

THE IMAGE OF THE IDEAL GERMAN MOTHER IN NAZI ERA POSTERS

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ABSTRACT. This paper examines the role of women in Nazi Germany and ways the policy and propaganda implemented and enacted both plans and policies to transform women into the mothers of the nation. The paper will focus on the ways propaganda posters were used in order to engage public opinion, using the power of visual arts into manipulating public opinion that the body of a woman should be devoted to the Reich, (re-)producing the pure-blooded German and support the creation of a new empire. The posters supported and acted as a direct reminder of the policies set by Nazi regime, and their ideology on family planning, racial purity and gender roles. The propaganda machine that produced them borrowed symbols from religious works of the Renaissance connecting the “ideal mother” to images of Holy Mary, in a twisted connection between religion and social engineering. The presentation will discuss about the ways Nazi Germany elaborated the role of women, the (ab)use of their body and the ideal depiction of it according to the regime, the distortion of iconic renaissance paintings along with the ways that religion and public policy have been weaved in order to manipulate and re-educate an entire nation will be parts of the presentation in order to highlight this interesting part of history.

KEY WORDS: propaganda, art, female body, Renaissance, nazi Germany

Introduction

The transformation of the women to mothers was the primary goal of Nazi family policy. The main role in a woman's life was to be ideal mother; an idea that was promoted by the Reich by modifying the laws of the German legal system and through the work of the Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda. This was evident both in the propaganda that was produced and the public speeches of officials of the Reich. Quotations from Hitler show that the leader of the Nazi State believed in the importance of the role of women in the Nazi state.

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The posters that are examined in this paper indicate that Nazi propaganda posters were successful in terms of portraying the ideal German mother according to the Nazi opinions and policy. Through the posters the Nazis succeeded in giving a clear image of the Aryan mother, as the perfect example of the pure-blooded German. The Nordic stereotype that German eugenics proposed was fully imprinted in the posters and it was designed precisely as Nazi genetic science suggested. These posters supported and acted as a direct reminder of the policies set by Nazi regime, and their ideology on family planning, racial purity and gender roles. The propaganda machine that produced these posters borrowed symbols from religious works of the Renaissance. In this paper, the transformation of German women into the mothers of the nation (a view fundamental to Nazi politics) is examined through the contrast of a Nazi poster produced in the mid 1930's and DaVinci's *Madonna Litta*.

The limitations of this study should be noted. By doing extensive research through national and international library databases, it was astonishing that there were very few titles on Nazi Propaganda Posters. An extensive list of research papers on the poster in USSR or in China could be found but none on the Nazi poster. Research in books on the art of the poster, and propaganda in the two World Wars was as subject matter predominately: the support of the army support and recruitment services; the promotion of Hitler's leadership; the recruitment of youngsters into Nazi youth organizations and of course many war posters against the leaders of the enemy states.

In the online poster databases that were checked, only one or two percent of the posters were about the role of the mother or the role of women in general in the Reich. As it wasn't possible to find any research papers on women's propaganda posters, I have decided to write a paper in which I would argue on the idea that the Nazi regime, the propaganda and the state mechanisms worked together to promote the role of woman as a mother.

The Political Poster

The power of persuasion is an essential element in the political synthesis of the modern state. Authoritarian or democratic and elitist or populist states adopt the language of mass persuasion either as a method of totalitarian manipulation or as a means of presenting governmental policies. Public opinion forms a significant component in political life and its importance is recognized as such by totalitarian regimes. The public, in the form of popular support, non-opposition, a consensus of political statements and actions or the voting body of a state, is the foundation of a civilized country.

The manipulation and transformation of public opinion plays a significant role in the survival of totalitarian regimes. Citizens are not seen as individuals but iden-

tified as part of a larger group; the state categorizes citizens according to their needs and their status. They are grouped according to social, educational and economic characteristics. In the extreme, radical regimes used sex, racial purity and origin as categories; these categories were seen as the important elements for the building of racially pure nations.

So that the masses would be informed in the politics of the new regime and to cultivate a sense of unity, information had to be provided in a didactic way. Rituals, mobilizing signs, slogans, belief, myths and symbols were invented, to ensure the social integrity and the participation in the life of the nation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 263-307).

National Socialist Germany, under the Nazi Regime, one of the most radical political movements, upgraded mass persuasion into a powerful machine based on scientific foundations. The means of mass entertainment and communication such as press, theatre, cinema, visual arts and music were put under the microscope of the propaganda machine in order to be modified and formulated in a way that would be helpful to the regime's policy. The Nazi regime created a huge and well-tuned public sector, where they introduced new methods of mass persuasion and manipulation or enhanced already existing ones. They believed that this would ensure their survival.

The power of the poster was evaluated and was used extensively in conjunction with other means of propaganda by the Nazis. Posters supported other forms of propaganda and created a connection between the messages that were delivered through cinema, theatre and radio. The vital space of the posters was the public sphere; citizens would see them in their everyday life as they went about their business. Eric Hobsbawm stated that the 20th century is the century of the poster (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 223); the ease with which posters could be produced and extensively distributed allowed the Nazis to transform public spaces into a modern political arena and a form of political street theatre. Here, posters acted as visual protagonists entrusted with the important role of being constant reminders of the government's decisions. Thus, posters provided a literal material bridge between regime's policy and the masses.

A poster, either political or not, consists of three basic elements: simplicity in design, a fascinating image and a direct message (Rowe 1927: 179). The role of the image is multipurpose: to attract viewers and directly affect their emotions; to convey a message (latent or direct) at a glance; to provoke the viewer in making associations that they normally may not. The posters can also be seen from a broader point of view. The Nazi posters usually used controversial images in order to promote the implied messages. In the examination of the soldier's posters, it can be found images of vigorous German soldiers being victorious in the battlefield as well as images of

aggressive enemy soldiers, who are ready to kill Germans and demolish the Reich. In other war posters there are pictures of the enemy leaders who are surrounding the German state in order to invade and seize the power. Other posters show the enemy in the face of death trying to bombard the Germans. The most representative reversed posters are the ones that presenting the Jews as the pure evil and that they are responsible for every problem in the German society. In order to create a feeling of fear, Jews are portrayed as spies of the enemy and this is coupled with the warning that enemy nations have spies everywhere and that Nazi state must fight back in order to ensure the survival of the nation.

In the posters where there are images of mothers, the images are always positive. The comparison of the Aryan mother to a Jewish mother is made in order to avoid any unfavorable judgment of Aryan women or to present them in an unfavorable light. Controversy was avoided by not publishing posters that they would present non-Aryan women in an unethical or unmoral manner. An action like this could bring the exact opposite results that Nazis wanted. Any posters representing an amoral way of life were not made or posted because of the controversy.

Posters were one-dimensional in their subject and design. There is no artistic evolution in these posters. The artists that were responsible for the creation of these posters seemed to follow the policy of the state and they did not create or experiment with any forms outside the formulas of the state. The connection to the archaism seems that was prevalent to the posters of the mothers. The classic art model influenced the artistic aspect of the posters as they created posters using the norms of the classic art but they didn't manage to succeed originality.

This paper investigates the role of propaganda in women's posters produced by the Nazi regime. The politics can be seen in the posters as underlying messages of national socialist ideas, racial and sex discrimination. The extent to which Nazi politics affected and supported the propaganda can be identified in posters. It is important to present this within the context of the policies that Nazi regime established legally and socially (e.g. the suppression of women's freedoms both in private and public life). The paper will also look at the role of German women as mothers of the Aryan Race, (a role that most of the cases seemed to be one-way road) and how the role of Adolph Hitler and the function of the ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda worked to transform women into mothers of the master race, and how the legal system supported it.

Nazi Policy and the German Family

The nature of Nazi family policy can be fully identified and explained, only if we take into consideration the influences on German society at the beginning of the 20th century. The great socio-economic changes of nineteenth century, directly affected

the idea and perception of the German family. Traditional attitudes and values were about to change under a new era of social transformations. Women's organizations that were seeking for civil liberties and rights to better education and labor equality, created a revolutionary feeling in their struggle for political solutions to their demands. With the Onset of World War I, the transformation of the traditional values was significant and the role of women as the base of the family order was again at the forefront of German social life. The hecatomb of dead soldiers created a lack of patriarchic symbols and family responsibilities were transferred to women. Under the circumstances of the war, necessity set mothers as the core of the German family, creating a germinal matriarch model (Mitterauer and Sieder 1982: 212).

Following the war, the institution of the Weimar Republic in 1919 gave women the freedom that they wanted and the chance to take an active role in political life. Organizations such as the Association for Sexual Hygiene and Life Reform, and the National Union of Birth Control and Hygiene set up between 1923 and 1928 introduced a prefatory education for sexual hygiene and birth control (Frevert and McKinnon-Evans 1990: 189); this resulted in an increase in the abortion and divorce rates. The economic crash in 1929, a result of the great international economic crisis and the unstable monetary system, escalated the crisis in the German society by diverting Germany into a country of suffering poor people. Germans turned to the National Socialist Party as a solution to the problems that were plaguing German society at the time. The program of the Nationalist Socialist Party suggested a restoration of traditional models of the family as the core of German society; this thinking played a great role in the changes instituted during the Nazi era.

Hitler, in favor of these changes, introduced his theories in his public speeches and as leader determined the path, which the propaganda machine should follow, in order to create unified and biddable citizens. In his public speeches, which were delivered in an energetic, aggressive and acrimonious manner, he always referred to the foundations and the pioneer policies of the new German state. In his 1934 speech at the Nuremberg Party Rally (NPR), he presented his opinions (which of course would be followed by the German state as official policy) on the role of the women in the Nazi state. He stated that, "Man's world is his struggle and his readiness to serve his community [...] her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home" (Stephenson 2001: 141, Part 4, doc. b). In this declaration, Hitler separated social life into two parts: the private and the public.

The role of the man should be superior to a woman's. Women must return to her significant, for the survival of the state, "smaller world" (Stephenson 2001: 141). He considered the role of the woman inside a small, private world where she would give all her efforts and energies to creating and supporting new generations of the Ger-

man nation. The main role of a woman was to contribute to the German nation by giving birth to as many new Aryans as she could; a feat which could be accomplished only by having women devote themselves to their families. Two years later in speech at the Nuremberg Party Rally in 1936, he stated: "A woman lawyer achieves great things [...] a woman with five, six, seven children [...] has achieved more and done more" (Stephenson 2001: 141, Part 4, doc. a). One of the clearest declarations to the German people was given in 1941, when he stated: "The essential thing for the future is to have lots of children. Everybody should be persuaded that a family's life is only assured when it has upwards of four children" (Pine 1997: 98). His ideas and opinions were transformed into political methods by the state and applied to the public policy of Nazi Germany. The Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda played a prominent role, by both assisting the state mechanism and creating methods of infusing Nazi ideas to the masses.

The Ideal Family and the Legal System

The Nazi party took steps to change the legal system of the country, in order to create on which regime could base its family policy. The changing demographic due to the drop in the birth rate had a direct effect on Nazi politics. It motivated the regime to introduce new laws promoting the idea of marriage among the couples and to approve policies on the transformation of the women from active working citizens to mothers and housekeepers. They managed to place motherhood as the core of family policy and the basic element of the typical German family.

On June 1st 1933, the *Law to Reduce Unemployment* (Stephenson 2001: 28-29) was approved because of the great unemployment among German men. The main part of the law was designed to increase the employment rate by setting women outside of the labor force. Interested couples were eligible for a loan of 1000 marks in the form of vouchers in order to equip them to establish homes (Pine 1997: 17), on the condition that women leave their paid jobs. The incentive worked so that each couple getting married would receive 1,000 marks as a loan and would not have to repay back a quarter of the loan (250 marks) for each child they had; if the couple had four children, they did not have to repay back the loan.

In order to further promote and educate women about motherhood, the Nazis established the *Hochschule der Frau* in Berlin (Pine 1997: 73) in 1934. In addition they supported any organizations and institutions that would educate women in their new role in German society and outline their new responsibilities both to their families and the state. They were told about their importance of their role in the new Nazi era as they were the core of this effort to promote the Aryan race and increase the birth rates which would ensure the future of the German nation. They were instruct-

ed on everyday housekeeping matters and of course on how they should raise their children. As the role of the mother was important to the education of her children, she was exercised and informed about the Nazi ways of raising a child. They were, instructed on ideological matters in order to indoctrinate their children in the National Socialist ideas. The main role of the mother was to create Nazi pureblooded citizens which would set themselves under the use of the German state every time that they would be needed.



Fig. 1 "Support the assistance program for mothers and children"

The propaganda machine tried to promote the idea of the women's organizations and women schools by using, among other means posters. The NSDAP poster (picture from the archive of www.nationalsozialismus.de/; translation of the legend, "The Third Reich, Politics and Propaganda", 2nd edition, by David Welch) in figure 1 clearly presents the role of women in the Nazi state and in the German family unit. The woman, in the role of mother, is dressed in a very conservative way and holding a baby, while she is embraced by her husband who also embraces one of the children. They all stand smiling under the protective wings of the German Eagle. The symbol

of the Eagle is used to promote the feeling that women would have the security and assistance from the state in order to raise their families. Further, the family has three children, which is significant because the state tried to promote the idea of large families and diminish the model of two-child families. The members of the family are happy, healthy, young and vigorous. The picture portrays and conveys that health and well-being are within the context of a family and that an Aryan family would have nothing to fear under the constant assistance and protection of the Nazi state.

Nazi state also awarded the most productive German mothers by establishing and presenting them with the Honor Cross of the German Mother (Stephenson 2001: 31). The awards were in recognition of helping the country and providing the state with pure Aryans. The mothers were awarded mothers according to the number of the children they had: gold medals for mothers who had more than eight children; silver for those who had six or seven children and bronze for those who had four or five. The effort to promote the role and the value of the mother through public ceremonies was a move to try and awaken Germans and remind them that the role of the mother is as a significant an honor as that accorded to the soldiers of the nation. Mothers like soldiers were awarded for fulfilling their own duty by “bearing the next generation” of Germans (*History Today* 1993: 35).

In 18 October 1935 the *Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People* was approved (*History Today* 1993: 28). The Marriage Health Law, as it was also known, was an early step for the introduction of the racial discrimination policy in the marriage process. Couples that wanted to get married had to obtain a doctor's certificate to verify that they were both healthy and that they did not carry any hereditary illnesses (*History Today* 1993: 28). This law is an example of how the legal system was changed under the will of Hitler and his party to introduce the most significant element on family policy: racial hygiene. The most important law, approved in the Nazi state, in terms of legalizing the racial discrimination and introducing the science of eugenics for the racial purification of the German nation, was the *Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring* (Pine 1997: 13).

Racial Hygiene

The Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda played a significant role in the formation of the ideal citizen. The idea of the Master race was behind almost every action of the ministry and racial propaganda used in order to create a separation between an ideal member of the master race and those inferior. By approving a racial policy, the state had turned to more radical solutions concerning the protection of the Aryan race. When they seized power the Nazis legalized the elimination of the “inferior human material”. The evidence of their beliefs about inferior humans was

the fact that the first people that they annihilated were not Jews but unhealthy Germans (Welch 1993: 87).

Under the Law of “Hereditarily Diseased offspring” that was approved by the new government on 14 July 1933, unhealthy Germans would be sterilized in order to prevent the birth of non-Aryan children. These parents were characterized as incapable of having pure German offspring. When the law was first applied in 1934 until 1936, almost 170.000 people sterilized, in order to prevent the birth of children that would have inherited diseases that would in contradiction to the eugenics program of the Nazi state. Other sources raise the number of the sterilized people to 320.000 by the end of 1939. The significance of this is that this was one of the first steps for the legally biological purification under the elected Nazi regime. The role of eugenics in Nazi policy can be highlighted if we consider the fact that even in public speeches Hitler as head of the government stated that the first accomplishment was to identify the inferior elements both biologically and socially and then modify the state methods in order to eliminate them. These procedures mobilized the Nazi propaganda machine in order to convince Germans that they should assist the programs of racial purification by not marrying people that were not pure-blooded.

In his speech at the Nuremberg Party Rally, Hitler referred to the establishment of the racial policy: “If every year Germany had one million children and eliminated 700.000 – 800.000 of the weakest, at the end, the result would probably be an increase in National strength” (Welch 1993: 86). According to this of view, the methods that were adopted to bring about the racial purity mathematically proved possible. The barbaric methods put in place for the good of the master race allowed the government to violate the civil and human rights of many Germans. According to information from the primary sources, people were categorized according to their racial and social status and not according to the fact that they could be German citizens. If a German citizen was not found to be pureblooded, then they were considered as a danger to the common good, and the purification and continuation of the national stock. The importance of Hitler’s statement is that the leader had great contribution to the policies that were in favor of Aryans. He seemed so dedicated to his ideas and so sure about the support of his voters that he was not afraid to state in public that he would legally kill thousands of people in order to ensure the power of the master race. This same rhetoric on racial was also used by other party members in their public speeches. The minister of Agriculture, Walther Darre, gave a simplified barbaric paradigm of what was the Nazi policy on creating the Master Race: “We shall gather together the best blood. Just as we are now breeding our Hanover horse from the few remaining pure blooded male and female stock, so we shall see the same type of breeding over the next generation of the pure type of Nordic German.”



Fig. 2 “Support the assistance program for mothers and children”

The Nazi race theory demanded the ideal Aryan to be an icon of the Nordic stereotype which means that Aryan man or woman must have “blond tall, long-skulled, with narrow faces, pronounced chins, narrow noses with high bridges, soft fair hair, widely spaced pale-colored eyes, [and] pinky white skin” (Welch 1993: 84). The icon of the ideal Aryan was set as the stereotype of beauty and excellence (fig 2, picture from the online archive of Calvin College, Michigan). The Reich’s state machine was going to work on creating, racially pure Germans and at the same time trying to formulate their behavior, their ideas, and their everyday life, even their personal relationships. The main goal was obviously to develop a feeling of unification among the Germans by connecting the racial element, the common historical background and the belief of a stable Germany that primarily originated from a pureblooded unified German family.

Eugenics played a significant role in the creation of the Aryan German. The biological purification was part of the evolution of Nazi scientific thought, which stated that distressing heritage diseases was acceptable as long as the, so called, abnormal social hereditary characteristics could be eliminated by preventing their carriers from reproducing. The other half of transforming the Aryan to an ideal citizen was in the hands of the Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda. The minister, Joseph

Goebbels, seemed to be the uncontested leader of the ministry. As he was also the President of the Reich Chamber of Culture, he took under his absolute responsibility culture and the social aspects of the cultural affairs. In one of his many speeches that gave to party members and to a public audience, he stated that his responsibility was to ensure that “people will be addicted” to the Reich (speech to representatives of the press, 15 March 1933, “*The Third Reich, Politics and Propaganda*”, in Welch 1993: 29). He also stated: “We are thinking of a public education within which film, radio, art culture and propaganda would be combined” (J. Goebbels and Vom Kaiserhof, Munich 1935, entry of 22 January 1932, “*The Third Reich, Politics and Propaganda*”, in Welch 1993: 28). The establishment of the Reich Chamber of Culture, by law on September 22, 1933, was the starting point of the propaganda project.

An extensive discussion of the propaganda machine is beyond the scope of this paper. It is important to keep in mind the establishment of seven sub-divisions that were responsible for its use in controlling every aspect of social and cultural life in the Reich. The Chambers (Sington and Weidenfeld 1944: 77) sub-divisions controlled the press, the radio, theatre, music, literature and the creative arts. It is not completely clear which division was responsible for the Poster propaganda, it is highly probable that it was under the supervision of the Creative Arts Chamber since posters were part of artistic work under the use of Reich.

Nazi Art, Christianity and Archaism

Nazi art was based on the classical style of the ancient Greeks and Romans and stood in contrast to other modernist movements of the time. The tension between the classical and the modernist movements is evident in the various forms that existed and which ones were adopted by the state. In the 1910's and 1920's artists experimented with new art forms finding new inspiration in escaping the accepted formalities and norms in art. Such movements as the Dadaism, the modernism and the Pacifism that were introduced by artist like Picasso, were considered controversial and inadequate for representing the ideals that a totalitarian regime like the Nazis wanted to convey. Architecture and painting were the most representative arts in which a tendency to archaism was evident. The tendency to archaism and its adoption as an aesthetic of the Nazi state extended to the posters that were produced by the Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda. The Chamber of Culture consisted of 100,000 artists, such as architects, painters, sculptors and designers (Clark 1997: 61). This impressive number of the artists recruited by the state is an indication of the important role that art propaganda played in the politics of the Nazi regime.



Fig. 3. *Madonna Litta* by Leonardo Da Vinci circa 1490



Fig. 4. Nazi Poster supporting the NSV

Unterstützt das Hilfswerk: Mutter und Kind. [circa mid 1930s] from *German Propaganda Archive: Nazi posters: 1933-1945*. Retrieved from <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/posters2.htm>. In the poster, the Aryan mother looks down on the child she nurses from her partially exposed breast. If the poster is compared to DaVinci's *Madonna Litta* (fig.3), the connection to archaism is evident in the parallels of the style and the subject matter of the two works. Although there are subtle differences between the two works, the Nazi poster with the image of the mother nursing the baby mimics that of the DaVinci *Madonna*. The imitation of a religious work in this poster is probably intentional, not accidental. In 1933, when the Nazis seized power, 95 percent of the German population was either the Protestant (62.7%) or Roman Catholic (32.4%). The pluralism that characterized the Weimar Republic was always seen as hostile by both the Catholic and the Protestant churches, as the increased liberalism threatened the church's power. Although the relationship between the Nazi state and the church was highly controversial and tense, it was through the use of borrowed religious imagery that the Nazi state used to convey its messages since a significant number of its citizens who were Christian would be familiar with the symbols and images of the Christian faith.

An example of propaganda poster in which the ideal Aryan mother is represented is the poster on the right, produced in the mid-1930s and entitled "Unterstützt das

Hilfswerk: Mutter und Kind” (fig. 4). The poster promoted the Nazi charity organization (the legend: “Support the assistance program for mothers and children”, poster dated circa mid 1930’s). In the left poster we have the Madonna Litta, by Leonardo da Vinci, circa 1490 (see Hermitage Museum Guide 1997: 399).

Although the Madonna was a common subject, which was widely recognized in DaVinci’s time, the models on which the Madonna was based were real people and not idealized. In the Nazi poster, the Aryan mother has been idealized: we do not see in her face in personal details; she is not recognizable as any one individual and as such she takes on a symbolic function and represents all German mothers. In both works, the image of the mother is at the same time earthly and holy. DaVinci accomplishes this by having the Madonna’s head framed on both sides by two windows, whereas in the Nazi poster the mother is elevated to a holy figure by the large sun behind her. In Christianity, the Madonna symbolizes purity, unconditional love and virginity and her role is to fulfill the most important duty of a woman: to give birth to the messiah, the one that will save and protect all the people from the evil. It was to this notion that the political scientists of the Ministry of Propaganda used to appeal to the faith of the German people. The mother breast-feeding the child shows the importance to the state of the child as a continuation of the German race and the nurturing of children with the correct ideals. Children would be raised and educated under the ideals of Nazi ideology and would be taught to be always ready to devote themselves to their nation. The ideal children would become either pureblooded women, or vigorous Aryan men who would ensure the survival of the nation and at the same time would protect the Aryan nation from the infection by inferior races and external enemies who wanted to abolish the Nazi empire.

The Aryan mother presented in the Nazi poster is more reminiscent of a woman from the 19th century than a woman in 1910’s and 20’s. The woman in the Nazi poster wears modest simple clothing and is presented in a picturesque and idealized rural scene with a farmer in shadow plowing the field. The Nazi slogan “Blood and Soil” (Clark 1997: 56) exemplifies how the Nazis idealized the German rural family. Families were connected and rooted to their land as the baby is connected to its mother. The idea “of sowing and reaping, reproduces the genetic purity of their race” (Clark 1997: 56) and the fact that they should sow the old spikes in order to grow new, healthy ones; the past connecting to the future. The Nazi state had proposed that art should imply continuity from the past and a return to the values the German ancestors. It was believed that the ideal German nation would connect to the old German values; this was an idea that was developed in posters in order to ensure that people felt a sense of unity.

Although the differences are subtle in the DaVinci work and the Nazi poster, it should be emphasized that the ministry of propaganda had thousands of artists, who probably had training in the classical art. This ensured that the art in propaganda would follow along the lines that the ministry set. The emphasis is different in the two works, it becomes apparent when the viewer examines both more closely; yet, the basic elements are the same. As was stated the connection of the Nazi poster and any representation of the Madonna feeding the Christ child is not accidental because the Renaissance was a period that the Reich preferred because it proposed that the basic elements of the art should originate from the ancient classic civilizations of the Greeks and Romans.

Conclusions

This paper was set within the framework of the research seminar *The Culture of Fascism*, for the MA program *Political Culture and National Identities* at Leiden University. It examined the posters of the Nazi era and in particular the way that Nazi posters portrayed the role of the German woman as a mother in Nazi society. The paper framed this study within the context of the legal system and social policy implemented by the Reich and discussed how Nazi policies and ideology on the role of the German woman as a mother were promoted through posters. An examination of the artistic aspects and the subject matter of the posters revealed how this policy and ideology were carefully introduced to German citizens. The Nazis view of the role of the mother in the society was shown in the imagery and the influences of the poster, in particular the use of Christian symbols and the tendency to archaism. It also supported the idea that Nazi posters also represented the ideal Nazi family and the gender politics of the period and that posters were designed following norms of an ideal national socialist art set by the Nazis.

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