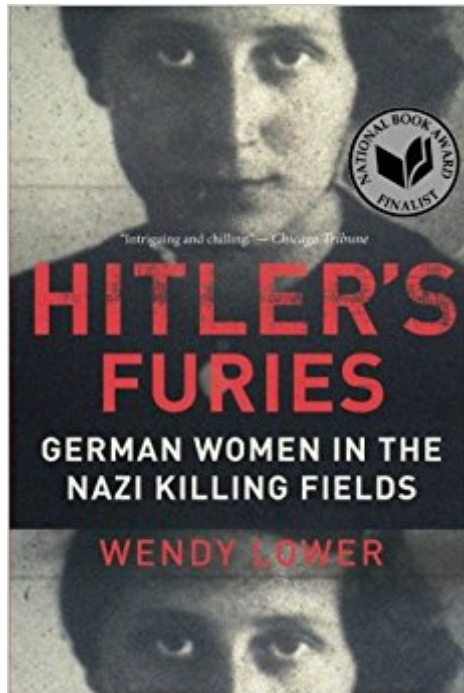




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# Hitler's Furies: German Women In The Nazi Killing Fields



## Synopsis

“Compelling . . . Lower brings to the forefront an unexplored aspect of the Holocaust.” —*Washington Post* In a surprising account that powerfully revises history, Wendy Lower uncovers the role of German women on the Nazi eastern front—not only as plunderers and direct witnesses, but as actual killers. Lower, drawing on twenty years of archival research and fieldwork, presents startling evidence that these women were more than “desk murderers” or comforters of murderous German men: they went on “shopping sprees” and romantic outings to the Jewish ghettos; they were present at killing-field picnics, not only providing refreshment but also shooting Jews. And Lower uncovers the stories of SS wives with children of their own whose brutality is as chilling as any in history. Hitler’s Furies challenges our deepest beliefs: women can be as brutal as men, and the evidence can be hidden for seventy years. “Disquieting . . . Earlier books about the Holocaust have offered up poster girls of brutality and atrocity . . . [Lower’s] insight is to track more mundane lives, and to argue for a vastly wider complicity.” —*New York Times* “An unsettling but significant contribution to our understanding of how nationalism, and specifically conceptions of loyalty, are normalized, reinforced, and regulated.” —*Los Angeles Review of Books*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lower, a consultant for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., sheds some much-needed light on an aspect of WWII history that has remained in the shadows for decades.

“The consensus in Holocaust and genocide studies,” the author writes, “is

that the systems that make mass murder possible would not function without the broad participation of society, and yet nearly all histories of the Holocaust leave out half of those who populated that society, as if women's history happens somewhere else. Based on two decades of research and interviews, the book looks at the role of women in Nazi Germany, in particular women who participated in the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Not merely subservient observers, some women the author dubs them Hitler's Furies, a reference to the mythological "goddesses of vengeance" actively took part in the murders of Jews and in looting and stealing from Jewish homes. Lower writes about horribly violent female concentration-camp guards; of young girls trained in the use of firearms; of brutality that would rival anything perpetrated by their male counterparts. Surprising and deeply unsettling, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Holocaust. --David Pitt --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

National Book Award Finalist National Jewish Book Award Finalist "Disquieting . . . Ms. Lower's book is partly the study of a youthquake . . . Earlier books about the Holocaust have offered up poster girls of brutality and atrocity . . . [Lower's] insight is to track more mundane lives, and to argue for a vastly wider complicity." New York Times "Intriguing and chilling . . . feminism run amok." Chicago Tribune "Compelling. . . By focusing on the role of ordinary women rather than the already notorious female concentration camp guards Lower brings to the forefront an unexplored aspect of the Holocaust. . . Lower's careful research proves that the capacity for indifferent cruelty is not reserved for men it exists in all of us." Washington Post "A virtuosic feat of scholarship." Kirkus Reviews "Well-researched . . . As gripping and eye-opening as it is chilling." People "Often harrowing and even disturbing... [Hitler's Furies] shines a stark light on the ordinary women who accompanied the 'ordinary men' of Christopher Browning's landmark study." New Statesman (UK) "Lower sheds some much-needed light on an aspect of WWII history that has remained in the shadows for decades . . . Surprising and deeply unsettling, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Holocaust." Booklist "Hitler's Furies will be experienced and remembered as a turning point in both women's studies and Holocaust studies." Timothy Snyder, author of Bloodlands "Hitler's Furies is the first book to follow the biographical trajectories of individual women whose youthful exuberance, loyalty to the Führer, ambition, and racism took them to the deadliest sites in German-occupied Europe. Drawing on immensely rich source material, Lower integrates women

perpetrators and accomplices into the social history of the Third Reich, and illuminates them indelibly as a part of post-war East and West German memory that has been, until this book, unmined. — Claudia Koonz, author of *Mothers in the Fatherland*

— “Hitler’s Furies is a long overdue and superb addition to the history of the Holocaust. The role of women perpetrators during the Final Solution has been too much glossed over. Lower’s book provides an important and stunning corrective. It is a significant addition to our understanding of the role of ordinary Germans in the Reich’s genocide. — Deborah Lipstadt, author of *Eichmann on Trial*

— “Lower shifts away from the narrow focus on the few thousand female concentration camp guards who have been at the center of previous studies of female culpability in Nazi crimes and identifies the cluster of professions — nurses, social workers, teachers, office workers — that in addition to family connections brought nearly one-half million women to the German East and into close proximity with pervasive Nazi atrocities. Through the lives of carefully-researched individuals, she captures a spectrum of career trajectories and behavior. This is a book that artfully combines the study of gender with the illumination of individual experience. — Christopher R. Browning, author of *Ordinary Men*

An interesting read, but it could be overly academic at times and very dry. There was also a lot of repetition of points/theories. Otherwise, a very insightful and occasionally sad/scary read - knowing the kind of violence and debauched behaviour that some of these women got up to and not really for any reason other than "they could get away with it" - leaves you with a bitter taste in your mouth sometimes. It's well written, just a little high-brow at times (for me - I'm no academic, I just really enjoy historical nonfiction and biographies/autobiographies etc.)

Hitler's Furies Shocking eye opener. well written and a good speaker. wish more books like this was available on regular cds

Discusses the characters and personalities collectively of the women who served Hitler's cause. More individual details about those women who voluntarily took up Himmler's ideas on the sub-humanity of certain ethnic groups, and how German women participated in the holocaust in general. Some of those women and wives of SS officers were happy to join Hitler's cause to build a super Teutonic race. They greedily participated. It is mostly a collective outlook on the German women who measured up to the false requirements of the perfect Germanic race.

It is my feeling that we need to understand the pressures of living in an oppressive regime, confounding patriotism with duty, and rationalizing the incomprehensible. My own writing deals with similar, if less threatening, situations created by religious extremism and some of the malfunctions within medicine. I read this for a book club, where a thoughtful group felt that the message was powerful and the stories engaging.

I have read numerous Holocaust books from varying viewpoints and was really looking forward to this. Unfortunately this is less about individual women and more about generalizations. The author does use specific examples of women involved in Nazi crimes but the information on them is relatively limited. There is little background information on these women and the information on the crimes they committed were limited to one or two examples. The majority of this book is generalizations of how it was difficult to believe women were capable of the type of cruelty that was committed. I felt I was in a college lecture instead of reading a book. If you are looking for a book on the women who committed crimes and who they are, this is not the book for you. I was also disappointed that the actual book stops at 59% on the kindle version with the other 41% being bibliography and index. Overall, this book gave me a few names I can research to learn more about but it is not a book I would recommend.

The author places a different perspective on the killing fields of Eastern Europe during the Nazi invasion of Russia. Wendy Lower did a good job breaking down the type of Nazi women killers by profession: nurses, secretaries, and frontier house wives - all of which were young people sent to start a new world of Aryan Soldier Farmers & Masters - the twisted fantasy of the Nazi elite. You will learn about a small group of Women who evolved from career women into cruel sadistic killers. Finally there is a discussion of the post war trials and an attempt to get into the psyche of these women. This book reads well and tells another account of the holocaust that we all should witness so it never happens again.

Although the research that went into the book was outstanding, the book was not what I expected. I wanted to read a book on the atrocities committed by the women, and instead sat through pages of psychological analysis of why the women committed them ( and as we all know this comes down to personal views). And it repeated the same ideas over and over again. I also thought the book was too expensive and would have bypassed it had I known this beforehand. The pictures did not match

the descriptions either and caused confusion. In conclusion, if you like psychological analysis this book is for you, but if you want to read about actual crimes committed by women in the third reich give it a pass.

Use in my IB 20th Century World History class adds so much depth of understanding to the nature of war

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