

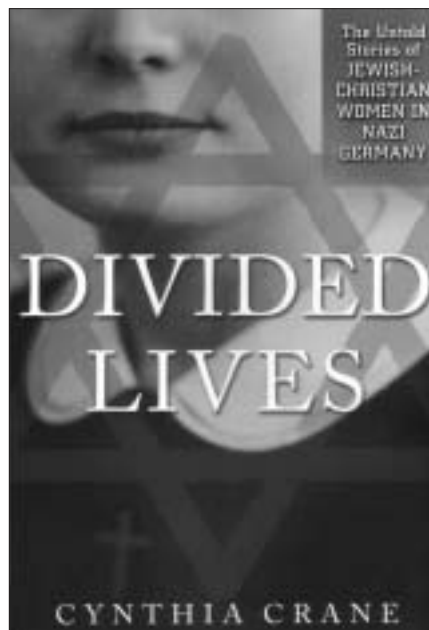
Divided Lives: "The Law"

*Before Hitler came to power in 1933, intermarriages between Christians and Jews in Germany were not uncommon. However, under the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, individuals with at least one Jewish grandparent were considered Mischlinge or "half-breeds," and were classified as Jewish, even though many of them were practicing Christians. Although most Mischlinge were not sent to death camps, they were persecuted by having their citizenship stripped, losing their rights and their jobs, being shunned by neighbors and friends, and, in many cases, seeing their families torn apart. In her book *Divided Lives: The Untold Stories of Jewish-Christian Women in Nazi Germany* (Palgrave Macmillan), author Cynthia Crane examines this little-known aspect of Holocaust history.*

You shall know them by their fruits.
— Matt. 8:16

Today you wake up and you are told you are not who you thought you were. You are young and have been happily leading a carefree life, heading into a promising future. You sit down in the living room and your mother or father reveals one secret in your family that will change your life from this day forward, forever. The government has changed cleverly and insidiously from a democracy into a dictatorship, one built on hatred and fear. And you are the scapegoat. You no longer have the right kind of blood, the right name, the right family background, the right physical features to be considered a member of your society, city, or state. Blue eyes and blond hair are favored, and you have neither. According to new laws, you had better be "Aryan," but by definition, you no longer are. You have always been an insider, but you are now an outsider. You have never been a victim, but now you are victimized. You can no longer attend school, see your familiar friends, have a profession, or marry anyone of your choosing. Nothing and no one is to be trusted. The world you've been living in has metamorphosed into an incomprehen-

sible labyrinth. What goes through your mind? Why is this happening to me? Is this true? I want to die. By degrees, your family is torn apart in ways that are irreparable and irreversible. Like having a love, a passion, the likes of which you will never again see, once you have passed through it, your identity is altered. As with a broken heart, some healed, and some did not. You cannot explain to others how your soul and heart have been defiled; the nails have left invisible marks that only God can



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see, although you try to show the marks when someone you trust asks. But there is always a sense that another breach of faith or of confidence will follow, that someone will pick up the hammer again and hit the nails. This is not make-believe, but happened to people in this book. When we hear someone talk about a divided life these days, it usually refers to a division between work and family, or work and social life, or children and spouse. It does not readily conjure up images of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, of people who were torn between a German and a Jew-

ish identity. Through the ten stories of women's voices, we receive a clearer picture of *Mischlinge* and what they endured under Hitler's laws. In the Luebeck memorial chapel, iron bells had fallen in 1942 during the Allied bombings and they lay still where they had dropped, badly broken and melted on the floor. It was astonishing to see. Later these bells haunted me and became a symbol of the *Mischling* women: A witness, a survivor, something left behind, but no longer in its original form. And the fall itself had altered the piece forever.

With the onset of the Third Reich in January 1933, Jews were no longer defined under religious or cultural terms, but as a race. The ensuing nomenclature that defined the Jews signaled an emphasis that was racist rather than religious. A specific lexicon illustrated by key terms was used to define and separate Jews from "normal" or *Deutschblütig* (pure German) society. Hitler's regime hoped that by marking and placing people into degrading categories, their spirits would be crushed by the separation from their fellow Germans. Hitler perverted the German language and effectively manipulated it as a psyche breaker. Thus, today, certain terms such as *Ehre* (honor), *Blut* (blood), and *Vaterland* (fatherland) are not used with the patriotic fervor that is still possible in other countries. There are no illegal terms in Germany today, just words that have a certain aura about them, words that older or "conscious" people who still remember have trouble listening to or using. Certain symbols, such as the swastika, indicative of National Socialism, are illegal in public, on flags, on medals of honor from the war, and on book covers.¹ Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* (my struggle) is not allowed to be sold secondhand unless for "scientific reasons."²

Language, especially through Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels's pervasive propaganda strategies, and violence were effec-

tive means to control the people, and propaganda slogans, such as *Juda Verrecke!* (Judah croak!), *Juden sind hier nicht erwünscht* (Jews not wanted here!), *Deutsches Volk! Wehr dich! Kauf nicht beim Juden!* (German people, defend yourselves, do not buy from Jews!), *Die Juden sind unser Unglück* (The Jews are our misfortune) were widely propagated. Nazi publications like *Der Stürmer*³ and others tried to show through repetition of certain words — *Judenschwein*, (Jewish pig), *Ungeziefer* (vermin), *Schmarotzer* (parasite), *Parasiten* (parasites) — that Jews and other “outcasts” were subhuman. Terms such as *ausmerzen* (eliminate), *ausrotten* (exterminate), and *vernichten* (extinguish) lowered inhibitions to the idea of Jews being treated like vermin or animals. These words today are taboo among politically correct people.

The *Mischling* women talk about the impact of these words, the cause and effect of Hitler’s evil, and the confusion that abounded over where they stood within the chaos. Suddenly, these women did not fit an ordained visage — an Aryan image. This was a betrayal for the *Mischlinge* — being told they were members of a Jewish “race,” but having little or no idea what being Jewish meant. This takeover of their identity was the beginning of their duality of Christian and Jew, German and Jew. Formerly, their identity was constructed to a degree for the purposes of nationalism and national unity, and one day this changed. This was betrayal. With whom do they identify now? The women were left with a complex set of emotions, such as an internalized hatred of themselves, often played out in “death wishes;” hatred of the Jewish family member; of their newfound identity; and of those Germans who had relabeled them. They were victim/victimizer, Jew/Christian, outsider/insider. How could a twentieth century, modern society make such laws? How could they then exterminate people? A complex question that the women uttered. “How could they determine a “race”? *Where was God*, one woman wondered.

I found the persecutors and the persecuted were often embodied in one — a disquieting phenomenon. This is the horror of the big picture. This division is at the heart of divided lives: split identities and torn loyalties, to which many people in contemporary society can relate. Although these women were the persecuted, they sometimes thought, and today think, the same as the persecutors. Was the victims’ silence as dangerous as that of the German perpetrators? Did victim and oppressor alike suppress the horror in order to move beyond this chapter in history? Or did only the victims bury their pain and anger temporarily, waiting for the day to speak? After the war, many Nazi officials lived on comfortably in Austria, Germany, and South and North America, having found a way to rationalize their actions. Many former Nazis, such as Nazi Women’s League leader Gertrud Scholz-Klink, expressed no qualms about their role in Hitler’s Reich. They still believe today that those twelve years bonded the German *Volk* into a golden nationalism. Perhaps they fail to see that today a German can scarcely show partiality to his country. Patriotism is a *Schimpfwort*, dirty word. If acted upon it could again lead to a frenetic nationalism. Germans are divided by their history. Surprisingly, some *Mischling* women harbored anti-Semitic views. It would be absurd to suggest, however, that undeserved, legalized persecution was needed in order to “straighten these women out.” (That is similar to saying that someone who managed to survive the camps was “stronger for the experience.”) But their endurance of racial persecution altered all of these women’s lives to varying degrees. They never saw themselves as *Jewish*: More often than not, their Jewish parent or spouse was fully assimilated into German culture, was not religious, or had been baptized Christian. Today, these women remain *zwischen allen Stühlen* (straddling the fence) to various degrees, although it appears that this “racial” identity forced some of the women in later

life to reevaluate their own nationalistic attitudes and their position within society. Could they risk hard-won security of having reattained their German status and relative anonymity, to talk to me, to draw attention to themselves once again, to dabble in the past? Their fear of discussing their twelve years of persecution, when they were Jews and no longer Germans, was great.

The group of women that I interviewed is one about which we rarely hear. These German women who were a part of or were products of a Jewish-Christian “mixed marriage” were persecuted under the Nuremberg Laws⁴; however, they have often been passed over in studies of the Holocaust. Why is this? Perhaps it is because they are not considered “really Jewish”; their families had cut their Jewish ties, and, for the most part, they were not practicing Jews. These women are still struggling with the nightmares of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, the loss of family in concentration camps, and if they are Jewish or Christian. Often, their Jewish background was disclosed to them only after Hitler’s laws were passed, and in some cases was not revealed for years after the laws were in place. For some of these women, this Jewish identity was their buttress in post-World War II Germany, as they had to separate themselves from the Germans who were looked upon as Nazis. Although one would think that they could not in good conscience reclaim their German heritage, today some of them have.

Many Germans, including my paternal family, escaped in time; however, many of their relatives and friends did not. The following stories look at the plight of the people who remained behind. At speeches I have given, I am often asked how these women manage to live in a country that once had been their refuge but had betrayed them. These women are often likened to other “mixed” people in the United States. As we become more interracial as a society, questions of cultural and ethnic identity arise. Although obviously we

do not live under a totalitarian regime, those of us who are “hyphenated” Americans wrestle with issues of loyalty and identity to one group or another. Most of the interviewees in my book are still searching for a cultural, religious, or national identity as a result of their persecution.

German historian Ursula Büttner mentions that “apart from the Jews themselves, several hundreds of thousands of people, a number originally perhaps just short of 400,000, suffered as a result of the National Socialist racial lunacy because they were spouses, children or grandchildren of Jews.”⁵ Between 1935 and 1945 those who lived in “mixed marriages” as well as “half Jews” were persecuted as “non-Aryans.” After the instatement of the April Laws (Civil Service Law) of 1933, Jews were cast out from the civil service and prohibited from taking up certain professions (legal and medical) and enrolling in particular schools and universities. On September 15, 1935, the Nuremberg Laws took away German citizenship from those who were not of “German or related blood.” Marriages and sexual relations were also prohibited between Jews and “pure Germans.” Jews and Germans were prohibited from “mixing”; doing so was an act of *Rassenschande* (racial defilement), and was punishable by law and viewed as treasonous. Although it was illegal to stay married to a Jew if you were German, the authorities found it difficult to enforce this law. When the initial push for divorces of “mixed marriages” did not show the desired results, the Gestapo (secret state police) put pressure on the “Aryan” wife or husband to file for divorce; very few left their Jewish partners. Oftentimes, the marriage continued while the couple inconspicuously lived apart. It would have been dangerous for the couple had the Gestapo detected that the bonds between them were intact. For the “Aryan” man, maintaining a marriage with a woman of Jewish origin meant that he could be fired or at least face disadvantages in his profession. An “Aryan” woman married

to a man of Jewish origin primarily had to face harassment and often had to use her “Aryan” privileges to rescue members of her husband’s family from camps. The major consequence for a Jewish partner in a “mixed marriage” who left (or was left) was more discrimination — fewer food and clothes stamps — and later, instant deportation and death. For the Jewish partner married to an “Aryan,” it was crucial that the marriage not end. Government

chlinge, who were considered temporary citizens. A person was a “full Jew” if he or she had at least three Jewish grandparents. A *Geltungsjude*, a self-declared or believing Jew, could be a person without Jewish grandparents who was a member of the Jewish community because he or she converted at the time of marriage or had decided to become a Jew for other reasons. Self-declared Jews were dealt with as Jews and deported from 1943 onward. Hitler’s objective for the



The author’s paternal grandmother, Herta Bahlson Cohn, whose experiences in Nazi Germany inspired the book.

pressure and harassment to divorce was difficult for couples to withstand. There was no discernible legal difference between Jewish men or Jewish women who left their marriages, as both were considered enemies of the state. In the interviews with the *Mischlinge* it is worth noting that the “Aryan” men in a “mixed marriage” did not live very long, perhaps because of the emotional and physical trauma of being married to a Jew and their subsequent loss of status and professional position in society. If they returned from concentration camps, the Jewish women to whom these men were married tended to live long lives.

The Nuremberg Laws and the “law of the preservation of German blood and German honor” as well as other orders that regulated behavior, split up the persecuted into two groups: Jews (German nationals) but not citizens, meaning they were not allowed to vote or run for public office, and *Mis-*

future was to separate “Germans” from Jews and “mixed persons.”

Mischlinge were divided into those of first and second degree—*Mischling ersten grades* and *Mischling zweiten grades*. A first-degree “half Jew” was a person with two Jewish grandparents. A second-degree “quarter Jew” had one Jewish grandparent. Both groups remained temporary citizens but were subject to strict marriage restrictions. Eventually, their rights decreased until they had none. Nazi policies were less restrictive toward second-degree *Mischlinge*. First-degree *Mischlinge* were allowed to marry people of German blood only if they received a practically unattainable marriage approval that entailed Gestapo supervision. Second-degree *Mischlinge*, on the other hand, could only marry persons of German stock. First-degree *Mischlinge* were further divided into two groups. The first were the *Geltungsjuden*. Although they fell under the defin-

ition of *Mischlinge*, they were treated as “full Jews.” They were permitted to marry either Jews or other *Geltungsjuden*. The second group consisted of those who had been baptized Christian (the majority of women I interviewed). According to historian Nathan Stoltzfus, “Baptized *Mischlinge* outnumbered *Geltungsjuden* by nine to one, since only 11 percent of *Mischlinge* belonged to Jewish communities.”⁶

In December 1938, after Kristallnacht (“night of broken glass”), the laws made a distinction between “privileged” and “non-privileged” “mixed marriages.” They were “privileged” if the woman was Jewish or if there were children who were raised Christian and were under age eighteen. Hitler created this “mixed marriage” category because he feared alienating the “Aryan” half of these marriages. They were “non-privileged” when the children were considered Jews or when the man was Jewish and the couple had no children. Most of those in “privileged mixed marriages” were not forced to relocate to houses designated for Jews and were not deported until toward the end of the war. The National Socialists concentrated on those marriages in which the man was Jewish. The irony here is that by doing so, they reversed the Jewish concept of lineage. For Jews, the matrilineal is more important in determining who is Jewish in the family as opposed to the German patriarchal, patrilineal definition of Jews as a race.

The majority of marriages between Jews and non-Jews were considered “privileged.” Because of centuries of anti-Semitism, most of the German-Jewish parents and their children had been baptized. They feared persecution if they did not distance themselves from the Jewish faith. Most members of privileged marriages belonged to the middle class, and they tried to “make it” by assimilating into German culture. Beginning January 1, 1939 Hitler decreed that on all German-Jewish identification cards, which already bore the letter “J,” the name “Sara” would be added

for women, and “Israel” for men. A few of the *Mischlinge* women mentioned the violation they felt for their mothers who were often addressed simply as “Sara.” In September 1941 Jews were forced to wear and display the yellow Star of David sewn onto their clothing. The star marked the Jews for deportation. There was an arbitrariness concerning *Mischlinge* wearing stars, as Joseph Goebbels was still uncertain what to do with them. Whether a *Mischlinge* wore a star often depended on the attitude of the local Gauleiter (regional Nazi leader) — the more beastly and fanatical he was, the higher the chance a *Mischlinge* might wear a star. Thus, they were forced to wear a star in certain places, but not in others.

To equalize Jews and *Mischlinge*, Nazi leaders at various times, as at a conference in 1941 and at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, suggested that *Mischlinge* be forcefully sterilized or deported to camps, and even their German spouses be deported with them. However, they did not know how to put this into action without causing public outcry from the German families, and Hitler, and Goebbels, in particular, stalled the issue. Finally, they were hindered by the turn of the war.

In 1940, men who were married to Jews were discharged from the army, with some exceptions. In 1943, men in “mixed marriages” received drafts from the Organization Todt (OT),⁷ and a year later were drafted for forced labor. Initially, the group of forced laborers were to be driven east to construct roads, however, in Hamburg they were needed first of all to build up the destroyed infrastructure, to clean-up, and to recover dead bodies and material. In late 1944 women in “mixed marriages” were forced into labor groups. The sporadic, random transports of *Mischlinge* began in February 1945, and those from Hamburg (as seen in many of the stories) and other areas were sent to Theresienstadt, a camp in which people were worked into their graves, rather than gassed, or transferred to extermination camps such as

Auschwitz. Several hundred died in the process. Fortunately, the chaos of the war’s end interrupted the process or the targeting of *Mischlinge* would have become systematic. They were the next wave of deportees.

If anyone in the *Mischlinge* categories acted against the laws or “suspiciously” in public or private, according to an “Aryan’s” report, they received a greater punishment, such as imprisonment or, later, deportation, than someone not in these designated groups. The degree of persecution against *Mischlinge* depended on a variety of circumstances, such as: birth year, gender, parental ability to protect their offspring, social environment, the solidarity of “Aryan” relatives, and the neighborhoods in which they lived. *Mischlinge* lived in a police state in which adult neighbors and their children had the ultimate power to denounce them. Often neighbors spied and were given a sense of autonomy and power when they could turn in their Jewish neighbor for listening to the BBC or for “acting strangely,” for instance, leaving home at odd times during the day or evening. An “Aryan’s” word against a Jew’s always had precedence.

The laws worsened year by year, a planned process (although this is debated by historians) culminating in *die Endlösung* (the Final Solution) or, in Hebrew, *Shoah* (catastrophe). Over a half-million Germans were considered Jewish under the Nuremberg Laws. Most of the labeled Jewish “asocials” were “outside” of normal time. The *Mischlinge* still had their German part to exploit, to hold onto; there was a semblance of hope. But they never knew when the laws would shift again. Civil laws were constantly revoked, rearranged, and reestablished. Stability amid the chaos was possible only for “pure” Germans. Even with all this anti-Jewish legislation, many of the women mentioned that not until Kristallnacht was the seriousness of Hitler’s intentions internalized. My grandmother’s story of single-handedly working through the

Nazi bureaucracy for the release of my great-uncle from a camp after this “rounding up of the Jews” corroborates this.

The narratives that follow are based on copious notes I took during and after the interviews and translated tape recordings. The interviews inevitably focused on issues of identity and gender that arose under the patriarchal machine of National Socialism.

Clearly, all of the women’s identities were fractured to some degree, but as they spoke of the desolation of their worlds, the crumbling of their formative years, they seemingly either reconstructed or reinvented their lives as *they were speaking*. In the telling of their stories, they each crafted and sometimes gave birth to a “fictional” identity, one that protected them from the pain of their history as victims. In “Authorizing the Autobiographical,” theorist Shari Benstock states, “Language, which operates according to the principles of division and separation, is the medium by

which and through which the ‘self’ is constructed.”⁸ In some sense, I helped them to create this self, this autobiography. My role interviewing these survivors included coming to terms with my own life as a daughter of a *Mischling* and survivor. I dealt with countless language and cultural barriers in my search for stories that validated but also deferred from my own, often nightmarish, family stories. I played the role of listener, recorder, and excavator of long-buried material and memories. I was entrusted with these women’s narratives because of my “spiritual” connection to their history. I lived what they had experienced through my grandmother’s and father’s stories, the confusion of being “outsiders,” neither German nor Jewish, and in particular, my father surviving torment as a *Mischling* that has shaped who he is today. I am

aware of and have acknowledged my positionality, where I stand as a first-generation American, also torn between my feelings of kinship and enmity toward Germany. It was up to me then to deliver the narratives in a compelling way. There was a transatlantic link between the women and me — a connection to a dysfunction that they knew made me a sympathetic listener. Dr. Dori Laub, psychoanalyst, states, “Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that

These women carry an enormous burden; they live between the extremes, juggling two worlds. They represent a variety of backgrounds, although the majority would be considered, by German measure, to be in the educated middle or upper class, a class most affected by the ban from the civil service, universities, and skilled jobs. All of the women’s fathers were professionals. Ruth Wilmshen’s and Ingrid Wecker’s fathers were classified as *Beamte* (civil servants), because they worked for the state as a teacher and principal, and a policeman, respectively. Most of them were from the northern port city of Hamburg, the second largest city in Germany.

The discrimination against the “mixed” women was, at times, so severe that many of them suffered after-effects similar to those of camp survivors, as psychologist Louise Kaplan documented — physical illness and/or mental dementia

that created a wall between the present and past. Kaplan calls this “transposition... where the past reality of the parent intrudes into present psychological reality of the child.” Even though these women were not deported, they continually created in their minds the suffering of a parent who returned, or the death of a parent who perished in a camp. Kaplan states, “The children of survivors were living out and dreaming out their parents’ nightmares. The children were enacting experiences and relating fantasies that could only come from a person who had actually been in a ghetto or extermination camp.”¹¹

These German women are caught between the Nazi definitions of patriots and “asocials”; their grief, manifested in physical pain and mental anguish, provides a murkier realm of study than the thoroughly researched grief of



The German passport of the author’s father, Carl Crane, which he used when he left Germany in 1939.

includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other* — in the position of one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are *talking* to somebody; to somebody they have been waiting for a long time.”⁹ I think these women’s stories have always been there waiting for me.

The following statement, made by author Ingeborg Hecht, best characterizes all of the interviewees’ lives: “We were stripped of our rights, denied the opportunity to train for worthwhile professions, prevented from building up a livelihood, forbidden to marry. We shared the fears of those who failed to survive persecution, but we also had to endure the shame of having fared better than our fathers, our relations, our friends. We did not emerge unscathed.”¹⁰

camp survivors. I found that traumatic ostracization led to repressed memories of the “mixed” women’s outsider status, which, in turn, created some real or imagined physical ailments. After the war, it was imperative they “be” German again — having repressed their negative experiences as victims, they were able to function, albeit superficially. After “purging” themselves through hospitalization, therapy, or work, did these women begin to heal — a prerequisite for coming to terms with their position in present-day Germany? Although their footing is precarious at best, these women have reached a point where they can speak openly, but often only with people they have carefully scrutinized. Their split identity — between victim and participant, Jew and Gentile — which they attempted to ignore or repress, appeared to be the cause of physical and mental ailments.

Some of the conversations with the women came from questions that comprised my questionnaire or were questions formed from discussions I had with Monika Richarz, academic director at the Institute for the History of German Jews in Hamburg. Family dynamics from 1933 to after the war — families under stress — was always the central topic of our talks and was an issue in all of the interviews. To what extent a woman’s identity was affected or changed often depended on how the family interpreted their situation. The story always began with the marriage of the parents and grandparents. How did the racial laws split the family? Was there pressure to divorce? What were the reactions to that? Did the “Aryan” partner drop or support the Jewish partner? Was there a major split or solidarity? What happened to their identity once they were designated for racial persecution in all its manifestations under the Nuremberg Laws? How did some of them cope with suddenly “being Jewish” when they had never been exposed to Judaism or ever entered a synagogue? Do they “feel” Jewish now as a consequence of their former

“stigmatization”? Are they actively “pro-Jewish”? Neutral? Christian? How was Jewish identity transmitted, if at all? How did their experience of persecution affect their psyches? How do they conduct their lives in Germany? Do they cover up or openly talk about the past?

These are some of the issues discussed in the following stories. There are myriad answers. Many women responded to these questions with rather disturbing answers—at times, contradictory to or in denial of their former plight as “outsiders.” A few resorted, perhaps unconsciously, to National Socialist words, a vocabulary particular to the Third Reich, when talking about the past. A few of them related brief sections of their stories in English, certainly because of my presence as an American. I was careful to include all of the questions in each interview, but the women chose how they wanted to engage their lives with me. Most of them did not need to be questioned before they began to talk; they simply started with a vivid memory. They spoke primarily in three different modes: stream of consciousness, associative, or linear. By request, a few of the women’s last names have been eliminated or changed, and events might not be relayed in their entirety. Necessarily, because of the voluminous oral material, I had to make decisions about what was relevant to this story and to frame their narratives accordingly. Sometimes this entailed moving around some material or excising tangential chitchat, but never changing the stories or factual events. As Israeli author Aharon Appelfeld said, “Life in the Holocaust ... was so ‘rich’ one could choke on it. The literary problem is not to pile up fact upon fact, but rather to choose the most necessary ones, the ones that touch the heart of the experience and not its edges.”¹² This does not change the “facts” of the stories, which are historically accurate according to the women’s memories. History is perceived differently from country to country and from generation to generation. History is not static and diachronic.

Many of the women claim to discuss German history as the Germans perceive it and tell it.

The stories of these Mischling women — Ingeborg Hecht, Ingrid Wecker, Ruth Yost, Ruth Wilmschen, Gretel and Sigrid Lorenzen, Ursula Randt, Ilse B., Margot Wetzel, and Ursula Bosselmann — display vividly the trauma these women endured during and after the Third Reich, and the coping mechanisms they sought after or adopted. Wilmschen’s, Wetzel’s, Bierstedt’s, and Bosselmann’s mothers were deported to camps. Yost’s and Randt’s fathers escaped Germany, Gretel Lorenzen’s father was deported to a camp, Wecker’s father was killed by the Nazis, and Hecht’s was purportedly exterminated in Auschwitz. Many of the women experienced trauma symptoms that did not necessarily dissipate once they had “purged” their memories. As Laub says, *The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of “normal” reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after. This absence of categories that define it lends it a quality of “otherness,” a salience, a timelessness and a ubiquity that puts it outside the range of associatively linked experiences, outside the range of comprehension, of recounting and of mastery. Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect.*¹³

Hence, the women repeatedly commented, “I can’t describe this,” and “you can’t imagine” as they attempted to narrate their past lives in the present. They could not escape the fact that they were victims at one time, that the people with whom they lived had been their persecutors. This problem is seen also in the United States, such as with African Americans and Native Americans. It would seem a difficult thing for anyone to live peacefully among her tormenters. This problem exists in many other nations. South Africa, Argentina, and other states have collapsed

and been renewed under somewhat less authoritarian conditions. There is a lot of bitterness and inability to forget. We must look at the Mid-East, the Balkans, Rwanda/Botswana and other regions where these hatreds continue for generations and generations. Perhaps it is just part of the human condition — not really a disease that can be “healed,” or a trauma that can be “purged.” The issues that the *Mischling* women faced can be bridged to the present in America. In a country verging sometimes on amorality, very often pushed by the media, we grasp at techniques such as dehumanization, stereotypes, and violence to talk about or act against “enemies.” Do the same fears still predominate in human nature, those of needing to exterminate for racial cleansing, and the fear of the unknown?

History is difficult to escape. These *Mischling* women have little, if any, support in Germany today. Silence is preferable to talking to the “wrong” person about their background. Perhaps this is why they still struggle to one degree or another with their identities. Most *Mischlinge* who survived do not have support within the *Jüdische Gemeinde* (Jewish community). The “mixed” women are still “mixed” psychologically and socially. They rarely and cautiously reveal their

heritage or their former outcast status so as not to draw attention to themselves. Often they have not disclosed their past to children or grandchildren. For the most part, they want to be included in German society and not be seen as women who were once considered “inferior” or “outsiders” by the majority. Even though now they can speak about their past, they protect their current status. Few of the women had ever spoken, and had not disclosed their identity split between Jew and Christian. To the outside world, they were Germans.

What these women discuss can be viewed as a warning to other cultures. We see what transpires from racist fanaticism and fascism. Through these women’s narratives we not only can better understand women’s plight under authorized persecution, but also the personal, individual traumas they withstood in regard to self, parents, lovers, husbands, children, and career. During the era of National Socialism, women more than men tended to be attached to community life, and they were more aware of their disintegrating world. Women also were expected to remain at home to care for parents and siblings, whereas men were more mobile and able (by virtue of their gender) to hide or emigrate. Because these women

lived in constant turmoil, with relationships shifting so dramatically, they had to escape from their lives, essentially, from their selves, in some manner — physically, psychologically, or both.

According to Ursula Büttner, *There is a vast literature on the Holocaust, but relatively little has been written analyzing the situation of Christian-Jewish “mixed” families in the Third Reich. (No doubt this is due to the fact that, unlike the Jews not in any “privileged” position, the majority survived the war) ...How these measures (the general Jewish policies of the Nazi regime) affected the day-to-day life of those involved and how their position deteriorated during the course of Hitler’s rule has yet to be explored.*¹⁴

Many academics, including Raul Hilberg, argued that discrimination against the *Mischlinge* was not severe.¹⁵ However, the narratives that make up my book dispute such historical suppositions. As Büttner claims, “Reports of those involved give another picture of the persecution of that time. That is why a new look at this subject is necessary.”¹⁶

HM

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End Notes:

1. In Germany, one may decorate walls with the swastika, and it is permissible to use historical photos with a swastika on it, or it may be used in pieces of art, but it must be critical, not propaganda art. If a publisher wants to use a swastika on a book cover, it must be relevant to the book’s content. It would not be acceptable to use only to trigger the interest of potential customers. Any sensitive designer/publisher would try to avoid using it. The swastika was used in India many centuries ago, and you can find Buddha statues with a swastika on the forehead. Of course it would be legal to publish those photos in a book and on the cover of it as well.
2. Libraries can buy this book for research; specifically, booksellers are allowed to sell it to only those customers who give proof that they need it for research. Libraries are not allowed to lend it to people who have no proof of serious interest. However, anyone can own *Mein Kampf*. Some people have three or four copies from Nazi relatives. This book and other Nazi books tend to be kept in a so-called poison cabinet. Many Germans, especially those in younger generations, do not want visitors to browse the bookshelf and get the wrong impression. Thanks to Kay Dohnke for this information.
3. *Der Stürmer* [the stormer], a weekly newspa-

per published by the vicious anti-Semite, Julius Streicher, between 1923 and 1945. It became known worldwide as an anti-Semitic publication. Streicher printed repugnant, nearly pornographic photographs, cartoons, slogans, and articles about Jews. Streicher gave speeches and set up nationwide display cases that further popularized his paper.

4. Two racial laws issued on September 15, 1935. The Reichsbürgergesetz (State citizenship law) declared that Jews were not citizens of the German state. The Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre (Law for the protection of German blood and honor) prohibited relations between Jews and “Aryans” and created categories and definitions for who was a Jew, “Aryan,” and *Mischlinge*. This legislation was the foundation for all anti-Semitic laws that followed.

5. Ursula Büttner, “The Persecution of Christian-Jewish Families in the Third Reich,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): pp. 267-289. Quote from p. 271.

6. Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Inter-marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), p. 71.

7. Named after Fritz Todt, SS General and Reich Minister for Armaments and Munitions. Todt is known for building the Autobahn. Todt put

together a group of his own laborers forming the Todt Organization to construct the Western Wall, the Siegfried Line. The project began in 1939. Todt used slave labor, including *Mischlinge*, for his various projects.

8. Shari Benstock, “Authorizing the Autobiographical,” in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1988), p. 29.

9. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 71.

10. Ingeborg Hecht, *Invisible Walls: A German Family Under the Nuremberg Laws* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), p. 136.

11. Louise J. Kaplan, *No Voice Is Ever Wholly Lost* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 225, 222

12. Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Conversation with Philip Roth*. Trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corp, 1994), p. viii.

13. Laub in Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, p. 69, emphasis added.

14. Büttner, “The Persecution of Christian-Jewish Families in the Third Reich,” p. 270.

15. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 268.

16. Büttner, “The Persecution of Christian-Jewish Families in the Third Reich p. 279.