

'Feminigenocide:' Or the Effacement of Women in the Genocidal Experience

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ABSTRACT

Until the end of the end of the twentieth century, there were few linguistic or legal mechanisms in place for addressing the specificity of women's experience in genocide. The terms Gynocide and Femicide—used loosely to designate a wide variety of acts meant to handicap women, from sex selection, genital mutilation, to female infanticide—were rarely employed to speak of women in genocide. As one might imagine, the original legal definition of the term in the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide did not include sex-identified groups amongst potential victim populations. It was not until 1982 that gender-based violence against women appeared in definitions of genocide. These, in turn, were later eclipsed by the gender-neutral term "Gendercide" which, since that time, has been used almost exclusively to refer to the killing of men. Indeed, as Adam Jones contends, due to their status as so-called "provocative targets" (specifically, as those most likely to participate in military action or to seek revenge) historically boys and men have been the first slated for slaughter in times of war (think Herod's Massacre of the Innocents, the slaughter of males in Lassíthi, Crete and the mass burnings of Sikh men in New Delhi in 1984).

Perhaps this is the reason that many scholars categorize women's experiences during genocide as statistically insignificant in comparison to that of men. The following essay is a meditation on the narratives surrounding women as victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence during armed conflict and the effect such narratives have had on the criminalization and prosecution of such acts in times of genocide.

'FEMINIGENOCIDE:' OR THE EFFACEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE GENOCIDAL EXPERIENCE

My research on genocide has not typically focused on women. This is partly because I examine the role of popular culture in genocide and, with the exception of poster art and political cartoons in magazines, this type of propaganda tends to either target men (challenging their masculinity or patriotism) or be gender neutral. Moreover, although women are clearly affected by genocide, until the end of the end of the twentieth century there were few linguistic or legal mechanisms in place for addressing the specificity of their experience in this particular situation. The terms Gynocide and Femicide—used loosely to designate a wide variety of acts meant to handicap women, from sex selection, genital mutilation, to female infanticide—are rarely employed to speak of women in

genocide. As one might imagine, the original legal definition of the term in the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide did not include sex-identified groups amongst potential victim populations. It was not until 1982 that gender-based violence against women appeared in definitions of genocide. They were later eclipsed by the gender-neutral term "Gendercide" which, since that time, has been used almost exclusively to refer to the killing of men.¹ Indeed, as Adam Jones contends, due to their status as so-called "provocative targets" (specifically, as those most likely to participate in military action or to seek revenge) historically boys and men have been the first slated for slaughter in times of war (think Herod's Massacre of the Innocents, the slaughter of males in Lassíthi, Crete and the mass burnings of Sikh men in New Delhi in 1984).²

Perhaps this is the reason that many scholars categorize gender-based violence against women during genocide as statistically insignificant in comparison, which has had an unfortunate effect on the prosecution of such acts. To be fair, referring to it as "statistically insignificant" is not the same saying that women are not targeted for assault in war. Sexual abuse in times of military conflict is as old as conflict itself. In his exploration of the gendered dynamics at work in the establishment of traditional kinship structures, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss identifies the commodification of women as an essential component of homo-social bonding. Women become the primary objects of exchange intended to secure peace between otherwise potentially warring tribes. Of course, their status as material assets would also make them socially acceptable objects of plunder when at war. Indeed, according to the so-called "Just War Theory," as articulated by Aristotle, Cicero, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, as the possessions of men—whether of fathers or husbands—women were "legitimate booty" in times of conflict.³ In this circumstance, rape would be taken to be a male on male act, meant to bring dishonor to the man who was unable to protect his chattel. Had it been a criminal offense, it would have been a property crime. Evidently, this was not a universally upheld practice. In 546 A.D., for example, Totila the Ostrogothe banned the sexual exploitation of Roman women by his soldiers. However, in ancient times such official prohibitions were the exception and sanctioned rape and abduction the norm. *Deuteronomy* even sets out the ethical parameters for

such conventions:

When you go out to war against your enemies and the Lord your God delivers them into your hand, [...] and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her [...] then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

Happily for the conqueror, there is a proviso lest all not work out as planned: "And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free [...]."4 To the victors go the first rights of refusal.

RAPE IN MODERN DAY CONFLICT

Although the technology of warfare evolved considerably over the centuries and many countries adopted military codes deeming rape a capital offense (Great Britain in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the United States Lieber codes of 1863, for example), the idea that women were fair game in state-sanctioned military conflict remained much unchanged in the twentieth century from what it had been in ancient times.⁵ The proof lies, in part, in the sheer number of occurrences of mass rapes and sex slavery in the past century, but also in their lack of prosecution. Examples include but are by no means limited to the Soviet military's rape of two million women in post world war II occupied zones, the Japanese imperial army's rape of two hundred thousand women in Nanking China in less than six weeks, the rape of two to four hundred thousand Bangladeshi women by Pakistani armed forces, the one hundred thousand Mayan women raped between 1960 and 1996 at the hand of the Guatemalan Ríos Montt regime, the fifty thousand sexual assaults in the rape camps of the former Yugoslavia, and the estimated two to five hundred thousand cases of rape in Rwanda (in one hundred days) and a similar number in Darfur today.

Even governments known to have officially condemned sexual assault in times of conflict—for reasons ranging from fear of racial corruption (the Nazis) to a professed sexual equality before the law (the Khmer Rouge, the United States, the United Kingdom)—tacitly condoned it in practice by granting impunity to the perpetrators. In some cases, a large-scale sexual violation against women was organized by the state. In an effort to increase the working population from eight to twenty million and to destroy the traditional family unit in the process, the Khmer

Rouge instituted an unspoken policy of arranging marriages between cadres and civilians, most of whom were strangers to each other. These so-called "red weddings" were conducted en masse—involving anywhere from three to one hundred and sixty couples—sometimes with little more than a moment's notice, and with no concern for former familial allegiances. According to witness testimonials, the weddings were followed by compulsory consummation under the watchful eyes of the military, who, if necessary assisted in raping unwilling participants. In other cases, sex slavery was engineered by the military as a way to increase morale amongst the troops. Prior to and during World War II, the Japanese Imperial military coerced upwards of two hundred thousand Chinese, Korean and Philippine women into prostitution.⁶ In an attempt to stave off the spread of disease, doctors were even invited to make regular visits to such "comfort stages," just as they would later in the Serb-run rape camps of the former Yugoslavia. When one takes into consideration the ubiquitous presence and tolerance of sexual assault of women, it becomes difficult to ignore the fact that wholesale violation of women in times of conflict is—today and always—the rule rather than the exception.

In his description of gender-based violence in ethnic riots, Donald Horowitz offers something of a justification as to why this is the case. "Rapes certainly occur [...], sometimes a great many rapes, *but the killing and mutilation of men is much more common than is the murder or rape of women*" (my emphasis). As if to punctuate his argument, he ends by adding "Sometimes women are even treated courteously by their husband's killers."⁷ What Horowitz is contending is not so unlike the attitude of ancient warriors. The treatment of women in times of warfare is not considered to be a major moral or legal infraction because, as wartime experiences go, it is "less than" that of men—which means to say, it is not as grave (since lives were often spared), but also that it is not as important. One need only scan the euphemistic descriptions of rape and its consequences in early to mid-twentieth century international legislation to see how pervasive this mindset is.

Here I'm referring to the 1907 Hague Conventions and Regulations, where sexual misconduct is described as a violation of "family honor," and the First, Third

and Fourth Geneva Conventions in which, when rape is defined, it is described as an "outrage [...] upon personal dignity." It hardly matters whether these regulations are referring to dishonor that would be suffered by the spouses of rape victims (as in ancient times) or to the victims themselves, because either way the wording here—as in Horowitz's description of ethnic riots—speaks much less to women's experience of rape than to men's appreciation of its gravity. Whether speaking of historical manifestations of "Just War" theory, or their early twentieth-century counterparts, nowhere is the reality of women's experience described. And by reality I mean brutality. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Ashley Judd described the effects of rape such as that experienced by women in the Congo:

There will be perforation of the vaginal walls, perforation and ripping of the cervix, potentially, based on the extent of the penetration into the uterus. The wall between the rectum and vagina is ripped apart. The urethra, which goes to the bladder, is damaged. There is incontinence. The urine is constantly seeping out, because the muscles and mechanisms that hold the bladder intact are ruined; there is fecal incontinence, which, of course, can introduce fecal matter into the gut, which results in horrific infections. Does that paint the picture?⁸

As excessive as this account seems to be, the condition described above is not an anomaly of wartime rape. Women may not be the first slaughtered in times of conflict, but rape in such times is characterized by extreme savagery that is often just the precursor to death. During the Armenian genocide, while men were killed on the spot, women were often driven off to the desert, and thus "spared." Although ostensibly protected by Turkish gendarmes along the way, women and girls were often gang raped, stabbed, or thrown over cliffs before ever reaching the desert. Those who made it that far died from starvation and exposure. In the 1970s, Cambodian women were publicly raped and tortured by Khmer Rouge cadre minutes before execution. The 1990s saw the imprisonment of Croatian women, who were tortured by electric shocks, mutilated, and gang-raped just prior to death, much in the same way as Jewish women were forced to undergo pre-death sexual brutalization of a variety of forms in the "medical experiments" in Nazi concentration camps some fifty years prior. Throughout the century, from Imperial Japan, to Serbia, to Rwanda, to Darfur, women have been violated with guns, bayonets, bamboo, broken bottles and machetes, and children split

open to accommodate adult men.

Despite the severity of the acts and the extremely high incidence of resultant mortality, sexual violence towards women has been widely tolerated as an unfortunate "sideshow in the theater of war;"⁹ this, not just because it has been historically considered socially acceptable (to the winners go the spoils), but also because it is expected as a natural byproduct of excess testosterone. As such, to paraphrase, Katherine MacKinnon, although it is clearly violent, what it reeks of is sex.¹⁰ Which, it seems, is justification enough to treat it as an opportunistic act and one that is performed by private individuals (albeit, a great many and often simultaneously) as opposed to a premeditated and strategic exploit of war.

RAPE IN GENOCIDE

Of course, the majority of the conflicts that I've made reference to up until this point—while related to war—are not merely examples of war. They are not instances of bilateral military aggression, but rather full-scale assaults by militia on mostly unarmed, noncombatant populations. This is something that lies outside the pale. It is military force employed not in the service of "gain" per se (gain of land, riches, political control), but rather of purposeful "loss:" that of an unwanted population. Subject to its set of regulations, it is, for all intents and purposes, lawless killing. Here, mass rape cannot be excused as unpredictable, fortuitous, or the result of excessive hormonal surges. In some cases, the directives were explicit, as in the case of Rwanda, where government officials gave orders to rape and kill in public places. In other instances, although such commands were rarely witnessed, the sexual violence was systematic enough that official sanction can be safely assumed. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, middle schools, municipal buildings, and animal pens were transformed into mattress-lined rape camps in all Serb-occupied territories.

The cases that I have mentioned are all genocides and, contrary to what Horowitz suggests, rarely do genocidal regimes rely solely on "flash killings" of men to achieve their aims. This is where women come into the picture in a more "statistically significant" fashion. As is implied when one refers to an exceptionally thorough leveling of a territory as a "rape" (as in the Rape of Belgium, the Rape of

Nanking), rape in genocide is like an atomic bomb engineered to lay waste. It demonstrates the intention of the *génocidaires* to thoroughly decimate a population; to take out, to paraphrase Adam Jones, the "roots" with the branch. What's more, it performs the perverse gesture of turning the victims into perpetrators by making them party to the destruction of their people.

A literal example of this took place during the Rwandan genocide when the extremist Hutu government released AIDS patients from hospitals for the purpose of transforming an estimated two hundred thousand Tutsi women and girls into ticking time bombs for their own annihilation, but also into biological weapons for the destruction of their people. Ironically, the pre-genocide anti-Tutsi propaganda fixated on the idea that Tutsi women were sexually dangerous.¹¹ Post-genocide, these so-called "lightning women" were considered so by Tutsi men as well. The Serbian military's use of rape for pornographic and propagandistic purposes is another way in which women were used to destroying their populations. Disguised in Croatian military garb, Serb soldiers would film their gang rapes of Bosnian Muslim women. During the rapes, the soldiers would shout anti-Serbian vulgarities at their victims and force them to sing Serbian patriotic songs. The films were then diffused on Television Belgrade to incite both fear and genocidal hatred in the general public.

While the examples above describe the most extreme ways in which women were employed as weapons against their communities, there are other, perhaps more subtle, ways that this was done. Armenian women who were not driven off into the desert to die were often kidnapped by Turkish men and forcibly "assimilated" by way of coerced conversions to Islam, marriage to their captor, and facial tattooing that would signal the end of former allegiances and the beginning of new ones. In other genocides, particularly those in which rape is thought to sully the victim and by extension her agnatic ties, the rape alone—in other words, without permanent enslavement and branding—is enough to cripple both the individual and her community. Facing ostracism from her people, further violence from the perpetrator if she returns, and in some cases legal liability (in Darfur, if a woman reports rape she can be arrested on charges of indecency/adultery), the victim is forced to submit to a

social death that precedes the material one. Nowhere is this more evident perhaps than in Cambodia where raped women (like the two hundred and fifty thousand brides of the so-called Red Weddings) are said to lose their Khmer identity. And to lose one's Khmer identity is to lose one's humanity. This is rape for the purpose of community destruction and coerced displacement, and refugee camps lying on the outskirts of countries in which genocide took place are filled with its victims.

Finally, in many patrilineal societies, where women's role in reproduction is perceived as little more than acting as the vessel for a male's genetic material, rape is used as a means of biological colonization. It is employed not only to humiliate the victim population and destroy bonds but also to literally occupy wombs. The most widely reported examples of this are from the former Yugoslavia and Darfur, where rape victims were systematically taunted with impregnation by their persecutors. In contrast to Darfur, however, raped women who became pregnant in the former Yugoslavia were often held prisoner until the seventh month of gestation when abortion was no longer possible.¹²

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

For the majority of women who survived genocidal rape (and a great many did not), there was little to no recourse to justice following persecution. The practical reality was such that if they wished to remain in their communities, they needed to stay silent about their victimization. According to Dr. Rangira Béa Gallimore, in post-genocide Rwanda, there was not even a word for rape in Kinyarwanda, which itself says much about the acceptance of sexual violence in Rwandan culture.¹³ By minimizing the gravity of sexual violence and rarely holding persecutors accountable, until the end of the century, International law did little more than add to the effacement of women's victimization.

Contrary to what Donald Horowitz and Adam Jones suggest, I would argue that genocide is not predominantly an attack on men but rather an all-out assault on women: not because, to paraphrase Barbara Ehrenreich, women who survived conflict, became the place takers for their male counterparts, and thus the psychological equivalent and symbol for "the enemy' Other,"¹⁴ but rather because they are women. It is an assault on womanhood. I do not say this because genocidal regimes often stripped their female

victims of superficial and not so superficial markers of femininity (hair and clothes in Germany and Cambodia; breasts, buttocks, and genitals in Nanking and Rwanda). Neither is it because they often purposely damaged women's reproductive systems (with forced sterilizations, medical experiments, and botched abortions in Nazi Germany). Nor is it because women were gang raped prior to execution (as in Cambodia) or literally raped to death with bayonets, broken bottles, sticks, rocks, pistols, and machetes in Nanking, Bosnia, and Rwanda. I would argue that genocide is above all a war on women because, in addition to the above acts committed by the *génocidaires*, rather than helping female victims of sexual brutality, the institutions and mechanisms set in place by international law to protect their rights seem to do little more than pick up where the *génocidaires* leave off.

This occurs in a literal way in that the presence of post-conflict peacekeepers—understood here as U.N. representatives, military contractors, NGOs, and aid workers—often results in a higher incidence of sex trafficking and abuse of women and children by the "peacekeepers" themselves.¹⁵ Citing myriad sources, Keith J. Allred claims that serious sexual abuses of civilian populations have been reported in peacekeeping missions in Angola, Cambodia, East Timor, Liberia, Mozambique, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, to name just a few.¹⁶ However, a more damaging way that international institutions, and, in particular, international law, fails women post-conflict is by misrepresenting their experience and thus creating a culture of justifiable impunity. For Catherine MacKinnon, divesting women of their status as victims in this way amounts to depriving them of their standing as humans, leading her to exclaim that "Atrocities committed against women are either too human to fit the notion of female or too female to fit the concept of human. "Human" and "female" are mutually exclusive by definition: you cannot be a woman and a human being at the same time."¹⁷

Of course, there is nothing new about the exclusion of women from, and their subordination within, patriarchal social systems. Building on Lévi-Strauss's study of kinship and Marx's analysis of commodity classes in capitalist society, Luce Irigaray describes such biopolitical social orders as structures which, perhaps not surprisingly,

demand of women the impossible: to be at once fully present and entirely absent.¹⁸ In accordance with Lévi-Strauss, Irigaray associates the role of a woman with that of a peace-offering. Her presence is necessary for establishing and maintaining bonds within a social or conceptual matrix of relations. However, since her value and potential roles are determined entirely by either her production value or exchange value—in other words, by her status as object of some transaction—she cannot be said to play a role within this economy in her own right: "Wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of and potential benefit in, relations among men."¹⁹

Like the Virgin, a woman has "pure exchange value." Representing nothing other than "the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men"—in other words, unmitigated potential—"In and of herself she does not exist [...]." Once impregnated, her use transforms from one of potential exchange to one of production. As such, she is extracted from male commerce—absent again within the system of male-to-male relations—and becomes instead private property. The sole value of the Prostitute—the final possible role for a woman in patriarchal social orders—resides in her status as an object in circulation. Representing "the locus of relations—hidden ones—between men," she is the embodiment of patriarchal exchange.²⁰ Regardless of the role, a woman is, for all intents and purposes, absent. As in the Oedipus complex, she is lack—nothing more than a "reflection as image of and for man."²¹ Although "played out through the bodies of women," this too is exclusively "homosexual," since it speaks less to relations between the sexes than to "the smooth workings of man's relations with himself."²²

FEMALE PERPETRATORS OF GENOCIDE

In the narratives surrounding the genocidal experience, there is a similar usurping of women's agency with respect to the portrayal of women perpetrators. Although statistically insignificant compared to the number of female victims (who are mostly given only parenthetical mention by scholars), female *génocidaires* are permitted hyperbolic presence in narratives relating to genocide. However, while this may lead one to assume that such women are, in fact, given the agency in genocide that is denied to female victims, this is

not the case. Most female participants are characterized as little more than "support staff" for male decision makers. Jones labels the participants in the National Socialist girls and women's groups—the darlings of pro-Hitler propaganda—the "cheerleaders," but in the supporting role I would also include female Khmer Rouge "teachers," Hutu women who identified Tutsis to killers, women who brought food and drink to *Interahamwe* militia at roadblocks, and the Hakama singers whose songs choreographed the sexual assaults by Janjaweed militia in Darfur, among others.

Far rarer, and thus much more sensationalized in media and scholarship, are women who held high enough positions in these regimes so as to commit if not command genocidal acts. In contrast to female victims of genocide, many of these women are given ample attention in the domain of international law. Although she was later released as mentally incompetent to stand trial, Ieng Thirith was one of the five Khmer Rouge leaders to be indicted for war crimes some forty years after the Cambodian genocide. Former Bosnian President Biljana Plavsic was prosecuted for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the Minister of Health and Women's Affairs, received a life sentence for her participation in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. So too did Valérie Bemeriki, the female disc jockey of RTLM, (otherwise known as "radio machete"), who plead guilty to inciting listeners to perform genocidal acts. The Nuremberg trials went much further by trying, convicting, and in several cases executing women for war crimes. Some of the most infamous include camp guards Irma Grese and Juana Bormann, nurse Greta Bosel, Ilse Koch, the wife of an S.S. officer, and the female commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Maria Mandel.

However, despite the fact that the law held them accountable for their actions, the same essentialist narratives that prevent victims from having subject status in their own victimization—in other words, the narratives that hold that normal women can be reduced to the Hegelian archetype of the notional "Beautiful Soul" (that which embodies "the claims of moral consciousness to have an inner grace or purity"²³)—deprived the female persecutors agency in and thus responsibility for having committed odious acts. In *Women and War*, Jean Bethke Elshtain argues as much by

stating that the Western conceptualization of women as "Beautiful Souls"—the necessary complement to the masculine "Just Warriors"—is little more than a cultural trope that functions to "re-create and secure women's location as noncombatants and men's as warriors."²⁴ Accordingly, "women"—by virtue of the fact that they are capable of giving life—do not take life. They do not send detainees to the gas chambers, or—as was rumored in the case of Ilse Koch—order the death of prisoners to collect their tattoos. Nuns, such as sister Gertrude Mukangango and Sister Julienne Kizito do not assist in the lighting of victims on fire. Ministers of Women's Health certainly do not lead victims to a stadium under the auspices of providing aid and then order soldiers—including their sons—to rape all of the Tutsi women before murdering them.

Describing such women as aberrations—as monstrous examples of "femininity," and so non-women—simultaneously takes away their subject status in decision making processes (that they can and did make decisions based on political or moral beliefs just like men, reprehensible though they may be) and releases them of accountability for their heinous acts. In some cases, the perpetrators themselves exploited such discourses to argue their innocence. In her defense, Rwanda's Nyiramasuhuko exclaimed, "I am ready to talk to the person who says I could have killed. I cannot even kill a chicken. If there is a person who says that a woman, a mother, killed, then I'll confront that person..."²⁵ Oftentimes, the media—perhaps unwittingly—reinforces such narratives and subsequent defenses by focusing on what the female defendants wore to court (Nyiramasuhuko), to their "charm," as with Irma Grese, or by referring to them, not by their official and earned titles such as "Dr. or President" in the case of Plavsic, but rather by "Ms. or Mrs."

The fascination with Nazi female persecutors—the first to be tried and convicted in international courts—took a decidedly different direction than that of the "un-motherly" killers of Rwanda. In this case, the women were not divested of responsibility—not to mention willpower, strength, and decision-making skills—for their acts (if just in the masculine imaginary). Instead, they were eroticized into consumable, albeit dangerous, sexual objects that spawned an industry of S&M Nazi

pornography.²⁶ Coinciding with the war crimes trials of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, 1960s, Israel saw the birth of the wildly popular Nazi pornographic fiction known as the *Stalag* series, of which the descriptively titled "I Was Colonel Schultz's Private Bitch" was just one example. Disturbingly, the series was written, printed, and produced by Israeli citizens.

Although ostensibly inspired by camp survivor Yehiel De-Nur's 1955 account of sex slavery in the so-called "joy divisions" of Nazi concentration camps,²⁷ the *Stalag* series focused its erotic attention not on the victims but rather on the female persecutors. As described in Ari Libsker's documentary film, *Stalags: Holocaust Pornography in Israel* (2008), while small details changed from one incarnation to the next, the basic structure of the paperbacks remained much untouched from text to text: Allied soldier falls victim to Nazis and is held prisoner by scantily clad, sadistic female guards who rape and torture the inmates until they are finally overpowered. Titillating though the varied acts of sexual dominance may have been to some readers, the predictable end in which the Allied captive manages to overpower his captor by extreme force, leaves little doubt as to what the producer of the series imagined the real climax of his mostly male readers to be: the rape and murder not simply of a Nazi but of a monstrous aberration of femininity.

While the Israeli government banned *Stalags* two years after inception, forcing the series into underground circulation and thus enhancing its subversive status, the 1970s and 80s witnessed a revival of the genre in cinematic form in North America and Western Europe. Arguably the most well-known of these is *Ilsa, She Beast of the S.S.* In this all-to-familiar variation on a theme, Ilsa—ostensibly a composite of S.S. wife Ilse Koch, guard Irma Grese, and commandant Maria Mandel—morphs into a commandant-doctor hybrid at a concentration camp where she conducts a variety of brutal, medical sexual experiments on the detainees. Ironically given that the film sought to give sexual pleasure to its audience through the viewing of such acts, the film's producers stated that they were releasing the film "with the hope that these heinous crimes will never happen again."

If the gravitas with which they claim to associate this film is not seen as dubious

after viewing the gratuitous sexual violence, it is further undermined when one learns that they chose to shoot it on the set of the concentration camp television comedy *Hogan's Heroes*. In 2008, Rob Zombie's trailer for the unmade *Werewolf Women of the S.S.*—featured in Quentin Tarantino's *Grindhouse* series and starring Nicolas Cage—took the genre one hundred and eighty degrees from conception, placing it neatly and disturbingly into the socially acceptable category of Hollywood, hipster-camp. To this day, it is nearly impossible to find descriptions of the actual Nazi female perpetrators that do not contain the word "sadist" or insist all too readily—and seemingly without the need for proof—on the explicitly sexual pleasure that they derived from inflicting torture.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, the narrative in which woman represents the "Beautiful Soul" hurts women perpetrators far less than women victims, and this is one of the inherent problems with it. It can also present a very real danger for future victims since, among other possibilities, it perpetuates the fiction that regular women—the women we interact with day to day—would be incapable of committing an atrocity, especially against other women. As the vast majority of genocides demonstrate, it is often the people one thinks of as neighbors, colleagues, and friends—in other words, "ordinary people"—who participate actively or as bystanders in such horror. History has shown us that under certain circumstances, for example when surrounded by extremist political climates, power struggles, professional and financial gain and loss, women are equally capable of succumbing to darkness. Choosing to turn a blind eye to this quietly renders us incapable of identifying genocide before it takes place. But this archetype of femininity is also dangerous in that it perpetuates the annihilation of "woman" that was already taking place for victims under international law. While the victim's experience is effectively erased by misrepresenting the severity of gender-specific sexual assault in times of conflict (both in law and in criticism) and by under-prosecuting it in times of peace, the persecutor's experience is as well when they are either associated with the passive and malleable Beautiful Soul—thus expunged as persecutors—or when they are reduced to consumable erotic, fetish objects.

Although admittedly distorted by an excess of brutality, both legal and critical

post-genocide narratives referencing women as both victims and perpetrators can often be read as palimpsests, concealing at their core Irigaray's "marketplace" system of gender relations. In this decidedly messier materialization of the symbolic version, the static roles of women in male-to-male commerce—the Virgin, the Mother, and the Prostitute—are shattered in times of conflict so as to conform to the demands of war and the goals of genocide. So too is the aim of heterosexual bonding. For in contrast to the kinship model, the ostensible purpose of this order is not to establish and maintain bonds between men, but rather to destroy them. In the theatre of armed conflict, female victims and perpetrators alike are forced to play multiple, conflicting roles. Like the Virgin in the social kinship order, the victim is "pure potential." There are, however, several significant differences. Even those in the role of Mother can, in the eye of the captor, be perceived as the Virgin.

Moreover, the woman's value lies not only in the gain her deflowering would bestow upon the recipient, but also—and perhaps most importantly—in the loss her it would place on her "owner" (after all, she is still property). In times of war, particularly that described in epic poetry, biblical stories, and ancient history, her potential value would be the gain of honor and property for one man and the loss for another. In times of genocide, it would be the loss of a people. In both cases, her consumption could result in either Mother status, where she would become private property and thus removed from the exchange, or that of Prostitute, if she were to be sent back into circulation. The difference being that in the case of genocide—perhaps with the exception of "morale building" gang rapes—men's not so smooth relations "are played out through the bodies of women" with the exclusive aim of causing death. Women are abducted, mutilated, raped, shamed, infected, impregnated, relocated, and killed as a means of obliterating—once and for all—differences amongst men. As for the female perpetrators, as agents they have no natural or immediate place within this economy as Virgin, Mother or Prostitute. Of course, this is not to imply that post-genocide narratives ignore them all together. As we have seen one too many times, they simply reimagine them into manageable roles. A perpetrator can be viewed as Mother, but must relinquish perpetrator status to do so. The other option is to rewrite her as a Prostitute, to be thrown indefinitely into circulation. Conveniently, for this last

scenario to take place, she need not be alive. Or, even real.

In the past half century, international legislation criminalizing gender-based violence against women has made some notable strides. However, Judith Gardam argues that while this is true with respect to human rights law, which saw the adoption of the umbrella-like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as early as 1979, international humanitarian law—which deals exclusively with situations of armed conflict—has until quite recently left women with little protection or recourse to justice.²⁸ Thanks in large part to the lobbying of women's groups and to the incorporation of women's voices in the scripting of legislation, the International Criminal Tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda achieved successful convictions for rape as a crime against humanity and a genocidal crime, respectively. In the case of Rwanda, the judgment in *Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu* represented not only the first time that an individual would be held legally responsible for genocidal rape, but also the first time that rape would be even be defined in international law as an act of genocide.

Despite the hope that such convictions might seem to offer, the reality is far more complicated. As Lilla Osztrovszki observed in her skillful study, *Women, Peace and Security: the Importance of the Universal Periodic Review*, although the U.N. claims to place women's security at the top of their agenda, representative members consistently fail to name it as a primary concern.²⁹ Feminist scholars themselves remain divided as to the relative benefits of legally defining sexual assault in genocide as genocidal rape. On one hand, there is the concern that the association of genocide and rape could lead to the conflation of the two terms, relegating the gendered aspect of such assaults to secondary status, not to mention those perpetrated in non-genocidal conflicts.

On the other hand, there is clearly a need to define and prosecute rape that singles out both gender and ethnicity at the same time. Why? Because the criminalizing of an act is dependent, in part, on its being named. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, while Gynocide and Femicide are typically employed to describe the murder of women by men because they are women, and *feminicidio* the responsibility of the

state and judicial powers in creating an atmosphere in which the killing of women *qua* women is acceptable,³⁰ apart from "genocidal rape," there is no term for state sanctioned rape of women—what is often the slow murder of women—that is committed for the sole purpose of destroying an ethnic population. Nor, to my knowledge, is there a word to describe the rape of women to transform them into weapons for the annihilation of their people. It makes me wonder if there a word for the effacement of women from their subjective experience of either, or from that of a perpetrator of genocide? I am curious to know if there is a word that encompasses the state-sanctioned, physical and symbolic decimation of woman as subject and object and as a means of obliterating a population, which results from men's interaction with and aggression towards other men. *Feminigenocide?*

In offering this overly complicated term, I do not mean to ridicule the process of naming unnamed phenomena, and certainly not those with such high stakes formerly. I do so, in part, to highlight the layers of complexity that make the criminalization of such acts problematic to say the least. However, in lying one already compound term upon another, I am also aware of how pedantic and fussy it sounds, and of how this may act to strip it of the gravity with which it deserves to be invested. Moreover, then I wonder, still thinking about Irigaray, if trying to work within the parameters of discourses that exclude or subjugate women—here phallogentric language, philosophy, or law—is the way to proceed if the aim is to expose such discourses for the role they play in the effacement of women. Admittedly, although applied to a new context, these are not new questions. Clearly, they are still necessary to ask, however, for there is no doubt that there is a correlation between the stories we tell ourselves about the world and the actions we take within it.

NOTES

¹ "Genocide is the deliberate destruction, in whole or in part, by a government or its agents, of a racial, sexual, religious, tribal or political minority. It can involve not only mass murder, but also starvation, forced deportation, and political, economic and biological subjugation. Genocide involves three major components: ideology, technology, and bureaucracy/organization," cited

from Jack Nusan Porter's *Genocide and Human Rights* (Lanham: New University Press of America, 1982), 12. "[...] gendercide would be the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex (or gender). Other terms, such as "gynocide" and "femicide," have been used to refer to the wrongful killing of girls and women. But "gendercide" is a sex-neutral term, in that the victims may be either male or female. There is a need for such a sex-neutral term, since sexually discriminatory killing is just as wrong when the victims happen to be male. The term also calls attention to the fact that gender roles have often had lethal consequences, and that these are in important respects analogous to the lethal consequences of racial, religious, and class prejudice." Mary Anne Warren, *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection* (New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), 22.

² Jones, Adam. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Publishers, 2006), and *Gendercide and Genocide*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

³ Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. (London: Seeker and Warburg, 1975) Note 3, at 33.

⁴ *Deuteronomy*, 21:10-14.

⁵ Rape was described as a criminal act and capital offense in British military codes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (those of Richard 11 (1385) and Henry V (1419), respectively). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw similar directives detailed in the Treaty of Amity between U.S and Prussia in 1785, the 1863 Lieber Codes in the United States, the 1874 Declaration of Brussels, and the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. However, many cases were under or un-prosecuted. For example, Crystal Feimster notes that at least four hundred and fifty such cases were prosecuted under the Lieber codes, however, almost none of the accused received the death sentence and most received ten years of imprisonment or less. Crystal Feimster, "Rape and Justice in the Civil War." *New York Times*, April 25, 2013. Viewed on 15 November, 2015. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/25/rape-and-justice-in-the-civil-war/?_r=

⁶ Japan has contested that the Japanese military played any role on what amounts to "sex slavery", but there is compelling documentation (including victim testimonials) that this was generally the case. See <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-revisionism-20141212-story.html>, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/15/opinion/comfort-women-and-japans-war-on-truth.html>, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/11/01/national/media-national/uncomfortable-truth-comfort-women/#.VNQSwlr7Hg>

⁷ Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 123.

⁸ In Christopher Dicky's "What Ashley Judd Learned in Africa," *Newsweek*, Oct 29, 2008.

⁹ See Jasminka Kalajdzic, *Rape, Representation, and Rights: Permeating International Law with the Voices of Women*, 21 *Queens Law Journal*, 457 (1996).

¹⁰ Catherine MacKinnon, "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights." *Harvard's Women's Law Journal*, 17 (1994), 6.

¹¹ The estimate comes from Peter Landesman, "A Woman's Work," *New York Times*, Sept. 15, 2002, (Magazine) 89, 116.

¹² *Warburton Report*, European Community 1993.

<http://www.womenaid.org/press/info/humanrights/warburtonfull.htm>

¹³ Reference taken from a talk presented by Dr. Gallimore on women in post-genocide Rwanda (Marquette University in April, 2012).

¹⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997), p130.

¹⁵ See Corina Csáky, "No One to Turn to: The Under-Reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid Workers and Peacekeepers," (London: Save the Children, 2008), Vanessa Kent,

“Protecting Civilians from UN Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Workers: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,” in *Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations*, ed. Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning and Ramesh Thakur (New York: United Nations University Press 2007), 45.

¹⁶ Julia Stuart, “Dark Side of Peacekeeping: Kofi Annan is Calling for UN Troops to be sent to Liberia,” *The Independent* (London), July 10, 2003: 4–5; Daniel Pallin, “Sexual Slavery in Bosnia: The Negative Externality of the Marketplace,” *Swords and Plowshares* 13, no.1 (Spring 2003): 27–43, http://www.american.edu/sis/students/sword/Back_Issues/3.pdf (accessed 20 November, 2014).

¹⁷ MacKinnon, 6.

¹⁸ Luce Irigaray, “Women on the Market,” in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Within such systems, the following can be assumed: “[...] the appropriation of nature by man; the transformation of nature according to “human” criteria, defined by men alone; the submission of nature to labor and technology; the reduction of its material, corporeal, perceptible qualities to man’s practical concrete activity; the equality of women among themselves, but in terms of laws of equivalence that remain external to them: the constitution of women as “objects” that emblemize the materialization of relations among men, and so on,” 184.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 172.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 185-186.

²¹ *Ibid*, 187.

²² *Ibid*, 172.

²³ Drew Milne, “The Beautiful Soul: from Hegel to Beckett,” *Diacritics*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring 2002.

²⁴ Jean Bethke Elshstain, *Women and War* (Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1987), 4.

²⁵ Yvonne Leggat-Smith, *Rwanda: Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers* (African Rights, 1995).

²⁶ For further study, see Sara Buttsworth and Maartje Abbenhuis (eds.) *Monsters in The Mirror: Representations of Nazism in Post-War Popular Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010), Florian Evers’ *Vexierbilder des Holocaust* (Munich: L.I.T. Verlag, 2011), Daniel H. Magilow, Elizabeth Bridges, and Kristin T. Vander Lugt (eds.) *Nazisploitation!: The Nazi Image in Low-Brow Cinema and Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2011), Pinaki Roy’s “*Incarcerated Fantasies: Women in Nazisploitation Films*” in *Portrayal of Women in Media and Literature* (Eds. Nawale, A., S. Vashist, and P. Roy. New Delhi: Access, 2013).

²⁷ Ka-tzetnik 135633. *House of Dolls*. (Moshe M. Kohn, trans) (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955).

While De-Nur insisted on the authenticity of the story by signing it with the pseudonym Ka-tzetnik 135633 (his camp designation) and by claiming it was based on his sister’s experience, it is considered by many to be exploitative fiction.

²⁸ Gardam, Judith G. “Women, Human Rights and International Law,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 324, 1998.

²⁹ Lilla Osztrovszki, *Women, Peace and Security: the Importance of the Universal Periodic Review*, paper given at the Oxford Women’s Leadership Symposium, Dec. 2014, Oxford, England.

³⁰ A comprehensive, and well-documented definition can be found in Victoria Sanford’s “From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala,” *Journal of Human Rights*, 7:104–122, 2008: “Femicide is a political term. Conceptually, it encompasses more than femicide because it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny. Impunity, silence, and indifference

each play a role in femicide. The concept of femicide helps to disarticulate belief systems that place violence based on gender inequality within the private sphere (Maldonado Guevara 2005) and reveals the very social character of the killing of women as a product of relations of power between men and women. It also allows for an interrogation of legal political and cultural analyses of institutional and societal responses to the phenomena. Femicide leads us back to the structures of power and implicates the state as a responsible party, whether by commission, toleration, or omission," 118.

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