

POLITICS OF HISTORY AND MEMORY: THE RUSSIAN RAPE OF GERMANY IN BERLIN, 1945

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The marching of the Russian Red Army into eastern Germany in the spring of 1945, at the close of World War II, was full of promise and hope, a promise of a new era of peace in Europe and an end to political isolation and economic deprivation at home. In 1994, almost half a century later, the return of the Soviet troops to the motherland signaled the surprising collapse of the Soviet Union and ultimately, the end of Soviet occupation and a reunified Germany. At the same time, however, the Russians also left behind them a legacy of resentment and anger. Much academic scholarship has focused on the years of Soviet occupation, 1945-49, as being the most brutal on the Germans in the Eastern Zone than their counterparts in the West. The plight of the German women raped by Soviet soldiers during this difficult period is of vital importance in discussing sexual violence in Europe, and in understanding the interesting interplay of history and public memory. The extent of German-inflicted destruction and atrocities in Europe and the corresponding hostility of Soviet troops need not and cannot be repeated within the scope of this paper. However, it is still necessary to examine the issue of these women within the context of World War II, of European lingering ideals of manhood and military service, as well as debates in recent scholarship that have focused on Germans being victims as well as victimizers.

Indeed, the issues underlying the rape incidents stir up the question of military responsibility, transforming into one of sexual slavery based on race, class, and ultimately, gender. While one cannot precisely determine the numbers of women raped and killed, estimates of rape victims from two of Berlin's

major hospitals ranged from 95,000 to 130,000; one physician estimated that out of 100,000 women raped in Berlin alone, 10,000 died as a result, with a large majority committing suicide.¹ With the sheer velocity of women raped by Soviet troops, it is incredible to discover its neglect by earlier seminal works, such as that by John Erickson, who wrote *Road to Berlin*, and even William L. Shirer of *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. At the same time, the opening of the Russian State Military Archives and the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, a whole array of primary source material and other information media are now open for scholars to understand this contest of brutality from first, the German soldiers and then the repatriating Soviet troops.

Natalya Gesse, a Soviet war correspondent, gave a first-hand estimation of Red Army's activities, and stated that "The Russian soldiers were raping every German female from eight to eighty. It was an army of rapists."² While my initial interest is on the Soviet-induced rapes, I will draw on the creative approaches of many scholars to highlight the issue of rape from a different perspective – that of Memory. Indeed, post-war Germany's relation to its past is undeniably filled with tension, and the issue of raped German women is one of a number of World War II legacies through which Germany asserts its victimization. In a larger context on the specific example of post-war Germany, there is an interesting dichotomy between the struggle to forget war aggressiveness and the need to remember it, as this very justifiable issue of mass rape dictates.

Many of the questions that I grapple with are universal ones. Yet the debate over the viability of Germany as a victim or a victimizer has its own peculiar inflections within the German context. The centrality of the rape issue in this contest over public memory has tied questions of war guilt to the problem of

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¹Antony Beevor, "Red Army Raped Every German Woman, Says Author," interview by Dave Eberhart, *NewsMax*, (May 2, 2002), Accessed March 26, 2006 from <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/5/2/80440.shtml>.

²Ibid.

sexual violence in Europe as well as issues of militarized concepts of manhood. With the emergence of a German version of historical revisionism, the rape issue has become a contest of beliefs about war responsibility and ultimately, the construction of public memory.

Several questions drive this study: first, why was rape used as method of revenge for German-induced atrocities? Second, is it truly possible to make silenced voices speak? How is the nation-state involved in this history? Who is to be held accountable for the difficult legacy of the war? How should war atrocities, on both sides, be represented, recognized and remembered? How and can we reconcile the difference between official and oppositional versions of history in the context of the contemporary politics of the rape controversy? In this paper, I propose to show that the issue of rape by Soviet soldiers has a dramatic place in this debate of national memory in Germany, and plays a role in how public memory of Germans as victims or victimizers is constructed. Furthermore, these rapes can also be seen as touching on women's traditional and symbolic roles of mother, moral guide and body politic.

Rape and Masculinity

It is an immense undertaking to research and summarize the vast amount of significant scholarship on the use of rape in military campaigns as a strategy, both intentional and unintentional, to victimize a populace. Historically, the rape of women in war is relatively invisible, or comes to light only as part of war-diplomacy, on questions of the victor's aggressiveness or the loser's innocence. Indeed, military histories are largely silent on the issue of rape, even where mass rape and forced prostitution has been systematic and militarily endorsed, as in the case of Korean comfort women, victims of Japanese aggression in World War II.

In her analysis on the use of rape during wartime, Ruth Seifert draws tentative conclusions about wartime rape as a symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male opponent. Drawing from the traditional European concepts of the male as

the head of the household, and the protector and provider of wife and family, Seifert contends that the rape of women additionally carried significant messages for their absent 'protectors,' that their masculinity was wounded and they were judged incompetent. In brief, the abuse of their women is seen as compromising their masculinity and as such, can be seen as a direct attack on them, and not the violation of women. Seifert emphasizes that this elevation of masculinity is an integral part of military service, at least in the European context, stating that:

The military profession provides subjective identities that are connected to ideas of masculinity in different ways depending on the country and that have connotations of power and dominance as well as eroticism and sexuality.³

Furthermore, symbolism plays a dynamic role, characterized by a mixture of violence with eroticism and sexuality, especially in language. Some examples include how the Germans' invasion of Belgium at the beginning of World War I was labeled the "rape of Belgium", while a weapon is also referred to as "a soldier's bride." As such, there is a distinct connection between sexual symbolism and militarized masculinity. Finally, perhaps one of the most disturbing elements of war is the total destruction of an opposing culture. With such an ideology in mind, it is no wonder that women are seen as tactical objectives, in their traditional roles as mothers and perpetuators of culture and family structure. There is a distinct focus on how the female body serves as a symbolic representation of the social body, of the community, and ultimately of the nation. As such, "the violence inflicted on women is aimed at the physical and personal integrity of a group,"⁴ and can be seen as the symbolic rape of the social body.

³Ruth Seifert, "War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis," *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln, NB and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 60.

⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

In the context of European, and more specifically, the Third Reich's emphasis on 'militarized masculinity', Annette Timm highlights the functionalization of male and female sexuality for the war effort. Indeed, sexual gratification, whether through the legal and widely-accepted family, or even illegal through the use of prostitutes, was equated with masculine power in Germany, and even in Italy. Increased vigor in combat and male vitality was seen a direct consequence of sexual gratification.⁵ And while Timm frames this discussion of masculine vitality within the context of achieving the racial state, it is also important to realize that such concepts of militarized masculinity transcended the Third Reich's pro-natalist policies to the Soviet Union itself.

As James Messerschmidt points out, there is an interesting interplay between nationalism, militarism and patriarchal masculinity in Stalinist Soviet society. With the emphasis on rapid industrialization and modernization, traditional notions of women as mothers and workers were integral in reinforcing patriarchal gender relations, resulting in the view that the Soviet Red Army was the hyper-masculine institution and that membership in this institution significantly increased nationalism. Indeed, Messerschmidt emphasized how the mass rape committed by Soviet soldiers were a function "to establish masculine domination over Other Women, Other Men and Other Nation...[symbolizing] the defeat of entire Nazi nation by the masculine Red Army soldier-hero."⁶ Accordingly, mass rape, though not a strategic policy of the Soviet Army, functioned as "an unofficial masculine maneuver to frighten and intimidate the Berlin civilian population into complying with the wishes and demands of its Soviet occupiers."⁷

⁵Annette F. Timm, "Sex With A Purpose: Prostitution, Venereal Disease and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, no. 1, (2002): 224.

⁶James W. Messerschmidt, "The Forgotten Victims of WWII: Masculinities and Rape in Berlin, 1945," Forthcoming in *Violence Against Women*, 12, no. 7 (July 2006); accessed March 2, 2006, from <http://www.usm.maine.edu/crm/faculty/jim/raphael/htm>

⁷Ibid.

Breaking the Silence: Schändung⁸ of German Women

A Woman in Berlin is the diary of a woman, who recounts the mass rape and wonton chaos in the Soviet occupation of Berlin in 1945. Recalling statistics cited earlier from Antony Beevor, 130,000 women, of all ages and ethnicities were raped and sexually victimized by Red Army soldiers. As Messerschmidt points out, this diary is replete with examples of "degradation, humiliation and domination as part and parcel of physically violent Soviet rape."⁹ A shocking account of mass rape during the fall of Berlin in 1945, the diary is the work of as yet unnamed thirty-four year journalist, first published in Germany in 1954, and translated into English the following year, was quickly condemned by German readers, for "besmirching the honor of German women"¹⁰ and went out of press. Indeed, perhaps the most pressing issue in this diary is not just the violent domination and devaluation of German women, but also the choices that women had to make in order to survive.

Describing herself as "a pale-faced blonde always dressed in the same winter coat," the authoress describes the brutal nature of the Soviet rapes, especially aimed at devaluing and humiliating German women. She describes the plight of a nineteen-year old Gerti, who:

[Was] hauled out of the basement into a stranger's apartment on the first floor, [thrown] on a sofa and [three Russians] had their way with her – first one after the other, then in no particular order.... They rummaged through the kitchen, but all the found was some marmalade and ersatz coffee...spooned it onto Gerti's hair... sprinkled it generously with ersatz coffee.¹¹

⁸The use of the noun "Schändung" is used to mean rape, but can also mean defilement or desecration.

⁹Messerschmidt, "The Forgotten Victims of WWII: Masculinities and Rape in Berlin, 1945."

¹⁰Anonymous, *A Woman In Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), xv.

¹¹Ibid., 225.

A disturbing component of the Soviet mass rapes was the rape of Jewish women, of women who had suffered both from the Nazi regime as well as the Soviet occupation. Detailing how one Jewish couple, who had been in hiding for months, had finally emerged from a basement, seeing the Soviet troops as their liberators, the authoress described how with the husband fatally wounded by a gun-shot, his wife was “[taken] into the hallway, three men on top of her, as she kept howling and screaming, “But I’m Jewish, I’m Jewish.”¹²

A bone of contention for German readers is how the authoress details various individual strategies that German women use to survive the initial harrowing days of rape and pillage. One of these was the informal agreements with Soviet soldiers and officers, also known as ‘Ivans’ for protection from other soldiers. The authoress herself is the victim of a brutal assault:

One of them grabs hold of me and shoves me into the front room...suddenly his finger is on my mouth, reeking of horse and tobacco.... A stranger’s hand expertly pulling apart my jaws.... Then with great deliberation, he drops a gob of gathered spit into my mouth.... I’m numb. Not with disgust, only cold. My spine is frozen: icy, dizzy shudders around the back of my head.... I stand up—dizzy, nauseated. My ragged clothes tumble to my feet. I stumble through the hall...into the bathroom. I throw up. My face green in the mirror, my vomit in the basin.¹³

As a result of such a humiliating experience, the authoress declares her intention to seek protection from groups of rapists, clamoring to find “a single wolf to keep away the pack. An officer, as high-ranking as possible, a commandant, a general, whatever I can manage.”¹⁴ She finds this “single wolf” in the person of Anatol, who at 200 pounds, will matter more because

¹²Ibid., 197.

¹³Ibid., 63-64.

¹⁴Ibid., 64.

of his size than his rank. For the authoress, this becomes her survival, her crossing of the Russian-German divide, her realization that she can “tell who’s truly evil from who is bearable, can picture them as separate human beings, distinguish them as individuals.”¹⁵ Through her diary, the authoress also details how “Ivan” (that is, the male Russian soldier) has his rare, touching and human moments, especially when she describes how Russian soldiers spared two German women from rape on account of their little children. She also describes how since Russian troops are farm boys, “used to living close to the earth in homes with only a single floor,”¹⁶ many German women living at on the upper floors of apartment buildings were spared rape.

With no limits on which women were to be raped, the Soviet mass rapes indeed transcended various lines of class and ethnicity, a direct challenge to the masculinity of German men. Indeed, the sexual violence against the German women can be seen as both as emasculation of the German male, as well as a direct attack of the German corporate body. Another crucial element in the diary is the reception of German men to the rapes of their wives, fiancées, mothers and sisters. A German distiller, for example, is stubbornly silent when confronted with the violent rapes of his wife and female employee, “[shrugging] his shoulders, doesn’t want to say any more and walks out of the kitchen.”¹⁷ The authoress’ own fiancé, Gerd, refuses to talk about the *Schändung* and returns her diaries to her. Indeed, by the spring of 1945, the widespread impression was that the women had succumbed too easily to the temptations of the Soviet soldiers. Indeed, as Ernste Stecker states, “A Negro said: ‘The German soldiers fought for six years, the German woman for only five minutes!’ That’s a fact from beginning to end. I was ashamed.”¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid., 77-78.

¹⁶Ibid., 135.

¹⁷Ibid., 136.

¹⁸Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA and London: University of

The mass rape of these women was indeed a smear on Communist rhetoric. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who was also an officer in East Prussia, provides a fitting testimonial to what he witnessed in that region:

Zweiundzwanzig, Horlingstrasse

It's not been burned, just looted, rifled.

A moaning, by the walls half muffle:

The mother's wounded, still alive.

The little daughter's on the mattress,

Dead. How many have been on it

A platoon, a company perhaps?

A girl's been turned into a woman.

A woman turned into a corpse...

No point in driving on – eh, fellows?

Unless we leave them some mementos?

Well, now we're getting our revenge, lads.

We've hit him good and hard, the foe!¹⁹

Reconstructing the National German Memory

Within this essay, it is imperative to provide an overview of this very point of debate in German scholarship, as debates on the German public memory are incredibly intertwined and reflective. While a complete history of the politics of memory in the Federal Republic and in a subsequently unified Germany is not possible in this paper, it is necessary to understand the construction of the public memory within the historical context of the founding traditions of the two Germanys. Jeffrey Herf asserts that the political memory of the Holocaust and crimes of the Nazi era emerged in both German states immediately after 1945, but retained an almost indigenous flavor in each, as a result of both postwar Soviet dictatorship and Western democratic traditions respectively. The politics of Holocaust memory played an important role in the shaping of national

California Press, 2003), 67.

¹⁹Norman N. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 73.

memories in both states. For example, while the East German government was not an anti-Semitic regime in any sense that the Nazi was, it still did not “display the kind of warmth or empathy that might be expected from any German government after the Holocaust.”²⁰ At the same time, within West Germany, major parliamentary debates focused on the extension of the statute of limitations on the persecution of crimes of the Nazi era, the trials of death camp personnel, the blunt confessions of major political leaders as well as the legacies of the Nuremberg trials. In the 1980s, however, in the *Historikerstreit*, conservatives aimed to reduce the presence of such discourse from the official West German narrative.²¹

The suppression of the Holocaust memory was a distinct episode in the history of postwar East German efforts to face a Nazi past. Herf emphasizes that as relations with West Germany began to deteriorate, making the two states' public memories incompatible, the Communists focused on the primary role of the Red Army in defeating Nazism, a “vindication of Communist dogma with victory.”²² The Holocaust, with its suffering and unmitigated disaster, just could not fit in the dominant Communist rhetoric. Herf even asserts that the Marxist-Leninist assaults on Western imperialism combined with anti-Western nationalist resentment, even though a disproportionate number of the Jews who had died during the Holocaust had been from Eastern Europe and Russia. Such a disparity is probably even more distinct with the election of East Germany's first democratic government in 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The link between democracy and discussion of the Holocaust and the Nazi past was immortalized in the April 1990 statement of the East German government, essentially admitting war guilt.

²⁰Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 384.

²¹*Ibid.*, 387.

²²*Ibid.*, 382.

We, the first freely elected parliamentarians of East Germany, admit our responsibility as Germans in East Germany for our history and our future and declare unanimously before the world: Immeasurable suffering was inflicted on the peoples of the world by Germans during the time of National Socialism and racial madness led to genocide, particularly of the Jews in all of European countries, of the people of the Soviet Union, the Polish People and the Gypsy People. Parliament admits joint responsibility on behalf of the people for the humiliation, expulsion and murder of Jewish women, men and children.²³

Even with unification in the 1990s, there is still much contentious debate on whether Germany itself was a victim of the Nazi party, or where they all Nazi victimizers and aggressors. From the mid-1980s, there has been an argument that the Holocaust alone cannot be the defining moment of twentieth-century German history. As such, much debate has risen on how histories of National Socialism were remarkably inadequate in describing the suffering of the *Germans* themselves, first as soldiers, then as refugees, and finally, as rape victims.

Robert Moeller, a leading historian on the Nazi past, asserts that there a number of perspectives to choose from when dealing with how German public memory about World War II came about. Providing an overview of the historical debates on German scholarship, Moeller also highlights the opposing view that any revisionist attempt would be akin to:

apologia and the false equation of German suffering with the crimes committed by Germans. They feared a tendency toward *Aufrechnung*—a reckoning up or settling of accounts—and charged that creating such moral balance sheets allowed Germans to avoid guilt and responsibility.²⁴

²³Ibid., 365.

²⁴Robert G. Moeller, "Germans As Victims? Thoughts on a Post Cold War

Moeller emphasizes that the construction of public memories on Nazism after 1945 tended to divide the world stage, from aggressors to victims. Thus, it is not surprising that considering the stigma attached to perpetrators, most Germans would probably want to identify themselves as victims as well of a Nationalist Socialist regime. At the same time, Moeller takes to task several episodes of German history that have been given from a one-sided perspective, though at the same time, are fully justified in themselves. The story of the Sixth Army, for example, is told as a tale of German victims, of an entire army encircled by Soviet forces outside of Stalingrad, and forced to suffer during the bitter Russian winter. As a tale of aggressors, the Sixth Army had had a hand in the mass execution of Jews at Babi Yar.²⁵

In the end, Moeller states that the academic debate in German scholarship is primarily a *re-visiting* of a history that has been discussed endlessly since 1945. Illustrating how the opening of the Cold War opens up space for discussions on both German barbarism *and* suffering, Moeller advocates finding alternatives to patterns that have long dominated the German national memory. Indeed, for Moeller, studying this history is tantamount to understanding how "memory can block historical understanding and impede an open discussion of the past"²⁶ and ultimately, the question of whether the Germans were victims or not can only be addressed by highlighting how "some Germans were victims, some Germans were perpetrators, and some Germans were both."²⁷

Rape as a Part of the Debate

The 130,000 rapes that occurred in Berlin in 1945 with the arrival of the Red Army are themselves an integral component of the debates on whether Germany itself was a victim or a victimizer. Theodor Schieder and Hans Rothfel's 1953

History of World War II's Legacies," *History & Memory*, 17, nos. 1 and 2, (Spring, Summer 2005): 150.

²⁵Ibid., 157.

²⁶Ibid., 182.

²⁷Ibid.

Documentation of the Expulsion of Germans from East-Central Europe was replete with personal testimonies from various women who had suffered at the hands of Soviet troops. Anna Schwartz was one of these women, for whom “the Soviet occupation of eastern Europe commenced, literally and symbolically, with the forceful occupation of German women’s bodies.”²⁸ Furthermore, visual imagery and sexual undertones are replete here as well, as German women bore scars of rape by Red Army soldiers as their war wounds. Indeed, the general consensus from the women interviewed focused on how once the Russians arrived, “no woman or girl was safe from the liberators.”²⁹

The massive evidence of Red Army rapes, forever immortalized in Schieder and Rothfel’s project, made no attempt to disguise Germans as victims. Indeed, here, German women were the victims, with no excuses or apologia. Rape of these German women became the ‘Rape of Eastern Germany’ by the Soviet Army, a powerful and intriguing glimpse into their psyche. As Moeller states, these evidences of mass rape created such a powerful rhetoric of victim ideology that “women’s violated bodies took on an enormous emotional value, and women’s suffering came to symbolize the victimization of all Germans.”³⁰

Popular culture too plays a distinctive role in the formulation of national memory of this symbolic rape. Helke Sander’s film, *BeFreier und Befreite* (Germany 1992; the title was translated into English as *Liberators take Liberties*) is the most in-depth investigation on this topic of rape by Soviet troops, and is probably also one of the most controversial. In this documentary, Sander examines the mass rapes of German women by Soviet soldiers as well the atrocities committed by German troops. Opening with documentary footage of Soviet soldiers on the streets of Berlin in May 1945, the film investigates

²⁸Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for A Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2003), 65.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 67.

the situation in Germany following the end of World War II, with an especial emphasis on the city of Berlin. Asserting that there never was much public discussion about the mass rape in either German state, Sander interviews fourteen German women throughout the course of the film, as well as Soviet soldiers and doctors who treated the raped women. While the second part of the film focuses on the consequences of the rapes, such as the birth of interracial children, the abortions and the abandonment of children, Sander makes it clear that her intent is to focus on the historical amnesia of the mass rape of German women.

Much of the criticism leveled at the film, and perhaps essentialist versions of history, is based on the accusation that Soviet soldiers and their actions are investigated without giving the necessary historical context in which the rapes actually occurred. Much debate focuses on what has been left out versus what has been included in the film, and indeed, the missing piece is the Holocaust and other German atrocities during World War II. Yet another important criticism is how German women are depicted as innocent victims, a direct contradiction to the vast body of evidence that documents their complicity with the Third Reich. Atina Grossmann provides a compelling overview with a more than adequate historical contextualization of the rapes, detailing at the same time, the “re-masculinization” of the West German state in the 1950s.³¹ Asserting that the topic of rape was repressed in order to build up the confidence of German male veterans, Grossmann emphasized that the fact that so many women had been raped was perceived of as an injury to male pride, and not a direct violation of women’s bodies, in order to rebuild traditional male roles and the male institution of an army. At the same time, Grossmann elsewhere emphasizes that women can both be victims and perpetrators, albeit in particularly gendered ways. While highlighting how they are

³¹Atina Grossman, “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers,” *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 34.

agents in history and in their own lives, although at times, “not under conditions of their own choosing,”³² Grossmann also emphasizes that women have a particular susceptibility to sexual violence and play both a material and symbolic role in the nation as reproducers, of people and of the body politic.

Richard W. McCormick raises a very difficult question in his own criticism of Sander’s film. He questions the importance of the degree of complacency that a woman had regarding the rapes. He takes to task the societal belief that was reinforced by the German male reception of *Schändung* immediately after the war, that the rapes were justified. Instead, McCormick highlights that many of the rape victims were young children, and that national and ethnic identity did not seem to matter much, as both Jewish and German Aryan women were raped. At the same time, McCormick acknowledges the specific wartime hardships and atrocities suffered by both German men and women, but emphasizes that this should be remembered in the context of aggressive victimization and extermination of targeted groups. However, McCormick also emphasizes that it is incredibly shortsighted to restrict our thinking to just nation-states and national identities in terms of complicity with the Third Reich.³³

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Red Army has been represented by stories of brutal rape and indiscriminate violence, which by all means, are completely justified. At the same time, it is also important to take into consideration the overall context, just as Grossmann and McCormick have emphasized. Perhaps even more salient is the use of victimization narratives by occupied nations to bolster nationalism, and to construct memories that they were the “wronged victims of war”³⁴ and to stigmatize the group that did

³² Atina Grossman, “Foreword,” *Conquering Women: Women and War in the German Cultural Imagination*, eds. Hilary Collier Sy-Quia and Susanne Baackmann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), x.

³³ Richard W. McCormick, “Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimiziers: Helke Sander’s *BeFreier und Befreite*,” in *Camera Obscura*, 16, no. 1 (2001): 130.

³⁴James Mark, “Remembering Rape: Divided Social Memory and the Red

the raping. An interesting sub-category in this is how the suppression, and at times, the denial of rape, in the national memory can be seen as a preservation of the occupying country, especially in terms of their vested interest in suppressing the memory of rape.

As seen by the vast amount of contentious debate on the nature of these rapes and how they play into the national memory of Germany’s Nazi past, these rapes constitute a distinct section of the national memory and have been constructed to fit the changing political, economic and social circumstances. This wide spectrum of the memory landscape is a distinctive feature on any study that incorporates a study of how memory plays a role in determining people’s remembrances of particular events. Furthermore, and perhaps even more illuminating, is how the construction of the national memory in Germany can never be adequately encapsulated into one official and all-encompassing national history. It is just not humanly possible to incorporate the stories of rape and atrocities, as well as their own different facets, and conclude with an unbiased, objective collection of history.

Yet another important facet discussed by these many scholars is the place that the woman holds in symbolizing the body politic. Indeed, as Grossmann highlights, it is the male pride and not the actual dominance of women’s bodies that is seen as injured. Furthermore, in a metaphorical sense, the literal intrusion of the women’s bodies is seen as the physical dominance of the occupying force over the occupied nation.

Conclusions

Once again, I feel oppressed by our German disaster. I came out of the cinema [after a night of revelry] deeply saddened but helped myself by summoning things that dull my emotions.... “A tale told by an idiot, full of

Army in Hungary, 1944 – 1945,” in *Past and Present*, no. 188 (August 2005): 159.

sound and fury, signifying nothing." Losing two world wars hits damned deep.³⁵

In retrospect, it is integral to realize that no single position dominates the politics of memory in contemporary Germany. Indeed, the end of the Cold War has made it possible for historians to access and write on the archived materials of the Soviet Union, without fearing the context of Russian-German hostility in the present time. Even before May 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the war, completely unleashed an entire program of commemorative events, and even today, it is still apparent that the pasts of both German victims and the victims of Germans are still in contest for space and recognition within the public consciousness. Nevertheless, finding a position from which to offer a balanced assessment of any war's end is probably the most difficult to accomplish. Instead, I believe that it is far more imperative to move beyond a language where "victim" and "perpetrator" are mutually exclusive, and instead, explore the realities of both suffering and causing suffering. Furthermore, as the recent wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda have shown, sexual violence against women in the name of a country is not a thing of the past. In fact, it is probably even more important to write analyses of women's roles in wars, and the sexual violence to which they are susceptible, before the lessons of history are forgotten.

³⁵*A Woman in Berlin*, 255.