

Atina Grossmann

Trauma, Memory, and Motherhood: Germans and Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-Nazi Germany, 1945–1949

I. INTRODUCTION: DIFFERENT VOICES ON »ARMES DEUTSCHLAND«

»8. Mai: Deutschland hat kapituliert. Gegen eine Welt von Feinden hat es sich sechs Jahre gehalten, es wird auch wieder hochkommen. [...] Lieber Gott – Berlin hat so viel aushalten müssen, laß es vorübergehen.«

»18. Mai. Im übrigen wird jetzt Kesseltreiben gegen die Nazis veranstaltet. In der ›Täglichen Rundschau‹ große Berichte über das Todeslager von Auschwitz. Selbst, wenn nur ein kleiner Teil davon wahr wäre und ich fürchte, es ist alles wahr, wäre die Wut der ganzen Welt auf die Nazis zu verstehen. Armes Deutschland!«

In May 1945 a middle-aged woman physician with excellent anti-fascist credentials, veteran of the Weimar campaigns for birth control and abortion reform, faces the defeat of Nazi Germany and the first press reports about Auschwitz and the death camps. She is not shocked or disbelieving; she can imagine and would not try to deny the horrors of which the Nazis were capable. Her response: to sigh for »poor Germany« (*armes Deutschland*) – an apparent victim – and look forward to the day when Germany – and especially her beloved metropolis Berlin – would revive (*wieder hochkommen*).¹

Five years later, in a 1950 report for the American Jewish journal »Commentary« on »The Aftermath of Nazi Rule«, Hannah Arendt diagnosed in Germans' »absence of mourning for the dead, or in the apathy with which they [Germans] react, or rather fail to react, to the fate of the refugees in their midst [...] a deep-rooted, stubborn, and at times vicious refusal to face and come to terms with what really happened«. Now a visitor from the United States, the land of the victors, Arendt lamented the pervasive self-pity that allowed no reaction to her insistent revelation that she was a German Jew and that continually invoked the image of *armes Deutschland*, as the miserable and sacrificial victim – *Opfer* in its double sense – of history.²

As Arendt pointed out with her customary acerbity, most Germans after 1945 understood themselves as victims and not as victimizers. The persecution and extermination of Jews, while initially widely and graphically documented in the German (albeit occupier-licensed) press, often in reportage on early trials of Nazis, seems nonetheless absent, or at best obscured and distorted, in immediate postwar public and private discourse.³ This putative lack of memory or »amnesia« has become a truism for the »silent fifties« in West

1 Anne-Marie Durand-Wever, Als die Russen kamen. Tagebuch einer Berliner Ärztin, unpublished diary, with kind permission of Dr. Madeleine Durand-Noll, S. 36 u. S. 51 (»May 8: Germany has capitulated. It held out six years against a world of enemies, it will recover again. [...] Dear God – Berlin has had to endure so much, let this be over with.« »May 18: And now witchhunts against the Nazis are being orchestrated. In the ›Täglichen Rundschau‹ big reports about the death camp in Auschwitz. Even if only a small part is true, and I fear it is all true, then the rage of the entire world against the Nazis is understandable. Poor Germany!«).

2 Hannah Arendt, The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany, in: Commentary 10, 1950, S. 342–343. Here Arendt obviously anticipates Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's famous discussion of the German »inability to mourn« (*dies.*, Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern, München 1967).

3 See for example the extensive coverage in the daily press during the fall and winter 1945/46 of the Belsen trial in Lüneberg in the British zone, the Dachau trial in the American zone, and the Ha-

Germany, the years of nationbuilding and economic miracle, supposedly broken only by the sea change of the 1960s.⁴ In the early occupation period from 1945 to 1946 – often described as the »zero hour« and the »hour of the women« – processions past naked emaciated corpses in liberated camps, denazification procedures, press reports and film images of »death mills«, and the Nuremberg trials, assured that the immediate past of Nazi crimes remained highly present. But despite the lack of »silence«, indeed the remarkable amount of discussion about precisely the issues of memory, commemoration, guilt, and complicity that continue to agitate historical and public debate in (and about) Germany, for most Germans, the more powerful impressions – the stuff of which memories were made – derived from other more direct experiences of war and defeat.

In the midst of a ruined physical and political landscape, and in the absence of a legitimate national past or clear national boundaries, or for that matter, legitimized rulers or markets, female experiences such as rape, abortion, childbirth, caring for malnourished and sick children, and grief over the dying and dead, as well as relations with occupiers and returning German soldiers and prisoners of war, became especially powerful markers of German victimization and defeat. They signaled also the urgent need for healthy reconstruction.

Clearly, rapidly constructed and tenaciously remembered narratives of victimization worked, not only to block confrontation with recent Nazi crimes but most importantly (and efficiently), to manage the chaos of the immediate postwar years, and eventually to authorize reconstruction of German nationhood and national identity. (Ernst Renan in his famous 1882 disquisition »What is a Nation« had already noted that »the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things«).⁵ But, during the early »pre-or non-national«, or at least non-state, years of military occupation from 1945 to 1949⁶, these narratives competed with, and were contested by, those posed by other protagonists who shared territory with defeated Germans, such as the Soviet and American victors or Jewish survivors gathered in Displaced Persons (DP) camps. Given the lack of a sovereign German state, and the unclarity about what it might mean to identify as German, it seems especially important to analyze stories of victimization from a vantage point that is not exclusively »German«. Moreover, as our understanding of post-Nazi Germany has finally become more gendered⁷, it becomes all the more necessary to consider the notion of »the hour of the

demar Clinic trial in Nuremberg (on charges of »euthanasia«), culminating in the headline-making Nuremberg trials beginning in November 1945. For Berlin and a representative sampling of reportage in both the Soviet and the American sectors, see especially »Tägliche Rundschau«, »Berliner Zeitung«, and »Der Tagesspiegel«. For a highly problematic analysis of divergent occupier and German interpretations of the war and its aftermath, see *Dagmar Barnouw, Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence*, Bloomington 1996.

4 See *Wolfgang Benz*, Postwar Society and National Socialism: Remembrance, Amnesia, Rejection, in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 19, 1990, S. 1–12. The impression of »amnesia« in the 1950s has now been forcefully challenged by a host of scholars. See among many others *Michael Geyer/Miriam Hansen*, German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness, in: *Geoffrey H. Hartman* (Hrsg.), *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*, Cambridge/Mass. 1994, S. 175–190; *Alf Lüdtke*, »Coming to Terms with the Past«. Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany, in: *JMH* 65, 1993, S. 542–572; *Jeffrey Herf*, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Cambridge/Mass. 1997.

5 *Ernst Renan*, What is a Nation, in: *Homi K. Bhabha* (Hrsg.), *Nation and Narration*, London 1990, S. 328.

6 For a useful discussion of the ambiguities and vagueness of the term »nation«, see *Clifford Geertz*, *Die Welt in Stücken. Kultur und Politik am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wien 1996, S. 37–67.

7 Two recent outstanding examples, from American historians, are *Elizabeth Heineman*, *The Hour of the Woman. Memories of Germany's »Crisis Years« and West German National Identity*, in:

women«, and the particular association of postwar victimization with female experience, from multiple non-German as well as German perspectives. If the history of postwar Germany is, as we have increasingly acknowledged, not only a story of men, it is also not only a German story.

I aim then, in this article, to reflect on two separate but inextricably interwoven and highly gendered stories about the meanings of sexuality, motherhood, and childbirth in the wake of National Socialism, war and genocide. These are stories about the reconstruction of identity and community, maybe even desire, in the wake of violence and trauma in which – to put it crudely or polemically – Germans appear as victims and Jews as survivors (and Allies as victors). But they are also stories in which the binaries of those categories emerge as highly complicated and mixed up. In order to illustrate these points, I focus on two »multinational« sites where post-Nazi occupied Germany presents itself as a highly diverse and contradictory terrain of »bordercrossers« (*Grenzgänger*): the DP camps for Jewish survivors in the American and British zones of occupation, and Berlin, the former Reich capital, occupied by the four allied victors.

II. BORDERCROSSERS (*GRENZGÄNGER*) IN BERLIN, 1945–1948

My initial focus is on Berlin, certainly not typical but exemplary for my purposes, and located usefully at an intersection of East and West. Conquered by the Soviets in April/May 1945, Berlin became after July 1945 a polyglot city of bordercrossers in four sectors; a kind of laboratory of international understanding, as U.S. Military Government officials initially preferred to put it, in which the precarious relations among the victorious powers and the management of the incoming refugee tide commanded virtually as much attention as the occupied Berliners themselves.⁸ The »größter Trümmerhaufen der Welt«, as its inhabitants sarcastically dubbed it⁹, was a city of women, refugees, and foreigners. Of a population of about 3 million (2,600,000 in May), over 60 per cent was female in 1945/46. Berlin was filled with returning soldiers and prisoners of war, liberated slave laborers from many different countries, German expellees and refugees from the East, repatriated political exiles (especially Communists returning to work with the Soviet Military Administration, SMAD), Jews emerging from hiding, forced labor, or concentration camps, and Allied troops (including a highly visible handful of former German Jews).¹⁰

By July 1945, huge numbers (some estimates as high as half a million) of displaced persons of multiple nationalities were streaming into some fifty transit camps in Berlin. Some 15,000 mostly ethnic German refugees from Soviet and Polish occupied territories in the East poured into the city daily, at the same time as Allied officials struggled to repatriate freed foreign laborers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp inmates.¹¹

AHR 101, 1996, S. 354–395, and Robert G. Moeller, War Stories. The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany, in: ebd., S. 1008–1048. See also the volume »Stunde Null: Kontinuitäten und Brüche«, in: Ariadne: Almanach des Archivs der deutschen Frauenbewegung 27, 1995 (Mai-Heft).

8 American Military Government officer John Maginnis referred in February 1947 to »a record of successful international adjustments and sympathetic understanding«. Major General John J. Maginnis, Military Government Journal. Normandy to Berlin, Amherst 1971, S. 345.

9 Berlin: Kampf um Freiheit und Selbstverwaltung 1945–1946, Berlin 1961, S. 10 (»the greatest collection of rubble in the world«).

10 See for example Hans Speier, From the Ashes of Disgrace. A Journal from Germany, 1945–1955, Amherst 1981.

11 See Maginnis, S. 278 f. See also Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB) OMGUS 4/24-1/4.

It is worth remembering that by 1945 the presence of foreigners in Berlin was nothing new; after all, 7.5 million non-Germans had been mobilized and coerced into the Nazi war economy before May 1945.¹²

There were also some 6-7 000 Jews (or »partial« Jews) in Berlin (a high proportion of the 15,000 who survived within the entire Reich, but only a fraction of the 160,000 who had been registered in Berlin in 1932).¹³ Their ranks were soon swelled by the »illegal infiltration« of Polish Jewish refugees fleeing renewed persecution. Starting in November 1945, the flight of East European Jewish survivors reached a high point after the pogrom in Kielce, Poland on July 4, 1946 in which a charge of ritual murder led to the massacre of at least 40 Jews who had tried to return to their hometown. About 250 arrived in the US sector daily via the »open secret« of the underground Zionist *Bricha* network, seeking routes out of Europe and especially to Palestine.¹⁴ Indeed the apparent presence of so many Jews, the formerly hidden and the newly arrived, so soon after the end of the regime that had promised to make Germany *judenrein*, so unnerved the journalist Margaret Boveri that already on May 9, one day after the unconditional surrender, she commented in a surprised and somewhat irritated tone on her encounter with a young »Rabbi« bicycling through the ruins:

»Es ist also auch kein Wunder, daß es jetzt überall von Juden in leitenden Stellen wimmelt, sie sind einfach aus der Verborgenheit hervorgekommen. Zuzug soll aber auch aus Osteuropa kommen, vor allem aus Polen, – solche, die sich mit den Flüchtlingszügen hierher schmuggelten.«¹⁵

12 By the end of the war foreigners composed almost a quarter of the wage labor force in Germany. See Mark Roseman, *World War II and Social Change in Germany*, in: Arthur Marwick (Hrsg.), *Total War and Social Change*, Basingstoke etc. 1988, S. 63 u. S. 71. For a vivid picture of the immediate postwar period in Berlin see the many microfilms of the *Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung* of the LAB.

13 These figures, taken from *Frank Stern*, *Antagonistic Memories: The Post-War Survival and Alienation of Jews and Germans*, in: Luisa Passerini (Hrsg.), *Memory and Totalitarianism* (= *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, Vol. I), New York 1992, S. 23, are necessarily imprecise. To the total of c. 15,000 Jews (of a pre 1933 Jewish population of about half a million) who survived within the Reich must be added perhaps 50,000 Jewish forced laborers who were liberated on German territory at the end of the war. Andreas Nachama, *Nach der Befreiung. Jüdisches Leben in Berlin 1945–1953*, in: Reinhard Rürup (Hrsg.), *Jüdische Geschichte in Berlin. Essays und Studien*, Berlin 1995, S. 268 f., quotes other reports estimating that there were about 7 000 Jews in Berlin. 1 500 had survived the camps, 1 250 had been »U-boats« in hiding, and c. 4 250 had been spared deportation because they lived in mixed marriages; of these 2 250 were so-called »star-wearers« while the rest were privileged due to their Christian identified children. Stern's corresponding figures are 1 155 camp survivors, 1 050 »illegals«, and 2 000 mixed marriage partners, and another 1 600 exempted from wearing the star. Nachama also counts the pre-Nazi Jewish population of Berlin as about 200,000, which presumably includes those not officially registered as Jews.

14 See Nachama, S. 272; Angelika Königseder, *Durchgangsstation Berlin. Jüdische DP's 1945–1948*, in: Fritz-Bauer-Institut (Hrsg.), *Überlebt und unterwegs. Jüdische Displaced Persons im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (= *Jahrbuch 1997 zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust*, Frankfurt/Main 1997, S. 189–206. See also Maginnis, S. 323–329 for a detailed (and candid) discussion of the Polish Jewish refugee crisis and the considerable problems it posed for the Allied *Kommandatura* and especially the American occupiers. On Kielce, see Abraham J. Peck, *Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust in Germany. Revolutionary Vanguard or Remnants of a Destroyed People?*, in: Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte 19, 1990, S. 35. On the *Bricha* network which transported Jews into the American zone of Germany and Italy for eventual *Aliyah* to Palestine, see especially Yehudah Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Bricha*, New York 1970.

15 Margret Boveri, *Tage des Überlebens*. Berlin 1945, München 1968, S. 128. Remarkably, Boveri opted to leave this section in her revised diary when she published it in 1968 (»So it is no wonder that important positions are crawling with Jews, they have simply crawled out of obscurity. Reinforcements however are also supposedly coming from East Europe, especially from Poland – those who are smuggling themselves in with the refugee treks.«).

Within the next months and years US and British occupied Germany would become a temporary home for some quarter of a million Jewish survivors, leading to many more such unexpected and difficult encounters. Astonishingly, between May and September, the victors had managed to repatriate about 6 of the 7 million displaced persons they had faced in the occupied areas; a significant number of those who remained uprooted were Jewish survivors.¹⁶ As numerous contemporary observers had already noted, it belonged »to the ironies of history that Germany, of all places, became under the occupation of the Allied powers a sheltering haven for several hundred thousand Jews«.¹⁷

During this liminal interregnum of occupation and military government from 1945 to 1949, and particularly in the turbulent first two years, defeated Germans, together with hundreds of thousands of their former enemies and victims, became, as they were often called, bordercrossers (*Grenzgänger*) on the surreal stage of a broken country. This was especially evident in carved-up and bombed-out Berlin. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich titled her diary of war's end »Schauplatz Berlin« and Curt Riess, a Berlin Jew who had returned as an American journalist, depicted his former hometown as »gar nicht mehr wie eine Stadt, sondern eher wie eine Bühne, auf der Kulissen herumstanden«.¹⁸ The U.S. diplomat Robert Murphy recorded his impressions when the US moved into the city in July 1945:

»Two months after their surrender, Berliners still were moving about in a dazed condition. They had endured not only thousand-plane raids for years, but also weeks of Russian close-range artillery fire. In addition to three million Germans in Berlin, thousands of displaced persons were roaming around the shattered city.«¹⁹

After accusing his Soviet allies of having created in Berlin »another Nanking, with Russians instead of Japanese doing the raping, murdering, and looting«, Colonel Frank Howley, the American commander, remembered in 1950:

»Berlin in late July was still a shambles from the effects of Allied bombing, especially incendiary raids, and of Russian street fighting, but the Russians already had put large squads of German women to work clearing the rubble in various parts of the city. As the women wearily passed the fallen bricks from hand to hand, in a long human chain, they presumably were spurred on to heroic efforts by the great posters the Russians had erected to assure the Germans that they had not been conquered but »liberated« by the Communists from their Fascist oppressors.«²⁰

Inhabitants moved between Allied occupation sectors and their varied models of denazification, democratization, and reconstruction. Germans in Berlin moved also be-

16 *Zorach Wahrhaftig*, Uprooted. Jewish Refugees and Displaced Persons After Liberation (= From War to Peace Nr. 5, Institute of Jewish Affairs for the American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress), New York 1946. Altogether, Allied armies had to cope with over 7 million DPs in occupied territories, plus some 12 million ethnic German expellees. See also *Leonard Dinnerstein*, America and the Survivors of the Holocaust, New York 1982.

17 *Michael Brenner*, East European and German Jews in Postwar Germany, 1945–50, in: *Michal Y. Bodemann* (Hrsg.), Jews, Germans, Memory. Reconstructions of Jewish Life in Germany, Ann Arbor 1996, S. 50.

18 *Ruth Andreas-Friedrich*, Schauplatz Berlin. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1945 bis 1948, Frankfurt/Main 1984; *Curt Riess*, Berlin 1945–1953, Berlin n. d. [presumably 1952], S. 174 (»hardly like a city anymore, more like a stage on which the backdrops are just standing around«). The notion of Berlin in ruins as a kind of surreal theatrical or operatic stage set was invoked by many observers – and filmmakers – at war's end; see the large number of films made in the ruins; exemplary perhaps are Roberto Rossellini's »Germania Anno Zero« and Billy Wilder's »A Foreign Affair«.

19 *Robert Murphy*, Diplomat Among Warriors, New York 1964, S. 264.

20 *Frank Howley*, Berlin Command, New York 1950, S. 65. An extraordinary number of Berlin's occupiers published memoirs.

tween identities as victims or perpetrators, liberated or conquered people. They appeared as rightfully subjugated former citizens of a criminal regime, or as hapless victims of Nazi betrayal, Anglo-American bombings, and Soviet plunder and rape. Rather quickly, they also surfaced as plucky survivors fascinated with the number of cubic centimeters or ruins to be methodically cleaned up, cheering the premiere of the Philharmonic, or the re-opening of the much worried-about Berlin zoo. Especially in the early occupation period through 1947, much that would seem settled by the 1950s after the formation of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic was still open and fluid; nothing about the postwar order was fixed.

At a moment when survival and reinvention of national and ethnic communities had such high political and cultural priority, women were especially visible and issues of reproduction – literally birth and death – were foregrounded, both in public policy and in personal accounts. Moreover, given the indeterminacy of viable categories of citizenship or identity (as continually reworked for example in rationing or denazification classifications), reproduction, motherhood, and sexuality loomed intriguingly large as crucial discourses for organizing the past, understanding the present and imagining the future.²¹

III. WOMEN'S WORK: RAPE AND MOTHERHOOD. VICTIMS AND VICTORS

I begin with the example of rape, probably the most dramatic form of gendered victimization, and one which has – after years of remarkable inattention – begun to receive a good deal of notice.²² Let me just reiterate briefly that, whatever the numbers, and they vary wildly – perhaps one out of every three of about one and a half million women in Berlin – it is unquestionably the case that mass rapes of civilian German women by the Red Army signaled the end of the war and the defeat of Nazi Germany.²³ The notorious days of »mass rapes« from April 24 to May 8, 1945 were an integral part of the final bitter battle for Berlin. The continuing (if not as massive) experience, and fear, of rape for at least months and probably several years thereafter, as well as the often repeated recollections, inscribed indelibly in the memory of many German women (and of the men who were unable/unwilling to protect them) a firm conviction of their own victimization. At the same time they retained a sense of their superiority over the vanquisher from the East who came to »liberate« them.²⁴

21 For a fine general discussion of the West German case, see *Heineman*.

22 See for example *Helke Sander/Barbara Johr* (Hrsg.), *Befreier und Befreite. Krieg, Vergewaltigungen, Kinder*, München 1992. For earlier feminist analyses, see *Ingrid Schmidt-Harzbach*, *Eine Woche im April. Berlin 1945. Vergewaltigung als Massenschicksal*, in: *Feministische Studien* 5, 1984, S. 51–62; *Erika M. Hoernig*, *Frauen als Kriegsbeute. Der Zwei-Fronten Krieg. Beispiele aus Berlin*, in: *Lutz Niethammer/Alexander von Plato* (Hrsg.), »Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten«. Auf der Suche nach der Erfahrung des Volkes in nachfaschistischen Ländern, Berlin etc. 1985, S. 327–344; *Annemarie Tröger*, *Between Rape and Prostitution. Survival Strategies and Chances of Emancipation for Berlin Women after World II*, in: *Judith Friedlander* (Hrsg.), *Women in Culture and Politics. A Century of Change*, Bloomington 1986, S. 97–117. On the thorny problems of historicizing rape at war's end, see *Atina Grossmann*, *A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers*, in: *Robert G. Moeller* (Hrsg.), *West Germany under Construction. Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Ann Arbor 1997, S. 33–52.

23 *Barbara Johr*, *Die Ereignisse in Zahlen*, in: *Sander/Johr*, S. 48, S. 54 f., S. 59. See also *Erich Kuby*, *Die Russen in Berlin 1945*, Bern 1965, S. 312 f. and especially *Norman Naimark*, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949*, Cambridge/Mass. 1995, S. 69–90.

24 *Naimark*, S. 88, suggests that the Red Army rapes continued, »at least through 1947«.

Rape of German women by Red Army soldiers also secured a particularly potent place in postwar memories of victimization because they represented the one, and certainly in Berlin the only, instance, in which Goebbels' relentless anti-Bolshevik propaganda turned out to be substantially correct. As Berliners emerged from their cellars during the piercingly beautiful spring of 1945, the Soviets did not kill everyone on sight, deport them to Siberia, or burn down the city. As the musician Karla Hoecker reported, with genuine surprise, in one of the many diaries composed by women at war's end, »daß die Russen, die uns doch hassen und fürchten müssen, die Mehrheit der deutschen Zivilbevölkerung ganz unbehelligt leben lassen – daß sie uns nicht scharenweise abtransportieren!«²⁵ In fact, the SMAD moved quickly and efficiently to organize municipal government, restore basic services, and nurture a lively political and cultural life.²⁶ In regard to violence against women, however, the Nazi *Greuelgeschichten* (horror stories) were largely confirmed.

Women's continuing (and undeniable) sense of unjust victimization was exacerbated by a nagging perception that the experience of massive sexual assault on women was quickly and lastingly silenced or tabooized – as anti-Communist propaganda, as the normal byproduct of a vicious war, or in the »anti-fascist« narrative, downplayed as understandable retribution.²⁷ However, there was after May 1945 no lack of speech or documentation about rape. If anything, we find a plethora of speech in many different voices: detailed police and medical reports, statements by Communist Party, SMAD, and then U.S. authorities. Most concretely, the Communist and Soviet-dominated *Magistrat* already on May 20 recognized the problem and its public health consequences by authorizing a moratorium on the longstanding and controversial anti-abortion paragraph 218 of the penal code (as well as instituting harsh venereal disease surveillance and treatment). This liberalized abortion policy was instituted despite some grumbling on the part of doctors and clear but irrelevant protest from Walter Ulbricht, the new KPD (Communist Party) leader who had flown into the embattled and smoldering city from Moscow on May 1: »Die Herren Ärzte müssen darauf aufmerksam gemacht werden, in dieser Frage etwas mehr Zurückhaltung zu üben«, he remarked laconically. But the very statement shows how widespread the practice already was.²⁸

Drawing on a mixed legacy of Weimar and National Socialist maternalist population policy, and racial discourses, as well as occupation policy, women seeking to terminate pregnancies told their stories in highly specific terms, and by the thousands, to authorities in medical commissions attached to district health offices which then sanctioned abortions, right up to the very last months of pregnancy. Women also retold rape stories in diaries and memoirs in astonishing quantity; never before had German women put pen to paper as copiously as they did in April and May 1945 when – and in many cases only

25 Karla Hoecker, *Beschreibung eines Jahres*. Berliner Notizen 1945, Berlin 1984, S. 42 (»that the Russians, who must hate and fear us, leave the majority of the German civilian population entirely alone – that they don't transport us off in droves!«). See also Susanne zur Nieden, *Alltag im Ausnahmezustand. Frauentagebücher im zerstörten Deutschland 1943–1945*, Berlin 1993.

26 See Wolfgang Schivelbusch's engaging study of postwar and pre-Cold War cultural politics; *ders.*, *Vor dem Vorhang. Das geistige Berlin 1945–1948*, München 1995.

27 This was certainly expressed in the lively discussions surrounding Helke Sander's film »Befreier und Befreite« which explicitly claimed to »break the silence« around Soviet rapes of German women. See the special issue of »October 72« (Spring 1995) on »Berlin 1945: War and Rape, »Liberators Take Liberties«.

28 BA (SAPMO), NL 182 (Nachlass Walter Ulbricht)/246, Besprechung Gen. Ulbricht mit je einem Genossen aus jedem Verwaltungsbezirk, Berlin, 20. 5. 1945, S. 47 (»The gentlemen doctors should be reminded to exercise a bit of restraint in this matter.«). See also LAB Rep 12. Acc 902/Nr. 5, Dienstbesprechungen der Amtsärzte 1945/6.

when – they faced defeat. Both in private statements and official affidavits, women deployed a wide range of direct and indirect vocabulary – *Schändung* (violation), *Vergewaltigung* (rape), *Übergriff* (encroachment), *Überfall* (attack) – to denote the »it« (*es*) that had been endured.²⁹ Sometimes they recounted stories of surprising escape or reprieve; often they resorted to generalities and passive voice (»the awful scenes went on all night«, »we all had to submit«) – or referred specifically to the horrific experiences of neighbors, mothers, sisters, which they themselves had supposedly been spared.³⁰ »Aber es entkamen viel weniger, als später behauptet wurde«, Curt Riess asserted a few years later.³¹

Public conversation about rape, common in the early postwar period, was indeed curtailed in both West and East once conditions had normalized. But rape stories continued to circulate, indeed were repeatedly invoked or alluded to by contemporary chroniclers, both German and occupier.³² Moreover, the importance of Berlin as the conquered capital, and the millions of refugees from the East who poured into western Germany assured the centrality of rape stories in memories of defeat even in areas where there had never been a Red Army soldier.

In the Berlin stories that I work with, maternal and rape experiences were often closely connected; in these stories of victimization the terminology of *Opfer* clearly carries the double meaning absent in the English term: the negative connotation of »victim« but also the more positive, redeeming, and even heroic sense of sacrifice. Women reported offering themselves in order to protect their young daughters: »Mein damals 10jähriges Mädchen wollten sie mir nehmen. Welche Mutter aber hätte das getan. So konnte ich mich also nur selbst dafür opfern.«³³ Or: »Mir schlug das Herz, doch ich glaube, meine Seele war abgestorben. Er riß die Tür auf, legte einen Revolver auf den Nachttisch und legte sich zu mir ins Bett. Die Sorge um mein Kind, das schlief, ließ mich alles ertragen.«³⁴ In another oft-repeated but somewhat different scenario, women recounted trying to take advantage of the Soviet troops' repeatedly observed kindness to children by clutching a young child to their body, or taking children along wherever they went. In one version, a mother remembered that she pinched her baby in the behind to make him cry piteously, said the child was very ill, and the soldiers let her go.³⁵ And sometimes women explicitly interpreted the rapes as a kind of revenge; the soldiers, they recollected, called: »Dawai, Dawai. Dein Mann wollen Krieg, drum deutsche Frau wollen, was wir wollen.«³⁶

29 See *zur Nieden*, esp. S. 74, S. 95 f.

30 A wide range of literature about wartime rape, including from the recent conflict in former Yugoslavia, makes similar observations about the ways in which women describe and circumscribe their experiences. See for example *Shana Swiss/Joan E. Giller*, Rape as a Crime of War. A Medical Perspective, in: *Journal of the American Medical Association* Bd. 270 (1993), S. 612–615.

31 *Riess*, S. 10 (»But many fewer escaped than was later claimed.«).

32 *Howley*, S. 11, referred to the »atrocious crimes« of the Soviets. For a rather melodramatic summary of many such accounts of destroyed Berlin, see *Douglas Botting*, *In the Ruins of the Reich*, London 1985.

33 LAB 240/2651/655/1, report by Erna Köhnke (»They wanted to take my then 10 year old girl. What mother would have done such a thing. So I could only sacrifice myself instead.«). The following three texts are from an essay contest sponsored by the Berlin Senat in 1976: »Preisanschreiben. Berlin 1945. Wie ich es erlebte.« 812 contributors, most of them women, wrote about the period from May 1945 to the end of the blockade in June 1949.

34 LAB 240/2651/131/1, report by Gertrud Strubel (»My heart was pounding, but I believe my soul was dead. He ripped open the door, placed the revolver on the night table and lay down beside me in bed. The anxiety about my sleeping child let me endure everything.«).

35 LAB 240/2641/83/1, report by Erna Beck.

36 LAB 240/2651/644/4, report by Elli Fallner (»Dawai, Dawai [Russian for »Get going«]. Your man wanted war, then German women want what we want.«).

Rape stories came, however, – and this is central to the ›not only a German story‹ aspect of my project – not only from these victims, but from those marked (in other contexts) as survivors and victors, that is, from Jews and anti-fascists who welcomed the Red Army. As Gabriele Vallentin, the sister of the executed Jewish Communist Judith Auer, wrote bitterly: »Was ist aus Goebbels »Greuelmärchen« geworden? Wirklichkeit! [...] Viele überzeugte Kommunisten drehten nun der Partei den Rücken zu. Auf diese Willkür der Russen waren sie nicht gefaßt gewesen!«³⁷ Disappointment and disillusionment with the Red Army *Befreier* and their clear connection to rape are surprisingly explicit in the complaints of communist activists about the damaging effect Soviet soldiers' behavior was having on an otherwise not unreceptive (and indeed somewhat relieved) local populace. One unhappy comrade wrote:

»Männer und Frauen aus der arbeitenden Bevölkerung sagen uns immer und immer wieder: Wir haben so gehofft, daß es jetzt endlich besser wird, wir haben uns gefreut, daß die Rote Armee kommt und jetzt benehmen sie sich so, wie es uns die SS und die NSDAP immer vorher gesagt hat. Wir können das nicht verstehen. Die Hoffnung, daß es besser werden wird, wie wir ihnen immer und immer wieder sagen, haben die meisten nicht mehr.«

Or even, as frustrated communist organizers reported:

»Die Stimmung unter der Bevölkerung ist jetzt in letzter Zeit durch diese Vorfälle wieder sehr schlecht geworden. [...] Eine Frau äußerte mir gegenüber heute auf der Strasse, als sie mir erzählte, wie nachts wieder die Rote Armee bei ihnen im Hause war und die Frauen vergewaltigt hat: ›Da hatten wir es ja mit der SS besser, die hat uns Frauen doch in dieser Beziehung in Ruhe gelassen.«³⁸

Anti-fascist activists, many of them recently released from Nazi concentration camps, despaired of their potentially promising political work, as the Soviets' liberator image was rapidly dismantled:

»Für uns, die wir zwölf Jahre lang den Faschismus bekämpft haben, waren die Konzentrationslager keine Erholungsheime und wenn wir jetzt sehen müssen, wie die Arbeiterschaft immer mehr und mehr enttäuscht wird, so könnte auch uns die Verzweiflung packen [...], wenn wir nicht den starken Glauben an die Parteileitung der KPD hätten.«³⁹

Rank and file Communists pleaded with their leaders, »daß auch die Rotarmisten, nachdem der Krieg schon 8 Wochen beendet ist, unbedingt Disziplin halten müssen.«⁴⁰ But they presented themselves as motivated less by outrage at the crime than by bitterness over the problems it posed for their political organizing. In their desperation, one group

37 LAB Acc 2421, report by Gabrielle Vallentin: Die Einnahme von Berlin durch die Rote Armee vor zehn Jahren. Wie ich sie selbst erlebt habe [1955], S. 30 (»What came of Goebbels' ›horror-stories‹? Reality! [...] Many committed Communists turned their back on the party. They were not prepared for this random vindictiveness.«).

38 BA (SAPMO), NL 182/853, S. 30 (»Men and women from the working population say to us over and over again: We had so hoped that it would finally become better, we were so happy that the Red Army was coming, and now they are behaving just like the SS and the NSDAP always told us they would. We cannot understand this. The hope that things will get better, which we have promised people over and over again, most of them no longer have that hope.« »The mood in the population has become very bad due to these incidents. [...] One woman on the street said to me today, while telling me how at night the Red Army had again been at their home, raping women, ›In that regard we had it better with the SS, at least in that respect they left us women alone.«).

39 Ebd., NL 182/853, S. 97. See also report from Köpenick, 842, S. 132 (»For us, who fought against Fascism for twelve long years, the concentration camps were no sanatoria and when we now have to watch as the workers are more and more disappointed, we too could despair [...], if we did not have our strong faith in the party leadership of the KPD.«).

40 Ebd., NL 182/852, S. 134. Report from the comrades in Köpenick (»even the Red Army soldiers, now that the war is already over for 8 weeks, absolutely must discipline themselves«).

of comrades helpfully suggested that the army set up brothels staffed with »bourgeois« and Nazi women to relieve the pressure.⁴¹ Party documents also make perfectly clear that rape by Red Army forces presented very concrete material problems. The much needed harvest was endangered, not only by the plunder of farm animals and equipment, but because women were afraid to work in the fields. Female activists were even so bold as to counter SMAD criticism of women's inadequate political involvement by protesting that women did not attend meetings because they were simply afraid to be on the street after dark.⁴²

Far from imposing a total silence, Communists and Soviet military authorities – certainly in the immediate postwar years 1945 till 1947 – did find many ways of talking about and acknowledging the massive incidence of rapes. They tried simultaneously to deny, minimize, justify, shift responsibility for, and contain them. Beyond the public health response organizing abortion and venereal disease treatment, KPD and SMAD officials also deployed a wide range of rhetorical and political strategies, freely admitting violations, »excesses«, »abuses«, »unfortunate incidents« (*Auswüchse, Übergriffe, unglückliche Vorfälle*) and vowing to get them under control (or to demand that the Soviet army do so). But they also trivialized rape, as an inevitable part of normal brutal warfare, as comparable to Allied excesses, and as understandable if not entirely excusable in view of the atrocities perpetrated on the Russians by the Germans: »Wir können und werden nicht etwa versuchen zu rechtfertigen, wenn wir auch Erklärungen haben und die Frage damit beantworten könnten, was Hitler alles in der Sowjetunion angerichtet hat.«⁴³

Despite all efforts at containment, rapes figured prominently as public relations and political control problems because they provoked anti-Soviet sentiment, especially among women, youth, and dedicated anti-Nazis, precisely those groups considered most likely to support a new socialist and democratic peace-loving Germany. Such protestations notwithstanding, it was generally if not explicitly acknowledged that the KPD's embarrassing loss to the SPD (Social Democratic Party) in Berlin's first open elections in 1946 was due in no small part to a majority female electorate remembering and responding to the actions of the Soviet *Freunde*.⁴⁴

For their part, German Communist leaders and the SMAD continually complained about German unwillingness to focus on their own guilt or complicity, noting that calls for *Wiedergutmachung* (referring to reparations to the Soviet Union) or discussions of responsibility and guilt were met with »geradezu eisiges Schweigen«.⁴⁵ The clear implication was always that the Germans should be happy to have gotten off as easily as they did. Even in regard to rape, both SMAD and KPD/SED contended that women would have had more of a right to complain if only, rather than senselessly battling the Red Army to the bitter end right into the center of Berlin, the German working class had fought fascism for even a day or two, thereby preserving some German honor and credibility vis à vis the Soviets. One communist leader petulantly remarked that those who supported the war and the attack on the Soviet Union could not stand

41 BA (SAPMO), NL 182/852, S. 132, KPD Tegel-Süd to ZK, 29. 6. 1945. *Naimark*, S. 119, also cites this example.

42 See ebd., DFD (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands) BV 1, Gründung des zentralen Frauenausschuss beim Magistrat der Stadt Berlin, S. 102. See also ebd., NL 182/853, S. 105; *Naimark*, S. 116–121.

43 Ebd., NL 182/856, S. 27, Der Funktionär. KPD-Bezirk Thüringen, October 1945 (»We cannot and will not try to provide justifications [for rape], even if we do have explanations and could answer the question by referring to all the havoc that Hitler wrecked in the Soviet Union.«).

44 See, among many sources, *Naimark*, S. 119–121.

45 BA (SAPMO), NL 182/853, S. 39 (»icy silence«).

there later and cry »Pfui«. He proceeded to add: »Der Krieg ist kein Erziehungsinstrument.«⁴⁶ But there was little popular sympathy for Ulbricht's perhaps irrefutable logic in an early leaflet promising swift punishment for »excesses«: »Wäre gleiches mit gleichem vergolten worden, deutsches Volk, was wäre mit Dir geschehen?«⁴⁷

Even three years later, in 1948, when two overflowing meetings were held in the »Haus der Kultur der Sowjetunion« to discuss the ever sensitive subject »About the Russians and about us« (»Über die Russen und über uns«), the subject most on the predominantly female audience's mind was Soviet soldiers' violations. The SED argued that the memory of rape as the most dramatic example of abuse by the victors was whipped up and kept alive by Western propaganda. In a standard construction, used both negatively and positively, of the Soviets as more impulsively »natural« and primitively »hotblooded« than the defeated Germans, the SED ideologue Wolfgang Harich insisted that the Soviet rapes were mere expressions of »victor's excess« (»Überschwung des Sieges«), as compared to German crimes which were »coldblooded actions of master-race consciousness«.⁴⁹ The topic was abandoned after two crowded four hour long meetings threatened to get out of control. Discussion of the topic could be publicly restrained, but not closed.

The continuing prominence of rape in German narratives of victimization was, however, certainly not, as suggested by the SED, due to Cold War propaganda by the Western allies. The Americans had their own problems with rape by GIs and, more importantly, with fraternization and casual prostitution. Indeed, there is a remarkably similar rhetoric of anxiety in the American debate about the negative and corrupting effects of servicemen's looting, brawling, raping, and general »sexual antics«, on both occupier and occupied.⁵⁰ In the early occupation years, U.S. officials were far from seizing on rape stories to discredit their Soviet allies and competitors, whom they described in 1946 as »hard bargaining, hard playing, hard drinking, hard bodied, and hard headed«.⁵¹ The Soviets were viewed as not only barbarian rapists, but also as tough fighters, and exotic celebrators who could drink, eat, and copulate prodigiously – often to the frustration of US colleagues unable to match their levels of consumption.⁵² Noting that

46 Wolfgang Harich in: Die Tägliche Rundschau, Nr. 291, 12. 12. 1948, S. 3 (»war is not a socializing tool«).

47 BA (SAPMO), NL 182/853, S. 10, Aufruf der KPD, n.d. (»Had they [the Soviets] taken equal revenge, German Volk, what would have happened to you?«).

48 Die Tägliche Rundschau, Nr. 291, 12. 12. 1948, S. 3. I am indebted to Norman Naimark's work for steering me to this source.

49 Ebd.

50 Harold Zink, *The United States in Germany, 1944–1955*, New York 1957, S. 138. Among many contemporary sources on relations between American occupiers and German women (rape, fraternization, and venereal disease), see also Julian Bach Jr., *America's Germany. An Account of the Occupation*, New York 1946, especially the chapter on »GIs Between the Sheets«, S. 71–83; Bud Hutton/Andy Rooney, *Conquerors' Peace. A Report to the American Stockholders*, Garden City etc. 1947; Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944–1946*, (=Army Historical Series, Center of Military History, United States Army), Washington D.C. 1975; Hans Habe, *Our Love Affair with Germany*, New York 1953.

51 Six Month Report, 4 January–3 July 1946. US Army Military Government, Report to the Commanding General US Headquarters Berlin District, n.p., n.d., S. 8. By 1950, with the Cold War in full swing, Frank Howley, who had been the American commander in Berlin, had changed his view of the Soviets: »We went to Berlin in 1945, thinking only of the Russians as big, jolly, balalaika-playing fellows, who drank prodigious quantities of vodka and liked to wrestle in the drawing room. We know now – or should know – that we were hopelessly naive.« Howley, *Berlin Command*, S. 11.

52 Howley; Maginnis; Murphy, among others, all make this point.

»[o]ur army has done a little on occasion«, William Shirer remarked in his »End of a Berlin Diary« on November 2, 1945 that

»taking into account that the Soviet troops had been in the field constantly fighting for two to three years and that capturing Berlin was a costly operation and that some of the Russian divisions were made up of very inferior material not to mention a weird assortment of Asiatic troops, then the amount of raping by Russian troops here apparently was not above the average to be expected«.⁵³

The US occupiers in Berlin downplayed German anxieties about hunger, homelessness, suicide, and disease, and especially crime and disorder (including a high level of violence by returning German soldiers against their families, as well as assaults by Soviets, Poles, and Ukrainians). The Americans noted with a touch of sarcasm that the crime rate per capita in 1945/46 Berlin was lower than that of most cities in the United States, especially New York!⁵⁴ Indeed, the threat of violence and epidemics was generally identified with »outsiders« and refugees clamoring for entry into Berlin.⁵⁵ This process of official marginalization and privatized retelling left much space for rape stories to proliferate and shape memories. As one woman wrote for an essay contest sponsored by the Berlin Senate in 1976 on »Berlin 1945: Wie ich es erlebte«: »Darüber mehr zu schreiben, hieße schreckliche Erlebnisse wieder wachzurütteln, die man zwar gern vergessen möchte, die aber im tiefsten Innern doch immer wieder wach bleiben.«⁵⁶ In immediate reports and in later memoirs, women reported over and over that the cry »Frau komm« still rang in their ears.⁵⁷

Rape was, of course, by no means the only traumatic event that contributed to German women's perceptions of victimization. In some ways, rape came as just one more (sometimes the worst, but sometimes not) in a series of horrible deprivations and humiliations of war and especially conquest; for mothers, not comparable to the loss of children. Rape – itself signified by a variety of generalized expressions – was integrated into a whole range of other violations and abuses (the ubiquitous term *Mißbrauch*), in particular plunder and demontage, hunger, homelessness, disease, especially infant and child mortality, the harsh treatment of German prisoners of war in the Soviet Union, the perceived arbitrary injustices of denazification, and the expulsions from the eastern territories. »Flucht ist Frauensache ebenso wie der Krieg Männersache war«, Ilse Langner noted in her postwar novel »Flucht ohne Ziel« (»Flight Without End«).⁵⁸

After the initial burst of reporting on rape and despair, many accounts of German (and especially Berlin) women's experience at war's end have portrayed sturdy fresh-faced women, wielding shovels and clad in trousers and kerchiefs (think of Hildegard Knef in postwar films). Or reporters presented young »furlines« driven by material need

53 William L. Shirer, *End of a Berlin Diary*, New York 1947, S. 148. It was clearly acknowledged, however, that the incidence of outright rape (as opposed to various levels of sexual »fraternization«) was much lower among US occupiers. See, for example *Hutton/Rooney*, and *Zink*.

54 Six Month Report, S. 8. See the detailed Berlin police reports on rape, prostitution, drug addiction, and especially family suicides and murders in LAB Rep 9/241, Polizeipräsident 1945–1948.

55 LAB Rep 12, Acc 902/Nr. 5, Dienstbesprechungen der Amtsärzte 1945/46, demonstrate clearly the anxiety about refugees and displaced persons, the attempts to deny them entry or at least limit the resources available to them, as well as to blame them (rather than »legitimate« Berliners) for the spread of social disorder and infectious diseases.

56 LAB Rep. 240/2651/655/1, report by Erna Köhnke (»To write more about this would mean to reawaken terrible experiences which one would like to forget but which in fact are constantly reawakened in one's deepest inner self.«).

57 See for example, LAB Rep 2651/2/184/1, report by Erna Kadzloch on the cry »Frau komm und Uri Uri.«

58 *Ilse Langner*, *Flucht ohne Ziel. Tagebuch-Roman Frühjahr 1945*, Würzburg 1984, S. 123 (»Flight is women's work just as the war was men's work.«). See also *Heineman; Moeller*, *War Stories*.

and moral degeneration, eager to fraternize; providing quite apocalyptic accounts of Berlin's wild trade in rumors, sex, and black market goods.⁵⁹ Only in the last several years have these rather heroic or salacious versions been displaced by the early stories of German women as victims of mass rape. Indeed in most immediate postwar sources, the *Trümmerfrauen* are hardly heroines; they appear as resentful and reluctant conscript labor tainted with having been Nazis or Nazi wives, or as hungry mothers desperate to escape the so-called *Himmelfahrt*-(journey to heaven-)category of the ration card system assigned to »unproductive« housewives.

Just as the city landscape itself was marked by theatrical contrasts between the utterly destroyed and the eerily intact, official reports by occupiers and German authorities stressing how remarkably quickly Berlin began to work again (in large part due to women's valiant housecleaning efforts) contrasted sharply with women's accounts. Memoirs and diaries related bitter experiences of rape, lack of fuel and food, suicide, and disease, such as dysentery, typhus, typhoid, and diphtheria which particularly claimed children as its victims.⁶⁰ Berliners cherished images of themselves as plucky good-humored survivors; »Berlin lebt auf!« (»Berlin revives«) the »Berliner Zeitung« already proclaimed on Monday, May 21, 1945, and other headlines announced, »Berlin ist wieder da« (»Berlin is back«). The sometimes still irrepressible Berliner *Schnauze* reported in a tone of ironic suffering: »Deutschland, Deutschland ohne alles, ohne Butter, ohne Fett und das bißchen Marmelade frißt uns die Besatzung weg.«⁶¹ But despite all efforts to revive the legendary *Berliner Luft* of the Golden Twenties⁶² the pervasive picture was one of relentless misery. Municipal officials themselves frequently emphasized how needy the city was in order to argue for improved occupation conditions; so much so that U.S. military authorities countered what they deemed to be persistent German »whining« by labeling fears about starvation as »bushwah«.⁶³

Contemporary reports (whether by foreign observers, occupiers, or Berliners themselves) present a virtually unanimous portrait of a thoroughly »whipped and beaten« population, self-pitying, broken, in the grip of what one today might identify as a mass clinical depression. A major symptom was the inability or unwillingness to bear children – as reflected in high abortion and low birth rates.⁶⁴ Berliners were described as listless and apathetic; they were dully, sullenly, willing to clean up and rebuild, to »look forward«, but neither insightful into the root causes of their misery nor remorseful about their own agency or responsibility.⁶⁵ Amazingly, the »Berliner Zeitung«, published by

59 For a summary (and good bibliography) of such dramatic versions, see *Botting*.

60 There were at least 15,000 deaths from epidemic diseases from May to December 1945 (plus a very high VD rate). Municipal and occupation officials were more likely to stress the rapidity and efficacy of public health measures such as mass immunizations, examinations and disinfection. For a brief overview, see *Dieter Hanauske* (Hrsg.), *Die Sitzungsprotokolle des Magistrats der Stadt Berlin 1945/46*, Berlin 1995, S. 74.

61 The quote is from the diary of Frau Heidleberg in LAB/Rep. 240, Acc. 2651/748 (»Germany, Germany, without everything, without butter, without fat, and the little bit of marmalade is eaten up by the occupiers.«).

62 See, among others, *Schivelbusch*, on efforts to bring back into the public the stars and successes of Weimar culture.

63 *Howley*, S. 85.

64 *Botting*, S. 109, summarizes many reports: »The wish to have a child is waning. Instead of wanting a child many women are now succumbing to a deep despondency.«

65 This portrayal of whining self-pity is especially evident in reports by occupiers and only really changes to the spunky *Berlin ist wieder da* image with the blockade and the airlift. For an insightful analysis of this »depression« (and the distinctions in the psychoanalytically oriented literature between melancholia and *Trauerarbeit*) see *Eric L. Santner*, *Stranded Objects. Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*, Ithaca 1990, esp. S. 1–56.

the Magistrat, felt it necessary already in June 1945 to instigate a readers' forum on the topic, »Zu viel oder zu wenig. Soll das die Zeitung bringen?« asking whether the Berlin daily press was overreporting news about concentration camps and Nazi crimes.⁶⁶ Just weeks after the collapse of the Third Reich, a major daily in the Soviet zone published (among others) responses that invoked *armes Deutschland*: »Wir haben ein schweres Erbe übernommen und müssen wieder gut machen, was diese Verbrecher getan haben. Dazu müssen wir aber vorwärts blicken, dann bauen wir auf und nicht, wenn wir zurückblicken auf häßliche vergangene Zeiten.« In a rhetoric more commonly associated with the 1980s and 1990s, readers called for a »Schlußstrich« (concluding line) to the discussion of the Nazi era.⁶⁷ As one American Military Government official observed in his diary in 1945: »The Germans in Berlin [...] were on very short rations, had only what shelter they could find [...] and looked beaten physically and in spirit. But what they were going through as they toiled, clearing up bricks and rubble, did not compare with the hell of Belsen and Buchenwald. Still, I doubted that they knew that.«⁶⁸

IV. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS: JEWS

Like the U.S. occupation officer interjecting the experience of the concentration camps into his narrative of German victimization, I too want at this juncture to insert another parallel story that mixes up categories of victims and survivors. The high suicide and abortion rate among German »victims«, the sense that having to bear and care for children was somehow an intolerable burden in the months after the defeat, contrasts sharply with the remarkable fertility among the approximately 250,000 Jewish »survivors« or »victims« living in DP camps. In some kind of supreme historical irony, at the same time as Germans bemoaned the high incidence of suicides, infant and child mortality and abortion, and German women were desperately seeking to keep alive the children they already had⁶⁹, Jewish DPs in occupied Germany were producing a record number of babies. In 1946, occupied Germany, far from being *judenrein*, counted the highest Jewish birth rate in the world.⁷⁰

The »steady rush of weddings«⁷¹ in the DP camps, sometimes within days to neighbors in the next barrack, without necessarily knowing or loving them very well, and the resulting »population explosion«, had little to do with the reconstruction of »normal« family life and self-sacrificing maternalism demanded by West Germany (or pro-natalist calls for renewing the health of the *Volk* in the East). Neither among Germans nor in the DP camps, could one really speak of orderly family life. Indeed the Jewish DPs were of-

66 Berliner Zeitung Nr. 35, 24. 6. 1945, S. 3 (»Too much or too little. Should the newspapers report this?«).

67 Ebd., Nr. 39, 29. 6. 1945, S. 3 (»We have taken on a difficult legacy and must make good again what these criminals [the Nazis] have done. For that, however, we must look forward, only then can we rebuild, and not, if we look back on ugly past times.«).

68 Maginnis, S. 258 f.

69 This rhetoric of despair complements the pro-natalist rhetoric immediately deployed in both East and West Germany (only partially but carefully reworked from the Nazi version) in which self-sacrificing motherhood was key to restoring »humanity and culture« to the German *Volk*. For excellent samples, see BA (SAPMO) DFD (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands) BV 7, Zeitungsausschnittssammlung, Probleme der Frauen im Nachkriegsdeutschland, 1945/46.

70 See among numerous sources, Peck, S. 38; Michael Brenner, Nach dem Holocaust. Juden in Deutschland 1945–1950, München 1995, S. 36; Margarete L. Myers, Jewish Displaced Persons Reconstructing Individual and Community in the US Zone of Occupied Germany, in: Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 42, 1997, S. 306–308.

71 Jacob Biber, Risen from the Ashes, San Bernardino 1990, S. 49.

ten characterized by a vocabulary similar to that defining the Berliners, whom their occupiers had quickly judged »shocked and apathetic [...] concerned almost exclusively with problems of food and shelter«. ⁷² Jewish relief workers and American military authorities, as well as German observers, saw the DPs as depressive, afflicted with »inertia«, and »an air of resignation«, unsuited to any kind of normal life. They regularly and graphically bemoaned the »uncivilized« state of the survivors, oblivious to the most elementary rules of hygiene, uninhibited in regard to the opposite sex, unwilling to work or take any sort of active initiative. Other reports cited symptoms that today are clearly associated with »post-traumatic stress disorders«: DPs were labeled »jittery, excitable, anxiety prone«. ⁷³ Echoing his Military Government colleagues' gloss on the Berliners, Irving Heymont, the American (and as he later revealed, Jewish) commander of Landsberg DP camp in Bavaria portrayed his charges: »With a few exceptions, the people of the camp themselves appear demoralized beyond hope of rehabilitation. They appear to be beaten both spiritually and physically with no hopes or incentives for the future.« ⁷⁴

Particularly the young mothers in the DP camps were in many ways utterly unsuited for motherhood and domesticity (in any case limited in the camps). They had come into Nazi ghettos and death camps, partisan encampments or hiding as teenagers, and had been given no time in which to grow up. Their own mothers were generally dead (often killed or selected for death before the survivors' eyes), or they had once had children, now lost and murdered. As a shocked American Army rabbi reported back to Jewish agencies in New York: »Almost without exception each is the last remaining member of his entire family. [...] Their stories are like terrible nightmares which make one's brain reel and one's heart bleed.« ⁷⁵

In some widely publicized cases, children had been appropriated by Christian rescuers who would not give them up or, most painfully, the children themselves did not want to give up their new identities. Some women had simply picked up other families' lost children and made them their own, at least for the duration of the displacement: »Women who have lost entire families [...], one woman who came in with three children not hers nor related to each other – she merely picked them up en route – one in one place, one in another – all three had lost their parents.« ⁷⁶

Relief workers consistently noted this desperate need to recreate some kind of familial as well as group bonds in a situation where »[t]he overwhelming majority of the Nazi camp survivors are *single* survivors of exterminated families«. ⁷⁷ Meyer Levin, in his sear-

72 Berlin Sector. A Report by Military Government from July 1, 1945 to September 1, 1949, n.p., n.d., S. 113.

73 Quoted in *Alex Grobman*, *Rekindling the Flame*. American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944–1948, Detroit 1993, S. 57. See also *Dinnerstein*.

74 *Jacob Rader Marcus/Abraham J. Peck* (Hrsg.), *Among the Survivors of the Holocaust – 1945*. The Landsberg DP Camp Letters of Major Irving Heymont, (= Monographs of the American Jewish Archives, Bd. 10), Cincinnati 1982, S. 5. (letter to Heymont's wife, 19. 9. 1945). Heymont graphically describes the camp residents' unwillingness or inability to use the latrines properly and the lack of sexual privacy.

75 Letter to Stephen S. Wise, 22. 6. 1945, in: *Abraham J. Peck* (Hrsg.) *The Papers of the World Jewish Congress 1945–1950: Liberation and the Saving Remnant* (= Archives of the Holocaust, Bd. 9), New York 1990, S. 30. On the important role of U.S. military rabbis in dealing with Jewish DPs, see *Grobman*; *Louis Barish*, *Rabbis in Uniform*, New York 1962.

76 Memorandum from Kalman Stein, 7. 12. 1945, in: *Peck*, S. 146. The problem of reclaiming perhaps 10,000 Jewish orphans who had been saved by Christians was prominently discussed in the immediate postwar period. Altogether, about 150,000 children outside Russia were estimated to have survived. See *Wahrhaftig*, S. 121.

77 *Wahrhaftig*, S. 44. Polish Jews who had fled to the Soviet Union and who later entered DP camps in the American zone after experiencing postwar persecution when they returned to Po-

ing memoir »In Search«, bitterly reflected on the sentimentalization of the desperate search for lost children:

»There were heartbreaking stories of children seeking their mothers; in a few cases they found them, and these cases were so endlessly overplayed in the radio dramas of American Jewish organizations for the next few years that Europe and its DP camps must have seem [sic!] to the mind of the American Jew to be one large happy reunion center where every half-hour another distracted mama called out a long-forgotten childish pet name, whereupon a curly haired five-year-old who had disguised her dark eyes for blue eyes in order to survive as a Polish child under the name of Wanda, rushed to the call of Bubaleh into mama's arms.«⁷⁸

His own vision was different: remarking on a young woman survivor he encountered as he drove through devastated Europe in his U.S. Army jeep, he wrote: »She hadn't been able to save her child, nobody had been able to save the child in this place. And somehow her tragedy seemed more terrible than that of the mothers who went into the gas chambers with their babies clutched to their breasts.«⁷⁹

V. »MASCHIACHSKINDER«

The veritable baby boom of 1946/47 was, however, a phenomenon much more complicated and remarkable than the »manic defense« against catastrophic experience and overwhelming loss diagnosed by contemporary psychiatrists and social workers.⁸⁰ »In the midst of the depressed desert life«, of the DP camps, »a noticeable change occurred: people who had survived singly in all age groups were struck with a strong desire to be married.«⁸¹ Levin too sensed that survivors' primary need was »to seek some link on earth. [...] This came before food and shelter.«⁸²

The rapid appearance of babies and baby carriages in the dusty streets of DP camps throughout the American and British zones served as a conscious and highly ideologized reminder that »mir szeinen doh« (Yiddish for »we are here«). A *She'erit Hapleita* (surviving remnant, or more literally, left-over remnant of a remnant) of the Jewish people had survived the Nazis' genocide and seemed determined to replace the dead at an astonishingly rapid rate.⁸³ Despite everything, women who only weeks or months earlier had

land were more likely to arrive in intact family groups than were survivors of the death camps, ghettos, or partisan groups.

78 Meyer Levin, *In Search. An Autobiography*, New York 1950, S. 245. This is precisely what happens in the American film »The Search« (1948, directed by Fred Zinnemann) in which Montgomery Clift plays a U.S. GI who picks up a lost and speechless child, clearly a victim of unspeakable brutality, wandering in the German ruins. At the movie's conclusion, the child is reunited with his concentration camp survivor mother who has been walking the assembly centers of Europe looking for him. She finally spies him walking past her in a row of children being prepared for *Aliyah* for Palestine. »Karel«, she cries, »Mamischka« he calls out and runs toward her, and the movie fades out. Only there is a twist familiar to Levin who railed against the universalization and dejudaization of the Holocaust: while the other orphans being prepared for emigration out of Europe are Jewish, little blond Karel is the child of anti-Nazi Czech intelligentsia.

79 Levin, S. 270.

80 For a fine analysis of this literature, see Isidor J. Kaminer, »On razors edge« – Vom Weiterleben nach dem Überleben, in: *Fritz-Bauer-Institut* (Hrsg.), *Auschwitz: Geschichte, Rezeption und Wirkung* (= Jahrbuch 1996 zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust), Frankfurt/Main 1996, S. 146 f. u. S. 157.

81 Biber, S. 37.

82 Levin, S. 183 f.

83 See Juliane Wetzel, *Mir szeinen doh. München und Umgebung als Zuflucht von Überlebenden des Holocaust 1945–1948*, in: *Martin Broszat/Klaus-Dietmar Henke/Hans Woller* (Hrsg.), *Von Sta-*

been emaciated, amenorrheic »living corpses« became pregnant and bore children.⁸⁴ They were not deterred by the knowledge that for purposes of *Aliyah* to Palestine and emigration elsewhere, pregnancy and young children were only an obstacle.⁸⁵ Major Heymont noticed, »that the use of contraceptives is highly frowned upon by the camp people. They believe it is everyone's duty to have as many children as possible in order to increase the numbers of the Jewish community.«⁸⁶ The American Jewish Distribution Committee (Joint) found itself having to scramble to build Jewish ritual baths for brides (*Mikveh*), and to produce gold wedding rings as well as wigs for Orthodox wives.⁸⁷

It is plausible then to suggest that this rash of marriages, pregnancies, and babies represented a conscious affirmation of Jewish life. This was true for both men and women; in his memoir »Risen from the Ashes«, Jacob Biber poignantly described the birth of his son, the first baby in Föhrenwald Camp near Munich: Chaim Shalom Dov was named in honor of the first son who had been murdered in his father's arms as the family fled to the forest in the Ukraine, and in celebration of peace and life. While on the run and in hiding, after the death of their son, Biber and his wife had »lived like brother and sister«, not daring to risk pregnancy, and now this »pleasant surprise was a sign of the continuity of life«.⁸⁸

Women especially were determined to claim domestic reproductive roles which they had once been promised in some long ago and now fantastic past. Women survivors of the death camps, sometimes of medical experiments, were anxious to reassure themselves of their fertility, as a way of establishing that they had indeed survived.⁸⁹ Observers were shocked by a kind of »hypersexuality« among the mostly youthful inhabitants of the DP camps, and noted with a certain astonishment that the »appearance of numbers of

lingrad zur Währungsreform. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland, München 1988, S. 327–364. See also *Angelika Königseder/Juliane Wetzel*, *Lebensmut im Wartesaal. Die jüdischen DPs (Displaced Persons) in Nachkriegsdeutschland*, Frankfurt/Main 1994, S. 104 f., S. 187. The term *She'erit Hapleita* derives from reworkings of Biblical references to the survivors of the Assyrian conquest.

84 See *Zalman Grinberg*, *We are Living Corpses*, in: *Aufbau*, Ausgabe vom 24. 8. 1945. For a strong argument against the view of survivors as »living corpses« and for the agency, and what Peck has called »the revolutionary ideology«, of the *She'erit Hapleita* (which focuses on political organization rather than reproduction), see *Ze'ev Mankowitz*, *The Formation of She'erit Hapleita: November 1944–July 1945*, in: *Yad Vashem Studies* 20, 1990, S. 337–370; *ders.*, *The Affirmation of Life in She'erit Hapleita*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5, 1990, S. 13–21.

85 »And the urge to arrive in time for the birth of the child in Eretz was real on every vessel that left for Palestine with its host of pregnant women, some of whom were smuggled onto the ships in their ninth month despite the Haganah regulation making the seventh month the limit.« *Levin*, S. 360. See also *Wahrhaftig*, S. 52–54.

86 *Heymont*, S. 44.

87 *Judith Tydor Baumel*, *DPs, Mothers and Pioneers. Women in the She'erit Hapleita*, in: *Jewish History* 11, 1997, H. 2, S. 103. See also *dies.*, *Kibbutz Buchenwald. Survivors and Pioneers*, New Brunswick 1997.

88 *Biber*, S. 1.

89 It is worth noting how many »Holocaust memoirs« actually include (or conclude with) time in the DP camps and experiences of marriage, pregnancy, and childbearing. See, among many memoirs, *Sonja Milner*, *Survival in War and Peace*, New York 1984; *Sala Pawlowicz* (with *Kevin Klose*), *I Will Survive*, London 1947. In general, see *Lenore Weitzman/Dalia Ofer* (Hrsg.) *Women in the Holocaust*, New Haven 1998; *Sybil Milton*, *Gender and Holocaust – ein offenes Forschungsfeld*; *Sara R. Horowitz*, *Geschlechtsspezifische Erinnerungen an den Holocaust*; *Atina Grossmann*, *Zwei Erfahrungen im Kontext des Themas »Gender und Holocaust«*; all three in: *Sigrid Jacobeit/Grit Philipp* (Hrsg.) *Forschungsschwerpunkt Ravensbrück. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Frauen-Konzentrationslagers*, Berlin 1997, S. 124–146.

new-born babies has become a novel feature of the Jewish DP camps⁹⁰. As many survivors have articulated, they were young and finally freed from constant fear; they wanted to live, to taste the pleasures of youth long denied: »our young bodies and souls yearned to live«.⁹¹

In one major Displaced Persons camp in October 1945, there were only 9 babies among 1 281 inhabitants. The majority of the survivors were young and men outnumbered women (approximately sixty to forty); young children and their mothers, along with the elderly, had been automatically marked for death in the Nazi camps. But within several months almost a third of the camp's 2000 strong population were children, most of them newborn infants. On the grounds of Bergen-Belsen, the former concentration camp which became the center of Jewish life in the British zone, 15 Jewish babies were born every week; in early February 1948, the birth of the 1000th Belsen baby was celebrated.⁹² Marriages were a daily ritual: »By the winter of 1946, a thousand [Jewish] babies were born each month« in the American zone.⁹³

Fertility and maternity worked, if you will, as a mode of reidentifying and reconstructing, both of claiming an intact individual body, and of constructing a viable new community – after extraordinary trauma, and even in transit. Supported by the traditional religious imperatives of the East European Jewish community in the camps, the reproductive behavior of the *She'erit Hapleita* could not offer any redemptive meaning to the catastrophe (*Churban*) that had been experienced. But it did perhaps offer a possible means to »redeem the future«⁹⁴ or at least to begin the regenerative work of making and imagining one. In that sense, the quick construction of new families could also be interpreted as a kind of genealogical and biological revenge⁹⁵; Jewish infants, born on territory that had been declared *judenrein* to women who had been slated for extermination, were literally dubbed »Maschiachskinder« (»children of the Messiah«).⁹⁶

Marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth clearly represented a possible reconstruction of collective or national, as well as individual, identity for the Jewish DPs – the battered survivors of the death camps, ghettos, and partisan groups in Eastern Europe as well as those tens of thousands of mostly Polish Jews who had spent the war years in the Soviet Union. Such practices offered a means of establishing a new order and a symbolic sense of »home«, even and especially in the approximately sixty refugee camps in the U.S. and British zones and in the American sector of Berlin.⁹⁷ Despite the overcrowding, the unappetizing rations, the sometimes humiliating and uncomprehending

90 *Wahrhaftig*, S. 54. Occupation and relief officials, as well as Germans, were often caught between disbelief at the horror and magnitude of the extermination and incomprehension of the fact that there remained, after all, hundreds of thousands of survivors who resisted repatriation and for whom there had to be found not just »relief« but a new life (what was still called »a final solution«) outside of Europe. See report by *Zorach Wahrhaftig*, 27. 11. 1945, Life in camps six months after liberation, in: *Peck*, S. 130.

91 *Biber*, S. 46.

92 See also *Myers*, Jewish Displaced Persons, S. 306–308.

93 *Grobman*, S. 17. This baby boom is well-portrayed in the American documentary film »The Long Way Home«, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, 1997.

94 *Mankowitz*, Formation, S. 351.

95 We might consider this gendered view of »revenge« in light of current discussions about the relative lack of vengeful actions by survivors. See *John Sack*, *An Eye for an Eye*, New York 1993.

96 I am grateful to Samuel Kassow, History Department, Trinity College, for this reference.

97 Comparative anthropological literature is useful in this context. See especially Lisa Malkii's analysis of the ways in which refugee camp settings encourage »construction and reconstruction of [their] history »as a people« and the importance of children in that process; *dies.*, *Purity and Exile. Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago 1995, S. 3.

treatment by military and relief workers who »looked down on us [...] as if we were some kind of vermin or pests«⁹⁸, the DP camps and the new families they housed provided a makeshift therapeutic community for survivors who had »been liberated from death«, but not yet »been freed for life«.⁹⁹ Magda Denes, who had survived in hiding with her mother in Czechoslovakia, remembered her reaction to the chaotic, depressing DP camp where »[b]eing processed was a protocol to which we were subjected again and again«. She asked a friend: »Do you think we live in a madhouse?« She looked at me sadly. »No, my dear«, she said. »You have never been in a concentration camp. This is normalcy. This is practically heaven.«¹⁰⁰

VI. JEWISH DPs IN TRANSIT STATION BERLIN

In Berlin also, despite the best efforts of American occupation officials to stem the flow of Jewish refugees, and especially to evacuate pregnant women and mothers with young children to the ostensibly better equipped DP camps in West Germany, the numbers of Jewish DPs continued to grow. U.S. Military Government had initially resisted forming DP camps in Berlin, particularly since as »the Jewish population resident in Berlin in the main did not desire to have a camp created for them, stating that they had seen enough of camps«.¹⁰¹ Starting in November 1945, however, about 250–300 Jewish survivors arrived in the officially closed city every day, creating what one U.S. officer termed a »red-hot« crisis.¹⁰² By 1947, over a thousand Jewish infants and children were housed in camps in the American sector, and 6 000–7 000 Polish Jews were settled into DP camps in the American sector. The Soviets forced the *Bricha* underground network to curtail its »flight and rescue« missions in fall 1946, but altogether, some 32,000 Polish Jews would pass through Berlin from November 1945 through January 1947.¹⁰³

American policy was pressured by an eagle-eyed press and public opinion campaigns at home. The Harrison Report, commissioned in summer 1945 by General Eisenhower, who had been deeply shaken by what he had seen at the liberated death camps, alerted especially American Jewish organizations that »we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them«.¹⁰⁴ Much to their annoyance, the US Military Government authorities could not as easily, guiltlessly, and unilaterally ban all Jewish DPs from their zone in Berlin as the British and French, and certainly the Soviets did. The British, preoccupied with the crisis in Palestine, flatly said no; the French, typically, pleaded poverty and lack of resources, and the Soviet general with »a puckish smile on his face«, rather gleefully noted that the refugees all snuck out

98 Biber, S. 14.

99 Wahrhaftig, Uprooted, S. 86.

100 Magda Denes, *Castles Burning. A Child's Life In War*, New York 1997, S. 304 u. S. 316. A recent letter to the editor of the American Jewish magazine »Moment« recalled DP Camp Föhrenwald as »a vibrant Jewish community. [...] we needed this transition time after Nazi hell«, in: *Moment*, June 1997, S. 21.

101 Lt. Col. Harold Mercer, Chief of Displaced Persons and Welfare Section (OMG), 5. 2. 1946, LAB OMGUS 4/20-1/10.

102 Maginnis, S. 326.

103 Nachama, S. 272. See also Königseder, *Durchgangsstation*. All these numbers are inexact. The Berlin Sector/Public Welfare Branch of the Office of Military Government estimated on 20. 6. 1947 that there were 8 000 German Jews in Berlin receiving aid from the American Joint Distribution Committee, plus 6 300 Polish Jews in two DP camps. Another memorandum on 20. 6. 1947 for the Jewish Agency for Palestine counted 8 000 persons in Düppel and 4 000 in Wittenau camps.

104 Among many sources see Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust*, S. 18.

of their sector into the West anyway.¹⁰⁵ In fact, squabbles about the »Polish Jewish problem held center stage« at a surprising number of Allied *Kommandatura* sessions. The U.S. Military Government officer responsible recalled: »Everyone was irked by the way we were being browbeaten into assuming responsibility for all of the Polish Jews, regardless of what sector of Berlin they were in.«¹⁰⁶

The Americans, in cooperation with UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), eventually made the commitment, as they did throughout their zone, that »reasonable care be taken of these unfortunate people«.¹⁰⁷ But they did so with great reluctance and resentment; as Irving Heymont confessed in his memoir about running Landsberg camp, »[w]hen I raised my right hand and took the oath as an officer, I never dreamed that there were jobs of this sort«.¹⁰⁸ In the characteristic rapid turnaround of sentiment in the postwar years, it was the victims of Nazism, still displaced and unruly, who came to be seen, even by the victors, as the disreputable villains. The Germans, miserable and depressed but trying to rebuild – with their »clean German homes and pretty, accommodating German girls«¹⁰⁹ – came to be viewed as victims, pathetic but appealing, and later with the airlift in Berlin, even heroic.¹¹⁰ Frustrated by Allied indifference to the particular trauma of their experience and what they perceived as favorable treatment for the more orderly Germans, DPs tartly observed that »it is better to be a conquered German than a liberated Jew«¹¹¹, and joked among themselves: »The Germans will never forgive us for what they did to us.«¹¹²

DPs existed within the »historic triangle« of occupiers, Germans, and Jews¹¹³, and as the impact of the Harrison Report faded into Cold War politics, it seemed to many that »[t]he guilt of the Germans was forgotten«. A worried Zorach Wahrhaftig informed the American and World Jewish Congress that, six months after liberation, the Jewish DPs »are looked upon as intruders, the Germans as the autochthonic population suffering from the plague of DPs«.¹¹⁴ It was directly in response to the mass influx of East European Jewish DPs that in December 1945, the liberal U.S. licensed »Tagesspiegel« editorialized:

»So darf man hoffen, daß die millionenfachen Opfer der Juden nicht umsonst gebracht worden sind, sondern daß es nach jahrhundertelangen Bemühungen heute möglich sein wird, das jüdische Problem in seiner Gesamtheit zu lösen [sic!] und zwar einerseits durch Auswanderung der heimatlosen Juden und andererseits durch vollständige Assimilation der Juden, die in Europa zu verbleiben wünschen.«¹¹⁵

105 *Maginnis*, S. 327.

106 *Ebd.*, S. 326.

107 *Wie Anm.* 101.

108 *Heymont*, *Among the Survivors*, S. 38.

109 *Samuel Gringauz*, *Our New German Policy and the DPs. Why Immediate Resettlement is Imperative*, in: *Commentary* 5, 1948, S. 510.

110 Among many other sources on shifting American policy, see *ebd.*, S. 508–514; in general, see also *Dinnerstein*.

111 Quoted in the documentary »The Long Way Home«, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, 1997.

112 *Norbert Mühlen*, *The Return of Germany. A Tale of Two Countries*, Chicago 1953, S. 154 f.

113 *Frank Stern*, *The Historic Triangle: Occupiers, Germans, and Jews in Postwar Germany*, in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 19, 1990, S. 47–76.

114 *Wahrhaftig*, *Life*, S. 134. For case studies of relations between Jewish DPs and a local German population in Landsberg, see *Angelika Eder*, *Jüdische Displaced Persons im deutschen Alltag. Eine Regionalstudie 1945–1950*, in: *Fritz-Bauer-Institut* (Hrsg.), *Überlebt*, S. 163–187; *Dietrich Kohlmannslehner*, *Das Verhältnis von Deutschen und jüdischen Displaced Persons im Lager Lampertheim 1945–1949*, unpublished paper, Fritz Bauer Institut Archives, Frankfurt/Main.

115 *K. E.*, *Juden in Deutschland*, in: *Der Tagesspiegel*, Nr. 39, 5. 12. 1945, S. 3 (»So one may hope that the millions of sacrifices [Opfer] by the Jews have not been brought in vain, but that rather after hundreds of years of effort it will finally be possible today to solve the Jewish problem

Indeed, Allied and German anxieties about a »flood[ing] by Jews from the East«, into »countries [Germany and Austria], made Judenrein by the Nazis«¹¹⁶, and then exacerbated by their high birth rate and obvious lack of assimilation, reveal a great deal about when and how Jews were specifically defined as victims of Nazi genocide, assigned roles (either uncomfortable or valorized, and differing whether one looks West or East) as victims of fascism, or most prominently, subsumed in the larger category of unwelcome war refugees.¹¹⁷

By 1948/49, currency reform, blockade, and airlift sealed the division of Berlin and fundamentally changed its status from vanquished Nazi capital to plucky Cold War ally (this too is a highly gendered process that requires further analysis). Ironically, it was the final division of the city into East and West that also basically eliminated the Jewish DP problem for Berlin. Almost all of the stubbornly remaining (c. 6,500) DPs in Berlin were flown out into the Western US zone in empty Airlift planes returning to their base at Rhine-Main; another step toward the normalization of divided Berlin. While Berlin had been a crucial entry point, the »vorgeschoebene [...] Landzunge für diese jüdische Wanderung aus Ost-Mitteleuropa«¹¹⁸, the center of Jewish DP life in occupied Germany had been shifting to large camps near Munich and Frankfurt.

VII. GERMANS AND JEWS

Writing about the same transitional period of occupation and adjustment, a German woman in Berlin wrote not at all untypically: »1947 kam unser kleiner Junge zur Welt und mit ihm für mich eine große Sorge mehr. Es war unverantwortlich, daß ich in dieser furchtbaren Notzeit noch ein Kind in die Welt gesetzt habe.«¹¹⁹ Certainly, young Berlin women reported excitedly on their encounters with well-fed fraternizing GIs, but even the *Fräuleins*, Curt Riess caustically noted, »waren nur noch Ruinen dessen, was sie einmal gewesen waren, ganz wie die Häuser, in denen sie ihr Leben fristeten«.¹²⁰ Women's stories were more likely to highlight rape, or the terrible hardships of motherhood at war's end: nursing a child through typhoid or diphtheria, the virulent dysentery epidemic of the first winter which killed 65 of every 100 newborns¹²¹, pushing a wheelbar-

in its totality [sic!]); namely, on the one hand, through emigration of the homeless Jews and, on the other hand, through the complete assimilation of those Jews who wish to remain in Europe.«).

116 *Wahrhaftig*, Life, S. 133.

117 The reconstituted Jewish community in Berlin engaged in tense discussions with the SMAD about whether Jews could be classified as resistance fighters, and not just as »victims of fascism« (*Opfer des Faschismus*). See *Nachama*, S. 279.

118 *Wolfgang Jacobmeyer*, Jüdische Überlebende als »Displaced Persons«. Untersuchungen zur Besatzungspolitik in den deutschen Westzonen und zur Zuwanderung osteuropäischer Juden 1945–1947, in: GG 9, 1983, S. 432 (»first frontier for this Jewish migration from East-Central Europe«).

119 LAB Rep 240/2651/98.3, report by H. Gnädig (»1947 our younger son was born and with him for me yet another great worry. It was irresponsible that in this terrible time of need I would put another child into the world.«).

120 *Riess*, S. 34 (»were only ruins of their former selves, just like the houses in which in they now lived out their days«). This view contrasted with more cheerful portrayals of women in western Germany, and surely had to do with the experience of mass rape. For fraternization stories, see the interviews in: *Heimattmuseum Charlottenburg* (Hrsg.), *Worüber kaum gesprochen wurde: Frauen und alliierte Soldaten. Katalog zu der Ausstellung vom 3. September bis 15. Oktober 1995*, Berlin 1995.

121 *Maginnis*, S. 344, makes this point. On the toll exacted by epidemics see: *Berlin: Kampf um Freiheit und Selbstverwaltung 1945–1946*, Berlin 1961, S. 10.

row with a dead child in a cardboard box (for lack of coffins) through a bombed-out street, and sometimes, most horrifically, accounts of mothers and children separated on the trek west, on the road, or in the packed refugee trains. Gabrielle Vallentin's 1955 account poignantly recalled the Berlin streetcars where »man so manches traurige Bild [sah], Mütter, die stumm und starr dasassen, auf ihrem Schoß ein Pappkarton, darin sie ihr totes Kind aus dem Krankenhaus abgeholt hatten.«¹²²

In compelling counterpoint to the response of Jewish survivors it seems that for German women really quite brief but vivid experiences of victimization, narrated over and over again, so dominated all memory as to seemingly block out all knowledge of what went before. Another classic testimony: »Die Bomben im Winter 1944/45 waren schlimm, doch die Tage die jetzt kamen, waren kaum zu ertragen.«¹²³ Such sentiments were of course also interpreted more cynically: »What they claim not to have known yesterday they wish to forget again today!«, a Jewish observer commented in 1950.¹²⁴ The »Frauenleben« page of the »Tagesspiegel« conveyed the ubiquitous despair about the condition of infants and children: »Es ist ja so, daß wir uns den berühmten Blick in jeden Kinderwagen, den angeblich keine Frau sich versagen mag, schon abgewöhnt haben, weil uns das, was wir sehen, oft so traurig macht.«¹²⁵

A few statistics can serve to provoke discussion about the different meanings attached to childbirth and babies by Germans and Jews in the interval immediately after war's end. Berlin births, which had reached a quite unprecedented height early in the war in 1940 of 74,903 (17.2 per 1 000 population), plummeted in 1946 to 22,894 (7.3 per 1 000 population), a circumstance that provoked much anxiety in the press and among medical and social welfare officials (agonizing about the need to rebuild a healthy *Volk*).¹²⁶ In Bavaria, where there had »never been as many Jews as there were one year after the destruction of European Jewry«¹²⁷, the 1946 Jewish birth rate was 29/1 000 vs. 7.35/1 000 for Germans. The death rate for Jews was also much lower, 1.6 vs. 8.55, and at a rate of 27.7 vs. 2.8, there were also many more Jewish weddings. The recorded Jewish birth rate in Germany for 1948, right before the proclamation of the state of Israel on 16 May 1948 and the easing of U.S. immigration regulations eventually reduced the »problem« to small but highly visible proportions, was a whopping 35.8/1000, far exceeding anything the Germans had managed in this century.¹²⁸

122 LAB Acc 2421, report by Gabriele Vallentin, S. 28 (»one saw many such sad pictures; mothers who sat silent and rigid, on their lap a cardboard box, in which they had picked up their dead child from the hospital«).

123 LAB, Rep. 240/2651/131, report by Gertrud Strobel, S. 1 (»The bombs in winter 1944/45 were bad, but the days that came now were almost impossible to bear.«).

124 B. Sagalowitz, Report on Trip to Germany, April 1950, in: Peck, S. 377.

125 Der Tagesspiegel Nr. 29, 23. 11. 1945, S. 3 (»It is after all the case that we have already broken the habit of the famous glance into the baby carriage, which supposedly no woman would deny herself, because what we see there so often makes us so sad.«).

126 LAB OMGUS 4/24-1/4; see also: Berlin in Zahlen 1947. Hrsg. v. Statistischen Amt der Stadt Berlin, Berlin 1949, S. 128. In 1946, 166 marriages in which the man was Jewish, and 109 in which the woman was Jewish, were celebrated (out of total of 20,903). Ebd., S. 122.

127 Brenner, East European, S. 49 f. He adds, »Ironically, some places that the Nazis never had to make *judenrein* because Jews had never lived there were eventually populated by several hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews.«

128 Jacobmeyer, S. 437. See also Brenner, Nach dem Holocaust, S. 36. For comparative purposes: the German birth rate in 1933 stood at 14.7 (9.9 in Berlin), in the aftermath of the first World War it had reached 25.9 in 1920. 2/3 of Jewish DPs eventually ended up in Israel; altogether about 100,000 went to the United States and 250,000 to Israel. On the reaction in Israel, see Tom Segev, The Seventh Million. Israel Confronts the Holocaust, New York 1993.

The point here is not to make facile comparisons on the basis of statistics that describe two very different populations who had undergone such different and incommensurate experiences and now lived under quite different circumstances. I am indeed talking about two groups – »Aryan« Germans (themselves hardly homogenous) and mostly East European Jewish survivors – whose social histories were dramatically different, but who quite unexpectedly (and ironically) found themselves in the same war-torn territory after May 1945. All these striking demographic markers can be related to empirical data, such as the opposite »alarming disparity«¹²⁹ of sex ratios among Jewish survivors and the general German population (preponderance of males among Jews and of women among Germans), the different age structure (most Jewish survivors were young), and the higher rations (some 2500 calories a day), and guaranteed (if primitive) housing for Jews. Having sex and making babies was also a good way to deal with the boredom and loneliness of leading a waiting life – *auf dem Weg* (on the way) – in the transit camps, and the disappointment at the reality of the long yearned for liberation, where, as was often and loudly pointed out by the DPs and their advocates, Jewish survivors were once again consigned to living in barracks behind barbed wire.¹³⁰

The radically different reproductive and sexual patterns of Germans and Jews – unsurprising as they may be in light of the divergent different social histories and circumstances – were at the time saturated with, and represented as carrying, highly charged political meaning and memory: a process that bears examination for all of us interested in gender, nation, and memory.¹³¹ I would insist that these glaring statistics, and the intense scrutiny to which they were subjected by Germans, Allies, and Jews, do speak to the blurred and complicated categorizing of victim, victor, and survivor in consciousness and memory after war and Holocaust.

Certainly, many Germans conceived of their experience as that of *Opfer*, and they did so in gendered and sexualized terms which focused on birth and abortion rates, infant and child mortality, on female victimization and rape (and on male impotence – one would have to look here at the competing images for example of the »poor infantryman« [*armer Lanzer*] and broken POW that populated the postwar era). Jews, I would argue, – certainly in the published record and in political representations – looked to pregnancy and maternity as emblems of survival, as signs that they were more than just »victims« and precisely did not dwell obsessively on the traumatic recent past. DP culture placed a premium on collecting personal histories, on bearing witness for the future. But in its preoccupation with the mundane everydayness of camp life and political association, it also fostered a kind of productive forgetting. Bearing children worked to mediate this continuous tension between remembering and forgetting. Babies, in their names and in their features, bore the traces of the past, of those who were dead and lost. But imaginatively, and in their ever-present demandingness, they also represented futurity. As the

129 *Wahrhaftig*, Uprooted, S. 54. As noted earlier, the approximate sex ratio in the DP camps was 60 per cent male and 40 per cent female; in Berlin at war's end, approximately the opposite (over 60 per cent female) ratio applied.

130 See the poignant depictions in the feature film »Lang ist der Weg«, a German/Polish co-production (1947). For a critical analysis, see *Cilly Kugelman*, »Lang ist der Weg«: Eine jüdisch-deutsche Film-Kooperation, in: *Fritz-Bauer-Institut* (Hrsg.), Auschwitz, S. 353–370.

131 Anthropologists have reminded us that »children are a crucial element in the representation of refugees«; *Malkii*, S. 11. Literary scholars are increasingly admonishing us to interrogate discourses of reproduction as responses to experiences of mass death and crises of futurity. Pressured by the AIDS crisis, queer theory has provided some of the most insightful analyses of cultures of reproduction in relation to loss and death. See *Michael Warner*, *Repro-Culture*, unpublished paper, Rutgers University 1995.

first issue of the DP newsletter »Unzre Hoffnung« stated: »Wir müssen zum Heute übergehen und ein besseres Morgen vorbereiten, ein schönes, ein gesundes Morgen.«¹³²

In a sense, the aborting German women carried within their bodies a huge question mark about the future of the nation: would Germany – as nation, as *Volk* – go on (*wieder hochkommen*), would it be reconstituted and how? None of that was clear at war's end. The question of national identity was indeed on the agenda. Mass rape at the point of defeat of course exacerbated such worries with all their nationalist and racial implications; the attempt to restore German women's bodily (and genetic) integrity via abortion seemed a necessary precondition for national integrity. If German women were expressing uncertainty about the possibility of a viable nation, Jewish women survivors, living in a kind of extraterritoriality on both German and Allied soil, were prefiguring on their pregnant bodies a kind of imaginary nation which they hoped – at least this is the message of the sources – to realize in Palestine/*Eretz Yisroel*. Their babies had »red hot« political valence, not only for the Allies, but also for the Zionists who dominated political and cultural life in the DP camps. The DP press and political actions demanding open emigration from Germany to Palestine invariably foregrounded images of babies and baby carriages.¹³³ The DP camp newsletters, which reported on cultural life in the camps and on progress toward a Jewish state – written in Yiddish, but printed in Roman characters because there was no Hebrew typeset available in occupied Germany – drove their message home with pages of marriage and birth announcements (along with notices searching for lost relatives). Meyer Levin was particularly struck by the hectic din of the streets in Berlin, Vienna, or Munich, where DPs congregated and »DP women paraded their babies«.¹³⁴ It is also crucial to keep in mind that this Jewish baby boom did not simply go on behind the gates of the DP camps, and unnoticed by Germans. As the survivors settled in, both inside and outside the camps, Jews gave birth in German hospitals where they were treated by German physicians and nurses; some Jews hired German women as housekeepers and nannies, they sometimes (especially given the surplus of men) dated, had sex with, and even (in a much stigmatized minority of cases) married German women. DP mothers crisscrossed the streets of German towns with their baby carriages; the many Jewish marriages and births in the DP camps were registered in the German *Standesämter* (marriage bureaus).¹³⁵

What are we to make then of these contrasting statistics and reports, about birthing Jews and aborting Germans – especially if direct comparisons are not appropriate? This leads me to some concluding speculations on the continually vexed questions of remembering and forgetting, and their relationship to (gendered) nationmaking, especially the particular issues raised by the (increasingly acknowledged) prominence of women's voices in defining the »difficult legacy« of the early postwar period. In a context in which female bodies – raped, aborting, pregnant, mothering – are so clearly both public and private and where neither public nor private is clearly defined or bordered, these German and Jewish stories, taking place, after all, on the same territory, if not really in the same (non-existent) nation must, I think, be told together. They must be examined as

132 Dieter E. Kesper, *Unsere Hoffnung*. Die Zeitung Überlebender des Holocaust im Eschweiger Lager 1946, Eschwege 1996. Newspaper of the UNRRA camp in Eschwege, discovered in Heimatarchiv Eschwege, Nr. 1, 4. 6. 1946. The published text is a translation of the original Yiddish (»We must turn to today and prepare a better tomorrow, a beautiful and a healthy tomorrow.«).

133 See the extraordinary photo collection in *Jacqueline Giere/Rachel Salamander* (Hrsg.), *Ein Leben aufs neu: The Robinson Album. DP-Lager, Juden auf deutschen Boden 1945–1948*, Wien 1995.

134 Levin, S. 398.

135 See Eder, *Jüdische Displaced Persons*.

contrasting survival strategies and differing responses to different wartime traumas (which were in turn given different public meanings by Germans, Allies, and Jews). But they raise also similar and provocative questions about the place of sexuality, pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood in furnishing possible reconstructions of ethnic or national identity in the wake of Nazism and World War II (or other violent trauma, either individual or collective).

Both Germans and Jews turned to narratives and metaphors of fertility and maternity (in terms of both loss and possibility) to comprehend victimization and survival and to conceptualize and imagine future identities as nation or *Volk*. By looking comparatively at these disparate experiences and the discourses they generated, we could begin to usefully complicate our understanding of gender as a historical category, ›deGermanize‹ a German history in which multiculturalism or heterogeneity is too often seen as an invention of the very recent past, and cut through the persistent division between German history and history of Jews in Germany which still characterizes our work on gender, nation, and memory.