues that self-representations of the end of the Second World War are dependent upon audience and context, with subgroups emerging based on time, place, and wartime experience—ultimately leading to different interpretations of the end of the regime. It is divided into three parts: the first examines representations of the immediate postwar period; the second looks at how English-language writers depict the end of the war; and the third considers how wider trajectories of the cohort are represented in the memoirs.

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1. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533,2 Dorothee K. ‘Nachkriegserinnerungen, 1947-1954’, 11.

2. Konrad H. Jarausch, ‘1945 and the Continuities of German History: Reflections on Memory, Historiography, and Politics’, in *Stunde Null: The End and the Beginning Fifty Years Ago*, ed. Geoffrey J. Giles, Occasional Paper, No. 20 (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1997), 13; Biess, *Homecomings*, 43ff; Edward Norman Peterson, *The Many Faces of Defeat: The German People’s Experience in 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1990); Hoffmann, *Stunden Null?*

Nineteen forty-five is pivotal to most of these memoirs. Most remember where they were when the regime ended, and how they felt during that time.<sup>3</sup> Considering gender and life stages allows us to study cohort members as active agents who ‘alternatively use different tactics in their attempts to cope with challenges and exploit the opportunities provided by the conditions’ not only during the war, but also in the post-war era.<sup>4</sup> Individuals remember where they were during the last phases of the war, and write about discovering Hitler’s suicide, how they escaped the encroaching Red Army, and their desperation to keep fighting at the front. Although 1945 was extremely important in determining the cohort members’ life trajectories, not all of the memoirists discuss the impact of the end of the regime—nor do they tell us what they did after the war. Documentation from the DTA lends some insight into the mental and physical states of these cohort members during the early postwar period; however, only a small number of memoirists discuss their experiences after the spring of 1945. This may be due to them feeling that 1945 was a break in their lives. In contrast, some cohort members use 1945 as a starting point for their memories of life after the war. For example, Marian A. (born 1932) alludes to the end of the Third Reich by referencing the image of Hans-Georg Henke—now considered iconic—the crying Hitler Youth. This image marks a new chapter in his life, in its placement at the beginning of his memoir.<sup>5</sup> In published memoirs, the year 1945 is temporally significant, with the juncture often signalling the end of the narrative. Because 1945 meant different things for different cohort members, there is no overarching definition that can be applied to everyone.

We might use the concept of a *Stunde Null* to describe this pivotal moment, however its usage and significance remain contested.<sup>6</sup> As a concept, *Stunde Null* refers to midnight on 8 May 1945, when the war came to an end, and a new, post-Nazi Germany was born. Both East and West Germany faced similar early postwar challenges in terms of their lack of resources and dealing with former concentration camps. Once the war ended, a defeated and occupied Germany underwent changes both politically

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3. Stephen Brockmann, ‘German Culture at “Zero Hour”’, in *Revisiting Zero Hour 1945: The Emergence of Postwar German Culture*, ed. Stephen Brockmann and Frank Trommler (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1996), 8.

4. Utas, ‘Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman’s Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone1’, 406.

5. DTA Sig. Nr. 3431.1.

6. Brockmann, ‘German Culture at “Zero Hour”’, 8.

and socially. From the viewpoint of the Allies, denazification was the next logical step, after victory.<sup>7</sup> Following the summer conference in Potsdam, the Allies decreed the denazification of Germany.<sup>8</sup> The aim, in part, was to thoroughly remove all symbols of Nazism and, in the American case, to court martial all Germans involved in the Nazi party. All four zones dealt with denazification by different means, with varying results.<sup>9</sup> The only structures left to ‘maintain their institutional identities’ were the churches.<sup>10</sup> Another important issue arose: the question of collective guilt and responsibility, both of which grew out of this process and which continued to raise more questions than answers.<sup>11</sup> Along with resentment towards the American denazification process—which only focused on the physical reconstruction rather than the re-education of the German people—the denazification process was not a true success, as elements of Nazism continued in West Germany.<sup>12</sup>

*Stunde Null* is not used by the generation, as Brockmann argues, because the generation was silent. They were unable to understand the current situation they faced in the early postwar years.<sup>13</sup> Most Germans were concerned about surviving, rather than focusing on describing or hypothesising about a ‘Zero Hour’.<sup>14</sup> On a local level, Germans began to view Nazism as an ‘external force’ from elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Local areas could decide which aspects of their history to highlight; in the early postwar period, politicians in West Germany used this as a tactic.<sup>16</sup> The GDR had more reason to interpret

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7. Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York, N.Y.: HarperCollins, 2009), 385.

8. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 234.

9. See further: Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*; Lutz Niethammer, *Die Mitläuferfabrik: die Entnazifizierung am Beispiel Bayerns* (Berlin: Dietz, 1982); Norman M Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Herf, *Divided Memory*, 69-105, 201-266, Josef Foschepoth, ‘German Reaction to Defeat and Occupation,’ in: Robert G. Moeller ed.: *West Germany under construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Ann Arbor 1997.

10. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 203.

11. Frei, *1945 und wir*; Lars Rensmann, ‘Collective Guilt, National Identity, and Political Processes in Contemporary Germany’; Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*; Karl-Heinz Reuband and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany: An Oral History* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2014); Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*.

12. Niethammer, *Die Mitläuferfabrik*.

13. Brockmann, ‘German Culture at “Zero Hour”’, 60-61.

14. *Ibid.*, 7,18.

15. Caroline Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 3.

16. *Ibid.*, 30.

1945 as a break or *Stunde Null*, for political purposes; politicians argued that the German people had been deceived and betrayed by the Nazis.<sup>17</sup> In the early postwar period, public rhetoric emphasised German suffering during wartime; this continued to influence the German public's understanding and memory of the Third Reich. Wartime trials allowed Germans to view themselves as the 'first victims of the Third Reich'.<sup>18</sup> This rhetoric, along with the memory and experience of denazification, as well as foreign occupation, posited Germans as double-victims. This double-victimhood was fostered, in part, by myth-making, along with the death toll from aerial bombings and forced expellees.

Sebald's argument that the Nazi past has been hidden from the public, and that the silence has made this whole period of history taboo, has been heavily disputed in postwar historiography.<sup>19</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Mommsen, and Langenbacher argue that there was a taboo placed upon discussion of the Nazi past. Moeller, Nieven, Biess, Wittlinger, Berger, and Sharples disagree—arguing that there was no taboo or silencing of the Third Reich during the postwar period.<sup>20</sup> Sharples divides narratives of German victimhood into three distinct periods: the late-1940 to 1950s, which emphasised German suffering; the 1960s to 1970s, which depicted the Germans as perpetrators; and the 1990s onward, which has been a return to German victimhood.<sup>21</sup> This division of public discourse differs when it comes to the Hitler Youth generation because the emphasis on German suffering and victimhood is constant throughout the postwar period. In Hitler Youth memoirs, suffering and victimhood are often deeply personal; only select English-language publications attempt to claim responsibility for the entire German population.

The cohort's life narratives reflect their variety in wartime, as well as during post-

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17. Wierling, 'The Hitler Youth Generation in the GDR: Insecurities, Ambitions and Dilemmas', 308ff; Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990*, New studies in European history. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Plato and Meinicke, *Alte Heimat, neue Zeit*.

18. Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust*, 29; Pendas, "I Didn't Know What Auschwitz Was": The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial and the German Press, 1963-1965'.

19. Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust*, 30.

20. Moeller, *War Stories*; Wittlinger, 'Taboo or Tradition? The 'Germans as Victims' Theme in West Germany until the Early 1990s'; Stefan Berger, 'On Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War Is Not a Historians' Controversy', in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. William John Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 210–224; Eric Langenbacher, 'The Mastered Past? Collective Memory Trends in Germany since Unification', *German Politics & Society* 28, number 1 (2010): 42–68.

21. Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust*, 30-31.

war experiences. In archived family narratives, we ought to consider what is excluded as well as what is emphasised. Certain stories may be over-represented in narratives because of family group culture, which might have motivated the narrator to shape their self-identity within the family unit. Published memoirs, on the other hand, do not account for family, instead opting for more sensationalised and exposé-style narration, placing certain events above others. As a result, difficult topics might have been glossed over or not mentioned at all. Early cohort writings differ from the overall source base due to their proximity to the collapse of the Third Reich, along with a relative lack of introspection. Subgroups of the cohort include those born 1925 to 1927 who experienced the war firsthand; those born 1930-1933 who went to KLV camps or stayed on the home front; those who stayed in Germany; and those who left for North America. Examining these differences illustrates how representations changed and what continued to stay the same throughout time.

## Representations of the Immediate Postwar Era

Richard Bessel contends that the end of the war was a ‘fundamental break with the past’ due to its violent nature, but this is debatable, based on cohort writings.<sup>22</sup> For many writers, there was an anticipation of the war ending, which may indicate a gradual and less definite breaking point. Others held out hope for a *Wunderwaffe*, with the sense that the end was nearing.<sup>23</sup> This tension is integral to memoirs. These emotional reactions to the end of the war are keenly felt and expressed by cohort members in the early life narratives. Redding interprets there being a shift from *wir* or *man* to *ich* ‘as a part of a retrospective narrative ... the coordination of a personal turning point and a narrative voice shift may ... be a strategy to downplay association with the Nazi regime’.<sup>24</sup> To a lesser extent, this strategy is employed in memoirs. Although they also hide behind the collective ‘wir’ in many cases, this shift to the postwar narrative voice does not downplay associations, as in Redding’s oral interviews. To answer these questions, this section has a chronological focus. The first section examines the 1950 Haß collection

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22. Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 369.

23. See, for example, Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*, 112; van der Kemp, *Achtung Achtung! Ende Ende!: Geschichte einer Kindheit und Jugend in dunkler Zeit, 1932-1951*, 171, KA BIO 2855, Hans-Kaspar Reinke, 1991, 36.; Reinhard Appel, ‘Auch in aussichtsloser Lage patriotisch’ in *Jahrgang 1926/27*, 145-151.

24. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow*, 32.

and early autobiographical fiction by the generation. Three main types of narratives exist in early texts: the first are expressions of emotional turmoil and a turn towards religion; the second are stories of surviving the war as a soldier and POW; and the third are stories of occupation and being a refugee. The second part of the section highlights the slight changes in private memory, which focus on representations of the family; the rape of German girls; and feelings towards occupation and Allied presence. Along with these changes, narratives continue to employ tropes found in the Haß collection.

The first narrative self-representation tactic in the 1950 Haß collection is emotional anguish, accompanied by a religious turn. The immediate postwar era saw German suffering as an excuse to revisit the past.<sup>25</sup> Hans-Jürgen F. writes of being ‘deeply shaken, emotionally almost broken’ as he was imprisoned into an American POW camp on 4 May 1945:

The ever expanding general resignation, which I did not let myself be affected by and began to expand again there, resumed again from where I left off in 1942. So I am back to my old school today and trying hard, with perseverance and tenacity to attain my high school [Abitur] diploma, to study law thereafter, and later to work as a civil servant in the reconstruction of a new, peaceful ‘German Reich’.<sup>26</sup>

As this quotation shows, the impact of the end of the war was emotional for cohort members, who now had to navigate new societal expectations and find a way, on a personal level, to deal with their Nazi pasts.

The same emotional distress is evident in Voss’s memoir, who attempts to speak for the cohort. Voss juxtaposes his pre- and wartime self-representations with his present day self, along with the beginnings of the denazification process and Nuremberg Trials. Captured as part of the Waffen-SS, Voss is critical of his imprisonment due to the time he spent as an SS soldier: ‘I don’t fully grasp the meaning of all those accusations, but I understand that we will all be held responsible for the terrible things that have become known’.<sup>27</sup> Voss uses language to include himself in the collective ‘wir’ of his generation and the Waffen-SS. It is not until the end of his captivity that Voss is able to recognise the crimes for which he is responsible. After finally accepting that he had been a part of the SS which, as a group, was responsible for the crimes of the Nazi

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25. Sharples, *Postwar Germany and the Holocaust*, 30.

26. Report 12 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 40.

27. Voss, *Black Edelweiss*, 2.



regime, Voss writes:

Our world has perished. A new world dawns, one in which our values are utterly discredited, and we will be met with hatred or distinct reserve for our past. Come on, I say, it's not without reason, let's face it! What counts is our future and what we are going to do with it.<sup>28</sup>

A similar optimism, found in Haß's collection, continues in later postwar accounts. However, time and distance from the events creates dissonance between memory and self-representation. Emotional responses continue to play a role in this collection of POW experiences, underscoring the range of emotions young men felt during and after their time as POWs. For those POW cohort members, representations of the immediate postwar period are emotionally complex, particularly with the end of the war marking the end of childhood, or innocence.<sup>29</sup> Writers close to the subject demonstrate an inability to look back at their experiences, until time allows for a more objective retelling.

Early writers express unease about the postwar situation and struggle to deal with the regime change.<sup>30</sup> Hilde Sch. perceives herself as always having stood apart from others 'externally but also internally'; the end of the war did not change her sceptical self-perceptions, and she continues to dread the change in the regime.<sup>31</sup> Ruth H. comments that although the world around her seemed chaotic 'life went on: we did not flee'—even though some of those who fled with her on the North German coast attempted to commit suicide by drowning.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, returning to a sense of 'normalcy' is important for some cohort members, as the upheaval and sudden change in ideology allowed many to reassess their own beliefs and ideals. For example, Eva-Maria J. comments on witnessing the bombing of Dresden, and then being forced to move again in the aftermath of the war:

In July 1945, we were expelled and came to W. How glad I was when, after I had gone through misery and need, nothing human was left alien to me, I could go back to school, not to forget all this, but to appreciate even more the good and the beautiful and to recognise it in its highest value! Time has made me more mature and purified and consolidated. If I have lost everything, I have won a lot for myself on the other side.<sup>33</sup>

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28. Ibid., 212.

29. See also Chapter 5 section on POWs

30. See Reports 50, 22, 15, 33 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 175-179, 72-77, 57-60, 117-121.

31. Report 63 in *ibid.*

32. Report 52 *ibid.*, 182.

33. Report 24 *ibid.*, 78.

The range of emotions she expresses, from misery to taking joy in living again, illustrates the emotional impact of the immediate postwar period on cohort members.

This emotional anguish is evidenced by the increased usage of religious terms—part of a German existential crisis, or struggle to understand this changed postwar Germany. German churches had already seen a revival during the early 1940s, and this continues into the early postwar period.<sup>34</sup> Despite postwar secularisation, religion continued to play an important role in West German people's lives, as these examples show.<sup>35</sup> In particular, some members of the Hitler Youth generation are seeking out a new belief system to replace Nazi ideology. Dieter Sch. writes that he became a Christian after his return from a POW camp:

In this time of inner distress I befriended a pastor's son, who also attended my school. From him I learned that a Christian never stands alone, that a Christian always has a goal. I became a member of a youth group of the Protestant Church. There I found young people who all wanted to walk the narrow, difficult way through Christ to God.<sup>36</sup>

The struggle to belong and to find acceptance parallels the challenges of growing up; it also underscores a need to fill the gap left by Nazism.<sup>37</sup> Without realising it, Dieter Sch. connects the postwar transformation of Germany to his Hitler Youth experience:

One has to start recruiting with the youngest, as they are the most susceptible. hence I started building up a youth group, which grew quickly to 50-60 boys aged 9 - 14. Every Sunday mass I told them the stories of the life and suffering of Christ, of the gift of his death at the cross and the certainty of his Resurrection.<sup>38</sup>

Dieter Sch. is able to use his Hitler Youth experiences to lead a Christian youth group of approximately the same age as the Jungvolk. He notes how important it was to start teaching the values of Christianity at a young age—mirroring Bernard Rust's promise to create the perfect National Socialist. Other cohort males write about their conversion to Christianity at POW camps, and the struggle to understanding why God would

34. Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 312-318.

35. Benjamin Städter, *Verwandelte Blicke: Eine Visual History von Kirche und Religion in der Bundesrepublik 1945-1980*, 1st edition (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2011).

36. Report 46 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 161.

37. See Report No. 9 (7 June 1946), 'Attitudes toward religion and the church as political factors in German life' Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt, editors, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945-1949*, in collab. with University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 81.

38. Report 41 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 149.

have allowed the 'death and misery of millions' of Germans.<sup>39</sup> Peter E., who went to an Adolf Hitler School before the war, discovered Christianity during his time as a POW, and saw his own imprisonment as 'violations of human dignity'.<sup>40</sup> Writings in this collection express emotional instability and attempts to find stability; along with a number of cohort members finding religion, namely Christianity, to fill the void left by Nazism. The emotive language of religion shows how emotional distress made some cohort members turn to religion.

Another common theme in these narratives is that of men fighting at the front, and subsequently being captured and taken to POW camps. As Stargardt recounts, a number of Hitler Youth fought until the last days of the war, and were captured by the Allies.<sup>41</sup> The Hitler Youth generation members, in general, were more active in writing down their POW experiences and discussing their role in the war.<sup>42</sup> There is little to no historiography that analyses the memories of Hitler Youth in war, nor those who were drafted into the *Volkssturm*, the SS, or as *Flakhelfer* near the end of the war.<sup>43</sup> Gabriele Rosenthal notes that war was especially difficult for men to discuss because of its close or nearly synonymous association with Nazism: 'The Zeitzeugen (eye-witnesses) were only not able to mourn their lost objects of identification neither could they mourn their painful childhood experiences of 1945'.<sup>44</sup> As Heer notes, those born between 1915-1924 attempt to distance themselves from their crimes, justifying themselves using Nazi language, denying, or reinterpreting their involvement, and becoming irritated at the suggestion that they were involved in war crimes.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, cohort members write more openly about their POW experiences, detailing what happened to them, and revealing generational and age differences with regards to war experiences. Because many of the cohort members were young men, they were still able to live relatively normal lives afterwards, whilst older men suffered more and could not always physi-

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39. Report 41 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 149; Report 44 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 157.

40. Report 14 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 56.

41. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 314.

42. Compared to, Kohut, *A German Generation*, 145.

43. The only sources which discuss it satisfactorily are as follows: Rosenthal and Gather, *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation*; Rosenbaum, "Und trotzdem war's 'ne schöne Zeit"; Plato, 'Hitler Youth Generation,' in von Plato, 'The Hitler Youth Generation and Its Role in the Two Post-War German States', 223.

44. Rosenthal, 'Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts mehr zu tun', 9.

45. Heer, *Vom Verschwinden der Täter: Der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber keiner war dabei*, 205.

cally recover from their experience. Therefore, the end of the Third Reich, and subsequent imprisonment, are openly discussed, but silences and gaps in narratives remain. Reports of POW treatment in the Haß collection are similar to Moeller's findings, as cohort members represent themselves as victims of Allied treatment. Eight reports out of 73 in the Haß collection deal directly with being a POW in the immediate postwar period. One of the writers was sent to Siberia, whilst the others were either captured by the French or the British. Ernst P, writing at the age of 18 in 1947, writes the following about returning from the POW camp:

The end of these horrors seemed to me to be something unavoidable. It had come to an end! The attempt to fight my way through the general confusion towards home did not fail too far from the goal. I ended up as a prisoner of war with the English. I think only of horror at the following months of hanging around, of physical and spiritual hunger, and I would like to take this time entirely out of my memory. At that time, I learned what freedom and being free meant, when I had lost both. The day of my dismissal became a feast of my life. Out into freedom! Home to parents and siblings!<sup>46</sup>

The use of exclamation marks, for example, is characteristic of his style, which is more expressive than others. Other cohort members write similarly about being a POW and being released from the camps. At age 19, Karl writes that 'hope faded permanently' when he realised the military situation in 1945.<sup>47</sup> He acknowledges that imprisonment was a part of the unconditional surrender—yet when the day of his release finally arrived—'the one I longed for so much', he writes with joy.<sup>48</sup> Another man commented, after leaving a POW camp in December 1945, that 'I do not feel young anymore'.<sup>49</sup> Such comments show the extent to which this event impacted the cohort, forcing them to confront their new self-identity as adults.

The third main narrative trope representing the immediate postwar period is centred on occupation and expellee status. Cohort members experienced the full occupation from all sides of Germany; this influenced how they understand this period and why they portray themselves as victims. Writing on 18 May 1945, Monika K. (1933-1947) factually details the end of the war, in a piece written for school: 'In January

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46. Report 1 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 15.

47. Report 10 *ibid.*, 32.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Report 38 *ibid.*, 145.

1945, the war advanced into menacing proximity. We noticed that many of the military moves came from the East'.<sup>50</sup> She then describes her family fleeing their home, walking by foot and waiting for trains to escape the advancing army, and the life narrative ends abruptly as she recounts staying with her grandmother.<sup>51</sup> The Allies wanted to ensure Germany's total defeat, in order to avoid a stalemate end like the First World War. Therefore, the Allies advanced on Germany from all fronts, which led to the division of Germany into four quadrants. This sudden end, and subsequent realisation that the Germany of the Third Reich no longer existed, resulted in many resentful accounts of the Allies occupying home towns.

For many, occupation and denazification forced an end to their political and social identities. In order to cope, they had to convince themselves that life would go on. Ruth H. experienced the end of the war as a KLV camp leader:

On April 30 all KLV camps were closed, transported off to be taken to Neu-Stadt in Holstein, then perhaps to be taken to Denmark. Since we had received neither army reports nor any other news, no one suspected that the journey would not go far beyond Stralsund.<sup>52</sup>

She was unable to return to her home town due to the advancing Red Army, and so began to journey through Germany to find her family using an alternate route. The reunification of her family and her father's return from his POW camp makes for a more positive ending; she writes that, although the general understanding was that the Third Reich was at an end: 'Das Leben ging weiter'.<sup>53</sup> The implication of her statement that 'life will go on' also indicates how heavily the end of the Third Reich must have weighed on her mind. It shows how politically and personally significant the Reich was for many cohort members. The politics of the Third Reich extended into the daily lives of all these individuals; political was personal, as Ruth H. implies. For Wolfgang P., the end of the Third Reich merely meant giving up the already-eroded German value system:

The destruction of our flourishing cities, with their ancient cultural monuments, filled me with bitter anger. I could not believe that all our sacrifices on the front and in the home should have been in vain. Even more painful,

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50. DTA Sig. Nr. 1510, 3.

51. DTA Sig. Nr. 1510, 12

52. Report 52 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 181.

53. Report 52 *ibid.*, 182.

was my experience of the humiliating attitude of the German people after the war. Never would I have thought of the shameless denunciations, I cannot get over the fact that our liberation has suddenly become a crime.<sup>54</sup>

In a similar manner to Ruth H., Wolfgang P. does not believe that the Third Reich was a criminal regime and represents himself as victim of the Allies' occupation of his country. For many cohort members, invasion is extremely uncomfortable. As Ingeborg P. describes Russian army's occupation of her home town: 'We were hopelessly exposed to the mercy of Mongol hordes'.<sup>55</sup> Her home town was cross-sectioned in the postwar re-drawing of borders, forcing her family to move. The town was given a Polish name and overtaken by armed Polish civilians who 'day and night ... ransacked their homes and took what they liked'.<sup>56</sup> Ilse B. writes of the Russian occupiers, whom she confuses with her behaviour. As a safeguard, seven young girls in the neighbouring house hid for two months in a cellar; whilst Ilse B. hid with three female family members. She writes, 'We were sick with fear (Krank mit Angst)'.<sup>57</sup> Her home town was also made Polish (*polonisiert*), and the family was slowly pushed out of the village, as their farm was given away to a Polish couple. They were then dispatched on a train to the new German border.<sup>58</sup> Occupation and expulsion from one's home alludes to an 'intact world now destroyed', allowing representations of victimhood to go unchallenged in the early postwar period.<sup>59</sup>

Representations of the immediate postwar period focus on the individual suffering and victimhood felt by cohort members. There is little attempt to understand or question the racial language referring to Russians and Poles. Cohort members vilify both groups because they feel that they have been wronged. There is no mention of the suffering and mass murder that the regime committed. Perhaps this is due, in part, to general public discourse in the immediate postwar period, which focused on German suffering. The denazification process is not directly recorded in these accounts, but remains ever-present in the background, along with the occupation. In short, it nevertheless enables those writing in the late 1940s to cast themselves as victims.

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54. Report 40 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 147.

55. Report 25 *ibid.*, 80ff.

56. Report 25 *ibid.*, 82.

57. Report 26 *ibid.*, 98.

58. Report 26 *ibid.*

59. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 329.

## Later Representations of War

In the 1960s to the 1970s in West Germany, emotional dissonance, stories of military combat and fighting on the front, and occupation remain unchallenged—although public discourse changes to focus on Germans as perpetrators. From the 1950s onward, the end of the war continues to define autobiographical fiction and non-fiction life narratives.<sup>60</sup> Moeller argues that the forced migrants' plight reflected the suffering of those who lost their homes due to the bombing.<sup>61</sup> The collected memoryscape focuses on German victimisation, allegedly caused by Allied treatment in the immediate postwar period. Melita Maschmann, in her memoir (1964), believes her experience exemplifies the collective experience and, as such, distorts victim narratives: 'One must tear aside the flowers, if I may use a somewhat bold image, in order to be able to recognize that the roots were poisonous. Millions of men died from this poison, among them the German soldiers and the victims of the bombing raids'.<sup>62</sup> In his autobiographical fiction novel *Simplicius 45* (1963), Heinz Küpper's description of the Allies' treatment of him and his village joins another victimcy narrative: 'They [the Russians] established themselves in the woods, raided lonely settlements and whole villages . . . thus demonstrating that they were sub-men and that we Germans had been quite right to invade their country'.<sup>63</sup> Küpper describes the Allied treatment as follows: '[Americans] sent Negroes against us, let the Russians loose on us, and then said we were not a civilised nation'.<sup>64</sup> In Küpper's autobiographical fiction novel, his breaking point is the invasion of the foreigner—using the image of raped German women with the violation of Germany. This novel also silences Nazism and its crimes. The narrator of *Simplicius 45* wants to present life in Nazi Germany as normal, and World War Two as one which was not fuelled by ideological differences. Although the context of postwar West Germany helped influence self-representations of the Nazi past, the cohort continues to use victimcy in fiction to argue that they were victims of the regime.

Turning now to memoirs written in the postwar period after 1980, we see some

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60. Finckh, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*; Gehrts, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*; Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?*; Richter, *Damals war es Friedrich*.

61. Moeller, *War Stories*.

62. Melita Maschmann, Marianne Schweitzer Burkenroad, and Helen Epstein, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self*, trans. Geoffrey Strachan (Plunkett Lake Press, 2013), Kindle Locations 1101-1110.

63. Küpper, *Simplicius 45*, 140.

64. *Ibid.*, 142.

parallels with the 1950 collection. There are three main types of representation here: devastation on the home front;<sup>65</sup> extended discussions of their last days as soldiers or Flakhelfen; occupation and refugee life; and a more open discussion of rape experiences and the fear of rape. Like the 1950 Haß collection, few authors accept or write about Germans as perpetrators and there is relatively little mention of the crimes of the regime. Often German suffering is the focus – showing how, on a public level, collective memories of the past can have a different focus entirely. Here, sources from archives act as a last means of communicative memory; as such, the contested nature of private and public memory is heightened. Publications attempt to demonstrate an awareness of changes in public memory, but with varying degrees of success.

The context and audience of these stories adds a layer of interpretation, as evidenced by the recent German publication entitled *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null* (2013), which features short narratives by famous Germans, focused on the so-called ‘*Stunde Null*’. The well-known Germans featured in this collection were born between 1923 and 1930, comparable to Haß’s collection. The experiences in this collection are similar to the 1950 collection in terms of how they deal with the end of the war, which indicates that emotional memories and experiences of the end of the Third Reich remain unchallenged and unchanged in the collected memoryscape. The 2013 collection has two principal themes which represent the end of the war: the experience of being a soldier during the last few months of the war and the occupation of Germany; and being a refugee, or having to evacuate one’s home. The two prevailing themes are written by two different subgroups: men born prior to 1928, who tell war stories, and women and younger men, born after 1929, who experienced war and occupation on the home front.

War experiences within the collection focus on the resilience of the Hitler Youth generation’s soldiers to fight until the end. A rare example of a female on the front is recorded by Tana Schanzara (born 1925), who was forced to go to the front as a soldier, after she finished her RAD-service. Her mother attempted to dissuade her from leaving for the front, but Schanzara felt it was her duty. Her mother had gotten in trouble with officials for publicly criticising the regime.<sup>66</sup> For her, the end of the war felt like a

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65. See chapter 4 on bombing experiences

66. Tana Schanzara, ‘Äppelfahrt’, in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 179.



liberation, as she felt no-one should have as much power as Hitler and his ‘Hitlerlites’ did.<sup>67</sup> Erich Loest (born 1926), whose father was an ardent Nazi and instilled in him a sense of militarism and heroism, notes the end of the war and the death of Hitler with hardly any emotion: ‘This was suddenly a completely new situation for us. Shattered, the Führer, our Führer, has fallen. But on the other hand, that meant too, now the war is over, now we do not have to fight anymore.’<sup>68</sup> Indeed, samples from the collection show how distance and time has an impact on what is written about the war and how it is expressed within the text.

Representations of the home front reflect this heightened emotional state which we see in the 1950 Haß collection.<sup>69</sup> Barbara Rütting (born 1927), who admits to having believed in Nazism when facing her uncle’s criticism, feels lost and confused when the regime ends.<sup>70</sup> Rütting writes about her father’s ‘old friend’, Hans Rütting, who stayed briefly with the family in the spring of 1945. She had a fairly negative impression of him: ‘I, the ‘Jungmädels’ who wanted to keep faith in her ‘Führer’ at this difficult time, hated this man, who was preparing to take away my meaning of life, to crush my ideal, to believe in my “Führer”’.<sup>71</sup> Whilst her father’s belief in Hitler had already begun to crumble, she held onto her belief, ‘It should take some time till even my world collapsed’.<sup>72</sup> She represents herself as part of the collective ‘wir Kinder’ who believed in Hitler and the Nazis until the very end. She demonstrates an inability to let go of Nazi family values, which she still sees in her sister’s family, who live in the GDR. She writes, ‘We had lived the “German virtues”’: be disciplined and modest, give, not take’.<sup>73</sup> This account parallels those in Haß’s collection, who also share a strong belief in Hitler’s vision of Germany and Nazi values—however, Haß’s collection differs in its focus on the emotional impact of losing Hitler and the Third Reich. In *Mein Kriegsende*, representations of the immediate postwar period do not make use of the Zero Hour terminology because, for the majority of writers, life continued on after the

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67. Ibid.

68. Loest, ‘Der Werwolf’, 123.

69. See Hartmut Radebold, *Kindheiten im II. Weltkrieg und ihre Folgen* (Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2004).

70. Barbara Rütting, ‘Beten für den Führer’, in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 167.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., 170.

end of the war. Only a few openly discuss their feelings and beliefs in Nazism, but transitioning to the new life without ideology is not discussed. Distance and age play a role here, as temporal distance from the events facilitates the development of narratives which protect self-identity and self-worth.

The denazification process and transition to a postwar Germany is more dutifully recorded in archived life narratives from the 1980s onward, as it was perceived to affect job prospects and pave the way for postwar careers. Cohort members do not appear to concern themselves with the reasons for denazification. The denazification process held more repercussions for men than for women, seeing as men were more likely to have committed war crimes as they fought more frequently at the front. For example, Friedrich S. (born 1927), the Waffen-SS who most likely witnessed the murdering of partisans in the Balkans, gives the following account of his military tribunal: ‘In August 1948, entering the State Security service began the unavoidable denazification process by which guilt (schuldverhalten) could be attributed to my SS unit. I was ordered to pay a 350,- DM fine, about 3 months income’.<sup>74</sup> Due to a little oversight, he is able to absolve himself. He then goes into police school training, and includes images of himself in his early career—again, without reflecting upon why he was brought up in front of a tribunal, nor commenting on the role of the SS in Nazi war crimes.<sup>75</sup> He gives the following reason for joining the police force: ‘I had sworn to never let myself go as an attentive observer of political and social events’.<sup>76</sup> Friedrich S. attaches a second part to his memoir, entitled ‘War ich eigentlich ein Nazi?’, as a reflection on his life and motives for joining the Hitler Youth. He claims that he only did it to ensure he had a job after his schooling, and that most jobs were military-related—for that, one had to be a Hitler Youth member. He uses his relative inexperience and age to lessen the impression of his involvement and investment in the Nazi system.<sup>77</sup> Those cohort members who went to Napola schools ended up with successful careers in finance,

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74. DTA Sig. Nr. 1953, 17; see also, KA BIO 2909, Eva Priester, Märy 1945 im Dorf Hessen am Harz, 5 from Deutsches Gedächtnis Archive.

75. Similar case mentioned in KA BIO 3041, Maria Ingeborg Protzner, 252 (Deutsches Gedächtnis).

76. DTA Sig. Nr. 1953, 19; Norbert Frei, *Hitlers Eliten nach 1945* (Munich: dtv, June 4, 2014); Herbert, ‘Die politische Generationen im 20. Jahrhundert’, 157–73; Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

77. DTA Sig. Nr. 539, 2, 1.

business, and politics.<sup>78</sup> The same can be said of cohort members in the GDR, as they played a ‘disproportionate role in the management of the economy and the leadership of parties’.<sup>79</sup> Although the denazification process meant uncovering the crimes of the regime, most representations ignore this and instead focus on how it benefited them career-wise.

Family dynamics and changes to family roles occupy an important role in how cohort members represent the end of the Second World War. Dorothee K. (born 1932), writing in 2014, tells us about her father, who had made the entire family *Gottgläubig* in the Third Reich. A staunch believer in Hitler’s ideology, he almost became a different person after the war: ‘Father became more and more quiet. He was too proud to admit his Nazi world view and glorious thousand year Reich had come to an end. Our headstrong mother eroded his previous dominance’.<sup>80</sup> She returns to this point a number of times, pondering her father’s ‘postwar pains’; if they occurred ‘because of the things you lived through and did not manage?’ In contrast, ‘Mother could handle it [the postwar] more happily’.<sup>81</sup> As her father became increasingly withdrawn, and seemingly disillusioned by the early postwar period in 1948:

Father disappeared to his room early, but his depression becoming apparent, but he categorically refused therapeutic interventions. Neither did he take his driving test, although he was one of the first to call a posh new dark blue VW-Beatle his own. Hitler made it possible with his so-called ‘social gifts’. The car had been paid during the war.<sup>82</sup>

Her representation of the postwar period plays into the ‘Rubble Woman’ narrative, describing her mother as a strong woman, whilst her father became weak as a result of his depression.<sup>83</sup> The anachronistic terminology—describing her father’s mental instability as ‘depression’—is a retrospective attempt to define and label her father’s postwar

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78. Leeb, ‘*Wir waren Hitlers Eliteschüler*’; Roche, ‘Surviving Stunde Null: Narrating the Fate of Nazi Elite-School Pupils during the Collapse of the Third Reich’.

79. See Figures 6.1 and 6.2 in Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 252.

80. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533,2, 7

81. DTA Sig Nr. 3533,2, 8.

82. DTA Sig Nr. 3533,2, 9.

83. Frank Biess, ‘Men of Reconstruction-The Reconstruction of Men: Returning POWs from the Soviet Union and the Making of East German Citizens, 1945-1950’, in *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 335–358; Robert G. Moeller, ‘The “Remasculinization” of Germany in the 1950s: Introduction’, *Signs* 24, number 1 (1998): 101–106.

experience.<sup>84</sup> Unlike other men who had been POWs, Dorothee K.'s family dynamic exemplifies the adjustments that many others endured.<sup>85</sup> Families had to change and adapt to new modes of living, once again.<sup>86</sup> Raised in a Catholic family and growing up in the countryside during the war, Erika S. (born 1933) recalls visiting her father with her mother, in the autumn of 1946. He was a prisoner at an English-occupied farm.<sup>87</sup> She writes: "Only when he saw my mother coming, only then I asked, 'Pappa, don't you know me any more?', he stopped in his tracks and took me in his arms. He could not quiet believe that I was his little Erika". In her memory, this was a 'frohes Wiedersehen'; the family then ate food together, and all seemed well.<sup>88</sup> Family dynamics changed due to fathers and children no longer recognising each other, and fathers having to re-integrate themselves into a changed postwar society.<sup>89</sup> Her other memories about her parents are, from then on, mostly related to growing up and adolescence.<sup>90</sup> Representing these changes to family life mark a turning point in the narrative, driving it towards its conclusion: life goes on, despite the fact that everything has changed.

Women perform gender roles, as wives or mothers, in an attempt to self-represent 'normalcy', in dealing with the end of the Third Reich.<sup>91</sup> In 1945, magazines reported that the family dynamic had changed: children and youths were no longer expected to be at Hitler Youth activities many days of the week.<sup>92</sup> In general, German women had positive memories of the war. Many had war-related jobs, such as working in the RAD, for the BDM, or in Red Cross field hospitals, or armaments factories.<sup>93</sup> However, these experiences are silenced or repressed in these narratives—perhaps because they would have caused tensions between women and their families. The positive impact which female cohort members felt is not openly discussed nor acknowledged; this bolsters

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84. Goltermann, *Die Gesellschaft der Überlebenden: deutsche Kriegsheimkehrer und ihre Gewalterfahrungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

85. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, 117, 120.

86. See, Rüttig, *Beten für den Führer, Mein Kriegsende*, 167f

87. Thamm and his family became prisoners for a Soviet Army farm, formerly their grandfather's.; Thamm, *Boy Soldier*, 162.

88. DTA Sig. Nr 3087, 46

89. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 326ff.

90. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 33.

91. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'; Lutz Niethammer, "'Normalisation" in the West: Traces of Memory Leading Back into the 1950s', in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hannah Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 238.

92. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, 126.

93. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 256; Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933-1945*, 184-185; Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, 44-74; Kohut, *A German Generation*, 109-110, 174.

Reese's argument that West Germany was in denial about women's liberation during the Third Reich.<sup>94</sup> Instead, family culture and family stories take precedence in many memoirs.<sup>95</sup> Although this is not limited to women's life narratives, women do place a greater emphasis on the importance of family and having children.<sup>96</sup> In a similar vein, Monika K., who was from a Catholic family and whose brother died during the war on the Eastern front, narrates short stories about her family and her early career as a nurse during this period. She places her marriage and subsequent move to an Osnabrück suburb under their own subheading, underscoring the importance of these events. In comparison, her nurse training and examinations are hardly mentioned.<sup>97</sup> Women's representations written for the DTA archive of the end of the war focus on their families and having children.

Representations of rape and the fear of being raped are more explicitly discussed in memoirs and life narratives from the 2000s than in earlier decades, whose authors either silenced or repressed these memories. The Hitler Youth generation is not seen as a 'moral witness' (or *Zeitzeuge*) from a historiographical point of view, thus making their trauma—whether from the war or from their childhoods—appear inauthentic, and also more difficult to categorise into 'bystanders', 'perpetrators', or 'victims'.<sup>98</sup> The inclusion of gender and life stages allows us to consider cohort members as active agents who 'alternatively use different tactics in their attempts to cope with challenges and exploit the opportunities provided by the conditions' not only of war, but after war.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, historians have begun to argue that the narrative breaks in twentieth century German history—before 1945 and after 1945 (or 1989)—ought to be abandoned, in favour of understanding the 'simultaneous process of making and unmaking' the German landscape.<sup>100</sup> In Haß's collection, the Russians were often cast in a negative light, reflecting Nazi propaganda. This trend continues in later narratives, which depict the

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94. Reese article in Roseman, *Generations in Conflict*, 236.

95. See Vaizey, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany, 1939-48*, 139ff.

96. See case study of Gisela P. in Roberts, *Starke Mütter - ferne Väter*, 212-213.

97. DTA Sig. Nr. 1560, 17

98. Roche, 'Surviving Stunde Null: Narrating the Fate of Nazi Elite-School Pupils during the Collapse of the Third Reich'.

99. Utas, 'Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone1', 406.

100. Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 11; Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 10; Michael R. Hayse, *Recasting West German Elites: Higher Civil Servants, Business Leaders, and Physicians in Hesse between Nazism and Democracy, 1945-1955* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 2,9.

Russians as villains. Writing and talking about wartime rape has recently garnered more scholarly attention, as victims are more willing to discuss their experiences—dismantling another taboo subject in the 2000s. Redding devotes a few pages to outline the differences between East and West Berliners' discussions of memories of rape, asserting that 'their recollections suggested that this theme, like the turning point stories, served several functions in personal narratives'. This included the blurring of the boundary 'between war and occupation'; 'fear and insecurity' about the wartime situation; and using rape to open a discussion about the Red Army.<sup>101</sup> Since she gathered her interviews in 1998-1999, more works have emerged which discuss rape; as such, the topic has moved from private to public discourse. In German-language memoirs, rape is an especially sensitive topic: it is no more than a black out, a gap in the text.<sup>102</sup> It is hinted at, but never fully described.<sup>103</sup> In political terms, until recently the German left argued that relativising the violence against the Germans by the Red Army would lead to an 'indicated tacit approval of the anti-Bolshevik program of the Nazis'.<sup>104</sup> The political right, on the other hand, considered the suffering of the Germans as prominent, whilst crimes receded to the background. The rape of German women was also a collective act of revenge. Cohen-Pfister posits the question then, of how 'to address German suffering in light of the suffering caused by Germans or whether German victimhood can even be addressed without simultaneously calling into remembrance the millions harmed or killed by Germans'.<sup>105</sup> Further, researchers also run the risk of robbing those individuals who suffered rape of their agency—creating a state of *victimism*: 'the exercise of any measure of resistance and self-determination used by an abused woman to regain control in her life and in her attempt to stop the abuse she experiences'.<sup>106</sup> Framing raped cohort members as complex political perpetrators allows us

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101. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 34.

102. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make?*, 119; 'Fremde Männer als Eroberer und Bfreier', in Roberts, *Starke Mütter - ferne Väter*, 120-132.

103. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 220, 253; Marianne Mackinnon, *The Naked Years: Growing up in Nazi Germany* (Chatto & Windus, 1987), 6, 178, 266.

104. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 3.

105. Laurel Cohen-Pfister, 'Rape, War, and Outrage: Changing Perceptions on German Victimhood in the Period of Post-Unification', in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Prepresenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner and Laurel Cohen-Pfister (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 321.

106. Patricia Connell, 'Understanding Victimization and Agency: Considerations of Race, Class, and Gender', *PoLAR* 20, number 2 (1997): 122; original concept formulated by Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 45.

to interpret them both as perpetrators and as eyewitnesses.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, for female cohort members, the end of the Third Reich is reinterpreted as a breaking point because of the rapes or the threat of rape by Russians.

The last few months of the war depicted by female cohort members are full of rumours and actual stories told about the rape of German women by the Red Army. The end of the Third Reich is therefore dominated by shame and anger, which are mostly directed at the Russians. Some women see their experience as a breaking point, such as Irmgard P.: 'At the beginning of May 1945, a new ordeal began, especially for young women and girls. The Russians are in a state of victory. They want everything, including the women. There are five young females on the farm. We have to hide'.<sup>108</sup> She and her sister hid in a barn for weeks, until the French soldiers arrived. Published in 2010, Gabi Köpp's *Warum war ich bloß ein Mädchen* describes her experience of rape during the end of the war. Raped multiple times by soldiers of the Red Army, during her trek across Germany in January 1945, Köpp was not allowed to discuss her experiences with her mother, who instead insists that she keep a diary of her experiences. Her resentment of her mother runs throughout the entire course of the narrative: 'In a way, she let me run into the open knife'.<sup>109</sup> She stopped writing when she began to have too many re-occurring nightmares of her experiences. For example, Köpp writes of her rapes only implicitly: 'Again, there is no mercy for Ruth and me'.<sup>110</sup> The reader has to fill in the blanks. Only during the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on 27 January 2005—which coincided with her train journey across Germany on 27 January 1945—did Köpp decide to revisit and reinterpret her memories. Her memoir, which simultaneously voices and silences the rapes she endured with her sister, reflects a shift in the victimhood framework. It appears that there has been a change in reception on the part of the audience, but whether Köpp is ready to discuss her experience without resorting to euphemisms is questionable. Using the end of the Holocaust as a bookend, Köpp is able to prop up her own experience and explore her own suffering. The memory of the Holocaust surrounds this narrative, which is largely about Köpp's

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107. Grossmann, 'A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers', 49.

108. DTA Sig. Nr. 891, 35 Rütting, 'Beten für den Führer', 167.

109. Gabi Köpp, *Warum war ich bloß ein Mädchen: Das Trauma einer Flucht 1945*, 2nd edition (München: Herbig, F A, January 19, 2010), 18.

110. *Ibid.*, 37.

own suffering. The memory is contested in that it does not acknowledge the suffering of the Jews during the Nazi regime. Köpp only uses the terms ‘rape’ and ‘sexual violence’ retrospectively; overall, she seems to lack the vocabulary to describe the trauma, as she provides no concrete statements about the violent injuries she received.<sup>111</sup>

Current research on complex political perpetrators and the role of girls in war argues for a more complex model to be used to understand perpetration. As in Köpp’s case, Beck-Heppner’s judgemental stance of Köpp’s experience ought to be reconsidered and placed into the wider spectrum of child soldier experiences. Whilst Köpp’s comparison, of her trauma to the liberation of Auschwitz, is flawed, do we have a moral right to judge someone’s individual suffering? German women, who actively or passively supported the regime and experienced rape, are also complex political perpetrators; they participated in the regime, but are also victims of the crimes committed against them. The more open discussions about personal experiences of rape in the German context lends itself to questions about how historians and the German public should interpret and understand perpetrators who were raped. This question is a part of the larger framework of how we should represent perpetrators. What are the moral rights of perpetrators as victims of rape? Do we engender empathy if we portray their victimisation in this way? Such case studies would hopefully help us to understand that it is possible to be both perpetrator and victim, in a way which does not diminish their crimes, but allows for suffering to be present in the individual.

The Allies are negatively represented in life narratives, as well—they are not liberators in the eyes of all the cohort members. Dorothee K. (born 1932) provides a scathing account of the impact of the rapes in her postwar memoir, by comparing the children born during the postwar period to children born in the Nazi sanctioned, SS-run *Lebensborn* programme. Her critical stance towards women who have sexual relations with non-Germans shows the powerful influence of Nazi propaganda and indoctrination, even though Dorothee K. is writing sixty years later:

In the Nazi era, this [building] was a *Lebensbornheim*. Children were conceived and given birth here for purely racial, Aryan motivation, because Hitler needed soldiers. In 1948, however, things looked a little different there. Young women lay in crowded rooms, discarding their unwanted children from liaisons. During a visit, Bill, John and Mac appeared with a

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111. Afterword by Birgit Beck-Heppner Köpp, *Warum war ich bloß ein Mädchen*, 146.



booming transistor radio, chocolates and lucky strikes. Loud laughter drew the scenery of the coloured occupying power; and everywhere stuck gum! Something has always been historically readable and happens after years of hunger deprivation. But in the soul of a then 19-year-old, shaken by the escape, and horrified by the peace, only consternation and shame could arise.<sup>112</sup>

Her discussion of the American troops' occupation shows how deeply rooted her resentment truly is—even at the time of writing, in 2014. Other memoirists recall finding dead women on their retreat, often linking these deaths to the Russians, whether or not they had any actual proof. Here, a male cohort member remarks on finding a woman's corpse during his retreat from the Eastern front:

Her intestines rolled in the dirt as twisted in pain ... Near her the two severely wounded Russian soldiers lay still. All assumed that the Russians had chased the woman in an attempt to rape her; in desperation she had dashed into the mined meadow.<sup>113</sup>

The Russians were not the only rapists, but they are most often blamed in the cohort collected memoryscape.<sup>114</sup> Another male cohort member (born 1931) recounts his reaction to his sister's British rapist:

...he moved my hand to the front of his pants and onto his erect penis. I recoiled and tried to shut the door, but he pushed me out of the way. He was reeking of alcohol. He headed straight for Inge.<sup>115</sup>

He then hits one of the men with a 'hot poker', but rather than continuing with the story, he writes, 'whatever happened traumatized me so severely that, try as I might, I have no other recollection of that evening's events'.<sup>116</sup> After the late 1990s, cohort members are more willing to recount the early postwar period, including details about how they were raped. These Russian rapes and other violent mutilations of the female body became symbolic in the postwar period, as German women were metaphorically equated with the Motherland. Cohort members use these rapes as a benchmark for how they felt personally violated or saw women as victims.

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112. DTA Sig. Nr. 3533,2, 15.

113. Thamm, *Boy Soldier*, 160 (here), 2.

114. Uta Ranke-Heinemann, 'Trümmerteenager', in *Mein Kriegsende: Erinnerungen an die Stunde Null*, ed. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa (Berlin: List, 2015), 149.

115. Schumann, 'Childhood and Youth in Nazi Germany', Kindle Locations 865-867.

116. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 870-871.

Whilst there are some similarities, there are a number of notable differences between writings from the 1950s and the turn of the twenty-first century in terms of how the immediate postwar period is represented. The war and the immediate postwar had emotional repercussions too, which are seldom found in these writings. Recorded in *The Collective Silence* as a therapeutic case, former Napola student (born 1929) describes his experience of the end of the war, as a fifty-nine year old: ‘You know, one single time in my life I did cry. I don’t know anymore whether it was for one or two or three hours. A world collapsed within me ... when we were 16, standing in the trench ... and suddenly someone calls out: “The Führer is dead!”’<sup>117</sup> For this man, his love for Hitler was greater than what ‘Jesus means to you’, when explaining his feelings for Hitler to his therapist. His mother was trampled to death when he was seventeen, and his father absent due to war. He then experienced severe drug and alcohol dependency in his adulthood. As this explanation illustrates, there are gaps in memoir that are later filled by psychological case studies and dialogue. This case study strengthens the emotional intensity of written works, as cohort members struggle to represent and understand the regime change at such a young age. Racial language and the negative perception of the occupiers is present in many works throughout the entire period—indicating that these racial slurs may not have been challenged on a public level. Narratives throughout the postwar continued focus on victimhood and survival. In later memoirs, the language is less emotional, and there is desire to distance oneself from negative memories or events. One exception to this rule is the emerging discussion of rape, and representations of the immediate postwar world as one full of danger and enemies, like the Allies.

## English-Language Memoirs: A Zero Hour?

Self-representations written in English consist of reinterpretations of life narratives as coming-of-age stories, especially in narratives written after 1990. For English-language cohort members, the early postwar period was a time of shifting boundaries and new norms. There are various reasons why cohort members moved to the United States after the war. Mahlendorf, Willy Schumann, Shelton, Werner Schumann, and Greger

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117. Barbara Heimannsberg and Christoph J Schmidt, *The Collective Silence: German Identity and the Legacy of Shame*, trans. Cynthia Harris Oudejans and Gordon Wheeler, The Jossey-Bass social and behavioral science series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 122.

gained university scholarships at American universities. Lehmann, Protsch, Volmar, and Goettig gained places in the U.S. military, and became citizens through naturalisation based on service. Irmgard Hunt's reasons for moving to the United States is the same as Schlant-Bradley's story.<sup>118</sup> Hunt met a young American doctor during her vacation in Rome, and after a brief courtship, agreed to marry him. Her haste to marry may have been in part due to her deteriorating relationship with her mother, her admiration of the American lifestyle, and her desire to 'escape from the shadows of my young life on the mountain'.<sup>119</sup> Further, moving to America 'seemed to promise wide open horizons and unknown freedom'.<sup>120</sup> When she emigrated, life was not as simple as she had envisioned. Hunt states, 'I remained alone with my wartime memories and German suffering, as there was no one who would want to listen, not even my husband'.<sup>121</sup> New York often gave her flashbacks of the war: the 'fire sirens filled me with the terror of air-raid alarms' and 'I was paralysed with fear during the Cuban missile crisis'.<sup>122</sup> Regardless of her move from Germany, her past continued to be present in her everyday life. For a number of men, the promise of continued military work was enough to convince them to move to the United States. There is often no reason for why these men decided to join the U.S. military, other than their experience fighting during the Second World War.<sup>123</sup> Herb Flemming (born 1933) had been too young to fight in the war, but was willing to join the U.S. military in Germany during post-war occupation. Although treated with suspicion because of his Hitler Youth ties, he 'was required to sign a statement saying that I would not refuse military duty in the United States should I be called upon. I didn't have any nationalistic feelings toward Germany'.<sup>124</sup> This lack of purpose following the war—particularly during the transition from adolescence to adulthood—is at the forefront of postwar period English-language memoirs.

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118. Alan Elsner, 'Bill Bradley's German-Born Wife Could Make History: [Final Edition]', *Tribune: Life* (Welland, Ont.), October 28, 1999, A10; See also Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*; Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 61.

119. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*, 306.

120. *Ibid.*, 306-307.

121. *Ibid.*, 308.

122. Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*, 309; Similar experience in the postwar: Rissel, *From Hitler's Oppression to American Liberty*, 32.

123. Some Wehrmacht men seemed to have joined the American military in Germany after the German defeat Campe, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie*, 14-15; See also, Eric H. Vieler, *A Journey on My Own: A Youth from Hitler's Germany Strives to Claim His American Identity* (Government Institutes, November 10, 2009).

124. Flemming and King, *From Hitler Youth to American Soldier*, 289.

English-language memoirs approach the collected memoryscape from a different cultural standpoint; yet the manner in which these writers deal with the past reveals the importance of temporal and geographical context. Koehn, writing in 1977, does not discuss the postwar period, ending her memoir around 22 May 1945. As previously mentioned, the fear of rape was ever-present: she and her mother hid in a ‘crawl-space under the house, but we don’t know exactly where’.<sup>125</sup> To bribe the Russians to leave the house, ‘Grossmutter gives them watches’. As the ‘tanks keep rolling’, Koehn, her mother, and a friend lay in silence for four days, waiting for the Russians to pass through.<sup>126</sup> After four weeks of hiding, her father’s return to the family signalled a change for Koehn: ‘Everything has to be good from now on. I know it. For me the war was over’.<sup>127</sup> The fear of Russians raping women, which caused cohort members to hide in their cellars and disguise themselves as men, shows the extent to which Nazi propaganda influenced their views of the Russians. Koehn’s memoir ends a few days after 8 May. She does not discuss her life after the war and why she decided to move to the United States. Indeed, this subject remains unchallenged in English-language life narratives. In contrast to Koehn, Willy Schumann (writing in 1992) sees the end of the Third Reich as the end of a long fight, nothing more, indicating how gendered experiences affected interpretations of the immediate postwar period. He writes, ‘I have often been asked in later years what our reaction to this news was. After all, our world was collapsing with the death of our idol, a world whose values and splendid future achievements we had believed in to the very end’. He asserts that the general populace felt a ‘general numbness’ and that the Volksgemeinschaft seems to have collapsed: ‘from then on we only acted and reacted as individuals’.<sup>128</sup> Life continued on, Schumann emphasises, when he received a scholarship to study in the United States and emigrated in the early 1950s. These two narratives illustrate how varied understandings of the end of the war are in the North American context. Both Koehn and Schumann

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125. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 231.

126. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 231-234; Shelton also goes into hiding from the Russians hideout: Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 87ff; Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 159f; Report 26 Haß and Goes, *Jugend unterm Schicksal*, 87-99, Hiding out also mentioned in DTA Sig. Nr. 891, 2.

127. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 240; The ending is similar to the ending of Jutta Schreiner’s memoir, which ends with her father returning from a POW camp in 1947: Schreiner, *The Signature Call*.

128. Schumann, *Being Present*, 154.

are similar in their attempt to exonerate ‘normal’ Germans in wartime, however they approach the end of the war in two completely different ways.

For some English-language female cohort memoirists, the postwar environment is relaxed in terms of sexual mores, indicating that some cohort members (mainly females) remember the end of the war as a period of adolescence and budding sexual maturity. In *Memoirs of a Simple German Girl*, which is an oral history recorded as a memoir by Sonya Siedschlag, in the United States, of her mother Inge, Inge remembers going to the movies by herself in 1948 after getting a perm and wearing make-up. She goes to a public restroom by herself, ignoring the advice of her family, and meets a strange man upon exiting.<sup>129</sup> Irmgard Hunt (born 1932) writes extensively about the postwar period, and the political changes on a micro level. She states that, ‘The transition from German, Nazi-bred provincialism to a freer outlook on life including fashion, hairdos, and cosmetics, was not automatic, even for a rebellious teenager like myself’.<sup>130</sup> She remembered how she ‘admired the American women who smoked on the street and wore bright lipstick and nail varnish’.<sup>131</sup> By the ‘second half of 1948’ her ‘Nazi girlhood ... truly, finally, come to an end’. Her ‘teenage years’ are peppered with guilt and notions of ‘building a democratic future’: ‘we would make up for our guilt, and the world’s people would be our friends again. At fourteen it seemed as simple as that’.<sup>132</sup> She then met an American doctor during a vacation in Rome and, after a brief courtship, married him and moved to the United States.<sup>133</sup> Helga Z., for example, writes of her first holiday in 1947 as a student and recounts her first work-related vacation in 1956.<sup>134</sup> These narratives of normalcy include casual encounters with men, going on first vacations, and getting married in the 1950s and 1960s. This shows how cohort members shared ideas about what was ‘normal’ during the postwar period. Nazi values are not reflected upon, it is almost as though they disappeared from public memory as discussion turns to the postwar period.

Other accounts, however, are not as positive when it comes to the end of the war, as

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129. Sonya Siedschlag, *Memoirs of a Simple German Girl: As Told by Ingeborg Tacke and in Part by Sonya Siedschlag* (Lulu Press, Inc, October 7, 2014), 135.

130. Hunt, *On Hitler’s Mountain*, 292; Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany*, 96.

131. Hunt, *On Hitler’s Mountain*, 298.

132. *Ibid.*, 305.

133. *Ibid.*, 306.

134. DTA Sig Nr. 1925, 214

the struggle to understand Germany's defeat causes not only short-term mental breakdowns for some cohort members, but also long-term difficulties in understanding and representing what truly happened at the end of the war, even in late adulthood. Shelton, an upper-class girl (born 1929, writing in 1982) previously living in the recently conquered Silesia, writes about her relatives attempting to burn her brother's Nazi memorabilia. Not understanding why they would attempt such a thing, Shelton asks for the pistol:

We have a weapon, a treasure, and all they can see is danger!

'Give me the desk key. I want that pistol.'

Mother looks at me aghast without making a move to get the key. Aunt Gretl charges at me as if to strike:

'Do you want to get all of us killed? You are insane!'

I never felt saner or calmer. 'You don't understand. I don't mean to use to on myself or anybody else, at least not now. But I want a way out if it becomes necessary.'

...

Deprived of my right to choose life or death, I am resentful of Aunt Gretl, who took it away from me.<sup>135</sup>

This passage reveals that she is convinced by Nazi propaganda, but still she does not engage directly with this past-self. The reader is therefore left to ponder whether Shelton feels ashamed of her beliefs or whether those beliefs have stayed the same. Overall, her memoir is bracketed by the story of her visit to her home town in Silesia, now part of Poland. In this sense, Shelton's memoir pays homage to Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), as Wolf's narrator enjoys a similar self-exploration through visits to her previous home town. Shelton's upper-class life is hardly reflected upon, if at all; instead, she explores her friendship with her brother, who died at the front: 'In a family not given to shows of emotion and affection, Franz [her older brother] was the gentle exception, and he poured his tenderness on me ...'.<sup>136</sup> Whilst Shelton's background and environment taught her not to show emotions, emotions are nevertheless important in terms of how she deals with the end of the war. Silesia was occupied by the Poles and the Russians in the immediate postwar period; Shelton was extremely angry and resentful about this. She writes that she feels that she is a 'victim of the times and

135. Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 96.

136. *Ibid.*, 56.

circumstance'.<sup>137</sup> Shelton and her family were a part of the three million Germans expelled from Poland as a result of the 1945 Potsdam agreement, which meant creating a more homogeneous Polish population in its place.<sup>138</sup> Shelton's memories of her home town are complex and layered, just as Wolf's. She calls the early postwar period the 'distressing years of my youth', but in 1982, as an adult, sees the conflict between the Communist and Catholic power structures in her home town.<sup>139</sup> Her account has a Cold War tone, which is also found in Maschmann and Wolf. Shelton recounts how she gave out Western goods in order to bribe and gain favours during her visit. This illustrates the lack of consumer goods and generally downtrodden state of her home town, which may have allowed her to justify Germany's previous occupation and treatment of the Poles. In her memoir, she is never truly able to come to terms with what happened to her and her family. The expulsion from her childhood home and change in political ideology becomes her new present, from which she cannot escape.

Whilst the English-language works are emotionally similar to the 1950 Haß collection, they also have their own unique characteristics. In the 1950s texts, the emotions are identified, but discussion is limited due to societal taboos and audience expectations. English-language memoirists also identify their emotions, but their discussion is much broader and less preoccupied with taboos and silence. Suicide and rape are discussed more openly. In some memoirs, accounts of the end of war take an emotional turn. Alfons Heck (born 1927) remembers having thoughts of suicide—and nearly attempts it—when he hears the American jet fighters approaching his aunt's house near the end of the war:

I jerked fully awake, my heart racing in sudden panic. The unthinkable was about to happen: I was at the mercy of the enemy. It was then, in that moment of wild despair that I shoved the barrel of the Walther automatic into my mouth, shuddered from its impact on my tooth and slammed it against the wall. And then I started to cry, with the inconsolable abandon of a six-year-old, in sure knowledge that Germany and I were headed for slavery. We had lost.<sup>140</sup>

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137. *Ibid.*, 228.

138. Hugo Service, 'Reinterpreting the Expulsion of Germans from Poland, 1945-1949', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, number 3 (July 2012): 535; Robert G. Moeller, 'Germans as Victims? : Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II's Legacies', *History and Memory* 17, nos. 1/2 (Autumn 2005): 174ff.

139. Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 210.

140. Heck, *The Burden of Hitler's Legacy*, 170.

Heck observes that he ‘should have pulled the trigger’ because ‘at least I would have died with my innocence intact’. It became an ‘intolerable burden’ to live, since now he was ‘shouldered with the irrefutable genocide of millions’.<sup>141</sup> These open discussions of suicide demonstrate how the end of the Third Reich was a complete breaking point for some. However, later interpretations place suicide attempts within the larger context of new beginnings and moving forward.

One striking aspect of Alfons Heck’s postwar representation is not only that he uses his life story as a ‘survival narrative’, but also that he attempts to explain why he fell in love with Nazism. Initially, he blames his parents; however, near the end of the memoir, he emphasises how estranged he and his fellow cohort members were from their parents as adults. He states: ‘We shared a bond of openness that excluded our families as well as our educators. We neither asked for guidance nor accepted it ... we no longer trusted their judgement. How could we?’<sup>142</sup> In other words, Heck shows that he and his fellow cohort members became adults and took control of their own lives because there were no longer any adult authorities that they could trust. In his last chapter, as he and Waterford present their views on life in the Third Reich and the Holocaust, Heck decides to ‘deflect the worst of [the criticism] by emphasizing my age. Despite my rank in the Hitler Youth, I had been only 17’.<sup>143</sup> In another instance, following an interview with the Today Show about Reagan’s visit to the Bitburg cemetery in the spring of 1985, Heck received feedback from a viewer which justifies the absolution of the young Wehrmacht population. He writes:

These young, dead Germans were also victims of Nazism. That was deemed unforgivable, because his sweeping statement put them on the same level with victims of the Holocaust. I’m neither that brave nor that casual. There is a degree of difference between dead German soldiers who fought for Hitler and those who died as his captives.<sup>144</sup>

Indeed, we may infer that Heck’s self-representation is a contradictory self-representation, and how he seems to be unable to come to terms with his actions and beliefs during the Third Reich.

Mahlendorf (born 1929, writing 2009) remembers having a heated argument with

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141. Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 173.

142. *Ibid.*, 189.

143. *Ibid.*, 234.

144. *Ibid.*, 246-247.



her mother in 1947 on whether or not she should be allowed to join the BDM: ‘Now, at seventy-five, I still wish she had done more than merely listen [about my being so enthusiastic about the HJ]. Would I have heard her? Did she know what we were indoctrinated in and how might she have countered it?’ Her mother argued that Mahlendorf might have reported her, had she questioned her motives.<sup>145</sup> Mahlendorf then enters high school, and ‘life had begun to assume some kind of normality’ by 1948.<sup>146</sup> Her relationship with her mother is no longer discussed; the strain on their relationship was only exacerbated by their poverty and constant hunger.<sup>147</sup> Shelton does not reflect upon her suicidal thoughts, unlike Mahlendorf (2009), who provides insight into the group mentality of the Hitler Youth leaders as they went into a forest in the middle of the night, intent on taking cyanide pills.<sup>148</sup>

What is most obviously lacking in many German-language publications are the exhibitionist tactics which we find in English-language publications. Normalisation, victimhood, and survival stories are present in German and English-language sources—but they are more nuanced narratives of victimcy. Dieter Hildebrandt and Felix Kuballa’s collection of German-language narratives (2015) works well as a comparative study; their contributors were famous Germans with published works, some of which are short narratives about ‘*Stunde Null*’ experiences. What can be said about the collection is that each story is unique, and each ‘breaking point’ is different for each individual. Indeed, for some of these writers there was no end to the war: life continued on, but it had changed. The Third Reich’s influence is felt visibly, but it is not directly addressed. A majority of the authors voice their belief in Nazism—a belief which was often founded upon and fuelled by their parents’ beliefs in the party.

## Looking Back

Representing their younger selves in writing, cohort members writing in late adulthood create new contexts for introspective narratives. Recalling, reconstructing, and recording memories is a process of ‘cancelling historical contingencies and of enabling

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145. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 115.

146. *Ibid.*, 302.

147. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 307; L.J. Hilton, ‘The Black Market in History and Memory: German Perceptions of Victimhood from 1945 to 1948’, *German History* 28, number 4, 479–497.

148. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*, 214, 323–324.

a fresh start'.<sup>149</sup> This approach also lends memoirists, especially those writing for posterity—often in English, for a global audience — the power to reconstruct their childhood experience of the Third Reich.<sup>150</sup> Using Jarausch and Geyer's understanding of 'retrospective self-victimisation', along with the concept of a life course, allows for a more subtle understanding of how personal and public memory interact in these life narratives. A small number of unpublished memoirs, along with English-language publications, aim to depict the broader, long-term implications of living in the new postwar Germany. Representing the latter half of their lives has the potential to give cohort members and their families closure.

Growing up is often a prominent theme in these memoirs. However, it falls to the wayside during the postwar period. Redding briefly discusses growing up, and the usefulness of oral testimony for emancipation—showing how discussions of the war often prompted career changes in the immediate postwar period.<sup>151</sup> However, public discourse is more influential than Redding's study indicates. Cohort members have trouble representing their time at the front because they tend towards victimcy in their narratives. Dieter Hildebrandt, for example, parallels his Hitler Youth experience and joining the war effort: both were inevitable and out of his control. These experiences often prompt the cohort member to represent themselves as an adult—however, Hildebrandt continues to represent himself as an adolescent at the front.<sup>152</sup> The issue of 'growing up' is present in Gunter Grass's *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (2006), as he openly discusses pandering for audiences by not focusing on growing up. He notes that his childhood came to an end in 1939 when the war began.<sup>153</sup> At age ten, and thus a newly minted member of the Hitler Youth, he transitions from childhood into adolescence. Grass, in contrast to others of his cohort who provide extensive details on their Hitler Youth activities, focuses his analysis on what adolescence meant for him: 'I grew and grew. By the time I was sixteen and eligible for Labour Service [RAD], I was considered full-grown. Or did I not measure one metre and seventy-two centimetres ... until

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149. Evelyn Hinz, 'Mimesis: The Dramatic Lineage of Auto/Biography,' in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University Toronto Press, 1992), 207.

150. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*; on a related note see: S. Jonathan Wiesen, *West German Industry and the Challenge of the Nazi Past: 1945 - 1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4.

151. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, 68.

152. Dieter Hildebrandt, *Mein Kriegsende*, 72-73

153. See Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 171.

I became a soldier, who survived the war's end only by luck or chance?'<sup>154</sup> This quotation is significant because it describes Grass growing mentally and physically. When he states, 'I was fully grown', he does not explicitly state who else thought he was fully grown. Was it the Nazi state, his family, or his reinterpretation of his youthful self? Yet Grass dismisses growing up as an issue—he believes audiences are more interested in 'what has been swallowed in shame, about secrets in varying disguise ... things that hurt'. Grass touches upon something quite profound, as indeed many debates and discussions have focused on painful memories, but what make the difference, ultimately, is an open acknowledgement of emotions.<sup>155</sup>

Whilst Grass shifts his focus to appeal to audiences, other unpublished memoirs address their self-representations to their families and cater to their families' expectations. In so doing, memoirists attempt to normalise their lives in Nazi Germany by retelling stories of their childhoods. Monika K., for example, recounts her inner-self coming to terms with the Nazi period: 'The clarifying and liberating confrontation with my childhood and adolescence was at times a difficult process. Many memories and the associated positive and painful feelings were reactivated. They led me to a deeper insight into the person I am today.'<sup>156</sup> It seems that it is only near the end of her life that Erika S. was able to glean some understanding of her childhood. In the quotation, she uses the word 'Jugend' to refer to the time before she was a nun. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, Erika S. became an adult at age 13, when she experienced severe hunger for the first time ever. In the summer of 1945, with the end of the war, Eva P. and her boyfriend, Hans, enjoyed their freedom. Eva recalls her brother questioning his duties towards his family and his independence: 'Can we boys hope for there to be an existence?'<sup>157</sup> Günter Fillmann (born 1927) illustrates these themes beautifully in his life narrative:

It is often spoken of our generation as the generation of the lost: the transition from child to youth in war, the loss of relatives, physical and mental damage, a partially catastrophic school education, the heavy years of re-

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154. Günter Grass, *Peeling the Onion*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (Random House, 2007), 62.

155. See also, Alan Riding, 'Still Intrigued by History's Shadow: Gunter Grass Worries about the Effects of War, Then as Now,' *The New York Times* (April 8, 2003). John Updike, 'Suppressed Atrocities', *New Yorker* (April 21/28, 2003), 186.

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157. KA BIO 2909, Eva P., 'März 1945 im Dorf Hessen am Harz', 11 in Deutsches Gedächtnis archiv in Fern Universität Hagen

construction, poor pay, hunger, all that has our generation experienced. Certainly it has also had grown up to meet the requirements, was forced early to wake up and to recognise tasks and problems and to solve them. At an early stage, responsibility had to be taken wherever it was required.<sup>158</sup>

Fillmann had been a Flakhelfer during the war. Looking back on his life, he blames the cohort's parents' generation for placing too much expectation and responsibility on young people. Although there is truth in this statement, he lacks an understanding of Nazism and Nazi policies; indeed, perhaps this is because his account is an East German interpretation of the Nazi past.<sup>159</sup> Here, the diction indicates that the concept of 'Jugend' can have multiple meanings and that those meanings can change throughout one's life. On a micro-level, this memory is being reinterpreted for a specific readership; however, it is less preoccupied with shame and 'things that hurt', as compared with Grass.

Although the recurrent end-of-war imagery reflects the destruction, horror, and criminality of the regime, cohort members often counterbalance this with personal stories of growing up. Ursula Martens (born 1929) tells the story of her transition from child to adult through the writer, Mark Shaw. She represents herself as an adult in the spring of 1945; nevertheless, her grandfather's refusal to grant her permission to defend Berlin betrays her true age:

My independence streak had reached a new level; here I was a member, a leader really, of the Hitler Youth and someone lowly like my grandfather was telling me what to do. Didn't he realise how I important I was to the cause? That I was becoming a grown woman and could think for myself? Mostly though, I thought, *There he goes again. He's not willing to fight for this country to win this war.*<sup>160</sup>

This passage describes not only generational and political conflict, but also Martens shifting view of herself and growing confidence in her autonomy. In contrast, Irmgard P. (born 1926) feels that her status as an adult was called into question during the post-war period because she was single: 'I was always hard to control and was [considered] the "young girl" despite my thirty years of age. In business, I had to carry a lot of responsibility, both [definitions] did not fit together properly.'<sup>161</sup> Self-representations of

158. Günter Fillmann, KA BIO 3114 in Deutsches Gedächtnis archiv, 60.

159. See also DTA Sig. Nr. 64, Hans F.; DTA Sig. Nr. 568, Hans G. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, 151.

160. Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*, 114.

161. DTA Sig. Nr. 891, 55; see also DTA Sig. Nr. 3727-1.

growing up find themselves in numerous post-2000 memoirs, indicating a sense of sensitivity towards concepts of growing up arising in writers looking back to their childhoods in the Third Reich.

Looking back and assessing the Nazi past retrospectively is time-dependant, as Adolph D.'s archived memoir illustrates. In his memoir, Adolph D. attempts to re-establish a sense of normalcy through personal anecdotes of love later in life. Still, the shadow of Nazism hangs over him. As his parents were both Nazis, the end of the war would have necessitated a certain amount of reconciliation within the family. On this subject, he writes:

It seems almost inevitable that I touch on memories of my youth and at the same time the topic of 'National Socialism'. But in the end, me and my family got a full load from that mischief. And you can not 'handle' the past as it has been called over and over again, but we have to accept and answer this past, we have to answer for it.<sup>162</sup>

Instead of discussing his life in the new GDR, he discusses his sense of failure and launches into a philosophical discussion as to why he failed—without telling the reader how he failed. Indeed, it is possible that he felt that he ought to have opposed the Nazis. He attempts to normalise the postwar period through his discussion of meeting, dating, proposing and, later, marrying Marilou.<sup>163</sup> However, the question remains as to whether Adolph D., who changed his name in the 1970s to Adolf, and was horrified by truths presented at the Wehrmacht Exhibition, was ever able to feel comfortable in postwar and post-unification Germany. Only a few archived memoirs by male cohort members offer representations of the end of the war within the larger context of their biographies. Marian A., the man who replaced his '*Stunde Null*' with an image of the crying Hitler Youth, opens his memoir with an account of the end of the war, when he is about to start his new life as a member of the police force. Before his police training, Marian A.'s life was marred by Nazi racial policies.<sup>164</sup>

Only one memoir tells the story of transitioning from the Third Reich to the Soviet Zone, and the long-term consequences of this are only briefly discussed. Many youths identified with Hitler, and until the end of the war were willing to sacrifice what

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162. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511, 37.

163. DTA Sig. Nr. 3511.1, 67ff.

164. DTA Sig. Nr. 3431.1, 4ff.

they could for the regime. Michael Buddrus argues that the war brought no personal advancement for young people, necessitating the ‘radical, complex readjustment’ of adolescents in the Soviet Zone of occupation. Young people appeared apathetic towards the new regime, as the KPD’s ‘crass assumptions of guilt’ did not help shift attitudes.<sup>165</sup> Herbert K.’s representation of the early postwar period in the Soviet Zone confirms this: ‘They tried to pressure us into the state youth organisation FDJ. But hardly anyone followed this call. ... Many fell victim to these offers. As I was fed up with the youth organisation in the Hitler era, every attempt to woo me was completely pointless.’<sup>166</sup> He expresses his distaste for political slogans and propaganda which, at seventeen years of age, he claims to have had a ‘sense of the political direction’. He dismisses his lack of interest in politics as being due to age, again, enabling him to deflect responsibility. Upon reflection, Herbert K. notes the similarities between both regimes: ‘Just as the former National Socialists, through glorifying the war, led the whole people into ruin, the Communists made their policy, propagated the right politics, and introduced the dictatorship of the proletariat’.<sup>167</sup> He writes that he became a brick layer because of his parents’ insistence that it was an easy enough job to find. He also participated in the 15 June 1953 strikes in Berlin—reflecting his life-time interest in politics.<sup>168</sup>

Although born in 1935, Ernestine Schlant-Bradley’s case looks back from an American cultural perspective. Schlant-Bradley’s childhood became of interest to the American media when her husband, Bill Bradley, announced that he would run as the Democratic nominee for president in 1999. Seeking normality after the war, Schlant-Bradley, like other cohort members, ‘took on more age- and gender-specific roles and expectations’.<sup>169</sup> She gained employment at the Pan Am Games in 1957, through which she met her first husband, American doctor Robert Schlant. After a few years, they di-

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165. Michael Buddrus, ‘A Generation Twice Betrayed: Youth Policy in the Transition from the Third Reich to the Soviet Zone of Occupation (1945–1946)’, in *Generations in Conflict*, ed. Mark Roseman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 249.

166. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216, 52.

167. DTA Sig. Nr. 1216, 52.

168. See further Wierling, ‘The Hitler Youth Generation in the GDR: Insecurities, Ambitions and Dilemmas’.

169. Redding, *Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow*, 112; Niethammer, ‘“Normalisation” in the West: Traces of Memory Leading Back into the 1950s’; Dagmar Herzog, ‘Desperately Seeking Normality’, in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161–192.

vorced and Schlant-Bradley met Bill Bradley, who played basketball for the New York Knicks.<sup>170</sup> Schlant-Bradley married Bill Bradley in 1974, after emigrating to the United States in 1959. Schlant-Bradley's past was dissected by a number of newspaper articles, which offer an unusual opinion on her Nazi childhood.<sup>171</sup> In separate interviews, she provides different accounts of how she asked her parents about their role in Nazi Germany. Her earliest memory, according to *The Washington Post*, is as follows:

Her memories of wartime Passau are vague. No one told her at the time that it was a center of Nazism, proud to be purged of Jews, or that there was a forced labor camp nearby. She now shudders at the remembered sound of trains forever whooshing in that direction. She remembers serving tea to wounded German soldiers in her school, which was requisitioned as a hospital.<sup>172</sup>

In January 2000, a *Newsweek* article attempts to show how Bradley's discussions with Rabbi Hertzberg—a university colleague whose mother's friend was murdered in a concentration camp—and the fact that she had Walter Strauss as her PhD supervisor make her a well-rounded individual who has effectively mastered her past. The anonymous writer highlights Schlant-Bradley's discussions with her father:

Bradley's conversations with her father, who died in 1974, were more heated. Although he had flown Nazi planes, she says, he was not a member of the party. He admitted to her that he had seen a Jewish couple forced to wear a Star of David, and said he gave them his food-ration card. "He thought that was very nice," Bradley recalls with a trace of bitterness. "And I said, 'So you knew that they didn't get enough food'. 'Well, yeah,' he said. He knew that they were being harassed and all that."<sup>173</sup>

In comparison, *The Tribune* (Ontario, Canada) asked more information about her father:

Her father was in the Luftwaffe, the German air force, but was not in the Nazi Party. After the war he formed his own party and served as mayor of Ingolstadt from 1966-1972.

"I grew up under a blanket of silence," Schlant said. It was only later, as a young woman, that she confronted her parents about their own past.

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170. Barton Gellman; Dale Russakoff, 'A Mother's Ardent 'Project'', *Washington Post*, December 12, 1999,

171. On ProQuest Historical Newspaper archive, 3799 articles appear mentioning Schlant-Bradley from 2000-2009; and 1805 articles from 1990-1999.

172. Dale Russakoff, 'No Silent Partner; For Ernestine Bradley, Academia and Politics Rarely Mixed. But Now She's Changed Course.: [FINAL Edition]', *The Washington Post: STYLE* (Washington, D.C., United States), December 30, 1999, C01.

173. 'A Daughter's Hard Questions', January 24, 2000, <http://europe.newsweek.com/daughters-hard-questions-158395>.

“I would say, ‘You really didn’t know what was going on?’ The answer was, ‘You don’t understand, you weren’t there, you can’t really talk about it,’” she said.<sup>174</sup>

Her inability to assess her place within her family’s private memory of the war illustrates how familial tensions affected postwar recovery and interpretations.<sup>175</sup> Bar-On calls this the ‘double wall of silence’ which parents place in front of their children, who are then shamed into silence, allowing negative feelings to pass onto later generations.<sup>176</sup> Schlant, Mahlendorf, and Adolph D.’s attempts to confront their parents’ assessments of the Nazi past reveals larger issues of collective guilt and shame.<sup>177</sup> As with many English-language publications, Schlant’s memoir was published as an extraordinary case, as was Irgmard Hunt’s 2013 *On Hitler’s Mountain*. In Hunt’s case, growing up in the same village as Hitler’s summer house was enough justification for publication.

## Conclusion

This chapter examines the complex process of understanding, remembering, and representing the immediate postwar period in memoir writing. Early postwar life narratives do this in three ways: they explore emotional anguish and ultimately turn towards religion for purpose and solace; they discuss being captured and placed in Allied POW camps; and they reflect on the occupation of the home front. These themes shifted in later writings, which focus on: the bombings of major cities and experiences as *Flakhelferen* or soldiers; the occupation, evacuation, and refugee status of Germans; and a more open discussion of rape and the fear of rape. Although some historians have argued that the war became taboo, certain aspects of war continue to resurface throughout the postwar period. Rape is more openly discussed in private memories at later life stages. There are perhaps other reasons why this is the case—most likely the lessening stigma towards rape victims, and a more open acknowledgement of rape culture in Western Europe had an impact.

English-language memoirists’ writings are similar thematically to German-

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174. Elsner, ‘Bill Bradley’s German-Born Wife Could Make History’.

175. Bernhard Schlink, *Guilt about the Past* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2013), 47.

176. Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*.

177. Roger Frie, *Not in My Family: German Memory and Responsibility After the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).



language works, however, they are more interested in exploring the emotional landscape of Nazi Germany during its final months. This may be due, in part, to the exposé style in which these works were written, as publishers and general audiences have certain expectations of genres. The memoirs of English-language writers do not always end when the war ends; some provide glimpses into postwar life. Many describe moving to the United States, and raising their families away from Germany. This distance, along with more widespread public discussions of the Second World War, have impacted representations and interpretations of the postwar period.

Some memoirists trace the trajectory of their lives in the postwar period in their archival writings, however this is rare. Adolescence and growing up appear in numerous memoirs, and growing up plays an important role in wartime and postwar representations. This may be because most memoirs were written for family, and most of these family members would already have been familiar with their lives after the war. Within this context, omissions are more understandable; however, some of the more noteworthy memoirs were those written after 1945, but which use 1945 as a turning point in the narrative. Marian A., for example, is a prime example of this: life during the Nazi period was not easy for him as an orphan; thus the end of the war gives him a new sense of direction and focus.

In life narratives or memoirs, context matters because it impacts self-representation. The audience, or readership, ought to be considered part of the context, as it influences the author's intentions and style. In the early collection of Abitur works, the context manifests itself as emotional language. The age of the writer also affects self-representations, which shift with time and increasing emotional distance from the event.

In German-language works from the 1980s onward, public memory of the Third Reich focused on the Holocaust. However, in private works, crimes committed against the Germans—such as occupation and the forceful expulsion of Germans from occupied areas—often take precedence or are, at least, equated to the Holocaust in terms of suffering.<sup>178</sup> Most accounts of the end of the Third Reich tell us how cohort members learnt of the Holocaust, which will be explored in the next chapter. In the United States, the end of the Third Reich is only indirectly tied to the Holocaust, with most stories

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178. Moeller, *War Stories*, 2.

centred around defeat and occupation. However, living in and writing from the United States also facilitates a different type of retrospection, as age and distance influence writers' understanding of the past and the Third Reich's fall. One important difference is the emphasised suffering in most accounts, probably motivated by the writers' guilt for partaking in Hitler Youth activities.

## Chapter 7

# Facing the Next Generation: Private Memory of the Holocaust

‘The Jewish family who had lived on the first floor of our house until 1941, and who were not permitted to use the shelter during air raids, were ... no longer there,’ writes Jost Hermand (born 1930) in his 1993 memoir.<sup>1</sup> Aside from this brief mention of his Jewish neighbours, Hermand never learns of their fate. Indeed, when they are acknowledged, Hermand’s Jewish neighbours are treated with indifference.<sup>2</sup> As previous chapters have illustrated, the Hitler Youth generation grew up with a strong belief in Nazism, an ideology fostered throughout school, as well as by the Hitler Youth organisation. Further, Kansteiner notes, this generation ‘shuttle[s] back and forth between the desire to forget and the compulsion to remember’.<sup>3</sup> Memories of the Holocaust and the racial state therefore place the memoirist in an uncomfortable position when recounting their idyllic childhood years. This chapter argues that the collected memoryscape outwardly distances itself from controversial topics, forcing a collective silence on the Holocaust, in an attempt to normalise the Third Reich; only a small number of life narratives broach the topic. Cohort memoirists grapple with their place within the contested Nazi past, as well as with the issue of collectively memorialising the Holocaust and their Jewish neighbours.

Commemorating victims of the Holocaust has been at the forefront of German public memory from the 1960s onward. From selectively-focused East German com-

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1. Hermand, *A Hitler Youth in Poland*, 67.

2. Kohut, *A German Generation*, 171-172.

3. Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 3.

memoration to West Germany's attempted *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—perhaps best symbolised through Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Holocaust memorial in Warsaw in December 1970—political speeches and Holocaust commemorations have been integral since 1960.<sup>4</sup> Historical studies of Holocaust survivors and victims have been ongoing since the 1980s. Recently, scholars have focused on how the Holocaust has been remembered and depicted in memorials, museums, and public sites in Germany.<sup>5</sup> In *War Stories*, Robert Moeller argues that in West Germany, public memory of the Third Reich and negative aspects of the Nazi regime were actively silenced, as the country focused on creating a 'usable' past.<sup>6</sup> Roger Frie uses personal, family accounts to discuss Germany memory and responsibility; he broaches new topics on the memory of the Holocaust through perpetrator perspectives, using psychoanalysis as a starting point.<sup>7</sup> Still, more work is needed to locate the complexities of self-representation and self-identity in post-Second World War accounts.

Jews often play only a minor role in cohort life narratives. This suggests that cohort members do not know how to memorialise victims of the regime, or perhaps that they do not wish to confront their own sense of responsibility or guilt. This issue is tackled in Ursula Hegi (born 1946)'s dialogue in *Tearing the Silence*, which concerns expatriate Germans living in the United States. Hegi herself moved to the United States as a young adult, and here she recounts how her parents (born c. 1910) discussed the war:

[Discussion was] never about the Holocaust. "We suffered, too", they would say. It is an incomplete lens, but only held up to many of our generation as the only lens to see through. If our parents had spoken to us about their responsibility for their actions or lack of action during the war, if they had grieved for the Jews and Gypsies and homosexuals and political prisoners who were murdered, and if then, in addition to all of this, they would have told us, "We suffered, too," their victimhood would have become a part of the total lens.<sup>8</sup>

Although Hegi fails to account for the 1968 student revolts in her analysis, her recognition of the post-First World War generation's victim mentality reveals the bias of

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4. Hoffmann, *Stunden Null?*; Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 176.

5. Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 10.

6. Moeller, *War Stories*.

7. Frie, *Not in My Family*.

8. Ursula Hegi, *Tearing the Silence: On Being German in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 15.

this memory—especially in the North American context.<sup>9</sup> After the 1970s, there was a shift in Germany towards a more historical self-awareness and re-assessment of the stereotypes of Jews, Poles, and Russians. Further, there was a departure from self-victimisation and a movement towards empathy for Nazi victims.

Whilst the geographical and cultural distance of the U.S. enabled writers to record their Second World War memories more freely in German, we also see more openness in English-language life narratives. One common theme is *Kristallnacht*, which took place on 8-9 November 1938. Although some cohort members were only five at the time, their interpretations are consistent with those of older cohort members. Most are second or third-hand accounts, rather than the firsthand account found in Hans Peter Richter's trilogy.<sup>10</sup> Those who were too young to remember still include it by acknowledging that they cannot remember it; those old enough to have witnessed it describe the confusion they felt during the aftermath of the pogrom. Margarete Baacke, for example, heard of *Kristallnacht* the day after it happened, on the radio: 'Synagogues burned? Storefronts shattered? To think all this happened last night!'<sup>11</sup> Incredulous, Baacke and her brother cycle into town to witness the carnage.<sup>12</sup> Dieter E. (born 1930) writes of his discovery on the way to school: 'Two uniformed S.A. men told the excited crowd really nothing had happened, only someone smashing the window of a damned Jew. Dieter had no idea what was going on and continued after having looked long enough, on his way'.<sup>13</sup> These English-language accounts are rare instances of German writers mentioning the trauma of the Jews and the Holocaust. Most of the cohort members do not engage with negative aspects of the regime. As such, these sources cannot be taken as wholly representative, because there is too much silence surrounding this topic.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first analyses the manner in which cohort members discuss Jews and the Holocaust in their writings; the second looks at how geographical and cultural distance influence representations of Jews and the Holocaust; and the conclusion argues that negative aspects of Nazi Germany are readily dismissed by the cohort and ignored in writing to protect self-identity and self-worth.

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9. Wibke Bruhns, *Isäni maa: saksalaisen perheen tarina*, trans. Marja Kyrö (Helsinki: Siltala, 2010), 22.

10. See Richter, *Wir waren dabei*.

11. Baacke, *Tainted Blood?*, 129.

12. *Ibid.*

13. DTA Sig. Nr. 344, 9

## German-Language Memoirs

As argued in Chapter 2, depictions and narrative stories concerning family life are vital for self-representations because they allow the writer to provide the reader with their origin stories. To protect the family unit's reputation, negative stories are silenced, removed from narrative, or written about laconically. Rosenthal's analysis suggests that 'accomplices and perpetrators of the Nazi regime have learned to eradicate all traumatic and embarrassing experiences from their life stories.'<sup>14</sup> She further states that in such life stories, deaths and violence are minimally recounted.<sup>15</sup> These points can also be applied to these sources, but the context of when and where the cohort member wrote adds nuance to our understanding of the corpus. Unpublished German memoirs are complex when it comes to remembering and commemorating the Jews. Cohort members often recount how they first learnt of antisemitism—typically through family discussions or witnessing Nazi party members mistreating Jews on the street. In some memoirs, the father is portrayed as the most politically active family member, and it is he who shapes the family's view of the Nazi party. The mother often counterbalances the father, as a moderate commentator or the voice of reason. This is especially the case in firsthand accounts of *Kristallnacht*, during which Nazi party members vandalised Jewish-owned stores, residences, and synagogues. Other than *Kristallnacht*, Jews are not the focal point of the narrative, as seen in Hermand's account. Some accounts avoid mentioning the Jews and the Holocaust altogether.

As the Second World War continued, Germany's Jewish and older, non-Jewish population learnt of the deportations and horrors of the camps in the East.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that Germans did not approve of the deportation of their Jewish neighbours; still, despite this, the war and Nazi ideology meant that people behaved indifferently towards the suffering of the Jews. Based on post-war data gathered by the Americans and later by the Germans, about forty per cent agreed with Nazi preconceptions of the Jews.<sup>17</sup> Many of the memoirists in this study admit to having pre-war anti-Semitic feelings; it

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14. Gabriele Rosenthal, *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime* (A&C Black, 1998), 30.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 240-243.

17. Robert G. Moeller, *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 231.

is possible that more of the writers did, but fail to mention it. For example, in Haß's collection, neither the Holocaust, criminal trials, nor the Jews are mentioned. Although historians believe that it was common knowledge to have some understanding of the regime's crimes, many of the young people responded with silence or indifference. Instead, the cohort deals with the memory of the Third Reich by emphasising stories of their own families and their suffering. It is only with the maturation of the cohort, in texts written from the 1980s onward, that cohort members begin to comment upon more contested or traumatic topics.<sup>18</sup> Even then, cohort members do not necessarily actively engage with the Nazi past, and often fail to explore anything other than happy autobiographical memories.

This idea that the cohort members knew about the concentration camps supports Johnson and Reuband's findings about the number of Germans who knew about the Holocaust. Some remember hearing about the camps from their parents or strangers, however, not all claim to have known about them.<sup>19</sup> Historical research indicates that civilians 'possessed enough information to make them realise if not the extent, at least the direction of Nazi policy' concerning the expulsion of Jews, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and political opponents into concentration camps.<sup>20</sup> An American study from 1994, studying the citizens of Aachen concluded that these Germans had a 'strange sense of guilt about the Jews' and expected 'punishment and retribution' for the war.<sup>21</sup> In many memoirs, the published images of death camps and dead bodies is remembered as, and believed to be, Allied propaganda.<sup>22</sup> Whether the cohort members found out about the camps in this way remains unclear; Kleinau, for example, claims his mother told him she could smell the fumes from the camps near them, but he does not challenge or question his own ignorance of this at all. Herbert W., strangely, heard about the camps from his barber: 'At my barber's, I heard older customers talking about concentration camps and about killing the inmates. Although I could not classify one

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18. Anne Wilson and Michael Ross, 'The Identity Function of Autobiographical Memory: Time Is on Our Side.', *Memory* 11, number 2 (2003): 137–149.

19. See Table 13.2, section on age in Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany: An Oral History* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2005), 370.

20. David Bankier, 'German Public Awareness of the Final Solution', in *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, ed. David Cesarani (London: Routledge, 1994), 215–216.

21. *Ibid.*, 216.

22. Kleinau, *Im Gleichschritt, Marsch! Der Versuch einer Antwort, warum ich von Auschwitz nichts wusste, Lebenserinnerungen eines NS-Eliteschülers der Napola Ballenstedt*.

or the other story correctly, I tried to capture a lot'.<sup>23</sup> Hans-Peter Sch. (born 1928) presents what we would consider negative aspects of the regime readily to his readers: he discusses seeing Jews in his home town of Lauban wearing the yellow star of David, on his way to the bookshop one day. At his school, he writes, they focused on learning about the 'Jewish financial influence on the world and the concentration camps in Germany'. These camps, he argues, were 'Humane facilities'. Further, at school they were encouraged to make racial ancestral charts.<sup>24</sup> Although context plays a role in who writes about the Holocaust, similar unwillingness to represent negative memories or narratives which implicate self-identity are found in all samples.

Most cohort members dedicate their unpublished memoirs to their grandchildren and children; this motivates them to exercise a certain amount of control over which autobiographical memories get passed down to future generations. For some, this means whitewashing complex memories; for others, the past is an oracle to warn and educate their offspring. In Christa H.'s (born 1931) memoir, written for her grandchildren and children, she describes her childhood as a 'schöne Kindheit' (ideal childhood), devoting only a few lines to her Hitler Youth activities and the games she played growing up. She writes of the concentration camps in the following manner:

You can not imagine what this fanatic feeling for the Hitler regime, even among the best of friends, did the greatest harm to. Even within families, their own children, who were more fanatical, like their parents, their own parents, reported them to senior party officials and were sent to concentration camps.<sup>25</sup>

Besides asking the reader to imagine the influence of Nazism on her family, she does not attempt further discussion of the concentration camps and she does not attempt to problematise or question it. This illustrates how much of an influence her family narrative had on her willingness to question reality. She casts Nazism in a negative light—however, her assessment of the Second World War is only available in a supplementary volume, separate from her main memoir. Her self-identity is grounded in her innocent childhood, putting her on the same playing field as her readers: her grandchildren. Otto P., writing for his grandchildren, places more controversial material into

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23. DTA Sig. Nr. 752 Herbert W., 11.

24. DTA Sig. Nr. 1067, 17-18; see also Goettig, *From Hitler Youth to American Hero*, 14-15.

25. DTA Sig. Nr. 1266, Vol. 2, 3.



the last one hundred pages of his three-hundred-page memoir. During Hitler Youth evenings, the boys would sing songs about the Jews:

As a joke song we sing again and again, 'The Jews go there, so – they are moving through the Red Sea, the waves are beating, the world is at peace.' And do not think anything of it. That's what I think. The song is simply down lifted. On the other hand, if we do not imagine anything, where is the 'joke' of this song? Why do we keep singing it? Does not it come with evil glee? A questionable, a bad situation.<sup>26</sup>

After questioning and failing to find the humour in these songs, Otto P. moves on to recount other, less politically-sensitive songs from his Hitler Youth evenings. He ends up recording war songs, and highlights a particular stanza: 'Traitors and Jews had profited, they demanded sacrifices for legions'. To which he attempts to make amends with the present: 'We did not attach much importance to them. Only after reflection of the systematic extermination of the Jews did they fall into view as evidence of a racist attitude of mind and terrible harbingers'.<sup>27</sup> Here, Otto P. is attempting to reconcile his private memory of singing amusing songs, with the collective memory of the systematic persecution and mass murder of the Jews. He appears unable to reconcile supporting and believing in racial ideology, and the postwar attempt to counter these notions. Here, the writer fails to explain what the songs mean or what they imply. Describing her school days after the end of the war, Erika S. abruptly shifts topics to write about her friend Ingrid, who was a half-Jew. She appears not to know how to deal with the mass murders her country committed, in which she indirectly took part, and attempts to reconcile her self-worth by raising Ingrid to a higher standard. Erika S. emphasises how Ingrid's father had fought in the First World War, and received an Iron Cross for his service. Still, this was not enough to keep her family safe from Nazi persecution. She recounts:

Only through the care of a doctor in Schötmar and his moral courage, Mr. Eichmann was spared the concentration camp. Unfortunately, his son and older daughter were not lucky. But they survived God bless them; however, all the family members had suffered severe physical and emotional damage to which they had to carry their lives and still have some. Ingrid Eichmann became in our class class spokeswoman, head girl and later an enthusiastic and very capable primary school teacher.<sup>28</sup>

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26. Otto P., *Deutsches Gedächtnis in Fern Universität Hagen* 2005, 238.

27. Otto P., *Deutsches Gedächtnis in Fern Universität Hagen* 2005, 240.

28. DTA Sig. Nr. 1829, 21.

This quotation shows Erika's inability to emotionally process and articulate the treatment of her classmate's family—other than thanking God that they survived the concentration camp, with Ingrid's father avoiding the camp altogether. In unpublished family narratives, these accounts are commonplace. Many writers demonstrate an inability or reluctance to confront memories of the Nazi past which conflict with their self-identities.

The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 against the Jews and the instigation against frequenting Jewish shops is one of the more challenging memories. Hans Josef Horchem (born 1927) reflects on these laws rather crudely: 'Most non-Jewish Germans accepted the new laws. Since they themselves were not affected, they did not care that they had taken their Jewish fellow citizens essential rights'.<sup>29</sup> This period is often mentioned, if only cursorily, in memoirs. Yet there is often no contextualisation nor reflection upon the repercussions for the Jews.<sup>30</sup> For instance, whilst Hans H. (born 1926) remembers seeing Jews with the star of David on their clothes at the train station in Leipzig, he does not question what he witnessed.<sup>31</sup> Elsbeth Charlotte H. (born 1933) recounts only one Jewish pre-war experience: she bought an item from a Jewish department store and was subsequently harassed by a man dressed in an SA uniform. He threatened to have her imprisoned if she bought anything from a Jew again. As a consequence, she states, 'I have not put on a uniform for a long time, it seemed soiled to me. But you were young and easily got over everything'.<sup>32</sup> Being accosted by a stranger and, later, feeling repulsed by her uniform was traumatic—as evidenced by her statement: 'I would have liked to meet the sowhead (*Saukopf*) after the war, but who knows, maybe he did not survive at all'.<sup>33</sup> This excerpt is ambiguous enough in that it leaves itself to the interpretation of the reader: does the author want revenge on the man for his treatment of the Jews, or because he publicly shamed her? Elisabeth M. (born 1926) does not discuss the treatment of the Jews. Her family lived in Berlin during the Third Reich and her mother worked for a Jewish family. After Kristallnacht, Elisabeth M. states that her

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29. Hans Josef Horchem, *Kinder im Krieg: Kindheit und Jugend im Dritten Reich* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 2000), 78.

30. See also DTA Sig. Nr. 64; DTA Sig. Nr. 1067, and Finell, *Good-Bye to the Mermaids*, 89.

31. Hans H., *Nobody 26 Jugendzeit 1926 - 1947*, 35 from Deutsches Gedächtnis Archive.

32. DTA Sig. Nr. 13.5, 17-18.

33. DTA Sig. Nr. 13.5, 18

mother later said she ‘has only experienced good things with this family’.<sup>34</sup> The true meaning of this statement remains open to interpretation. As these accounts illustrate, the Jews are part of everyday German life – however, they are only mentioned in stories of being reprimanded for interacting with them, in light of the Nuremberg Laws.

Writing her memoir in a pseudo-historical style, Helga Z.’s (born 1927) impression of the Jews in her home town of Duisburg typifies how cohort members silence uncomfortable memories about the Third Reich. She discusses the Jews by retelling a family story about the Jewish tenants who rented from her father. After learning of a court order which forced Jewish families to move, she remembers that her father was upset about the ruling—ultimately, though, he brushes his feelings of guilt aside: ‘We assume that they emigrated, just in time in the spring of 1938! That was a great relief for my father; he was now relieved of his decision’.<sup>35</sup> She claims that her father did what he could for their Jewish tenants; further, Helga’s family narrative absolves her and her family of guilt, because the story took place in 1938—before the beginning of the war and the Holocaust. Following this account, Helga Z.’s description of Duisburg’s Jewish population is biased and filled with pockets of silence. Duisburg was a target of the Allied bombings because of its armament factories; however, it was also the location of a small concentration camp which, in 1943, was destroyed by aerial bombardment.<sup>36</sup> As readers, we cannot uncover whether she knew about the work camp close to her home, but as a text contending with the present, she fails to grapple with negative associations. This is visible in how she idealises her home town:

In Duisburg we did not know any Jews. I only remember that one day in 1938 the synagogue was burning near my way to school. I thought, ‘It just happens that something is burning somewhere.’ I was 11 years old and did not wonder why it was burning. Since there was a synagogue in Duisburg, Jews must have lived there too, but certainly not as many as in Frankfurt.<sup>37</sup>

This passage contains numerous contradictory statements: she did not know of any Jews in Duisburg although her father had Jewish tenants and the synagogue near her was burnt during Kristallnacht? Such tactics are not uncommon, seeing as it would be

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34. DTA Sig. Nr. 256, 18.

35. DTA Sig. Nr. 1925, 55

36. Karola Fings, in *Konzentrationslager im Rheinland und in Westfalen 1933-1945. Zwischen zentraler Steuerung und regionaler Initiative*, 1 edition, ed. Jan Erik Schulte (Munich: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, January 1, 2005), 165–178.

37. DTA Sig. Nr. 1925, 55.

difficult to confront these memories in a life narrative or autobiography..

Hans G., who lived in East Germany until its collapse, is similarly reticent. He only mentions the persecution of the Jews briefly in an earlier part of his memoir — when he was a child and his mother bought him shoes from a Jewish shoe maker. Hans G. does not discuss his views of the Holocaust or Nazi war crimes. Moreover, at a United States conference, he writes about how his last name is called into question because of its seeming ‘Jewishness’. He explains the etymology of his name in the following passage:

As I took a closer look at this fishing venture, I had to state that the arguments of my adversaries in the Nazi era were more valid than they had probably assumed: in the late Middle Ages, the grain trade between Poland-Lithuania and the German Reich was primarily in Jewish hands. On the other hand, my forefathers can be traced back to the time of the Eastern colonisation. If one of my ancestors was a Jew, he might go into the protection of the church during a medieval pogrom. That would also explain the occurrence of Old Testament names in several of my ancestors.<sup>38</sup>

Although the origin of his last name probably derives from his East German family background, Hans G’s rationale is striking. This overall tendency to avoid discussing the fate of the Jews illustrates how uncomfortable memories are transformed or silenced by writers of this generation. It also shows how much these writers valued composure, and how narrativising history links familial memory with identity. The manner in which Helga Z. contradicts herself every few sentences, and uses her age to convince the reader of her innocence, reveals the weight and complexity of processing the Holocaust. Helga’s indifference towards the Jews is an indication of the Hitler Youth generation’s public memory framework. Cohort members try to absolve themselves and their families of responsibility by repressing guilt and negative feelings of self-worth.

Seeing as German historiographical and public discussions of the Holocaust were just beginning, cohort writings from this period often explore how Nazism impacted daily life. For example, Wolfram Siebeck, writing a short memoir in 1982 for *Die Zeit* magazine, makes a few mentions of the Jews. However, he still makes no comment upon their fate. As he writes of his father’s apparent anti-Semitism:

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38. DTA Sig. Nr. 568, 12.

I heard my father say with satisfaction that they had finally shown it to the Jews. Whether he himself was involved in the riots, I do not know. He did not spend many evenings at home; Often meetings were mentioned. Years later, I came to the conclusion that he was advancing party affairs in order to be able to sit in pubs with his new friends from the NSDAP; maybe he also had girlfriends.<sup>39</sup>

Here, the reader can infer that Siebeck's rejection of Nazism seems to have been motivated by his father's obsession. The father's public anti-Semitism invades the private sphere and influences family life—an influence which Siebeck and his mother reject. Still, whether or not they dislike anti-Semitism and its impact on their home remains unclear. Here, we see how family narratives and family culture affect the recording and remembrance of the Holocaust. Jews are only mentioned if they pose a problem to family life; they are rarely considered within the broader context of Nazism.

## English-Language Memoirs

The North American writing context has shaped how the Holocaust and the Jews are remembered and represented in life narratives. Several cohort members moved to the United States in the 1950s, typically to study or to join the U.S. military. Unlike their German-language counterparts, leaving Germany gave them an opportunity to distance themselves from the past.<sup>40</sup> American historians were some of the earliest to write about and document the Holocaust; further, as James Young notes, America happens to be a 'culture of competing catastrophes', with each cultural group coming together under the common identity of victimhood.<sup>41</sup> Hilene Flanzbaum argues that the Holocaust has become an American cultural artefact, which has gained traction since the 1990s — especially with films such as *Schindler's List* (1993) and the opening of the Holocaust Museum.<sup>42</sup> As American-Jewish presence and involvement in Holocaust commemoration has risen, it is possible that cohort members began writing about the Holocaust because of its cultural significance in the United States. Female cohort writers express more guilt about the Jews, representing themselves as more emotionally distressed than the men in their narratives. Just as with the unpublished narratives, memories of the

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39. Siebeck, 'Meine Kindheit unter dem Hakenkreuz'.

40. See Chapter 6

41. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, 164.

42. Helene Flanzbaum, 'The Americanization of the Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, number 1 (1999): 97; 101-102.

Jews are often subsumed within autobiographical memories of Kristallnacht. Further, most writers blame their teachers for their own anti-Semitic values. Within the selection of English-language works, an outright denial of Jewish suffering is rare. German suffering is pushed to the forefront, in order to absolve ordinary German citizens of Nazi war crimes.

In English-language memoirs, cohort members make an effort to discuss their knowledge or lack thereof to explain their ignorance of concentration camps. For instance, Schlesier (born 1927) writes, ‘I had known since I was six years old that there had been concentration camps. That they had become death camps where people were systematically murdered was something we had not known’.<sup>43</sup> Schlesier’s usage of the general ‘we’ and the singular ‘I’ are at odds; moreover, who he means by ‘we’ remains unclear. Regardless, using the first person plural allows the individual to deflect responsibility. Indeed, this creates tension between memories of a childhood, which might have been happy, with the criminality of the regime—as Werner Schumann notes:

I had known about something called a ‘concentration camp,’ although I did not really understand the difference between that and a prison. Now I learned that these inmates (mostly Jews) were not only confined and many used as slave labour, but they were also deliberately killed. It is likely that initially I may have put that information off as propaganda by the occupiers. It was only gradually that I learned more about the extent of the Holocaust. How could my fellow Germans, this heroic master race, be capable of such inhumanity? Even seeing the first images made it difficult for me to accept the information as fact. After all, it was a horrible indictment of my own father (even if he was not explicitly involved); and it made my own childhood’s embrace of the Nazi world evil.<sup>44</sup>

The way in which Schumann understands and discusses his perceptions of the Holocaust is typical in terms of the collected memoryscape; many writers feel a desire to defend Germans, in that not all Germans were ‘evil’ or ‘Nazis’. In contrast, Voss (born 1925), knew about the concentration camps when he was writing in 1947—although, he thought they were all work camps.<sup>45</sup> So did Volmar (born 1929), writing in 1999,

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43. Schlesier, *Flakhelfer to Grenadier*, 141.

44. Schumann, Werner (2015-02-24). *From Brownshirt to Turtleneck: Memoir of a Documentary Filmmaker* (Kindle Locations 917-921). (Kindle Locations 921-925 Lulu Publishing Services. Kindle Edition.

45. Voss, *Black Edelweiss*, 35.

who ‘never heard [concentration camps] called “death camps” until after the end of the war’.<sup>46</sup>

In memoirs, we see a very gradual engagement with and discussion of the Holocaust and Nazi war crimes. Within the context of American Holocaust memorialisation, Ilse Koehn’s *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* (1977) is one of the earliest published works. The term Mischling refers to those of ‘mixed-blood’, to people who had both Aryan and Jewish parents. Although Koehn’s paternal bloodline is composed of spiritualists and atheists, all are considered, ethnically, to be Jewish. Because of Koehn’s Mischling status, she sees herself as a victim of the regime, despite her involvement in the Hitler Youth organisation and not personally suffering any persecution. Writing for a North American audience allows her to ‘show that the victims of war are ordinary human beings, individuals, whose concerns are the same as anyone else’s, even though they are the enemy to others’.<sup>47</sup> Koehn does not use her memoir to problematise, question, nor actively engage with the Holocaust or the fate of the Jews—although her title suggests otherwise. Alfons Heck’s (born 1930) memoir, which was originally published in 1983, but updated and expanded in 1986, is another North American attempt to engage with Nazism. Heck became acquainted with a Holocaust survivor named Waterford, and the two went on a joint book tour in 1985. In the last chapter of his republished edition, as he and Waterford present their opinions of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, Heck decides to ‘defect the worst of [the criticism] by emphasising my age. Despite my rank in the Hitler Youth, I had been only 17 [...]’.<sup>48</sup> In another instance, after an interview with the Today Show on Reagan’s visit to the Bitburg cemetery, during the spring of 1985, Heck received a comment from a viewer:

These young, dead Germans were also victims of Nazism. That was deemed unforgivable, because his weeping statement put them on the same level with victims of the Holocaust. I’m neither that brave nor that casual. There is a degree of difference between dead German soldiers who fought for Hitler and those who died as his captives.<sup>49</sup>

Memories of Kristallnacht vary depending upon geographical location, as do interpretations of the pogrom. Ursula Martens (born 1929) writes about Kristallnacht

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46. Volmar, *I Learned to Fly for Hitler*, 231.

47. Bloom, ‘Ilse Koehn’s Story’.

48. Heck, *The Burden of Hitler’s Legacy*, 234.

49. *Ibid.*, 246-247.

through her parents' and classmates' perspective—recalling that 'revved up' feeling at school, the following morning.<sup>50</sup> Martens's parents remember Kristallnacht as the night when the Jews got 'what they deserved' because 'they were bad people'.<sup>51</sup> In retrospect, she 'wondered whether things would have been different for the Jews if they had fought back on that day ... but they must not have fought back'. She writes of feeling 'sorry for all the beautiful crystals', and does not question Nazi representations of the Jews as 'bloodsuckers and parasites, and that they were the reason Germany was bad off since they took all the money'.<sup>52</sup> Werner Schumann (born 1930) writes in his memoir (2015), 'In fact, I was not aware that Jews were living among us in Berlin', and did not hear about Kristallnacht until after the war.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Ursula Mahlendorf (born 1929) continues to feel guilty about Nazi war crimes, which she learnt about through eavesdropping:

Yet whenever I learned, as an adult of one or another specific crime, I felt revulsion, horror, guilt and dread. . . . I have often thought that I saw much of what adults refused to see because, as a child, I felt no responsibility for these events. . . . No amount of conscious knowledge that you cannot be responsible for what you experience as a child, no attempt at dismantling this guilt, erases the shame and grief.<sup>54</sup>

Mahlendorf, in the latter part of her memoir, partially blames her mother for not correcting her belief in Hitler and the Nazi party; her relationship with her mother eventually healed, over time. In contrast to Martens and Mahlendorf, Jutta Schreiner's *The Signature Call* (2010) does not address the Holocaust, but instead focuses on the hardships which her family and her neighbours endured under American occupation.<sup>55</sup> Cohort members use family stories and culture to justify either ignoring the Jews, or believing in the justness of Hitler's cause.

Male cohort members who were either living near the Eastern Front or who were old enough to be sent to it, represent Jews and other civilians as partisans. Johan Voss's (born 1925) 1947 account, although published in 2002, is a product of his time. Voss

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50. Koehn, *Mischling - Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany*, 34; Shelton, *To Lose a War*, 32; Hunt, *On Hitler's Mountain*.

51. Martens and Shaw, *Stations Along the Way*, 62-63.

52. *Ibid.*, 63.

53. Schumann, *From Brownshirt to Turtleneck*, Kindle Locations 382-385.

54. Mahlendorf, *The Shame of Survival*.

55. See Schreiner, *The Signature Call*.



had been a member of the Waffen-SS, and had been captured by the Americans.<sup>56</sup> Voss attempts to come to terms with SS crimes, which he denies throughout his memoir, until the last few pages. At this point, he does, if rather begrudgingly, make some concessions: ‘since those mass killings and other crimes against humanity seem to be true, and since they were organized by criminals wearing our uniform’.<sup>57</sup> It is possible that, by the end of the memoir, Voss accepts that some of the SS members were responsible — as indicated by his description of the Jews’ transportation: ‘Horror struck me. Large black eyes in deep eye sockets, imploring and frightened . . . These were humans at their lowest level of debasement’.<sup>58</sup> However, he does not probe into why these people were being transported, or wonder what became of them. The intensity of the autobiographical memory conflicts with Voss’ very natural desire to deny what he witnessed. This indifference to Jewish suffering is not unique; rather, it illustrates the writer’s tendency to place personal stories and suffering over those of others’, particularly strangers.

A small number of Hitler Youth members living in the U.S. were able to use newspaper opinion pieces to express, remember, and collectivise their experiences. In the *Los Angeles Times*, John Haase (born 1924) wrote a short expose-piece, in May 1984, titled ‘A Boy’s Rite of Passage Out of Nazi Germany’. Haase, a German Jew, writes of his desire to join the Hitler Youth, mainly due to the allure of the ‘wonderful black uniforms of the boys in the Hitlerjugend’.<sup>59</sup> Although his father was still a manufacturer in Frankfurt, his brother had emigrated to the United States. This made it easier for the family to leave Germany on short notice for San Francisco.<sup>60</sup> He does not demonstrate an awareness of the Holocaust in this piece. One month later, two responses to Haase’s publication appeared.<sup>61</sup> Ruth Weddle, also born in 1924, focuses on her negative experiences in the Hitler Youth, and claims to have been wholly unaware of Nazi racial policies. On race, Weddle writes:

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56. Voss, *Black Edelweiss*.

57. *Ibid.*, 202.

58. *Ibid.*, 63.

59. John Haase, ‘OA Boy’s Rite of Passage Out of Nazi Germany’, *Los Angeles Times: Part V* (Los Angeles, Calif., United States), May 21, 1984, F1.

60. Rather interestingly Haase’s father had converted to Christianity at some point. This did not seem to deter him from leaving the country. *ibid.*, F2.

61. Ruth Weddle and Hilda Anker Fogelson, ‘Letters in VIEW: Other Rites in Nazi Germany’, *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File): Part V* (Los Angeles, Calif., United States), June 11, 1984, h14.

*Der Stürmer*, a vile compendium of alleged Jewish perversions and atrocities . . . my folks didn't allow us to stop and look—ever. Especially not after it ran a picture of Mother and Dad strolling down our street one week. Oh I found a copy, to be sure, and had no idea what they were talking about when they bemoaned the shame of the obviously Aryan blonde, soiling her body by union with that Jew who ran the little music shop.<sup>62</sup>

As a result, her father's business 'had gone down the tubes' and the family was forced to remove all sheet music composed by Jews and sell 'brass handles from the furnace and stove, empty toothpaste tubes and whatever brought a few marks'.<sup>63</sup> As Haase was unable to join the Hitler Youth, he is unable to rebut Weddle's account, which is of an authoritarian Hitler Youth which demanded 'weekly meetings of the neighbourhood troop, every bloody Wednesday'.<sup>64</sup> Reflecting on the present moment, in which they both are survivors of a system—survivors who 'felt the same smell of oppression in Germany's air'—she writes that she and Haase are 'Angelenos with a present and future that we could never have dreamed of then, ours to shape in a way neither the Jewish boy nor the German girl had a chance to in Germany'.<sup>65</sup> Another response below Weddle's deals with a Jewish woman who was part of the Kindertransport to London: 'A scene etched into my memory is the farewell of all these children to their parents, whom some never saw again. The Nazis would not let the parents kiss their kids goodbye [*sic*], but only wave from another platform at the train station'.<sup>66</sup> Together, these three pieces illustrate the complexity of public and private memory, combined with geographical distance. Whilst Haase gives no reply, the dialogue here gives a sense of the victimisation felt by all three individuals. Weddle's experience is similar to Koehn's, as both were Mischling children. This might also explain why Weddle's account was printed.

Somewhat differently from other English-language memoirists, Willy Schumann defends the cohort by arguing that none of them could have been anti-Semitic. He claims that *Der Stürmer* was 'unconvincing' and 'no person or family in our town' subscribed to the magazine. Further, Schumann believes that although the ideal 'Nordic Herrenmensch' was preferred in propaganda, 'in reality we were very much aware of the appearance of NS leadership types ... they looked anything but Nordic, and there

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62. Weddle and Fogelson, 'Letters in VIEW'.

63. Ruth Weddle in: *ibid.*

64. Ruth Weddle in: *ibid.*

65. Ruth Weddle in: *ibid.*

66. Hilda Anker-Fogelson in: *ibid.*

were plenty of jokes about it'. His 'most important reason we did not take NS racial theory seriously' was because it was 'a taboo subject' in his family or in school.<sup>67</sup> Schumann attempts to absolve his generation of guilt—which may have been, in part, his response to the film *Europa, Europa* (1990), which won the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1991.<sup>68</sup> The film, and life narrative, portrays a Polish-Jew, Solomon Perel, who pretends to be German to escape death. Perel then enrolls in a Napola school, where he discovers the racist and anti-Semitic nature of the Nazi regime.<sup>69</sup> Although Schumann does not explicitly state that this movie had any impact on him, the extent to which he attempts to exonerate his fellow Germans is somewhat extreme; it is likely that there was some motive.

One of the rare instances where a writer admits to perpetrating the Jews' suffering and deaths is in Albin Greger's (born 1926) English-language memoir (2015). Greger's son, who edited and digitised Greger's originally handwritten memoir, published Greger's memoir posthumously.<sup>70</sup> Greger began writing it in the 1970s, but his declining health prompted him to finish it before his death in 2006. Greger, who was born and lived in Hochweiss — a small village located in what is today central Czechoslovakia—writes about the Einsatzgruppen who came to his village to round up Jews and murder them. Greger was keen to help the German soldiers as their village had been under 'communist-led partisans' prior to 1944.<sup>71</sup> The first three who were shot were 'an old man, a middle aged man and a young man', after they had dug their own graves. After, Greger helped round up and corner the women and girls, so that the Germans could kill them. 'This memory', Greger writes, 'is a wound that has not healed'.<sup>72</sup> Throughout his memoir, Greger attempts to present his and his family's treatment of the Jews as accepting and tolerant, perhaps in order to atone for telling the Einsatzgruppen their location. Still, he does not openly discuss feelings of guilt and shame in the memoir.

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67. Schumann, *Being Present*, 29.

68. See further Kevin Thomas, 'Germany Divided on 'Europa' Movies: German Filmmakers Protest the German Export Film Union's Decision Not to Enter 'Europa Europa' for Best Foreign-Language Film in the Academy Awards.: [Home Edition]', *Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext): Calendar; PART-F; Entertainment Desk* (Los Angeles, Calif., United States), January 29, 1992, 1.

69. Perel, *Ich war Hitlerjunge Salomon*.

70. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*.

71. Greger's dating may not be entirely accurate, as in 1944 the German Wehrmacht and Einsatzgruppen were in retreat from the Red Army. See Chapter 5.

72. Greger, *Memoir of a German Soldier*, Kindle Location 153.

## Conclusion

Most of the life narratives used in this study do not explicitly deal with the Holocaust nor with the fates of the Jews—be they doctors, shopkeepers, or tenants. Although the memorialisation and commemoration of the Holocaust are part of collective and cultural memory, in terms of private, or individual memory, the Nazi past is not directly addressed. Instead, cohort members are more likely to avoid or silence the past. The examples from the chapter are not representative of the entire source base, because the majority of writers avoid discussing the Jews and the Holocaust to protect their identities and self-worth. Often, in unpublished life narratives, the political dimension of the past is not discussed because the work was intended for family members. Both writer and reader are complicit in their silence as part of the autobiographical pact. Therefore, these life narratives are highly personalised and sensitive to their audiences, with writers masking or eluding their complex relationship with the Nazi past. For example, life narratives by individuals with religious families often avoid any discussion of Nazism and the challenges it presented to daily life. This illustrates how the political correctness of collective memory does not extend to the private level. Although some cohort members more readily engage with the negative and uncomfortable truths, most individuals avoid discussion altogether.

In these memoirs, gaps appear as a result of disengagement or active indifference towards the fate of the Jews. German-language memoirists, in particular, do not actively engage with the Holocaust nor the suffering of the Jewish people. This is also partly due to geographical location and public debate from the 1980s onwards. The time of writing also has an influence, as memoirs written in the 1970s and early 1980s often do not engage with discussions of the Holocaust. Yet, the cohort's autobiographical fiction reveals writers' complicity in Nazi crimes.

The distinctions between memoirs, in terms of their dissemination and intended audience, ought to be considered. In German-language archival works, the archive acts as a memory depository, which is meant to be forgotten.<sup>73</sup> Helga Z. uses the archive as a repository; indeed, she ended up placing it in the archive because she was an acquaintance of the DTA head archivist. In other cases, families archived loved ones' memoirs posthumously. Some cohort members donated a copy of their memoir, with

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73. Connerton, 'Seven Types of Forgetting'.

the intention of forgetting and ending communicative memory. The publication or date of writing the memoir, as well as the geographical location, play a major role in how this period is remembered. In German-language publications prior to the 1980s, writers often neglect to mention the suffering of the Jews and others under the regime. This may be due to increasing interest in the history of everyday life in the 1980s, along with the influence of the American TV drama, *Holocaust* (1979). The Historian's Debate of 1986—a debate on whether the nature of the Holocaust was unique to Germany's historical path (*Sonderweg*) or if mass genocides of a similar scale were not unique to Germany—contributed to public discussions and commemorations of the Holocaust. By 1998, the Walser-Bubis debate brought these issues to a head in Germany. Although these events touched the public and collective memory of the Holocaust, they had a lesser impact on private or individual memory of the Third Reich.

The Hitler Youth generation's Life narratives engage with the Nazi past in multifarious ways. Ultimately, however, they fail to address the problematic and complex nature of mass genocide. West Germany's selective memory becomes particularly apparent in German-language material. Although most of this source base is from the 1990s onwards, cohort members continue to express a reluctance to engage with the Nazi past. Those who moved to the United States and those who stayed in Germany during the post-war years offer their own unique interpretations.



## Chapter 8

# Conclusion

This thesis argues that cohort members create narratives which eradicate negative feelings of self-worth, perceived identities, difficult memories, or unappealing self-representations from the Second World War period (whether fictional or real) through autobiography and memoir writing. Ageing and adolescence are crucial to these memoirs, which include concepts of adolescence and growing up in their life narratives to make sense of the Nazi legacy. These concepts enable cohort members to relate to their readers who are, predominantly, their grandchildren. The collected memoryscape of the Hitler Youth generation is characterised by a particular focus on normality which accepts German suffering and victimhood as intrinsic parts of the remembering of the Third Reich. As Stargardt states, ‘children’s memories of Nazi Germany are divided between those who remember it as a time of normality and those who recall it with fear and horror, the exact events they recalled mattered’.<sup>1</sup> For this generation, normality is defined as a happy childhood, parents who were not Nazis, survival through the war, and a post-war life consisting of marriage, children, buying consumer goods and owning property. Indeed talking about Nazism creates discomfort for many of this generation, and geographical distance allows cohort members to feel more open about sharing experiences. Normality was particularly important for this generation because of the postwar context of living a ‘normal’ life outside of a totalitarian regime. Further, there is evident discomfort with discussing Nazism; instead, the postwar return to ‘normality’ is emphasised through extensive discussions of marriage and buying consumer goods. In this thesis, the narratives serve a dual purpose: they suggest an approach which considers life narratives as ego-documents; and, using the concept of the col-

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1. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 11.

lected memoryscape, they show how private and public memory influence one another through time and in different places.

The Hitler Youth generation's memory and representation of the Third Reich is time and place-dependent, which is understood through the collected memoryscape. I have used the term 'collected memoryscape' to understand the multidimensionality of public and private memory in memoir writing.<sup>2</sup> As a collective, these writers tell their stories in a similar fashion—indicating that they are a social generation as well as a textual community. The collected memoryscape acknowledges the individual level as well, since it is the individual who attempts to transmit subjective experience through representations of the past; this representation, in turn, also reflects the collective understanding of historical events. The collected memoryscape concept expands upon Jerome Bruher's understanding of narratives as a cultural tool of history and memory, and challenges Novick's argument that memory 'has no sense of the passage of time'.<sup>3</sup> Time plays an essential role in how individual memory of a historical event is perceived. Memory is an intricate part of individual identity, but it is also a part of how we relate to others. The collected memoryscape makes use of Jan and Aleida Assmann's concepts of communicative memory and collective memory to signify how vital memoir writing is for the cohort. Communicative memory may be equated with memoirs written by the cohort—unpublished works allow for a final communicative memory between generations. Based on the source material, the cohort is interested in setting this record straight: creating a common narrative and appearing authoritative, realised through the collected memoryscape. One common core element found within the majority of life narratives is the emphasis on childhood, growing up, and adolescence. These life stages are used as a victimcy tactic, to avoid responsibility and perpetration. Cohort members writing in Germany, for example, express *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*-type language to analyse the Third Reich. Those who appear more uncomfortable with confirming, refrain from analysing their past to gain an understanding of their failings. Men, who fought in the war, focus heavily on the positive aspects of their service and blame short-comings on age. Further, the usage of the collective 'wir' indicates also

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2. See further Christine Lavrence et al., *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age*, 2 edition, ed. Kendall R. Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, September 7, 2011).

3. Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, 4; Jerome Seymour Bruner, *The Culture of Education* (Harvard University Press, 1996).



the collected memoryscape—perhaps even as a new *Volksgemeinschaft*. The collected memoryscape, as a methodological approach, allows us to study the cohort and their memories as they evolved through time and place of their experiences.

Memoir writing is a parley with the past, present, and future. It is also its own distinct genre, separate from autobiography in that its aim and content is often more focused and plot-driven—as opposed to the autobiographer’s record of self-development over a lifetime. Such definitions are useful not only in a denotative sense, but also in a connotative sense, deepening what we understand as ‘life writing’. Historians ought to carefully consider the use of memoirs as ego-documents, both for their pitfalls as sources, as well as for their insights. The genre allows both writer and reader to select and craft self-representations; historians ought to consider these self-representations in terms of Lejeune’s autobiographical pact.

The memoirs sampled provide detailed depictions of everyday life. Indeed, creating the semblance of normal family life during the Nazi period was important for cohort members. These narratives help ground and flesh out the narrative for their readers. The most simple function of such narratives is to create an identity for the narrator, which not only gives the reader an image of the writer, but also gives the writer a better understanding of themselves. Therefore, narratives rarely include negative representations of family stories or readily challenge positive identities. These depictions of family life offer limited answers in terms of families’ Nazi or political leanings because of a deep-seated desire to protect family secrets and preserve family group culture. Analysing the audience and context influence how writers approach Nazism within the nuclear family, sixty percent of the sampled archived memoirs do not discuss how deeply or to what extent Nazism influenced the family unit. When Nazism is discussed as a family matter, more often it is the family members outside of the nuclear family who are vilified rather than the parents whose similar behaviour was acceptable.

Similarly, the Third Reich education system and being a member of the HJ organisation is depicted as normal. It is worth noting that the writers’ experiences are also fundamentally gendered experiences. Cohort members rarely compare their gender-specific experiences, which implies a generational understanding of the HJ organisation as separate but equal in terms of gender roles—despite the fact that the historiography dismantles this claim. Historiography on the Nazi education system is often focused

on official party material, and rarely examines the complicity of writers in the educational system.<sup>4</sup> Especially in archived memoirs written for the family, Nazi teachers are caricatured to dehumanise them and create a narrative of victimcy for the author. Writing about childhood, where often teachers criticise children for their parents' political leanings, writers often confront emotional turmoil. On the one hand, they express their fear of ostracism for not wearing the correct uniform. On the other, they feel a loyalty and duty to their parents, who were protecting their children from the HJ by forbidding them to wear it. It is either a story of reconciliation or avoidance. Men and women express discomfort in discussing education and Hitler Youth activities, hardly mentioning negative experiences, and instead providing more fact-based narratives. Sometimes, cohort members skip over the story because their German audience would have already been familiar with it. The denial of racial elements of Nazi education is most prevalent in accounts written by former Nazi elite school students. Many of these attempt to deny or deride criticism of the racist nature of the schools, due to the postwar opportunities they afforded. Moreover, the well-documented militarism of such schools and of the HJ are only questioned by a small number of writers—mostly Catholics—because of their postwar identity as victims of the regime.

These life narratives all locate the Second World War as the climax or focal point of their story line. One central theme is the coming of age during wartime. This nevertheless creates issues for male cohort members who fought in the war. Men often use victimcy to excuse their wartime involvement in the Waffen-SS and Luftwaffe. For instance, many memoirists emphasise wearing the Hitler Youth uniform, and the way it made them feel as though they were adults. Especially for the boys, the uniform symbolised the conquering of the adult domain—a kind of rebellion. Female cohort members and those male cohort members who were too young to fight attempt to normalise growing up during wartime. It also allows the cohort member to regain control and ownership of their past. As Arno Klönne argued, his generation was robbed of adolescence by the Nazis. The memoirists therefore insert concepts of adolescence and teenager-hood into their life narratives, as a means of persuading the reader of their victimcy. Although cohort members write as though life continued as normal in wartime, many went off in new directions, to the RAD or to a labour service. Often there is little

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4. See for example Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*; Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*.

mention of what occurred during the RAD, and few reflect on its political and ideological purpose. It may be that the memory of the service, often ill-paid and exploitative, is negative and is thus left out. As Schönfeldt's autobiographical fiction novel *Sonderappell* (original publication 1978) and her article in *Die Zeit* (1985) argue, her generation does not want to discuss the squalid conditions they endured. Further, representations of the KLV became part of public memory in the early twenty-first century, as interest in war children increased. More than ever before, individuals felt a need to share their experiences.

Wartime experiences at the front have become normalised, meaning that they follow a set pattern detailing the horror, honour, and savage end of war. Those who discuss wartime activities, such as those at the front, fleeing the approaching Red Army, or the bombings, often claim that they were victims of circumstance and age. However, on a collective level, cohort members are fairly unwilling to admit to their role in the war. Recording an eye-witness account of his Waffen-SS unit murdering villagers in the Balkans, Friedrich S. removes himself from his own memory. This is one of the more common victimcy tactics, where wartime complicity and guilt spills over into the postwar age. Throughout this thesis, victimcy becomes a form of tactical agency: repeatedly, cohort members take responsibility for certain actions, and not for others. Current research on child soldiers, taken into consideration with this source material, reveals that the cohort used similar tactics in wartime situations. Wehrmacht POW testimonials collected by the West German government illustrate this point. As Moeller argues, they share more and more traits as time wears on. Rosenthal argues that many former soldiers created narratives which depoliticised their involvement, to avoid feeling embarrassed. Life narratives by male cohort members, who were often barely 18 years of age during the war, contain emotionally complex memories of war. Cohort members often looked up to their fathers, who were fighting in the war, and felt compelled to join them in the war effort. However, reflecting on childhood often increases tensions within family narratives.

Indeed, cohort members must ask themselves how to reconcile with fathers who may have had morally dubious roles in the Wehrmacht and SS. Fathers and sons had sensitive relationships, such as Adolph D., who could not bring himself to ask his father about his time in the war and Nazi party affiliation until late adulthood. For

female cohort members, when their fathers left, it changed the family. Reflecting on their fathers, whether or not they survived, proves emotionally challenging for these writers. Those fathers who returned were often different from those who left; still, only a few writers record that the family dynamics had changed. Overall, male cohort members give positive representations of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS because these protect their identities. They use age to convince themselves of their victimcy—even though they may have depicted themselves as adults up until that point in the narrative. As Stargardt notes, the level of trauma that these men felt was questionable, yet the emotional impact of fighting is most visible in earlier, 1950s narratives. Regardless, men felt some sense of pride in belonging to the Wehrmacht, even when they knew the facts.

The year 1945 is the climax in the majority of these memoirs. Richard Bessel contends that because of the violent nature of the end of the war, it is a ‘fundamental break with the past’.<sup>5</sup> Still, memoirists often reiterate that life went on as usual after the war. This response shows, in part, that Nazi propaganda permeated society during the war. It convinced Germans that they would experience death and rape if Germany lost.<sup>6</sup> Life narratives follow a similar pattern in discussing the end of the war, with few differences between the narratives in the 1950s and 2000s. In the 1950 Abitur accounts, three major themes appear. First, a number of cohort members write of increasing unease at the changed political situation and the new powers in control of (West) Germany. Some sought religion as a means of coping with the change and loss of ideology. Many young adult men mention their experiences in the POW camps, which left a lasting impression. Both the men and women are uneasy about occupation and having to flee from their homes. These thematic similarities continue into the 2010s, showcasing how this heightened emotional state was translated into autobiographical memory. The denazification process is more openly discussed in later life narratives, as these experiences helped pave the way for postwar job prospects. Indeed, these are stories of redemption and change – even when cohort members deny their personal involvement in war crimes. In women’s accounts, the postwar period is often normalised: narratives

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5. Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 369.

6. See Wolfgang Diewerge, *Das Kriegsziel der Weltplutokratie. Dokumentarische Veröffentlichung zu dem Buch des Präsidenten der amerikanischen Friedensgesellschaft Theodore Nathan Kaufman “Deutschland muß sterben”* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1941); Heinrich Goitsch, *Niemals!* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944).

focus heavily on family life, finding husbands, having children, and buying material goods. In the 2000s we see a more open discussion of rape. For English-language cohort memoirists, the postwar period meant moving abroad to North America. Based on the number sampled, many went to the United States with university scholarships and others joined the US military. A few fell in love with Americans visiting Germany in the 1950s. Nineteen-forty-five is a turning point in these narratives: either as the end of an era or a new beginning.

Cohort members illustrate a reluctance toward writing about their experiences with Jews and the Holocaust. Only a small number of cohort members consider the fate of their Jewish neighbours or Jews that their parents knew. Family narratives and family small group culture are integral to this discussion, as families helped influence how cohort members felt, interacted and understood the Jews. Cohort members create narratives about their Jewish neighbours to make themselves feel better and to protect their parents. English-language narratives especially go to great lengths to deny the mass murders. The silence and avoidance of the negative memories of the Nazi past illustrates how the politically correct collective memory does not correlate on a private level. Although some cohort members more readily address the uncomfortable truth, most choose instead to protect their identities and sense of self-worth.

This thesis stresses that historians ought to consider the temporal and spatial dimensions of narratives as documented sources. North American and West and East German memoirists all approach the past from different angles; culture and public legacy, which form from private memory, are what determine these trajectories. The more traumatic legacies of the Nazi past—such as the Holocaust, euthanasia, the role of the Waffen-SS, and the Wehrmacht's support of Nazi war crimes—rarely resurface in memoirs or private archival accounts. Geographical location impacts how topics are reinterpreted in narratives. Holocaust denial, euthanasia support, and unchallenged racial assumptions resurface especially in English-language material. Indeed, English-language writers are more inclined to acknowledge their own perpetration because they are less likely to be held responsible for the war. These themes are found in the earlier English works from the 1970s up until the 2010s. This unwillingness to approach controversial themes illustrates how the North American context, and the United States in particular, did not publicly address the culpability of ordinary citizens; as such, this

influenced how expatriate Germans remember the Third Reich. Along with its ‘culture of competing catastrophes’ the suffering of ordinary German citizens is pushed to the forefront and the cohort member’s victimhood becomes part of this. These geographically different public memory contexts affect how cohort members deal with topics—if they even deal with them at all. Fest’s and Grass’s memoirs, for example, have a completely different understanding of who was victimised by the regime. Grass, for instance, is reluctant to admit his own agency in the Third Reich, whilst Fest uses his religious standing and father’s critical viewpoint to atone for being a part of the Luftwaffe. In English-language memoirs, the age of perpetration is more commonly used to plead victimhood.

As the introduction suggests, understanding the concepts of generation, childhood, recollection, and memory are all imperative to a study of these source texts. Cohort members use growing up, as a concept, to convince readers not only that they are innocent, but that they are, indeed, victims of the regime. They represent themselves as young victims who could not possibly have understood the consequences of their actions—even when they were perpetrators. In order to demystify the complex and occasionally contradictory roles that cohort members played during the Third Reich, I interpret the cohort as complex political perpetrators enlisting victimcy to create, recreate, construct, and reconstruct context-dependent life narratives. As seen in Chapter 4 and 5, whether performing labour service or fighting in the war, cohort members favour dichotomies rather than nuances in their writing.

Whilst Mannheim’s definition of a generation is key to this study, the sources indicate that generational experiences are not entirely uniform—although the common experiences of the Hitler Youth and the Second World War tie writers together. Mannheim also supports the notion that youth experiences influence how a generation forms a collective; indeed, growing up during the Third Reich impacted cohort members’ understanding and representation of history through writing. Further, Mannheim’s concept of a ‘generational actuality’ is useful here. It focuses on the collective experience of a generation through orientations, namely ‘Grundintentionen’ (basic intentions) and ‘Gestaltungsprinzipien’ (basic principles). Mannheim underscores the importance of studying people who are the same age, ‘who not only define their situation in a similar way but also develop similar ways of (re)acting in response to their generational problems as

“generational units”.<sup>7</sup> A multilateral approach is taken to Mannheim’s understanding of a generation to contextualise and reflect upon the differences between age units and gender. The Hitler Youth generation, broadly defined here to include those born between 1925 and 1933, was therefore divided into smaller segments within chapters. Peukert’s suggestion of three age-groups preceding adulthood is helpful—however, it ought to consider variable experiences, birth dates, and genders. For example, a male born in 1925, who joined the *Waffen-SS* and fought in the war would have had completely different experiences from a female born in 1933, who spent her wartime in a *KLV* camp, yet both are in the same generation and subsumed within Peukert’s concept of a generation. This thesis argues for a subdivision of the cohort that facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the Second World War collective memory.

Discussions of the Hitler Youth, for example, are nearly always gendered, even though the gender roles in these organisations are never clearly defined. Working class girls did not actively go to meetings, nor did they take part in the *JM* or *BDM*, but as Erika Z. implies, being the *BDM* leader during childhood games was a coveted role. Women’s writings about their time in the *JM* and *BDM* are often limited and focus on family life and how their family changed because of the war. Women, especially those from working class families, were pressured by family and society to join the workforce once their schooling ended. This is evident in the female transition from childhood to adulthood, which happens almost overnight in the narrative. Wartime culpability through involvement in the *RAD* and *KLV* as camp leaders then threatens this new adult identity. During the Second World War, women’s roles included working for the benefit of the war. As many cohort members entered the *RAD* or went to *KLV* camps as campers or camp leaders, they became a unified front: positive experiences are discussed, with little to no mention of negative memories. Even though Schönfeldt’s appeal to change this misconception was not successful, it illustrates how the public narrative of a collective memory is difficult to change. Experiences of rape by the Red Army are now more openly discussed in public, and memoirs written by the generation facilitate that discussion. However, these discussions of rape prompt us to ask how women should understand themselves as dual victims and perpetrators of Nazi Germany. Perhaps we ought to look beyond Germany to Africa, where similar issues

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7. Corsten, ‘The Time of Generations’, 245.

arise but in vastly different contexts. By the end of the war, women faced new challenges in now-occupied Germany. Indeed, memoirs reflect the newness and uncertainty about the 1945 to 1947 shift, highlighting the changed family dynamics with the return of fathers and brothers. Many write about securing employment, meeting their future husbands, and having children. These later memoirs illustrate how cohort members attempt to distance themselves from the emotional chaos and uncertainty that come with the end of the war.

Men's writings focus on their personal stories and time on the war front. Life narratives from the 1950 Abitur collection are emotional and express confusion, denial, and ideological uncertainty about democracy. These emotional messages and discussions of emotions become rarer in later postwar memoirs. Although not the main focus of this thesis, men's autobiographical fictional works from the 1960s until the 1980s present intricate emotional, yet stoically masculine, accounts of the Third Reich.<sup>8</sup> These fictional works provide postwar insight into the emotional landscape of the socialist dictatorship of Nazi Germany. Male cohort members also use the notions of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood to navigate their narratives and account for their actions. They often claim that they were mere boys during war, and therefore should not be judged harshly for their actions. Once again, we see how these complex political perpetrators use age to claim victimcy.

The thesis diverges from existing studies in its use of the collected memoryscape, as well as its redefinition of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The emotional intensity of family life and wartime service memories leads us to wonder whether emotions are an indicator of the past or the present.<sup>9</sup> Childhood is relegated to a different corner of the life narrative, and sometimes ends with the beginning of formal education—contrasting with general Western European definitions of childhood.<sup>10</sup> This requires further elaboration, because the end of childhood ought to be situated historically at the end of the Second World War—that is, if we follow the general definition proposed by Venken. As parts of the collected memoryscape, recollection and

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8. See Wagner, *Die Fahne ist mehr als der Tod*; Richter, *Damals war es Friedrich*; Heinz Küpper, *Simplicius 45* (Cologne: Middelhaue, 1963); Burger, *Warum warst du in der Hitler-Jugend?*; Seiffert, *Einer war Kisselbach*; Siegfried Lenz, *Deutschstunde* (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co., 1968).

9. As discussed in Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

10. Venken and Röger, 'Growing up in the Shadow of the Second World War', 201.



memory are crucial to our understanding of these life narratives and their place within the postwar period. Moreover, we might press further by examining the professions of both published and unpublished authors.

Historians studying adolescents and youth culture often lean on Mannheim's 'generations of conflict', because it provides a useful working definition.<sup>11</sup> Yet, Kater and Stargardt shy away from this concept when discussing young people, whilst Fulbrook's usage is broader.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Kater and Stargardt approach their study of the war and German youth culture through two lenses: Kater provides a more top-down approach, through 'parents' culture', demonstrating how the Nazi regime influenced children and adolescents through teacher education and the Hitler Youth; Stargardt, on the other hand, takes a more grass roots approach, using a variety of contemporary ego-documents. This study has employed a micro-historical approach similar to that of Stargardt; it incorporates individual voices not only to mirror, but also to nuance our understanding of the KLV camps.

The study deepens our current historiographical understanding of the Hitler Youth generation by delving into written testimonies, to answer questions about how writers perceive the past and how that past dictates their present. The current English-language historiography often fails to consider the impact and importance of the ego-document, particularly in terms of time and geographical location.<sup>13</sup> Kater's *Hitler Youth* (2004) complicates our understanding of the Hitler Youth organisation through the use of personal accounts, where Buddrus offers a more systematic study of archival documents. Kater also uses a number of memoirs and autobiographical fiction novels in his study; however, his approach is scattered and fails to define or contextualise the source material. Evans's chapter on education and youth in *The Third Reich in Power*, relies too much upon Maschmann's *Fazit. Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch* in his study of youth experiences. Stargardt's great contribution to the field in *Witnesses of War* is more critical of his source material, acknowledging the time-sensitive nature of these texts in his introduction. He is not explicitly interested in how the memory of wartime experiences

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11. Oded Heilbronner, 'From a Culture for Youth to a Culture of Youth: Recent Trends in the Historiography of Western Youth Cultures', ed. Richard I. Jobs et al., *Contemporary European History* 17, number 4 (2008): 571 check.

12. Kater, *Hitler Youth*; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*; Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*.

13. Kater, *Hitler Youth*; Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*; Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*; Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*.

changes through time. This thesis considers that dimension, and argues for the contextualisation of memoirs and life narratives. It also contests that cohort memoirists felt an intense need to reclaim their childhood and adolescence from the Nazi past.

Previous studies have focused on analysing the historical past presented by the generation. Heide Rosenbaum's *“Und trotzdem war's 'ne schöne Zeit”* (2014) provides the fifty oral history interviews referenced in this study. Whilst her focus was on the everyday life of people from different socio-economic backgrounds, this thesis emphasises the power of memory over representations of that everyday life. In labelling this generation as the ‘sceptical generation’, Schelsky (1957) predicted that they would be ‘a silent generation, a generation that ‘reconciles’ with and knows it better than their politicians’.<sup>14</sup> However, as this study shows, cohort members did not remain silent, nor were they able to reconcile with the past or know it better. Yet, his conclusion that the generation was marred by the ‘error, weakness and failure of adults’ rings true in these sources.<sup>15</sup> Schelsky argues that the Hitler Youth Generation is less trustworthy and more sceptical than other generations because of these weaknesses this study shows whilst a number attempted to overcome the failures, many have difficulty removing themselves from their Third Reich mentalities, even after West Germany's extensive *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. More broadly, this prompts questions about German victimhood in the twenty-first century.

Historiographical discussions of German victimhood are relatively recent, really taking hold in the early 2000s. The re-unification of the two Germanies, the Wehrmacht exhibitions of 1995, and writings by Günter Grass, W.G. Sebald, and Jörg Friedrich also prompted this discussion.<sup>16</sup> What is most striking is the portrayal of victimhood and socialisation in early Hitler Youth generation works. Stephen Berger comments that ‘there is very little evidence of trauma having produced silences and resulting in the repression of memories of German suffering after 1945.’<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this is true for most of the adult population—but it raises the question of how children dealt with the

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14. Schelsky, *Die skeptische Generation- eine Soziologie der deutschen Jugend*, 488.

15. *Ibid.*, 381f.

16. Hubertus Knabe, *Tag der Befreiung?: das Kriegsende in Ostdeutschland* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2005); Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

17. Berger, ‘On Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War Is Not a Historians’ Controversy’, 212.

devastation of the war, the loss of their pre-war identities and, in some cases, ideological certainty. As the sparse number of available texts prior to 1989 indicates, many did not write about the war until late adulthood. Silence and repression, as well as time, location, and age not only provoke questions but, in some cases, provide answers.

As Fulbrook states in *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, ‘memory does not take place in a vacuum’, but is shaped by its environment. Often, feelings of guilt and shame are not directly addressed in these life narratives, as Rensmann and Giesen claim. Both scholars mention the Hitler Youth generation in passing, but their experience of the Third Reich is not adequately addressed. These life narratives also reveal that communicative memory of the Nazi past remains contested within families. The Hitler Youth generation members missed the 1968 student revolution, as their children would have been too young to participate. As this study notes, only a small number of late 1970s autobiographical fiction works deal with the 1968 student revolution. It is mostly in unpublished accounts where we see the belated communication of memories to children and grandchildren.

These memoirs illustrate that the Hitler Youth generation was deeply influenced by their childhood and youth experiences in the Third Reich. Considering the findings by Fulbrook, Wierling, Redding, and Rosenthal, these life narratives confirm and expand upon our understanding of what events defined this generation. The Hitler Youth organisation emphasised a sense of duty and sacrifice, which is apparent in how life in wartime is represented. Both 1930s cultural values and Nazi ideology seem to have influenced the cohort members’ professions in later life. For example, a large portion of memoirists became teachers, gained higher education degrees, or worked in the academy.

As the sources used in this thesis were published memoirs and archived memoirs located in what was formerly West Germany, the findings are limited to West Germany and English-language works. West German writers are more inclined to silence and adopt the terminology of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, whilst English-language writers are more brazen in their discussions of the Nazi past. East German accounts, although smaller in number, share some qualities with West German accounts; however, they emphasise the importance of the end of the GDR in being able to write about their past. On the basis of this limited source base, the Hitler Youth life narratives give

us a glimpse into the minds of those writers who had the ability and motivation to communicate their life stories. Most of these writers had some degree of education, and often many were, at the very least, Abitur graduates. However, there is more variance amongst the unpublished archival memoirs which, combined with the published source texts, democratise the source base.

This study is concerned with how people understand their experiences within historical time and space. Examining family life, educational experiences, the Second World War, and the post-war period problematises and complicates life narratives as a genre. Unlike published sources, unpublished texts give unequal focus to these themes, and vice-versa. In conclusion, this work provides a new perspective on representations of childhood, adolescence, and growing up in the Third Reich. The source base reveals how writers represent their memories of a contentious past. The Hitler Youth cohort writers use victimcy to preserve their autonomy and innocence in the face of war and genocide.

These life narratives indicate that the Hitler Youth generation has more to say about the Nazi past. Unfortunately, their children and grandchildren have started to forget the societal, cultural, and political repercussions of this totalitarian dictatorship. The Hitler Youth generation bears the mark of that dictatorship, particularly when it comes to private life. Their writings show how totalitarian rule and ideology can destroy—or shake—a person's identity or sense of self. Many therefore use their life narratives as a testament of how such experiences negatively impact the individual, but also society as a whole. Hence why so many of this generation turned to leadership positions and attempted to refocus their lives to building democracy or socialism. Although these life narratives are marred by the passage of time and subjective representations, readers are left with a resounding message: 'never again'.

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Archive number	Name	Title
KABIO 3114	Hermann Emmerich	... und trotzdem kehrte ich heim: Erlebnisse als Soldat un in 5 Jahren russischer Kriegsgefangenschaft (Bad Kreuznach: Gras & Jung, 1988)
	Friedrich Wilhelm H. Günter F.	Auf Zeichnungen 1943-49
	Hans F.	Nobody 26: Jugendzeit 1926 - 1947
	Theodor H.	Jung betroffen (Essen, 1979)
	Theodor R. W.	Lebenserinnerungen von Theodor Richard Wengler, Verfasst Herbst 2008
KABIO 2855 KABIO 2909	Elisabeth T.	Mein Gedächtnis geht zurück und erinnert sich mit leiser Wehmut
	Hans-Kaspar R. Eva P. Joachim K. Otto P.	Ein Leben voller Harmonie? Opa als Schüler und Pimpf: Berliner Erinnerungen der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus
	Franz van der K.	Achtung Achtung! Ende Ende! Geschichte einer Kindheit und Jugend in dunkler Zeit 1932 - 1951 (self-published autobiography)

## Deutsches Tagebucharchiv

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DTA Sig Nr.	Name
13.2	Elisabeth Charlotte H.
23	Christa
64	Hans F.
85.2	Helene S.
214.1	Gerhard T.
256	Elisabet M.
301.1	Rainer L.
344	Dieter E.
539	Friedrich S.
557.1	Gert S.
568	Hans O-G
655.1	Alfred F.
745	Peter W.
752.1	Herbert W.
825	Barbara S.
842	Erika Z.
876.1	Marianne G.
878.1	Karl H.
891	Irmgard P.
909	Adrian G.S.
977.1	Gertrude M.
1017.2	Margret Elisabeth W.
1038.1	Heinz R.
1049	Ameri S.
1063	Ursula H.
1067	Hans-Peter Sch.
1144.2	Gerhard B.
1215	Gunter N.
1216	Herbert K.
1266	Christa H.
1358.3	Eva A.
1510	Renate B.
1552.1	Hans T.
1699	Margit B.
1746.1	Margarete Sch.
1764.1	Walter J.
1829	Margarete H.
1925	Helga Z.
1953.1	Friedrich H.
2100.3	Ermann W.
2135	Kurst W.
2145	Marta A.B.
2146.1	Paul W.
2157.1	Margarete W.

2184	Edith S.
3087	Erika S.
3287	Rolf M.
3411.1	Marian A.
3511.1	Adolf D.
3533	Dorothee K.
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