

***Margarete* and *Sulamith* under the Swastika: Girls' Names in Nazi Germany**

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Past research has well established that the personal name a woman carries can have a significant impact upon the way she is perceived by her surrounding environment. The power of this impact may be significantly increased during periods of sociopolitical unrest. Using the techniques of corpus linguistics, this paper traces diachronic variations in the twenty most popular girls' names chosen by German parents between 1934 and 1950. To supplement this empirical analysis, historical information is provided on onomastic legislation which not only affected societal preferences in female names, but also the individual lives of the women who carried them.

KEYWORDS Jewish, Holocaust, War, Germany, Nazi, corpus linguistics, personal names

General introduction

One of the most exciting responsibilities awaiting new parents is the selection of a personal name for their newborn child. During times of armed conflict or war, however, this joyful task can quickly be transformed into a statement of political allegiance or dissidence. There is ample evidence that the selection of personal names can be greatly affected during periods of great sociopolitical upheaval (e.g. Eichhoff & Seibicke, 2001; Brechenmacher, 2001; Wolffson, 2001). Such was also the case in Nazi Germany.

Nevertheless, some German onomasticians have tended to either down play or overlook the potential importance of this period, operating under the assumption that National Socialism had little or no lasting effect upon German naming patterns (e.g. Kunze 2004; Seibecke 1999). Moreover, those few who have explored personal naming patterns during the Nazi period, have tended to focus upon male personal names (Bach 1943; Bahlow 1967; Bering 1987).

To a certain extent, this historical focus may be explained by the notorious Hitlerian obsession with mythologizing the masculine. However, the continued investigatory preoccupation with the singular role of men in Nazi Germany may have seriously

hampered our collective understanding of this period. The present article will provide a diachronic corpus linguistic analysis of the most popular names chosen for female children in Germany immediately before, during, and after World War II. This paper will thus provide indirect yet nonetheless disturbing insights into the insidious ways in which National Socialism crept into the everyday life of German society.

Background information on official policies regarding the naming of children in Germany

Unlike the United States and Great Britain which give parents almost unlimited freedom in the selection of their children's names, Germany has historically restricted the set of personal names considered acceptable for its citizens. As a general rule, the application of these naming restrictions has been largely left up to the individual discretion of the local and regional courts within each German state or "Bundesland."

Predictably, substantive differences in the juridical interpretation of these onomastic guidelines have led to many regular inconsistencies. An excellent case in point involves the 1994 decision of the Nuremberg courts which denied the parents permission to give their daughter the German name "Sonne" "sun" on the grounds that it would expose the child to public ridicule. Just five years earlier, however, Düsseldorf authorities, apparently seeing no such danger, allowed the English name "Sunshine." While such irregularities provide regular fodder for diehard critics of the German legal system, it is generally accepted that such government controls are needed to protect children from the more or less well-meaning creativity of their parents. This public acceptance is based upon the underlying presumption that the priority of the court is the welfare of the prospective name-bearer.

This assumption of municipal benevolence has not always been borne out, however. In some instances, the decisions of the German courts have been rather obviously (mis)guided by quite different motivations. For example, in 1927, officials in the city of Freiburg disallowed the female name *Zélie Noëlie* on the grounds that it was purely French and therefore wholly objectionable (Walz 1998: 248). In this case, it was the German government which imposed its increasingly fascist will upon private citizens. However, the devastating power of the Nazi regime did not simply lie in the power of the state to impose its will upon the people, but was also harbored in the seemingly unlimited willingness of average citizens to make their every action conform to the visions of a madman; and the personal selection of their daughter's names was no different.

Methodology

Although the compilation of a corpus always presents certain challenges, there were many unique obstacles encountered for the present investigation. First and foremost, unlike many other nations, the German government does not keep central annual records of the most popular names chosen by its residents. Moreover, many of the necessary archival records were damaged or destroyed during the war years. For these reasons, the corpus compilation for the present investigation necessitated the use of several different resources.

Of these resources, by far the most instrumental was the collection of Knud Bielefeld, a private onomastician who has painstakingly compiled continuous ranks of the most popular personal names in Germany for every year since 1890 (www.beliebte-vornamen.de).¹ These rankings are based upon systematic surveys of birth certificates, death announcements; church, municipal, and state archives. The resulting Bielefeld corpus is roundly recognized as one of the most comprehensive and reliable collections of kind. Indeed, it is recommended by such respected public and private institutions as the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache*, [the Society for the German Language] and the statistics bureaus of Switzerland and Germany. With the generous consent of Mr Bielefeld, a database was created of the 20 most popular (i.e. highest frequency) girls' names before, during and immediately after WWII.

The resulting e-corpus is composed of three different temporal subsets: 1.) five years before the outbreak of war (1934–1938); 2.) the War years (1939–1945); 3.) the first five years of post-war Allied Occupation (1945–1950). In addition, the 20 top names for year 2006 are also briefly examined. The chart below gives a coded, alphabetical listing of the personal names in the e-corpus. An asterisk marks the names from the 2006.

TABLE 1
NAME CODES FOR THE ONOMASTIC CORPUS

NAME	CODE	NAME	CODE	NAME	CODE	NAME	CODE
1. Alina*	ALA*	22. Erika	ERI	43. Karin	KRN	64. Nelly*	NEL*
2. Amélie*	AME*	23. Erna	ERN	44. Käthe	KÄT	65. Renate	RNT
3. Angelika	ANG	24. Frieda	FRI	45. Lara*	LAR*	66. Rita	RIT
4. Anke	ANK	25. Gerda	GRD	46. Laura	LAU*	67. Rosemarie	RSM
5. Anna	ANA	26. Gertraud	GRT	47. Lea(h)*	LEA*	68. Ruth	RUT
6. Anneliese	ANL	27. Gisela	GIS	48. Lena*	LEN*	69. Sarah*	SAR*
7. Anne-Marie	ANM	28. Hanna(h)*	HAN*	49. Leonie*	LEO*	70. Sophie*	SOP*
8. Birgit	BIR	29. Hannelore	HNL	50. Lieselotte	LSL	71. Ursula	URS
9. Brigitte	BRI	30. Heike	HKE	51. Lilly*	LIL*	72. Ute	UTE
10. Bärbel	BÄR	31. Heidi	HDI	52. Lisa*	LIS*	73. Waltraud	WLT
11. Barbara	BAR	32. Heideleore	HDL	53. Louise	LSE		
12. Charlotte	CHL	33. Heidemarie	HDM	54. Louisa*	LSA*		
13. Christa	CRT	34. Helene	HEL	55. Margarete	MRG		
14. Christel	CRL	35. Helga	HLG	56. Maria	MRI		
15. Edith	EDI	36. Inge	ING	57. Marie*	MRE*		
16. Elfriede	ELF	37. Ingeborg	IBG	58. Marianne	MRN		
17. Elisabeth	ELB	38. Ingrid	IGD	59. Marion	MRO		
18. Elke	ELK	39. Irma	IRM	60. Marlies	MRL		
19. Else	ELS	40. Irmgard	IRG	61. Marta	MRT		
20. Emma	EMA*	41. Julia*	JUL*	62. Mia*	MIA*		
21. Emily	EMI*	42. Jutta	JUT	63. Monika	MON		

Each of the above names was systematically tagged according to popularity rank, etymology, and documented appearance in the German language. It was then possible to design chronologically-ordered charts tracing the progression of each name between, within, and across each of the three aforementioned periods. Diachronic shifts in the popularity rankings of selected names were then illustrated via lines graphed across each one of the aforementioned time periods. This empirical approach has been shown to reveal critical diachronic variations in onomastic preferences (Herbert 1997; Kunze 2004). Here, this method also helped to highlight corresponding shifts in Germany's underlying sociopolitical system as it moved from democracy to dictatorship.

Results

Period one: before WWII (1934–1938)

On March 14, 1937, the newly ensconced National Socialist government made the following announcement: “Die Kinder deutscher Volksgenossen sollen grundsätzlich nur deutsche Vornamen erhalten” [The children of German comrades should as a rule only carry German first names.] (Kunze 2004: 53). Shortly thereafter, on the fifth of January 1938, another set of onomastic regulations was introduced — this time regarding the selection of names for Jewish residents. This declaration stipulated that Jews were only permitted to carry those first names within the express guidelines of the Minister of the Interior or *Reichsminister des Innern* (Reichgesetzbl. I S. 9§ 1. (1)). According to Brechenmacher (2001), of the meager 300 names sanctioned by the Reichsminister, the vast majority were traditional, diasporic names. This regulation was then followed by a 1938 edict stating that the penalty for failing to comply was punishable by a hefty fine and up to 6 months imprisonment. Immediately after the institution of these measures, two striking complementary onomastic movements can be observed. For clarity, each will be dealt with separately.

The rise of “Germanic” Names

The first noticeable trend was a substantive increase in names which were generally perceived as Aryan. Of course, like so many aspects of the Nazi ideology, it was not entirely clear what was meant by “Aryan” and “non-Aryan.” As eye-witness, and survivor Bertha Ferderber-Salz commented: “Many German Jews discovered their Jewishness only after Hitler came to power.” (1980:112). In the face of this ambiguity, the German citizenry exhibited frightening alacrity and ingenuity, developing many naming strategies to comply with the perceived wishes of the Führer.

One naming strategy was simply to select a name which was inspired by one of the leading members of the Nazi Party. In fact, this strategy became so popular that NS leaders reportedly became alarmed by the number of German daughters named in honor of the Führer. To curtail this tendency, in the summer of 1933, it was decreed that names such as *Adolfine* and *Hitlerike* could no longer be given (Wolffson 2001: 26).

Undaunted, many concerned German parents adopted another popular strategy: selecting names which overtly marked so-called Germanic values. Girls' names of this

type were typically composites of Old and Middle High German words or morphemes. The table below displays some of the morphosemantic constituents (const.) used in the formation of 15 different composite names (cmpnam) which were popular during this period.

TABLE 2
THE MORPHOSEMANTIC CONSTITUENTS OF GERMANIC COMPOSITE NAMES

	const.	orig. meaning	const.	orig. meaning	cmpnam
1.	Diet-	<i>thiot</i> "people"	-mut	<i>muot</i> "spirit"	Dietmut
2.	Edel-	<i>edal</i> "noble"	-heid	<i>heit</i> "way/manner"	Edelheid
3.	Fried-	<i>fridu</i> "peace"	-lind(e)	<i>lind</i> "soft, gentle"	Friedlinde
4.	Froh	<i>fruot</i> "clever"	-mut	<i>muot</i> "spirit"	Fromut
5.	Ger-	<i>ger</i> "speer"	-trud(e)	<i>trut</i> "trusted"	Gertrude
6.	Heid-	<i>heit</i> "way/manner"	-run	<i>runa</i> "secret"	Heidrun
7.	Heil-	heil "stamina"	-wig	<i>wig</i> "battle"	Heilwig
8.	Kun(i)-	<i>kunni</i> "kin, race"	-gund	<i>gund</i> "battle"	Kunigund
9.	Mat-	<i>mafc/ht</i> "power"	-hild(e)	<i>hiltja</i> "battle"	Mathilde
10.	Ort-	<i>Ort</i> "weaponhead"	-rud	<i>trut</i> "trusted"	Ortrud
11.	Rein-	<i>*ragina</i> "fate"	-gard	<i>*gardaz</i> "fence"	Reingard
12.	Sig-	<i>sigr</i> "victory"	-rid	<i>fridr</i> "beauty"	Sigrid
13.	Wal-	<i>waltan</i> "to rule"	-burg	<i>burg</i> "protection"	Walborg
14.	Wil-	<i>wille</i> "will"	-fri(e)d	<i>fridu</i> "peace"	Wilifried
15.	Wolf-	<i>wolf</i> "wolf"	-traud	<i>trut</i> "trusted"	Wolftraud

The popularity of this phenomenon has been noted by many other researchers (e.g. Bach 1943; Bering 1987; Seibicke 1999; Wolffsohn & Brechenmacher 2001; Kunze 2004). This observation was also borne out in the present investigation. Of the 22 different girls' names which made the top twenty list between 1934 and 1938, exactly half fell into this category (*Elke, Erika, Gerda, Helga, Hildegard, Inge, Ingeborg, Ingrid, Irmgard, Ursula, Waltraud*). In the following table, all of the names which made the top twenty list for this time interval are displayed.

A look at the popularity patterns reveals relative stability in this period. The most noticeable fluctuations occur in the struggle between the following three Germanic names for top position: 1.) *Ingrid* (a name inspired by *Yngvi*, a beautiful goddess from Old Nordic myth); 2.) *Helga* (the Old Norse name for "holiness" *heilagr*); and 3.) *Ursula* (the name of a small female bear). Importantly, the relative popularity of names featuring and/or inspired by the ancient Germanic lexicon was not entirely a function of NS directives. As with so many other laws, the Party's agenda found eerie resonance with the collective pulse of the general public.

Since the 1871 founding of the German Reich, the nation had already seen a marked movement towards more traditional "Germanic" names which commemorated the

TABLE 3
THE TOP TWENTY MOST POPULAR GIRLS' NAMES IN GERMANY BEFORE WWII

1	IGB	HLS	HLS	HLS	HLS
2	URS	IGD	IGD	IGD	KRN
3	HLS	URS	URS	URS	IGD
4	GIS	GIS	CRT	CRT	RNT
5	ING	CRT	GIS	KRN	URS
6	CRT	ING	KRN	RNT	CRT
7	RNT	KRN	RNT	GIS	GIS
8	ERI	RNT	ING	ELK	ELK
9	KRN	GRD	ERI	ING	ING
10	GRD	WLT	GRD	GRD	ERI
11	WLT	ERI	CRL	CRL	CRL
12	IRM	ILS	ILS	ERI	WLT
13	IBG	EDI	EDI	WLT	GRD
14	ILS	IBG	HDG	HNL	HNL
15	HNL	RUT	WLT	ILS	ILS
16	HDG	IRM	ELK	MRA	MRA
17	EDI	CRL	MRA	IBG	HDG
18	RUT	HDG	IBG	EDI	IRG
19	MRA	MRA	HNL	HDG	IBG
20	CRL	HNL	RIT	IRM	RIT
	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938

nation's roots. Many of the girls' names which experienced a renaissance during this period were accordingly inspired by the romanticized heroines of Germanic mythology, literature and music. The Nazi Party's onomastic policies simply matched the surging nationalism of the time.

The fall of Judaic names

Accompanying the surge in Germanic names was another, almost prophetic development: the gradual disappearance of names perceived as being "non-Aryan." This trend is epitomized by *Ruth*, a name which had historically enjoyed particular popularity among Jewish families. From 1934 to 1935, this Biblical name experienced a brief increase in popularity, rising in rank from no. 18 to no. 15. However, in 1936, three years after the opening of the concentration camp Dachau, *Ruth* suddenly disappeared completely from the top twenty ranking.

The fluctuation seen in the popularity of *Ruth* between 1935 and 1936 coincides with many of the momentous changes which took place both inside and outside of the German Reich within this 12 month period. Just two historic events which radically altered the fabric of the German society are as follows: 1.) September 15,

1935 — Rudolph Hess signed the Nuremberg Race Laws for the “Protection of German Blood and Honor” (Wiesenthal 1986: 208); and 2.) October 18, 1935 ~ a major ordinance is passed which expands the powers of medical officials operating within the newly installed “Hereditary Health Courts” to undertake forced sterilizations of persons deemed unfit (Lifton 1986: 27). Against these developments, the sudden absence of *Ruth* takes on a disturbing significance. Not incidentally, across this entire pre-war time interval, the period which manifested the highest absolute value of cumulative change) was also between 1935 and 1936.

As the power and violence of the Nazi Party spread, many parents scrambled to avoid names which might be “non-Aryan.” This trend was not only followed by German residents who were loyal to the Party, but also by those who were increasingly its target. For the majority of non-Aryans who either had chosen or been forced to remain in Nazi Germany, “invisibility became the order of the day.” (Koonz 1987: 359). The only way for most to survive was to hide. As one popular German magazine for Jewish women advised: “We must avoid doing anything that will attract attention to us and possibly arouse hostility.” qtd. from Koonz 1987, 358). The importance of personal names during this period can not be overstated. And having a name which might draw undue attention could prove lethal.

Period two: during WWII (1939–1945)

From Kiel to Munich, Nazi soldiers marched in perfect unison down the freshly scrubbed cobblestone streets of the newly aryanized *Adolf Hitler Platz* “Adolf Hitler Place” (formerly known as *Jüdenplatz*) past the recently christened *Heinrich Himmler Strasse* “Heinrich Himmler Street” (once known as *Leostrasse* “Leo Street”), over the last remaining shards of glass from *Finkelsteins Apotheke* “Finkelstein’s Apothecary” where the freshly painted signs announced the grand-opening of *Schmidts Apotheke* “Schmidts Apothecary.” Accompanying this public obliteration of thousands of years of European Jewry, a commensurate erasure was taking place within the private lives of the German populace.

Now more than before, new parents assiduously avoided giving their daughters personal names which could in any way be considered “non-Aryan.” This avoidance even extended to foreign names which were known to have originated from one of the fascist nations. For example, traditional Italian and Spanish names like *Antonia*, *Carmen*, *Fabrizia*, *Isabella*, *Nicola*, *Rosaria*, and *Venetia* did not enjoy any substantive popularity in Germany until long after the war, in most cases after the late 1960s. Given the notorious fickle tides of war, German residents seem to have been well aware that a nation which had been once a trusted ally one day could become a sworn enemy of the Reich the next.

The strongest aversion to non-Aryan sounding names was however reserved for traditional Jewish girls’ names (e.g. *Anat*, *Bathsheba*, *Bethel*, *Dora*, *Lilith*, *Miriam*, *Nora*, *Mitzi*, *Rebekka*, *Rabil*, *Salome*, *Schlomit*, *Sulamith*, *Yosheba*, *Yehudit*) The clear exception were traditional Biblical names (e.g. *Anna*, *Maria*, *Eva*, *Elisabeth*, *Hannah*, *Ruth*, *Sarah*). The fact that such Old Testament names were also Hebrew in origin obviously created a clear conflict for the increasingly rabid anti-Semitic government.

To discourage this onomastic tradition, Party leaders took every opportunity to extol the merits of names “befitting of an Aryan.” For inspiration, citizens were directed to the example set by the first families of the Reich. An excellent example comes from the Goebbels. In this high-profile family, each of the five daughters born to and then murdered by the infamous Minister of Propaganda and his wife, *Magda*, carried a traditional name: *Helga, Hildegard, Hedwig, Holdine, and Heidrun*. The five daughters of *Gerda* and Martin Bormann, Hitler’s private secretary, were also given similarly sanctioned names: *Isle, Ehrengard, Irmgard, Eva, Uta, and Gerda*.

Importantly, Nazi officials did not ban the use of Old Testament names by German Christians, although there had been some initial thought given to creating a definitive list of Party sanctioned Aryan names. Instead, the Party simply prohibited non-Aryans from carrying Aryan names, thereby placing the dangerous onus upon the official enemies of the Reich to conform or face the deadly consequences (i.e. fine, imprisonment, and/or relocation to the growing number of concentration camps). In addition, effective as of January 1, 1939, all Jewish women were required to add the middle name *Sarah* to all official documents.

In making this decision, the Nazis followed a program of action which had proved to be uncommonly successful in achieving their aims without unduly alerting the attention or resistance of the general populace. Rather than circumscribing the freedoms of the Aryan citizenry, they tended to curtail the rights of non-Aryan residents by introducing seemingly innocuous regulations. After all, they cajoled, what Jewess could object to carrying the name *Sarah*. Had a more offensive name been chosen, this regulation might have raised more public protest.

Like so many of the other edicts, however, once it became clear how this regulation could be used to single out Jewish residents for “special treatment,” it was far too late. According to Bock, almost immediately after the above proclamations were issued, Nazi officials began to cull through lists of residents’ names to identify potential candidates for the forced sterilization programs (1986: 357). Clearly, an individual’s name had long since ceased to be an issue of personal taste or family tradition, and had mutated into a question of life or death.

To help ensure one’s name was placed on the right list (or perhaps more importantly, not placed on the wrong list), it was of course essential to have the right name. Consequently, as the Nazis’ thirst for power and sadism grew more brazen, there was a mass exodus towards *Fluchnamen*, names which could be used as a form of social refuge. In the PBS documentary, “Daring to Resist,” Holocaust survivor Barbara Ledermann Rodbell recounts how she reached her personal breaking point in 1942 after witnessing another Gestapo-sponsored round-up. “This is when I decided that it was time for me to disappear. I changed my name, took off my star, I became a non-Jewish person.” (Attie & Lubell 2000). Such an action was not of course without considerable risk. Despite these dangers, as the Nazis’ plans for a “Judenfrei” “Jewish-free” Europe progressed, untold numbers of women decided that the risk of being caught with an illegal Aryan name was far more acceptable than the near certainty of being “liquidated” with a Jewish name.

At the same time, there were also many signs that the Third Reich was beginning to crumble. Scattered reports of Allied Forces victories began to spread and rumors

of dissent among the highest Party echelons began to leak. Even Goebbels' now infamous promise to unleash all — out war had failed to stem the tide. By the Winter of 1945, Soviet forces had liberated the concentration camp Madjanek and were beginning to break through the eastern border of Germany on their way to Berlin. For all but the most rabid Party members, it had become clear the Reich which had been prophesied to last a thousand years was finally falling apart after just twelve.

Once again, reflections of these radical societal shifts can be seen in the names that were chosen during the war years. For example, the two intervals which demonstrated the greatest cumulative number of rank order shifts were 1942–1943 and 1944–45, when many of the above events took place. In addition, the war years also exhibited the highest overall degree of lexical variation. Only 37.9% of the names in this interval made the top twenty list for the entire period. By comparison, between 1934 and 1938, almost twice that percentage (72.7%) made the top twenty list each and every year. Many of these trends are displayed below.

TABLE 4
THE TWENTY MOST POPULAR FEMALE NAMES DURING WWII

1	HLG	KAR	KAR	KAR	KAR	RNT	RNT
2	IGD	HLG	RNT	RNT	RNT	KAR	MON
3	KAR	IGD	IGD	IGD	MON	MON	KAR
4	RNT	RNT	ELK	ELK	URS	URS	URS
5	URS	ELK	URS	MON	IGD	IGD	BRG
6	ELK	URS	HLG	URS	ELK	GIS	IGD
7	ERI	ERI	MON	HLG	GIS	ELK	BAR
8	GIS	CRT	GIS	GIS	HLG	HLG	ELK
9	CRT	GIS	CRT	CRT	BAR	HKE	HLG
10	ING	MON	ERI	ERI	CRT	BAR	GIS
11	HNL	HNL	BRG	BAR	HNL	BRG	CRT
12	WLT	RSM	HNL	HNL	HKE	CRT	HNL
13	ILS	ING	BAR	HKE	BRG	JUT	JUT
14	BRG	BRG	ING	BRG	BAR	HNL	BAR
15	RSM	IGB	ANK	HDI	HDM	BAR	HKE
16	IGB	WLT	HKE	ANK	JUT	HDL	MRN
17	GRD	BAR	RSM	BAR	ERI	ERI	MRL
18	MRA	JUT	JUT	JUT	HDI	HDI	ERI
19	RIT	HKE	HDI	WLT	UTE	MRL	ANG
20	EDI	GRD	BAR	UTE	ANK	UTE	ANK
	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945

As shown above, two parallel movements took place as the War finally drew to a close. First, many of the girls' names which had enjoyed great popularity during

the rise of Nazism, experienced dramatic drops in frequency (e.g. *Helga*, *Ingeborg*, *Gerda*, and *Waltraud*). Secondly, a rise can be seen in the number of names which were not obviously German. Indeed, many of girls' names which made the top twenty list for the vanquished *Führerstaat* in 1945 could easily have been heard in any playground of Paris, London, or New York (e.g. *Brigitte*, *Monika*, and *Karen*). A cross-comparison of the 20 most popular names listed for 1945 in the United States and Germany, for example, produced three etymological matches: *Mary*, *Barbara*, and *Karen*.

An interesting historical anecdote powerfully illustrates these two, criss-crossing onomastic developments. According to some modern German historians, the infamous head of the Waffen SS, Heinrich Himmler, fathered two daughters. The first came from his marriage with Margarete Siegroth (nee Boden) and was predictably given an unambiguously "Aryan" name *Gudrun*. A composite of the Old Norse words for *gud* meaning "god" or "divine" and *rún* for "secret," this name must have seemed a logical choice for the daughter of the man who headed the Nazi's Secret Police, the Gestapo. Himmler's second daughter was reportedly born out-of-wedlock during a long-standing affair with former Party secretary, Hedwig Potthast. Born in 1944, just one year before the final collapse of the Third Reich, Himmler's youngest daughter was not given a classic "Germanic" name like her half-sister. Instead, this second child was given the very traditional French name, *Nanette*.

Period three: post WWII (1946–1950)

Onomastically speaking, the five years following the end of WWII exhibit several striking contrasts. On the one hand, this interval of time was marked by great stability. For example, of the 25 different names which German parents chose between 1946 and 1950, 60.0% made the top twenty list all five years. On the other hand, name-givers seemed to have had a great deal of ambivalence towards many of these names. This vacillation is demonstrated by some of the rather extreme shifts in popularity exhibited by many of the names selected during this period. The extremity of some of these shifts in preference is illustrated below.

Between 1946 and 1950, the name *Barbara* and its derivative *Bärbel* slid up and down the scale of popularity. A similar, though somewhat less dramatic pattern of oscillation is exhibited by *Brigitte*, *Karen*, and *Gisela*. What is immediately striking about all of the names making up this cluster is the fact that each could be easily mistaken as French or English (i.e. non-German). As before, this empirical pattern would seem to coincide with the Allied Forces program of De-nazification.

In the years immediately following the Fall of the Third Reich, the German public was forced to not only confront the humiliation of defeat, but also to accept the shock of having participated in and/or becoming a survivor of one of the greatest human rights catastrophes of modern history. This psychological trauma was then compounded by the daily physical obstacles accompany the crushing hunger, disease, landmines, and persistent pockets of depravity. For many living in this period, the one force which kept them going was the fervent hope that somehow they would be able to rebuild the lives they had been forced to leave behind. The precious hopes expressed above were again reflected in the top birthnames selected at this time: many

TABLE 5
THE TOP TWENTY MOST POPULAR GIRLS' NAMES DIRECTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II

1	RNT	MON	RNT	RNT	RNT
2	MON	RNT	MON	MON	ANG
3	URS	BRI	KRN	BRI	BRI
4	KRN	URS	BRI	KRN	KRN
5	BRI	KRN	URS	URS	MON
6	GIS	IGD	GIS	ING	URS
7	IGD	GIS	IGD	ANG	ING
8	HNL	CRT	HLG	GIS	GIS
9	HLG	HLG	HNL	BÄR	MRO
10	ELK	JUT	CRT	MRO	JUT
11	BÄR	BÄR	JUT	HNL	BÄR
12	CRT	BÄR	MRO	HLG	GAB
13	JUT	HNL	BÄR	JUT	HLG
14	BÄR	CRL	ANG	CRT	HNL
15	CRL	MRO	BÄR	MRI	BIR
16	MRO	ANG	CRL	BÄR	CRT
17	ANG	BIR	GAB	ELK	MRN
18	ERI	ELK	BIR	BIR	BÄR
19	BIR	GAB	MRI	GAB	MRI
20	HKE	MRL	ELK	MRN	ELK
	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950

of the names popular in this period were either taken directly from or obviously inspired by the Bible. This inspirational cluster can be divided into two etymological sub-groups. The first set (e.g. *Angelika*, *Christa*, and *Christel*) is Latin in origin and means “angelic” and “belonging to Christ” The second sub-set is remarkably made up girls’ names which find their roots in the Old Testament (e.g., *Maria*, the mother of Christ; *Marion*, a derivative of *Maria*; *Marianne*, a double name formed of *Maria* and *Anne*; and *Marlies*, the synthesis of *Maria* and *Lies*, the shortened form of *Elisabeth*).

The sudden re-appearance of Biblical names after the cessation of the Second World War has been also noted elsewhere (e.g. Kunze 2004). However, what has not been mentioned is the fact that so many of these names were Hebrew in origin. Moreover, the post-war popularity of Hebrew would not seem to have been a fluke given the 15 top names in 2006: 1.) *Anna*; 2.) *Leonie*; 3.) *Lea(h)*; 4.) *Lena*; 5.) *Hannah*; 6.) *Laura*; 7.) *Lara*; 8.) *Emily*; 9.) *Sarah*; 10.) *Lilly*; 11.) *Nelly*; 12.) *Emma*; 13.) *Mia*; 14.) *Julia*; 15.) *Sophie*. As frightening as the disappearance during the Nazi period was, their gradual reappearance of these names is a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

Discussion and Conclusions

In 1952, the German-speaking Jewish poet and near Holocaust survivor, Paul Celan, published a collection of poetry called “Mohn und Gedächtnis,” [Poppy and Memory]. Appearing in this internationally acclaimed work is *Todesfugue* — a literary masterpiece in which Celan describes the tragic cycle of perversion which enveloped Europe by juxtaposing the fates of the golden-haired *Margarete* and the ashen-haired *Sulamith*. Just as the poet’s choice of names symbolizes, under the extraordinary circumstances of war, the name a woman carries may not only affect how but also whether she lives.

Note

¹ Due to continual compilation updates, slight statistical shifts in the main Bielefeld corpus may occur.

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