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Identity, Violence, and Memory: Women's Accounts of War in Twentieth-Century Europe

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ABSTRACT

This project uses women's accounts—both written and oral—to examine women's experiences of war in twentieth-century Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. Focusing on ways women construct their identities within their accounts, this analysis seeks to explore the role of ethnicity and nationalism in women's war experiences via autobiographical accounts. This project also examines women's bodily autonomy or lack thereof during wartime, including negotiating pregnancy and experiences of sexual violence, and how they depict these experiences. Throughout, this analysis considers *how* women speak about and remember their war experiences in twentieth-century Europe.

Contents

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CHAPTER ONE—NARRATING WAR: GENDER, TRAUMA, AND THE UNSPEAKABLE

History is not and cannot be objective. The historical narratives produced and consumed are formed by specific groups or individuals via different privileged voices and stories. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, "the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production."[1] Coupled with the long-standing tendency of Western academia to privilege written narration and documentation over non-written sources or oral traditions, these aspects have combined to create a discipline which has historically privileged sources written by—and often featuring—individuals who have had the privileges necessary to write themselves or others like themselves into history. History is about power and about creating and perpetrating power structures. If one is not represented in history, one loses a certain degree of power because historical presence itself grants power. If marginalized populations have not appeared as significant historical actors in the long-standing historical traditions to date, some may question the point of reconsidering the historical agency of those who have not featured in historical narratives thus far. But that is precisely the point. The narrowly-focused traditional historical narratives which feature only a specific set of individuals simply *cannot* suffice. Such a narrative is far too simplistic to truly capture the complexity of human interactions and life itself. Thus, it is nothing less than our responsibility to reexamine these long-held ideas for flaws, inadequacies, and narrow-mindedness.

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[1] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Preface," *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), xix.

This thesis argues that gender is an essential category of analysis to use when assessing the wars of twentieth-century Europe, particularly when analyzing identity construction based on ethnicity, nationalist practices, experiences with sexual and non-sexualized violence, and efforts to cope with war circumstances. The research presented in this thesis touches on a number of subfields within the discipline of history. The use of women's accounts as the dominant form of primary sources used in this analysis is deliberate. Using specifically women's accounts of war in twentieth-century Europe serves to diversify the presentation of war and war experiences in twentieth-century Europe by not only adding women's voices but by confirming these voices as authorities. Recent decades have led to increased use of autobiographical sources by historians, thus diversifying who is represented in history, allowing for more consideration of "ordinary" individuals and a more thorough consideration of everyday life, rather than simply large-scale political events.

Personal accounts and autobiographical writings have also gained larger consideration within academic analyses of war experiences. Yet despite the benefits of utilizing these accounts, the "selective incorporation of individual wartime memories into collective narratives" can be used to perpetuate long-held notions regarding who participated in war in what capacity—namely, to reinforce misconceptions that war was a specifically male experience during the twentieth century.[2] Indeed, women's voices regarding wartime experiences have generally been omitted from official histories in spite of the sizable amount of "vivid recollections, diaries, and other autobiographical

[2] Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, "Introduction: Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 10.

writings" women have produced about their wartime experiences.[3] In the narrative of who experienced war and in what capacity male accounts are "privileged," thus presenting men as the primary actors during war.[4]

This thesis examines the multiplicity of ways in which women share their experiences of war in twentieth-century Europe, focusing on the discussions of ethnicity and nationalism, gender, and daily life within these accounts. Women's experiences of war in twentieth-century Europe cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional image of the victim, of the individual carried along by the large-scale geopolitical forces without expressing any sort of agency whatsoever. Yet certain aspects of war tend to be universal amongst women's accounts of war. Sexual violence, either the threat or the actual experience, appears in nearly all of the accounts considered in this analysis, as does coerced sex. The issues of ethnicity and nationalism also figure heavily in these accounts. In particular, gender, ethnicity, and nationalism are inextricable facets of an individual's identity which interact to construct not only an individual's concept of self, but also a society's conception of itself and of individuals' roles within society. Pregnancy figures as a way in which women sometimes negotiate their own nationalism. Women's wartime accounts also reveal the violence they often contended with on a daily basis, and how they sought to deal with the mental and physical stresses of war.

I. Women and War in Twentieth-Century Europe

Reams of paper—and billions of gigabytes—have been dedicated to scholarship about the wars and violence of the twentieth-century. While many academics have

[3] Wingfield and Bucur, "Introduction," 10.
[4] Ibid., 10.

claimed they have written about war experiences, what they almost certainly mean is that they have written about *men's* war experiences. As Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet write, "[historical] studies of war have pivoted on 'high politics' and on the evolution of what might be called, for want of a better term, public economic life, both primarily masculine preserves."[5] On the rare occasions upon which women entered the historiographical discussion of war, often discussion of their experiences was relegated strictly to one side of what Eliza Ablovatski calls the "fighting front-home front dichotomy," and treated as trivial and less worthy of academic analysis than male experiences on the "fighting front."[6] According to Maria Bucur, integrating women's experiences on the home front "means nothing less than moving away from an analysis of war that privileges almost exclusively combat and diplomacy" and instead transition to examining the "social and cultural aspects of war."[7] History as a discipline has begun "reexamine[ing]...what constitutes 'historical experience' during war along more gender-inclusive lines," but has yet to complete the shift.[8] Analyses of women's experiences of war and women's accounts of war are being completed and written, but these are still frequently regarded as addendums to analyses of the "normal" war experience. Even more alarmingly, such analyses are often considered a specialist area of history rather than an understudied aspect of history in general.

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[5] Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 46.

[6] Eliza Ablovatski, "Between Red Army and White Guard: Women in Budapest, 1919," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds. (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 71.

[7] Maria Bucur, "Women's Stories as Sites of Memory: Gender and Remembering Romania's World Wars," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 188.

[8] Bucur, "Women's Stories as Sites of Memory," 188.

One way in which this conception of women's experiences as somehow a specialist area comes to the forefront is in the inclusion—or lack thereof—of women's accounts in reconstructing historical narratives. Despite the wealth of "vivid recollections, diaries, and other autobiographical writings" left behind by women who experienced war in the twentieth-century, the Academy has had the tendency to "privilege men's autobiographical writings" even when reconstructing non-combatants' experiences of war.[9] This further perpetrates the idea that male-documented experiences are the norm to which women's experiences can only be contrasted as something "other" or abnormal. The crucial differences between men's and women's historical experiences of war makes it essential to take women's accounts of life into account when writing history. Adding women's voices to historical narratives is of particular importance when writing about war because of the long-standing portrayal of war as a specifically male experience. Yet the wars of the twentieth-century have proven that warfare is not a specifically male experience.[10]

The very usage of women's narratives and autobiographies in historical analyses is to confirm the legitimacy of the female gaze, of women's accounts, of women's perspectives. This may seem simple, but it is an outright assertion that women's experiences deserve attention. Women's experiences deserve analysis and integration into the large-scale historical narrative, which will certainly alter as a result of integrating women's experiences into "history." This is particularly true concerning academic examinations of war experiences. Despite extensive historical records of women's

[9] Wingfield and Bucur, "Introduction," 10.
[10] This is not to say that women did not experience war or were not present in war before the twentieth-century; on the contrary, women have long experienced war in many different capacities. However, this analysis focuses on war in twentieth-century Europe, hence the specification.

involvement in or observations on warfare, Western thought has a tendency to consider women ineligible to experience warfare and the deprivations of war except as bystanders. Consequently, women's observations of war have long been held to hold less value than male observations of war, as "...[s]eeing war as a woman is compounded by gender anxieties and questions about the legitimacy of the female gaze."[11] The "female gaze" has long been held to be inadequate to assess war and experiences of war.[12] Using women's accounts of war experiences legitimizes women's experiences and recognizes women's observations and experiences as equally legitimate as men's observations and experiences.

II. Autobiographical Accounts as Primary Sources

The primary sources used in this thesis are nearly exclusively autobiographical accounts—deliberately. Encompassing diaries, letters, memoirs, autobiographies, oral histories, and other formats, autobiographical accounts give an intimate look into individuals' experiences, providing an essential counterweight to the reams of histories published which use exclusively "official" sources—governmental records, numerical data, etc. In contrast to these other sources, autobiographical accounts give an idea of an individual's life, an individual's experience of events that have, most likely, been well-documented, assessed, and analyzed through a political or economic lens. While letters and diaries have often been considered "adjuncts to history of literature"—that is, sources worthy only to bolster other sources rather than sources worthy to analyze in and of

[11] Carol Acton, "Diverting the Gaze: The Unseen Text in Women's War Writing," *College Literature* 31:2 (Spring 2004), 58.
[12] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16:3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

themselves—such accounts "offer crucially important ways of understanding the relationship between the subjective experience and the larger public narrative," which, it is crucial to underscore, is also based on subjective accounts.[13]

Writing an account of one's war experience permits the opportunity to reflect upon, reinterpret, and perhaps even renegotiate one's relationship with one's wartime experiences. Autobiographical accounts of all sorts allow this reflection, reinterpretation, and potential renegotiation. Writing during war, particularly keeping a diary, allows the act of writing another purpose: to serve as a "mechanism by which [one] reinforces [one's] own present."[14] As Carol Acton writes about an Irish nurse's diary during World War Two, her diary becomes "the place wherein she can process and thus impose order on the terrifying events...placing them in the past but framing them with the present."[15] The act of writing one's account thus becomes a tool to cope with the events one is experiencing. A diary is a way of coping with the present; a memoir or oral history is a way of coping with past experiences that still resonate in and impact the present.

There are, of course, like with all sources, certain limitations to using autobiographical writings. As Maria Bucur explains in her article "Women's Stories as Sites of Memory: Gender and Remembering Romania's World Wars," reading autobiographical writings "does not, however, provide a global picture of wartime experience, because all of the authors tend to be relatively well, if not highly, educated and to come from urban areas."[16] Bucur explains that this necessarily limits a historical analysis using autobiographical writings as primary sources to an "evocative" and not

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[13] Carol Acton, "'Stepping into history': reading the Second World War through Irish women's diaries," *Irish Studies Review* 18:1 (February 2010),52.
[14] Acton, "'Stepping into history,'" 51.
[15] Ibid., 51.
[16] Bucur, "Women's Stories as Sites of Memory," 174.

"comprehensive" analysis of experiences of war.[17] Using oral histories in addition to autobiographical writings helps to correct for some degree of this "evocative" slant driven by inequities in accessing education or even writing materials.

Motivations for publication come into question when using autobiographical writings published with the author's permission during her lifetime. Several of the sources used here fall under this category. As Bucur writes regarding Romanian women's publication of autobiographical writings following World War I, "women who published wartime memoirs...attempted to bear witness to women's dignified and selfless participation in the war effort and to the effects of war on their lives" seeking to provide a "counterbalance [to] the almost exclusive emphasis in writings that appeared soon after the war on the military and political action of men."[18] Publication of one's account during one's lifetime indicates a belief in one's ability to speak as an authority. This calls to mind Trouillot's assessment of the power dynamic present in the production of historical narratives.[19] By choosing to publish their accounts, Maria Savchyn Pyskir, Alaine Polcz, the anonymous author of *A Woman in Berlin*, and Elma Softić each position themselves as an authority figure with the power and the right to speak about what has happened and to share their experiences with others via published text. Even women who agree to participate in an oral history interview indicate by their agreement to participate that they consider themselves to have information or a story worth sharing, as Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik indicated by allowing themselves to be interviewed on their experiences of World War II.

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[17] Ibid., 174.
[18] Ibid., 175.
[19] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995).

Using autobiographical accounts to explore and write history also calls into question the role, presence, and influence of memory. Often, memoirs and autobiographies are written months if not years after the events recounted; oral histories fall into this category as well. Letters and diaries may seem to provide a more in-the-moment documentation—a more intimate read, if one will—but one rarely writes down events in one's diary as the events are occurring. Like memoirs and autobiographies, diaries are written in the same process of recalling the past and creating memories—just after a shorter passage of time in between the event and the documentation.

III. Identity, Ethnicity and Nationalism

Taking the position that ethnicity and the nation are social constructs, the mythology of the nation and of the innate nature of ethnicity has become so pervasive that they have, in effect, become fact. The danger of this pervasiveness is that ethnicity and nationalism are frequently cited as motivating factors for violent conflicts—wars—that were in fact prompted by a combination of other factors. The twentieth-century wars in southeastern Europe[20]—including the First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, respectively, and the Wars of Yugoslav Succession in the 1990s[21]—are widely misunderstood to have been motived by ancient ethnic hatreds or some innate or natural source of nationalism. In his 1993 book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, Robert Kaplan even went so far as to describe southeastern Europe as "a time-capsule

[20] Southeastern Europe is frequently referred to as the Balkans; however, I have chosen to avoid the term due to the heavy pejorative connotations of "Balkan" or "Balkans." For an in-depth explanation of the pejorative use of the term "Balkan" and how such negative usage of the term came to be the norm, please see Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*.

[21] The so-called 1990s Wars of Yugoslav Succession include the Slovenian Independence War (27 June-7 July 1991), the Croatian War of Independence (1991- 1995), the Bosnian War (1992- 1995), and the Kosovo War (1998- 1999).

world" in which "people raged [and] spilled blood," with their perspectives remaining "fixed" on the past rather than focused on the present.[22] What such an analysis omits—that is, an analysis that takes claims of innate ethnicity and naturally-occurring nations to be fact—is the role of political elites in formulating and propagating national mythologies and ideas about ethnicity for political gains—such as was the case in the so-called "Balkan wars" of the twentieth-century. The First and Second Balkan Wars were motivated by territorial desires by newly-formed states coping with the legacy of centuries of Ottoman imperialism in the region. The Wars of Yugoslav Succession in the 1990s were driven by the economic downturn in Yugoslavia during the 1980s and the efforts of certain political elites—i.e. Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman—to retain and even gain power.[23]

The myths of the nation and of ethnic hatred also serves to conceal the motivating factors behind World War I. Stating that the "Great War"—or the "War to End All Wars," as the First World War was popularly known until the Second World War—was prompted by the assassination of the Habsburg heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand by the Bosnia-born Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip[24] conveniently avoids acknowledging the disturbingly-tangled web of treaties binding Europe that were signed into existence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This narrative thus places the blame squarely on nationalism and on the late Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was itself dismantled as a result of the war. Imagining that the "War to End All Wars" was begun

[22] Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), xxi.
[23] Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Break-Up of Yugoslavia.* Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, and Robyn Wiegman, eds. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
[24] Gavrilo Princip is also frequently identified as a Serb nationalist rather than a Yugoslav nationalist.

by a lone nationalist provides an easy escape of culpability for the millions of deaths during World War I.

Personal conceptions of ethnicity and of the nation figure heavily in how individuals understand their experiences and how they construct their own identities. With the nineteenth-century typically regarded as the advent of "the nation" and nationalism amongst the general population—as opposed to simply amongst the elites—the twentieth-century was the first new century entered into with a particularly "nationalized" European population. The 1848 Revolutions across much of Europe were only the dress rehearsal for the outbreaks of nationalist violence that ripped Europe—and much of the rest of the world—apart during the twentieth-century.[25] Autobiographical accounts provide a valuable insight into how individuals—granted, educated individuals, due to their ability to document their own stories—understood their own ethnic and national identification and the actions they took to support this personal identification.

What *must* be recognized in writing an analysis of women's accounts of war—particularly with regards to accounts that women wrote and published themselves—is that by the sheer act of writing such an account, a woman such as Alaine Polcz or Maria Savchyn Pyskir is writing herself into the history of her state and her nation. By writing an account of her experience *in war* such a woman claims a place in the national or state historiography, a radical act in and of itself.

[25] This is not to say that nationalism was the sole force behind World Wars I and II; on the contrary, international state-to-state treaties figured heavily in the way that World War I in particular spread from a conflict between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia to encompass nearly all of Europe. However, nationalism stemming from the nineteenth-century provided a means by which political elites were able to motivate the general population to support the war effort.

IV. Wartime Sexual Violence against Women

Sexual violence was not legally prosecuted as a war crime or as a crime against humanity until June 1996, when the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) passed an indictment on "sexual offenses committed in war" in the Bosnian city of Foča.[26] On 22 February 2001, marked the first conviction on the level of international law for the crime of sexual violence in wartime.[27] Yet the sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina was by no means the first instance of sexual violence used during wartime in Europe during the twentieth-century, nor was it the first time such sexual violence was documented. Teresa Iacobelli opens her essay on the mass rapes in Foča by blunting stating, "Rape has always accompanied war."[28] The discourse of war—the concern for the physical territory for state or nation, the concern for the continuation of the nation—"strengthens the sense that women are property" and serve as "symbols of national victory."[29] This mentality creates sexual violence against "enemy" women—women from another state or nation—as a tool to enact victory and shame the enemy.

The sexual violence committed against German women by Soviet soldiers during the final months of World War II is infamous. Conservative estimates of the number of women raped in Berlin alone reach into the thousands.[30] German troops committed brutal acts of sexual violence against women on the Eastern Front earlier in the war, with some scholars speculating that these acts were a factor in the widespread nature of sexual

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[26] Teresa Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions': Investigating Mass Rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina through a Case Study of Foca *[sic]*," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 266.
[27] Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions,'" 271.
[28] Ibid., 261.
[29] Higonnet and Higonnet, "The Double Helix," 37.
[30] Jeffrey Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," *Politics and Society* 37:1 (March 2009), 53.

violence committed by Soviet troops in late-World War II Berlin.[31] Jewish women were raped in concentration camps.[32] The number of examples from World War II *alone* indicates the massive scale of wartime sexual violence.

Despite the abhorrent frequency with which wartime rape occurs, the motivation behind rape in wartime is not always the same. Wartime sexual violence in twentieth-century Europe has served as "a bribe to the perpetrators to encourage their participation in the less pleasurable activity of killing," entertainment for perpetrators, "to keep concentration camp inmates compliant," or as "a means of implementing genocide."[33] Genocidal rape intends to use sexual violence to eliminate, persecute, or forcibly displace from a certain region a specific population or ethnic group. Such motivations lie behind mass sexual violence in episodes of ethnic cleansing,[34] such as in the case of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and the 1990s Wars of Yugoslav Succession.

There are three primary variations of wartime sexual violence: sexual violence explicitly and officially ordered by a military or governmental force, such as has been deduced in the Armenian and Bosnian cases; sexual violence occurring without explicit orders to commit rape but sanctioned by military or governmental command, such as has been suggested regarding the rape of German women by Soviet forces in late World War

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[31] Ibid., 47.

[32] Robert Sommer, "Camp Brothels: Forced Sex Labour *[sic]* in Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth-Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, 168-196 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[33] Dagmar Herzog, "Introduction: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth-Century," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth-Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 4.

[34] Some consider "ethnic cleansing" to be a highly problematic term used primarily to avoid the responsibility implicit when using the term "genocide." This is a legitimate criticism. Teresa Iacobelli describes "ethnic cleansing" as "a phrase first used by the international community to describe the events in the former Yugoslavia, without having to use the more loaded term of genocide" (Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions,'" 264).

II[35]; and sexual violence occurring against military or governmental orders and prosecuted by those in authority. Parallel to these three types of physically violent sexual assault is coerced sex—that is, sex demanded in exchange for a particular good or service, which often was as basic as food to survive.[36] Katherine R. Jolluck has examined Polish women's experiences with coerced sex while they were exiled in the Soviet Union during World War II, which provides valuable context for other women's experiences with coerced sex during wartime.[37]

Experiences of sexual violence also shaped how women spoke—or wrote—about their experiences. In "The Nation's Pain and Women's Shame: Polish Women and Wartime Violence," Katherine R. Jolluck discusses Polish women's experiences in forced exile in the Soviet Union, paying particular attention to how the women spoke about their experiences—and what they didn't speak about. Jolluck notes that the vast majority of the women she studied spoke only about sexual violence in the third person—as if it was something that happened to something else.[38]

V. Violence and Humor during Wartime

Women also describe experiences with violence that are not specifically gendered; that is, experiences of violence that is not sexual violence, or violence directed at these women because they are women. Nearly all of the women describe experiencing air raids or artillery attacks. One writes that air raids haunt her more than four decades

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[35] Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions,'" 278.
[36] Katherine R. Jolluck, "The Nation's Pain and Women's Shame: Polish Women and Wartime Violence," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 205.
[37] Jolluck, "The Nation's Pain and Women's Shame," 193-219.
[38] Ibid., 207.

after the war has ended,[39] while another documents two of the most infamous artillery attacks from the siege of Sarajevo, in both instances using the phrase "human meat" to describe the carnage.[40] A member of the Organization for Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) described experiencing the explosion of a small bomb at close range, an instance in which she was severely injured.[41] Many of the accounts describe the authors' experiences with violence in excruciatingly graphic detail, providing for somewhat harrowing reading.

Yet an apparent coping mechanism that reappears in multiple accounts is the use of humor to counter the mental strain from constant or near-constant exposure to violence. Many of the jokes themselves are exceptionally dark in nature—one punchline jokes that "[i]n Auschwitz they at least had gas"—but reveal the ways in which individuals and women in particular sought to deal with the psychological tolls of war.[42] Other jokes make light of individuals' experiences with rape. Scholar Ivana Maček specifically identifies joke-telling as a way in which individuals "negotiated normality" in besieged Sarajevo; her analysis applies also to attempts to negotiate normality in other wars of the twentieth-century.[43] Scholars Harish C. Mehta and Nathaniel Hong have also examined the use of humor during war, in the Vietnam War and World War II,

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[39] Alaine Polcz, *One Woman in the War: Hungary, 1944-1945*, trans. Albert Tezla (New York: Central European University Press, 2002), 37.
[40] Elma Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, trans. Nada Conić (St. Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1996), 40-41 and 133.
[41] Maria Savchyn Pyskir, *Thousands of Roads: A Memoir of a young Woman's Life in the Ukrainian Underground During and After World War II*, trans. Ania Savage (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 159.
[42] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 94.
[43] Ivana Maček, "'Imitation of Life': Negotiating Normality in Sarajevo under Siege," in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, Xavier Bougarel, et al., eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007): 39-57.

respectively.[44] The juxtaposition of humor and violence—and humor based off of experiences with violence—provide insight into *what* individuals experiencing war as non-combatants first-hand faced and *how* they faced these experiences.

VI. Methodology

This thesis argues that an analysis of women's accounts from twentieth-century wartime Europe reveals certain similarities of women's experiences of war throughout the century and across Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe; this is particularly true with regards to experiences of sexual violence, non-gendered violence, and efforts to deal with experiences of violence. This thesis also argues that ethnicity and nationalism figure heavily in women's accounts of war from twentieth-century wartime Europe, but that women do not share universal understandings of or experiences with ethnicity and nationalism. One cannot understand the wars of twentieth-century Europe without using gender to assess the events and impacts of these wars.

This thesis compares seven different women's accounts of war experiences in twentieth-century Europe. These accounts span the twentieth-century, from Natalija Zrnić-Matić's account of life in Serbia during the First and Second Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913 and during World War I[45] to Elma Softić's account of the siege of Sarajevo between 1992 and 1995.[46] Between these two bookend accounts of war in southeastern

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[44] Harish C. Mehta, "Fighting, Negotiating, Laughing: The Use of Humor in the Vietnam War," *Historian* 74:4 (Winter 2012): 743-788 and Nathaniel Hong, "Mow 'em all down grandma: The 'weapon' of humor in two Dnaish World War II occupation scrapbooks," *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 23:1 (2010): 27-64.

[45] Natalija Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija: Life in the Balkan Powder Keg, 1880-1956*, Jill A. Irvine and Carol S. Lilly, eds. (New York: Central European University Press, 2008).

[46] Elma Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, Nada Conić, trans. (St. Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1996).

Europe at either ends of the twentieth-century are Alaine Polcz's World War II experience in Transylvania and Romania,[47] Maria Savchyn Pyskir's experiences as a Ukrainian nationalist between 1939 and 1952,[48] Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik's experiences as Danube Swabians during World War II,[49] and an anonymous German woman's experience of the "liberation" of Berlin by the Soviet Army in the waning months of World War II.[50] Other women's accounts of war are drawn into conversation with the above accounts to provide additional examples and contextualization of experiences. Furthermore, the accounts considered here are all from women who experienced little separation between home front and battlefront; war came to them, and all of them experienced occupation by foreign military forces in their home areas. These primary sources are contextualized with and drawn into conversation with scholarly literature on wartime sexual violence, ethnicity, nationalism, and women's experiences of war.

Previous literature on women's accounts of war in twentieth-century Europe has tended to be written in English and focused on western Europe. With the exception of the accounts of Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik, both of which were obtained through oral history interviews conducted in English, all of the accounts examined in this thesis were originally published in languages other than English; all the sources here were examined in their English translations. Additionally, all of the accounts examined here are from women born in Central, Eastern, or Southeastern Europe, as a means of

[47] Alaine Polcz, *One Woman in the War: Hungary, 1944-1945*, Albert Tezla, trans. (New York: Central European University Press, 2002).
[48] Maria Savchyn Pyskir, *Thousands of Roads: A Memoir of a Young Woman's Life in the Ukrainian Underground During and After World War II*, Ania Savage, trans. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001).
[49] Oral history interviews conducted by the author with Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik in Sterling Heights, Michigan on March 20 and March 21, 2014.
[50] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City*, Philip Boehm, trans. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005).

diversifying the rather heavy focus on western Europe in academic analyses of women's autobiographical writings on war in twentieth-century Europe. Czech scholar Jitka Malečková has criticized the dearth of scholarship on European history of gender, arguing that the scholarship on European history of gender that exists disproportionately focuses on western Europe.[51] This thesis's focus on Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe is an effort to augment the research on women's experiences of war within Europe but outside of Western Europe.

[51] Jitka Malečková, "Gender, History, and 'Small Europe,'" *European History Quarterly* 40(4), 685.
[51] Malečková, "Gender, History, and 'Small Europe,'" 685-700.

CHAPTER TWO—PREGNANCY: IDENTITY, ETHNICITY, AND NATIONALISM

Sex and gender are inextricably linked to construction, perpetration, and expression of ethnicity and the nation. Nationalism itself is inherently gendered, with specific roles for male and female bodies in the service of the nation.[52] Conversely, nationalism is also used to engender territories, with the physical land conceptualized as "raped or pregnant, as virile or virginal" as a means of instilling anger or pride.[53] Intrinsic to the concept of the nation is the delineation of who does *not* belong to the nation, or the designation of the Other. But in the same vein that ethnicity and nationality are only two identities of a whole host which each individual possesses, "the Other of nationalism is never *only* ethnic, but also always gendered and sexualized."[54] These identities—gender, ethnicity—take on difference significance in different contexts.[55] At some points and in some circumstances gender takes precedence, in others ethnicity; however, both identities are present at all times.

Before entering into a discussion of ethnicity and nationalism in war in twentieth-century Europe, a few terms must be identified and explained, with the understanding that these definitions persist throughout the remainder of the text. The "nation" is understood not as a political entity, but as a socially constructed entity possessing shared characteristics of some sort—most commonly language or cultural traditions—that imply some degree of shared history, or allows for contemporary members to entertain a belief

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[52] Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams, "Who Belongs? Women, Marriage, and Citizenship: Gendered Nationalism and the Balkan Wars," in *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6:3 (September 2004), 417.
[53] Žarkov, *The Body of War,* 4.
[54] Ibid., 11.
[55] Ibid., 11.

in a shared history.[56] Nationalists frequently identify nations with particular geographic territory, thus "territorializ[ing] the nation."[57] The "state" is therefore understood as distinct from the nation, with the former being acknowledged as a political entity with sovereignty over a specifically delineated territory.

I. Theoretical Approaches

A brief explanation of recent theoretical literature on nationalism is necessary to understand the significance of ethnicity and nationalism in war in twentieth-century Europe, and how this informs the way in which each of these women discuss their experiences. The theoretical approaches to nationalism can be subdivided into the three following categories: primordialism, modernism, and ethno-symbolism. Primordialism, the oldest of the three approaches, dates back to Johann Gottfried von Herder's "Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind," originally published near the close of the eighteenth century, in which Herder defines each nation as "one people, having its own national form, as well as its own language" over which "the climate" "spreads...a slight veil," making each nation unique and inextricably tied to specific geographic areas.[58] Primordialism is no longer considered a legitimate approach to the study of ethnicity and nationalism due to "its suggestion of primitiveness."[59]

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[56] See, for example, Anthony Smith's "Ethno-symbolism and the study of nationalism," in *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 23-31.
[57] Ulf Brunnbauer, "Emigration Policies and Nation-building in Interwar Yugoslavia," *European History Quarterly* 42:4 (2012), 604.
[58] Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind," in *The Nationalism Reader*, Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Islay, eds. (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995), 49.
[59] Walker Connor, "A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a...," in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 106.

Modernism, and its constructivist and instrumentalist subfields, replaced the primordialist approach in the early 1980s. Modernist theory on nationalism considers the very idea of the nation—and consequently nationalism itself—to be "the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high cultures," a modern construction rather than a primordial group identity.[60] Some scholars consider the development of modern industrialism to have provided the crucial impetus for intense nationalism.[61] Political scientist and modernist theorist Benedict Anderson famously defined the nation as an "imagined community" which is "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" because of its construction during the Enlightenment.[62] Ethno-symbolism, the third theoretical approach to the study of nationalism, rejects "the modernist top-down explanation of culture formation,"[63] arguing instead that the nation "embod[ies] shared memories, traditions, and hopes of the populations [which are] designated as parts of the nation."[64] Ethno-symbolism, developed within a decade of modernism, attributes modern nationalism's strength to its ability to "draw sustenance from the pre-existing memories, myths, symbols, and traditions of each ethnic community and region."[65] Contemporary scholars of nationalism are divided on modernism versus ethno-symbolism; consequently, much current scholarship on the nation and nationalism considers one of these two approaches.

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[60] Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism and High Cultures," in *Nationalism (Oxford Reader)*, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 63.
[61] See, for instance, Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) or Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[62] Benedict Anderson, "Introduction," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1993), 6-7.
[63] John Hutchinson, "Nations and Culture," in *Understanding Nationalism*, Montserrat Guibernan and John Hutchinson, eds. (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), 77.
[64] Smith, "Ethno-Symbolism and the Study of Nationalism," 23.
[65] Ibid., 30.

Despite the wealth of literature on the modernist and ethno-symbolist approaches to nationalism—both of which, as explained above, see a clear role for the elite in the creation and perpetration of nationalism—the idea of primordial nature of ethnicity and the nation continue to hold great sway in the popular imagination. The violence surrounding the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s led to a renewed consideration of the role of ethnicity and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia and a thorough questioning whether different ethnic groups were indeed able to live in the same state.[66] Instead of the violence being examined through "rational criteria," the crisis was instead explained away "in terms of Balkan ghosts, ancient Balkan enmities, primordial Balkan cultural pattern and proverbial Balkan turmoil."[67] Many "journalistic and quasi-journalistic literary" works, including "travelogues, political essayism, and especially this unfortunate hybrid—academic journalism," perpetuated the misguided belief that violence was an innate feature of the Balkans, caused by centuries of ethnic conflict and dissension amongst distinct ethnic groups, each of which had a specific and genuine claim to a particular geographic region.[68] Effectively, ethnicity and nationalism in the former Yugoslav republics was considered to be primordial, an in-born and inherent feature

[66] Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks (formerly called "Bosnian Muslims") are all South Slavs and are differentiated primarily through religious affiliation. Serbs are Orthodox Christian, Croats are Roman Catholic, and Bosniaks are Muslim. As may be apparent, not all Serbs live in Serbia, all Croats in Croatia, or all Bosniaks in Bosnia. A Bosnian Serb is an Orthodox Christian South Slav from Bosnia, while a Bosnian Croat is a Roman Catholic South Slav from Bosnia. Following this, a Croatian Serb is an Orthodox Christian South Slav from Croatia. A Serbian Croat is a Roman Catholic South Slav from Serbia. The term "Bosniak" was originally used in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but fell out of favor after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes after World War II (which was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929). Muslim Yugoslavs were known as simply as Muslims until the Wars of Yugoslav Succession in the 1990s, when the term "Bosniak" was revitalized as a way of referring to the Muslim population of Bosnia without explicitly calling them "Muslims." In that way "Bosniak" is intended to serve the same purpose as "Croat" or "Serb." In practice, the terms "Bosniak," "Croat," and "Serb" serve to conflate religion with ethnic identity.

[67] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 186.

[68] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.

possessed by all inhabitants of the region,[69] with the perceived "'real' identity of persons or groups...to be found in the pre-Yugoslav past."[70] The violence of the 1990s and this belief that ethnic strife was somehow something automatic or to be expected in this geographic region only reinforced the twentieth-century belief that the Balkans were somehow different from the rest of Europe, that ethnic conflict, rabid nationalism, and squabbles over territory were somehow an integral part of Southeastern Europe.[71]

Recent scholarship on nationalism about the 1990s Yugoslav Wars tends to take a modernist approach, citing Slobodan Milošević's control and use of the Yugoslav[72] media and the Croatian media's coverage of the wars in Bosnia and Croatia to facilitate ethnic nationalism. This perspective also takes into account the economic and political factors surrounding the break-up of Yugoslavia. Current scholarship on the break-up of Yugoslavia also focuses heavily on the ways in which media representations during the wars tended to portray human beings as explicitly and irreversibly "ethnicized," "nationalized," "gendered," and "sexualized."[73] Some scholars, such as Dubravka Žarkov, also focus on the ways the media was instrumental in the very production of ethnicity, gender, and nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[74] Furthermore, Marxist historian and modernist theorist Eric Hobsbawm's theory that "in post-

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[69] See, once again, Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*.
[70] Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54:4 (Winter 1995), 923.
[71] Maria Todorova identifies this phenomenon as "Balkanism," comparable to Edward Said's theory of "Orientalism." For an in-depth explanation of Todorova's theory of Balkanism and the parallels she sees between Balkanism and Orientalism, see *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[72] In this case "Yugoslav" refers to the rump state of Yugoslavia after the former Yugoslav republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia declared their independence from socialist Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1992. Essentially, in this usage, "Yugoslav media" refers to Serbian media, although at this point Montenegro and Kosovo were still part of Yugoslavia.
[73] Miloš Pankov, Sabina Mihelj, and Veronika Bajt, "Nationalism, gender, and the multivocality of war discourse in television news," *Media Culture Society* 33:7 (2011), 1044.
[74] Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 11.

communist societies ethnic or national identity is above all a device for defining the community of the innocent and identifying the guilty who are responsible for 'our' predicament" is particularly salient in the case of the break-up of Yugoslavia because of the ways in which ethnic differences were attributed to problems in the economically-suffering socialist state.[75]

Where these three theories on the construction of identity via the construction of nationalism fall short is the complete lack of consideration on the role of gender is such identity construction. These three theories essentially posit a gender-blind perspective on ethnicity and nationalism. Such a perspective ignores crucial differences in the gender-specific roles prescribed in nationalist ideologies. The specificities of gendered nationalism will be examined below.

II. Women, Ethnicity, and Nationalism

Extreme forms of nationalism see women's primary role as members of the nation to literally reproduce the nation—to bear children to physically continue the existence of the nation, and to raise these children is such a manner than the external elements that comprise the nation, such as language, social structures, and songs, are passed along and the future of the nation ensured. Therefore, as V. Spike Peterson has explained, gendered nationalism—that is, nationalism in which male and female roles are distinctly

[75] E. J. Hobsbawm, "Nationalism in the late twentieth century," in *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 174. Ironically, and problematically, Hobsbawm contradicts his theory of the modernist construction of nationalism by citing Yugoslavia specifically, stating that "[t]he Yugoslav revolution succeeded preventing the nationalities within its state frontiers from massacring each other almost certainly for longer than ever before in their history," adding that "this achievement has now unfortunately crumbled." Hobsbawm's inability to step beyond his internal Balkanism, his failure to forego a primordialist approach to nationalism and ethnicity in the former Yugoslavia demonstrates the strength and insidiousness of Balkanism and the primordialist approach.

different—considers women's primary roles as the "biological reproducers of group members" and "social reproducers of group members and cultural forms."[76] Therefore, gendered nationalism considers women not as individuals nor as full members of the nation but rather as "symbolic markers of the nation and as the reproducers of the nation and its future inhabitants."[77] Under the influence of gendered nationalism, women's role as the physical reproducers of the nation becomes particularly crucial in times of war.

Natalija Zrnić-Matić's account of the First and Second Balkans Wars and World War I provides an excellent example of a nationalist woman who constructs her identity via gendered nationalism. Born two years after Serbia gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire after some four centuries under Ottoman rule, Zrnić-Matić grew up well-educated for a late nineteenth-century Serbian woman of the emerging middle-class and described herself as a "fervent supporter of the Independent Radical Party" while she was attending high school in Belgrade.[78] Zrnić-Matić identified herself specifically as a Serb and, in accordance with popular beliefs amongst Serbs in the early twentieth-century, believed that all Serbs should be included within a Serbian state, which would have necessitated changing Serbia's border and obtaining land from neighboring states.[79] Taking Zrnić-Matić's belief in the creation of a Greater Serbia into account sheds a different light on her choice to bear four children between 1904 and 1909, with two additional children born in 1914 and 1917.

Nada Conić, the translator of Elma Softić's published account *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights,* identifies Softić's father as Bosniak and her mother as Jewish, although

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[76] V. Spike Peterson, "Gendered Nationalism: Reproducing 'Us' versus 'Them," in *The Women and War Reader*, eds. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 43.
[77] Kaufman and Williams, "Who Belongs? Women, Marriage, and Citizenship," 420.
[78] Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija*, 46.
[79] Ibid., 88.

Softić's mother also has Bosniak paternal relatives.[80] Softić's Bosniak and Jewish background plays a significant role in her experience of the siege, allowing her to experience some aspects of the war as a Bosniak and others as a Bosnian Jew. Softić's Jewish identity plays a major role in her experience of the siege and the war, differentiating her experience from Sarajevo's Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks.[81]

While Softić mentions various particularities that are unique to her experience because of her Jewish identity, these are not readily apparent until one looks more deeply into the Sarajevan Jewish community's experience as a whole during the siege. Despite a large number of conveys available to evacuate Sarajevan Jews, a significant portion of the city's Jewish population remained in the city to organize various forms of aid, including "medical care, pharmacies, a short-wave radio communication station, [and] hot lunches."[82] The short-wave radio station, run by the Jewish Community Centre [*sic*],[83] proved to be a remarkably important aspect of Softić's experience of the siege. The radio station allowed the Sarajevo JCC to communicate with the Zagreb JCC, allowing Sarajevans who had evacuated to keep in touch with their family members still in Sarajevo. Vitally, it was through the JCC radio station that Softić first met Caka, the first person to ask Softić if she would allow her letters to be published, which eventually

[80] Nada Conić, "Translator's Preface: Parallel Lives," in *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights* (St. Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1996), 2.
[81] Cursory analyses of the siege of Sarajevo and the Bosnian War frequently reduce ethnic diversity to the three main players—Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks—but Sarajevo has a many century-long history with its population of mostly Sephardic Jews, with Sephardic Jews arriving in Sarajevo after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. Bosnian Jews were eventually considered a "fourth Bosnian nation" and "fought proudly alongside the 19th-century Bosnian patriot Husein-Kapetan Gradišćević" against Ottoman rule. By World War II, Sarajevo's Jewish population numbered between ten and twelve thousand; after the war, less than one thousand remained in the city. Despite the massive population reduction in the mid-twentieth century, to omit Sarajevo's Jewish population from an analysis of multicultural Sarajevo or from an analysis of the siege of Sarajevo is to gratuitously oversimplify the city's diversity.
[82] Fran Markowtiz, *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 113.
[83] Hereafter the JCC.

led to the publication of Softić's collection of diary entries and letters from April 1992 to June 1995.[84]

Softić's Jewishness also gave her access to a privilege much less available, if not completely unavailable, to most of Sarajevo: the ability to leave the city. As mentioned briefly above, the JCC organized numerous conveys carrying Sarajevan Jews out of the city. Softić describes the JCC as "bedlam" during the process of organizing a convey, "like a scene out of a movie: Paris, World War II, the Germans at the city gates..."[85] Softić repeatedly debates in her diary whether she should leave the city on one of the conveys as the death toll in the city increases. In her November 22, 1992 entry Softić notes that she had gained a spot in a convey leaving November 14, but chose to stay in Sarajevo. As she says, "[e]verything was ok, I made it onto the list, and by now I would probably already be in Israel."[86] She seems a little confused why she did not leave with the convey, but eventually notes that she "can't bear not to see the end of this story."[87] Softić repeats this question of whether to stay in Sarajevo or to leave for Israel, Zagreb, anywhere else besides Sarajevo relatively frequently throughout the duration of her account, consistently torn between her desire to escape the siege and her insatiable "long[ing] to see the closing ceremonies of these bloody Olympic games."[88] This repetitive questioning of whether to stay in Sarajevo or leave is directly related to Softić's Jewishness, as it was nearly impossible for Bosniaks to leave the city.[89]

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[84] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 86.
[85] Ibid., 66.
[86] Ibid., 79.
[87] Ibid., 79.
[88] Ibid., 132. Softić's dark comparison of the war to Olympic games is a reference to Sarajevo's hosting of the 1984 Winter Olympics, in which Softić participated in the closing ceremony as an ice skater. Hosting the 1984 Winter Olympics was hugely important for Sarajevo and Yugoslavia because it demonstrated socialist Yugoslavia's and Sarajevo's participation in the international community.
[89] Ibid., 66-67.

But as significant as Softić's Jewish identity was in her experience of the siege, equally so was her Bosniak heritage from both sides of her family. Softić's last name immediately marks her as a Bosniak, or at least of mixed ethnic heritage, despite being a practicing Jew.[90] Her last name—which, when asked how "'Muslim'" it is, she describes as "'very'"—puts her in immediate danger in November 1994 while trying to pass through a Bosnian Serb force checkpoint in order to leave Sarajevo.[91] A Bosnian Serb soldier, enraged, asked the friend who was driving Softić out of Sarajevo how she dared "bring along a Muslim woman as a translator."[92] Softić explains in her letter that she has "never in [her] life thought of [herself] as a Muslim, even though [she has] always been proud of the fact that [she is] descended from fine Muslim forebears, among others."[93] The experience, while extremely dangerous, highlights that the reality of ethnic identity in Bosnia cannot be reduced to a simple delineation of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. It also emphasizes that Softić considers her "ethnicity" to be from her mother, rather than her father. This flies in the face of the belief that ethnicity is inherited from the father, that "any child a woman bore automatically belong[s] to the father's family and his community."[94] The idea that ethnicity is passed on to a child via the paternal line proved

[90] Conić explains in the introduction to *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights* that Softić considered herself to be secular and agnostic until an experience in 1982 when she attended a pro-Palestine rally and saw a fellow protester carrying a sign reading "Alle Juden Schiessen!" which translates as "Shoot all the Jews" (Conić, "Translator's Preface: Parallel Lives," 2).
[91] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 179. Softić was going to Split, Croatia on "company business" and to Zagreb for the launch of the Croatian edition of *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*.
[92] Ibid., 179. Although Softić does not specifically say this, apparently the friend driving Softić was an English-speaking foreigner; consequently, Softić did a significant amount of translating between her friend, referred to as "D.," and the Bosnian Serb soldiers at the checkpoint.
[93] Ibid., 179.
[94] Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion During and after the Armenian Genocide," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55:3 (2013), 530.

crucial in the Armenian Genocide in the early twentieth-century and was revitalized by nationalized Serbs and Croats in the lead-up to the Wars of Yugoslav Succession.[95]

III. Living with Others

The very nature of nationalism raises the question of affiliation, or perceived affiliation, between a "nation" or ethnic group and specific territory. Ethnic nationalism demands a particular connection to a specific territorial region. One example of the perceived affiliation between ethnicity and territory is Natalija Zrnić-Matić's belief, expressed before even the First Balkan War in 1912, that all Serbs should be united under one Serbian state, which would have, at that time, necessitated Serbia absorbing territory from Bosnia, Crotia, and Vojvodina, then under control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Macedonia, or so-called Southern Serbia, which was under Ottoman control until 1912; and Kosovo, known as Old Serbia, also part of the Ottoman Empire until 1913. While Zrnić-Matić makes it clear that she believes all Serbs should live in a single state, she does not indicate whether such a state is to be comprised of only Serbs.[96] This indicates that Zrnić-Matić's perspective on a multinational versus mononational Serb state differs from the point of view prescribed by contemporary Serb nationalist ideology. Zrnić-Matić repeatedly recounts relationships with non-Serbs in her diary, indicating that while she subscribes to Serb nationalist ideology to a powerful degree, she does not support such ideology to the extent that it demands a mononational state. Integrating Zrnić-Matić's account into a wider discussion of World War I-era nationalism in Southeastern Europe complicates the narrative of ordinary individuals desiring mononational states.

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[95] Kaufman and Williams, "Who Belongs? Women, Marriage, and Citizenship," 425.
[96] Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija*, 124.

Transylvania-born Alaine Polcz, who considers herself an ethnic Magyar,[97] also believes that all members of a particular nation—in this case all Hungarians, or Magyars—should be united in a single state. She writes that she was born "into a world in tears and mourning following the shock of having my birthplace [Romania-held Transylvania] severed from my homeland [Hungary]."[98] Like Zrnić-Matić, Polcz holds to the idea that specific territories—in this case Transylvania—belong to specific ethnic groups, or nations.[99] However, she indicates that she supports a multinational, as opposed to mononational, Hungary, as long as Transylvania in included in such a Hungary.

Maria Savchyn Pyskir is the only one of the seven women considered here who was explicitly involved in a nationalist organization. The Organization for Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN) has a somewhat ambiguous history; the organization was vilified in Soviet history for its opposition to Soviet rule, yet other scholars question OUN's methods in the later years of its insurgency against Soviet rule in the late 1940s through approximately 1952.[100] Savchyn Pyskir, who grew up in a majority Ukrainian village with a few Polish and Jewish families in a region of Western Ukraine that was

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[97] "Magyar" and "Hungarian" are frequently used interchangeably to refer to ethnic Hungarians due to the conflation between ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. This thesis will use "Magyar" to refer to ethnic Hungarians and "Hungarian" to refer to individuals with Hungarian citizenship. Thus, Alaine Polcz, who was born in Koloszvár, Transylvania after Transylvania was transferred from Hungary to Romania with the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, is a Magyar who was born in Romania.

[98] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 5.

[99] Transylvania's historical position between Hungary and Romania is quite complex. Transylvania existed as a relatively independent principality under the dual suzerainty of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires for more than a century after the tripartite division of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1541, which placed western Hungary, known as Royal Hungary, under Habsburg control, and the central portion of the kingdom under Ottoman control, with Transylvania being granted the status of a principality. The dominance of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the other two portions of the former kingdom led to Transylvania being considered the "last bastion" of Hungarian-ness. While Hungary regained legal control of Transylvania with the 1867 Dual Compromise between Austria and Hungary, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon granted Transylvania to Romania. Hungarians still smart over the terms of the Treaty of Trianon in the present, with irredentist claims reappearing in Hungarian politics every few years.

[100] Scholar David R. Marples provides an analysis of the differing interpretations of the OUN and its partner organization, the Ukrainian Insurgency Army (UPA) over time in his article "Anti-Soviet Partisans and Ukrainian Memory," *East European Politics and Societies* 24:1 (2010): 26-43.

"annex[ed]" to Poland in the 1920s, describes her national awakening as having occurred when she was quite young, writing, "I do not recall when I realized my national heritage. I know I knew this very early. I remember that I had a friend whose mother spoke to her in a language that was different from the one we used at home. This is how I knew we were different from our neighbor."[101] Like Polcz, Savchyn Pyskir grew up in a region that she personally considered outside of her "homeland." Throughout the course of her account, Savchyn Pyskir frames her motivation to join the OUN as variously anti-Soviet and pro-Ukrainian. Like Polcz and Zrnić-Matić, Savchyn Pyskir does not explicitly call for a mononational state, but neither does she explicitly state her support for Ukrainians and Poles, for instance, living in the same state. She supports a *Ukrainian* state.

Elma Softić's account differs from the previous three because she explicitly rejects the notion of a mononational state. Additionally, Softić's account complicates—or contradicts outright—much of the rhetoric alleging deep ethnic divides between Serbs and Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks, and Croats and Bosniaks proselytized during the 1990s Yugoslav Wars. She disputes these notions of primordial ethnic hatreds amongst these allegedly-distinct ethnic groups both explicitly and indirectly, proving herself well-aware of the deliberately-augmented nationalist rhetoric appearing on all sides of the conflict. She openly disdains nationalism, calling it "the most serious form of disturbance of the consciousness of values."[102] But the nationalist propaganda and divisions fostered by the besiegement of Sarajevo and the violence committed in the name of nationalism across Bosnia still makes its mark on Softić. Softić holds out for the first three months of the war before she gives a little ground to the nationalists by beginning to refer to individuals

[101] Savchyn Pyskir, *Thousands of Roads,* 10.
[102] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 50.

by their "ethnic labels."[103] She recognizes this change, but seems somewhat to accept it, saying: "I'm still referring to the victims as 'people,' it still goes against my grain to attach ethnic labels to them. But I guess it's about time to start."[104] Despite her best intentions, despite disbelieving the importance of attaching ethnic labels to individuals, Softić gives in as it becomes necessary to identify former Yugoslavs by their "ethnic labels" in order to make any sense at all of the violence.[105] But Softić manages to withstand the worst of the nationalist propaganda, refusing to fall prey to the misconception that the violence was the result of such deep, inherent, natural divides between Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks. She expresses her frustration with the way in which the siege and the war have been considered outside of the region, making the following statement in a letter to her friend Caka written on December 16, 1993:

> Fuck, the minute I even think that in some book of world history some asshole is going to write about this war as a conflict of national and religious interests between ethnic groups located in the perpetually unstable region of the Balkans, which lasted from 1991 to whenever, I could just blow this whole planet to bits so that not a particle of it remains.[106]

Softić, whether or not she knows it by name, is clearly well-aware of the insidious concept of Balkanism which helped perpetrate the idea that the war was inevitable and that the residents of the former Yugoslavia were primitive and bloodthirsty.[107]

But the years of the siege wear on Softić, beginning to erode her faith in the multicultural Sarajevan mosaic or kaleidoscope.[108] She begins to question whether the

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[103] Ibid., 52.
[104] Ibid., 52.
[105] Ibid., 52.
[106] Ibid., 114.
[107] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.
[108] Various scholars have used "mosaic" or "kaleidoscope" as a motif to explain Sarajevo's historic multicultural nature. Bougarel, et al.'s *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, Bougarel, et al., eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007) is an example of the mosaic

historically diverse Bosnia in which she grew up can truly be revitalized after the violence ends. She openly doubts Bosnia's—and Sarajevo's—ability to retain their famous multicultural heritages and tolerance levels. After three years of open war, returning to the multiculturalism of the past seems to be nearly beyond the realm of possibility:

> Actually, what interests me most is how this show will end. What will become of Bosnia? Will it survive as 'multinational' and 'multicultural' and multi-this, multi-that? I fear, I truly fear that there's not much of that 'multi-' left. Three years is just too long a period for a splendid idea like that to exist. There's been too much evil perpetrated, too much nationalism, too many myths and legends, too many memories.
>
> But enough of that. I'm tired of this business.[109]

The exhaustion of simply surviving for the past three years of the siege seems to have surpassed Softić's capacity for hope that some part of the past can be salvaged. While Softić's perspective was no doubt shared by great numbers of her fellow former Yugoslavs, not all Sarajevans shared her pessimism that the ethnic stratification and separation brought about during the war would last. Sarajevan Esad Taljanović expresses a more hopeful outlook for Sarajevo and Bosnia than Softić, asking:

> What can we do with ourselves now?...[W]e can't have everybody knocking on doors, pointing fingers at who's guilty...There is no way that anybody can take the position that we can't live together again. We lived together for decades, shared the same food, shared the same beds. Four years should not be enough to separate us.[110]

In some ways, both Softić and Taljanović's predictions have been proven correct, at least within Sarajevo. While the city is nowhere near as diverse as it was at the beginning of the war, it is not as ethnically stratified as other areas of Bosnia. Culture and questions of

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motif, while Fran Markowitz's ethnography *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010) is an example of the kaleidoscope motif.

[109] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 191.

[110] Barbara Demick, *Logavina Street* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel, 1996), 178-179.

ethnicity or nationality are inextricable from local politics.[111] But that is beyond the scope of Softić's account of the war.

IV. Nationalism and the Body: Negotiating Pregnancy in Wartime

One way in which women's roles in an ethnic state are constructed are as reproducers of the nation; they literally reproduce and guarantee the continuation of the nation by giving birth to new members. As Dubravka Žarkov writes, "there is hardly a war—let alone a war in which identity politics stand central—where the maternal body is irrelevant."[112] The maternal body is the "body vested with the power to give birth to the nation."[113] Often in the construction and propagation of nationalist ideas, the maternal body is seen as "ultimately the very symbol of the plight of the nation."[114] Through its ability to literally reproduce the nation, the maternal body is seen as both vital to the nation's survival and inherently vulnerable.

Beyond practical matters—such as the availability of birth control pills in recent decades—deliberate pregnancy in wartime may be an expression of parents' attempts to cope with the loss of children to the war, an act of nationalism against fears of the eradication of the nation, or in response to the sheer emotional devastation of war—a means of counteracting death with life, perhaps.

Natalija Zrnić-Matić's 1914 pregnancy—her fifth—is an example of wartime procreation driven by nationalism.[115] By August 1913, when Zrnić-Matić chose to

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[111] Markowitz, *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope*, 5.
[112] Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 19.
[113] Ibid., 19.
[114] Ibid., 31.
[115] Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija,* 171

become pregnant, she and her family had already experienced approximately one and a half years of intermittent war.[116] Despite becoming pregnant in the period between the cessation of the Second Balkan War in July 1913 and the declaration of World War I on July 28, 1914, Zrnić-Matić's pregnancy can be considered a wartime pregnancy as it occurred due to war-motivated nationalism. Zrnić-Matić writes in her diary,

> I am pregnant again. I wanted a baby and didn't douche last month...I will raise [my child] and bring it on the right path, may God only keep my Jova *[her husband]* alive. We now have Greater Serbia, so there is going to be enough bread for everyone. With God's help, it will be a son and we'll name him Mirko—Peace.[117]

Zrnić-Matić recounts the concerns of her neighbor and sister over choosing to carry her pregnancy to term, demonstrating her awareness of such concerns, but her desire to bear another child—her fifth—outweighs such concerns. Her explicit reference to "Greater Serbia" indicates her nationalist motivation for this pregnancy; previously in the text she has cited her desire for all Serbs to be united in a "Greater Serbia," that is, a geographical territory containing all individuals who identify themselves or are identified by others as "ethnic" Serbs.[118] For Zrnić-Matić, this pregnancy not only celebrates the unification of Greater Serbia, but also serves as a means of reproducing for the nation—she is choosing to literally help populate the newly-formed ethnic state through her own reproduction.

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[116] The First Balkan War, fought between October 1912 and May 1913, was fought against the dying Ottoman Empire, with the allied Serbian, Bulgarian, Montenegrin, and Greek forces managing to push the Ottoman forces back to within 20 miles of Istanbul. The Second Balkan War of July 1913 involved the same states—Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece, and the Ottoman Empire—with Romania joining the fray this time around in an attempt to gain additional territory. The August Treaty of Bucharest "effectively ended" the Second Balkan War, with large swathes of territory again changing hands. The First and Second Balkan Wars marked a vital turning point in the "Balkan" states relationships with the rest of Europe, with various European powers attempting to affect the border changes determined in the various treaties tying up the various exchanges of territory (John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 31, 35).

[117] Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija*, 171

[118] Ibid., 124.

As opposed to Zrnić-Matić's nationalist motivation to become pregnant, Softić's deliberate decision to have a child in the midst of the siege can be read as a way of asserting her own agency over her body. Perhaps surprisingly, Softić's decision to have a child was not particularly unique during the Siege of Sarajevo. Nearly a year before Softić became pregnant, Sarajevo started experiencing an increase in the number of births.[119] Precluding practical reasons, such as interrupted supplies of hormonal birth control pills, the increase in births was perceived alternately as parents' deliberate attempt to deal with the potential loss of children to the war, or as an act of nationalism against the "Serbian extremists who were trying to eradicate Sarajevo's" Bosniak population.[120]

Softić and fiancé Pavle Kaunitz's decision to have a child could also be read as a form of nationalism—had Softić revealed herself to be an explicitly nationalistic individual earlier in her account. As it is, her lack of apparent nationalism, even her disdain and contempt for intense nationalism, makes it unlikely that choosing to have a child was spurred on by the desire to reproduce for the nation.[121] In Softić's case it seems more likely that her decision, in coordination with her fiancé, to have a child in the midst of a war was fueled more by the losses of the long years of the siege and the near-constant threat of death than by any nationalistic desires. Softić openly addresses her fear that time may be running short:

> But we have decided to have a child. And as soon as possible. Whereas a year ago, I considered that such an act required more courage than I have, now I think I have even less time than courage. And we genuinely want a child.[122]

[119] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 105.
[120] Ibid., 106.
[121] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 114.
[122] Ibid., 171.

Other pregnant couples also cited their desire to have a child, despite the harsh circumstances of the siege.[123] Softić's observation in May 1992 that, with the exodus of mothers and children, "[t]he life of Sarajevo is leaving. The children and their mothers are leaving. Sarajevo is not merely bleeding to death—it is dying of old age...The strength, creativity, and intelligence of this city are leaving"[124] was echoed by other Sarajevans who chose to have children during the siege.[125]

The prospect of having a child and the actuality of becoming pregnant changes Softić's feelings towards the war. Even in the early months of her pregnancy, Softić tells her sister that she had "lost her nerve" since finding out she is pregnant.[126] While Softić had once taken unnecessary risks, venturing outside under circumstances in which, as Softić says, "[t]he only people to be found outside were idiots like me," she became much more cautious during her pregnancy. Softić is more afraid than she has been since the initial months of the war. And she readily admits to it:

> There is such an atmosphere of menace that I didn't go to work this morning. Today I am afraid. O God! But it's a gorgeous day. But I'm afraid...much more afraid than I was in the worst periods of '92 and '93...[N]ow I have, in some sense, more reasons to be afraid. Listen, I'm in my eighth month of pregnancy...I'm horrified by the thought that I might be injured, that I might lose the baby.[127]

Her pregnancy once again genders Softić's experience of the siege and the war. Whereas earlier in the siege she was afraid that she would experience a loss of physical and sexual agency either through sexual violence or poverty, Softić's pregnancy makes her much more conscious of the danger in which she lives on a daily basis. Early in *Sarajevo Days,*

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[123] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 106-108.
[124] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 31.
[125] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 106, 108.
[126] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 181.
[127] Ibid., 185.

Sarajevo Nights Softić writes of her constant awareness of danger, questioning on the fourth day of the siege and the shelling "if there is such a thing as a safe place in [her family's] apartment."[128] But the lengthy duration of the siege wore away at this constant awareness of danger; it took pregnancy and the accompanying awareness that she was immediately responsible for someone other than herself to make her once again aware of the daily danger in which she lived.

Without the existence of perfect contraceptive methods, unintentional pregnancy is a consistent risk of sexual activity, regardless of the presence of war. But during wartime unintended pregnancy may have more severe consequences than during peacetime by further endangering pregnant women. Maria Savchyn Pyskir, Ukrainian, and Natalija Zrnić-Matić, Serbian, each experienced two unintended pregnancies during their wartime experiences and wrote about it in their accounts. Each presents a unique picture of nationalist women's perspectives on and experiences with pregnancy during wartime.

Maria Savchyn Pyskir joined the youth sector of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in 1939 at age fourteen, and was admitted into the regular OUN in 1942.[129] She married Vasyl "Orlan" Halasa, at that time a deputy leader for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), in May 1945 and became pregnant approximately a year after her marriage. She writes that she "had not been careful" and that her husband "blamed himself."[130] Despite knowing that she "faced a difficult life" and "might be fated to raise the child alone," Savchyn Pyskir writes, "Yet, unlike Orlan, I

[128] Ibid., 10.
[129] Savchyn Pyskir, *Thousands of Roads*, 18.
[130] Ibid., 51.

was happy. I wanted to have the baby…I was twenty and all of life lay before me."[131] She attributes her decision to keep the pregnancy to her youth, rather than voicing a belief that she has a duty to contribute to the future of the Ukrainian nation, or anything along those lines. Savchyn Pyskir gave birth to a healthy baby boy in December 1946, but six months later she was captured by Soviet intelligence officers. Savchyn Pyskir escaped the house where she was held, but was forced to leave her six-month old son behind. He was adopted by the head of the Polish Secret Service in Krakow, a devastating loss to both Savchyn Pyskir and her husband.[132]

Savchyn Pyskir became pregnant for a second time in early 1948, with the pregnancy confirmed by a doctor in April. In her memoir Savchyn Pyskir writes of her second pregnancy:

> I would suffer one more blow. The doctor told me I was pregnant again. I had suspected that my illnesses were the result of another pregnancy, but I had not wanted to believe it. After the tragedy with little Zenon *[her first son]*, I did not want to get pregnant again. I had considered an abortion, but by the time I arrived in Lviv, I knew I would not go through with one.[133]

Unlike with her first pregnancy, Savchyn Pyskir does not consider assimilating into ordinary society to raise her second child, instead evaluating potential foster families with her parents' and siblings' assistance. Savchyn Pyskir chooses an intermediate path between attempting to raise the child herself—an almost impossible option, given the ferocity with which the Soviet intelligence forces wished to capture her—or obtaining an abortion. By giving birth and placing the infant with a foster family, Savchyn Pyskir was choosing to carry the pregnancy to term but acknowledging the impossibility of raising

[131] Ibid., 51.
[132] Ibid., 76.
[133] Ibid., 95.

the child herself and instead removing herself from the child's life. Savchyn Pyskir gave birth to a second son in October 1948,[134] and by early 1949 had been forced to place him in the care of her husband's cousin.[135]

Once again, Savchyn Pyskir does not explicitly connect her pregnancy to any nationalist sentiments. Her mention that she considered an abortion—as well as her characterization of the second pregnancy as "one more blow"—seems to preclude any nationalist sentiments behind becoming pregnant. Yet the lack of explanation for why she chose why not to obtain an abortion—particularly when she considers this second pregnancy extra emotionally-taxing due to what happened with her first child—raises questions about precisely what her motivations for keeping the pregnancy were. For a female member of a nationalist organization, she displays somewhat a lack of awareness of gendered nationalism. Her silence on the issue takes on an additional dimension of complexity when one takes into consideration both the fact that Savchyn Pyskir wrote her memoir decades after she participated in the OUN and the semi-negative legacy of the OUN-UPA.[136]

Zrnić-Matić became pregnant again in the summer of 1916, two years after the beginning of World War I. Unlike her previous pregnancy, this pregnancy is not deliberate. In her entry for August 6, 1916, Zrnić-Matić writes:

> It seems I will give birth to yet another son. If the war was over I would do it gladly, but the war is ongoing and Mirko *[her fifth child]* hasn't been cured yet. This is why I'm not glad about this pregnancy, although I like children. We heard that tomorrow the Bulgarians will requisition all food items.[137]

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[134] Ibid., 108.
[135] Ibid., 121.
[136] See, for example, the aforementioned David R. Marples' "Anti-Soviet Partisans and Ukrainian Memory," *East European Politics and Society* 24: 1 (Winter 2010): 26-43.
[137] Zrnić-Matić, *Natalija*, 248.

Zrnić-Matić's sentence regarding the Bulgarian occupying forces requisitioning all food items immediately after her concerns about another pregnancy during wartime confirm that, unlike with her previous pregnancy, Zrnić-Matić is truly concerned about being pregnant during wartime. Yet she decides to continue with the pregnancy. She gives birth to her sixth child, a daughter she names Milica, in April 1917.[138]

Zrnić-Matić becomes pregnant again in March 1918. By early 1918 Serbia has seen three wars and several years of complete military occupation by neighboring Bulgaria in the past six years. While she had at that point successfully carried two pregnancies to term during wartime or during a brief period of peace between wars, Zrnić-Matić decides that to do so for a third time—to carry a seventh pregnancy to term with six living children under her care already—would be unwise. She makes the decision to abort the pregnancy. In her entry from March 27, 1918 Zrnić-Matić writes, "I should have gotten my period yesterday but didn't…I must have gotten pregnant. What if I should pay for it with my own head?…If I die I won't even have a pair of socks."[139] She seems to feel her own mortality much more strongly than with any of her previous pregnancies. Her war experiences also seem to have moderated her nationalist fervor to bear children for the nation. Her next entry is from April 5, 1918, writing

> It's over. Today I aborted the whole embryo with the placenta. It must have been six weeks old. I don't know why fate forced me to do something like this. I feel very bad and regret having to do with…I don't know if I would ever do that again.[140]

Zrnić-Matić expresses her regrets over aborting her pregnancy, but did follow through with her decision to do so.

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[138] Ibid., 268.
[139] Ibid., 307.
[140] Ibid., 307.

Of the three women considered here, Zrnić-Matić's three wartime pregnancies show a clear progression of nationalist sentiments due to and during wartime. Her first pregnancy is explicitly nationalist; she deliberately becomes pregnant after Serbia has emerged victorious from two regional wars, gaining territory that Zrnić-Matić and other Serb nationalists consider intrinsic to the nation. She expresses joy about this pregnancy, brushing off the concerns of her neighbors and sisters about having a fifth child. Two and a half years later, at the height of World War I, Zrnić-Matić became pregnant again. She writes that she is "not glad about this pregnancy" and immediately mentions concerns about potential food shortages.[141] The nationalism that motivated her previous pregnancy has been moderated by the war and a lengthy occupation by Bulgarian troops. She becomes pregnant again in early 1918 and makes the decision to abort this pregnancy. Four additional years of war and occupation have completely shifted her concerns from a nationalist desire to bear children for Greater Serbia to concerns about her own life.

V. Conclusion

This chapter argues that nationalism is an inherently gendered concept, with gender used to engage nationalist sentiments and support for nationalist causes. Nationalism engenders geographic territory, intertwining the notion of the land's ability to produce with the female body's ability to reproduce. This therefore positions women within nationalist causes as the biological and social agents of reproduction for the nation. Yet while this may be apparent in ideology, it is not always true in practice, even in the case of women who explicitly identify themselves as nationalist. Of the three

[141] Ibid., 248.

women's experiences considered here who each became pregnant during wartime, only one of them indicates nationalist motivations for her pregnancy, and that holds true for only one of her three pregnancies during wartime. Another woman cites feeling pressed for time as her motivation for deliberately becoming pregnant while living in a besieged city. And the only woman to affiliate herself with a nationalist organization out of the seven women considered in this thesis overall provides little explanation for her decision to keep both of her unintended pregnancies, although she indicates youthfulness as partial motivation for her desire to go forth with her first pregnancy. These examples demonstrate that ideology and practice do not always align. Furthermore, the example of Natalija Zrnić-Matić particularly underscores the way in which war can alter an individual's nationalist sentiments.

While traditional theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity and nationalism have evolved significantly within the past several decades, all of these theories fail to take into account the influence of gender in an individual's perception of ethnicity and nationalism. Some scholars, including V. Spike Peterson, posit the existence of gendered nationalism, in which women are understood as the biological and social reproducers of the nation. These tentative steps towards incorporating gender into analyses of societal and individual nationalist ideologies confirm the approach utilized in this chapter, that of analyzing historical depictions of ethnicity and nationalism via the use of gender as a category of analysis. With gender, ethnicity, and nationalism each functioning as only one of an individual's multiple identities, it is essential to take each into account when assessing how these women understood their own ethnicity and expressed their nationalist sentiments.

CHAPTER THREE—RAPE, WAR, AND RECOVERY

A common theme among many women's accounts of war from twentieth-century Europe is the threat or presence of sexual or sexualized violence. Some authors simply express their fears of sexual violence based on what they have heard through hearsay, while others recount shocking tales of violence and violation based on their own experiences. The previous chapter discussed identity construction within the contexts of ethnicity, nationalism, and gender, and the construction of the female body as a potential maternal body with the capability of reproducing the nation. This ability to literally reproduce and perpetuate the nation makes the ethnicized female body vulnerable to being targeted by external nationalized forces—that is, nationalists who consider themselves to belong to a nation other than the one to which a particular woman belongs. The ethnicized female body is then a site upon which an external nationalist can threaten the future of the woman's "nation" through either death or sexual violence. In her assessment of the production of ethnicity via media and gender in the break-up of Yugoslavia, Dubravka Žarkov explores the relationship between sexual violence and ethnic narratives, explaining that "the *raped* Mother of all Serbs is the embodiment of the narrative of ethnic suffering."[142] To rape an ethnicized maternal figure is therefore to force the creation of a narrative of ethnic suffering while simultaneously interrupting the propagation of the nation.

As one woman who experienced the mass rape in Berlin by Soviet soldiers in the final weeks of World War II wrote in her diary:

[142] Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 41. Emphasis original.

> What does it mean—rape? When I said the word for the first time aloud, Friday evening in the basement, it sent shivers down my spine. Now I can think it and write it with an untrembling hand, say it out loud to get used to hearing it said. It sounds like the absolute worst, the end of everything—but it's not.[143]

What is crucial to note about this quote is that the author—whom will henceforth be referred to as "Anonymous"—wrote this after some four days of being repeatedly raped by Soviet soldiers. Women's accounts of war and sexual violence indicate a multitude of perspectives on both the threat and actuality of wartime rape. The above individual implies that she has learned from her experience with rape that it is not the end of the world—yet Elma Softić recounts an anecdote about a coworker's neighbor being raped and then committing suicide by throwing herself out a window.[144] Women experience, recount, and process wartime sexual violence in numerous ways. As sexual violence featured significantly in the wars of the twentieth-century, an assessment of women's autobiographical writings on wartime sexual violence is essential in order to thoroughly assess the role sexual violence played as a weapon of war in twentieth-century wartime Europe.

Wartime sexual violence may occur as a result of deliberate, specified, and officially-sanctioned military policy aimed at completing certain goals, such as genocide, the propagation of a specific nation, or the assimilation of women from a certain ethnic group into another ethnic group.[145] It may also serve to dehumanize individuals in preparation for deportation or genocide.[146] Wartime sexual violence may be obliquely

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[143] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 63.
[144] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 52.
[145] Matthias Bjørnlund, "'A Fate Worse Than Dying': Sexual Violence during the Armenian Genocide," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, 16-58 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[146] Bjørnlund, "'A Fate Worse Than Dying,'" 16-58.

permitted by military officials choosing to look the other way, either for a limited period of time, as in the case of the Soviet forces in Berlin in the last months of World War II, or for an extended period of time. Officials may consider such sexual violence to be just reward for soldiers' efforts, or they may consider mass rape to serve as a bonding activity for troops.[147]

Teresa Iacobelli argues that "rape is more than a by-product of war: the act itself provides a vital function in the destruction and disgrace of an enemy."[148] This is true in the case of sexual violence—rapes—perpetrated against a specific ethnic group explicitly to eradicate a population, as in the case of the Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992-1995 or the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, or rapes motivated against women more generally, such as the rapes committed by Soviet troops in their "liberation" of Central and Eastern Nazi-occupied territory in late World War II. Ethnically motivated or otherwise, wartime rape serves to demoralize and control enemy populations, both women and men.[149]

Survivors of sexual violence often experience severe shaming from other individuals if their sexual assault is discovered; consequently, many survivors of sexual assault or sexual violence keep silent about their experiences out of fear or shame. The very fact that sexual assault is one of the most invasive forms of violence an individual

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[147] Dagmar Herzog, "Introduction: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century," in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, 1-15 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[148] Iacobelli, "The 'Sum of Such Actions,'" 261.

[149] The particular nature of sexual violence as a tool to shame both women and men is an output of the patriarchy. In a system in which women are defined solely in relation to their worth to men, the sexual violation of a woman from another group—be it ethnic, national, or otherwise—is seen as a means of targeting the men of the group via the women. To shame and abuse women is only one aspect of wartime sexual violence. The very possibility of the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is due to the dominant patriarchal system. This is not to say that men do not experience wartime rape; however, this analysis specifically assesses women's experiences with rape during war.

can experience can also contribute to a reticence to share one's experiences of sexual violence even in order to prosecute perpetrators.[150] The choice to openly share one's experience of sexual violence takes an immense amount of courage.

The issue of silences around sexual violence thus brings to mind the old adage, "silence speaks louder than words." Several of the accounts considered here speak openly about sexual violence, whether the narrators themselves experience such violence or heard about others' experiences. Anonymous and Alaine Polcz openly discuss their brutal experiences of sexual violence perpetrated by Soviet troops in the final months of World War II in Berlin and Hungary, respectively. Elizabeth Brandelik also mentions rapes occurring in northern Yugoslavia. Elma Softić recounts a friend's tale about a neighbor's rape and subsequent suicide, and discusses her own fears that she will be raped if the Bosnian Serbs invade Sarajevo. In contrast, Maria Savchyn Pyskir is curiously silent about the issue of sexual violence in the Ukrainian nationalist movement, despite her obvious observance of gender inequities within the movement. Savchyn Pyskir's silence thus appears deliberate; although one cannot make conclusions about precisely *what* she is omitting from her account, it seems likely that she has omitted instances of sexual violence of which she was aware.

The point of an analysis of wartime sexual violence via women's accounts of war is *not* to imply that all wartime sexual violence is motivated by the same factors or that wartime sexual violence is a universal experience; on the contrary, this analysis is intended to assess the ways that the experiences, motivations behind, and the practices of

[150] See, for instance, the difficulty with which women who were sexually assaulted in Foča during the Bosnian War agreed to testify in front of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. *Women, War, and Peace: I Came to Testify*, online, produced and written by Pamela Hogan (2011; New York, NY: WNET, October 7, 2011).

sexual violence differed in different contexts. Yet what *is* intended to be communicated via this analysis is the way in which the threat of sexual violence is pervasive within differing wartime social contexts throughout the twentieth-century and that concerns regarding potentially experiencing sexual violence are relatively universal amongst women. Assessing women's autobiographical accounts of war through the lens of gender allows for a more thorough understanding of women's experiences of sexual violence during twentieth-century wartime Europe.

I. Fears and Threats of Sexual Violence

Recurrent in many women's accounts is fear of sexual violence. This fear, whether or not it becomes reality, appears in almost every woman's account considered in this analysis. While Elma Softić does not frequently mention sexual violence, each mention makes it clear that she is aware of the scale of sexual violence occurring in Bosnian Serb-controlled territory—including in the suburbs of Sarajevo. Softić first mentions the sexual violence for which the Bosnian War became infamous in her diary entry from July 7, 1992. In this entry Softić recounts a story told to her by a female coworker who escaped the Bosnian Serb-controlled suburb of Grbavica. Bosnian Serb Chetniks[151] had taken over the coworker's apartment building and "[t]he nights were pierced with the screams of people being tortured."[152] The coworker, referred to only by her initials A.S. for her own safety, tells Softić that the Chetniks "raped a neighbor, the

[151] The use of the name "Chetnik" by Serb irregular forces in the 1990s Yugoslav Wars stems from nationalist and monarchist Serb militia groups from earlier in the twentieth century. The name is also spelled Četnik, with "Chetnik" being the Anglicized version.
[152] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 52.

four of them, before her husband's eyes, then they took him away."[153] The next day the neighbor "threw herself out the window."[154]

Hearing this story seems to have a significant effect on Softić. Only three pages—and one day—later, Softić first mentions the potential that she herself may experience sexual violence at the hands of the Bosnian Serb forces. Softić has, prior to this point in the text, dedicated considerable space in her diary entries to her fear of the shelling and the physical expressions of this fear she experiences. Therefore, the way she phrases her fear of experiencing sexual violence is significant:

> Bombs are horrific, but it's when I imagine what would happen if the line of defence [*sic*] were breached and if the murderous hordes were to come sweeping down from Vrbanja or Skenderija that I am overwhelmed by terror—with its already familiar and so often described symptoms, the tightened throat and the cold sweat.[155]

The bombs frighten Softić, but it is the thought of the "murderous hordes" which pushes her fear over the line into terror. It is unclear to what degree Softić is aware of the scale of sexual violence occurring in rural Bosnia which was to become infamous; regardless, she clearly knows enough to be extremely frightened, so much so that she holds no hope of escape in the case that the Bosnian Serb forces break the siege:

> If they [the Bosnian Serb forces] capture Sarajevo...there will be no one or nothing that can save me from violence, and almost certainly, from rape, the fate that awaits everyone whose name isn't Serbian, and especially if their name is Muslim...[156]

Softić clearly places little faith that anyone can protect her from violence at the hands of the Bosnian Serb forces if they capture Sarajevo—which is most likely a correct assumption. While Softić does not specifically state that Bosnian Serb forces have been

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[153] Ibid., 52.
[154] Ibid., 52.
[155] Ibid., 55.
[156] Ibid., 55.

committing acts of sexual violence against Bosniak women, her comment above about the likelihood that she will experience rape if the Bosnian Serb forces enter Sarajevo paired with her reference to the danger of having a Muslim name indicates that she is aware of what is happening in territory controlled by Bosnian Serb forces outside of Sarajevo, that Bosniak—Muslim—women are being raped by Bosnian Serb forces on a massive scale. Softić seems to understand—and fear—her essential powerlessness in controlling who has access to her body in the case that the Bosnian Serb soldiers are able to capture Sarajevo. She recognizes that her agency over her own body will almost certainly vanish in the instance that Bosnian Serb forces take control over Sarajevo, and this prospect, understandably, terrifies her.

On the other end of this spectrum of knowledge, Polcz was initially ignorant of the scale of sexual violence occurring after the Soviet troops reach the small Hungarian town of Csákvár where she was living with her mother-in-law, whom she called "Mami." Polcz describes learning about the scale of the sexualized violence occurring in Csákvár in the following passage:

> I tied up my hair with a kerchief and went to the kommandatura. Many others were already sitting there, waiting for their turn. Among them was a young girl whose head was bleeding, a lock of her hair having been ripped out. She was miserable and despondent. "The Russians ran over her," said her mother. I did not understand. "With a bicycle?" I asked. The woman became furious. "Are you crazy? Don't you know what they do to women?"
>
> I listened to what the people around me were saying: which woman's back broke, which one lost consciousness, which one was bleeding and they could not stop it, a man shot to death for trying to protect his wife.[157]

Unlike Softić, Polcz was ignorant of the widespread occurrence of sexual violence until directly encountering a survivor and her mother. Part of Polcz's ignorance can be

[157] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 85.

explained by the difference between the siege of Sarajevo and World War II—the siege was much more televised than World War II, World War II resulted in much more widespread destruction, and communication technology was overall superior by the siege of Sarajevo than during World War II.

An even more vital distinction between Polcz and Softić's fears of sexual violence is *who* must fear sexual violence. Softić fears being raped because her "name isn't Serbian" and "especially" because her name is "Muslim."[158] On the contrary, Polcz fears rape because she is a woman, not because she is a Hungarian woman. Polcz is asked, "don't you know what they *[the Russians]* do to women?"[159] rather than "don't you know what they do to *Hungarian* women?" Whereas Softić fears being raped because she is not Serbian, Polcz fears being raped because she is female. This indicates a crucial difference between how sexual violence features as a weapon of war. In Softić's situation, in the siege of Sarajevo, sexual violence is a deliberately utilized, specifically targeted method.

II. Recounting Experiences of Sexual Violence: Separation of Mind and Body

The anonymous author of *A Woman in Berlin* recounts several instances of rape by Soviet soldiers in graphic detail. The majority of the rapes she describes are explicitly and specifically violent acts, and in all instances she describes being treated as simply a body or a physical object, rather than a human being. The first two rapes she experiences, which occur within minutes of each other, fit this pattern. They also reveal what she will later note in her diary: that the occupying Soviet troops typically traveled in pairs, if not in larger groups; the sexual assaults committed by Soviet soldiers were typically violent

[158] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 55.
[159] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 133.

and often occurred in basements, hallways, or deserted apartments; and that other Berliners were more likely to protect themselves than seek to protect women who were targeted by the Soviet troops. The reader eventually gets the sense that she has ceased recording every single event of rape she experiences, instead documenting in detail only those which stand out to her for some reason.

One particular experience that stands out from the other occurrences of rape that Anonymous describes occurs the day after the first time she is raped; furthermore, this rape occurs not in a basement, hallway, or deserted apartment but rather in the apartment in which Anonymous has been living with one of her neighbors. Anonymous describes this specific rape in the following manner:

> One of them grabs hold of me and shoves me into the front room, pushing the widow out of the way. Without a word, the other plants himself by the front door and points his rifle at the widow, keeping her in check. He doesn't touch her.
>
> The one shoving me is an older man with gray stubble, reeking of brandy and horses. He carefully closes the door behind him and, not finding any key, slides the wing chair against the door. He seems not even to see his prey, so that when he strikes she is all the more startled, as he knocks her onto the bedstead. Eyes closed, teeth clenched.
>
> No sound. Only an involuntary grinding of teeth when my underclothes are ripped apart. The last untorn ones I had.
>
> Suddenly his finger is on my mouth, stinking of horse and tobacco. I open my eyes. A stranger's hand expertly pulling apart my jaws. Eye to eye. Then with great deliberation he drops a gob of gathered spit into my mouth.[160]

Unlike the other experiences Anonymous recounts, the male aggressor—the rapist—in this instance communicates that his act of rape is intended to deliberately humiliate her. The very first paragraph also indicates that there is a deliberate nature behind this rape, as only one of the two men commits rape and only the younger woman—Anonymous—is raped.

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[160] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, 63.

What is also notable from Anonymous's description of this particular assault is the way in which she describes the specific details. In all of her descriptions she uses short, blunt statements intermixed with longer sentences. But this is the only described sexual assault in which Anonymous shifts from writing in the first person to writing in the third person, although the switch is only temporary. This depersonalized narration indicates that this rape had a greater negative effect on Anonymous, that the deliberate act of humiliation affected her more significantly than some of the other more violent rapes—such as the first rape, when she is pushed onto the basement stairs and fears being strangled.[161] Anonymous describes herself as feeling like she is "gliding and falling, down, down, through the pillows and the floorboards," adding that "[s]o that's what it means to sink into the ground."[162] Anonymous adds another paragraph immediately after her description of feeling like she's sinking into the ground, further describing her rapist's attempt at deliberate humiliation:

> Once more eye to eye. The stranger's lips open, yellow teeth, one in front half broken off. The corners of the mouth lift, tiny wrinkles radiate from the corners of his eyes. The man is smiling.[163]

Once again Anonymous uses impersonal language to describe what is happening, using the phrase "the corner of *the* mouth"[164] rather than "the corners of *his* mouth." Furthermore, by smiling at Anonymous, the rapist is communicating that not only is he taking pleasure in raping her, but he is taking pleasure in the fact that his act of rape is humiliating Anonymous.

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[161] Ibid., 53.
[162] Ibid., 64.
[163] Ibid., 64.
[164] Ibid., 64. Emphasis added.

Alaine Polcz recounts a similar experience. Like Anonymous, she experiences the Soviet troops traveling in a small group rather than alone, and she finds that attempting to physically resist does not prevent her rape.

> Three Russians came in; they told me...to go with them. I knew exactly what they wanted; I don't know how, but I knew...
>
> ...I put on my boots and tied my hair in a kerchief. Then I untied it and tied it again, untied it and tied it again to gain time. As I was standing, I heard something thumping on the floor. It was the heels of my boots, I was trembling so hard...
>
> ...They took me back to the kitchen and threw me to the ground—apparently I was trying to defend myself or attack them...I lost consciousness.
>
> I regained consciousness in the archdeacon's large inner bedroom. The panes were broken, the windows boarded up; nothing was on the beds but bare boards; I was lying on it. One of the Russians was on top of me. I heard a woman's voice ricocheting from the ceiling. "Mommy, Mommy!" it shouted. Then I realized it was my voice, that I was shouting.
>
> When I realized this, I stopped; I lay quiet, motionless. My physical feeling had not returned with my consciousness; it was as if I had become petrified with fear or grown cold.[165]

Her fear of what is to come manifests itself physically through her violent trembling. With the knowledge that she will be raped by the three soldiers, Polcz attempts to play for time by tying and retying her scarf, trying to stall. Like Anonymous, Polcz indicates a sensation of separation between her mind and body during this particular sexual assault. The difference in the two forms of autobiographical writing—diary versus memoir—is most likely what causes the slightly different ways in which the two women seek to distance themselves from their experiences. Anonymous switches into the third person, as a way of distancing herself from a humiliating experience she has just experienced, while Polcz recalls that she did not recognize her own voice when she initially regained consciousness, recalling this distinct fact—and her feeling that her "physical feeling had not returned with [her] consciousness"—more than three decades later.[166] These two

[165] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 88-89.

specific uses of language demonstrate similar but slightly different efforts to deal with the mental trauma of experiencing sexual assault.

III. "Sex" and Power: Coerced, Non-consensual Sexual Relationships

Some women participated in coerced sex as a means of survival during wartime. Many such women were branded as "sexual collaborators" after the war and publicly humiliated as a means of retribution for what others considered their collaboration with the enemy for their own benefit.[167] So-called "sexual collaboration" occurs during war as a survival tactic, as it is sometimes safer because it allows for a certain degree of negotiation. This is sometimes true, but not always.

Elma Softić did not consider sexual collaboration with enemy combatants—such "collaboration" was unlikely in the siege of Sarajevo—but demonstrated her awareness of such "collaborative" interactions as a means of surviving in desperate conditions when she saw "the well-fed foreign soldiers on a truck going down the Street of the Defenders of the City (formerly the Yugoslav National Army, don't you know) toss[ing] to the children little packages of sweets."[168] She watched the children excitedly scrambling for the candies, but as an adult, and particularly as a thirty-year-old woman, she could not share their sentiments. Instead, the interaction highlighted to her the power imbalance between the soldiers and the locals, and the particularly gendered power imbalance between the soldiers and Sarajevan women. She described her feelings observing the scene as the following:

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[166] Ibid., 89.
[167] Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," 60-61.
[168] Softić., *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 77.

> ...I found it hard to take. I felt demeaned and impoverished. I asked myself whether I was certain that no amount of poverty would ever drive me to sell myself to one of the ordinary little soldier-boys who have become what they could never aspire to be back in their own home towns in Canada: demigods.[169]

The interaction between the foreign soldiers and the local children highlighted to Softić both her poverty living in besieged Sarajevo and the possibility that her situation may become so dire in terms of the inability to purchase or obtain basic goods for survival that she may resort to prostitution in order to survive. It also highlighted the immense power the soldiers had over the local populace. Despite her clear contempt for the possibility, Softić's ready acknowledgement that sexual relations for profit existed between local women and peacekeepers foreshadowed the debate in the coming years over the regulation of sexual relations between UN peacekeepers and local populations during UN peacekeeping operations.[170] Like the threat of sexual violence, Softić's recognition of UN peacekeepers' power as foreign nationals who are, in many ways, above the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, accentuated her own recognition of the precariousness of her sexual and physical agency living in a war zone.

Alaine Polcz's first sexual assault is an example of coercive, non-consensual sexual result, occurring after a Soviet soldier discovered a photo of Polcz's husband, János, wearing a Hungarian military uniform. János had deserted the military and was no longer serving in any sort of military capacity, but the Soviet soldier's knowledge of the photo endangered János's—and Polcz's—life. Polcz describes the encounter in the following passage:

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[169] Ibid., 77-78.

[170] See, for instance, Olivera Simić's *Regulation of Sexual Conduct in UN Peacekeeping Operations* (New York: Springer, 2012), which takes a new approach to the study of sexual relations between UN peacekeeping and local populations, arguing that the UN's current prohibition on any and all sexual relations between peacekeepers and local populations overlook questions of agency.

> I went in with him; I knew what he had in mind. He put the photograph *[of her husband]* on the nightstand and laid me down on the bed. I was afraid he would not give me the picture. When he was done, he took the picture into his hand and showed it to me again. (I just kept fearing he would not give it to me.) I was wearing a checkered blouse with buttons for closing up and a small pocket. He unbuttoned the blouse, put the photograph inside it, buttoned it up, caressed where the picture lay, then left.
>
> Somehow I put in an appearance. Mami looked at me. I think she knew exactly what happened, but we did not talk about it.[171]

Polcz does not physically resist, but this experience was coerced rather than consensual, making it an act of violence. The Soviet soldier coerced Polcz into having sex by holding over her the threat that he would expose her husband's military past, thus endangering both Polcz and her husband. This power differential and the way in which the soldier used the threat of retribution against both Polcz and someone important to her pushes this interaction into the category of coerced sex, which is itself a form of sexual violence. This experience also serves as an example of sexual violence as a tool of warfare, with specific women targeted for specific reasons. Polcz is targeted in this case because of her husband's former military service. Her connection to him provides an opportunity for the Soviet soldier to sexually exploit—rape—her.

Similar encounters, in which sex is "traded" for material objects or specific privileges, occur frequently in both Polcz and Anonymous' accounts. Polcz submits to a Soviet officer's offer that he will allow her to take a mattress—which she already owns, and had abandoned when she had fled a previous shelter—to her mother-in-law if she will engage in sexual relations with him. Polcz notes that he cannot have gained much satisfaction from the encounter, as the officer at one point checks her eyes to see if she is still alive. Nonetheless, the officer sends his orderly down to rape Polcz before allowing

[171] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 86-87. Emphasis original.

her to leave with the mattress. Polcz ruminates on whether this egalitarian impulse by the officer was due to the Soviet system or if a Hungarian officer would have done the same for his orderly.[172] In this instance, like many other women in occupied zones, Polcz "traded" sex as a "means to survive."[173] While Polcz specifies that at the time she "did not think of anything," in her memoir she calls herself a whore, defining a whore as "someone who goes to bed for money or some other kind of benefit" and "someone who deliberately acquires something with her body."[174] The use of this word to describe herself based off Polcz's own definition of the word takes on an intricate meaning via Polcz's use of the phrase "deliberately acquires." In defining being a whore in these terms—based on a deliberate act—Polcz assigns herself a degree of agency. She demonstrates that she prefers to call herself a whore rather than a rape victim.[175] By calling herself a whore, Polcz asserts a degree of agency—she *chooses* to "go to bed" to obtain certain tangible or intangible benefits. She recalls being a whore rather than being raped.

Anonymous took a similar approach in occupied Berlin, although she at no point refers to herself as a whore. Anonymous deliberately facilitated sexual relationships with two different Soviet soldiers in an attempt to protect herself from additional violent sexual assaults and, later, as a means of obtaining food. Almost immediately after being raped for the third time, Anonymous makes up her mind to "find a single wolf to keep away the pack. An officer, as high-ranking as possible, a commandant, a general,

[172] Ibid., 96.
[173] Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," 41.
[174] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 108.
[175] The word "victim" is used here rather than "survivor" because the use of the latter is a more recently-utilized term and has a slightly more positive connotation; Polcz clearly gives the *idea* behind the terms "rape victim" or "rape survivor"—the fact that the individual indicated by such a phrase has experienced rape—a highly negative connotation.

whatever I can manage."[176] Anonymous finds a first lieutenant, Anatol, whom she identifies as a Ukrainian, who is more than happy to establish some sort of sexual relationship with her. While Anonymous deliberately pursued Anatol as a means of protecting herself from further violent rapes, she is clearly uncomfortable with the situation: she intentionally drinks enough alcohol to become drunk and "only remember bits and scratches" after she invites Anatol back to the apartment where she is staying.[177] The power differential between Anonymous and Anatol precludes a strictly consensual sexual relationship. Anonymous is at risk of being repeatedly violently sexually assaulted and even killed; establishing a sort of sexual relationship with a Soviet officer offers her some measure of prevention against repeated violent sexual assault, but the issue of consent is messy.

By establishing a sexual relationship of a kind with Anatol, Anonymous exercised her limited agency in a desperate situation. The sexual relationship is not entirely consensual, but it is still an expression of her agency by establishing a sexual relationship—almost a business relationship—more or less on her own terms. When Anatol is reassigned to staff headquarters, Anonymous undertakes a sexual agreement with a Soviet major after intermediate negotiations undertaken by another Soviet officer, a "blond lieutenant," who asks Anonymous if she finds the major "pleasant" and if she can "love him."[178] While this is an example of an exploitative sexual relationship, which is itself a form of sexual violence, Anonymous demonstrates a certain level of agency—and a *desire* to exert a certain degree of agency—by choosing to go about obtaining protection in this manner.

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[176] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 64.
[177] Ibid., 71.
[178] Ibid., 100-101.

These sorts of non-consensual sexual relationships create a new set of vocabulary for the individuals encountering such circumstances. Anonymous states that "[s]leeping for food is another new concept, with its own vocabulary, its own specialized jargon, just like 'my major's sugar,' 'rape shoes,' 'plunder wine,' and 'coal-filching.'"[179] This new vocabulary demonstrates Berliners' adaptation to the new circumstances of the Soviet occupation and the widespread sexual violence. The integration of such language and such a concept—the idea that one would have sex for the explicit purpose of obtaining food—into Berliners' mindset and vocabulary indicates that such sexual violence has become a new normality.

IV. Aftermath: Coping with the Experience of Sexual Violence

Both Polcz and Anonymous note the collective nature of the mass rape that occurred as the Soviet troops liberated[180] Nazi-held territory in the final weeks of World War II. Polcz notes that "the Russians took everyone away," "everyone" being understood to mean "every woman."[181] Anonymous speaks of the collective nature of the experience explicitly in her diary, and, after the initial weeks of terror, almost always asks other Berliner women she encounters about their own experiences with rape at the hands of the Soviet soldiers. The collective experience of sexual violence serves to augment former casual acquaintances to close friends. When visiting with her friend Ilse after the two weeks of intense sexual violence by the Soviets, Anonymous describes

[179] Ibid., 190.
[180] Here the word "liberated" is used with great caution. In the former states of the Soviet bloc and the former Soviet republics, the word "liberated" is used sarcastically, ironically, when speaking of the Soviet troops at the end of World War II as for many of these states the Soviet liberation ushered in decades of repression under Soviet-sponsored state socialism.
[181] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 89.

"embracing a woman with whom I had previously shaken hands at most."[182] Following their friendly embrace,

> Ilse and I hastily exchange the first sentences: "How many times were you raped, Ilse?" "Four, and you?" "No idea, I had to work my way up the ranks from supply train to major."[183]

Establishing their shared experience as survivors of mass-scale sexual violence clearly takes precedence over any other social niceties or other exchanges of information. By establishing this shared experience, the two women create a sort of new normality[184] in which it is not uncommon for a woman to have experienced sexual violence—which was more or less the case after the Soviet invasion of Berlin in the last months of World War II, with an estimated two million female survivors of sexual violence from the early months of the Soviet occupation in East Germany alone.[185] Confirming this shared experience also creates a safe space for survivors of sexual violence in which they know they can expect at least some degree of understanding from another individual with a similar experience.

The experiences with sexual violence alter Anonymous' relationship with her own body. A feeling of being unclean is particularly clear. Anonymous writes bluntly:

> I'm constantly repulsed by my own skin. I don't want to touch myself, can barely look at my own body. I can't help but think about the little child I was, once upon a time, the little pink-and-white baby who made her parents so proud, as my mother told me over and over...SO much love, so much bother with sunbonnets, bath thermometers, and evening prayers—and all for the filth I am now.[186]

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[182] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 204.
[183] Ibid., 204.
[184] The effort to create a "new normality" during wartime runs throughout all of these texts; this is only one example.
[185] Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," 53.
[186] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 75.

In addition to feelings of uncleanliness, women who experience sexual violence frequently seem to experience deterioration in feelings of self-worth, as Anonymous demonstrates. Anonymous refers to herself as "filth" and craves soap to "give [her] skin a thorough scrub," as she feels that it would "make [her] feel a little cleaner in [her] soul as well."[187] This feeling of uncleanliness demonstrates that, in some way, the effort to humiliate her has succeeded; yet it also makes quite a bit of sense that she feels "dirty" after she has been raped by multiple men. Polcz also describes feeling unclean, but the way she describes this sensation is more of a physical feeling based on actual uncleanliness—lice, dried blood, dirt—rather than the deep emotional uncleanliness as a result of experiencing multiple rapes that Anonymous' writing indicates.

The women also seem to seek ways of forgetting or glossing over their experiences at times. Anonymous recounts several evenings with the Soviet soldiers where she drank to excess, writing the next day that

> I drank a lot that evening. I wanted to drink a lot, wanted to get drunk, and I did. That's why I remember only bits and scratches: Anatol next to me again, his weapons and things scattered around the bed...I felt like I was a doll, no sensation, shaken, shoved around, made of wood...[188]

Several days later, Anonymous states that "[n]ow there are holes in my memory. Once again I drank a great deal, can't remember the details."[189] Using alcohol to drink to excess seems to be a coping mechanism for Anonymous, deliberately becoming so intoxicated that she is unable to recall the sexual violence she presumably experiences after the fact. With no other options available to her, drinking to excess is a means of mental and emotional escape when actual physical escape is not possible.

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[187] Ibid., 149.
[188] Ibid., 71.
[189] Ibid., 82.

V. Silences and Silencing

Another common element among the accounts written by women who experienced sexual violence was the silencing practiced by other individuals after the violence was concluded, or by individuals who did not experience the same levels of violence. Polcz experienced the final months of the war in and around the Hungarian town of Csákvár, less than fifty miles away from where her family was seeking refuge in Budapest. Yet when she returned to her family in 1945 after the conclusion of the violence, her family refused to believe her when she openly told them that she was assaulted. Polcz recalled the experience as follows:

> They told me the Russians had raped women. "Where you were, too?" asked my mother. "Yes," I replied, "where I was too." "But they didn't take you away, did they?" she asked. "Yes, everyone," I replied, and I kept on eating. My mother gave me a little look and said in amazement, "But why did you let them?" "Because they hit me," I replied, and I kept on eating. I did not consider the matter to be either important or interesting.
>
> Someone asked airily and drolly, "Many times?" "I lost count," I said, and I kept on eating. "Just think, we had lice in the cellar," my mother said. "We did, too," I said. "But surely you didn't get infected." "I did indeed!" "With head lice?" my mother asked. "Every kind," I said, and I kept on eating. Then we talked about other things.
>
> My mother called me aside after dinner and said, "My dear girl, don't tell such nasty stories, people might believe them!"
>
> I looked at her. "Mother, it is the truth." She began crying and put her arms around me. Then I said, "Mother, I said they took everyone away, they raped every woman! You said they took women away here, too."
>
> "Yes, but only those who were whores. You are not one," my mother said. Then she threw herself on me and begged, "My dear, tell me it is not true!" "All right," I said, "it is not true. They took me away just to nurse the sick."[190]

Polcz's experience having her experience with sexual violence silenced by others is complicated by the fact that the dominant silencing force in this exchange is her mother.

[190] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 120-121.

Anonymous notes at one point in her diary that she cannot imagine what it must be like to watch a loved one go through the kind of sexual violence women experienced from the Soviet troops, asking "[w]hat must a mother feel, seeing her girl so devastated?"[191] Polcz's mother's refusal to believe her daughter's assertions that she was repeatedly raped may be due less to her disbelief that Soviet troops carried out mass rape and more to her inability to believe that her daughter was repeatedly raped by Soviet troops. Regardless, Polcz was still silenced, choosing to tell a false tale of her experience in order to not upset her mother. Social forces—notably the heavy Soviet influence over Hungary in the decades after World War II—also silenced Polcz. The social forces at play after World War II were powerful enough to keep Polcz from publishing her account until 1991,[192] despite having written her account between 1975 and 1980.[193]

The language Polcz uses indicates that even by the time she has rejoined her family she has developed a coping mechanism for acknowledging but not delving too deeply into her experience. She chooses not to share too many details—as she writes, she does "not consider the matter to be either important or interesting"—when she is asked for an account of her time away from her family.[194] She tells the truth, refusing to lie, but does so in a manner that allows her to protect herself from too thorough an examination. Yet her family's dramatically different experience prevents them from believing her; even when Polcz reasserts that she has told the truth, she is not believed. Finally giving in

[191] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 180.
[192] There were also, of course, political forces powerfully involved in this delayed publication, as there were Soviet troops in Hungary from the 1956 Hungarian Revolution until 1991, after Hungary rejected state socialism and began transitioning to a democratic political system.
[193] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 11.
[194] Ibid., 120.

to her mother's inability to believe that her daughter was raped and had every kind of lice, Polcz chooses to refute the truth of what has happened to her, thus silencing herself.

Anonymous repeatedly touches on the silencing of women who experienced sexual violence in the final months of the war, with the bulk of the silencing efforts coming from men. When she goes to visit a friend in late May, after the rampage of sexual violence in late April and early May 1945, Anonymous mentions how her friend's husband leaves the room when the two women began talking about their experiences of rape. The woman states that her husband cannot stand listening to any discussion of the sexual violence that occurred to his wife.[195] Yet the two women openly discuss their experiences with sexual violence, "taking [their] mocking revenge on everyone who had humiliated [them]" with their gossip.[196] When Anonymous' lover[197] Gerd returned to Berlin in late June after having walked away from the German army, he openly expressed his anger at Anonymous and other women discussing the rapes.

> If I was in a good mood and told stories about our experiences over the past few weeks, then he got really angry. Gerd: "You've all turned into a bunch of shameless bitches, every one of you in the building. Don't you realize?" He grimaced in disgust. "It's horrible being around you. You've lost all sense of measure."
>
> What was I supposed to say to that? I crawled off in a corner to sulk. I couldn't cry, it all seemed so senseless to me, so stupid.[198]

Gerd's reaction—his sense that Anonymous has "lost all sense of measure" and his accusation that Anonymous and the other women have become "shameless bitches"—was relatively common amongst German men after the massive scale of sexual violence

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[195] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 204.
[196] Ibid., 205.
[197] Anonymous makes it clear that she and Gerd are not married, but she at no point indicates if she considers Gerd to be her boyfriend, fiancé, or lover.
[198] Ibid., 259.

in the final months of World War II.[199] Anonymous demonstrates a certain amount of foresight about the silence German women would have to practice after the war with regards to the sexual violence they experienced on a scale of thousands:

> And the women do their best to hide their men and protect them from the angry enemy. After all, what more can the Russians do to us? They've already done everything.
>
> So we put on our harnesses and pull. That's logical enough. Nevertheless there's something about this that bothers me...We [women], on the other hand, will have to keep politely mum; each one of us will have to act as if she in particular was spared. Otherwise no man is going to want to touch us anymore.[200]

Survivors of wartime sexual violence also silenced themselves, as Anonymous' statement above indicates. An inability or powerful disinclination to speak of one's experience of sexual violence is not uncommon amongst survivors, but in these cases it is clearly linked to others silencing rape survivors. Polcz is silenced by her mother, while Anonymous—and other women in Berlin—are silenced by men. Both Polcz and Anonymous defy these efforts to silence them, and chose to publish accounts of their experiences. Yet even survivors who choose to speak out—such as Anonymous or Polcz—may choose to silence themselves at least to certain degree. The author of *A Woman in Berlin* chose to publish her account in its entirety, but without her name attached to it in any way. The foreword to the most recent edition of *A Woman in Berlin* attests to the level of secrecy surrounding the author's name, as well as her request that the account not be republished until after her death, after the initial 1959 German edition—an English edition had been published in 1954, and additional editions in seven other languages had been published in the intervening five years—was received by the German public with "either hostility or

[199] Ibid., 259.
[200] Ibid., 149.

silence."[201] The German public's response led the author to forbid another publication of her account until after her death. Polcz published *One Woman in the War* under her own name, but postponed publication of her account for more than a decade, until 1991, after the end of state socialism in Hungary and during the waning months of the Soviet Union.

Other survivors allude to experiences of sexual violence in their narratives, but deliberately forego recounting these experiences. In "The Heroic Combat of Chabine-Karahissar," in which she recounts one Armenian village's defense in the face of Ottoman forces attempting to exterminate the village, Turkish Armenian *[sic]* Zabel Bournazian recounts "the Turks...taking money, jewels, and clothes [from us] with such fury that they tore as they came off," but while she confirms that acts of sexual violence were committed against the Armenian village, she bluntly stated, "I do not want to speak of the horror of rapes committed under circumstances impossible to describe."[202] The little she shared about the sexual violence against the women from that particular Armenian village indicates the level of inhumanity without going into detail: "I had closed my eyes; I did not want to see; I remembered suddenly that we had brought a bottle of violent poison. Women and girls drank it and died in serenity."[203] The villagers had been prepared that their position would be overrun by the Ottoman forces and that they would be taken, hence the bottle of poison. Bournazian describes the poison as "the flask of freedom"; death is preferable to rape.[204]

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[201] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, foreword to *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City*, by Anonymous, translated by Philip Boehm (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), xi.
[202] Zabel Bournazian, "The Heroic Combat of Chabine-Karahissar," in *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*, ed. Margaret R. Higgonet (New York: Plume, 1999), 170.
[203] Bournazian, "The Heroic Combat of Chabine-Karahissar," 171.
[204] Ibid., 171.

VI. Conclusion

As depicted in the accounts considered here, sexual violence occurred throughout European women's experiences of war in the twentieth century. Sexual violence is an undeniably gendered experience; while male individuals may also experience sexual violence, sexual violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated against female individuals. This makes it absolutely essential to use gender as a category of analysis when considering sexual violence in twentieth-century wartime Europe; one cannot understand sexual violence in the wars in twentieth-century Europe without analyzing gender.

Polcz and Anonymous each recount graphic, extraordinarily violent episodes of sexual violence perpetrated by Soviet soldiers. Indeed, the scale of sexual violence perpetrated by soldiers of the Red Army has become nearly synonymous with considerations of sexual violence committed during World War II. Yet German troops also committed extreme "sexual atrocities" on the Eastern Front, with scholars increasingly theorizing that Soviet sexual atrocities were driven not by "lack of discipline," "hunger for reprisals, or just soldiers' blowing off steam," but rather as a means of "aveng[ing] German wrongs" against non-German women on the Eastern Front earlier in the war.[205] The terrible acts of sexual violence against German women committed by Soviet troops have received a much more significant amount of study than the sexual violence committed against non-German women on the Eastern Front by German troops, with German acts of violence typically being subsumed under considerations of genocide against the Jews and the Roma. Even US troops' acts of sexual violence have been understudied. It is more than likely that this discrepancy may

[205] Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," 55.

be due to the politics of the postwar era. With the development of the Cold War and the imposition of state socialism across much of Central and Eastern Europe, many voices were silenced by state forces. Conversely, the animosity between the United States and the Soviet Union likely contributed to the privileging of accounts documenting sexual violence by Soviet troops, while accounts of sexual violence perpetrated by American troops or even German troops may have been silenced. With the attempted rehabilitation of West Germany into "Europe"—meaning those states in Europe that were not members of the Eastern, or Soviet, bloc—states may have been more willing to overlook sexual atrocities committed against citizens of the ideological enemy, the Soviet Union.

Women's experiences of wartime sexual violence have been examined through official documents and statistics, but the use of autobiographical accounts of individuals' experiences regarding sexual violence—the actual experience of sexual assault or the threat of sexual assault—during wartime provides an invaluable insight into wartime sexual violence. Autobiographical accounts allow for an assessment of how *women*—statistically the most likely population to experience sexual violence, wartime or otherwise—describe, remember, and experienced wartime sexual violence. By analyzing women's voices on the matter, a historical analysis of twentieth-century wars in Europe is enriched immensely. One should not seek to understand war in twentieth-century Europe—be it World War II or the 1990s Wars of Yugoslav Succession—without taking into account precisely how women experienced, remembered, and wrote about sexual violence.

CHAPTER FOUR—JOKES: COPING WITH VIOLENCE

This chapter assesses two contrasting aspects of women's wartime experiences of daily life: violence and humor. Both accounts of episodes of extreme violence and the use of humor as a coping mechanism reappear repeatedly in women's wartime autobiographical writing. Individuals' focus on particular episodes of violence or particular jokes indicate the significance the violent episode or joke had upon the individual. Comparisons of discussions of violence, in particular, indicate how these women's reactions to experiences of violence changed over time, as is demonstrated, for instance, by Elma Softić's accounts of two separate but similar artillery strikes nearly three years apart.

Assessing uses of humor in war environments provides a fascinating look into "ordinary" individuals' experiences of daily violence and the ways in which they adapted to bear the mental strain of prolonged exposure to violence. The telling of jokes about individuals in positions of power—be it a reviled military leader or a rapist—also allows individuals to grant themselves a certain level of agency and power, and reduces an aggressor's agency and power. Wartime jokes also indicate the way in which previously taboo topics may gain a certain degree of acceptability due to the disruption of war. As in previous chapters, this chapter demonstrates the necessity of using gender as a category of analysis even when considering violence and humor—ostensibly non-gendered phenomena—in daily life. Taking gender into account reveals important characteristics about the ways in which women recounts instances of violence or the particular ways in which these women used humor to cope with the stress of wartime.

I. Violence

Violence is, unquestioningly, one of the most predominant features of wartime experiences, particularly in the total wars of the twentieth-century.[206] It is therefore only logical to take into account and provide a deep scholarly analysis of women's discussion of experiences of violence in their autobiographical writings about war experiences. Doing so reveals which aspects of violence carried the most weight and left the deepest impact on individuals, and how individuals' reactions to violence shifted over time and continued exposure to everyday violence.

One of the most consistent features of daily life in wartime recorded by women in their accounts of war is the presence of air raids, and the level to which they affect individuals' lives and morale. Based on the accounts considered here, air raids had a devastating effect on many women during war, and the effects frequently continued past the duration of the war. Alaine Polcz penned her account of World War II between 1975 and 1980, and postponed publication until 1991, nearly fifty years after the events she recounts in her account. At the very least, she wrote her account three decades after the end of the war. Yet she asks her readers,

> Am I talking too much about the air raids? Even today my stomach and intestines churn a little at the drone of an airplane. To me, the thought is reassuring, and it dissipates my fear, if I know that the atom bomb will be released at a great height and fall silently. And if then the roof, the house, the concrete will not bury anyone, there will be no detonation, no throat rattle, no death cry, and our limbs will disintegrate in silence...We will turn into dust. It [is] only to be hoped for.[207]

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[206] "Total wars" are not confined to a specific battlefront but instead encompass civilian and military populations alike.

[207] Polcz, *One Woman in the War*, 37.

The incessant air raids left a deep mark on Polcz, as they did on many other women. The existence of this particular passage in a memoir written decades after the end of World War II demonstrates the permanent impact repeated exposure to air raids and the threat of artillery strikes left on Polcz.

Elma Softić writes frequently about air raids in her diary and letters published in *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*. She describes the physical manifestation of her fear of the air raids: the cold sweat, diarrhea, "shudders of horror," a "constantly constricted" throat,[208] a "pounding" heart, and feeling as if she has been stricken with tonsillitis.[209] As one of the most recent accounts considered in this research, Softić mentions a palliative remedy to the constant tension and anxiety caused by the air raids: tranquilizers. Within a month of the beginning of the siege, "tranquilizers [have become] the most sought-after medicine in Sarajevo."[210]

One of the more infamous events from early in the siege of Sarajevo was the Vaso Miskin Street artillery attack of May 27, 1992, nicknamed the "breadline massacre" because the three mortar rounds exploded amongst a group of Sarajevans waiting in line to purchase bread.[211] The attack killed 20 people and wounded more than 100 others, the deadliest civilian mortar attack to date.[212] Softić recounts her reaction to the bombing in her diary. Like much of the contemporary journalistic coverage, Softić immediately terms the Vaso Miskin Street shelling a "massacre." She seems to be stunned by the juxtaposition of the violence with the ordinary act of waiting in line to purchase bread.

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[208] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 12.
[209] Ibid., 23.
[210] Ibid., 21.
[211] Benjamin Rusek and Charles Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres': A Controversy Revisited," *Nationalities Papers* 32:4 (December 2004), 837.
[212] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 837.

The language Softić uses indicates her emotional state after learning the news—her sentences are short, sharp, and graphic:

> The bloody bread of Sarajevo. There were about 200 people there. A slaughterhouse. The street running with blood. People lying, mown down. A torn-off foot. Some people are moving, some are screaming for help, others are motionless. The uninjured are running. Some are trying to help—they're carrying away the wounded. You can see shattered legs. One woman's foot is hanging, barely attached, a man being carried by two others has legs that are hanging at a most unnatural angle. A heap of human meat. Blood, body bits. People are arriving in automobiles and trucks rushing out from neighboring homes in their slippers, wringing their hands, weeping, running, looking for the living—the dead can wait.[213]

Softić updates the death toll the next day, then ceases writing for more than a week. She only begins writing again to note a friend's death, recalling that "only one evening before his death, he was teaching me how to play rummy and how the cards are ranked," emphasizing the cruel interplay of ordinary events with death.[214]

At the time it occurred, the Vaso Miskin "breadline massacre"[215] was the most deadly attack to date in Sarajevo's besiegement and was still, at the end of the war, one of the "most deadly artillery attacks against civilians" in the entire duration of the siege.[216] It was the first of three attacks resulting in high deaths tolls which each prompted immediate international intervention, "substantially determin[ing] the course and resolution of the conflict," even as early as May 1992.[217] It was the Vaso Miskin attack which induced the United Nations Security Council to "impose trade sanctions against Rump [*sic*] Yugoslavia,"[218] which was believed to be funding and supplying the Bosnian

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[213] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 40-41.
[214] Ibid., 42.
[215] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 830.
[216] Ibid., 827.
[217] Ibid., 827.
[218] Rump Yugoslavia refers to the Yugoslav republics which were left after the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely Serbia and Montenegro.

Serb forces besieging Sarajevo.[219] Additionally, the "breadline massacre" was one of three extremely deadly artillery attacks for which "Bosnian Serbs denied responsibility and assigned blame to the Bosnian government forces."[220] The Bosnian Serb forces and supporters accused the Bosnian government of committing the attack in order to "elicit military assistance, if not direct intervention, from the international community."[221] After nearly two months of shelling by Bosnian Serbs forces against Sarajevo, these allegations took the international community aback, and it was "unprepared to evaluate the Bosnian Serb countercharge" that the Bosnian government was responsible for the attack.[222] While the Bosnian Serbs' purported evidence was "easily refuted," observers were unable to "prove conclusively" that those three specific rounds were fired by Bosnian Serb forces.[223] The idea that "the Bosnian government would purposely fire on its own civilians in order to create international sympathy and intervention against the Bosnian Serbs" reappeared time and again during the remainder of the war.[224]

Softić's account focuses specifically on the human cost and emotions raised by the "breadline massacre"; she does not mention the controversy that arose immediately after the artillery attack concerning responsibility for the event.[225] This omittance can be read in one of two ways: either Softić was so overwhelmed by the most deadly attack of the siege to date that she simply failed to mention the controversy, or she did not consider the allegations valid enough to bother mentioning or even consider. Overall, her account of the Vaso Miskin artillery attack can be noted for the immense shock that her writing

[219] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 837.
[220] Ibid., 829.
[221] Ibid., 829.
[222] Ibid., 847.
[223] Ibid., 837-838.
[224] Ibid., 837.
[225] Ibid., 830.

communicates, to the degree that her shock nearly radiates off the page. Despite having endured nearly two months of shelling, the breadline massacre marked a new experience with war for Softić—and for much of Sarajevo.

The second of the three disputed artillery attacks occurred on February 5, 1994. Known alternately as the first "marketplace massacre" or the first "Markale massacre,"[226] one mortar round killed 68 people and injured some 200 others, surpassing the Vaso Miskin breadline massacre as the most deadly artillery attack in Sarajevo during the siege. Softić's account of the second disputed and extremely deadly artillery attack contrasts sharply with her account of the Vaso Miskin attack. Softić recounts her experience to her friend Caka in a letter written on the same day as the artillery attack. In contrast to the way she began her diary entry on the Vaso Miskin attack, Softić simply says in opening: "The pictures from Markale *[market]* have gone round the world, and I suppose you've seen them too."[227] Unlike her diary entry about Vaso Miskin, Softić's letter reads smoothly, void of the choppy, abrupt sentences that characterized the diary entry from almost two years earlier. Softić describes herself as "too tired, too sad, and too anxious to have the strength to think about just another bomb or just another death in Sarajevo."[228]

The above excerpt from Softić's entry on the Vaso Miskin attack characterizes her response to the incident. The following demonstrates the change in her reaction to such massive acts of violence after living under siege and witnessing violence almost daily for nearly two years:

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[226] *Markale* literally means "market," but it was also the name by which this particular market was popularly known.
[227] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 133. Emphasis original.
[228] Ibid., 133.

> I was neither shaken nor amazed that some Chetnik got the idea to fire a mortar shell into a mass of people. They'd been doing that before as well. Deliberately and precisely. Someone today bought his last kilo of flour, someone else bought cigarettes for the last time. I felt nothing. Not even gratitude that fate had spared me once again...Among the victims, two familiar names—a neighbor, and the father of a former boyfriend of a good friend of mine. Fifty-six dead—for the moment. Some have not yet been identified because their bodies were horribly disfigured. After all, you could see *[on TV]* headless torsos and a complete set of human entrails on a counter. A market of human meat.[229]

The most similar characteristic between her accounts of the two events is the use of the phrase "human meat." The letter describing the first Markale attack reads as detached, almost emotionless—which seems to be somewhat what Softić intended. Softić says that she "felt nothing" and her letter reads that way.[230] The only easily discernable emotion or feeling is tiredness, even exhaustion.

Softić describes Sarajevo as "waiting to see how the world will react" to the Markale artillery attack.[231] Barbara Demick writes that the bombing was of a "magnitude impossible to ignore."[232] Like the Vaso Miskin attack, the first Markale attack prompted international intervention in the conflict. Instead of responding with trade sanctions against rump Yugoslavia as they had after Vaso Miskin, the international community demanded that the Bosnian Serb forces "withdraw all artillery beyond a 20-km-wide 'total exclusion zone'" or risk facing NATO air strikes.[233] The Bosnian Serb forces were given ten days in which to comply with NATO's demand.[234] Although she was, like the rest of Sarajevo, waiting to see how the world would respond, Softić was skeptical that

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[229] Ibid., 133. Emphasis original.
[230] Ibid., 133.
[231] Ibid., 134.
[232] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 118.
[233] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 839.
[234] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 119.

anything would change, stating that she doesn't "set much store by anybody's words, promises, threats, agreements, treaties, or declarations."[235]

As they did in the wake of the Vaso Miskin breadline massacre, the Bosnian Serb forces alleged that the Bosnian government had launched the Markale attack in the hopes of gaining additional international support and opening the possibility for intervention against the Bosnian Serb forces.[236] Republika Srpska[237] President Radovan Karadžić claimed that media vans and ambulances were already at the marketplace prior to the mortar attack, and that "several of the Markale dead were refrigerated corpses trucked in from the morgue with ice still clinging from their ears."[238] Coupled with lingering suspicions from the Vaso Miskin bombing, the question of who was responsible for the first Markale bombing was even more controversial than Vaso Miskin, with UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali daring to state publicly that the Bosnian government was "most likely" responsible.[239] Softić does not mention this controversy in her letters, instead noting that, three weeks after Markale, mortar shells no longer fall within Sarajevo city limits, which Softić attributes to "the, so they say, serious threats from NATO."[240] She focuses on the here and now, on the immediate happenings in her life and how they affect her day-to-day existence.

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[235] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 134.
[236] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 838.
[237] Republika Srpka, translated as "Serbian Republic," was the name chosen by the Bosnian Serbs for their breakaway territory during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War. The name reflects their belief that the land was Serb land and that only Serbs should live on the traditionally Serb land. Per the 1995 Dayton Agreement, Republika Srpska officially comprises 49 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other 51 percent of which is the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Republika Srpska is located to the north and east of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
[238] Rusek and Ingrao, "The 'Mortar Massacres,'" 840.
[239] Ibid., 840.
[240] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 137.

The predominant episodes of violence Eva Retzler recounted from her experiences of World War II concerned acts carried out by Yugoslav Partisans[241] in her hometown of Nijemci, in present-day eastern Croatia. These episodes include the Partisans ransacking Nijemci and Retzler's home, taking whatever goods they desired; the dragging of a young woman through town in an effort to force her to reveal her anti-Partisan brother's location; and the disappearance, and presumed execution, of Retzler's father. Retzler recalls the Partisans dragging a "young girl" whose brother was "in the service" through town while beating her with rose thorns in an effort to force her to reveal her brother's location. Retzler says, "they took her through the town. They took her through the town and made the people watch what they were doing, they were hitting her, and she was bleeding, and it was taking her clothes off."[242] This episode of violence that Retzler recalls reveals that the Partisans sought to use violence as a threat to force cooperation from unwilling or unsympathetic individuals. It also reveals that the Partisans used violence against women both to attempt to force the women to reveal information but also as a threat.

A second important episode Retzler recounted was her father's kidnapping by the Partisans. Although living 16 kilometers away from her parents' home in Lipovac at the time, Retzler describes the Partisans coming to her "mom's house" in the middle of the night and demanding that her father, who held an important committee position in the town, come out and speak with them. She says that they "took him in the forest" along

[241] The World War II Yugoslav Partisans were a guerrilla group led by Josip Broz Tito, later known as Marshall Tito, who fought against German forces after they invaded and took control of Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941. The Partisans, as they were commonly known, took control of Yugoslavia by the end of World War II, becoming one of, if not the most, successful guerrilla organizations of World War II. Under the control of Tito, the Partisans recreated prewar monarchal Yugoslavia as socialist Yugoslavia after World War II, with Tito serving as head of state until his death in 1980.

[242] Interview with Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik conducted by author on March 20, 2014 in Sterling Heights, MI.

with several other locally important and educated men and "they shoot them. They just killed them." She was informed of her father's death by a man from her home village, Lipovac.[243] Retzler's description of her father's death contained important details pertaining to the circumstances of his death, but her account was relatively devoid of descriptors or words to indicate her emotions at the time she learned of her father's death. The way in which she told her story of her father's death differed slightly from how she spoke about other aspects of her experience of World War II. The language she used and the way in which she told the story imply that she has, over the past six decades, created a relatively standard format in which she tells this story of personal loss.

II. Humor: Joke-Telling in Wartime

A common element of many women's accounts of war is the use of humor or jokes as a means of dealing with the deprivations or violence of war. In her piece "'Imitation of Life': Negotiating Normality in Sarajevo under Siege," Ivana Maček identifies joke-telling as a relatively "typical way of commenting" on the "destructiveness and humiliation" of the siege.[244] Joke-telling was also relatively common in other accounts of the siege of Sarajevo. Jokes also appear in other accounts written by women during wartime, demonstrating a common usage of humor to displace some of the stress of living under near-constant threat of violence.

Softić retells jokes then currently popular in Sarajevo multiple times in her letters. These jokes range from the relatively lighthearted to the dark and somewhat difficult to

[243] Interview with Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik conducted by author on March 20, 2014 in Sterling Heights, MI.
[244] Maček, "'Imitation of Life,'" 56.

read. The jokes that Softić retells in her letters reveal quite a bit about the siege, from Sarajevans' way of dealing with life under siege, to the way in which the siege and the violence impacted the lives of all Sarajevans regardless of age, to Sarajevans' opinions about Radovan Karadžic. Overall, the jokes that Softić chooses to retell indicate the way in which Sarajevans sought to deal with the reality of the siege and normalize the situation by mitigating the pain of the siege with humor. As Maček notes, "[m]any of the jokes were impossible to tell outside" Sarajevo because people who had not experienced the siege—or, as Maček phrases it, "people who did not have the same macabre experiences"—frequently found the jokes "disturbing and morbid" because they "had no references with which they could appreciate this kind of humour [*sic*]."[245] Telling jokes was also a way of "keeping up morale."[246] Softić always frames the jokes as either "Sarajevan jokes,"[247] "local jokes,"[248] or as "the most recent Sarajevo joke," indicating the relative universality within the besieged city of the jokes she recounts.[249]

For example, Softić retells the following joke in a July 7, 1993 letter to her aunt's family in Zagreb, referencing the everyday deprivations resulting from the siege:

> Q: What is the difference between Auschwitz and Sarajevo?
> A: In Auschwitz they at least had gas.[250]

To an outside observer, this joke is beyond the pale. Yet the joke functions effectively: it reminds listeners that, like those killed in Auschwitz, Sarajevans have been targeted on the basis of their identity, and also that, while their situation is unenviable, it could be

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[245] Ibid., 56.
[246] Harish C. Mehta, "Fighting, Negotiating, Laughing: The Use of Humor in the Vietnam War," *Historian* 74:4 (Winter 2012), 749.
[247] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 94.
[248] Ibid., 105.
[249] Ibid., 138.
[250] Ibid., 94.

worse.[251] The joke also serves as a way of demarcating who is an "insider" and who is an "outsider" to the siege. The "gas" which Sarajevans lack is not the Zyklon-B gas used in the Nazi concentration camps, but rather cooking gas.

The idea that the situation could be worse is reiterated in another joke Softić retells in the same letter:

> Did you hear that Miloš *[a typically Serbian name]* has gone?
> - Where to, the Chetnik s.o.b.?
> To Beograd.[252]
> - Ha, f—— him, I always knew he was a Chetnik.
> We heard from him a few days ago, he wants to come back.
> - Idiot![253]

According to this joke, life in besieged Sarajevo is preferable to living in Belgrade. After all, the hypothetical Serb Miloš is apparently dissatisfied with living in Belgrade and would rather be under siege by Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo than live amongst Serbs in Belgrade. This particular joke, then, not only implies to listeners that the situation in Sarajevo could be worse, but that living in besieged Sarajevo is preferable—even by a Serb—to living in Belgrade, Serbia. The joke emphasizes Sarajevans' love for their city and their belief that Sarajevo is superior to all other cities.

In a letter from February 25, 1994, Softić retells a joke about Radovan Karadžić, which she calls "the most recent Sarajevo joke."[254] Softić tells the joke as follows:

> Karadžić arrives at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter says to him:
> -You, go on down!
> - But why? Please, Pete, I beg you, I'm not that bad.
> - Look, I said down! It's hell for you!

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[251] The use of humor in war as a political weapon and as a form of resistance can be further examined in the following articles: Harish C. Mehta's "Fighting, Negotiating, Laughing: The Use of Humor in the Vietnam War," *Historian* 74:4 (Winter 2012): 743-788 and Nathaniel Hong's "Mow 'em all down grandma: The 'weapon' of humor in two Danish World War II occupation scrapbooks," *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 23:1 (2010): 27-64.
[252] Belgrade.
[253] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 94-95. Emphasis original.
[254] Ibid., 138.

- But...
- DOWN!
After some time St. Peter sends an angel down to see what Karadžić is up to. The angel comes to the gates of hell and sees a pair of gloomy devils huddled in front of the gates.
- What are you doing here? Why aren't you inside?
- We're refugees.[255]

According to this joke, Karadžić is so terrible, so evil that even devils in hell would rather become refugees than live under Karadžić's rule. In one sense, St. Peter can be read as the international community, with the Karadžić in the joke protesting that he is "not that bad," in a dark mimicry of Karadžić attempts to disabuse the international community that what his Bosnian Serb forces were doing in Bosnia and outside Sarajevo was as terrible as it looked. Composing and retelling a joke in which Karadžić is sent to hell and proves to behave so horrendously that even two "gloomy devils" leave allowed Sarajevans to make light of the "destructiveness and humiliation" of the siege, as well as critiquing Karadžić's increasingly-transparent attempts to gain legitimacy within the international community.[256] Relevant in the context of this joke is also "humor's capacity to maintain or subvert power": by mocking Karadžić, the joke undermines the power he clearly has over Sarajevo.[257]

Anonymous also retells a joke being told about another powerful leader directly responsible for the violence—in this case, Adolf Hitler. While the joke Anonymous retells about Hitler is slightly less complex than the joke Softić shares about Karadžić, the joke achieves the same goal of belittling the loathed yet powerful leader:

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[255] Ibid., 138-139.
[256] Maček, "'Imitation of Life,'" 56.
[257] Nathaniel Hong, "Mow 'em all down grandma: The 'weapon' of humor in two Danish World War II occupation scrapbooks," *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 23:1 (2010), 30.

> That reminds me of a quip I heard yesterday in the basement: "Just think how much better off we'd be if [Hitler's] old lady'd had a miscarriage."[258]

Like many of the jokes Softić retells, the joke functions on several levels. On the one hand, it humanizes the figure which has for more than a decade been held up as superior to all other individuals by pointing out that it was a mere quirk of fate that he managed to grow up at all, that his mother did not suffer a miscarriage. On another level, the joke allows the joke-teller and the listeners to place the blame for their current situation squarely on Hitler, thus absolving themselves of responsibility for the present circumstances.

Softić also occasionally makes jokes of her own accord, rather than simply recounting jokes she has heard. One such joke, included in her November 6, 1993 letter to her friend Caka in Zagreb, is the following:

> Listen, before we make a date for a cappuccino and apple strudel (nice and flaky, with cinnamon sprinkled on top and lots of icing sugar, still warm—taken from the oven about half an hour earlier and left at room temperature) at the Esplanade about five o'clock (in the afternoon, obviously), I'll have to beg you to wait for me a minute or two in case I'm late—you know how it is, it's November, and you can't be sure about Sarajevo airport even in the middle of summer.[259]

With this joke, Softić is able to make a connection to her life before the war, when such delectably-described apple strudel was readily available. Her reference to the apparently-infamously delayed Sarajevo airport also allows her to bypass the reality of the war—that she is unable to leave Sarajevo through normal means—and normalize her current experience.[260]

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[258] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin*, 28.
[259] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 109.
[260] For a thorough explanation of the concept of creating normality in wartime, see Ivana Maček's "'Imitation of Life': Negotiating Normality in Sarajevo under Siege," in *The New Bosnian Mosaic:*

The jokes Softić retells also provide a commentary on the way in which the war was fought, from the prevalence of snipers within the city itself to Radovan Karadžić's role in the war. In the same letter in which she retells the Auschwitz-Sarajevo joke, Softić tells the recipient "a story that couldn't be more horrible:"[261]

> A woman shouts from her window:
> - Children, get out of the yard, you know there's a sniper here, you'll get shot!
> A little four-year-old girl answer:
> - No, we won't, daddy's sleeping.[262]

This joke alludes to the prevalence of snipers within besieged Sarajevo who targeted the local populace. At some points in the siege, it was "too dangerous to go outside" during daylight because of the snipers.[263] Softić describes her own encounters with a sniper early on in the siege, recalling how in the second encounter she "heard shooting which [she] didn't even pay attention to," so used to the sound of bullets was she by then.[264] While the joke refers to a local—the little girl's "daddy"—who has become a sniper, non-locals also were snipers in Sarajevo during the siege. In a letter dated March 21, 1994, Softić refers to a "story" about a Romanian woman who was allegedly a sniper—Softić calls her a "hired gun"—who, according to the story Softić retells, primarily killed older men.[265] The joke about the little girl's father and Softić's anecdote about the Romanian woman demonstrate the diversity—and prevalence—of the snipers within the city.[266]

Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society, Xavier Bougarel, et al., eds., 39-57 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

[261] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 95.

[262] Ibid., 95.

[263] Demick, *Logavina Street*, 7.

[264] Softić, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, 64.

[265] Ibid., 150.

[266] Snipers played a major role in the siege of Sarajevo and the Bosnian War. The violence in Sarajevo began on April 6, 1992, when members of Radovan Karadžić's Serb Democratic Party fired upon a peace demonstration in downtown Sarajevo from the upper floors of the Holiday Inn hotel. Fourteen people were killed on the official first day of the war (Demick, 22).

The above anecdote-joke is one of the darker which Softić retells. Anonymous's jokes about sexual violence fall into this same darker category. At one point, Anonymous obliquely references the nights of sexual assaults by stating that she has had "[t]oo many night classes. As soon as they're finally over I intend to reclaim the evenings for myself."[267] Shortly after referring to "this Russian brand of schooling" that has resulted in so many "night classes," Anonymous explains that

> ...[s]lowly but surely we're starting to view all the raping with a sense of humor—gallows humor.
>
> We have ample grounds for doing so, too, as the woman with the scabby eczema discovered this morning...She was on her way upstairs to visit some neighbors when two men jumped her and dragged her into one of the abandoned apartments. There she had to take it twice, or really one and a half times, as she explained rather enigmatically...A little later she staggered into our apartment. It took a few minutes before she could speak, we revived her with a coffee cup full of Burgundy [wine]. Finally she recovered, then grinned at us and said, "So that's what I've spent seven years waiting for." (That's how long she's been separated from her husband)."[268]

As Anonymous explains, the "woman with the scabby eczema" responds to being raped not with screams of fear and pain, but rather with a joke—evidence not only of the extreme scale of the sexual violence, but also of the ways in which individuals began to respond to the levels of sexual violence. The woman turns her sexual assault into a joke about herself being sexually frustrated for seven years. While her joke is extremely dark in tone, it fits in with the other jokes present in these narratives, demonstrating that humor is a way in which these particular women seek to cope with their experiences of violence.

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[267] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin,* 119.
[268] Ibid., 121-122.

IV. Conclusion

Violence and humor initially seem to occupy vastly different positions within the spectrums of human experiences, making it seem unlikely that they would be paired in an analysis of daily life in wartime. Yet the direct comparison between descriptions of violent events and specific jokes provides for important revelations regarding how women wrote about and retold their narratives of wartime violence and means of coping with war experiences. Typically, the jokes about violence or about other subjects pertaining to war did not appear until the narrator or author had experienced some level of violence previously. For instance, Elma Softić does not begin retelling jokes about the siege of Sarajevo until several months into her account. Anonymous from late World War II Berlin does not retell jokes about rape until two weeks or more have passed since Soviet troops first began raping women in Berlin. This time lag indicates one of two things: that the need to make light of graphic or violent experiences grows over repeated exposure, or that repeated exposure to such events desensitizes individuals, thus opening up a new avenue through which to reinterpret disturbing events. Employing humor as a coping mechanism also allows for a certain expression of agency by allowing individuals to coopt narratives about powerful individuals or themes and instead ridicule said individuals, as Sarajevans did with Radovan Karadžić during the siege of Sarajevo and Anonymous' friend did with her rapist in late World War II Berlin.

While experiences of non-sexualized violence such as artillery attacks or air raids may be read as gender-neutral, an assessment of women's descriptors of their experiences with such forms of violence not only provides another lens through which to read such experiences, it also reaffirms that women do not only experience sexual violence

in wartime—they experience "regular" violence as well. Assessing women's accounts of non-sexualized wartime violence, like women's experiences with wartime identity construction, allows for a consideration of women's experiences to be integrated into a larger analysis of wartime violence in twentieth-century Europe. The same is true for the use of joke-telling as a coping mechanism and expression of agency during wartime. The necessity of using gender as a lens through which to analyze wartime daily life becomes apparent through the ways in which women discuss violent events and specific jokes.

CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that women's experiences of twentieth-century European wars must be integrated into larger scholarly analyses of these events. To pass over women's autobiographical writings on their experiences of twentieth-century wars in Europe is to omit a rich source of primary material that holds the ability—as many recent scholars have revealed—to add additional complex dimensions to current conceptions of these wars. Even these few accounts considered here demonstrate the complex nature of women's identity construction during wartime, experiences of wartime violence, and wartime daily life. To examine specifically women's autobiographical writings on wartime experiences is to assert one's belief that "women" are not a single, unitary group with identical experiences and identities, but rather to argue that women are individuals who comprise a group that is only one identity of multiple.

These particular accounts all differ in their specifics, from the wars each woman experienced to the way in which she chose to document her experience. Elma Softić, the anonymous author of *A Woman in Berlin*, and Natalija Zrnić-Matić each recorded their wartime experiences via diary-writing. Alaine Polcz and Maria Savchyn Pyskir each wrote their memoir of World War II decades after the war ended, with Polcz choosing to record herself speaking into a tape recorder before transcribing her narrative. Even the oral history interviews conducted with Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik, which were conducted in the same place at the same time, differed in the way the two women told their stories. Retzler's narrative had a more natural flow, unmediated by an editor or translator, although it was, of course, shaped by the interviewer's questions. Brandelik had previously begun a memoir of her experiences, leading to her more "packaged"

retelling of her wartime experience.

Yet despite the differing formats and means of documentation, each woman specifically recounted the ways in which gender shaped her experience of war. Some acknowledged this specifically, such as when discussing the possibility or reality of sexual violence. Others recounted the ways in which their gender interacted with ideas of ethnicity and nationalism in their own identity construction. What is common among all the accounts, regardless whether it is specifically acknowledged or not, is that gender is only one of many identities each woman considers herself to possess. Yet that does not diminish the importance of assessing the way in which gender as an identity serves to enrich academic analyses utilizing gender as a category of analysis. On the contrary, it serves to allow an examination into the ways in which women's experiences of war possess certain similarities across other differentiating phenomena, such as acknowledging the threat, if not the reality, of sexual violence, or using writing as a means of documenting one's personal experiences.

Using gender as an overall category, scholars have increasingly focused on questions of war and nationalism in twentieth-century Europe within recent decades, with new scholarship illuminating heretofore unrecognized similarities and relationships, as well as differences. This new scholarship has contributed to an increasingly nuanced understanding of war and violence in twentieth-century Europe. Numerous books on the above topics have been published within the last decade alone, among them *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* edited by Dagmar Herzog[269] and *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Europe* edited by Nancy M. Wingfield and

[269] Dagmar Herzog, ed., *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Maria Bucur.[270] Such works have significantly contributed to the study of gender and war in the context of twentieth-century Europe.

Yet Czech scholar Jitka Malečková has identified a significant deficit in the academic analysis of the history of gender in Europe by questioning the existence of a "*European* gender history."[271] Malečková criticizes the current study of the European history of gender on two counts: the way in which it "remains strikingly centred *[sic]*" on western Europe, and the popularity of works that are more a "sum of (some) national histories" presented as comprehensive studies of European gender history.[272] As Malečková explicitly states, "gender history deliberately transcends borders," making it "a good place from which to ponder European history."[273] Yet, as Malečková rightly contends, even more recent works on European gender history tend to present collections of essays each focusing on a European state—individual national histories of gender—rather than an overall *European* gender history. That is to say, there are few works which integrate these national studies of gender history into a comprehensive study of gender history in Europe, despite the wealth of historical sources available for use. Malečková acknowledges the "difficulties" of writing such an integrated European gender history,[274] listing several "reasons for this neglect," including a scarcity of "systematic, broadly conceived studies on gender history in Eastern Europe, written in English and grounded in gender theory"[275] and quite possibly "simply a lack of interest on the part of Western

[270] Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, eds., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).
[271] Malečková, "Gender, History, and 'Small Europe,'" 685.
[272] Ibid., 685-686.
[273] Ibid., 686.
[274] Ibid., 686.
[275] Ibid., 689.

scholars, resulting from the belief that [Eastern Europe's] inclusion would not substantially enrich (not to mention change) European gender history."[276]

Malečková's belief that including Eastern Europe in European gender history can be translated to the inclusion of women's war experiences in scholarship on wars in twentieth-century Europe. As the exclusion of Eastern Europe deprives European gender history of valuable information and sources, so too does the omission of women's autobiographical writing on twentieth-century experiences in wartime Europe. Including women's autographical accounts reveals firsthand the ways individuals experienced and practiced gendered nationalism, as Natalija Zrnić-Matić reveals with her explicitly nationalistic pregnancy after the Second Balkan War and Elma Softić complicates with her explicitly non-nationalist pregnancy during the 1992-1995 siege of Sarajevo. So too do autobiographical accounts enrich scholarly analyses of wartime sexual violence, with Anonymous' account providing a contemporary firsthand account of the infamous sexual violence in late World War II Berlin and Alaine Polcz revealing the level of sexual violence Hungarian women experienced during the same time period.[277] Eva Retzler and Elizabeth Brandelik's accounts reveal the complex relationships between Yugoslav Germans and Yugoslav Croats and Serbs before and during World War II, and also provides insight into the violence perpetrated by Yugoslav Communist Partisans against civilian populations.

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[276] Ibid., 689.

[277] Alaine Polcz's publication of her account takes on an additional significance when one considers that she was a famous psychiatrist in Hungary during the later twentieth-century. She is well-known for her work with children and the dying. The fact that she published her account of experiencing brutal wartime sexual violence under her own name enriches public knowledge and consideration of survivors of sexual violence because she deliberately identified herself as a survivor of sexual violence knowing of her own recognition within Hungary as a famous psychiatrist.

In particular, these women often recount events that were only experienced by non-combatants, of whom the majority were women or children. By integrating these accounts into wider analyses of twentieth-century wars in Europe—by using gender as a category of analysis—these non-combatant experiences are validated, given authority, and allowed to complicate analyses that have previously focused only on the battlefront. As Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur write, this allows for "a more nuanced understanding of the subjective nature of wartime experience and its representations."[278] Increasing nuance in close analyses of wartime experiences and events is highly beneficial even on the larger scale, as it allows for smaller-scale analyses to be applied on the larger scale. For example, one woman's support of certain aspects of nationalist ideology but not others provides for a richer discussion of women's support of and interaction with nationalism on a larger scale. Conversely, one woman's directly expressed opposition to the portrayal of a particular war as an ethnic conflict allows for a complication of the narrative that such as conflict—such as the Bosnian War, of which the siege of Sarajevo was only one aspect—was based on the premise that different "ethnicities" were unwilling to live with individuals of other "ethnicities." Nuance allows for deeper analysis.

What this also allows for is the reversal of the tendency to portray women as victims in war. These women, by the very act of writing down their own experiences of war at the very least, have agency. They have chosen to position themselves as authorities. This consideration of women as agents rather than victims takes on particular significance when assessing women's experiences of wartime sexual violence. Both Alaine Polcz and the anonymous author of *A Woman in Berlin* explicitly reject narratives

[278] Wingfield and Bucur, "Introduction," 9.

that position themselves as victims by their actions and their narration. Polcz prefers to describe herself as a whore when she experiences coerced, non-consensual sex—which, it is vital to acknowledge, is rape—because to assert that she is a whore is to assert that not only is she obtaining something through this coerced sex but she is choosing to participate in this particular activity. She does not describe herself as a victim, but rather as an actor. Anonymous's decision to find a "lone wolf" to protect her allows her the same assertion of agency. Assessing the actions of agency and the ways in which women make the decision to understand their experience through an overlay of constructing themselves as agents rather than victims is only possible by using gender as a lens of analysis when reconsidering twentieth-century wars in Europe.

These women—all of them, not only the ones who acknowledge experiencing wartime sexual violence—all depict themselves as in possession of agency rather than as victims. Even in her retelling of leaving behind her first child when escaping from Soviet officials, Maria Savchyn Pyskir positions herself as an agent—she makes the choice to save herself and is forced to leave behind her child—rather than a victim because she still makes the choice. Elma Softić chooses to stay in Sarajevo even when she has the option to leave, and she chooses to marry and have a child during the siege. Natalija Zrnić-Matić chooses to have a child during wartime. What these autobiographical accounts attest to is the way in which these particular women still saw themselves as having choices during wartime, despite external pressures such as foreign occupation, artillery attacks, or the threat of sexual violence. In the living of their daily lives, these women saw themselves as still possessing options through which they could uniquely shape their daily lives.

Ethnicity and nationalism have previously been identified as strong

motivating factors for war in twentieth-century Europe. Here, too, gender must be used as a lens of analysis, with a particular examination of the ways in which women incorporate ethnicity, nationalism, and gender into their construction of their own identities. As V. Spike Peterson has argued, nationalism is an explicitly gendered phenomenon, with nationalist ideology delineating specific roles for females and males. Thus it is only logical to assess the ways in which women understand their own ethnicity, uphold nationalist ideology, and express nationalism on a personal level. Such nationalist ideologies commonly attribute to women the biological and social reproduction of the nation, making women's individual expressions of and adherence to nationalism of crucial importance.

Using gender as a category of analysis for twentieth-century wartime Europe also enriches scholarly analyses beyond just considerations of the battlefront and political games. Because women have primarily experienced war on the so-called home front,[279] the use of gender as a lens of scholarly analysis forces a reconsideration of who experienced "war," the limits to which "war" occurred, and the exact form of "war." Using women's autobiographical accounts of war *not* on the battlefront extends the limits of war beyond the battlefront or the seat of political power. It redefines war as something all citizens experience, not just soldiers on a battlefront, which in turn redefines war as something that includes negotiating pregnancy in wartime, or experiencing war without directly engaging in combat on a regular basis.

With the unfortunate legacy of European hegemony through European colonialism and imperialism existing on a global scale, the wars of twentieth-century

[279] Some notable exceptions include Flora Sandes, a British woman who served in the Serbian Army during World War I, and Ecaterina Teodoroiu, a Romanian woman who served in the Romanian Army during World War I.

Europe have served to shape world history. To forego using gender as a category through which to analyze the wars of twentieth-century Europe—that is, to eliminate the experiences of at least half the population which directly experienced wars in twentieth-century Europe—impoverishes scholarly analyses on the subject. And, quite frankly, it is irresponsible. History is not just written by politicians and generals, nor is it only written—literally—by men. History must include the woman who is doing her daily washing as Bulgarian soldiers occupy her hometown, as well as the woman who calls herself a whore after she trades sex for a mattress on which her mother-in-law can sleep. To keep these women's experiences out of history is to imply that these experiences do not matter; moreover, it implies that, ultimately, those who have experienced these events—women—do not matter.

By providing a close examination of several different women's autobiographical accounts of wartime experiences, this thesis makes the claim that including women's accounts in the history of twentieth-century wartime Europe does matter. This thesis makes the claim that integrating women's autobiographical accounts of war into scholarly discussion is to position these women as authorities on the subjects on which they write—which they most certainly are. What can bestow more authority on a particular topic—such as women's experiences of war—than firsthand experience? It is absolutely essential that gender serve as a category of analysis in scholarly examinations of twentieth-century wartime Europe. This thesis is but a small step in that direction.

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