CONTRASTING SILENCES: THE PUBLIC MEMORY
OF GERMAN WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF THE SECOND
WORLD WAR IN A DIVIDED GERMANY, 1945-PRESENT

by

Emily McPherson

Bachelor of Arts Honours History, University of New Brunswick, 2017

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of History

Supervisor: Lisa Todd, PhD, History

Examining Board: Sean Kennedy, PhD, History, Chair
Julia Torrie, PhD, History, St. Thomas University
Suzanne Hindmarch, PhD, Political Science

This thesis is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

April, 2019

© Emily McPherson, 2019
Abstract

More than 800,000 German women were victims of the sexual violence perpetrated by Allied troops at war’s end, however, rape victims have not been the dominant image in public memories of the German wartime experience. Instead, memorials, ceremonies, speeches, and books lauded women as post-war Trümmerfrauen, “rubble women” who worked to reconstruct war-torn cities after 1945. This thesis sits at the intersection of changing perceptions of German victimhood and theories of memorialization, and examines, through a gendered lens, wartime diaries such as A Woman in Berlin, novels, newspaper articles, documentary films, and stone memorials, including the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin’s Treptower Park, and statues erected in honour of Trümmerfrauen. Both the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany instilled female wartime experiences into the public memory landscape of their nations; however, they did so in limited and intentional ways, in an effort to construct histories that aligned with their political goals. German memory politics shifted throughout the Cold War, and changed again after reunification, to reflect new nation-building projects.
Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of many different people. First, I want to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the financial support that made my studies feasible. Thank you to the University of New Brunswick for making this prairie girl feel at home for the past six years; all of my gratitude to all the strangers who became my friends in the Carol-Hines Common Room, you were reason I made it up that hill some days. Thank you to the faculty and staff in UNB’s history department for your infinite patience, wisdom, and confidence in me. My professors, thank you for teaching me, for laughing with me, and encouraging me to keep asking questions about the world. Lisa Todd, I am forever grateful for your constant willingness to answer questions and solve problems, for helping me find perspective, reminding me that I belonged here, and that maybe I needed to take a night off. I have learned so much, and had so much fun working with you. Ella, your friendship, support, and belief in me have pulled me through stretches of imposter syndrome. Thank you for always reading my work, I will always trust you with my ‘roughest’ of drafts. To the League of Extraordinary Historians, my classmates, thank you for being my friends, for laughing and learning with me. The other “Emily”, I could not have done this without you. Thank you for understanding me, for simultaneously be angered and amazed at this crazy world with me, we are going to change things one day. My family, thank you for always being there to catch me when I fall and for being proud of me. Mom, I could not have gotten through this time in my life without you. Thank you for always answering the phone when I call in a panic, for talking me out of a spiral, and for reminding me to celebrate my accomplishments.


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 – CHAPTER ONE: AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW: GERMAN VICTIMHOOD, THEORIES OF MEMORIALIZATION, AND WOMEN AS HEROES AND VICTIMS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GERMAN VICTIMHOOD</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIALIZATION AND SITES OF MEMORY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN AS VICTIMS AND HEROES IN POST-WAR GERMANY</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRÜMMERFAUEN</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - CHAPTER TWO: “EXAGGERATED ANTI-COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA” OR THE “INEVITABLE BY-PRODUCT OF A VICIOUS WAR”? PUBLIC MEMORY REPRESENTATIONS OF GERMAN WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF Mass RAPE</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SOVIET WAR MEMORIAL AT TREPTOWER PARK</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BIG RAPE</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A WOMAN IN BERLIN</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEFREIER UND BEFREITE</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 – CHAPTER THREE: “MEMORIES CHISELED IN STONE” PUBLIC MEMORY DISCOURSE SURROUNDING GERMANY’S TRÜMMERFAUEN</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERYDAY REALITIES (1944-1948)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPICTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF WOMEN</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE AS FIRST EX. OF PUBLIC MEMORY 1945-1948</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIALS BUILT IN THE FORMER EAST GERMANY</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIALS BUILT IN THE FORMER WEST GERMANY</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 CONCLUSION</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY SOURCES</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIALS BUILT IN THE FORMER EAST GERMANY</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CURRICULUM VITAE
List of Figures

Figure 1 – Gronefeld, Gerhard. Kokssammlerin in Der Gaanstalt Mariendorf. May 1945. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 2 – Jacobson-Sonnenfeld, Bau Auf Trümmerbahn. 1945/46, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 3 – Gerhard Gronefeld, Trümmerfrau in Der Berliner Hockernstraße, December 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 4 – Gerhard Gronefeld, Trümmerfrauen, 1945/48, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 5 – Jewgeni Chaldej, Enttrümmerung in Der Holzmarktstraße. May 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 6 – Pressbild-Verlag Schirner. Trümmerfrauen. May 22, 1945. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 7 – Taking a Break During Clearing Operations in Berlin, 1945-1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.

Figure 8 – Rubble Woman near the Trinity Church, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.

Figure 9 – Putting Every Brick to Use: 'Rubble Woman' Removing Mortar Remnants, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.

Figure 10 – Puck Pressdienst. Trümmerfrau in Berlin. 1946. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 11 – Trümmerfrauen. 1945/1949. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 12 – Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.

Figure 13 – Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.

Figure 14 – Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.

Figure 15 – Ossietskysstraße Memorial, Ossietskysstraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 16 – Ossiet斯基straße Memorial, Ossiet斯基straße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 17 – Ossiet斯基straße Memorial, Ossiet斯基straße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 18 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 19 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 20 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 21 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 22 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 23 – Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 24 – Denkmal Aufbauhelferin Von Fritz Cremer in Berlin-Mitte. In Wikimedia Commons. April 17, 2006.

Figure 25 – Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.

Figure 26 – Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.

Figure 27 – Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.

Figure 28 – Weiβensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weiβensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 29 – Weiβensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weiβensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 30 – Weiβensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weiβensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 31 – Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 32 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 33 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 34 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 35 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 36 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 37 – Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 38 – Volkspark Humoldthian Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018.

Figure 39 – Volkspark Humoldthian Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018.

Figure 40 – Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 41 – Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 42 – Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 43 – Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018.

Figure 44 – Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018.

Figure 45 – Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018.
Figure 46 – Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 47 – Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 48 – Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 49 – Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 50 – Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 51 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 52 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 53 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 54 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 55 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 56 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 57 – Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 58 – Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Graggenauer Viertal, Munich, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 8, 2018.

Figure 59 – Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Graggenauer Viertal, Munich, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 8, 2018.

Figure 60 – “Chipping Hammer used in the removal of rubble”, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.
Figure 61 – “Clearing the Rubble”, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.

Figure 62 – Max Lachnit’s “Trümmerfrau (Rubble Woman)”, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.

Figure 63 – Max Lachnit’s “Trümmerfrau (Rubble Woman)” Explanatory Plaque, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.

Figure 64 – “Refugees, Resettlers and Expellees” Explanatory Plaque, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.
1.0 Introduction

As the recipient of the 2005 Franz-Josef Strauss Award, former Chancellor Helmut Kohl gave his acceptance speech at a ceremony in Munich. Reflecting on his first visit to that city, sixty years before, Kohl stated, “that was the end of March 1945. I was just 15 years old at that time...I did not know Munich yet and my first encounter with the city was a shock because it was just a pile of rubble.” Kohl reinforced the narrative of a desolate Germany emerging from the destruction of the Second World War, recalling that the German people were in a miserable situation, but that a “great generation” was responsible for the rebuilding of the nation, and more obviously, he made no reference to Nazi crimes in the Second World War. He then referenced a memorial in Berlin:

[...] it is a monument that the Berliners dedicated to the so-called rubble women in the 1950s. This term has to be explained to young people today. What should a twenty-year-old be able to do with it? The monument in Berlin is reminiscent of a large number of women who volunteered for the removal of rubble. They did not know when their husband would come back from the war, whether he was missing, fallen or being a prisoner of war. They did not know how to feed their children. They were close to despair, especially when you consider how many of them were raped between March and October 1945. But you did not give up. And so these "rubble women" have become a symbol of the willingness to build up and the survival of the Germans in the postwar period.  

---


3 Rede Des Preisträgers Dr. Helmut Kohl.
That Kohl was still discussing the events of 1945 in 2005 was not unusual for a German politician, nor was the fact that his speech contributed to the postwar narrative that tended to view Germans as victims and not perpetrators, of the Second World War. Indeed, his comments generally illustrated how the events of the war were an ever-present aspect of German political discourse, and that 1945 was not the Stunde Null (or zero hour) many Germans imagined.\(^4\) Kohl’s 2005 statement was unique in the way it addressed German women’s experiences after the war. By referring to women has both ‘heroic’ clearers of rubble, and as victims of mass sexual violence, Kohl’s statements challenged the ‘contrasting silences’ that have often defined the public memory of the Second World War after 1945.

Kohl’s speech also demonstrates a larger trend within the German public memory of women’s experiences in the Second World War, that of highlighting the so-called ‘heroism’ of the Trümmerfrauen (‘rubble women’), especially compared to the suffering of victims of sexual violence. As this thesis will illustrate, rape victims were not the dominant image in public memories of the female wartime experiences, nor did their suffering enter into the memorialization process in the same way that of the Trümmerfrauen did. Public memorials, ceremonies, speeches and images lauded West and East German women as post-war Trümmerfrauen, women often credited with removing massive amounts of rubble from German cities, thus playing an important role

in the process of postwar reconstruction.\textsuperscript{5} Kohl’s statements highlight the immensely complicated narrative that surrounds the study of these women and their experiences.

This thesis investigates and compares, through a gendered lens, the presence of women in the German public memory of the Second World War, from 1945 to present. By comparing East and West Germany, the project considers the ways different ideological and political systems influenced how women were framed in public memory and utilized these memories to achieve desired social and political change. In the division of Germany, East and West Germany constructed themselves in opposition to one another; they defined their national history, identity, and future by vilifying and opposing qualities of the other. After 1945, there were two dominant images of German women in postwar memory – this thesis will illustrate the ways these representations changed in the decades from 1945 and the present. The two images of women that emerged in the aftermath of the war were that of the ‘ideal woman’ according to each set of political ideals, the ‘socialist worker’ in East Germany, and the ‘maternal housewife’ in West Germany. These two identities, and the set of qualities that they stood to represent illustrate the way that the Germanies used not only gendered ideals, but also the memory of the Second World War to construct the future that they desired. The ‘socialist worker’ was constructed as a woman who believed in the ideals of socialism, worked outside the home, and bore children.\textsuperscript{6} These qualities were emphasized because the nation needed both men and women to contribute to the workforce for both


economic and cultural reasons. She is represented as strong, youthful, and eager to work. In comparison, the ideal of ‘maternal housewife’ that emerged in West Germany was first and foremost a mother and wife, despite the disruption that the war inflicted upon the strict gendered division of labour, women were expected to return to the private sphere. That is, in West Germany the contributions of women to the workforce during wartime were acknowledged, yet this involvement was clearly defined as an exception to the constructed ‘rules’. This thesis will consider images of German women in postwar memorialization, and their subsequent evolution over the past seven decades to illustrate how women’s identities were rarely static, but were often constructed and utilized for political purposes.

German women experienced the end of the Second World War in many ways. With the official end of the war on May 9, 1945, the defeated German nation came to be controlled and occupied by the Allied forces. Germany entered an immensely complicated and dire post-war situation. Many historians see the German defeat and Soviet victory at the Battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942-43 as a turning point in

---

7 Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 141-143.
10 Throughout this thesis, the reference to ‘German women’ is done in acknowledgment of the racist policies that worked to exclude minority groups of women and men such as the Jewish, Roma, Sinti, and ‘asocial’ populations from the German national body. This is done intentionally, as these many different groups faced intense persecution before, during, and after the Second World War and thus were subjected to a vastly different set of experiences. Therefore, this project is using this phrasing in an attempt to bring clarity to the memory of a group whose identity was defined by their ‘acceptance’ in Nazi society and the postwar experience that resulted from, while acknowledging that this ‘acceptance’ occurred while many other groups were excluded and murdered.
the events of the Second World War – it was from this point that Soviet forces moved consistently into German-occupied territory.\textsuperscript{12} As the Soviet forces travelled west across Eastern Europe they came into contact with a largely female German civilian population: women and children relocated to the countryside in an effort to protect them from the threat of Allied bombings of Germany cities, and also women living in the ruins of German cities.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, soldiers came into contact with a predominantly female population on the Western front. Historians are still divided in their understandings of the numbers of women, the numbers of soldiers, and the consensual or non-consensual nature of these interactions, despite these disagreements, historians generally agree that mass sexual violence took place.\textsuperscript{14} This period was defined by a lack of housing, food, medicine, and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{15} Millions of displaced persons – they were concentration camp survivors, refugees, soldiers, foreign workers, and ethnic Germans further stretched the already limited resources available to the German nation. As historian Mary Fulbrook states, this was “a population in a state of physical and moral collapse”.\textsuperscript{16} Germany was divided into four occupation zones among the Allied powers: the United States, France, Britain, and the Soviet Union each had control over one of these sections.\textsuperscript{17} During this time period occupation soldiers committed acts of sexual violence on a massive scale against German civilians, refugees, and survivors of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 101.
\item Grossman, \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies}, 48-49.
\item Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 125.
\item Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 125.
\item Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 114.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
concentration camps.\textsuperscript{18} While men were, at times, the victims of these sexual assaults, the primary victims of these rapes were women and girls, for the purposes of this project the emphasis will be placed primarily on female victims.\textsuperscript{19}

Scholars estimate that at least 860,000 women and young girls were raped at the end of the Second World War, victims were pulled out of bomb shelters and violated, both gang rapes and the acts of singular men defined women’s experiences of rape.\textsuperscript{20} Accounts emerging from this period demonstrate that sexual violence was at times brutal and incredibly violent, with many women dying as a result of them.\textsuperscript{21} While in other instances the rapes were coerced, as a result of hunger or the realization that the power dynamics of the postwar world disadvantaged women.\textsuperscript{22} Simultaneously, under the control of occupation forces the German nation began to address the physical destruction and rebuild. Women, as one of the largest demographics left in German cities immediately after the war, were enlisted to work as manual labourers clearing rubble and contributing to the overall process of postwar reconstruction.\textsuperscript{23} This work was at times voluntary, or used a punishment for women who were involved with Nazi organizations, or incentivized with it as a necessity to be granted food rations.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{18} Grossman, Jews, Germans, and Allies, 62-63.
\textsuperscript{19} Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 9.
\textsuperscript{22} Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 10; Moeller, "Emerging From the Rubble," 24.
\textsuperscript{23} Fulbrook, The People's State, 146.
The physical division of the German nation into various occupation zones began to define the social and political landscape of what would become two separate German nations. At the end of the Second World War the Allied powers, comprised of the Soviet Union, the United States, France, and Britain, occupied and divided Germany into four sectors.\footnote{Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 130-131.} Four sectors that, in 1949, were solidified with the establishment of two separate German nations: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG/West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR/East Germany). This division of the American-influenced FRG and Soviet-influenced GDR was escalated in 1961 with the construction of the Berlin Wall, a physical barrier that furthered the division of the German people; the division of the German nation lasted until 1990.\footnote{Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 506-511; Fulbrook, \textit{The Divided Nation}, 343.} Despite the fact that the whole of Germany experienced the end of the Second World War similarly, the two Germanies – East and West – came to remember the events in vastly different ways.\footnote{Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 508-509.} In East Germany, the Red Army advance through the nation was largely constructed to be remembered as a ‘liberation’, whereas in West Germany the same events were reflected on as a time of revengeful violence and as evidence to the barbarism of the Soviet Union.\footnote{Grossman, \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies}, 63-64; Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 52-53; 175-176. Gebhardt references the influence of works published in the immediate aftermath of the war that chronicled the experiences of Germans under Soviet occupation. She specifically discusses the work of Erich Kuby whose eyewitness accounts were published in \textit{Der Spiegel} in the 1960s. She argues that Kuby’s work contributed to a public memory of Soviet occupation that emphasized the victimization of Germans and failed to adequately the mass rape of German women.}

Memories are political, and I will argue that public memories must be studied in the historical context in which they were established, silenced, ignored, or modified. This thesis project explores the idea of memory politics, and investigates the ways
memories were used for politics, and politics used memory. The methodological
approach of this project has been shaped by theories of memorialization; in particular,
James Young’s theories provide a foundational underpinning to my approach to the
primary sources, especially the idea that “a memorial may be a day, a conference, or a
space, but it need not be a monument. A monument, on the other hand, is always a kind
of memorial.” Likewise, Brian Ladd who argues that the true nature of post-war
German memory can be understood by investigating not only what people were saying
and writing in the 1950s but also what they were building (or destroying). Michael
Imort suggests a bottom-up approach to the study of German memorialization, arguing
that by ‘reading’ these monuments and memorials ‘through their location, form,
material, inscription, and many other aspects they instruct us what, how, and when to
remember’. Robert Moeller argues that postwar West Germans “selectively
remember[ed]” their recent past in search of “useable pasts” from which to build their
national identity.

Each of these theories and approaches have defined the choices of primary
sources for this project, and the subsequent analysis of sites of memory. For instance, I
examined thirteen statues dedicated to Trümmerfrauen, on site in Germany, but I have

29 James Edward Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, (New Haven: Yale
30 Brian Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape, (Chicago, Ill:
31 Michael Imort, “Stumbling Blocks: A Decentralized Memorial to Holocaust Victims,” In
Memorialization in Germany Since 1945, edited by Bill Niven and Chloe Paver. (Basingstoke,
32 Robert G. Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s," In
The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968, ed. by Hanna Schissler
Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimisation in East and West Germany." In Germans as
Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany, edited by Bill Niven. (Basingstoke,
not limited my investigation to those memorials built of stone, I also examined propaganda, photographs, books, and films. Following Ladd’s theoretical propositions regarding ‘ghost’ elements of public memory, I examine not only what is present, but also what is missing from public memory representations. Likewise, I ‘read’ the sites of memory for aspects of their creation, including their intention as either a celebration or a warning.

This thesis contributes to a historical discussion of the memory of women’s immediate post-war experiences, and the role played by those memories in the construction of national identities. Chapter One illustrates how the historiography of German wartime victimhood has shifted in the thirty years since German reunification, primarily by acknowledging the role of perpetrators in the Third Reich, an idea explored by historian Stefan Berger through the argument that “German victimhood can only be discussed with the parameters set by the perpetrators discourse”.33 This historiographical shift has allowed the idea that Germans can be studied as both victim and perpetrator to enter the historical record. The chapter also engages with theoretical understandings of sites of memory and memorialization and how they apply to the construction of national histories. The next two sections explore the way historians have applied understandings of public memory, German victimhood, and memorialization to two groups of women: the victims of mass rape by Allied soldiers and the Trümmerfrauen.34 In short, Chapter One illustrates some of the ways scholars have addressed post-war German public

33 Stefan Berger, “On Taboos, Trauma and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War is not a Historians’ Controversy.” In Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany. Edited by Bill Niven. (Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 222.

memory, especially regarding the silencing and celebrating of the experiences of women in wartime.

Chapter Two explores the public memory of victims of mass sexual violence through an analysis of propaganda, memorials, memoirs, and the public reactions to these pieces of social and cultural history. In particular, the chapter examines the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park, the novel *The Big Rape*, the wartime diary *A Woman in Berlin* including its film adaptation, and the documentary *BeFreier und Befreite* (‘Liberators/Johns Take Liberties’), to explore how women are presented, and ignored in public memory discourses. Chapter Three also demonstrates continuity and change in the public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* in East and West Germany through an investigation of thirteen memorials.

This thesis highlights who, where, why, and in what ways German society – East, West, and reunified – chose to remember women’s experiences at the end of the Second World War. The comparison of these two female identities, the victim of mass rape and the *Trümmerfrau* is vital to the overall aim of this project, as the relative acceptance or rejection of female experiences illustrate what aspects of women’s identities are deemed ‘acceptable’ in public discourses. In addition, through the comparison of the memorialization of these two identities the constructed nature of memory is highlighted, that perhaps women were subjected to both sets of experiences however, they were intentionally separated in public memory representations. This thesis demonstrates the many complexities of nation building and its relationship to women, and their experiences in the aftermath of war. It exemplifies the reality that the victim-perpetrator binary is often applied to women in a vastly different way that it is to
men, that national identities can be perpetuated through public memorials, and what these acts of memory tell us about these societies.
2.0 – Chapter One: An Historiographical Overview: German Victimhood, Theories of Memorialization, and Women as Heroes and Victims

In her 1996 article, “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity”, historian Elizabeth Heineman argues that “the history of memories of women’s experience during Germany’s ‘crisis years’ shows that, in considering social memory, we need more than an awareness of the distinctions between counter, popular, and official memories. We also need to understand their interconnections.”

She references the significance of the ‘crisis years’ — the years 1942-1948 when the German Army began to experience significant military setbacks, stretching until the postwar period directly before the establishment of the two German states, and highlights the importance of understanding how these memories emerged and why certain memories were solidified in national consciousness.

Heineman’s work illustrates some of the multifaceted dimensions of the gendered public memory of Germany’s Second World War, and reminds us that historians must examine a variety of influences that affect commemoration. This is crucial in order to understand how a society views their past, their present, and what they aspire to be in the future.

Although historians have examined aspects of both the public memories of victims of mass rape, and the Trümmerfrauen, no one has yet compared the two, over a long historical period. Studies have tended to investigate these identities separately, or, when in comparison, they focus on the immediate postwar period. This gap in the

---

36 Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman”, 355.
historical research is the result of the immensely complicated historiography surrounding the memorialization of German women in the Second World War. This resulted in a discourse that came, for many years, to see these historical actors through a set of rather rigid understandings. By bringing together these two areas of historiographical study, German women’s wartime experiences and public memory, this chapter illustrates that the gendered nature of historical events has not been adequately incorporated into studies of public memory and memorialization. This thesis fills this gap as it compares the two female identities over a period of vast social and political change, and demonstrates the gendered aspects of memory practices, that is the different set of standards applied to men and women. This comparative study of these two sets of German women’s wartime experiences has brought forward new understandings of how women are used as symbols of national politics demonstrated by the utilization of the Trümmerfrauen in both East and West Germany. In addition, this comparative study demonstrates that when experiences of sexual violence are discussed, if at all, they are done so in the pursuance of national goals, as was done in West Germany.

The historiography of these topics has been shaped by several factors. To begin, German women were part of the nation of perpetrators that carried out the Holocaust, which complicated their status as either heroes or victims. Second, women were, for a long time, not included as a part of the official study of military or political history. This idea began to shift with the rise and spread of Second Wave feminism, a paradigm shift that argues women’s history should be studied, as should the social and political factors that worked to reduce the importance of their experiences. Third, East and West Germany cultivated very different ways of remembering the Nazi period. This
difference in memory practices was influenced by the politics of Allied occupation and Cold War politics, as the two nations attempted to define themselves in contrast to each other. Fourth, memory politics and memorialization are generally new areas of historical academic study. Fifth, and similarly, the academic study of sexual violence is also a relatively new area of focus for historians. In all, several factors have influenced the historiography on the memorialization of German women’s experiences in the Second World War.

This chapter will use four subsections of the historical discourse to explore the historiographical discussion surrounding the public memory of German women’s experiences in the Second World War: German victimhood, memorialization and sites of memory, the public memory of victims of sexual violence, and the public memory of the Trümmerfrauen. The simultaneous study of these four subsections that are traditionally analyzed separately, will demonstrate the gap in the historical research this thesis seeks to fill, and demonstrate the further need to study the memorialization of German women’s lived experiences that have often been ignored or disregarded.

**German Victimhood**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Germans immediately began working to understand their experiences during wartime. These discourses often focused on German victimhood and emphasized the ways that Germans experienced events, such as Allied bombings, postwar relocation, and occupation. Although ideologically and physically divided in East and West Germany, Germans came to see their own suffering through a narrow and simplistic lens of victimization immediately after the Second
World War and into the 1950s. After the division of Germany and the onset of the Cold War, discussions of the German experience were constructed around the tension between the two Germanies; the memory that emerged in this time period focused on the way that both nations were separate from the actions of Nazi Germany. Generally, West Germans identified themselves as victims of the Second World War, they saw the destruction caused by Allied aggression as a key aspect of their suffering. This victimization was established in the 1950s on the basis of memories exemplified by victims of bombing raids, in particular the hardship and trauma that civilians experienced in cities such as Dresden and Hamburg. Similarly, East Germans saw themselves as victims of the Second World War, however, not in the same way that West Germans did; rather, they primarily saw themselves as victims of fascism. East Germans emphasized the ways the Nazi Party targeted both Communists and Socialists in the Third Reich. In both the East and West, these ideas remained relatively dominant in Germans’ memory of the Second World War throughout the 1960s.

In the 1970s, conceptions of German victimhood were rightfully challenged as historical evidence of Nazi crimes was discovered, explored, and understood. In addition to an increased discussion of genocidal crimes against the Jews, the rise of Second Wave feminism also disrupted the German memories of the Second World War. German feminists embarked upon a public conversation surrounding the treatment of women in war, the restriction of women to the domestic tradition of

38 Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 508-509.
39 Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims," 101.
40 Schwartz, “Narrating Wartime Rape,” 2.
motherhood and marriage, and problems of economic disparity.\textsuperscript{41} Although, women began to challenge their subjugation in society, these ideals were not fully applied, nor applied to the study of historical events, especially in Germany until the 1990s.\textsuperscript{42} Of course, individuals were discussing and writing about the historical realities for women in war before this, however, they were often cast outside the realm of scholarly debate.\textsuperscript{43} Despite these changes that occurred in the 1970s, I would argue that a well-rounded history of the Second World War and its memory in Germany could not be, and was not written, until after the end of the Cold War. Public and scholarly conversations surrounding German victimhood did shift in the 1990s, the resolution, or at the least the reduction of East - West tensions after 1989 influenced the ways wartime histories could be studied by German historians. Therefore, my historiographical investigation focuses on the historical discussions of this time period of the last 30 years, the primary research in this thesis examines the confluence of public and scholarly discourse on women’s wartime experiences from 1945 to the present.

The historiographical contributions of Robert Moeller, Bill Niven, and Stefan Berger after 1990 illustrate the changing nature of the memory of the Second World War amongst German historians. In the 2001 article “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims,” Robert Moeller investigates how the German people came to see, and represent themselves as wartime victims. By addressing Theodor Adorno’s statements made in 1959, in which he argued that West Germany had failed to deal with its past,}

\textsuperscript{42} Schwartz, “Narrating Wartime Rape,” 2.
\textsuperscript{43} Brownmiller, \textit{Against Our Will}; Gebhardt, 9-10.
Moeller disrupts the historiographical understanding that in the post-war period Germans ‘forgot’ their past.\textsuperscript{44} Rather than forgetting their past, Moeller argues, in the 1950s the West German people entered a period of “remembering selectively”.\textsuperscript{45} He goes on to explain the way in which West German public memory of the Second World War was focused on instances of resistance, such as the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler, and non-politically affiliated resistance groups, such as the White Rose.\textsuperscript{46} Moeller’s emphasis lies in the role that the memory of the German experience on the Eastern front in the final days of the war – that of women and children fleeing the advancing Red Army and German soldiers captured and killed – had on the formation of the West German national identity.\textsuperscript{47} As he argues, this focus on their own suffering allowed the German people to acknowledge the collapse of the Nazi regime without dealing with the crimes of it, or their role as perpetrators.\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, West German public memory of the Second World War in 1950 was defined by a choice in what to remember and not as a period of forgetting; as Moeller argues, “West Germans were by no means silent about the ‘horrifying totality’ of the past in the first decade after the end of the war, but their memories were selective”.\textsuperscript{49} Therefore, this trend was an attempt by the German people to mold a national identity that was not based on National Socialism.\textsuperscript{50}

This identity is exemplified by documents such as those produced by the West German government that chronicled the violence experienced by expellees and refugees

\textsuperscript{44} Moeller, “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims”, 83. Moeller references statements made by German social theorist Theodor Adorno who lived from 1903-1969.
\textsuperscript{45} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 83.
\textsuperscript{46} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 84.
\textsuperscript{47} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 84.
\textsuperscript{48} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 86.
\textsuperscript{49} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 86 & 99.
\textsuperscript{50} Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 99.
fleeing the advancing Red Army. This assertion that Germans ‘forgot their past’ was not born out from claims that the Holocaust never took place, rather it was the product of silences surrounding the culpability of average Germans for these crimes and an emphasis on the ways that Germans experienced victimhood. Overall, Moeller challenges the historical narrative which simplistically accuses the German people of ‘forgetting’ the crimes committed in the Second World War; rather, he complicates the historical understanding by introducing the idea of memory selection carried out by the West German population in the post-war period.

The questioning of the wartime German victimhood narrative was furthered by Bill Niven, in his role as editor of the 2006 book *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*. Niven emphasizes the immense changes that occurred between 1989 and 1992 with the reunification of Germany and a re-evaluation of the German role in Nazi crimes. Like Moeller, Niven stresses the place of the Cold War in defining German (both East and West) memory of the events of the Second World War, outlining what was both possible and convenient to remember. The formation of memory which focused on Germans as victims, Niven argues, “was clearly designed to reconcile Germans not just from their history, but also with each other…it was the memory politics of national conciliation”. He exemplifies a 2005 speech by German chancellor Gerhard Schröder who stated that between 1933-1945 the role of the German people was one of perpetrator, and that any victim experiences that they had was in

---

51 Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 86.
53 Niven, *Germans As Victims*, 4.
54 Niven, *Germans As Victims*, 6.
direct connection to this role. Schröder’s speech, given on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, addressed the rise of right-wing neo-Nazism in Germany and the need for all Germans to remember and reflect on the events of the Second World War. His remarks demonstrate that discussions of German victimhood remained a part of public discourse even after reunification, and disprove the assertion that all Germans ignored the crimes of Nazi Germany. Further, this illustrates the immense role that the memory of the events of the Second World War have had on German society in not only historical discussions, but also political and media-centered narratives. Niven mirrors the point of view earlier explored by Moeller, that narratives of German victimhood did not emerge in the 1990s with the reunification of Germany but were present in the immediate post-war German discourse of the 1950s.

Alongside the work of Niven is Robert Moeller’s 2006 article “The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimisation in East and West Germany” which contributes to the historical narrative of German victimhood and public memory of the Second World War. Here, Moeller restates some of his earlier claims, arguing that the 1950s was not a period of silence regarding the crimes of National Socialism, but one of selective memory. This selection of memory allowed post-war Germans, in both the East and West, to “define usable pasts” relating to their role in the Second World War. Moeller expands this idea to discuss the inherent difficulty in understanding the events of the Nazi Regime with strict groupings of analysis, such as, “victims and perpetrators [which] appear as mutually exclusive categories”. He outlines a fundamental change

55 Niven, Germans As Victims, 8.
that should occur in the historiographical study of the memory of the crimes of the Second World War: Moeller proposes the writing of histories “of National Socialism in which some Germans were victims, some Germans were perpetrators, and some Germans were both”. Thus, not only does Moeller contribute to existing narratives of German public memory and victimhood but he also advances the discourse on this subject by challenging the terms used to understand this complicated past.

Along with Moeller and Niven, Stefan Berger elaborates on the historical narrative revolving around perceptions of German victimhood in his 2006 article “Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War is not a Historians’ Controversy”. Berger outlines the way in which German conceptions of victimhood began to develop in the immediate post-war period, stemming from eyewitness accounts of bombings and fleeing refugees. The development of this narrative then transitioned to memoirs written by Wehrmacht generals, who expressed their view of soldiers as victims of Hitler. The war stories that were available in the immediate post-war period provide a vital understanding of how the German memory of the Second World War developed in the years followings its conclusion. Berger also clearly outlines the different memories that emerged in the West, the Federal Republic of Germany (the FRG) and the East, the German Democratic Republic (the GDR); he explains not only what memories emerged, but which memories were accepted and for what reasons. He goes on to state that these victim discourses are not formed for the service of right-wing political groups, but rather, are co-opted by

59 Moeller, "The Politics of the Past in the 1950s", 42.
60 Berger, “On Taboos, Trauma and Other Myths”, 212.
them. Berger emphasizes that historians, at the time of his writing, seem in general agreement that “German victimhood can only be discussed with the parameters set by the perpetrators discourse”; therefore, the memory of Germans as victims of the Second World War is not only a complicated discourse but one that must always take place within a larger understanding that the plight of bombing victims or refugees should never be equated to the crimes of the Holocaust.

The works of Robert Moeller, Bill Niven, and Stefan Berger illustrate the complex scholarship informing historical discussions of German perceptions of their own victimhood in the Second World War. The historical discourse on this subject, although it was initiated in the 1950s, faced a turning point in the 1990s with German reunification. This historical narrative illustrates that in the 1950s Germans tended to see themselves as victims, a point of view which in some cases remained stagnant and in others changed within the tense political sphere of the Cold War. As these scholars illustrate, understandings of German public memory progressed to see victimhood as a real memory for many Germans; however, these historians challenge this narrative as it exists within an understanding of the overall German role as perpetrators in the Second World War and a questioning of the victim-perpetrator binary. Historians have continued to study topics in the realm of German victimhood, however, it seems that the historiography has tended to narrow its focus, further identifying historical actors who have previously been overlooked or misunderstood in historiographical studies.

**Memorialization and Sites of Memory**

---

62 Berger, “On Taboos, Trauma and Other Myths”, 221.
63 Berger, “On Taboos, Trauma and Other Myths”, 222.
The historical study of memorials in post-1945 Germany illuminates how and why societies build memorials in the aftermath of war, and highlights how historians have come to understand the significance of these instances of the physical inscription of memory on a city’s or country’s landscape. In collaboration with the study of German public memory and victimhood, the study of memorialization provides a key set of ideas to aid in the research of women in the German post-war discourse. The history of memorialization in Germany has undergone an evolution of emphasis since its increased popularity following re-unification: there has been a shift from state-centered memorialization projects to ones that uncover the memory politics that exist behind grassroots projects of memory.

In his 1993 book *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, James Young outlines some of the foundational aspects of the discipline of the study of memorialization in Germany following the Second World War. Echoing the narrative within historiographical understandings of public memory, Young states that memorial sites “remember the past according to a variety of national myths, ideals, and political needs.” He expands on this idea by arguing that without those national myths memorials would simply be stones, they would have very little significance. Young goes on to define the difference between a memorial and a monument; he sees the term ‘memorial’ as a larger characterization and within that umbrella definition fits the term

---


65 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 1.

66 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 2.
‘monument’. Therefore, according to Young a “memorial may be a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not be a monument. A monument, on the other hand, is always a kind of memorial”.

He addresses not only the investigation of the social and political circumstances that a site of memory is intending to portray as well as the intended definition of a site of memory – whether it was intended to be a memorial or a monument as well as what definition it has come to embody. Young’s *The Texture of Memory* is an immensely important work; although it is focused on the memory of the Holocaust, and not more generally on the memory of the Second World War, it nevertheless lays down a foundational understanding of how to interpret sites of memorialization, taking into account their intended purpose and the social political atmosphere in which they were developed.

Building on Young’s work, Brian Ladd explores the connection between memories and the physical manifestation of these memories – buildings, ruins, and memorials in his 1998 book *Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German history in the Urban Landscape*. Although this book only explores memory in the city of Berlin, not the entire nation, Ladd thoroughly and innovatively explores the relationship between the physical reminders of the war in Germany and the nation’s memory. He argues that the history of the memory of an event can be accessed through buildings and memorials which “are also the visible remnants of the past: they often outlast the human beings who created them”.

Ladd goes on to argue that these physical instances of memory are especially important and that an investigation of “how these structures are seen, treated,

---

67 Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 4.
and remembered sheds light on a collective identity that is more felt than articulated”.\textsuperscript{69} His arguments of the highly politicized character of Berlin’s landscape are connected to more general points of view made by historians of public memory explored earlier. Therefore, as is illustrated by Ladd, the true nature of post-war German memory can be understood by investigating not only what people were saying and writing in the 1950s, but also what they were building (or destroying).

Ladd provides a general examination of the ways in which physical structures, or their absence, call Germans to remember the events of the Second World War; Bill Niven and Chloe Paver build from this and explore specific examples of this process in the 2006 book \textit{Memorialization in Germany since 1945}. In the introduction to the book, the two editors outline their understandings of the intersections of public memory and memorialization in Germany since the Second World War. They engage with discussions present in the overall dialogue of public memory in Germany by exploring conceptions of \textit{Stunde Null} or ‘Zero Hour’, an idea that in 1945 German society, politics, and culture were rebuilt from nothing.\textsuperscript{70} Niven and Paver argue that 1945 was not a \textit{Stunde Null} in Germany, but that it represents a turning point in the history of memorialization in Germany, therefore they see the possibility of new historical discoveries through the examination of memorials and the memorialization process. Niven and Paver’s book intends to go about “‘reading’ the more visible, tangible markers of memory, and what they tell us about Germany’s relationship to its difficult past”.\textsuperscript{71} This compilation includes explorations of both state-sponsored memory projects

\textsuperscript{69} Ladd, \textit{The Ghosts of Berlin}, 2.
\textsuperscript{71} Niven and Paver, \textit{Memorialization in Germany Since 1945}, 6.
and privately initiated projects of memorialization, thus illustrating not only the role of the state in determining public memory through memorials as well as the desire of citizens to have a part in this process. The evolution of public memory, as is illustrated through the introduction to *German Memorialization since 1945*, can be more thoroughly understood by examining memorials and monuments.

Michael Imort’s chapter in that book, entitled “Stumbling Blocks: A Decentralized Memorial to Holocaust Victims” explores a bottom-up approach to memorialization and in doing so provides new insights into the role of memorials and monuments to post-war memory. Imort examines the *Stolperstein* or “Stumbling Blocks” and asks “how we as citizens ‘learn’ what to forget and what to remember about our collective past”? He goes on to explain that by ‘reading’ these monuments and memorials “through their location, form, material, inscription, and many other aspects they instruct us what, how, and when to remember”. Imort also makes important contributions to the historiographical understanding of the relationship between public memory and memorialization. He explores how the *Stolperstein* act as both monument and memorial and in doing so, provides important definitions of these often-conflated characterizations. Imort explains that a monument is meant to act as a warning and in contrast, a memorial is intended to commemorate or remind the viewer – these differences tend to be lost when used in English. However, as he argues these

---

72 *Stolperstein* or “Stumbling Blocks” are small squares which contain basic information, such as name, date of birth, date of deportation, and date of death of a victim of the Nazi regime. They are placed in the sidewalk outside the last known address of the victim and were initiated by a German artist. *Stolperstein* are privately funded and appear throughout many European countries. This form of memory is often regarded as especially effective due to their embedded nature in the physical landscape of the city, they appear in the lives of people not intentionally seeking out a memorial experience.


important differences are clearly highlighted through their German translations, “a Denkmal invites the viewer to remember and reflect, while a Mahnmal admonishes the viewer to not permit a repetition of the calamity that forms the subject of the monument”. Therefore, Imort’s chapter provides important understandings on how to interpret memorials and monuments in a German context as well as determining which categorization – memorial or monument – the physical structure was intended to embody and which categorization it has embodied. As these investigations by James Young, Brian Ladd, Bill Niven, Chloe Paver, and Michael Imort illustrate, the study of memorialization in Germany since 1945 is approached from multiple vantage points. However, all of these historiographical interventions outline the significant connection between public memory and discourse to understandings ingrained in sites of memory.

**Women as Victims and Heroes in Post-War Germany**

Victims of mass sexual violence have not traditionally been the subject of significant historical research; where they appeared in academic history books at all, they tended to be included in passing at the end of a paragraph. However, and as Chapter Two will illustrate, accounts of the mass rape of German women after 1945 appeared in many other publications. In the past thirty years; however, as the historiography of the Second World War has undergone significant changes, the topics of ‘acceptable’ research have also shifted. The change of focus in scholarly debates –

---

75 Imort, “Stumbling Blocks”, 236.
the shift from these acts of sexual violence being omitted from the historical record to them being the sole focus of entire historical works – serves as evidence to the changing public memory of German women’s experiences in the Second World War. Before this shift the history of acts of sexual violence committed in the Second World War were rarely, if ever, the primary focus of the historical study. Therefore, the historiographical discussion surrounding the victims of mass sexual violence at the end of the Second World War has remained a present, although a changing feature, in German public memory since the events occurred up to the present day.

The academic discussion of these events was ignited with the feminist Historikerstreit or the “woman historians debate” of the late 1980s and the 1992 release of Helke Sander’s film Befreier und Befreite (‘Liberators/Johns Take Liberties’).\textsuperscript{77} Atina Grossman grapples with the feminist Historikerstreit in the 1991 article “Feminist Debates about Women and National Socialism”, arguing that this debate emerged from discussions of the legacy of female involvement in the crimes of the National Socialism epitomized by the contrast of Gisela Bock’s 1986 book Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik and Claudia Koonz’s 1987 book Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics.\textsuperscript{78} Grossman argues that “Koonz’s direct confrontation with issues of female agency and complicity in Nazism and the Holocaust poked right into an ongoing and painful German feminist debate about the degree to which women who lived in/under/through

\textsuperscript{77} Befreier und Befreite 1, 1. Bremen: BIFF Bremer Institut Film/Fernsehen, 1992.
the Third Reich should be judged ‘victims’ or ‘perpetrators’ (Opfer or Täter).” 

79 Bock and Koonz debate the role of German women as perpetrators, bystanders, or victims in the Third Reich; Bock argues that German women were ultimately victims of National Socialism as their roles as mothers was attacked and controlled under Nazism. 

80 In comparison, Koonz argues that German women in the Third Reich had agency and were, for the most part, willing and enthusiastic participants in the regime. 

81 The feminist Historikerstreit broke from the historical trends that came before it, a phenomenon that Claudia Koonz describes as “the women among Hitler’s supporters have fallen through the historians’ sieve, unclaimed by feminists and unnoticed by men.” 

82 Therefore, this debate and the academic study that emerged from it marks an important shift in this historiography, a shift to critically examining women, who history had forgotten or ignored in the study of National Socialism.

Just as the feminist Historikerstreit garnered a great deal of controversy, and inspired innovative academic research, so too did the release of the documentary film BeFreier und BeFreite, which vividly presented the stories of mass rape victims. The 1992 film claimed to be breaking the silence on the rape of German women at the end of the Second World War. Sander’s film is divided into two parts, the first of which addresses the rapes themselves and is comprised of shots of Sander in the archives, interviews with victims, and discussions with former Red Army soldiers. 

83 Sander directs the interview to discuss certain and limited topics emphasizing the Soviet Union.

---

as the primary perpetrators, she centers her documentary on the physical destruction of the German nation, using immediate postwar footage of bombed cities. Although Sander does give German women victimized by wartime rape a platform by which to firmly entrench their experience in the public consciousness, she does in many ways reproduce the historiographical assumptions that previously defined this study. Principally, that when the mass rape of German women was discussed it was done so within a narrative of German victimhood at the hands of the Soviet Union. The second section of Sander’s film discusses the experiences of children born from these rapes, she interviews the offspring of German women and their Allied rapists. The legacy of being the product of sexual violence is addressed, that is, the emotional inability for German women to express maternal love toward these children born out of rape and violence. In addition, the social and political underpinnings of the Cold War that defined the complicated way that these individuals came see themselves are explored.  

In a 1995 article entitled “Remembering/Forgetting” Sander explores the significance of the film; she states that she was especially drawn to the topic of her film through question of “whether cruelty can be repaid with or effaced by another act of cruelty”. Through this query Sander engages with the argument that historical research into these acts of sexual violence is not an appropriate area of study because these women were often involved with the Nazi regime or supported the war effort. Sander goes on to highlight the role of the 1970s women’s movement, through which she argues many women came to be aware of the “silence surrounding violence against

---

84 Sander, Befreier Und Befreite.
85 Sander, Befreier Und Befreite.
women” and thus reinforces her belief that up until that point there was silence surrounding the discussions of violence against women.  

She contends with the nuanced arguments within this historiography by researching the number of rapes, the classification of rape, and the treatment of the victims as well. Moreover, she addresses the publication and significance of *A Woman in Berlin* by referencing the harsh public reaction it received and citing it as evidence of the taboo surrounding the public discourse of the mass rape of German women at the end of the Second World War. Sander goes on to connect her research to larger themes of public memory in this time period, such as the role of polarizing politics in defining what gets remembered and how. She also challenges the idea that the binary of liberator and rapist are mutually exclusive, arguing that these terms are not mutually exclusive just as historians of German victimhood have argued that understandings of victim and perpetrator are not.  

Sander concludes by emphasizing her argument that German women were silent about the mass sexual violence that they endured at the end of the Second World War, and were kept silent due to the pressures that existed in the social and political atmosphere of the post-war period.

Directly responding to the bold claims made by Sander was Atina Grossman’s 1995 article “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers,” which complicates the historical narrative surrounding public memory of the mass sexual violence carried about against German women. Grossman acknowledges that this discourse is occurring within wildly complex understandings.

---

87 Sander, "Remembering/Forgetting." 16.
89 Sander, "Remembering/Forgetting." 24.
surrounding German victimhood and fears of its revival; she also openly responds to Sander who she sees as “at times wildly self-righteous and historically disingenuous”.\textsuperscript{90} Grossman proposes a new direction for this research, stating that “we need to ask how the (eventually privately transmitted and publicly silenced) collective experience of the rape of German women in the absences of (protective) German men insinuated itself into postwar Germans’ view of themselves as primarily ‘victims’ and not ‘agents’ of National Socialism and war”.\textsuperscript{91} Therefore, Grossman reminds researchers of the historical context in which the mass rape of German women took place, that of the aftermath of the Holocaust and the destruction caused by German National Socialism. Through her historiographical intervention Grossman argues that the memory of the mass sexual violence experienced at war’s end by German women was not absent or silenced as Sander would argue, but rather co-opted to serve as evidence in the formation of a public memory in which Germans were victims in the Second World War.

In his 1995 book \textit{The Russians in Germany} Norman Naimark demonstrates that both Sander and Grossman’s opinions on the public memory of the mass rape of German women can coexist and both contain partial truth. Naimark chronologically assesses Soviet actions and responses to the rape of German women at the hands of Soviet soldiers and in doing so he focuses on the public memory of the victims of mass rape that emerged in East Germany. He highlights that rapes continued to occur after the establishment of the German Democratic Republic, that it wasn’t until January 1949 that


\textsuperscript{91} Grossman, "A Question of Silence", 166.
strict punishments for rape were instituted by the Soviet military authorities, and that the Soviets were concerned with the impact that the rapes had on German public opinion.\textsuperscript{92} Naimark goes on to argue that despite these instances of silencing or ignoring the experiences of German women “rape became a part of the social history of Soviet zone in ways unknown to the Western zones”; therefore once again arguing that public memory of the victims of mass rape was allowed to exist is different ways in East and West Germany.\textsuperscript{93} However, this social history was one in which German leaders refused to even say the word ‘rape’, bring the sexual violence committed against German women into the public discourse, and where victims of sexual violence were silenced by both German men and the occupying forces.\textsuperscript{94} Naimark’s assertion that the rapes existed in the social history of the East differently than it did in the West, supports the idea that the centralized GDR state did not discuss the rapes in an official sense. However, despite this inability for the memory of the rapes to occupy political space in the East, the experiences of these women nonetheless were discussed in an informal, social setting.

Naimark highlights that although German women rarely received any recognition of their experiences, their agency in working against the occupation forces – that were responsible for the sexual assaults – can be seen through local German elections, in which German women consistently voted for non-communist parties in higher numbers than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{95} This evidence illustrates that the public memory of these instances of sexual violence has been both silenced while

\textsuperscript{92} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{93} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 106-107.
\textsuperscript{94} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 127.
\textsuperscript{95} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 121.
simultaneously the topic of discussion, the discussion surrounding victims’ experiences and rights was largely silenced, however it is important to acknowledge as Naimark does, that there were in fact voices to silence. Naimark concludes his discussion of the mass rape of German women by emphasizing the importance in understanding these events: “the social psychology of women and men in the Soviet zone of occupation was marked by the crime of rape from the first days of the Russian occupation, through the founding of the GDR in the fall of 1949, until – one could argue – the present.”

Similarly to Sander and Grossman, Naimark advocates for a greater historical understanding of the sexual violence experienced by German women at war’s end and its role in society and politics in the years that followed and he goes on to emphasize the enduring public memory of these events in German society.

Shifting from the focus on Soviet perpetrators of sexual violence in both Grossman and Naimark’s work, Petra Goedde’s 1999 article “From Villains to Victims: Fraternization and the Feminization of Germany, 1945-1947” focuses on the relationship between American occupiers and German women. Although her focus is not solely centered on sexual violence carried out against German women, some of her findings act as important historical contributions to the narrative. She outlines the fact that the term ‘fraternization’ was often connected to the sexual relationships that took place between Western Allied occupation forces, an important language choice when juxtaposed with the fact that a narrative emerged in which the Soviet soldiers raped German women. Goedde states these language differences and their impact on the

---

96 Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 132-133.
historical narrative by arguing that women in the American zone of occupation also faced the threat of rape by occupation soldiers. This challenges the public memory of the 1950s in which the rape of German women was a crime committed solely by Soviet soldiers. Goedde’s article explores how the interactions between American soldiers and German women influenced the formation of memory of Germans as victims. Under American occupation ideas of race, its connections to violence, and the way in which sexual relations between civilians and soldiers took place influenced the public memory of German women’s experiences of rape in the Western zones of occupation. German pre-war and wartime conceptions of race placed Russians low on their racial hierarchy, therefore German women anticipated barbarity and sexual violence at the hands of the Soviet occupiers. In comparison, American occupiers were viewed as refined and the sexual encounters that occurred between them and German women could be subdivided as ‘coerced rape’ or as rape out of necessity. That is, many historians argue that German women had sex with American soldiers because they were motivated by hunger, or the desire for protection; this relative choice was at times used to criticize German women for their sexual immorality. However, in more recent studies historians have come to understand the impoverished conditions, and the lack of choice allotted to German women in the immediate postwar period and see these sexual relations as instances of sexual violence.

These sexual relationships, consensual and non-consensual, are further explored in Mary Louise Roberts’ 2013 book, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in* 98 Goedde, "From Villains to Victims”, 10. 99 Goedde, "From Villains to Victims”, 19. 100 Goedde, "From Villains to Victims".
World War II France. Roberts’ book uncovers the ways that the promise of interactions with female civilians was used as top-down motivation for American soldiers to fight in the deadly battles of the Second World War.\textsuperscript{101} She goes on to expose the way these interactions were not always consensual, and the powerful way that the American military suppressed the memories of these women’s experiences of sexual violence.\textsuperscript{102} Although Roberts does not specifically focus on the public memory of victims of rape in Germany, she effectively contributes to the historiographical narrative by demonstrating the ways that nations silence the actions of soldiers that do not align with the creation of a desired national history.

The release of Sander’s BeFreier und Befreite influenced the academic discourse on the mass rape of German women, Richard McCormick’s 2001 article “Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers: Helke Sander’s BeFreier und Befreite” illustrates that this discussion remained an active topic of debate years after the film’s release. Throughout this article McCormick recounts the controversy that emerged in 1992 from the release of BeFreier und Befreite, outlining where his opinion lies in the debate surrounding the film. In response to claims that Helke Sander was a right-wing filmmaker who espoused her beliefs through this documentary McCormick states his opposition to the argument that the film serves a revisionist or victimhood narrative in discussions German public memory.\textsuperscript{103} He points out that the German Right did not co-opt the film to serve its agenda centered on victimhood, but rather that neither the right nor the left in German society were willing to discuss or listen to the victims of

\textsuperscript{101} Mary Louise Roberts, \textit{What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{102} Roberts, \textit{What Soldiers Do}.
mass sexual violence. McCormick goes on to contend with a public memory that has remained contentious years after the events took place, he addresses the film’s “charges of trying to efface German women’s complicity” to which he responds with a question “What difference, however, does it make how complicit or not a woman was with regard to the rapes?” that “the mention of such guilt seems to imply that somehow these rapes were ‘justified.’” This statement challenges a major problem in this discussion, that many historians fall back on when attempting to discuss the memory of these events, that is attempting to justify rape. This tendency stems from the idea that someone who is guilty of another crime cannot also be a victim, or somehow deserves to be victimized for their role as victimizer. This article successfully complicates the discourse in which German women are often viewed as either victim or perpetrator, he explains that German women aided the Nazi Party or war effort and therefore acted as indirect perpetrators of the crimes of the Holocaust but that they can also be victims of sexual violence. However, McCormick does clarify that there are different degrees of victimization, stating that Jewish women were victimized in a very different and incomparable way to that of German women who were victims of sexual violence. McCormick dispels the argument that Sander’s film is ahistorical, rather he argues, that the film is transhistorical that the topic “has a long history, much longer than the specific events that led to the multitude of crimes committed during World War II.” Ultimately McCormick believes that the topic of rape in times of war is an understudied

---

104 McCormick, "Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers", 118.
105 McCormick, "Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers", 122.
106 McCormick, "Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers", 122.
107 McCormick, "Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers", 124.
108 McCormick, "Rape and War, Gender and Nation, Victims and Victimizers", 123.
and often ignored area of historical understanding, and that *BeFreier und Befreite* actively works to include the topic of sexual violence committed against women into the narrative of the Second World War.

Similarly to McCormick, Pascale R. Bos discusses Sander’s *BeFreier und Befreite* in her article “Feminists Interpreting the Politics of Wartime Rape: Berlin, 1945; Yugoslavia, 1992-1993”. This article outlines the feminist understandings of the politics surrounding two instances of wartime rape, Germany in 1945 and Yugoslavia in 1992-1993. Bos is challenging the feminist thought at the backbone of Sander’s film, arguing that it is rooted in dangerous conceptions of race and ethnicity.\(^{109}\) She demonstrates that although these two events occurred in very different historical contexts there is still something valuable to gain from their comparison, and in this argument Bos aligns herself with some of the ideas of McCormick, who acknowledged the lack of historical context in Sander’s film yet still sees the discussion of the reoccurrence of similar events as valuable. Bos goes on to state that *BeFreier und Befreite* “is the product of naïve feminism rather than of apologetic politics and that it fits the pattern of a kind of German feminist historiography emerging in the 1980s” and in doing so agrees with McCormick that Sander’s work is not an attempt to restate the argument that Germans were the primary victims of the Second World War.\(^{110}\) She contends with the public memory of these victims that Sander claims to have ‘broken the taboo’ surrounding, Bos states that “from about 1949 on in the Federal Republic, the female rape experience had been universalized and appropriated by a national discourse


\(^{110}\) Bos, "Feminists Interpreting the Politics of Wartime Rape", 1006.
that attempted to situate the German population as a whole as victims (of Hitler’s regime, of the expulsion from the east by the Russians, and of the Allied occupation). The rapes of the German women became the rape of Germany.”\textsuperscript{111} Through these statements Bos is arguing that, similar to other critics of Sander, there was no taboo for \textit{BeFreier und Befreite} to break. Overall, Bos argues that Sander’s narrative creates a past in which female actors had no agency, one in which “women are simply never political agents in war”; rather, Bos argues these conceptions of women as inherently potential victims of wartime rape need to be set aside so a more complex understanding of women’s agency can be gathered.\textsuperscript{112}

In her 2007 book \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany} Atina Grossman further contributes to the historical narrative. Grossman once again dispels the notion that Germans were completely silent about their post-war experiences, but rather they were selective about their memories in this time period.\textsuperscript{113} Amongst other things, Grossman explores the connection between female sexuality and the construction of German national identity in the post-war era. She views this as a time period “in which female bodies – raped, aborting, pregnant, mothering, fraternizing – were both public and private” going on to argue that at times “neither public nor private was clearly defined nor bordered.”\textsuperscript{114} She expands upon this by exploring how the interactions that took place between Jewish survivors, Germans, and occupation forces influenced the formation of perceptions of victimhood. Grossman explores the way in which sexual violence was committed by both Soviet and Western Allies; and how these

\textsuperscript{111} Bos, "Feminists Interpreting the Politics of Wartime Rape", 1005.
\textsuperscript{112} Bos, "Feminists Interpreting the Politics of Wartime Rape", 1022.
experiences entered the public memory of the immediate post-war period. She argues that German women largely saw themselves as victims at the conclusion of the Second World War, however, American occupiers formed two categorizations to understand them: the first of which is “sexually appealing, politically harmless victims” and “as villainous or certainly complicit seducers and Hausfrauen.”\(^\text{115}\) The variant understandings of German women’s identity after the Second World War also led to a difference in treatment by occupation forces. Overall, the contributions made by Grossman in *Jews, Germans, and Allies* highlight the complicated nature of the events that took place in the late 1940s, but also the development of a complex narrative of public memory based on these events that developed in the 1950s and continues to evolve.

The most recent contribution to this discourse is Miriam Gebhardt’s 2017 book *Crimes Unspoken: the Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War*. Gebhardt argues that the topic of her book has been long overlooked and is at risk for forever being lost as many of the victims have died.\(^\text{116}\) The publication of this book signifies a change in the study of German public memory and victimhood, in which discussions of Germans as victims emerged once again, yet this discourse, unlike the one that occurred in the 1950s takes place within a more general acknowledgement of the crimes of Nazism and the role of perpetrator that many Germans played in them. Gebhardt clarifies that she is not attempting to relativize the events of the Holocaust, but rather “to cast a new light on this difficult subject and to untangle the half-truths and

traditional prejudices.\textsuperscript{117} She argues that the historical research of the rape of German women has faced barriers to its study due to the lack of understanding surrounding wartime rape.\textsuperscript{118} Throughout the book, she highlights the many factors that have contributed to a partially inclusive historical understanding of the rape of German women. She explores how the definition of rape used at the time, “vaginal penetration”, served to exclude male victims of sexual violence from the narrative. Gebhardt goes on to examine the role of race in defining sexual violence and she considers the exclusion of other victim groups such as slave labourers and Jewish survivors from the estimated numbers of those affected.\textsuperscript{119} Echoing the points made by Grossman, Gebhardt expands upon the fact that American occupation forces also committed acts of sexual violence against German women despite the fact that this was long excluded from the historical narrative.\textsuperscript{120} She concludes with questions of curating a more inclusive narrative of this history, by introducing aspects of these events often treated with ambiguity, such as coerced or necessity-driven sexual encounters.\textsuperscript{121} Overall, Gebhardt contributes to the historiography of the rape of German women through her questioning of the selective memory which defined who were victims of these acts of sexual violence, her challenging of why certain stories are transformed into memories, and by advocating for a more thorough approach to the writing of this history in the future.

The historical narrative of the sexual violence committed against German women at the end of the Second World War has been challenged in many ways through

\textsuperscript{117} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 5.
\textsuperscript{118} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 5.
\textsuperscript{119} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 22.
\textsuperscript{120} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 92.
\textsuperscript{121} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 97 & 199.
the work of these historians; through their contribution of scholarly works that focus on the experiences of women they are confronting the silences in the historical record. The primary research that follows in the later chapters of this thesis works to expose, and fill some of the gaps that exist in the historical research of this topic area. The historiographical research focused on investigating the rape of German women has been built from and intersected with discussions of German public memory and victimhood. These two discourses – the rape of German women and perceptions of German victimhood – have followed similar historiographical trends, thus highlighting the inability of these areas of research to be separated. This thesis is filling that specific gap in the historical research, that has neglected to examine through the lens of sites of memory the public memory of victims of mass sexual violence in the Second World War, in comparison to another historical characterization of women.

**Trümmerfrauen**

Two universalized images of German women have emerged in public memory from the immediate post-Second World War period, one of which is the victim of mass sexual violence previously explored, the other is that of the *Trümmerfrau* or rubble woman. The universalized image of rubble women defined them as heroic figures who persevered through the destruction of the Second World War, with heroism and determination they cleared rubble and aided in the reconstruction of German cities. The *Trümmerfrauen* have been briefly mentioned in historical inquiries, yet their memory has only in the last 30 years been challenged by historians who have all engaged with the historiographical discussion of this postwar characterization of German women. These historians have disrupted, from various vantage points, the universalized image of
the Trümmerfrauen and in doing so they have demonstrated the way that women’s wartime experiences were utilized in German public memory.\textsuperscript{122}

In her 1996 article titled “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Years’ and West German National Identity” Elizabeth Heineman initiates a discussion of the place of Trümmerfrauen in German public memory discourses. She argues that “the universalization, in West German collective memory, of crucial aspects of the stereotypically female experience of Germany at the end of the war and during the immediate postwar years” played a crucial role in the development of a West German national identity.\textsuperscript{123} Heineman sees the formation of the Trümmerfrau identity as a “powerful symbol of women at the workplace”, despite the reality that it was often not the most valued position a woman could acquire in the immediate postwar period, as it was often punishment for involvement in Nazi organizations, or a choice made out of desperation.\textsuperscript{124} Rubble clearing was not perceived as a job of heroines at the time, yet the public memory of the women of the rubble made them into heroines for the German nation; Heineman argues “a single image linked women in rags and ruined cities on the one hand, the resilience of Germans and the process of reconstruction on the other”.\textsuperscript{125} Thus, the memory of the Trümmerfrauen was altered in postwar Germany to serve a purpose: it was utilized in the formation of a West German identity focused on resilience and rebuilding and not the crimes of their Nazi past.

Heineman’s work examines the creation of a Trümmerfrauen identity, which was utilized in the social and political formation of a West German identity. In contrast is

\textsuperscript{122} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 355.
\textsuperscript{123} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 355.
\textsuperscript{124} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 374-375.
\textsuperscript{125} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 375.
Benedict Anderson’s 2015 article “Trümmer Geographies: Teufelsberg a Site of Forgetting”, which explores the place of rubble in German public memory. Anderson’s article is centered on examining the role of Teufelsberg, Berlin’s tallest hill which was built out of rubble between 1946 and 1966. He does engage with the place of Trümmerfrauen in the creation of Teufelsberg in both reality and its maintenance as a site of public memory. Although Anderson does not explore the discourse that Heineman initiated which sees the Trümmerfrauen as being universalised to serve the national memory of West Germany, he does provide some very interesting insights into the formation of this memory. He has studied archived images of the destroyed city of Berlin, and therefore photographs of the women of the rubble; Anderson argues that “the inseparability of the Trümmerfrauen from the ruins of their city elicits both attraction and fascination with respect to the overwhelming magnitude of the unfolding task evident in each photograph”. He fails to question if there was political gain to be had through the curation of the Trümmerfrauen as heroines through the simple task of photographing their work. Anderson goes on to call for the possibility that Teufelsberg could be “unearthed” and therefore a site of memory for the Trümmerfrauen; he is clearly of the mindset that this historical characterization of women is worthy of remembrance, and not to be questioned. Overall, Anderson’s article illustrates a different approach to understanding the public memory of the Trümmerfrauen, as he begins with the site of Teufelsberg, a physical remnant of the destruction of Germany in the Second World War and from there transitions to a discussion of the role of the

women of the rubble in this reconstruction. Anderson’s approach demonstrates the power of public memory; however, it does not allow for a great deal of historical criticism of this characterization on which national identity myths are founded.

Transitioning from Anderson’s rubble-centered analysis of public memory is Leonie Treber’s 2016 book titled *Mythos Trümmerfrauen Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* which challenges the large role that *Trümmerfrauen* have played in German public memory.\(^{128}\) She states that *Trümmerfrauen* were a small fraction of the society, echoing arguments put forward by Heineman that the rubble women constituted only 5-10% of employed women in Berlin.\(^{129}\) Treber analyzes the emergence of *Trümmerfrauen* mythologies in both West and East Germany, immediately after the nation was divided and traces those understandings over the next 40 years.\(^{130}\) She argues that by the 1950s in West Germany rubble women were disappearing from the public discourse as it was a type of work tied to Allied punishment of the German people.\(^{131}\) Narratives of *Trümmerfrauen* emerged, according to Treber, in the 1980s with the 40th anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany. This contrasts to East Germany which, in the 1950s, saw the amalgamation of the characterization of *Trümmerfrauen* with the *Aufbauhelferinnen* or ‘women reconstruction workers’.\(^{132}\) Treber states that in the 1970s there was a return to the use of the term *Trümmerfrauen*, in the East, due to the

---

\(^{128}\) Title Translated: *The Rubble Woman Myth: From the Debris removal in the war and post-war period and the Emergence of a German Place of Remembrance*

\(^{129}\) Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 375.


\(^{131}\) Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen*, 82.

This rhetoric changed once again after the 1990 reunification of Germany. Treber sees this as an attempt by Germans, especially West German feminists, to write the history of the rubble women back into their national identity. She goes on to further destabilize this mythology, noting that reconstruction projects began before the war had ended and were often carried out by Hitler Youth, slave labourers, and concentration camp inmates. Treber illustrates the selectivity present in the writing of this history and the inability to remove the formation and memory of conceptions of Trümmerfrauen from discussions of German victimhood and the memory politics that accompany it. Jannes Riemann’s review of Treber’s book demonstrates the contributions that her book made to the public discourse in addition to the academic discourse. Riemann argues that Treber “does not refute the existence of ‘rubble women’ at all, more the idea that they rebuilt Germany alone. Her point, really, is that their work represents a preparatory stage of reconstruction rather than its totality and to reveal the political circumstance that led to the perpetuation of the myth.” Riemann is addressing responses to Treber’s book that claim she was trying to erase the history of the Trümmerfrauen, rather as this article states her book proves the exaggeration of their involvement in reconstruction for the creation of national myths. Overall, Treber’s work complicates the historiographical narrative further as it dispels the actuality that Trümmerfrauen played a significant part

133 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 113.
134 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 375.
135 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 415.
in the reconstruction of German cities, yet acknowledges their significance in public memory and memorialization processes.

The historiographical narrative of *Trümmerfrauen* has been furthered by the work of these historians; the identity of the rubble woman has played a significant role in the formation of post Second World War German public memory. The discussion can be further examined by bringing together public memory understandings of rubble women with the memorialization that this identity has and continues to garner. There have been many sites of memory built in commemoration of the *Trümmerfrauen*, the analysis of these sites has not yet been entered into the historiographical discussion to a significant degree, and thus, requires primary research. Historians are divided on the public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen*, however, combined with an analysis of the sites of memory new insights into the place of this historical characterization can be uncovered.

**Conclusion**

This historiographical overview demonstrates some of the complexity of the public memory of post-Second World War Germany. German victimhood and its varied utilization during the Cold War have defined public memories of the Second World War, these memories were both vital in the construction of, and were a result of, the constructed national identities forged by both West and East Germany. This chapter has demonstrated that the historical understanding of German’s memories of the Second World War, that is, their self-identification as victims, has undergone significant changes since the 1950s, undergoing a major shift with the reunification of the Germanies. In different ways, for various purposes, and with varying outcomes both
West and East Germany shaped the public understanding of women’s lived wartime experiences, including those who had been victims of mass sexual violence, and those who had worked to rebuild destroyed cities after 1945. Historians have generally been slower to investigate the stories of women after 1945, though that has begun to change in the past decade. The historiography of public memory and perceptions of German victimhood after the Second World War has been revolutionized by the questioning of the victim-perpetrator binary, a shift that allows historical actors to be studied as both victims and perpetrators. Historians of memorialization have developed scholarly approaches to sites of memory, analyses of their significance, and the process of ‘reading’ memorials for underlying messages. The conjunction of these historiographical themes demonstrates not only the gap that exists in historical research, but as Elizabeth Heineman argues, and the next two chapter illustrate, that historians “need more than an awareness” of the different ways memories unique to women’s experiences were formed, we “need to understand their interconnections”. 137

137 Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 392.
3.0 - Chapter Two: “Exaggerated anti-Communist Propaganda” or the “Inevitable By-Product of a Vicious War”? Public Memory Representations of German Women as Victims of Mass Rape

On May 8, 1945, an Anonymous author wrote,

One thing is for sure: if this were peacetime and a girl had been raped by some vagrant, there’d be a whole peacetime hoopla of reporting the crime, taking the statement, questioning witnesses, arrest and confrontation, news reports and neighbourhood gossip – and the girl would have reacted differently, would have suffered a different kind of shock. But here we’re dealing with a collective experience, something foreseen and feared many times in advance that happened to women right and left, all someone part of the bargain. And this mass rape is something we are overcoming collectively as well. All the women help each other by speaking about it, airing their pain, and allowing others to air theirs and spit out what they’ve suffered. Which of course doesn’t mean that creatures more delicate than this cheeky little Berlin girl won’t fall apart or suffer for the rest of their lives.

While historians debate the exact number of women who were victims of mass rape at the end of the Second World War, very few dispute that rape was an everyday reality for German women. These acts of sexual violence were vastly varied in their nature; female civilians from the elderly to girls were targets of rape by Allied soldiers. These rapes occurred as women were dragged out of bomb shelters, walking to fill buckets with water, sitting in their homes, and attempting to work. They were committed by soldiers acting in groups, with the consecutive rape of a single woman, they also occurred in a relatively less violent manner, in the private homes of German women. Many women died as a result of the brutality of these acts of sexual violence, some also

139 Anonymous, A Woman in Berlin, 147.
141 Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 8.
142 Grossman, Jews, Germans, And Allies, 50-57.
143 Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 59-63.
took their own lives in the aftermath, many contracted venereal diseases, and were
impregnated through these rapes. The experience of rape was varied amongst German
women, however many women were subjected to acts sexual violence many different
times and in different circumstances. Despite the differences, the anticipation of rape
was common for most German women, that is, they knew as occupation forces
‘liberated’ Germany from Nazism these forces intended to carry out gendered acts of
violence on them.

As the diary account that opened this chapter makes clear, the female victims of
the ‘collective experience’ of sexual violence in 1945 were vocal about what had
happened to them in the final weeks of war, and the opening months of Allied
occupation. However, in the decades following 1945, reports of these crimes were
largely silenced, or criticized. Indeed, in the post-war period the retelling of these
sexually violent acts, perpetrated by Allied soldiers, was either rejected or accepted,
often based on their discussions of German identity and its connection to conceptions of
femininity, masculinity, and race. This diary, *A Woman in Berlin* and the responses it
received in the 1950s and the post-Cold War period demonstrate that the mass rape of
German women remained a controversial topic. Rape victims were not the dominant
image in public memories of the either the East or West German wartime experience,
nor did women’s suffering enter into the memorialization process in the same way the
‘rubble women’ did.

---

Woman in Berlin* 5.
This chapter explores the public memory that developed in the Germanies of victims of mass sexual violence, from 1945 to the present, by examining the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park in Berlin, the novel *The Big Rape* by James Wakefield Burke, the war diary titled *A Woman in Berlin* written by an Anonymous author, the film adaptation of that diary, and Helke Sander’s film *BeFreier und Befreite*. These primary sources demonstrate the way in which the memory of this historical group shifted over a broad timeframe at the intersection of academic discussions and public perception in both the United States and Germany. This public memory was further complicated by the emergence of second-wave feminist ideas focused on reproductive freedom and the prevalence of sexual violence committed against women.\textsuperscript{147} The evolving memorialization of these female wartime experiences highlight not only the reality of war for women, but also the ways women’s experiences are often co-opted by states in the service of political goals. Political ideologies in East and West Germany largely defined war memories: in the West, rape victims were used in a broader discourse of German victimization, in the East, the official memory of mass rape was non-existent, as the Socialist state remembered the Soviet Red Army as liberators. This examination is not meant to create a hierarchy of wartime suffering, but rather to acknowledge the ways that suffering, pain, and violence have been utilized and/or ignored in the creation of national stories and identities, and how, as I argue, this was uniquely accomplished through the manipulation of women’s experiences.

**Methodology**

All memories are political, they are influenced by political discourses and serve to shape the political landscape of the society that they occupy. In analyzing the primary evidence for this chapter, I tended to follow four steps: I analyzed the historical events, how these events were presented, the reaction to these memories, and an examination of what these reactions demonstrate about society. The analysis of these various pieces of public memory will also include an analysis of the location of the document’s release and presence in East, West, or reunified Germany. Although this is difficult to precisely trace for intellectual documents, such as books and films as their dissemination can circumvent the physical political borders that define other forms of public memory, such as statues. Additionally, I will examine the space that these primary sources occupy in the society that they inhabit, this will be done by deconstructing its’ role in either academic or public discourses. In addition, the artistic form of the document is dissected in this chapter, that is whether the narrative is presented through books, fiction or non-fiction, or film. This form is then analyzed for its ability to convey ideas of public memory, questions of availability and accessibility to the narratives that these artistic forms present will be explored in relation to each primary source.

**The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park**

Sixty years after the official end of the Second World War individuals began more openly challenging the simplistic narrative presented on a grand scale at the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park, in Berlin. They were doing so through the unofficial renaming of the site’s ‘Warrior-Liberator’ statue as the “Tomb to the Unknown Rapist”. This has acted as a call to modern German society to re-evaluate their history.

---

and to challenge their characterizations of heroes. In her 2015 BBC article Lucy Ash explores the memory of the mass rape of women, stating that such acts were “rarely mentioned after the war in Germany – West or East – and is a taboo subject in Russia even today”. Undoubtedly there have always been those who resisted or disagreed with the heralding of Soviet soldiers as heroes since the construction of this memorial site. However, since the end of the Cold War and the changing political and social realities in Germany that surrounded it, statements about the historical narrative presented at the Soviet War Memorial at Treptow Park have emerged and brought the experiences of victims of mass rape into to forefront of the nation’s public memory. Statements such as the reference of the “Warrior-Liberator” as “The Tomb to the Unknown Rapist” highlight that historical actors cannot simply be understood as either a perpetrator or a hero.

This modern day conflict demonstrates that not only is the public memory of the victims of mass rape in Germany still a controversial topic, but so is this particular memorial. The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park is a popular tourist destination, attracting visitors from all over Europe; this large public park is also easily accessible to the German people through the ability of visitors to simply stumble upon the site, learn about and reflect on the sacrifice memorialized at this place. This site of

---

149 Ash, "The Rape of Berlin,"
150 Ash, "The Rape of Berlin."
151 In his book The Russians in Germany, Norman Naimark references the 1950 reaction of a German woman to this site of memory, “There would always be women like Maria Reuss, who – when asked about the huge Treptow statues memorializing the Soviet liberators of Germany from fascism – was unwilling to ‘look at the Russian so quickly as friend and liberators; one doesn’t forget something like that so quickly.’” Naimark, The Russians in Germany, 121.
152 Naimark, The Russians in Germany, 121.
153 When I visited The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park there was what appeared to be a Russian family, who were very solemnly walking through the park. I got the impression that they were there to pay their respects, a national responsibility to acknowledge the sacrifices of these
public memory was completed in May of 1949 to remember and honour as the archway entrance to the park reads: the “Eternal Glory to the Heroes Who Fell For the Freedom and Independence of the Socialist Home 1941-1945”\(^{154}\). The memorial establishes that in the final days of the Second World War – between April 16- May 2, 1945 – 70,000 people were killed in Berlin alone, of these fatalities 22,000 were Soviet soldiers, 20,000 were German soldiers, and 30,000 were civilians.\(^{155}\) Treptower Park is also where 5,000 Soviet soldiers are now buried and is thus clearly focused on highlighting the sacrifice made by Soviet soldiers in the so-called liberation of Germany.\(^{156}\) As was previously explored, the final battles of the Second World War in Europe occurred on the streets of Berlin, as the Red Army fought street by street for control of the capital.\(^{157}\) Therefore, this site is dedicated to honouring the lives of soldiers who were, perhaps, the very same individuals who committed acts of sexual violence against German women.\(^{158}\)

This memorial site contains “half-mile long plaza” and was built from “marble, bronze, and granite taken from Hitler’s ruined Reich-Chancellery.”\(^{159}\) The message that the memorial aims to portray, that the Soviet Union liberated Germany and is now in control as is illustrated by the extravagance of the site and the repurposing of materials

\(^{154}\) Treptower Soviet War Memorial Entrance, Treptower Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018


\(^{156}\) Ash, "The Rape of Berlin."


\(^{158}\) Naimark, The Russians in Germany, 121.

once used by Hitler. Until the 1967 when the Volgograd Memorial was completed to honour the Battle of Stalingrad, “Treptower Park was the largest and, also the Soviet Union’s, best-known memorial, paying tribute to the liberation from National Socialism and the end of World War II.”

Under the German Soviet treaty on neighbourly relations signed at the end of the Cold War in 1990 Germany agreed to care for the Russian war graves housed at Treptower Park. This decision is explained by the reunified German nation on the plaques present at the memorial, stating that “Mourning the dead and remembering the breakdown of civilization under the National Socialist regime are vital to Germany’s understanding of its own history. Long-term maintenance of this memorial is also a visible expression of understanding and reconciliation between Germany and the Russian Federation, as well as with the Soviet Union’s other successor states.”

In addition to the construction of the memorial, the maintenance and care for the memorial illustrates the reality that sites of memory are political and that in the emphasis of certain memories others are silenced.

It is significant to highlight the creation and maintenance history of this site of memory in relation to both the Second World War and the Cold War, the Soviet War Memorial was completed a mere four years after the Second World War ended. The Soviet ‘liberators’ built this site celebrating their role in the ‘liberation’ of Germany thus illustrating that the war’s victors defined the postwar narrative in East Germany. This structure was not something that the ‘liberated’ Germans felt compelled to build in order to thank the soldiers who died in the war. Rather, it was to be a constant reminder of the

---

160 Treptower Soviet War Memorial Explanatory Plaque.
161 Treptower Soviet War Memorial Explanatory Plaque.
162 Treptower Soviet War Memorial Explanatory Plaque.
Soviet involvement in the end of the Second World War, and build support for Socialist ideals in post-Second World War East Germany.\textsuperscript{163}

As the memorial’s visitors enter the park they approach two large raised stone installments, each with a large statue of a Soviet soldier kneeling with their helmets off of their heads looking down in a sense of mourning or reflection. These statues are accompanied by plaques, one in German and one in Russian that read “Eternal glory to the champions of the Soviet army who have given their lives in the struggle for the liberation of humanity from Fascist bondage”.\textsuperscript{164} These statues define the narrative of this memorial space, illustrating that this space is primarily dedicated to celebrating and honouring the heroism of these soldiers. The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park is not dedicated to the entirety of the memory of the victims of war, but primarily to the memory of Soviet soldiers. This history is recorded in a series of eight relief works, which are made from a flat piece of stone and an image is created by carving away the stone around the image, leaving the image raised.\textsuperscript{165} These pictorial representations are also accompanied by descriptive plaques in Russian and German. The repeated use of primarily Russian and German throughout the memorial demonstrate that it was created with the intention making this memory accessible to both German and Russian speakers.

These reliefs tell the story of the Second World War from the Soviet point of view, beginning with the unexpected 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union. Overall these reliefs emphasize moments of Soviet civilians’ and soldiers’ sacrifice,

\textsuperscript{163} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 121.
\textsuperscript{164} Treptower Park Soviet War Memorial Kneeling Soldiers, Treptower Park, Berlin, Germany, Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018.
bravery, victimization, and resilience. They illustrate that the war was fought to end the horrors of Nazism, and in doing so position Communist ideals as the answer to the social issues from which the war sprung. These reliefs also depict the ideas of gender equality that is fundamental to Communism, this is done through the presence of women fighting alongside their male counterparts in many of the pieces. The final installment in this artistic representation of the events of the Second World War is a plaque stating “Eternal Glory to Heroes who have fallen in the Battle for the Freedom and Independence of our Homeland”.166 This assertion is paired with a relief of men carrying a dead man on a stretcher, it captures a moment during a military funeral as the mourners surround the man being laid to rest their eyes are cast down, and they hold a wreath and Soviet flag. This, as the final aspect of the story that this memorial portrays emphasizes the heroism and sacrifice of the soldiers of the Red Army who died in the Second World War.

This series of reliefs and their accompanying statements highlight some of the key themes presented through this memorial; that of the importance of Socialism as a guiding ideology and a justification for the war that was waged. Perhaps, this illustrates that for the Soviet people retribution for Nazi violence and aggression was not enough to legitimize the suffering of war, but this suffering could be accepted in the protection and establishment of Socialism. The memorial’s emphasis of the socialist ideology also serves to reinforce the good that socialism has brought and promised to bring the German people, that in the name of socialism the German people were ‘liberated’ from

---

Nazism. Therefore, as this relief series illustrates that not only is this a memorial of the Second World War, but it also illustrates how the memory of the events of that war were utilized in the struggle for political legitimacy that followed in the Cold War. This liberation narrative of course neglected to mention violent acts perpetrated by Russian soldiers against German civilians. This emphasizes the reality that public memory is defined by both what stories are told, but also what experiences are left out of the historical record.

In addition to the eight relief images and plaques is the artistic element known as the “Warrior-Liberator” statue, this structure serves as the focal point of the entire memorial space. The massive 12-metre-high statue is located at the far end of the park and as a visitor walks through the space they would arrive at it at the end of their journey. Lucy Ash reflects on the depiction of a Red Army soldier, holding a young girl in one arm, and a sword in hand, while he breaks a swastika with his foot, she states “the colossal proportions of the monument reflect the scale of the sacrifice. At the top of a long flight of steps you can peer into the base of the statue, which is lit up like a religious shrine”. The immensity of the “Warrior-Liberator” illustrates the significance of Red Army so-called liberators in the formation of a post-war Soviet identity that extended into East Germany during the Cold War.

The location of the statue contributes a sense of finality to the experience of the memorial’s visitor, it is the final point before the visitor has to turn around and walk back through the memorial to the exit. The location of this statue within the memorial

167 Ash, "The Rape of Berlin."
168 Ash, "The Rape of Berlin."
169 Peter Heinz Junge, Berlin-Treptow. Sowjetisches Ehrenmal Info Non-talk.svg, March 1975, German Federal Archives, Berlin-Treptow, In Wikimedia Commons,
space adds to the historical narrative in itself, as the final aspect of the memorial the viewer is left with the impression that the Red Army liberated Germany from National Socialism and nothing else worth recounting occurred. It omits the possibility that suffering and violence continued after the Second World War officially ended, perhaps that young girl in the soldier’s arms was being carried away against her will and would experience sexual violence at the hands of that soldier, or many others. While a twelve-metre-high statue was built to honour a Soviet soldier, the young girl in his arms holds symbolic importance in this artistic representation. She is simultaneously placed in the background of the narrative, she is not the focal point, she is the helpless female character for the strong male hero to save while she is also used to represent the entire German nation that the Red Army ‘liberated’. This artistic representation is echoed in the social and political realities of the post-war period in East Germany, that women were used, or ‘held up’ as symbols of the equality of the Socialist state without sufficient concern for their wartime experiences or the actuality of this perceived equality. That is, East Germany declared that men and women were equal, yet failed to restructure expectations of family involvement alongside women’s entrance into the public workforce. East German women were told that they could work and raise a family, while East German men were told to continue working outside the home, without a re-evaluation of the division of unpaid labour. Therefore, women and their


171 Cederskjold, *Sowjetisches Ehrenmal Treptow*.

172 Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 141 & 146.

173 Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 141 & 146.
experiences were used in specific and limited ways in East Germany, this utilization is presented in this memorial, which demonstrates the ways in which German women’s experiences were silenced, ignored, or utilized for political gain.

Further, it is significant to highlight the fact that reunified Germany assumed responsibility for the care of this site of memory, one that lifts up and proclaims Soviet soldiers as uncomplicated heroes in the Second World War.¹⁷⁴ Even the post-1990 Federal government failed to acknowledge the possibility that the Soviet soldiers honoured at Treptower Park – who fought and died for the liberation of Germany from National Socialism – have the potential to be the same soldiers who raped German women in said ‘liberation’.

The renaming, or rather counter-naming from ‘Warrior-Liberator’ to “The Tomb to the Unknown Rapist” illustrates the power of public memory and the historical reality of the mass rape of German women. The naming of this memorial defines how the viewers came to understand the history it represents; by naming the statue “Warrior-Liberator” the public memory of the Soviet involvement in Germany is fundamentally structured as a mission carried out by heroic liberators. The juxtaposition of these two titles, the official and the unofficial, illustrate the power of perspective – a liberator to one may be an abuser to another – as well as the reality that perhaps historical actors can inhabit both characterizations.¹⁷⁵ This historical reality is also addressed by the counter-naming, many women were either denied the ability to or chose not to name the identity of their abusers, further underlining the simple fact that East German society failed to

---

investigate and therefore respect the experiences of women in and after the war. There are no physical memorials built in Germany to honour the suffering of wartime rape victims, so the Soviet War Memorial has been transformed, by some, to serve this purpose. The renaming of this site, as “The Tomb to the Unknown Rapist” illustrates the multitude of interpretations that sites of memory garner, in addition, the Soviet War Memorial is being reclaimed through an expansion and complication of the history that the site represents.

The Big Rape

While the mass sexual violence committed against German women was silenced by some in East Germany, in the West, it was utilized for political gain. James Wakefield Burke’s 1952 novel The Big Rape demonstrates the way that the public memory of victims of mass rape was utilized by post-war Germany. Written by an American war correspondent this fictional account discusses the historical realities that many German women faced at the end of the Second World War and into the post-war period. The Big Rape follows the life of Lilo Markgraf, a Hitler Youth leader throughout the Second World War and the period of occupation by the Red Army. It discusses the physical and moral destruction of Berlin, the utter shock at the German defeat that believers in National Socialism experienced, the reality of mass sexual

---

177 Ash, “The Rape of Berlin.”
178 Júlia Garraio, “Hordes of Rapists: The Instrumentalization of Sexual Violence in German Cold War Anti-Communist Discourses,” RCCS Annual Review 5, no. 5 (October 2013): 49 & 57. Garraio argues that The Big Rape was published as an American propaganda novel, “sponsored by U.S. authorities in the context of the fight against the Soviet Union’s ideological influences and expansion on German soil.”
violence, and the struggle to survive. In the 1950s tensions were very high between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Burke’s novel fits into a larger cultural, political, and diplomatic narrative of the 1950s in which Germans, with the help of their American occupiers, sought to transform themselves into victims of the Second World War. Burke highlights the inhumanity and brutality that Soviet soldiers committed against the ‘helpless’ German women, he discusses instances of horrific sexual violence committed by Red Army soldiers, he also humanizes both German women and the German soldiers. This novel is a fascinating contribution to the public memory discourse surrounding victims of mass rape, while through its engagement with the historical reality of mass rape only years after they occurred it demonstrates the utilization of women’s experiences of sexual violence for political purposes.

Throughout The Big Rape Burke depicts the main character, Lilo, as a hero; she experiences dislocation, the loss of her father’s business, witnesses the rape of her mother and sister at the hands of Soviet soldiers, and the destruction of her beloved country. These hardships, in addition to her willingness to aid two young Jewish girls, housing them and getting them much needed medical attention also contribute to the creation of Lilo, a former Nazi, as a hero. This characterization is especially surprising considering the novel’s release in the aftermath of the murderous actions of the Nazis throughout the Holocaust and the Second World War. Burke’s description of Lilo as a hero, who works to survive against all odds and the Soviet soldiers as ‘wild beasts’ who

---

180 Burke, The Big Rape.  
take out their anger at all Germans through sexual violence is symptomatic of the general atmosphere of the Cold War. Although *The Big Rape* discusses the rape of German women at the end of the Second World War it does not adequately allow the victim’s experiences to be purely expressed, rather, it demonstrates the way that these women’s rapes were used by Western Allies to instill the Soviet Union as the enemy.

Júlia Garraio states that *The Big Rape* was “hugely successful in 1950s Germany” although fictionalized, this novel does tell the story of a German woman as a victim of mass rape and therefore contributes that historical narrative to the public memory. The public reaction to Burke’s novel can be examined through Sam Hunter’s August 3, 1952 review of *The Big Rape* titled “A City Humiliated” in the *New York Times*. In this overall critical review Hunter briefly presents the plot of the novel, and allows his understanding of these events to become clear. He writes that “Lilo survives the occupation by a combination of guile and ferocity” only to later “catch the moral malady of Berlin to become the submissive mistress of an N.K.V.D. officer.” Hunter’s opinion on the character of Lilo is revealed here, he praises her for avoiding the sexually violent advances of soldiers, yet is blamed for her inability to fight those of a high-ranking Soviet officer. Hunter claims that the character of Lilo is morally ill, along with the rest of Berlin, because she fails to outwit the Soviet officer, knowing she would surely lose a physical fight. He does not put forward the culpability of the Russian soldier, but rather blames Lilo for her rape; a reality which mirrors the public

---

186 Garraio, “Hordes of Rapists,” 49.
188 Hunter, "A City Humiliated."
189 Hunter, "A City Humiliated."
discourse surrounding sexual violence in the 1950s, arguably continuing into modern discussions.

As we shall see, widespread discussions of women’s experiences of sexual violence did not emerge until the rise of second wave feminism, which peaked in the 1970s. The public discourse surrounding sexual violence in the 1950s, especially in West Germany was relatively silent; ideals of the nuclear family, encouraging women to return to the home to become wives and mothers were emphasized. Women’s rights were not categorized as paramount to the advancement of the West German society during this time period, rather, during this time period, on the rare occasion that sexual violence was discussed it was not analyzed as an overarching gendered issue. It was understood to be an isolated event, the study of rape as an instance of patriarchal violence did not emerged until the 1970s. This view was accompanied by ideas, such as those expressed by Hunter, that women were responsible for avoiding or stopping rape instead of men being viewed as responsible for their expression of sexual violence.

Hunter goes on to summarize his opinions on Burke’s The Big Rape, stating that he does not doubt that “the gory details of the Russian occupation are real, as is the Berliner’s talent for surviving moral erosion, with no profound damage to his self-esteem.” However, he takes issue with “the author’s glibness, vulgarizations and crashing clichés [that] smother the voice of Berlin”, resisting the author’s discussion of the acts of sexual violence, and not the fact that the acts themselves took place.

---

192 Moeller, “Emerging From the Rubble,” 33-34.
193 Schwartz, “Narrating Wartime Rape,” 2.
194 Hunter, "A City Humiliated."
195 Hunter, "A City Humiliated."
Therefore, Hunter’s review illustrates that the postwar public resisted Burke’s novel and discussions of the rape of German women on the basis of a more generalized resistance of candid dialogue of sex and sexual violence.

The utilization of women’s experiences of rape are demonstrated through the novel’s title and its content; *The Big Rape* works to draw in readers and also surprise them with the discussion of topic often absent from 1950s discourses.\(^{196}\) In the form of a book, read widely in both the United States and Germany, Burke’s novel illustrates the way that victims of rape were ‘allowed’ to exist in the public memory of the Second World War, that is through the prescribed limitations of the politics of the Cold War.\(^{197}\) Rape could only be discussed when it was used to ensure that the Soviet Union was viewed as immoral, violent, and evil. *The Big Rape* serves as evidence to the complicated discourse surrounding the victim-perpetrator binary in the post Second World War world as well as the way in which the public memory of victims of mass rape evolved throughout the Cold War and after reunification. The novel’s main character, Lilo appears to be the story’s hero; she faces adversity, witnesses violence and destruction, overcomes obstacles, until she too becomes a victim of sexual violence. However, Burke’s representation of Lilo is juxtaposed to her identity during the Third Reich, that of a Hitler Youth leader. Burke, through the character of Lilo, challenges the victim-perpetrator binary as Lilo is both a perpetrator of National Socialism through her role as a teacher of a doctrine of hate and violence and a victim of mass rape of by Allied soldiers at the end of the Second World War.\(^{198}\)

---

198 Burke, *The Big Rape*. 
Burke goes one step further to complicate simplistic understandings of good and bad, victim and perpetrator, through Lilo’s protection of two young Jewish girls who were raped by Red Army soldiers. Lilo witnesses the rape of two young Jewish girls by Red Army soldiers, although she does not do anything to stop the sexual assaults from happening – not out of hatred for the girls for their Jewish identity but because she recognizes that she is unable to stop it from occurring – after the rapes Lilo takes the girls with her, gives them a place to sleep and tries to get them the medical attention that they need.199 This act complicates the character of Lilo, but also the category of people that she represents in the novel, German civilians, as it is an act of humanity from a German towards Jewish people, the very people that the Nazis attempted to destroy. This representation of a German civilian as complicated, as not simply perpetrator or victim as well as the discussion of the crimes committed against the Jewish population was unique in the 1950s. According to the historiography of German victimhood, Germans tended to see themselves as simply as victims of the Second World, primarily of bombings, air raids, and relocations this novel does not simply present Germans in this way. Rather, I would argue Burke presents a very nuanced understanding of Lilo, as a representative of the German people. In addition, *The Big Rape* discusses the crimes committed against Jewish people, and the double victimization that German women suffered as victims of rape.200 Acknowledging that *The Big Rape* was written by an American it is still important to recognize the unique content of this book, that it

199 Burke, *The Big Rape*.
grapples with topics that were not common in the historical discourse until after the end of the Cold War.

Finally, it is vital to not only acknowledge the unique discourse that this novel engages with but also the way this novel was received. As Hunter’s book review illustrates Burke’s book was not highly thought of, a reality echoed by the fact that book is no longer in print. University libraries do not seem to carry it, and the only way I would find a copy was by buying a used copy. This solidifies the opinion that Burke’s book did not comfortably fit into public memory discourse that was established in the 1950s, or that the public opinion it was written to serve has changed. Together the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park and The Big Rape illustrate that the public memory of German women’s experiences in the Second World War can be found in not only what stories were told and what was built, but also in what stories were silenced, or rejected. This awarding of primacy to some experiences has been vital to the formation of public memory in postwar Germany, one that was built from the utilization of experiences, especially those of women.²⁰¹

A Woman in Berlin

For 65 years, Gabriele Köpp remained silent about her experience as a victim of the mass rape inflicted upon German women in the final days of the Second World War. In a 2010 interview discussing her book, Why Did I Have to Be a Girl?, she stated, “I was hardly more than a child. Writing this has not been easy, but I had no choice: who else would do it?”²⁰² Even though more than 860,000 German women were victims of

the sexual violence perpetrated by Allied troops at war’s end, Köpp’s memoir was one of the first to be published in Germany under the victim’s name, and was met with widespread criticism. While in recent years there has been an increased publication of memoirs detailing German women’s experiences of rape in the final days of the Second World War, perhaps the most famous was published in the 1950s, *A Woman in Berlin* by an anonymous author. *A Woman in Berlin* is the diary of a woman who lived in the city of Berlin for the final months of the Second World War; the narrator, who wished to remain anonymous, was a victim of rape by many Red Army soldiers. Throughout the book, the author openly and consistently portrays her experience as a woman, a German, and a victim of sexual violence at the end of the war into the immediate post-war period. In addition, she grapples with questions of individual agency, the formation and destruction of community, as well as questions of morality and humanity. This is an incredibly rich source which highlights many of the historical realities German women faced in this point in history while also illustrating the complicated divisions between conceptions of victim, perpetrator, and bystander in a time of war.

The turbulent publication history of *A Woman in Berlin* – that of its publication, harsh reviews, and the lengthy period between publications – as well as the way that the author narrates her experiences of sexual violence on both an individual and collective

---


205 In the 2010 interview with Beyer, Köpp expresses the long-lasting impacts of these rapes and the public memory that surrounded her private trauma. She goes on to describe the way her fellow Germans betrayed her, encouraging soldiers to rape her and not them; actions resulting in Köpp’s anger towards her fellow German citizens. She outlines the impact that these acts of sexual violence had her relationship with her body, her family, and her emotional development.
level illustrate the evolution of the public memory of German women as victims of sexual violence. Throughout the diary the anonymous author describes not only her experiences as a victim of sexual violence, but also her immense hunger, material poverty, the formation and destruction of a sense of community, her national identity, and her work as a rubble-woman. Despite its multi-dimensional discourse, *A Woman in Berlin* entered public memory as a book about the mass rape of German women. This public memory was influenced by the author’s narration of her experiences on both an individual and a collective level, descriptions which influenced the public discourse and therefore memory of and surrounding the mass rape of German women.

To begin, the author discusses her experience as an individual on May 1st 1945, she writes, “What does it mean – rape? When I said the word for the first time aloud, Friday evening in the basement, it sent shivers down my spine. Now I can think it and write it with an untrembling hand, say it out loud to get used to hearing it said. It sounds like the absolute worst, the end of everything – but it’s not”. Here, the author illustrates her personal resilience, she challenges the social understandings of rape. An understanding that perhaps told German women of the time that rape was the worst possible thing that could befall them – leading many women to commit suicide at the threat of or the aftermath of rape. Following that same act of violence the author vows to “find a wolf to keep away the pack” referencing her choice to find one high-ranking Russian soldier to form a sexual relationship with and therefore discourage other

---

soldiers from attacking her. This is an individual choice that the author makes, a decision made in an attempt to achieve greater individual security. She addresses her rape on an individual level considering the physical, emotional, and social implications of these acts of sexual violence as they pertain to her. She writes “physically I feel a little better, though, now that I am doing something, determined to be more than a mere mute booty, a spoil of war…. Only to state a short time later that she is “worried about her taboo”. This quotation illustrates that the anonymous author is forced to address the physical and the social realities of rape, that in acting to reduce her exposure to sexual violence she also considers the way her society will judge her for the choice to form a relationship with a so-called ‘wolf’.

Simultaneously, the author describes how her experience as a victim of sexual violence occurred on an a collective level, she writes, “there’s a split between my aloofness, the desire to keep my private life to myself, and the urge to be like everyone else, to belong to the nation, to abide and to suffer history together”. Even though she wrote this before the Russians arrived in Berlin and she was raped, this quote still highlights the way in which the author foresaw these events, as collective in nature. She describes the final days of the Second World War as the Russian army approached Berlin, referencing how many women feared the threat of sexual violence. She states that “…the Russians are already at the Teltow Canal. The women seem to have reached an unspoken agreement – all of a sudden no one is bringing it up ‘that subject’”. This illustrates that even before the sexual violence has occurred to and around the author,

she along with her fellow women shared a collective fear of the threat of rape. This collective experience is further explained by the author through her statement that “slowly but surely we’re starting to view all the raping with a sense of humor – gallows humor”. The author refers to her fellow victims as “we” and identifies the common response and system of dealing with their collective trauma, by talking to each other and sharing their experiences. A reality once again illustrated through the author’s greeting to her fellow women, “How many times?” therefore asking not if, but rather asking how many times they have experienced rape. Further instilling the historical reality that sexual violence amongst German women in this time frame, at least in Berlin, was nearly universal. It is clear throughout A Woman in Berlin that the author’s identity is one of victim, both individually and collectively, however her identity is further complicated by her acknowledgement of her actions. Throughout the diary Anonymous discusses the destruction that her nation carried out against marginalized groups, and her initial support of National Socialism and the violence that it brought. Although these references are brief, they illustrate the way the author sees herself; she clearly understands, to some degree, the role that her actions played in the rise of National Socialism. She portrays the experience of woman, like many people in times of war, that was both perpetrator and victim and cannot be simply defined by either.

In order to grasp the significance that the rejection of this diary holds in public memory discussions it is not only vital to understand what the author says in the source but also the public reaction to the book’s publication. A Woman in Berlin has a

---

214 Anonymous, A Woman in Berlin, 121.
particularly interesting publication history that highlights the internationality of the
postwar discussions of German women’s experiences of rape. The manuscript of what
would become *A Woman in Berlin* was entrusted by the anonymous author to Kurt W.
Marek a German publisher who moved from Germany to the United States after the war
and published the diary there in English in 1954.217 In 1959 after an exhaustive search
the diary was published for the first time in German by the Swiss publisher Helmut
Kossodo.218 This translated version was met with very harsh criticism in German
society; a response that German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger explains by stating
“German readers were obviously not ready to face some uncomfortable truths, and the
book was met with either hostility or silence.”219 In the forward from the 2005 printing
of the book Enzensberger further explores the public reaction to the diary, outlining that
one of the reviewers “complained about about the author’s ‘shameless immorality.’”220
The anonymous author was criticized for discussing the reality of German women’s rape
at the hands of Russian soldiers, one of the reasons that Enzensberger cites as an
explanation as to why “diary was quickly relegated to obscurity” in the 1950s.221
Germans came to see their own suffering through a narrow and simplistic lens of
victimization immediately after the Second World War and into the 1950s. An
understanding which emphasizes the memory of the German experience on the Eastern
front in the final days of the war – that of women and children fleeing the advancing
Red Army and German soldiers captured and killed.222 This focus on their own suffering

222 Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims", 84.
allowed the German people to acknowledge the collapse of the Nazi regime without
dealing with the crimes of it, or their role as perpetrators.223 This understanding fails to
explain the German rejection of *A Woman in Berlin* because the anonymous author’s
experiences should have fit into the historiographical trend of German victimhood in the
1950s. This inconsistency leads to a questioning of the aspects of *A Woman in Berlin*
that failed to align with the identity of the German victim of the 1950s. Perhaps it was
her discussion of sex and sexual violence, her commentary on humanity, or simply that
it was a female narrative.224

After the harsh criticism the diary received in 1959, the author refused to have
her book republished for the rest of her life, that in itself highlighting the feelings of
rejection that the author faced.225 Not only did her nation refuse to address the topic in
terms of public memory, but even her fellow Germans, possibly fellow victims, did not
want to hear her story. *A Woman in Berlin* was not published again until 2003, after the
author’s death. When the diary was published following the Cold War it was more
widely accepted; once again signaling a social change, aspects of society must have
changed between 1950 and 1990 in German society for this narrative to be accepted.226

*A Woman in Berlin*’s publication history and the anonymous author’s recounting
of her own experience as a victim of mass rape are both important to understanding the
public memory of German women in the Second World War. *A Woman in Berlin* was
vehemently rejected by 1950s society, it was “met with either hostility or silence”; a

---

223 Moeller, “Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims”, 86.
1954 *New York Times* book review illustrates that perhaps, for some, the response to this book was not quite so simple.\textsuperscript{227} Frances Keene’s “Survivors of the Fall” discusses both *A Woman in Berlin* and Frances Favelli’s *The Dancing Bear*, two books that are set in the post Second World War period however in different locations, Berlin and Britain. Keene reviews the many qualities of the anonymous diary, referencing the author as a “trapped Berliner” who faces the “horror of violation, hunger, and swift-learned expediency.”\textsuperscript{228} In doing so, Keene associates legitimacy and sympathy to the main character’s suffering, however, Keene does not stop there with her exploration of the identity of the narrator. She highlights that the anonymous author “does not question the fact that the concentration camps existed” and “notes with disgust that no popular reaction of any magnitude was ever expressed.”\textsuperscript{229} Through this emphasis Keene does many things, she references the reality that the Nazis systematically killed people in the camp system and the German people were aware of this. She goes on to highlight the reality that the author was part of the society that supported the Third Reich; that the author was aware of the destructive and murderous intentions of the Nazi organization and that even though the author did not do anything to actively stop the violence she was disgusted with its acceptance throughout society.\textsuperscript{230} Keene’s article indirectly addresses the reality that the author of *A Woman in Berlin* defies the victim-perpetrator binary by outlining her actions in both identities, however, Keene fails to call for this reality to be central in the treatment of Anonymous as a historical actor.

---

\textsuperscript{227} Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, xv.


\textsuperscript{229} Keene, "Survivors Of the Fall," 1.

\textsuperscript{230} Keene, "Survivors Of the Fall," 30.
Keene goes on to reinforce the narrative that the mass rape of German women occurred solely at the hands of Red Army soldiers, granted that it the only experience that the anonymous author experiences and therefore chronicles. However, it is important to acknowledge how, why, and when this narrative that the Red Army was solely responsible for the rape of German women formed. Throughout the Cold War there was very little, if anything written in North American media stating that non-Soviet Allied soldiers raped civilian women at the end of the Second World War. It was not until after 1990 that both a public memory and historiographical account emerged in which rape was a violent act that was carried out by soldiers in every uniform. Keene goes on state that *A Woman in Berlin* reminds the public “that all ‘liberators’ behave in varying degrees within a single pattern” and in doing so challenges the very narrative of the Red Army ‘liberators’ in Germany. As has been evident in this chapter, the idea that Soviet soldiers liberated Germany was firmly entrenched, however, as Keene points out that was not the way that many Germans, especially women, experienced the end of the Second World War. While this article does challenge some ideas of the victim and perpetrator binary it does conform to the political realities of the historical context in which the United States and the Soviet Union were opposed to one another. This article published in the United States clearly challenges the concept that the Soviet Union liberated the German nation, but rather they committed innumerable acts of sexual violence. Keene states in reference to the so-called Soviet liberation, “this diary makes it quite clear that Russians, regardless of

232 Keene, "Survivors Of the Fall," 30.
education, or ethnic derivation, behaved during the first ten days with brutality.” Keene’s article utilizes the sexual violence that Anonymous experienced in service of the political tensions of the Cold War, that is the idea that the United States represented good and that the Soviet Union represented evil.

Despite her rejection of the narrative in which Red Army soldiers were liberators, Keene does not subscribe to the seemingly opposing argument, that of Germans as victims narrative, nor does she illustrate much sympathy for the violence that the anonymous author experienced. Rather, Keene emphasizes the way in which the German people came to support the Nazi organization; finding it unnecessary to discuss the way in which women’s bodies were brutalized at war’s end. Keene’s review illustrates that in the 1950s German women’s identity as perpetrators, through their support of and participation in the German war machine superseded their identity as victims of mass sexual violence, and they, at the time, could not exist in the public memory of the Second World War as both perpetrators and victims.

*A Woman in Berlin* was published in German in 1959 and was met with more hostility in German society that it saw in the United States; as a result, the author refused to have the book republished in her lifetime. After she died the book was republished in 2003, in both English and German, and received a very different response. This response is embodied in the 2005 *New York Times* article titled “My City of Ruins: A memoir of life in Berlin in the immediate aftermath of World War II” by

---

234 Keene, “Survivors Of the Fall,” 30.
235 Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 84.
236 Frederick Kempe referenced the June, 12, 1959 publication of a review of *Eine Frau in Berlin* titled “Schlechter Dienst an der Berlinerin / Bestseller im Ausland — Ein Verfälschender Sonderfall” (“Bad service to the Berliner / Bestseller abroad - A falsifying special case”). Written by Maria Sack and published in the *Tagesspiegel*, this review is an example of the harsh criticism that the diary received in German society.
Joseph Kanon. The half a century between the events and his writing granted Kanon a perspective not available to Keene, Kanon’s positive review of the diary addresses not only the interest it offers the reader but also its historical significance. He addresses the 1950s reception of *A Woman in Berlin* writing that “in the atmosphere of 50 years ago, what had happened in Berlin in 1945 seemed an affront. Like so much else, the book was best forgotten.”

Although Kanon avoids stating the gender-based reasons for the diary’s contents to be rejected from the German public memory of the Second World War, he does discuss how the events were gendered in character, that is acts carried out on a largely female civilian population by a largely male population.

Kanon goes on to challenge understandings of rape and the historical study of rape in war; reflecting on the diary’s contents he writes that “the population was largely female and the dramatic events here are rapes – repeated rapes, groups rapes, violent rapes, accommodating rapes.” He is addressing not only the degree of violence that took place in this context, but also the idea that emerged that women, such as the anonymous author, were not raped but rather chose to have sex with occupation soldiers. The term “accommodating rapes” reflects the reality that many German women were raped by soldiers and in return they received food, water, or protection, or that German women may have chosen a coerced relationship with one high-ranking officer instead of experiencing sexual violence from a multitude of unknown soldiers. This is an indirect reference to statements made in *A Woman in Berlin* in which the author reflects on her sexual experiences during the immediate postwar period, debating if she feels

---

238 Kanon, "My City in Ruins,” 12.
239 Kanon, "My City in Ruins,” 12.
that sexual intercourse with one of the men was in fact rape.\footnote{Anonymous, \textit{A Woman in Berlin}, 115.} Such statements that illustrate the wide range of sexual violence that German women experienced were used in the book’s reception, some of which argued that women who came forward as victims of sexual violence were sexually promiscuous and not victims of a gender-based violence. Kanon’s inclusion of accommodating rape challenges this assessment of German women’s choices or lack therefore in the immediate aftermath of war, and in doing so, further illustrates the wide-spread nature of this type of violence. He goes on to challenge historical understandings of wartime rape, in which it was “the fashion to think of rape as a military tactic as it was in Bosnia, but here it appears in its more familiar aspect: crude men seizing their spoils of war, as barbarous as Goebbels had promised.”\footnote{Kanon, "My City in Ruins," 12.} Kanon’s assessment does challenge the discourse surrounding wartime sexual violence, however I do not think he goes far enough in exposing the reality of gender relations that produce mass rape on this scale or the understandings of gender that shape public memory.

This review goes on to support the enormous reality of these acts with statistics of the number of women victimized, and argues that \textit{A Woman in Berlin} inserts humanity into dehumanizing statistics. Kanon goes on to point out that although the anonymous author’s reflection on her experiences as a victim of rape, the diary also contains her many diverse experiences, such as being confined to a bomb shelter for many hours, forced labour, and the breakdown of community. Kanon emphasizes the author’s reflection on German society under National Socialism; where Keene
ultimately sees the author as a perpetrator despite her victimization. Kanon credits the author with her ability to see the destruction that her government brought on herself, her nation, and the people of Europe.\textsuperscript{242} This review signifies the evolution of the public memory of the final days and aftermath of the Second World War, Kanon argues that through \textit{A Woman in Berlin} “she has given us something that transcends shame and fear: the ability to see war as its victims see it.”\textsuperscript{243} In this statement Kanon sees Anonymous as a victim thus illustrating the evolution of public memory surrounding German women as victims of mass rape; 60 years after the events took place the memory of these women’s experience began to see them in their entirety, as both perpetrator of National Socialism and as a victim of mass rape.\textsuperscript{244}

The publication history of \textit{A Woman in Berlin} and the responses it received at those respective times illustrates the evolution of the public memory of victims of mass rape. The 1950s rejection of the diary in both the United States and Germany by readers and reviewers alike is microcosmic evidence of a macrocosmic reality in postwar societies, one in which women could not inhabit complex identities; such as simultaneously being a victim and a perpetrator. For many years the public memory of these events went unchanged, as \textit{A Woman in Berlin} was not again published until after the author’s death. The re-emergence of this narrative into the public discourse provides an obvious point for the reassessment of the public memory of German women as victims of mass rape. In 2003, the diary was generally read more widely and received

\textsuperscript{242} Kanon, "My City in Ruins,” 12.
\textsuperscript{243} Kanon, "My City in Ruins,” 12.
\textsuperscript{244} Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 89. Krimmer discusses the inability for the simple perpetrator-victim binary to capture to entirety of acts of rape.
more positive reviews than in decades before, a reaction that is evidence to a larger shift in public memory, in which previously silenced or ignored victim groups were included as such.\textsuperscript{245} It is also important to acknowledge that although the anonymous author’s suffering came to heard through her book, this narrative was confined to the limits of a book. Although still a memorial, a published diary such as this, is not as accessible to the general public as a stone memorial; therefore, the public memory of victims of mass rape through \textit{A Woman in Berlin} is inherently limited. Similar to the analysis of the Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park and \textit{The Big Rape, A Woman in Berlin} illustrates how the public memory of events can be found not only in what is built, written, or created on a topic but also in their silencing or destruction.

As a result of a combination of factors, such as the changing socio-political dimensions of Germany after reunification and the death of the author, the diary \textit{A Woman in Berlin} was republished in 2003 and became a bestseller in Germany.\textsuperscript{246} This re-emergence of Anonymous’ experiences into public discussions was not without criticism, such criticism came in the form of a project led by journalist Jens Bisky to uncover the anonymous author’s identity.\textsuperscript{247} Veiled under the premise that he was doing so to ensure the validity of the diary, Bisky’s actions and the tendency for those who study \textit{A Woman in Berlin} to dissect the author’s identity in order to believe her, reveals more about that society than the author herself.\textsuperscript{248} This desire to reveal the identity of Anonymous reflects the way in which gendered reactions to the mass rape of German

\begin{footnotes}
\item[245] Schwartz, “Narrating Wartime Rapes,” 2.
\item[246] Schwartz, ”Narrating Wartime Rapes,” 3.
\item[247] Schwartz, ”Narrating Wartime Rapes,” 3.
\item[248] Throughout this project I have made conscious choice to not name the anonymous author of \textit{A Woman in Berlin} (although her identity was uncovered by researchers). I believe that the act of naming the anonymous woman too often lead directly to narratives of victim-blaming.
\end{footnotes}
women did not disappear but changed throughout the Cold War. Bisky’s interest in her pre-war life reflect the broader reality that the lives of victims of rape influence the degree to which their experiences are viewed as important and legitimate.\(^{249}\) In response to such investigations many scholars have chosen to acknowledge the wishes of the author and refer to her anonymous identity. Overall, the re-publication of the diary and its popularity in German society illustrate the evolving public memory surrounding the victims of mass sexual violence at the end of the Second World War.

The narrative *A Woman in Berlin* arguably garnered its highest degree of notoriety with the 2006 release of the film *Eine Frau in Berlin* directed by Max Färberböck.\(^{250}\) This film, like the diary, follows the experiences of a 30-year-old woman living in Berlin in the Spring of 1945. The main character, played by German actress Nina Höss duplicates the character developed through the diary, that of a fearful, desperate, yet strong woman in the face of the destruction of her criminal nation.\(^{251}\) The artistic form of this contribution to the public memory is vital to understanding its significance. In one sense, the use of film rather than a book translates into a higher degree of availability to the public; however, the presentation of this set of experiences as fiction is also problematic. Presented a film, *Eine Frau in Berlin* tended to be critiqued for its cinematic qualities, and received less critical attention from historians. Two of the film’s reviews appeared in American media, demonstrating not only the

---

\(^{249}\) Schwartz, “Narrating Wartime Rapes,” 3.

\(^{250}\) Schwartz, ”Narrating Wartime Rapes,” 2; *Anonyma : Eine Frau in Berlin = a Woman in Berlin*. Screenplay by Max Färberböck and Catharina Schuchmann. Produced by Günter Rohrbach, Jacek Gaczkowski, Piotr Strzelecki, and Martin Moszkowicz. Directed by Benedict Neuenfels, Ewa J Linda, Zbigniew Preisner, Uli Hanisch, Lucia Faust, Anonyma, Anonyma, Constantin Film (Firm), Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Tempus (Production Company), Strand Releasing (Firm), and Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen. Strand Releasing, 2009. DVD.

\(^{251}\) *Anonyma : Eine Frau in Berlin = a Woman in Berlin.*
international attention this movie received but also the way in which critics approached this controversial topic.

Published on *Variety*’s online magazine Eddie Cockrell’s film review simply titled “A Woman in Berlin” scratches the surface of the film’s historical importance, yet critiques the film for “wallow[ing] in the depravity its condemning.” Cockrell focuses on the the actors and the parts they play, the casts’ overall ability to work together, and the set design for the film. He even goes on to acknowledge that a similar subject matter is dealt with in Helke Sander’s film *BeFreier und Befreite*, however he incorrectly states that the controversy surrounding the diary *A Woman in Berlin* began with the release of Sander’s film. Cockrell fails to acknowledge the gendered complexities that contributed to the relative silence surrounding the diary, overlooking the ways that understandings of sexual violence and German victimhood limited the expression of women’s wartime experiences. This review is therefore important in the study of the public memory of these experiences because in academic discussion it is often argued that there was not a complete silence surrounding the mass rape of German women, which is true to a certain extent. However, this article highlights the reality that outside of academic discourses, that is in public discussions historical nuances are, at times, left out. The resulting gap in contextual information therefore changes the way that the public consumes the memory of that source, in this case the film, presents to the audience.

---

253 Cockrell, "A Woman in Berlin."
254 Cockrell, "A Woman in Berlin."
Taking a different tone than that of Cockrell’s simplistic review is Kenneth Turan’s 2009 review of the film *A Woman in Berlin* in the *Los Angeles Times*, he refers to the film as “intelligent, provocative and intensely dramatic.”

Drawing the reader into the film and its surrounding controversy Turan begins by stating that “‘A Woman in Berlin’ is the best movie you’re not going to see this year.”

He explains that the subject matter of the film will deter viewers from seeing it, referencing the 50-year scandal in Germany that surrounds the narrative. Turan goes on to explain the diary’s turbulent publication history, a vital aspect of the film’s place in public understanding and memory. He agrees with the popular point of view that the mass rape of German women “has not been dealt with or even recognized” and “one of the war’s last taboo areas.”

Turan gives Färberböck’s *Eine Frau in Berlin* an overwhelmingly positive review, he discusses the topic area of the film without prefacing it with the acknowledgment that the Anonymous author cannot be viewed solely as a victim.

This discourse, that is, the discussion of the Anonymous author’s victimization without contrast to her perpetrator status, is relatively recent in public and academic discussions of the memory of victims of mass sexual violence. Turan’s review demonstrates the evolving discourse surrounding the victim-perpetrator binary that has defined the public memory of *A Woman in Berlin* since its release.

In her article “Narrating Wartime Rapes and Trauma in A Woman in Berlin” Agatha Schwartz argues that “the silence around women’s experience of the rapes, [after the 1959 book release] which were aimed at destroying female agency, served to

---

256 Turan, ”A Woman in Berlin’.
257 Turan, ”A Woman in Berlin’.
258 Turan, ”A Woman in Berlin’.
reconstruct the traumatized masculinity of German men.” 

Therefore, that the rejection of the diary in Germany (primarily available in the West) was based on socio-political ideas of the reassertion of masculinity following the destruction of the Nazi ideology focused on hyper-masculinity. 

Therefore, Schwartz hypothesizes that narratives of wartime rape were able to garner greater interest after the reestablishment of traditional ideas of masculinity and the introduction of second-wave feminist ideas during the Cold War. Based on this, the general acceptance of both the diary and the film version of *A Woman in Berlin* in the early 2000s is better understood; masculine ideas were firmly entrenched in society when these narratives of mass rape were reintroduced, thus they posed less of a threat to the social fabric than they did in the 1950s and 1960s. 

Despite the relatively positive reviews that the film received in the United States, Schwartz argues that Färberböck’s film received a “mixed reception” in Germany. Júlia Garraio explains this reaction in German society as a result of “the film’s failure to successfully navigate the fine line between a discourse of German victimhood and wartime guilt something at which, she contends, the diary succeeds much better.” Despite the varied opinion on the film’s ability to both entertain and achieve a fine political balance, Schwartz does praise the book and the film released in the 2000s as responsible for igniting initiatives to for trauma survivors to get access to counselling. Although the film is, at times, problematic it achieved and continues to achieve some of the goals that sites of memory aim to accomplish, that is provoking a public discussion around

---

historical events. Overall, the discourse surrounding the multiple releases of *A Woman in Berlin* demonstrates the limitations placed on the memories of women’s experiences of rape at the end of the Second World War, and the rejection of narratives that do not conform to these restrictions.

**BeFreier und Befreite**

The utilization of German women’s experiences of sexual violence is also demonstrated through Helke Sander’s 1992 film *BeFreier und Befreite. Krieg, Vergewaltigungen, Kinder* (Liberators/Johns Take Liberties: War, Rape, and Children), its accompanying book, and the reactions it received. Released after the reunification of Germany, Sander claimed to be “breaking the taboo” surrounding the mass rape of German women. The historical context of the film’s release is vital to understanding the film’s significance, the lessening of tensions between the Soviet Union and United States, a rivalry that was carried out through the two Germanies, and the subsequent reunification of the two Germanies. This is significant because although the mass rape of German women by occupation soldiers was introduced in the divided Germanies the narrative presented by Sander breaks from the limitations of this Cold War discourse, ideas that restricted who was able to narrate their experiences, who could be categorized as victims, and who were perpetrators.266

Sander’s film is primarily comprised of victim testimony gathered through interviews with the filmmaker and film footage from the time period; she converses with victims of rape, former Soviet soldiers, and the children born from these sexual interactions.267 *BeFreier und Befreite* grapples not only with the experiences of victims

---

267 *Befreier und Befreite 1, 1*. Bremen: BIFF Bremer Institut Film/Fernsehen,
of rape, it also addresses what the film’s director sees as a problematic public memory, or lack thereof. Therefore, the events are addressed in this work not only occurred in the immediate post war period but continued throughout the division of Germany. Sander’s choice of title for her film is immensely important to understanding exactly what Sander is discussing in her film. She is challenging the term “liberators” that was used to describe Allied soldiers who occupied Germany at the end of the Second World War, Sander’s choice to capitalize the word “Freier” which translates to a man who visits a prostitute or a “John” within the word “BeFreier” demonstrates this criticism of the soldier as ‘liberator’ narrative. Through her film Sander argues that they did not simply ‘liberate’ the Germany people, but took ‘liberties’ such as looting and rape; and that these ‘liberties’ were deemed acceptable in the postwar world, especially East Germany, because of their ‘liberator’ status. In this title, Sander is not only exposing the violence that was silenced in postwar Germany, but also the way in which postwar memory in general accommodates violent actions of men (outside of the scope of war) because of their soldier identity.

Sander opens her film with a broad statement surrounding the universality of gender-based sexual violence committed in times of war, connecting the events of 1945 Berlin with instances of mass sexual violence committed in Yugoslavia and Kuwait. Although problematic, through this statement Sander attempted to instill the importance of this film’s topic by reminding the viewer of the continuity of wartime sexual violence throughout history. This point of view was influenced by the emergence of ideas of

268 Bos, "Feminists Interpreting the Politics of Wartime Rape", 1001.
269 Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 84.
270 Sander, Befreier Und Befreite: Krieg, 108.
second-wave feminism that emerged in the United States, and Europe in the 1970s. Based on the time period that BeFreier und Befreite was released it is reasonable to conceive of Sander’s ideas as heavily shaped by scholarship on sexual violence and war yet distanced from nuanced understandings of post-Second World War Germany and discussions of responsibility. Despite the standpoint that rape in times of war is universal Sander argues that a taboo surrounding its study remains. Critics of BeFreier und Befreite used this argument against her film, accusing Sander of not only contributing to the German victimhood narrative, but also presenting a contradiction – how can something be both ever present in war and a taboo? In the introductory chapter of the accompanying book under the same title, Sander further explains her position as a German filmmaker; she states that until the 1959 German language release of A Woman in Berlin the mass rape of German women was not a major topic of postwar study. Sander explains that when women’s experiences were discussed the word ‘rape’ was rarely used therefore creating a “void surrounding the word ‘rape’” which contributed to the erasure of this violence was from public memory.

Sander goes on to state that not only is the study of rape shaped by a failure to recognize its gender-based universality – that is the silencing of women’s experiences in war – but that the understanding of rape in the Second World War is still heavily

---

271 Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 9. Echoing the connections made by Sander, Gebhardt instills the importance of the historical study of the mass rape of German women, in her 2017 book Crimes Unspoken, she states that “war-related rape is a global and traditional problem connected with patriarchal gender roles…”

272 Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape; Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 84.


274 Sander, "Remembering/Forgetting," 17.
influenced by ideas of national identity. This is expressed through the refusal of many Germans to recognize the rapes that German soldiers committed against women in Soviet territory. Sander argues that one of the many struggles she faced in producing BeFreier und Befreite was “describing the singularity of the rapes committed by the Red Army without at the same time thereby defining the Soviet men uniquely as rapists”; therefore that the sexual violence committed by Soviet soldiers against German women in the final days of the Second World War was unlike any other event, while also acknowledging that rape in this historical context was not solely committed by the Red Army, and that not all Soviet soldiers were in fact rapists.

The first screening of BeFreier und Befreite took place at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 1992 and received many positive reviews from both the national and international press. The film gained support as it addressed the abuse of women’s bodies in times of war, and the tendency of these crimes to be ignored in the postwar period. German Studies scholar, Sabine Smith explains that these complimentary reviews were challenged in November 1992 with Gertrude Koch’s critical review titled “Kurzschluss Perspektiven” (“Short Circuit Perspectives”) published in Frankfurter Rundschau which ignited the controversy surrounding the film. However, Smith argues that the controversy surrounding BeFreier und Befreite was not widespread in Germany as it was limited to academic discourse. Therefore,

275 Sander, "Remembering/Forgetting," 18.
276 Sander, "Remembering/Forgetting," 18.
278 Smith, “Interview with Helke Sander,” 252.
Koch’s criticism of the film failed to impact the entirety of the public memory of the mass rape of German women as BeFreier und Befreite was generally received positively in non-academic discourses and ignited a conversation about the silence surround these acts of sexual violence nearly 50 years later. This multifaceted public memory is demonstrated through the responses to the film, as well as the increase in memoirs written by victims of sexual violence published following the film’s release. The evolution of understandings of this event occurred in both academic and non-academic discussions in Germany and the United States; for the purposes of evaluating the public memory of such events I will be focusing on non-academic responses.

Two reviews of Sander’s work, “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger” (“Women: Trophies for the winners”) and “Warum haben die Frauen geschwiegen?” (“Why did the women keep silent?”) address the public non-academic response to the film.280 Appearing in Der Spiegel on July 1 1992, “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger” provides a positive review of the film; the unnamed author outlines the film’s content, Sander’s research process, and the public memory that the film is challenging. They outline the film’s portrayal of victim’s experiences, for example a 65-year-old victim states that she and her fellow victims “were spoils of war, trophies for the winners” and that some women were raped between 20-100 times.281 The research process of Sander and Barbara Johr is then overviewed, the researchers examined diaries, biographies, hospital records from the Berlin Charite, and scholarly documents from the end of the war to


281 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
gather information on the events that they believed to be silenced. Victims were located using newspaper advertisements to encourage women to come forward and share their experiences; testimonies were collected from women who had, in some cases, not discussed their rape for 40 years, from this evidence they came to believe that 1.9 million women and girls were raped during the advance of the Red Army on Berlin.

The author argues that the “book and film are therefore not meant as a crude indictment against Russians rather, they denounce the male aggressiveness that – regardless of nationality – rages again and again in times of war”.

An idea emphasized by the fact that the mass rape of German women in 1945 was not solely committed by Red Army soldiers, but by soldiers of other Allied countries. BeFreier und Befreite discusses the women’s experiences of sexual violence as well as the “repression of crimes” that occurred during the Cold War, that victims experienced “contempt from all sides”. During the Cold War, the public memory of the Second World War focused on German men as victims, while German women’s experiences were silenced. However, this argument is often confused and conflated with the idea that “after all the war crimes that fascist Germany had perpetrated on other peoples, they believed that they had no right to complain”, an idea that the author challenges with the fact that children, who did not take part in politics or the execution of the war were the victims of rape. Therefore, the previous crimes or support of Nazism cannot fully

---

282 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
283 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
284 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
285 Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 92.
286 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
287 “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger”.
explain the violence committed against German women. This article illustrates that even after the release of *BeFreier und Befreite* those who agreed that German women’s experiences of sexual violence were in fact silenced could not yet untangle the many reasons that were used to understand this oppressive silence.

Months after “Frauen: Trophäen Für Die Sieger” was published, Viola Roggenkamp’s article “Warum haben die Frauen geschwiegen?” was published in the German news source *ZeitOnline* on September 25 1992. Roggenkamp takes a more critical approach than that presented in *Der Spiegel*, she examines the topic of the film highlighting that the crimes at the centre of the film occurred in both Germany by Allied soldiers, and on the Eastern front by German soldiers. She emphasizes that the rapes occurred, that it was known throughout society, and “that this was never talked about and never researched is for Helke Sander, ‘the scandal’”. Roggenkamp states that Sander developed anger toward these women for their silence, however it is unclear if that frustration is at the fact that their experiences were silenced or at the women for their silence. Roggenkamp challenges with a line of questioning surrounding Sander’s father, who was a soldier in the German army. This discussion also demonstrates the struggle that historians and the public both face, that of trying to understand historical actors a both victim and perpetrator, soldier and rapist. This idea, that one cannot simultaneously embody two characterizations is a fundamental part of the discourse that argues that German women cannot be studied as victims of rape because they supported

---

288 Roggenkamp, "Warum Haben Die Frauen Geschwiegen?"
289 Roggenkamp, "Warum Haben Die Frauen Geschwiegen?"
290 Roggenkamp, "Warum Haben Die Frauen Geschwiegen?"
the Nazi regime. This gendered understanding is juxtaposed to national histories in which male soldiers are celebrating in the aftermath of war, often heralded for heroism despite the fact that they also killed. The title and Roggenkamp’s inability to discuss the film’s topic without also making clear the crimes of sexual violence were also committed by German soldiers demonstrates a key aspect of the evolution of this public memory. This response, along with many others that grapple with the overall memory of the mass rape of German women demonstrate that post Second World War society cannot seem to discuss the mass sexual violence committed without also discussing German crimes committed on the Eastern front.\textsuperscript{291}

The public discussion surrounding \textit{BeFreier und Befreite} occurred in American news sources in addition to German ones. Caryn James’ article “Critics Notebook: A Diversity of Viewpoints from Reunified Germany” was published in the \textit{The New York Times} on December 18, 1992 and provides an overview of many German films that were released that year. James states that the films examined in that year provide a “window to a country in crisis, vividly reflected through the eyes of some of its most thoughtful and accomplished film makers, both newcomers and familiar names.”\textsuperscript{292} She explains the way that the films released in 1992 are particularly significant because of their proximity to the end of the Cold War and German reunification in 1990; emphasizing the significance of Sander’s work in which “long-silent women” were “given their chance to speak” a concept that was “unthinkable before unification”.\textsuperscript{293}

\textsuperscript{291} Roggenkamp, “Warum Haben Die Frauen Geschwiegen?”
\textsuperscript{293} James, “Critic's Notebook.”
James goes on the provide some critical analysis of the film’s contents and potential, stating that Sander is too focused on discovering the number of rapes that occurred and has an overpowering presence on screen. Rather, James thinks that “the testimony of the women and their children speaks powerfully and eloquently on its own” and therefore should have been given greater focus in the film. Finally, James acknowledges that BeFreier und Befreite would likely not be viewed in great numbers, as many Germans still prefer American films and Sander’s film does not have an American distributor. Unlike the James’ German counterparts, she does not critique the film’s content, she does not preface the focus on German women’s suffering with the suffering they inflicted throughout Europe from 1939-1945.

The discussion of BeFreier und Befreite continued in the United States with the article “Human Rights Watch Film Festival Begins Friday: Movies: ‘Liberators Take Liberties: War, Rape and Children’ – a documentary on German women raped by Allied soldiers – opens the two-week event” published in the Los Angeles Times on September 27 1993. Kevin Thomas begins the article by outlining the goals of the festival that the film is included in, that it is “intended not only to expand awareness of human rights issues but also encourage filmmakers to address them.” Thomas reinforces the narrative that Sander puts forward, that the mass rape of German women was not only an abuse of human rights, through it inclusion in the film festival, but it was also largely silenced in the historical context in which their rapists were regarded as liberators.

294 James, “Critic's Notebook.”
295 James, “Critic's Notebook.”
296 James, “Critic's Notebook.”
297 Thomas, "Human Rights Watch Film Festival."
Similarly to James, Thomas addresses *BeFreier und Befreite* briefly but in doing so does not critique the film’s subject matter, sexual violence committed against German women.\(^{298}\)

These relatively positive reviews of *BeFreier und Befreite* in the public sphere are starkly contrasted to the critical discussions of Sander’s film amongst American academics. Building from the discourse between Sander and Koch, historian Atina Grossman identified her response to the newly released documentary in the 1997 article “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers”. Grossman’s criticism of Sander is based on her belief that Sander’s approach and presentation of these historical events work to simplify a very complex topic.\(^{299}\)

Grossman clarifies that in her criticism of Sander she is not “suggesting that raped German women were not victims (as long as we are stuck with that insufficient vocabulary); there must be no doubt that they were”; through this acknowledgement Grossman is tackling one of the largest problems prohibiting the study of the mass rape of German women, the labelling of historical actors as either victim or perpetrator.\(^{300}\)

Grossman goes on to argue that Sander’s “eagerness to integrate German women into the international transhistorical sisterhood of victims of male violence” that emerges from Sander’s failure to adequately acknowledge the historical context in which these rapes occurred.\(^{301}\) According to Grossman this leads to a “problematic historical slippage and displacement in which German women seem to become the victims

---

\(^{298}\) Thomas, “Human Rights Watch Film Festival.”


primarily of National Socialism and the war, rather than of the failure of National Socialism and defeat in the war.”

It is clear that the debate surrounding BeFreier und Befreite was not resolved with Grossman’s 1997 statements, in her 2007 book Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany she discusses Sander’s work and debates that surround it. Grossman once again firmly positions herself in opposition to the idea that there was a silence surrounding the mass rape of German women in the two Germanies in the aftermath of the Second World War. Rather she argues that it is “the case that the ubiquitous stories of rape were – not denied – but rather downplayed or ‘normalized’ by virtually everyone, including, as we have seen the victims themselves.” Going on to acknowledge that the experiences of rape victims were described differently depending on who was telling them, she fails to realize the way in which this ‘retelling’ or what I would define as utilization for political purposes had the potential to alter who’s stories got to be included in the narrative.

Sander’s 1992 film BeFreier und Befreite claimed to ‘break the taboo’ surrounding the mass rape of German women. Sander instilled the mass rape of German women in the public memory of the Second World War through film, a medium that had the potential to reach audiences that previous forms of memory could not. Although problematic, Sander’s film and its reactions reveals the continuity and change that has occurred since 1945 in discussions of victims of mass rape’s place in the public memory of the war. Critics claimed that Sander did not expose a long supressed narrative, but rather revised the traditional revisionist arguments that see Germans as

---

victims of the Second World War, therefore she reinforced the rigid victim-perpetrator binary that continues to define the study of war.305

Discussions of BeFreier und Befreite are still prefaced with acknowledgements of the crimes of the German Army in the East, and the role of German women as perpetrators. These choices illustrate that German public memory and conceptions of victimhood continue to shape the public discourse surrounding victims of mass rape. The primary sources collected in this chapter reflect that a public memory of the mass rape of German women did in fact, exist; therefore, I am challenging statements made by Sander that there was an complete and overpowering silence surrounding this discourse. However, I am also in opposition to Grossman’s statements that the social and political complexities of the postwar period in Germany did not result in “rape stories [being] denied or silenced.”306 Rather, as the release of BeFreier und Befreite demonstrates the public memory of the victims of mass rape in Germany at the end of the Second World War was and continues to be a highly controversial topic. Where there is controversy there is the creation of a hierarchy of experiences in which that of some individuals is inevitably silenced. Therefore, BeFreier und Befreite and the discussions that have emerged from it, that of complete versus intentional silences contribute to the chapter’s larger thesis that asserts the utilization of the mass rape of German women at the end of the Second World War.307

Conclusion

307 Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy”, 83.
The public memory of German victims of mass rape was confined to limited spaces of society during and after the Cold War – the process of memorialization illustrates that the victims of mass rape were utilized in both East and West Germany, which in some cases resulted in silence and in some the modification of memories. The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park illustrates the way that the memory of victims of mass rape was erased in Eastern Germany through the narrative of soldiers as liberators; an identity solidified by the tendency to ignore the contradictory potential in the victim-perpetrator binary. That is the general failure in the public memory of war, to acknowledge the complex reality present in the memorialization of soldiers, who kill but are also regarded as heroes and who therefore embody the perpetrator and hero historical characterizations. That complexity is rarely presented in aspects of memorialization and is rarely afforded to women in historical study.

The books *The Big Rape* and *A Woman in Berlin*, both released in the 1950s, demonstrate that even in seemingly democratic West Germany, the experiences of victims of mass rape were, when brought into the public discourse, often rejected. Books are arguably easier to ignore than a statue made of stone in the center of a city. However, historians such as Atina Grossman have argued that there was not in fact a silence surrounding the mass rape of German women but that it was commonly discussed in West Germany. I am not contesting her assertion, rather, I am building from it. Grossman argues that in West Germany the experiences of victims of mass rape were discussed informally, amongst families and communities; this thesis illustrates that these conversations failed to translate into national narratives. It highlights the way in which women’s experiences, and the memory of them are often viewed as secondary to
that of men; echoing the sentiments of Agatha Schwartz, women’s experiences of rape were silenced in an effort to do no further damage to German men’s fragile ideas of masculinity in the postwar period.  

Finally, the film *BeFreier und Befreite*, published after the reunification of Germany, demonstrates that even without the social and political limitations of the Cold War, but within the new post-reunification limitations German women’s experiences of sexual violence were not fully accepted into the public memory of the time. Helke Sander’s controversial film and the responses it received demonstrate the way that emerging second wave feminist ideas of female emancipation from patriarchal control contrasted with emerging historical research on the complicity of Germans in the crimes of the Second World War. Many critics identify Sander’s own feminist ideas as blinding to her historical accuracy and understanding the immense complexity of the memory of the mass sexual violence committed against German women.

At various points in the sixty years since they occurred the mass rape of women has been rejected from the official public memory of the German experience of war for various reasons: the division of Germany and the sociopolitical realities, accompanying patriarchal attitudes that defined understandings of sexual violence, statements that these instances of violence were false, and even when the validity of the events was accepted their further study was rejected on the basis of the victims’ lives before the rape, that is their contributions to the Third Reich. These representations of the public memory of women’s wartime experiences, that are more easily hidden from view, are contrasted with physical sites, often in prominent public locations, built to remember men’s

---

wartime experiences. The fact that female historical characters with identities that border both victim and perpetrator are rejected from the national memory of the Second World War while male historical actors who fought in wars and killed are remembered as heroes demonstrates the reality that women and men are given different standards when understood in discussions of public memory.

This idea if furthered by the reality that while there are no physical memorials built to acknowledge the suffering of German women as victims of mass rape, there are many built to honour soldiers. For example, the *Neue Wache* or “The New Guardhouse” in Berlin is officially dedicated to “commemorate the victims of war and tyranny” and is therefore dedicated to many different victim groups. However, elements of this site challenge the totality that this site claims to memorialize. Through the placement of the bodies of an unknown soldier and a victim of a concentration camp on this national site of memory their experiences are given primacy, the primacy of the victim of concentration camp is fitting at this site, however it is the presence of the soldier that is worthy of critical exploration. In addition, the *Neue Wache* holds an enlarged version of Kathe Kollowitz’ artwork titled “Mother with her dead son” originally crafted in the mourning of her son, a soldier who was killed in the First World War. These two aspects of the memorial demonstrate the way men’s experiences in war are allowed to exist in a different way than women’s; soldiers, primarily men at this time, who fought and killed are memorialized on a state level. This memorial leaves the impression that they are not deemed to be perpetrators, but rather heroes who lost their lives in war, although it is reasonable to assume that they too supported the murderous intentions of

---

310 Neue Wache, Berlin, Germany.
the Nazi government. Why then, are women, who, for the most part, did not set out to kill but rather worked in factories, raised children, and were subjected to the resulting revenge not granted an explicit physical acknowledgment in the public memory of the nation’s history like there are for other groups? While this chapter does not grapple with the entirety of this public memory tendency it does effectively explore the way that the memories of German women’s wartime experiences were utilized by both East and West Germany. This utilization, that is the limiting of experiences into molds that serve the social and political goals of the state demonstrates larger historical truths surrounding the way women’s bodies are used in postwar discourses and the establishment of national identities.

The postwar period in Germany was defined by discussions of the nation’s responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism contrasted with discourses of German victimhood. Simultaneously, ideas surrounding sexuality and gender relations were taking place, and were directly linked to the events of the Second World War. In the aftermath of war, physical and social erosion defined the everyday experiences of German civilians; the reactions to this destruction caused by war were different in East and West Germany. Ideas that began to form in the immediate postwar period but were solidified with the official political establishment of the East and West Germany in 1949.\(^{311}\) In East Germany, the postwar treatment of women emphasized their equality under the ideals of socialism, these ideas stress the place of women in the workplace and expanded women’s social roles from the traditional confines of the home.\(^{312}\) However,

\(^{311}\) Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 506-511; Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 84

\(^{312}\) Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 526.
these ideological tenets at times, conflicted with women’s experiences in the Second
World War and its aftermath. In East German society the mass rape of German women
was often silenced as, in many, however not all cases, these acts of sexual violence were
perpetrated by soldiers in the Soviet Red Army.\textsuperscript{313} Their victimizations of German
women contrasted with the postwar narrative of the Soviet Army as liberators of the
German people from the oppression and violence of Nazism.\textsuperscript{314} The memory of the mass
rape of German women, if it had been allowed to exist openly, would have served to
delegitimize the Soviet influence on the emerging nation and challenge the equality that
they boasted of.\textsuperscript{315} This perceived equality would have been shattered with the
acknowledgment that the very same army that liberated the German people committed
large scale acts of sexual violence and the state failed to officially acknowledge the
long-lasting gendered impacts of these crimes.

In comparison, in West Germany the acts of mass sexual violence committed
against German women were discussed, and thus part of the public memory, however
these memories were only allowed to exist within certain parameters. American
influenced West German society emphasized the historical inaccuracy that the mass rape
of German women was a crime committed solely by Soviet soldiers.\textsuperscript{316} This was carried
out in an attempt to further divided the two German state, molding their Soviet
neighbours into criminal and thus less legitimate than themselves.\textsuperscript{317} However, this
emphasis on the Soviets as perpetrators of these crimes left little room for the

\textsuperscript{313} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 550.
\textsuperscript{314} Grossman, \textit{Jews, Germans, and Allies}, 64.
\textsuperscript{315} Krimmer, “Philomela’s Legacy,” 84 & 95; Garraio, “Hordes of Rapists,” 50.
\textsuperscript{317} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 497. & Garraio, "Hordes of Rapists," 46-56.
acknowledgement that British, French, and American soldiers also committed acts of sexual violence against German women. This choice illustrates the utilization of the experiences of some women, and the simultaneous silencing of the experiences of others. This occurred in the context of a West German society that was attempting to reinstate ideas of the nuclear family, and women’s primary role as mothers and wives. The postwar historical context, the way that both states dealt with the experiences of sexual violence, it vital to informing an analysis of the process of public memorialization of women in Germany.

318 Gebhardt, Crimes Unspoken, 2.
4.0 – Chapter Three: “Memories Chiseled in Stone” Public Memory Discourse Surrounding Germany’s *Trümmerfrauen*

In his 2005 speech Helmut Kohl reflected on the physical and moral destruction of the German nation in 1945:

[…] faced with this misery, neither we children nor adults saw a positive future. But we did it! This great generation of my parents, grandparents and perhaps great-grandparents did not despair of everything. They said to each other: "We want to seize it!". This courageous attitude symbolizes a memorial in Berlin, where I drive by almost every day. It is a monument that the Berliners dedicated to the so-called rubble women in the 1950s. This term has to be explained to young people today. What should a twenty-year-old also be able to do with it? The monument in Berlin is reminiscent of a large number of women who volunteered for the removal of rubble. They did not know when their husband would come back from the war, whether he was missing, fallen or being a prisoner of war. They did not know how to feed their children.\(^{320}\)

Kohl’s statements simultaneously contribute to, and are evidence of, a public memory in which the *Trümmerfrauen* or rubble women are viewed as “altruistic” national heroes who were vital in the reconstruction of Germany after the devastation of the Second World War.\(^ {321}\) The memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* has been inscribed into the German public memory in a way unknown to that of the victims of mass rape, that is physical sites of memory have solidified these women as heroines. This largely positive and simplistic perception of the *Trümmerfrauen* was born out of the events themselves, emerging through the popularized photographs of the rubble women at work amidst the devastation of German cities. This focus on the work of rubble women was quickly solidified in German public memory through the construction of many memorials.

\(^{320}\) Kohl, "Rede Des Preisträgers."

through East, West, and reunified Germany. This chapter will analyze the presence of these memorials to the *Trümmerfrauen* throughout Germany and by deconstructing this representation will further demonstrate the way that women’s experiences in war have been utilized in public discourses of reconstruction. I will explore how the memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* varied between East and West Germany, how these memories diverged and converged throughout the Cold War and post-reunification period, and how these differences are made visible through physical memorials. This utilization of women’s experiences, by both East and West Germany, highlights the complex interactions between public memory, gender, and postwar politics.

In a 2014 *Deutsche Welle* article, Sabine Damaschke stated “chiseled in stone, hammer in hand, her hair bound in a knotted kerchief – monuments to Germany’s *Trümmerfrau* (‘rubble woman’) can be found in many German cities”, going on to explain that historian Leonie Treber’s *Mythos Trümmerfrauen* is the first book of its kind to challenge the dominant narrative of *Trümmerfrauen* as the nation’s heroic saviors.\(^\text{322}\) This chapter largely aligns with the points made by Treber, who argues that although the memory and public understanding of the rubble women has factual elements it has been influenced by a degree of mythology surrounding their actions.\(^\text{323}\) My analysis will build from Treber’s understandings of the public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* and apply it to additional memorials to the rubble women; it will deconstruct the social and political factors that contributed to the creation of this largely positive public memory, of the ‘altruistic rubble woman’.\(^\text{324}\) This analysis provides

---


another example of the postwar utilization of women’s experiences in the establishment of national identities and memory practices in both East and West Germany. In contrast to the relative silencing or reduction of women’s experiences of mass rape by the state, explored in the previous chapter, the public memory of the Trümmerfrauen, expressed through the multitude of memorials demonstrates the utilization of women’s experiences through memorialization in attempts to construct national identity.\footnote{Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 141 \& 146.}

As this chapter will illustrate, aspects of various memorials’ significance lies in the historical context in which they were constructed, often echoing gendered expectations of German women, in both East and West, and at times diverging from the everyday realities and activities of the Trümmerfrauen in the immediate postwar period. The expectations of women at various points in time took on complex social and political significance as these ideas were ingrained in the societies through memorials. Memorials are accessible to and absorbed by society, and work to inform that society of the ‘appropriate’ identity of its people, or in this case its women. In the East this was informed primarily by Soviet Socialist Realism, and in the West conceptions of female identity were influenced by attempts to re-establish prewar gender relations.\footnote{Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 496-497.} I will demonstrate the ways that thirteen distinct Trümmerfrauen memorials worked to establish different ‘useable pasts’ for East and West Germany through women’s wartime experiences.\footnote{Moeller, "The Politics of the Past in the 1950s," 36.} This chapter will argue that the analyzed collection of Trümmerfrauen memorials found in East Germany illustrate the utilization of German women’s wartime experiences in the establishment of the East German socialist state. The Trümmerfrauen
were used in East German public memory to illustrate the advancement of the ideals of Communism and in doing so, their experiences were modified and co-opted by the nation. In comparison, in West Germany, the Trümmerfrauen were perceived to be ‘more distant’ from the crimes of National Socialism than their male counterparts, they were therefore ‘safe’ subjects of public memory to be used by the West German state.

I analyze the memorials based on their geographic location, and the political framework in which they were created. This chapter will demonstrate that practices of public memory, are not simple or innocent in their intention, rather, they are inherently political in their construction and work to inform the social and political beliefs of their society.

Methodology

While some scholars have been interested in the Trümmerfrauen memorials, no one to date has compiled a list, or a database of the relevant statues in Germany. This meant that when I began this project, I needed to compile a list. I did this first through internet sources, which included municipal websites, Wikimedia Commons, and personal blogs. Next, I took a research trip to Germany and visited over a dozen of these memorials; I spent two weeks in Berlin finding statues from little more evidence than a Wikipedia picture or a passing comment of a street name on a blogpost. I documented the precise location, took pictures, and noted the memorial’s surroundings. From Berlin I travelled to Dresden, Würzburg, Heilbronn, and Munich in search of additional memorials. There are more memorials throughout Germany that I did not attempt to locate in this project. I chose to locate and document all of the memorials to that I found a trace of in Berlin, although this methodological practice was not possible for
memorials in the whole country. Outside of Berlin the location of sites of memory visited largely depended on ability to travel there, therefore, I acknowledge that there is not an equal number of memorials analyzed from East and West. The realities of this research have sometimes meant that I do not have uniform information for each site. Thus, this overall analysis is not the final report on the Trümmerfrauen memorials dispersed throughout Germany, rather, it is a contribution to the academic and public conversation surrounding the place of these women in German history and women’s place in national histories in general.

I set out to ‘read’ the Trümmerfrauen memorials for their significance using three main categories: the location, space, and artistic form of the structure. The analysis of the location of the memorial will include the year of its construction, the artist or designer, its title (if applicable), the city it’s located in, its location in East, West, or reunified Germany, and the social-political considerations that informed its creation. The second category of analysis is the space the memorial occupies. This analysis will look at where in a city or town the memorial is located, and the significance or insignificance of that space. For example, a memorial placed in front of a city hall sends a different message, and has the potential to reach a different viewing population than a memorial hidden in the trees of a public park. The third category of analysis is the artistic form of the memorial. This involves establishing its physical form, usually differentiating between a sculptural work or a plaque (textual based site) and dissecting the aspects of this representation. That is, if the memorial is a sculptural piece, elements of the woman’s clothing, age, tools, stance, and facial expression will be evaluated and probed for meaning. These different presentations/representations, in which the size of
the memorial must also be considered, aid in simultaneously uncovering the underlying
ideas that informed the memorial and the ideas the memorial went on to inform. The
language choice used in plaques will be broken down and analyzed for deeper meaning.

**Everyday Realities (1944-1948)**

In May 1945, the German nation was in a state of ruin, as historian Mary
Fulbrook argues, “the big cities that had suffered bombardment from the air were
reduced to piles of rubble between gaunt, hollow shells of bombed out buildings, lone
walls with empty windows forming a jagged skyline, the occasional intact building
standing out starkly amidst the ruins.” Therefore, post-1945 Germany was defined by
the physical destruction caused by the war; the wreckage was largely the result of Allied
offensives carried out against the German nation in an effort to ensure the surrender of
the German army. This physical defeat of Germany resulted in a great deal of
destruction, that is rubble and unlivable houses. This rubble was cleared, a process that
involved moving and cleaning bricks from the large piles that accumulated in the
bombing of buildings, often by hand or with rudimentary tools.

This ruin was not just physical, the population of Germany was divided,
demoralized, and in a state of anticipation to realize just how much the war had taken
from them. This physical destruction was paired with the human realities of warfare
and postwar society, that of cities comprised of primarily women, children, and the
elderly; this factor contributed to the emergence of the rubble women as a symbol of
German identity as they were one of the main demographics available to carry out

---

328 Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 129.
manual labour.\textsuperscript{332} An Anonymous diarist recounts that “women were clearly in the majority” in postwar Berlin\textsuperscript{333} because much of the male workforce that would have been traditionally called upon was absent, German women and girls, male civilians who had not been fighting, slave labourers, refugees, and POWs all took part in rubble clearing efforts.\textsuperscript{334}

Elizabeth Heineman argues that rubble women “cleared away the piles of stone and brick that constituted Germany’s urban landscape,” however, “rubble clearance was not an occupation women entered with much enthusiasm.”\textsuperscript{335} Occupation authorities assigned both men and women who were associated with Nazi organizations to remove rubble in many cities, an attitude made law when, “beginning in the summer of 1945, women between the ages of fourteen and fifty were legally obliged by state and provincial authorities to register with labour exchanges for work.”\textsuperscript{336} When working for wages and not for food, women and girls were paid, however they were paid significantly less than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{337} This inclusion of German women into traditionally male jobs was made law in postwar German society with the Control Council Law No. 32 on the “Employment of Women and Reconstruction Work” passed on July 10, 1946; the law stated that “the appropriate German authorities may employ, or authorize the employment of female labor in building and reconstruction work, including rubble clearance.”\textsuperscript{338} The law is prefaced with the acknowledgement of its

\textsuperscript{332} Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 146.
\textsuperscript{333} Anonymous, \textit{A Woman in Berlin}, 194.
\textsuperscript{334} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman,” 375.
\textsuperscript{335} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 374-375.
\textsuperscript{336} Moeller, "Emerging From the Rubble,” 25; Anonymous, \textit{A Woman in Berlin}, 207.
\textsuperscript{337} Moeller, " Emerging From the Rubble", 25
\textsuperscript{338} Control Council Law No. 32 on the Employment of Women in Building and Reconstruction Work (German History in Documents and Images 1946).
context, that of “the shortage of able-bodied men in certain parts of Germany”; therefore, demonstrating that in 1946 the decision was made, not in an attempt to enact greater equality between men and women, but to address the simple shortage of workers.\textsuperscript{339} The discussion of female reconstruction workers in law demonstrates that the contributions made by rubble-women to postwar Germany, was not a spontaneous rising up of individuals in the salvation of a decimated nation. Rather, it was a logical response to a lack of labourers. The traditional memory of the \textit{Trümmerfrauen} does not align with the reality that the majority of rubble clearing work was not completed by German women; rather in many cities, such as Berlin, they only made up 5-10\% of rubble clearers.\textsuperscript{340} However, rubble clearing has entered the German public memory as a task largely credited to altruistic German women, despite the variant identities of the rubble clearers.

The myth of the heroic \textit{Trümmerfrauen} is further destabilized – not only by the fact that the majority of labourers were not in fact women – but also through the fact that rubble clearing work was often coerced or forced. Rubble clearing work was not always voluntary, it was often performed in order to receive money or food rations necessary for survival in occupied Germany, a historical understanding that challenges the supposed altruistic motivations of the \textit{Trümmerfrauen}.\textsuperscript{341} This ‘work for rations’ system is explained by the Anonymous author who stated that civilians were divided into three different categories based on their work status and were given different rations

\textsuperscript{339} Control Council Law No. 32 on the Employment of Women in Building and Reconstruction Work (German History in Documents and Images 1946); Anonymous, \textit{A Woman in Berlin}, 207.
\textsuperscript{340} Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman”, 375.
\textsuperscript{341} Heineman,"The Hour of the Woman", 374-375; Treber, \textit{Mythos Trümmerfrauen}, 45.
based upon the work they completed. Leonie Treber challenges these understandings of this work as non-voluntary and self-less in nature through her exploration of female rubble-work as punishment handed down to young women determined to be ‘easy’ in postwar Germany. Treber’s assertions not only shatter the myth that German women were, in large numbers, ready and willing to donate their time to the reconstruction of cities, but it also connects postwar understandings of female sexuality, women’s work, and public memories.

As the chapter will illustrate, the historical realities of rubble work in 1940s Germany is largely missing from the statues that dot cities and towns throughout the country. Instead, the rubble women came to symbolize the rebuilding of the German nation, and represented a new beginning for the German people.

**Depictions and Expectations of Women**

When the *Trümmerfrauen*, and others, set to work clearing the rubble from the streets of Germany, they did so in the increasingly tense weeks and months of the early Cold War. From 1945 onward, East and West Germany “became embedded in separate and hostile networks under the domination of the United State and the Soviet Union” which were based upon a mutual fear of the other. This establishment of their national identity on the basis of their relationship with “the other Germany” influenced the “economic, social, and political relations” of the two Germanies. As historian Frank Tipton explains, “the rupture of defeat and division left them to reinterpret and repress

---


that earlier history, but the mournful footsteps of the past continued to echo in the present”; therefore, the emergence of East and West German identities were defined by the proximity to the Second World War.\textsuperscript{346} Eric Weitz argues that the two “societies were inextricably entwined, deriving many of their characteristics as much from one another – in reverse image – as from their internal developments.”\textsuperscript{347} This interaction was demonstrated through the West German distrust of Communism, a response that Weitz calls “deep-seated and unyielding”; these anti-communist sentiments acted as “the glue that would hold together the Western Allies.”\textsuperscript{348} Not only was an aversion to Communism existent in West German discourse, it provided the Federal Republic a common enemy with which to unite with Allied nations. The ever-present threat of their enemy to the East led the FRG to cultivate a national identity separate from that of East Germany. In contrast, the GDR was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{349} Soviet occupation authorities promoted the installation of a “central unitary state” with centralized institutions in East Germany.\textsuperscript{350} Not only were the emerging identities of the two nations heavily based on their relation to each other, but also to their past in the Second World War.\textsuperscript{351} In short, after 1945, the Germanies set out to cultivate identities that were separate from their Nazi past; including distinct social expectations and depictions of women.

As a Socialist nation, the GDR promoted the concept of gender equality.\textsuperscript{352} As such, women were not only expected to marry and have children, but to work outside

\textsuperscript{346} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 499; Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 141.
\textsuperscript{347} Weitz, "The Ever-Present Other", 219.
\textsuperscript{348} Weitz, "The Ever-Present Other", 220.
\textsuperscript{349} Naimark, \textit{The Russians in Germany}, 130-133.
\textsuperscript{350} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 503.
\textsuperscript{351} Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 29.
\textsuperscript{352} Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 141-142.
the home.\textsuperscript{353} This ideological tenet, in addition to the insufficient number of workers to support the Communist state led to the mobilization of women into the workforce throughout the GDR.\textsuperscript{354} Tipton argues that in East Germany “the pressure on the economy led the government to transform this right [to work] into an obligation. The norm for women became a combination of work and motherhood.”\textsuperscript{355} Therefore, the women working outside the home was popularized and encouraged throughout East Germany, an idea that informed the public memory of the \textit{Trümmerfrauen} throughout the nation.\textsuperscript{356} Weitz maintains that in the GDR “female crane operators and production line workers were touted as the signs of the great progress, the visible symbols of an ideology that viewed women’s participation in the paid labour force as the key to their emancipation.”\textsuperscript{357} Weitz’s assertions further the discourse surrounding the expectations of women in the GDR, highlighting that not only was their labour valued in the East German economy, but it was utilized in political discussions to instill ideas of equality and progress.

Gender equality as a state policy was also reflected in the development of art and culture, as writers and artists sought to portray the ideal ‘Socialist citizen.’\textsuperscript{358} GDR cultural expressions were usually created under “severe restrictions on permissible modes of expression,” thus most East German art was molded by “Soviet Socialist Realism [which] meant that the artist needed first to consider their responsibilities to society. ‘Formalism’ and bourgeois individualism became things to be avoided. Art was

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 526; Fulbrook, \textit{The People’s State}, 142 & 153.
\item Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 519; Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 146.
\item Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 519; Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 142.
\item Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 142.
\item Weitz, "The Ever-Present Other," 227.
\item Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 524; Fulbrook, \textit{The People's State}, 146.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
not simply to reflect the individual experiences, and it was not to look critically at the new political and social system." The ideal Socialist female citizen was a hard worker, who rarely complained. This is reflected in the Trümmerfrauen memorials built in East Germany, where women were often depicted wearing pants and holding tools, ready to work.

In the West German context, discussions of “family and gender policies” took “a profoundly conservative tone, more rigid, and ‘traditional’ than that of the 1920s.” This tone was manifested through the encouragement of women to marry, have children, and they were sent “back ‘into their place’ in the home”; an overall deterrence from their overwhelming presence in the public workforce. West German society viewed the emerging East German expectations of women as “signs of godless Communism [destroying] femininity and families.” Rather, the ideal West German women was a mother and a wife first, she was not instructed to be a contributing member to the workforce in the same way that women in East Germany were instructed to be. These ideals were expressed through Abstract Expressionism in art and literature throughout West Germany, a style that Tipton describes as “realism without politics, concentrating on the struggle for survival in postwar Germany… the abbreviated descriptions abstracted from their wider context and broader meanings.” However, this is not to argue that art in West Germany was apolitical, rather it attempted to appear non-political. For example, and as we shall see, many public memorials in the FRG

---

361 Weiβtz, “The Ever-Present Other”, 226.
362 Schissler, “‘Normalization’ as Project,” 363.
363 Weitz, "The Ever-Present Other", 227.
presented the *Trümmerfrauen* as tired and often middle-aged or elderly, implying that they had ‘done their part,’ completed their public duty, and could return home. Rubble women in the West, this motif suggested, were not interested in remaining a part of a manual labour workforce but wanted to return to their ‘proper’ place in the home.

Overall, differing expectations of women in East and West Germany, ideals which were formed within the socio-political framework of the two nations, informed the public presentation of the ‘ideal’ woman. These gendered norms influenced the creation of rubble women statues in both countries after 1945.

**Photographic Evidence as First ex. Of Public Memory 1945-1948**

The formation of a public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* was born from photographic evidence of these women working. The work of rubble-clearing duties was documented in a striking number of photographs, this simple act ensured that these women would exist in the historical record in specific and calculated ways. These memories that highlight the work of German women, were further instilled in the history of the immediate postwar period through memorials built throughout the nation. Photographs of smiling women standing among the rubble and destruction of name-less German cities passing bricks are aspects of a popular history understanding of the *Trümmerfrauen*.\(^{366}\) I would argue that these photos are the first pieces in the establishment of a public memory of the ‘altruistic rubble women’ that have come be

---

\(^{366}\) Gerhard Gronefeld, *Kokssammlerin in Der Gaanstalt Mariendorf*. May 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 1); Jacobson-Sonnenfeld, *Bau Auf Trümmerbahn*. 1945/46, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 2); Gerhard Gronefeld, *Trümmerfrau in Der Berliner Hockernstraße*, December 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 3); Gerhard Gronefeld, *Trümmerfrauen*, 1945/48, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin (Figure 4), Germany; Jewgeni Chaldej, *Entrümmern in Der Holzmarktstraße*. May 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 5).
ingrained in the German history of the immediate postwar period. Jannes Reimann explores the way that the memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* was constructed through the use of photographs, highlighting that there are “many (largely unseen) photos of ‘rubble men’ in the historical record”; that is, photographs exist of both men and women clearing rubble. However, the photos focusing on women working came to define the memory of this type of work and of the time period as a whole. As Reimann argues, the memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* emerged from the simultaneous focus on images of women at work with the overlooking of photographs of men clearing rubble.

The photographs that emerged in 1945-46 worked to define the two symbolic identities the *Trümmerfrauen* would come to embody in German public memory: the equal socialist worker and the maternal housewife. The photograph titled “Taking a Break During Clearing Operations in Berlin” captures three young women in matching work suits sitting on what appears to be a machine, they are smiling and holding their tools. These women embody the ideals of the Socialist nation that their memory would be utilized to legitimize, that women were equal to men and content to carry out labour that contributed to the good of the nation. In comparison, I would argue that the two photographs, “‘Rubble Woman’ near the Trinity Church” and “Putting Every Brick to Use:’ Rubble Woman’ Removing Mortar Remnants” contribute to the memory of the

---

368 Riemann, "Jannes Riemann Reviews Leonie Treber's Controversial Book on Germany's 'Rubble Women'..." *Slow Travel Berlin*, Pressbild-Verlag Schirner, *Trümmerfrauen*. May 22, 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 6); Jewgeni Chaldej, *Enttrümmerung in der Holzmarktstraße*, May 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 5); Gerhard Gronefeld, *Koksammlerin in der Gassenstalt Mariendorf*, May 1945, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 1). In these archival photos men are captured working alongside women in rubble clearing efforts, thus demonstrating the argument presented by Riemann that photographs of ‘rubble men’ do in fact exist but are often ignored.
369 *Taking a Break During Clearing Operations in Berlin*, 1945-1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin. (Figure 7)
Trümmerfrauen in West Germany. Both photographs capture a single, middle-aged woman, dressed in average clothing, sitting amongst a pile of rubble with a pick in hand they are looking down at their work, their facial expressions are solemn. These photographs depict women who are tired, run down, and not especially pleased to be doing the work; however they accomplished it. These women, the photographs suggest, took part in rubble clearing in a temporary role, filling a gap in German society and returning to the ‘private sphere’ once the physical destruction of the war was adequately addressed. This sentiment is reflected in the stern facial expressions of the women, their clothing choice that aligns with traditional gender norms. Even before stone memorials were erected, the GDR and the FRG were already constructing different memories of ‘their’ rubble women.

Memorials Built in the Former East Germany

The construction of the East German woman was based upon ideological and economic factors; the ‘equal’ woman contributed to the “country’s economic productivity” while simultaneously indicating “that the East German state – unlike its West German neighbour – was a just society of truly equal citizens.” However, despite its ideological and economic backbone efforts to achieve true gender equality resulted in a “discrepancy between ideal and reality” in East Germany.

370 Rubble Woman near the Trinity Church, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin (Figure 8); Putting Every Brick to Use: ‘Rubble Woman’ Removing Mortar Remnants, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin. (Figure 9)
371 Puck Pressdienst, Trümmerfrau in Berlin, 1946, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 10); Trümmerfrauen, 1945/1949, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany (Figure 11).
372 Rinke, Images of Women in East German Cinema, 20.
373 Rinke, Images of Women in East German Cinema, 24.
Dresden (Figures 12-14)

Originally cast in iron in 1952, the first memorial built to the Trümmerfrauen was designed by artist Walter Rienhold and unveiled in Dresden, Germany. Its occupation of the space in front of Dresden’s city hall conveys the importance of the rubble woman to the city, and the nation’s history. Seven years after the end of the war, the city of Dresden built this memorial, demonstrating that the East German nation was concerned with cultivating a centralized national history of the postwar period that emphasized the manual labour contributions of women. Treber argues that this spatial choice is significant because the Trümmerfrauen sits in a ‘focal point’ of the city and expresses the ideas of reconstruction and the emerging political ideas of East Germany. This historical narrative of the Trümmerfrauen was re-emphasized when the memorial was recast in bronze in 1967 and dedicated to the “women of Dresden, who laid the foundation stones for the construction of the destroyed city in hard times with the work of their hands.” The 1967 dedication of the memorial demonstrates that East German public memory connected the work of the Trümmerfrauen with the success of Dresden, a major East German city.

The Dresden memorial depicts a middle-aged woman dressed in clogs, pants, an apron, and her hair is tied back with a scarf. She appears to be stepping forward, with a pick in hand – a tool provided to Trümmerfrauen to aid in their rubble-work – her face is cast upwards as she looks confidently forward. This representation of a rubble-woman

---

374 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 89.
375 Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018. (Figure 14).
376 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 89-90.
377 Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. (Figure 13).
378 Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. (Figure 12).
demonstrates the idea that Trümmerfrauen were strong, determined to rebuild the nation, and proud of their work. This connection of the work of the rubble women, the reconstruction of Germany, and the advancement of Communist East German ideals instills the importance of gender equality, illustrated through the presence of women in positions of manual labour. This idea, of the equal treatment of women in East Germany set them apart from their ‘criminal’, ‘fascist’ neighbours to the West. Together, the location, space, and artistic form of the Dresden Trümmerfrauen memorial demonstrate the utilization of the rubble women’s experience in the advancement of Communist ideals in East Germany.

Ossietskystrasse (Figures 15-17)

In 1952, artist Gertrude Claas constructed a sculpture informally referred to as “Stein aufbuhelferin” which translates to “female stone reconstruction helper” which was located on Ossietskystrasse in the Pankow region of Berlin.379 In contrast to the Dresden memorial, the space that this memorial occupies is unassuming and not obviously a state effort. The statue itself is rather hard to find, it is set back from the sidewalk in an overgrown garden in front of what appears to be apartment buildings. There are no signs alerting tourists or the people of the neighbourhood to the sculpture. In fact, this memorial has so little identification that the informal title previously referred to is written in what appears to be chalk on the red bricks on which the artwork sits; because of this it is hard to ensure that the title is always present. There does not seem to be any evidence that this memorial is supported by the state, no signs, or

379 Ossietskystraße Memorial, Ossietskystraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018. (Figure 15).
description of the artist or her intent.\(^{380}\) Rather, the memorial of Ossietskystraße demonstrates the prevalence of the myth of the Trümmerfrauen throughout many facets of German society. The public memory of the Trümmerfrauen, while political, was also expressed in non-political, more socially inclined efforts such as artwork.

In addition, the artistic form of this site is vital in understanding its significance, the smaller than life-size sculpture depicts a woman, who appears to be relatively young, wearing a dress, and shoes.\(^{381}\) She is carrying a stack of three bricks, she is stepping forward, with her eyes turned down, and a serious facial expression. This statue itself is only brought up to approximately five-feet from the ground by a pedestal of red bricks that it is placed upon, a significant fact when the history that the sculpture intends to represent in considered.\(^{382}\) The narrative of the strong, hardworking, and sacrificing German woman found in the Trümmerfrauen was not simply a narrative pronounced by the postwar government that was ignored, rather it permeated social understandings of the past, as is demonstrated through its expression in non-state-centered artwork.

**Frankfurt an der Oder** (Figures 18-23)

In 1955, east of Berlin on the now border of Germany and Poland, two memorials were installed in the town of Frankfurt an der Oder. Designed by Edmund Neutert, these two memorials are titled “Trümmerfrau” and “Stahlwerker” and frame the Lichtspieltheater der Jugend.\(^{383}\) The location, space, artistic representation, and an analysis of these factors demonstrate the Trümmerfrauen in the German public memory.

\(^{380}\) Ossietskystraße Memorial. (Figure 17).
\(^{381}\) Ossietskystraße Memorial, (Figure 16).
\(^{382}\) Ossietskystraße Memorial, (Figure 15).
\(^{383}\) Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018. (Figures 20 &22).
of the Second World War. The presence of both a female and male reconstruction worker memorialized in stone signifies the unique way in which the memory of the Trümmerfrau was utilized in East German society in an effort to solidify the perception of gender equality. The space that this memorial inhabits is vital to understanding the significance of the memorials, the message, and their place in society. Occupying the space in front of the now forgotten Lichtspieltheater der Jungend, which translates to the “Young People’s Theatre”, alludes to not only the intended place of the memorial in East German society, but also place of the “Trümmerfrau” in the public memory of a reunified Germany. Neutert’s artwork was not placed in front of the city hall, rather they were installed in front of a theatre dedicated to young people, a space where the city’s youth were encouraged to gain a cultural education.  

The significance of the placement of these memorials when they were installed in 1955 is different to that which it currently holds. In modern day, the Lichtspieltheater der Jungend appears to be uncared for and forgotten, the city’s inhabitants pass not only the theatre but the memorials without gazing up. The once magnificent theatre is now defined by graffiti and broken windows, even Neutert’s artwork is degrading with age and lack of upkeep. This lack of attention paid to the Trümmerfrau demonstrates that the memory of these women, who once held such esteem in society, is changing. 

In addition to the location and space of and surrounding the memorial is the artistic representation through which the memory is presented. The main focus of this analysis will be Neutert’s “Trümmerfrau”, however “Stahlwerker” will also be

---

384 Lichtspieltheater der Jugend. (Figure 19).
385 Lichtspieltheater der Jugend. (Figure 19).
386 Lichtspieltheater der Jugend. (Figure 21).
examined in order to fully understand the message that these memorials portray. Placed atop a pedestal the Trümmerfrau appears to be a middle-aged woman captured staring off to one side, she is wearing a dress, with her hands at her side, hair tied back, and wearing shoes. Like many other Trümmerfrau memorials she is not illustrated at work but with many of the aspects associated with women engaged in rubble clearing, such as shoes necessary for manual labour and her hair tied back. Neutert’s Trümmerfrau is wearing a dress; a traditionally feminine clothing choice while performing a conventionally male task, thus demonstrating the way in which East German women were instructed, by historical narratives, to enter the external workforce.

A number of the Trümmerfrau memorials found in East Germany were placed with a male counterpart, the site of memory in Frankfurt an der Oder displays both the female Trümmerfrau and the male, Stahlwerker, which translates to a ‘steel craftsman’. Also atop a pedestal, the Stahlwerker is wearing in an army type jacket, with a helmet, and goggles; he is captured pulling up his sleeve giving the impression that he is getting prepared to do work. The presence of the Stahlwerker adjacent to that of the Trümmerfrau illustrates that East Germany built a narrative of reconstruction in which both men and women played an important role, and thus the idea of gender equality inherent in Communism was also instilled in the public discourse. Tied to gender equality, this site of memory also presents a heroic image of a female worker,

---

387 Edmund Neutert's 'Trummerfrau', Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018. (Figure 18)
388 Fullbrook, The People's State, 141 & 146; Edmund Neutert's 'Trummerfrau', Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018. (Figure 18)
389 Edmund Neutert's 'Stahlwerker'. (Figure 22)
390 Edmund Neutert's 'Stahlwerker'. (Figure 23)
perhaps to inspire or encourage the women of East Germany to enter the workforce outside the home.

**Roten Rathaus** (Figure 24)

In 1956, Fritz Cremer’s “Aufbauhelferin” and “Aufbauhelfer” were placed, prominently in front of East Berlin’s city hall.391 These memorials are titled “female construction helper” and “male construction helper”, it is important to clarify that “Aufbauhelferin” and “Trümmerfrauen” carried out very similar roles in German society, and the difference in their naming is largely based on social and political discourses of the time.392 However, while both titles were understood to contribute to rubble clearance, the *Aufbauhelferin* the women who, in addition, contributed to structural redesign of the socialist state.393

Cremer’s memorials occupy the space in front of East Berlin’s city hall or Roten Rathaus, which, these memorials and the memories that they represent were introduced as part of the civic and national history.394 This inclusion of the *Trümmerfrauen* to the public memory of the Second World War in East Germany through the fact that anyone going into the city hall, for a multitude of reasons would pass by the “Aufbauhelferin” and “Aufbauhelfer” memorials. The simple exposure to these sites of memory influences the way that individuals come to understand the actions of the *Trümmerfrauen* in their understandings of their own history. The connection of these

---


392 Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen*, 91-94; Denkmal Aufbauhelferin. (Figure 24)

393 Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen*, 93-94.

historical actors to a government building illustrates the way that the narrative of the
Trümmerfrau was memorialized because of what ‘she’ could do to further the perception
of gender equality vital in the establishment of Communist East Germany.

An examination of the location and space that Cremer’s memorials inhabit is
important to understanding this site’s significance as is the analysis of the artistic
representation. Cremer’s “Aufbauhelferin” is a sculptural artwork of a young woman,
standing and looking off into the distance, and dressed in pants and sleeveless shirt. Her
hair is tied back, and she is carrying a shovel giving off the impression that she is
prepared to or has taken part in rubble clearing work. The memory emerging from
Cremer’s “Aufbauhelferin” is also influenced by the way it is presented to its viewers,
that of a sculpture. As viewers pass by the site they are likely to garner a different
reaction in seeing the recreation of a woman in stone compared to that which emerges
from a plaque using language to portray a point. The viewer is likely to experience an
affective response when witnessing the humanity and emotion displayed through the
woman’s body, compared to the response emerging from a plaque. In addition, this
artistic representation demonstrates the female ideal within the Socialist state, that of the
young, able-bodied woman who challenges previous understandings of ‘normal’ gender
practices; such as women not wearing pants, and only wearing skirts or dresses and the
confinement of women’s work to the home. Rather, as previously explored, in East
Germany women were encouraged to work in traditionally male work places, such as
factories, to a greater degree than ever before. This artistic presentation of the

395 Denkmal Aufbauhelferin. (Figure 24)
396 Denkmal Aufbauhelferin. (Figure 24)
397 Fulbrook, The People’s State, 141.
398 Fulbrook, The People’s State, 141; Naimark, The Russians in Berlin, 244.
“Aufbauhelferin” as a heroine to the German people, instills aspects of her identity as the feminine ideal for East German women to strive to achieve.

**Johannesthal on Sterndamm** (Figures 25-27)

Also in East Berlin, Gerhard Thieme’s “Aufbauhelferin” installed at the junction of Johannesthal and the Sterndamm, in the Johannesthal region of Berlin in 1963 instilled postwar female reconstruction workers into the physical memory landscape. Thieme’s memorial occupies the space in front of an apartment building in a quiet neighbourhood, far from major forms of public transit, and not particularly close to any major tourist attractions. (although the neighbourhood may have looked different in 1963). Thieme’s memorial does not feel like a state or city memorial, it lacks the pomp that many other sites of memory emit, rather “Aufbauhelferin” gives off the impression that this piece of artwork was created for the community. Despite the lack of evidence to illustrate that Thieme’s memorial was the result of the politics of the centralized East German state, it, like the memorial found on Ossietzkustraße, is evidence of the way that public memories, even those constructed in political realms, permeate the social sphere. Therefore, public memories do not always have to be officially presented by the government, for example, they do not have always be placed in front of a government building. Rather, public memories can be influenced by political ideas and be expressed in ‘non-political’ or unofficially political spaces.

In addition to the location of and space surrounding this memorial, it is important to analyze the artistic representation exhibited in Thieme’s “Aufbauhelferin”. A middle-aged woman is captured in this sculptural artwork, she wearing a skirt, an apron, clogs,

---

399 Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018. (Figure 25)
and has her hair tied in a scarf. She is bending over, with a pick in one hand, and a brick in the other; this rubble woman is depicted at work. Her state, that of being at work, connects the viewer with the task of the manual labour that the Trümmerfrauen carried out. While her hunched position demonstrates the physical toll that this work took on women’s bodies, once again furthering the idea that these women sacrificed for the reconstruction of their communities, and the nation. Thieme’s “Aufbauhelferin” on the Sterndamm was one of the hardest memorials I attempted to locate as the deserted streets, unassuming location, and the lack of signage or explanation of the memorial’s purpose demonstrate the seemingly contradictory aspects of the public memory of the Trümmerfrauen.

Weissenseepark (Figures 28-31)

In 1965 Eberhard Bachman’s memorial further instilled the Trümmerfrauen into the public memory of East Berlin. Bachman’s bronze sculpture titled “Trümmerfrauen” was placed in Weissenseepark, a popular leisure area; his sculpture is tucked into a patch of overgrown trees and placed away from the highly populated beach front. Without any signage signalling the historical significance of Bachman’s “Trümmerfrauen” this memorial could easily be missed or misunderstood. However, the space that this memorial occupies is one of leisure, a park where many individuals visit with their family to relax, it is therefore reasonable to assume an overall appreciation for the space, and what it offers the community. Despite this, when I visited the memorial in the

---

400 Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial. (Figure 25).
401 Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial. (Figure 25)
402 Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018. (Figure 28 & 31)
403 Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Personal photograph. (Figure 31)
Spring of 2018 there were trees growing around the sculpture and there were no other individuals viewing it, it seemed to go largely unnoticed by the park visitors.

In addition, the artistic representation of the rubble woman in Bachman’s piece further highlights the way that German women’s work as rubble women was presented and utilized. The woman depicted in this sculpture is wearing a dress, is barefoot, and a scarf in her hair; she appears to be a strong woman and is captured with a serious expression on her face. Through these artistic elements it is not overtly clear that the woman depicted here is definitively a Trümmerfrauen, however, after viewing a multitude of these structures there are many common elements that mirror the representation of rubble women. These aspects, along with the location and space of Bachman’s memorial work to further emphasize the utilization of German women’s experiences in the aftermath of the Second World War as Trümmerfrauen. Although Bachman’s artistic representation does not directly align with traditional Communist artistic representations of Trümmerfrauen, the very existence of yet another built memorial dedicated to the rubble women illustrates the utilization of this experience in public memory. East Germany continued to present images of the Trümmerfrauen, and in doing repeat the narrative that women in the GDR were equal to men and willing and able to work in traditionally male workplaces.

**Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg** (Figures 32-47)

At the entrance to the Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg (People’s Park of Prenzlauer Berg) in East Berlin a memorial honours the history of the neighbourhood through a

---

404 Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Personal photograph, (Figure 28)
series of relief images. Created by Birgit Horota in 1975 this memorial chronologically tells the story of the neighbourhood, and in doing so demonstrates the impact of major world events on the people of Prenzlauer Berg. The space that Horota’s memorial resides in is an important aspect in unpacking the memorial’s intention at the time of its construction as well as the response it garners in the modern day. In the aftermath of the Second World War rubble from the surrounding area was moved to the Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg, forming a mountain in the centre of this community space. In 1975 Horota’s memorial was placed at the entrance of the park, I have not located any photographic evidence of the artwork in 1975 therefore it is difficult to discern the way in existed in the space at that time. However, in the Spring of 2018 I visited the memorial at Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg and it was covered in graffiti. The park in general appeared to be overgrown and not diligently cared for. At the park’s entrance the memorial was on the information board, although that too was mostly masked with spray paint. Once again, while immersing myself in the space that this memorial takes up there were no other viewers of the memorial. This, together with the site’s vandalism are two aspects of the memorial’s space that signify the treatment and thus importance placed on this public memory.

In addition to the location and the space, the artistic representation of the memorial is key to understanding its place in German public memory. Primarily, it is important to establish the fact that Horota’s works presents the memory of the district

---

405 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018. (Figures 32-37)
407 “Volkspark Prenzlauer Berg.”
using reliefs and not sculptures like many other memorials to the *Trümmerfrauen*. This presentation, I would argue, has a different effect on the viewer; for example, I completely walked by this memorial when I first went to view it. A series of relatively small reliefs on the side of a park wall has a lesser potential to catch a passer-by’s eye than that of a memorial. Further, the reliefs allow for the artist to outline a series of events, and in doing so connect the reader to the human outcomes of such actions. In comparison, a sculptural artwork allows the artist to express human emotion on a larger and more in-depth way and thus for the viewer to connect with the sentiments being emoted. Therefore, it appears that sculptures are more commonly used in works intended to express human qualities, such as strength or sadness. In comparison, reliefs (in this case a series of reliefs) are used to express change over time, such as a series of events or the history of a region.

The form of the artistic representation, that of reliefs, is key to understanding its significance, as is the images portrayed in the reliefs. The memorial visually demonstrates various aspects of the district’s history, such as the emergence of industrialized machines, the events of the First World War, and the persecution of Jewish peoples under National Socialism. However, of the most importance for this project is Horota’s depiction of the German experience of the Second World War and the immediate postwar period when the *Trümmerfrauen* were active.

The German experience of the Second World War is depicted in the illustration of women, children, and the elderly hiding in what appears to be an air raid shelter, outside the shelter an elderly man carries a cross, that appears to be for a grave site.

---

408 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018. (Figures 32-37)
409 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, (Figure 33-37)
through rubble and destruction; thus demonstrating the experience of life on the German home front. The next series of relief images transition from representing the Second World War to the postwar period, as a soldier pumps water, while the Soviet symbol of the hammer and the sickle sits behind him. Therefore, this illustration represents the Soviet presence in the district of Prenzlauer Berg through the image of soldiers giving out food to children, a soldier returning from war, a boarded up building, and a number of women passing pails to the water pump. This relief clearly demonstrates the destruction of the German nation, however, this tone of defeat quickly transitions to a message of resilience in the next image. Next, men and women dance to music and the Soviet flag is held up as one man and three women are captured moving bricks, shovelling, hammering, and rebuilding a wall. This visual representation of the memory of the process of rebuilding that depicts largely female reconstruction workers demonstrates yet another way that German women’s experiences of rubble work has been utilized and perpetuated in discussion of public memory. This memorial is concluded with a relief of a train car with the words “From the ruins of the Second World War, a mound was heaped up here and the park laid out.” This statement connects the creation of the park with the rubble of the Second World War, and those who are said to have been the primary rubble clearers, Trümmerfrauen. Thus, like many sites of memory to the rubble women located in community parks Horota’s memorial ties modern day park visitors’ appreciation for the park to the work of the Trümmerfrauen and thus incorporates these women in the modern day public memory of

---

410 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, (Figure 33)
411 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial. (Figures 33 & 34)
412 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial. (Figure 37)
413 Prenzlauer Berg Memorial. (Figure 32)
the Second World War. Horota’s memorial built in 1970s East Germany, although vast in its narrative, emphasizes the actions of the Trümmerfrauen and their importance to the creation of the Germany that modern day park visitors enjoy and in doing maintain the public memory of the Second World War in which the rubble women are heroines.

Altogether these sites of memory dedicated to the Trümmerfrauen and built in East Germany demonstrate the way that women’s war and postwar experiences were utilized by the state in the solidification of the socialist nation. The Trümmerfrauen were inscribed into the physical landscape of the German Democratic Republic on the basis of their embodiment of the ideals of socialism, that of women who are both equal and work outside the home. This proclamation of the Trümmerfrauen in East German public memory is part of a larger trend within the Cold War to establish the socialist state as different and better than their West German neighbours. The analysis of the location, space, and artistic form of these eight memorials to the Trümmerfrauen demonstrate that East Germany constructed a memory of the rubble women that contributed to the establishment of a socialist state and perpetuated this memory in an effort to further legitimize East Germany ideals.

Memorials Built in the Former West Germany

The Trümmerfrauen memorials built in West Germany illustrate that German women’s experiences were utilized in the construction of a postwar nation that was distant from the crimes of the past: women were used because they were viewed as separate from Nazism and thus ‘safe’ subjects of history. However, the FRG used the image of the rubble woman for a different purpose than the GDR; a narrative emerged in the West in which the Trümmerfrauen were heroes. German women’s experiences of
victimization “were modified to stand for the nation”, that is women’s wartime experiences were co-opted for the establishment of a ‘useable’ national history based on ideas of reconstruction and resilience. The following memorials in West Germany must be analyzed in consideration of the historical reality of their location; that they were constructed to contribute to the narrative of a nation that was attempting to establish itself as non-criminal victims of the Second World War using female identity.

_Volkspark Humboldthain_ (Figures 38-39)

In 1952, the same year that the first _Trümmerfrauen_ memorial was built in East Germany, a memorial was dedicated, in part, to female reconstruction workers in the _Volkspark Humboldthain_ or the People’s Park Humoldthian in Berlin, Germany. In addition to its location in West Berlin, the space and artistic form of this site of memory highlight the significance of this memorial in the West German public memory of the _Trümmerfrauen_. Karl Wenke designed the two-metre high memorial stone with a “portrait relief” of Alexander von Humboldt on one side and a dedication to the workers who rebuilt the park on the other.

Located in a public park, on one of the park’s main pathways, the memorial is relatively easy to find as well as read, therefore informing any of the park’s visitors of the space’s history and those responsible for ensuring that the citizens of not only Wedding but also Berlin have access to this public space. The formation of aspects of memory in public spaces, such as parks work to inform public opinion in seemingly

---

415 _Volkspark Humboldthian Trümmerfrauen_ Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018. (Figure 39)
innocuous ways and are a very important aspect of the overall public memory of the time.

This memorial presents the memory of the Trümmerfrauen using a plaque form, relying on text to portray the importance of the work of the rubble women. Wenke’s memorial states that “the Humboldthain was built in 1872. Following the destruction of the plants during the Second World War, Weddinger emergency workers and female workers rebuilt the park between 1948 and 1951”.\textsuperscript{416} This statement connects the work of female workers, an identity closely linked to Trümmerfrauen, to the park’s existence by explaining its origin and that without that group’s work the park would not have been rebuilt. Although this memorial does not present a physical representation of the Trümmerfrauen the specific mention of their contribution to the reconstruction of the park demonstrates their presence and importance in the public memory of the post Second World War period. The mention of their efforts, once again illustrates the way in which post Second World War female work has come to represent the period of reconstruction as a whole; thus once again firmly tying German women, the aftermath of the Second World War, and reconstruction together. The specific mention of the work of ‘female workers’ contributes to a larger trend in which the work and experiences of Trümmerfrauen were utilized in West Germany because they were understood to be ‘safe’, non-criminal, and distant from the crimes of Nazism subjects of memory.\textsuperscript{417}

Max-Josef-Metzger Platz (Figures 40-42)

In 1954 a 12-metre-high column was constructed of multi-coloured bricks, titled “pillar of rubble” and designed by Gerhard Schultz-Seehof this memorial was placed in

\textsuperscript{416} Volkspark Humboldthain Trümmerfrauen Memorial. (Figure 38).
\textsuperscript{417} Volkspark Humboldthain Trümmerfrauen Memorial, (Figure 38).
Max-Josef-Metzger Platz in West Berlin. In addition to its location in West Germany, Schultz-Seehof’s memorial garners deeper meaning when the space it occupies is analyzed. Although the Max-Josef-Metzger Platz was only given that name in 1994, after the memorial’s installation, it is important to unpack to symbolic significance of the park’s namesake as the memorial remained there after the park’s rededication. Max Josef Metzger was a priest who lived under Nazism, his pacifist beliefs led Metzger to speak out against the war, he was arrested and in 1944 was killed by the Nazi regime. Metzger was a resister, he spoke out against injustice he saw throughout his nation and was killed for his opinions.

It is vital to acknowledge the difference between a historical actor such as Metzger and historical actors such as the Trümmerfrauen. The rubble women are not present in sites of memory for their resistance to the evils of Nazism, rather, they represent a fraction of society that was not targeted by the Nazism regime. It is most likely that these women either supported or remained silent when groups within German society were marginalized and violently targeted. They are honoured, through memorials, for the so-called sacrifice that they contributed to postwar Germany, with very little acknowledgment of the reasons that they survived the war. This is not to say that the reconstruction work that the Trümmerfrauen carried out was not important, however, it does illustrate the way German women’s actions and experiences are subject to modification for the creation and maintenance of public memories of the Second

---


419 Eberhard, "Max-Josef-Metzger-Platz: Nur Scheinbar Unscheinbares Grün...".
World War. In addition, these examples demonstrate the way that West Germany used the events of the Second World War, that is Nazi resisters and postwar reconstruction workers, to define themselves in opposition to East Germany.

In addition to the space that this memorial occupies, the artistic form is also vital in understanding its overall contribution to the public memory of the Trümmerfrauen. Schultz-Seehof’s work is constructed from the rubble of the postwar period and depicts many faceless and gender-ambiguous figures characters passing bricks up the column. From bottom-up the figures appear to be passing the bricks up the column thus giving the illusion that the workers are building the column themselves. Although the memorial is a stagnant piece of public memory it contains an element of interaction with the audience. Viewers are reminded that the destruction of the war was a physical reality throughout Berlin, and that there were many unidentified heroes who were key in the reconstruction of the city. This narrative of the ‘everyday unrealized hero’ is furthered through the location of the memorial, in a community park. This environment instills the narrative of reconstruction and the importance of the Trümmerfrauen in the identity of Weddingers and West Germans.

The memorial officially represents ideas of “the reconstruction of Berlin, slavery, destruction and democracy. Incidentally, "slavery" did not only mean the era of National Socialism, but also the political system of the GDR”.

Created after the June 1953 uprising of the workers in East Berlin, this memorial exemplifies the ways in which the actions of the Trümmerfrauen were utilized in political discourses of the Cold

---

420 Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial. (Figure 42)
421 Eberhard, "Max-Josef-Metzger-Platz: Nur Scheinbar Unscheinbares Grün…".
Schultz-Seehof’s memorial serves to connect the struggle of post Second World War reconstruction workers, the best known of whom are the *Trümmerfrauen*, to the plight of workers in the GDR, therefore utilizing the public memory of the Second World War in the struggle for political supremacy in the Cold War. Schultz-Seehof’s memorial is a multi-faceted and complex piece of public memory that presents many different narratives of German history.

**Volkspark Hasenheide** (Figures 43-45)

In 1955, a sculpture by Katherina Szelinski-Singer was crafted honouring the *Trümmerfrauen* for the *Volkspark Hasenheide* in West Berlin. The location and space, inform the way that the public interacts with the memorial and therefore defines the way that memory of the events represented are then incorporated into the public’s understandings of the past. Like the other *Trümmerfrauen* memorials erected in West Germany during the Cold War, this site worked and continues to work to define a public memory of the Second World War in which German women were molded into national heroes who uncomplicatedly sacrificed their labour in efforts of reconstruction. The memorial is not only located within, and therefore defined by West German political and social goals, more specifically it is in *Volkspark Hasenheide*. This allows, calls, and encourages the park’s visitors to visit, honour, be educated, and reflect on the actions of the *Trümmerfrauen*. It is my assertion that memorials such as Szelinski-Singer’s are informed by and work to inform a public memory of the Second World War in which German women’s work as *Trümmerfrauen* was molded in public discussions to

---

422 Eberhard, "Max-Josef-Metzger-Platz: Nur Scheinbar Unscheinbares Grün...”.
423 *Volkspark Hasenheide* Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018. (Figure 33)
emphasize postwar contributions and sacrifices while simultaneously silencing discussions of Germans as perpetrators. The emergence of this uniquely female public memory occurred within a gendered discourse of women’s wartime actions, their perceived distance from the crimes of National Socialism resulted in the postwar perception of them as ‘safe’ subjects of memory.

In addition to the space it occupies, Szelinski-Singer’s artistic form demonstrates the way in which West German ideals of the Trümmerfrau were expressed in public spaces. Her sculpture is of a middle-aged woman sitting with bricks piled behind her, she is depicted holding a pick, wearing clogs, with a scarf covering her hair, and wearing a skirt. This unnamed rubble woman is captured looking up and to the side, it appears that she is deep in thought or in a period of questioning or reflecting. It is vital to acknowledge that she is sitting, this particular Trümmerfrau was not instilled in the public’s memory as a woman at work, but rather a woman who had already worked hard, and not only needs but deserves a break from gruelling manual labour. Treber analyzes the body language of the Trümmerfrau displayed in this memorial, emphasizing her “slightly rounded back and the wide-eyed eyes make the woman look tired.’ It is the representation of a worn-out... woman who recovers from her hardships after the work is done.” This argument feeds into the understanding in West Germany that the rubble women were not a signal to the inclusion of women into the workforce, rather, they were used as workers to fill temporary need. In addition to the sculptural artwork, this site of memory includes a plaque that outlines the dedication of the

---

424 Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial. (Figure 45)
425 Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial. (Figure 45)
426 Treber, Mythos Trümmerfrauen, 103.
memorial. The plaque states, “in gratitude to the Berlin women who, after the Second World War, eliminated the rubble of the ruined city as ‘rubble women’ and thus rebuilt it. Created by Katherina Szelsinski-Singer.” This clarification sets this site of memory apart from other representations of Trümmerfrauen in West Germany because it utilizes visual elements to portray the emotions of the rubble woman and to garner an emotional response from the site’s viewers. In witnessing her facial expression, the exhaustion displayed there, the viewer is compelled to if not sympathize, at least acknowledge the hard work that she has contributed to the process of reconstruction. The clarity of the language-based description reduces the ambiguity surrounding the intention of this memorial, a factor missing from other sites of memory for the Trümmerfrauen, often those built in the East. This description also works to place primacy on the role that these women had in the process of post Second World War reconstruction in Berlin; this is done by the omission of others’ contribution in this plaque or the memorial in general. The singling out of the rubble women, as national heroes, through memorials such as this one illustrate the way in which the public memory of postwar Germany used the experiences of women.

Fritz-Schloß Park (Figures 46-50)

In the same year, 1955, not far from Volkspark Hasenheide another memorial honouring reconstruction workers in Germany after the Second World War was erected. In the Moabit subsection of Berlin, more specifically in Fritz-Schloß Park, Alfred Frankel’s stone memorial titled “Memorial to the Emergency Workers”, a definition that

---

427 Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial. (Figure 43)
428 Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, (Figure 33).
includes the *Trümmerfrauen* was installed.\footnote{Fritz-Schloß Park *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018. (Figure 50)} The location and space of this memorial in addition to the artistic representation of the historical actors is vital to understanding the public memory that it represents and contributes to. Located in a public park, Frankel’s memorial is identified on a sign, therefore, clarifying and emphasizing the reality that the memory that the structure presents to viewers is a cohesive piece of the national and municipal history.\footnote{Fritz-Schloß Park *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial. (Figure 50)} Similarly, to other memorials dedicated to the rubble women the placement of Frankel’s memorial in a community park reinforces the contributions of the *Trümmerfrauen* to not only German society as whole, but to the community that benefits from the park. There is the underlying conclusion that visitors of the park would not be able to enjoy it and the leisure that it affords them if it was not for the rubble women, or more broadly the reconstruction workers who made this park possible again. Overall, not only is it important to understand the creation and existence of the memorial in relation to its location in West Germany, but also in relation to the space it inhabits – *Fritz-Schloß Park* – a community space.

Frankel’s memorial was not only constructed in West German society, it was constructed for that population, in an effort to define the social and political understandings of the nation through public memory. Therefore, not only is it important to examine where, why, by who, and for who a memorial was constructed it is also vital to analyze what and how this message was presented to the public that consumed it. The memorial in *Fritz-Schloss Park* is more abstract that some of the other sites of memory previously examined, it is neither a piece of sculptural artwork or simply a plaque.
Rather, when viewed from slightly above and far enough away it resembles a pick or hammer used by reconstruction workers. As the viewer approaches the structure it becomes clear that there are a series of relief type visual representations on the four sides of the ‘top’ of the tool. Side one simply has the phrase “Thanks to the emergency workers”, while the second portrays three people taking part in this emergency work. Here, three people consisting of two women and one man are hammering and moving bricks while what appears to be the rubble of bombed buildings sits behind them. It is important to establish that although the wording of the plaque thanks ‘emergency workers’ in general and not the Trümmerfrauen, there are more women visually represented than men. These women are represented in a similar fashion to that of other memorials, dressed in dresses, clogs with their hair tied back with a scarf. These choices in representation demonstrate how, through the public memory of the Second World War, gender norms were reconstructed in the postwar period. Women clothed in dresses, traditionally female attire, yet carrying out manual labour, a traditionally male area of work illustrates how postwar public memory was focused on ensuring that the Trümmerfrauen were remembered as heroes yet did not challenge the existing understandings of the roles of different genders. The third side of this memorial depicts an unidentified coat of arms, assumingly belonging to the community that visited the park.

The fourth and final side of the box displays the same three people planting a tree, one woman holds a pail and seems to be steadying the tree, the other woman seems

---

431 Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen. (Figure 49)
432 Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen. (Figure 47)
433 Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial. (Figure 47)
to be placing the tree in the ground. The man in the relief is standing off to the side, he does not seem to be actively participating in the tree planting effort. Not only are the women displayed in the same clothing as the previously described image but in this moment, captured on the stone, the women are actively working while the man is merely supervising. Together the four faces of the square structure, at the top of the tool, work to inform the public memory on the history of the post Second World War period, weaving a narrative in which reconstruction workers are vital to the re-emergence of comfortable life in Germany. This account chronologically begins with the emergency workers’ response to the destruction caused by the war, then transitions into their planting of trees, work intended to make the park an enjoyable place for members of society to spend their leisure time. That progression combined with the dedication to the emergency workers and the district crest signify that the park would not exist, or at least be place it is, without the hard work, determination, and sacrifice of the emergency workers. Finally, although the dedication to “emergency workers” is encompassing of all genders, the visual representations presented in this memorial identify women as the primary actors in the process of addressing the rubble and rebuilding. Although not a solely feminine act of labour, the task of rubble-clearing was tied to and continues to be not only important to West Germany’s postwar memory but it is also connected to women’s postwar experience, as is demonstrated through the visual representation in Frankel’s memorial.

**Heilbronn** (Figures 51-57)

---

434 Fritz-Schloß Park *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial. (Figure 49)
435 Fritz-Schloß Park *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial. (Figure 47-50)
436 Fritz-Schloß Park *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial. (Figures 40&49).
In the Hafenmarkt on Kiliansplatz in Heilbronn Germany sits a striking sculpture dedicated to the people of Heilbronn who rebuilt their city after the destruction of the Second World War. The location, space, artistic form, and an analysis of Sabrina Grizmek’s 2003 sculptural artwork highlights aspects of the public memory that informed its creation and the public memory that it works to perpetuate. Unlike the memorials previously analyzed, Grizmek’s was built after the reunification of the German nation. This reality, however, must take into consideration the city’s and therefore its citizens’ experiences during the Second World War and the postwar period. Heilbronn was occupied by American troops in the immediate postwar period, and was part of West Germany during the Cold War. On the plaque accompanying the sculpture it states “war means suffering. People lost their lives, [were] uprooted, cities and landscapes devastated”; a statement that reflects a conflicting public memory as the army largely responsible for the physical destruction of the city was that of the Americans who later came to Heilbronn. The experience and memory of these bombings is further referenced in the plaque “on his spire in 1951, the phoenix flying in the wind was placed as a symbol of the will to live of the town heavily destroyed by the bombing raid on December, 4, 1944.” The location of the memorial within Germany, in conjunction with the references to the destruction of the city highlight the significant way that location influences the formation and expression of public memory. Perhaps, the memorial’s post-reunification construction demonstrates that an acknowledgment of the human consequences of the bombing of German cities could not occur in West

---

437 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018. (Figure 51).
438 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 51)
Germany. In addition, the memorial’s construction nearly 60 years after the bombings occurred illustrates the way that this violence remained an underlying aspect of Heilbronn’s public memory of the Second World War, despite its inability to be expressed.

In addition to the location of Grizmek’s work, the space that it occupies is vital in understanding the way that visitors experience the memorial. When I visited it in the Spring of 2018 the Hafenmarkt in Heilbronn was busy with people, families with children were enjoying the late spring afternoon and people were hurrying home from work. Once again, while I experienced the memorial and took photographs no one else was clearly viewing Grizmek’s work; there were members of an organization handing out pamphlets that were blocking a portion of the site. Grizmek’s artwork is placed in a public space that is frequented by members of Heilbronn, and therefore available for the consumption of the community.

In addition to the location and space associated with Grizmek’s work, an analysis of the artistic representation of the memories presented is vital to understanding the memorial’s significance. Grizmek presents a naked, very thin female figure standing in the rubble, with one foot placed on a higher pile of rubble. She holds a very thin child on her knee and a baby in her other arm. The woman looks off the side, her facial expression is downcast; despite this, she emits an overall resilient mood as she emerges starving, with multiple children to care for from the destruction of war. A few feet from the woman and child stands a man, also naked and very thin stepping through the

---

439 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 52)
440 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 52)
rubble, in his hand is a pick. Grizmek’s presentation of both the woman and man in this memorial may appear to lessen its significance to the broad public memory of the Trümmerfrauen, however, the presentation of both illustrates a historical reality of the immediate postwar period, that both men and woman participated in rubble clearing and reconstruction. She has presented the woman, as emerging from the more significant pile of rubble with more than one child in her hands thus visually representing the many responsibilities that German women had in the immediate postwar period. The association of the woman with the children – although a traditional gendered understanding of woman as mother and nurturer – also serves to further the idea that female reconstruction workers were key in the emergence of a postwar nation. Her position as protector of the youth in this memorial signifies women’s important role in ensuring the survival German nation following the destruction of the Second World War.

In addition to the sculptural work, the message of Grizmek’s memorial is furthered by the previously mentioned plaque. It states:

War means suffering. People lose their lives, are uprooted, cities and landscapes devastated… Like the Phoenix, which repeatedly emerges from the ashes, Heilbronn was also to emerge from the ruins. The city owes it success to the women and men who have survived the horrors of war and National Socialism and who, in spite of the hopelessness of the situation, have exhausted their courage and energy. Dismantling the rubble into space and rebuilding it. This artwork is dedicated to all of you.

---

441 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 56)
442 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 56)
443 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 52)
444 Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial. (Figure 50)
This dedication of the memorial to the reconstruction workers of Heilbronn works to reinforce a public memory in which *Trümmerfrauen* and their male counterparts, through sacrifice and resilience, are responsible for the re-creation of German cities as liveable places. Overall, in combination the location, space, and artistic representation of Grizmek’s memorial highlight the utilization of German women’s experiences in the Second World War and the evolution of these memories throughout the nation’s division and reunification.

**Munich** (Figures 58-59)

In 2013 in the area of the National Theatre Munich and the Munich Residence, at the *Graggenauer Viertal*, a memorial was erected in honour of the *Trümmerfrauen*. Similarly, to the memorial in Heilbronn, this site was created after the reunification of the nation, and thus not entirely dependent on the social and political realities of the division. Perhaps the timing in combination with the memorial’s location and message illustrate that the public memory of the perceived plight of Germans as victims of bombings was existent but could not be incorporated into the region’s public memory through physical sites of memory until German reunification took place. Thus alluding to the reality that the American presence in West Germany influenced, if not controlled, the evolution and thus utilization of the public memory of German women’s experiences.

The location of this *Trümmerfrauen* memorial in the former West is significant to understanding its role in the public memory the postwar period, as is the space in which this site of memory was placed and thus interacts with the public. Sitting in the

---

445 Munich *Trümmerfrauen* Memorial, *Graggenauer Viertal*, Munich, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 8, 2018. (Figure 59).
Graggenauer Viertal around the corner from the National Theatre Munich the Munich Residence, both major cultural and tourist locations, this memorial occupies an important space in the city. When I visited this memorial, although tucked away from the busier streets, it is very close to the city’s bustling crowds. The proximity of this memorial to such significant cultural sites thereby instills importance of the memorial itself. In addition, the immediate space surrounding the memorial signifies a level of care and maintenance that is not always present in these sites; it was surrounded by candles and fresh flowers. These aspects of the space surrounding it demonstrates that the city and the civilians of Munich feel a connection to those being honoured in the memorial, and thus have incorporated ‘practicing’ this memory into their lives.

This memorial is in the form of a plaque, more specifically a large rock – which resembles a piece of rubble – with a dedication stating “The rubble women and the construction generation. Thanks and recognition. Munich after 1945, In knowledge of the responsibility.” The artistic representation used here, varies from many of the other sites of memory dedicated to the Trümmerfrauen which present a sculptural, and thus more personal, artistic representation of the memory of the rubble women. This memorial does not connect with the passerby in the same way, as they cannot view the tired eyes of a rubble woman and be compelled to investigate why she should be remembered. Rather, this site, through a rather traditional presentation and simple language clearly states the way in which the city intends to remember the contributions of the rubble women; the dedication does not leave any room for the viewer to form

---

446 Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial. (Figure 58)
447 Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial. (Figure 58)
448 Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial, (Figure 49).
their own opinion on the role of these women or the significance of this memory. The memorial to the Trümmerfrauen and reconstruction workers in Munich is the most recent of its kind, built 68 years after the end of the Second World War this site demonstrates the way in which the memory of those events are still being rewritten in Germany through the experiences of women.

Altogether these six West German memorials dedicated to the Trümmerfrauen demonstrate the utilization of women’s experiences in an attempt to construct a national identity not based on the crimes of National Socialism. Rather, the Trümmerfrauen provided West German society the opportunity to construct an identity through the non-criminal, ‘safe’ bodies of women.

Conclusion

In 2013 the Green Party in Munich staged a protest at the Trümmerfrauen memorial in the city by placing a cover over the memorial that read, “A monument to the right ones, not the old Nazis.”449 This act demonstrates the contentious history of the Trümmerfrauen, the Green Party members who carried out this action demonstrated the conflicts that often arise surrounding public memory and its often fraught construction in postwar Second World War Germany. Memorials built to the rubble women throughout Germany demonstrate many different aspects of this process of memory, its political influences, and most of all how women were used in the construction of ‘useable pasts’ and ‘acceptable’ futures.450

The image of the *Trümmerfrauen* was different in East and West Germany, despite the fact that both nations referred to the same fundamental actions carried out by women. The memorials in East Germany were influenced by the emerging Socialist ideals manifested through the artistic representation of Soviet Socialist Realism which openly and obviously portrayed such political ideals.\(^{451}\) The memorials in East Germany often used sculptures to depict the image of the *Trümmerfrauen*, allowing for the presentation of aspects of her appearance such as her clothing, stance, and facial expression.\(^{452}\) Through these aspects the ideals of the socialist woman were implanted into the social discourse of the emerging nation, the *Trümmerfrauen* were heroes who represented the promises of Socialism, that of gender equality. In addition to the artistic form often used in East German memorials to the rubble women, the space that they occupied was unique and set them apart from their Western neighbours. Memorials to the *Trümmerfrauen* in the GDR were, in more cases than the West, found in front of government or culturally significant buildings such as a city hall. The presentation of a uniquely female experience in the centralized state of East Germany illustrates that the government aimed to ensure that the work of the rubble women was part of its national identity.\(^{453}\) This effort solidifies the assertion that East Germany presented the public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* in an effort to simultaneously establish themselves as separate from their Nazi past and to ensure that they were perceived as a truly socialist, thus moral, just, and equal nation.

---

\(^{451}\) Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 496-497.
\(^{452}\) Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 146.
While it may appear that the Trümmerfrauen memorials built in West Germany present the same memory of the rubble women as in the East, they in fact were built to accomplish a very different set of goals and presented a differing image of the ‘ideal’ woman. After the Second World War, East Germany was concerned with establishing itself as a Socialist state, in contrast, West Germany went about forming an identity that proved a discontinuity between the Third Reich and West Germany.\textsuperscript{454} Fuelled by anti-communist fears, American influences, and attempts to grapple with their criminal murderous past, West Germany used the image of the Trümmerfrauen in public memories because they were seen as ‘safe’ subjects of history.\textsuperscript{455} Nazism emphasized the masculine, and in many cases women were excluded from positions of power and authority under National Socialism; from this point of view, women were indirect participants and thus ‘less guilty’ of the crimes of the Second World War than their male counterparts.

In addition, the presentation of the Trümmerfrauen memorials in West Germany often took place in public parks and tended to rely on plaques rather than sculptural works; two aspects, space and artistic form, that inform the analysis of the motivations for memorialization. Compared to the East German tendency to present Trümmerfrauen memorials in the inherently central and political space of the city hall, the West German presentation of Trümmerfrauen memorials in less political public spaces demonstrates the differing memory practices that took place in the two countries. Memorials in decentralized public spaces, such as community parks can contribute to the narrative that this memory of the heroic rubble women emerged directly from the German people.

\textsuperscript{454} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 548-551.
\textsuperscript{455} Moeller, “Emerging From the Rubble,” 12.
An idea that is furthered through Abstract Expressionism, the artistic expression of West Germany, that claimed to not be political and represent larger or broader themes.\textsuperscript{456} When compared to the East German examples, the memorials found in West Germany more often present this memory through plaques rather than sculptural works. Perhaps this illustrates an aversion or inability by West German society to present human figures, male or female, as heroes in the postwar period. Rather, the description of their work using language, with many specific mentions to the work of rubble women, highlights the relationship between ideas of perpetrators and gender; when gender is discussed in West German memorials to rubble clearers women are identified.

The \textit{Trümmerfrauen} memorials built in West Germany and analyzed challenge the idea that West German public memory was non-political, natural, and therefore ‘more true’ than that of their East German neighbour. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that although West Germany attempted to present a public memory that was not admittedly political, the memories that emerged were, in fact, deeply political.\textsuperscript{457} West Germany used the \textit{Trümmerfrauen} by employing their image as victimized, yet resilient reconstruction workers to establish a national history on the gendered understandings of women as incapable of perpetrating violence, and thus ‘safe’ subjects of public memory.

It is important to acknowledge that the only memorials in this analysis that were built after German reunification in 1990 were found in the former West. Demonstrating that the public memory of the \textit{Trümmerfrauen} underwent further evolution after the reunification of the two Germanies. Overall, while the differing images of the

\textsuperscript{456} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 496-555.
\textsuperscript{457} Tipton, \textit{A History of Modern Germany Since 1815}, 523.
*Trümmerfrauen* between East and West Germany appear to be relatively constant there are some inconsistencies. For example, in West Germany there seems to be a concentration of memorials built in West Berlin compared to both the remainder of West Germany and East Berlin. Perhaps the geographic proximity of West Berlin to East Germany influenced the way that specific city went about memorializing the *Trümmerfrauen*; that is, by bearing witness to the utilization of the rubble women by the East, West Germany could have motivated to ‘reclaim’ that female identity for their own nation building practices.

In conclusion, the public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* while variant between the two Germanies existed in both, and was one of the platforms on which both nations constructed their history and an identity for the future. The rubble women came to embody the promises and practice of Socialism in East Germany, as they symbolized working women and gender equality. In comparison, in West Germany, because of their femininity and therefore inability to be perpetrators of violence the *Trümmerfrauen*, were memorialized as ‘safe’ non-criminal heroes to the country. When brought together and analyzed these memorials demonstrate the way women’s wartime and postwar experiences are constructed, co-opted, modified, and silenced in discussions of national identity. Not only do understandings of gender influence social and political interactions but they go on to structure the formation of a memory of these events. This practice, of utilizing women’s experiences, further highlights the reality that women are ‘allowed’ to exist in history in certain ways; however as the 2013 Munich memorial controversy demonstrates this negotiation of existence is ongoing and constantly being challenged.
5.0 Conclusion

Today, when visitors experience the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German History Museum) on Unter den Linden in Berlin, they see an extensive display on the Trümmerfrauen; photographs, artifacts, and pieces of artwork, all reflect the experiences of these German women who helped rebuild war-torn cities. Visitors can view a woman’s pick, a ration card awarded to the rubble woman for her work, and many photographs.\textsuperscript{458} One of the interpretive plaques read, that “women had the biggest share in the task of clearing the rubble” in the postwar period and therefore “laid the foundations for reconstruction”; reinforcing the narratives of the heroic rubble woman.\textsuperscript{459} The exhibit also features the work of artist of Max Lachnit, acknowledging that, “the bombing of Dresden destroyed all [his] works,” but “with hundreds of small basalt and mosaic stones from the ruins of Dresden, Lachnit created the monumental head of his Rubble Woman.”\textsuperscript{460} This fairly substantial display stands in contrast to a sole interpretative plaque that briefly mentions the mass sexual violence committed against German women.\textsuperscript{461} This disparity between these museum exhibits reflects the larger discourse explored in this thesis: the reduction, or relative silencing, of women’s experiences of sexual violence, in favour of an emphasis on “heroic” actions.

Germany has not been alone in ignoring victims of mass sexual violence in times of war. A similar discourse has defined the memory of the so-called ‘Comfort Women’, female civilians from Korea, China, and the Philippines who were forced into brothels

\textsuperscript{458} Trümmerfrauen Exhibit, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018. (Figure 60)
\textsuperscript{459} Trümmerfrauen Exhibit. (Figure 61)
\textsuperscript{460} Trümmerfrauen Exhibit. (Figure 62 & 63)
\textsuperscript{461} Refugees, Resettlers, and Expellees, Deutsches Historisches Museum. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018. (Figure 64)
and raped by the Japanese Army before and during the Second World War.\textsuperscript{462} The acts of mass sexual violence committed against these women were, for many years, not discussed; this silence was challenged in the 1990s when survivors began speaking publicly about their experiences and demanding acknowledgement.\textsuperscript{463} The Japanese government paid Korean survivors $8.3 million in reparations.\textsuperscript{464} However, many former ‘Comfort Women’ demanded a further public understanding of their victimization; as a result, statues have been erected, and days of memory enacted in the United States, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Korea.\textsuperscript{465} Like in the German context, these acts of public memory have not been without controversy, highlighting a more widespread resistance to the public memory of victims of mass rape.\textsuperscript{466}

On June 9, 1945, the Anonymous author of \textit{A Woman in Berlin} wrote, after surviving bombings, hunger, and sexual violence, “to the rest of the world we’re nothing but rubble women and trash.”\textsuperscript{467} This statement demonstrates the way that the public memory of German women’s wartime experiences would come to be remembered throughout Germany, within the limitations set out for them as either rubble women or ‘trash.’ The author does not elaborate on what she means by ‘trash’, she could simply be referring to the large amount of rubble that littered the streets of Berlin in the aftermath of war. However, I believe this reference runs deeper and exposes underlying perceptions of postwar Germany; through the use of the word ‘trash’ the author is


\textsuperscript{463} Tan, "Despite Protests from Japan."

\textsuperscript{464} Tan, "Despite Protests from Japan."

\textsuperscript{465} Tan, "Despite Protests from Japan."


\textsuperscript{467} Gebhardt, \textit{Crimes Unspoken}, 9.

\textsuperscript{467} Anonymous, \textit{A Woman in Berlin}, 248.
perhaps referencing a common moral judgement against rape victims. This statement is one of the earliest commentaries discussing the limitations placed on these women’s wartime experiences to embody either the identity of the rubble woman or the victims of mass sexual violence, but not both (despite the descriptions in the diary to the contrary). The deliberate separation of these female identities demonstrates that the two German states molded the memory of women’s experiences to accomplish specific politics, social, and gendered goals. It also provides a vivid example of the ways women are often restricted in the way they are ‘allowed’ to exist in history, in this case, society has been largely unwilling to accept complex historical identities. This thesis has analyzed the public memory of German women’s wartime experiences, as a way to fill a gap in scholarship on the post-1945 period that has failed to, up until now, to fully address the memory of women are not simply understood as either a victim or perpetrator. The historiographical basis of this project occurs at the intersection of two major areas of research: the public memory of German victimhood, and the theoretical study of memorialization and sites of memory.

Chapters Two and Three analyzed primary source evidence, that is, sites and pieces of memory, for their representations of women and deconstructed what these representations say about the society that created them. Overall, the comparisons made between East and West Germany, as well as between the two female identities have provided insights into the tense political practices of the two Germanies throughout the Cold War, in addition to the way these practices shaped women’s identities. The two experiences, that of the victim of mass sexual violence and the Trümmerfrauen, that

---

were of focus throughout this thesis have been utilized in the German public discourse throughout the Cold War and after reunification.

These findings are illustrated through a comparison of the way that both East and West Germany chose to remember the experiences of the victims of mass rape and the *Trümmerfrauen*. In East Germany, the mass sexual violence committed against German women was not officially recognized on a state level. The official role of the Red Army, largely responsible for the rapes in East Germany, was that of liberators. This blanket categorization of these soldiers as heroes left no room for the inclusion of German women’s experiences of rape in the public memory of the Second World War. Their actions as rapists were viewed as contradictory to their actions as liberators; the official response of this conflict was, for East Germany, to exclude the experiences of victims of rape from the official public memory. Historian Norman Naimark explored the phenomenon in East German society, that the official memory of these acts of sexual violence was absent, despite the prevalence of discourses surrounding rape in informal social discussions.\(^{469}\) The East German public memory of victims of mass rape was therefore silenced to a degree, it was rejected from the national memory of the Second World War despite the reality that it was an aspect of family and community memories.

While there was no official recognition for the victims of mass sexual violence in East Germany, the work of the rubble women was celebrated on a state level throughout the country. As the primary evidence presented in earlier chapters demonstrates the memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* contributed to the socio-political installation of socialist ideology; the image of the equal, working woman was reinforced

---

\(^{469}\) Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 132-133.
through the multitude of memorials built to honour the rubble women. Therefore, the many memorials built to the *Trümmerfrauen* demonstrate the identity the East German state was willing to remember, and the silence surrounding victims of mass rape illustrates that which they were not willing to. This example of selection and omission shows how public memory is not simply a reflection of what aspects of the past a society remembers, rather, it is highly political and shaped by the national identity that society seeks to embody.

The divisive politics of the Cold War defined the social, economic, and cultural lives of Germans, in both the East and West. A less obvious outcome of the political division of the Germanies following the Second World War is the construction of memory that both states carried out using the experiences of women. Thus, the public memories of victims of mass rape and the *Trümmerfrauen* in West Germany diverged from that of East German society. As the previous chapters have exhibited, the victims of rape were ‘allowed’ to speak about their experiences of sexual violence within strict limitations set out by the social and political goals of West Germany. Therefore, the victims of mass rape were publically remembered if their experience aligned with the West German construction of the barbarous Soviet rapist. This limitation, therefore, had the power to silence women whose rapes occurred at the hands of different perpetrators, such as American soldiers, or under different circumstances, such as coerced sexual intercourse – when women had no other way of acquiring food they would have sexual relations with soldiers to feed themselves.

The restrictions placed on whose experiences are allowed to be heard, and exist in the public discourse are illustrated through the rejection of the diary *A Woman in*
Berlin. The Anonymous author chronicles her experiences of rape at the end of the Second World War, the narrative she presents in many ways fits with that of the ‘acceptable’ West German victim of mass sexual violence. She is violently, and obviously, in a non-consensual manner, raped by Soviet soldiers, it illustrates the terrible actions of Red Army soldiers yet the diary was not welcomed into the public discourse in the 1950s. I believe that the diary was rejected because the author reflects on her experiences of rape without the level of shame that 1950s society, specifically West Germany, expected her carry in response to these acts of sexual violence. She describes the way in which postwar realities blurred the lines between rape and sexual relations, in addition, Anonymous acknowledges her deep desire to form human connection in the aftermath of war. As a result, she develops a human understanding of these the Red Army soldiers, even in her victimization she views these soldiers as not simply ‘perpetrators’ but explores the vastly complicated relationship between victim and perpetrator. For her, at times, sympathetic response to the actions of occupation soldiers, her vivid and unapologetic description of rape, and her discussion of the breakdown of humanity within her German community, the experiences of Anonymous were rejected from West German society in the 1950s. This rejection resulted in a gap in the diary’s publication from 1959 until 2003; a gap which meant it was largely unavailable to the West German public and therefore not a part of that society’s memory of the events of the Second World War. While historians have argued that the experiences of victims of rape were present in West German discourses, the rejection of the experiences of Anonymous demonstrate that only certain experiences were accepted, that the limitations were strictly defined, and worked to exclude the experiences of some
from the public memory. Experiences that were accepted were those that provided
‘useable pasts’ for West German society to construct its identity from, in reference to
the victims of mass rape, that was limited to narratives that simply characterized Soviet
soldiers as the barbarous enemy to the West.\footnote{Moeller, "The Politics of the Past," 26.}

In comparison to the West German memory of victims of rape, the memory of
the *Trümmerfrauen* was instilled in that same nation through stone yet, was a less
powerful symbol utilized by the state. While the victim of rape was used by West
Germany to remind postwar society of the barbarity of the Soviet Union, the
*Trümmerfrauen* were remembered on a local level and reinforced the ability of the FRG
to rebuild after the destruction of war. Compared to the East German memory, the West
German public memory of the *Trümmerfrauen* was less pronounced. The memory of the
work of the rubble-women in the FRG was not focused on their feminine identity, rather
sites of memory emphasized the contributions of both male and female reconstruction
workers. These sites were also not located in significant political or cultural spaces,
rather they were often built in public parks destroyed by war and rebuilt in its aftermath.
These sites of memory echoed the sentiment that these social spaces would not exist
without the hard work of both male and female reconstruction workers. In the West,
these sites dedicated to the *Trümmerfrauen* did not connect rubble-clearance to its
national identity as was done through memorials in the East.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that both East and West Germany utilized the
memory of German women’s wartime experiences in the creation of ‘useable’ national
identities in the postwar period.\footnote{Moeller, "The Politics of the Past," 26.} Specifically, post-reunification narratives that
highlighted German women’s victimization through rape were rejected on the basis that the memory of that victimization superseded and thus erased their identities as perpetrators of Nazism. This primary source analysis of public memory debates, taking place in both public and private spheres, reveals the reality that male historical actors are allowed to exist in historical discussions in ways unknown to women. There is trepidation surrounding the discussion of these victims of mass rape, an apprehension that does not exist, at least not to the same degree, around the historical study of men, for example, soldiers of the Second World War. Soldiers are often memorialized as heroes, acknowledgments of their crimes exist in academic discourses but in public spaces these men are primarily held up representations of sacrifice, and goodness. In comparison, German women are excluded from public memory on the basis that they supported the Nazi regime, not through acts of war but by perpetuating and benefitting from the ideology of a murderous regime. This comparison demonstrates the different set of standards that men and women are held to that define their presence in historical discourses. Additionally, the experiences of the Trümmerfrauen were exaggerated and utilized in East German postwar memory, the rubble women contributed to the narrative that the GDR was enacting the ideas of equality from which they were supposedly built.

The primary evidence analyzed in this thesis demonstrates that postwar memory came to see German women, as the Anonymous author wrote in 1945, as “nothing but rubble women and trash.”472 These two identities were, although historically convergent, divided in the public memory understandings of this time period, resulting in ‘contrasting silences’. This division and the subsequent utilization of these experiences

highlights the way these postwar societies defined themselves through these identities, that is, either “rubble women or trash.”

6.0 Bibliography

Primary Sources


*Befreier und Befreite 1, 1*. Bremen: BIFF Bremer Institut Film/Fernsehen, 1992.


Control Council Law No. 32 on the Employment of Women in Building and Reconstruction Work (German History in Documents and Images 1946).


[http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681416.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13681416.html).


Putting Every Brick to Use: 'Rubble Woman' Removing Mortar Remnants. 1946. German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.


Rubble Woman near the Trinity Church. 1946. German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.


Memorials


Ossietskystraße Memorial, Ossietskystraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018


Secondary

Anderson, Benedict. "Trümmer Geographies Teufelsberg As a Site of Forgetting". Performance Research. 20, no. 3: 75-82. 2015.


Smith, Sabine. "Interview with Helke Sander: Reception of *Liberators Take Liberties*: I Would Have Hoped for a Different Discussion..." In *Triangulated Visions: Women in Recent German Cinema*, edited by Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey and


Appendix

Photographic Evidence as First ex. Of Public Memory 1945-1948

Figure 1 - Gronefeld, Gerhard. Koksammlerin in Der Gaanstalt Mariendorf. May 1945. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 2 - Jacobson-Sonnenfeld, Bau Auf Trümmerbahn. 1945/46, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.
Figure 3 - Gerhard Gronefeld, *Trümmerfrau in Der Berliner Hockernstraße*, December 1945, *Deutsches Historisches* Museum, Berlin, Germany

Figure 4 - Gerhard Gronefeld, *Trümmerfrauen*, 1945/48, *Deutsches Historisches* Museum, Berlin, Germany.
Figure 5 - Jewgeni Chaldej, *Enttrümmerung in Der Holzmarktstraße*. May 1945. *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 6 - Pressbild-Verlag Schirner. *Trümmerfrauen*. May 22, 1945. *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, Berlin, Germany.
Figure 7 - Taking a Break During Clearing Operations in Berlin, 1945-1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.

Figure 65 - Rubble Woman near the Trinity Church, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.
Figure 9 - Putting Every Brick to Use: 'Rubble Woman' Removing Mortar Remnants, 1946, German History in Documents and Images, Berlin.

Figure 10 - Puck Pressdienst, Trümmerfrau in Berlin. 1946. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.
Memorials Built in the Former East Germany

Figure 11 - Trümmerfrauen. 1945/1949. Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.

Figure 66 - Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.
Figure 13 - Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.

Figure 14 - Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Dresden, Germany. Personal photograph by author. June 2, 2018.

Figure 15 - Ossietskystraße Memorial, Ossietskystraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 16 - Ossietskystraße Memorial, Ossietskystraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 17 - Ossietskystraße Memorial, Ossietskystraße, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 18 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 19 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 20 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.
Figure 21 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 22 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 23 - Lichtspieltheater der Jugend, Frankfurt an Der Oder, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.
Figure 24 - Denkmal Aufbauhelferin Von Fritz Cremer in Berlin-Mitte. In Wikimedia Commons. April 17, 2006.

Figure 25 - Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.
Figure 26 - Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.

Figure 27 - Johannisthal Trümmerfrau Memorial, Johannisthal, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 26, 2018.
Figure 28 - Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 29 - Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 30 - Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.

Figure 31 - Weißensee Trümmerfrau Memorial, Weißensee, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 28, 2018.
Figure 32 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 33 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.
Figure 34 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 35 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.
Figure 36 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.

Figure 37 - Prenzlauer Berg Memorial, Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 27, 2018.
Memorials Built in the Former West Germany

Figure 38 - Volkspark Humoldthian Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018.

Figure 39 - Volkspark Humoldthian Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 25, 2018.
Figure 40 - Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.

Figure 41 - Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018.
Figure 42 - Max Josef Metzger Platz Memorial, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author. May 29, 2018

Figure 43 - Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018
Figure 44 - Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018

Figure 45 - Volkspark Hasenheide Memorial, Hasenheide Public Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 26, 2018
Figure 46 - Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 47 - Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.
Figure 48 - Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 49 - Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.
Figure 50 - Fritz-Schloß Park Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Fritz-Schloß Park, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 27, 2018.

Figure 51 - Sabrina Grızmek’s Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.
Figure 52 - Sabrina Grizmek’s Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 53 - Sabrina Grizmek’s Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.
Figure 54 - Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 55 - Sabrina Grizmek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.
Figure 56 - Sabrina Grzimek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.

Figure 57 - Sabrina Grzimek's Memorial, Hafenmarkt, Heilbronn, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 5, 2018.
Figure 58 - Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Graggenauer Viertal, Munich, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 8, 2018.

Figure 59 - Munich Trümmerfrauen Memorial, Graggenauer Viertal, Munich, Germany, Personal photograph by author, June 8, 2018.
Exhibit at the German History Museum

Figure 60 – “Chipping Hammer used in the removal of rubble”, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.

Figure 61 – “Clearing the Rubble” Explanatory Plaque, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.
Figure 63– Max Lachnit’s “Trümmerfrau (Rubble Woman)”, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.

Figure 64– Max Lachnit’s “Trümmerfrau (Rubble Woman)” Explanatory Plaque, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.
Während Millionen von Kriegsflüchtlingen durch das territoriale Deutsche-land irren, begannen die in Polen zufließenden Flüchtlinge in den ehemaligen deutschen Ostgebieten mit der systematischen Verteilung der damaligen deutscher Bevölkerung unter binne des Krieges. Es zeigte sich, dass die Verbote der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Jugoslawien bis zu 600.000 Menschen verloren bei Flucht und Vertreibung innerhalb weniger Monate ihr Leben.


Anfang 1940 kehrte in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone rund 4,8 Millionen Flüchtlinge und Umsiedler, in der britischen Zone waren es ca. 3,3 Millionen, in der Amerikanischen Zone etwa 3 Millionen und in der Französischen Zone waren der bis dahin restriktiven Aufnahmepolitik nur rund 60.000. Auf den endlosen Zentren von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen regierte die einheimische Bevölkerung zum Teil mit schneller Ablehnung.

Figure 65 – “Refugees, Resettlers and Expellees” Explanatory Plaque, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin, Germany. Personal photograph by author, May 25, 2018.
Curriculum Vitae

Emily McPherson

Education

2019  Master of Arts, Department of History, University of New Brunswick

Areas of Specialization: German History, Modern Europe, Gender and Sexuality, Historical Theory and Methods, Digital Humanities
Thesis: Contrasting Silences: The Public Memory of German Women’s Experiences of the Second World War in the Divided Germany, 1945-Present
Language Training: German
Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Todd, Department of History, University of New Brunswick
Thesis Examiners: Dr. Julia Torrie, Department of History, St. Thomas University; Dr. Suzanne Hindmarch, Department of Political Science, University of New Brunswick

2017  Bachelor of Arts, High Honours in History, University of New Brunswick

Areas of Specialization: New Brunswick History, Environmental History, Canadian Experiences of War, the Second World War, Gender and Sexuality, Modern German History 1871-present

Conference Participation

2019  Moderator for Panel, “Change and Continuities in War and Society since Antiquity,” at the Atlantic Universities Undergraduate History and Classic Conference (AUUHCC), Fredericton, New Brunswick, 2 March 2019.

2018  “The Utilization of Women’s Wartime Experiences: Gender and Public Memory of the Second World War in a Divided Germany, 1945-present.” Presented as part of the panel “Women, Germany, and the Second World War,” at the 19th Annual University of Maine and the University of New Brunswick Graduate Conference New Voices in History, Orono, Maine, 22 September 2018.