Rape as a Weapon of War
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This essay examines how rape of women and girls by male soldiers works as a martial weapon. Continuities with other torture and terrorism and with civilian rape are suggested. The inadequacy of past philosophical treatments of the enslavement of war captives is briefly discussed. Social strategies are suggested for responding and a concluding fantasy offered, not entirely social, of a strategy to change the meanings of rape to undermine its use as a martial weapon.

Rape in war—martial rape—has even arrived in the movies. Within the past year, films I have seen featuring or portraying rape in war or in warlike situations, include Death and the Maiden (featuring a woman who survived rape by a physician who was hired to oversee her political torture), Rob Roy (portraying a strategic rape—intended to provoke a husband—by an English “nobleman” charged with putting down a Scottish rebellion), and Immortal Beloved (briefly showing the apparently gratuitous rape of a civilian stagecoach passenger by one of Napoleon’s soldiers). Closely related is Braveheart, which presents imperial rape in the “rite of the first night,” which licensed English “nobles” to rape Scottish “commoner” brides on their wedding nights. Although this imperial rape was not officially an act of war, it had some of the same goals as martial rape: genetic imperialism and a realignment of loyalties in future generations (which are made explicit in Braveheart). Each of these films displays a different aspect of martial rape. No one (to my knowledge) has yet portrayed mass rape in war.

Mass martial rape in the real world, however, is receiving media attention, and public consciousness is being raised about it. What is new is not the practice of mass rape but the extent of its relatively recent publicity and some of rape’s consequences for public health in an era of HIV. Martial rape is an ancient practice. Patterns of intelligibility to be found in it have important continuities with patterns to be found also in civilian rape. Despite differences in the structures of the relevant causes, Judith Herman argues that the “shell
Hypatia

"shock" in World War I combat survivors has important similarities to post-traumatic stress disorders as experienced by female survivors of domestic violence and rape. She finds that "the most common post-traumatic disorders are those not of men in war but of women in civilian life" and that women and children subject to civilian rape and domestic violence are in a war:

The subordinate condition of women is maintained and enforced by the hidden violence of men. There is war between the sexes. Rape victims, battered women, and sexually abused children are its casualties. Hysteria is the combat neurosis of the sex war. (Herman 1992, 28-32)

Although my focus here is on martial rape as a weapon wielded by male soldiers of one country (or national, political, or cultural group) against typically unarmed female civilians of another, much of what I say can be applied also with certain modifications in (so-called) civilian contexts.

A little more than ten years ago I began writing about rapes that are often "domestic" in two senses: they are (generally) rapes of citizens (or residents) by other citizens (or residents) of the same state, and they were often committed by members of a household against other members of the same household (Cald 1991). I now find that an important aspect of both civilian and martial rape is that it is an instrument of domestication: breaking for house service. It breaks the spirit, humiliates, tames, produces a docile, deferential, obedient soul. Its immediate message to women and girls is that we will have in our own bodies only the control that we are granted by men and thereby in general only that control in our environments that we are granted by men.

Instruments of taming include terrorism and torture, which rely on the energy-consuming and debilitating effects of fear and, as Nietzsche noted (1967, 61-62), our ability to remember what hurts. Taming is often for service—utilitarian, recreational, or both—which sets limits to terrorism and torture in that "taming" carried too far may leave an animal who is neither useful for much nor even entertaining. In the case of civilian rape, purposes commonly served include both utilitarian and recreational exploitation. Women and girls raped are often primary instruments of the exploitation of other women and girls. As with other kinds of terrorism, rape as a practice often has two targets (O'Neill 1991). One target may be a throw-away or sacrificial victim who is used to send a message to others. The role of women who are raped and then murdered is like that of people who are murdered in a bombing. They are used to send a message to the second targets, whose compliance with various demands and expectations is sought by the terrorist.

The ubiquitous threat of rape in war, like that of civilian rape, is a form of terrorism. The aim in war, however, may not be service (the aim generally served by civilian rape) but expulsion or dispersion. Expulsion and dispersion
do not set limits to the extent and degree of terrorism and torture as the hope of future exploitation would do, because it does not matter to the terrorists whether those to be expelled or dispersed survive. Again, there are often two targets, sacrificial victims and others to whom their sacrifice is used to send a message. Martial rape domesticates not only the women survivors who were its immediate victims but also the men socially connected to them, and men who were socially connected to those who did not survive.

If there is one set of fundamental functions of rape, civilian or martial, it is to display, communicate, and produce or maintain dominance, which is both enjoyed for its own sake and used for such ulterior ends as exploitation, expulsion, dispersion, murder. Acts of forcible rape, like other instances of torture, communicate dominance by removing our control over what enters or impinges on our bodies. Rape is a cross-cultural language of male domination (that is, domination by males; it can also be domination of males). This is its symbolic social meaning. Civilian domination characteristically issues in exploitation for service, although some forms of even civilian rape—such as college fraternity party gang rapes—may be best understood as a kind of training for war. An aim of civilian rape is female heterosexual dependency and service. The rapes of some women send a message to others that they need “protection” (Griffin 1979; Card 1991). The ever-present threat of rape from childhood through old age produces a society of females who are generally oriented toward male service—females animated by the hope of securing male protection as a reward for such service—females who often feel bound to those they serve through misplaced gratitude for a “protection” that is mostly only a withholding of abuse (Card 1991). By contrast, martial rape aims to splinter families and alliances and to bind not women to men but warrior rapists to one another. The activity of martial rape, often relatively public, can serve as a bonding agent among perpetrators and at the same time work in a variety of ways to alienate family members, friends, and former neighbors from each other, as in cases where the perpetrators had been friends or neighbors of those they later raped.

Accounts from recently surviving rape victims and perpetrators indicate that purposes currently served in Bosnia-Herzegovina include genocide, expulsion, revenge, and obedience (although in many cases, not service) and that its ultimate targets are entire peoples (Stiglmayer 1993). The same patterns are discernible historically in the rapes of Vietnamese women by U.S. GI’s (Brownmiller 1975, 86-113) and of Native American women by British soldiers (Storm 1972). As forcible impregnation, martial rape can also be a tool of genetic imperialism. Where the so-conceived child’s social identity is determined by that of the biological father, impregnation by martial rape can undermine family solidarity. Even if no pregnancy results, knowledge of the rape has been sufficient for many men in patriarchal societies to reject wives, mothers, and daughters, as was reported to have happened to many Bengali
women raped by Pakistani soldiers in 1971 (Brownmiller 1975, 76-86). Ultimately, martial rape can undermine national, political, and cultural solidarity, changing the next generation’s identity, confusing the loyalties of all victimized survivors.

There is more than one way to commit genocide. One way is mass murder, killing individual members of a national, political, or cultural group. Another is to destroy a group’s identity by decimating cultural and social bonds. Martial rape does both. Many women and girls are killed when rapists are finished with them. If survivors become pregnant or are known to be rape survivors, cultural, political, and national unity may be thrown into chaos. These have been among the apparently intended purposes of the mass rapes of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Rwandan women by Hutu soldiers (Lorch 1995), of Vietnamese women by U.S. GI’s, of the systematic rapes of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971, and earlier of Native American women by British soldiers.

Where genocide by cultural decimation is the principal aim, universal slaughter of captives is unnecessary. Instead of being slaughtered, captives may be enslaved or dispersed. Historically, women have often been thus enslaved for sexual service. In his history of slavery, Milton Meltzer (1993) notes that one primary source of slaves in the ancient world was the practice of taking war captives who, in a pre-agricultural age, would have been slaughtered. John Rawls observed in A Theory of Justice:

There may be transition cases where enslavement is better than current practice. For example, suppose that city-states that previously have not taken prisoners of war but have always put captives to death agree by treaty to hold prisoners as slaves instead. Although we cannot allow the institution of slavery on the grounds that the greater gains of some outweigh the losses to others, it may be that under these conditions, since all run the risk of capture in war, this form of slavery is less unjust than present custom . . . The arrangement seems an advance on established institutions, if slaves are not treated too severely. In time it will presumably be abandoned altogether, since the exchange of prisoners of war is a still more desirable arrangement, the return of the captured members of the community being preferable to the services of slaves. (Rawls 1971, 248)

This semi-speculative account, however, does not address the situation of women who are enslaved as war captives and treated as booty. Even in a pre-agricultural age, the practice prior to enslavement of enemy soldiers may have been to slaughter the males but enslave females for sexual service. Captured and impregnated females might be “persuaded” to alter their loyalties where nothing comparable could have been done to change the loyalties
of their fathers or spouses. Mary Renault's historical novels (e.g., Renault 1972) present captive women and adolescents of both sexes as enslaved for sexual service in the ancient world and sold on an international market, a practice that may have existed long before any such an agreement as Rawls imagined was reached among men. What would such a new agreement do to improve the lot of women?

For men, enslavement rather than slaughter as war captives has two apparent advantages. First, if any man might become a war captive, it could be to his advantage to survive (rather than be killed) even as a slave and hope for a reversal of fortune. Second, slavery instituted a class system, providing exploitable productive labor for conquerors. But to what advantages could a woman look forward who was enslaved rather than slaughtered? Would a captured woman who was impregnated, gave birth, and then survived to be freed when political fortunes changed be better off after the change of political fortune? What would have become of her identity? Of her children and her ties to them? If she were not a lesbian, who would be eager to have her returned in an exchange of prisoners of war? Or, as a woman of the victorious party, what would it do for her were her husband to take female concubines from defeated peoples?

Under universal (bisexual) slavery for productive labor (as opposed to female concubinage), enslaved women have been permitted to live temporarily in families with enslaved men. This was true, for example, under American slavery. That practice, however, coexisted with enslaved women's continual liability to rape by free men and to fear of being sold. Here rape continues to send the message of dominance, to enforce dominance, and has the potentiality to wreak havoc with bonds among those enslaved, especially as survivors may be portrayed as willing rather than raped.

Although some women have been exploited as sexual slaves and others as sacrificial victims, enslavement and service have not been the apparent primary aims of the rapes of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Rather, the expulsion and dispersion of entire ethnic groups appears to be a primary aim of some perpetrators and failing that, genocide by a combination of murder and forcible impregnation. The idea has not been to bind captive women to captors, but to destroy family and community bonds, humiliate and terrorize, ultimately to drive out and disperse entire peoples in "ethnic cleansing," the current euphemism for genocide.

When I refer to the purposes of martial rape, I have in mind its strategic purposes, those appreciable at the level of authority and command. Individual rapists, those who carry out the strategy, may not intend those purposes or be moved by them, just as they may be ignorant of larger purposes served by various orders they implement. Thus there is room, as we will see, at the level of particular acts of rape for many motives. Like civilian rape, martial rape has become a political institution. As with other institutions, the purposes that it
serves and that lead those with power to maintain it need not move many of its participants. Sometimes the purpose is more likely to move those who do nothing to resist the practice or who support it as relative outsiders. Thus, civilian rape serves a domestic protection racket (Griffin 1979) whereby males secure the services of females in exchange for protection (against other males). But this does not imply that men who rape intend to terrorize women into seeking male protection; they may or they may not. It may be more likely relative outsiders, judging that a raped woman was “asking for it,” who intend protectionism. Likewise, martial rape is a practice defined by unwritten rules (for example, the rules that only females are “fair game,” that age does not matter, that soldiers who rape “enemy women” are not to be reported for it, that anonymous publicity of it may be desirable). Action in accord with these norms serves purposes identifiable independently of the motives or intentions of individual rapists. A soldier may rape because he was ordered, or because he felt like it. Superior officers, on the other hand, may look the other way because of the martial purposes such rapes serve.

Some women survivors in Bosnia-Herzegovina assume, because those who raped them were previously neighbors from whom they could not imagine such brutality, that the soldiers must have been under orders (Stiglmayer 1993, 120). Yet rape violates international rules of war. Soldiers may not always be given direct orders. They may be induced in other ways, for example, they may be given reason to believe that if they do not participate, they will be beaten or raped themselves. Some interviewed rapist captives gave other explanations. Borislav Herek from Sarajevo, who admits to raping and shooting three unarmed women, said that if he did not do it, his superiors would have sent him “to the worst front line” or to jail and that they would have taken away the Muslim’s house that they had given him (Stiglmayer 1993, 147-54). One is reminded, by such accounts, how banal evil can be at the level of motive. When pressed on why he was willing to kill people with whom he had no past history of animosity, he indicated that he was told—apparently in an attempt to incite revenge—that Muslims had killed his father and burned his house. Another motive emerged when Herek admitted that his superiors gave him women to rape along with wine and food as a reward for good behavior and to induce camaraderie with fellow soldiers.

At the level of the motivations of individual rapist soldiers, it can be difficult to see patterns. It is at the level of strategy—of order-giving, hate-mongering, rewarding and penalizing, and, equally important, of refusing to investigate and penalize on the part of military authorities—that coherent strategic patterns emerge. Alexandra Stiglmayer reports (1993, 160-61) that in the opinion of some, paramilitary groups are using rapes “to build up a kind of solidarity” among the rapists, to teach “who is ‘good’ and who is ‘contemptible,’” and to destroy bonds of friendship that had existed between former neighbors. Herek’s testimony supports that view.
A sense of purposes served by martial rape is a step toward developing strategies of resistance. But we must also ask why rape is used to achieve these purposes. Consider the aims to demoralize and disrupt bonds among those victimized and to create bonds among perpetrators. Many forms of terrorism or torture can achieve this. Why rape?

Many forms of terrorism and torture are employed in war for such ends: burning and looting of residences, villages, cities, and destruction of domestic industries, for example. Nietzsche described the phenomenon well (1967, 40), under the illusion that he was describing a prehistoric practice, in his characterization of the blond beasts (“lions,” according to Walter Kaufmann) who “emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a student’s prank, convinced they have provided the poets with a lot more material for song and praise.” Of many forms of martial terrorism, rape in a patriarchal culture has a special potential to drive a wedge between family members and to carry the expression of the perpetrator’s dominance into future generations.

Yet many survivors today obtain abortions. According to Alexandra Stiglmayer, writing about women and girls raped in Bosnia-Herzegovina, “Women who become pregnant following a rape normally reject both the pregnancy and the children”; she offers a chart with impressive statistics on abortion (1993, 135). According to a front page report in the New York Times, of more than 15,700 women and girls between the ages of thirteen and sixty-five who were raped in Rwanda between April 1994 and April 10, 1995, more than 1,100 gave birth but 5,200 had abortions, and many more pregnancies were untrackable (Lorch 1995). Many raped Rwandan women were reported to have abandoned newborns or killed themselves. Many reportedly named as their greatest fear, in a region hard hit by AIDS, infection with the HIV virus.

Thus, genetic domination may be defeated more readily today. Why women are targeted today has more to do with above-mentioned cross-cultural symbolic meaning among men in patriarchies of rape as dominance—dominance not simply over women but in war even more importantly over other men who are presumed to take pride in being protectors of women—and with the fact that women in patriarchies are such easy victims. Rape symbolizes who is dominant by forcibly, dramatically removing the most elementary controls anyone could be presumed to want: controls over one’s intimate bodily contacts with others. By way of the rules of patriarchies, such contacts, however forced, can also have consequences for the future identities of survivors.

Women who lack martial training are an easy mark for those who would communicate the message of domination. Women in patriarchies are commonly unarmed and untrained for physical combat. Perpetrators need fear little direct reprisal. Where there is concern about reprisals, the only trouble-
some witness is easily eliminable. This suggests that strategies of resistance would have women become armed and skilled in the use of weapons and in other methods of defense and self-defense, not only by martial arts and other civilian classes (perhaps funded by the state) but also by infiltration of the military at every level. Not only do females need to be able to call on skills when attacked (for which conventional military weapons may not be helpful) but the social meaning of “female” needs to be changed so that it no longer connotes “victim.” Perhaps females would do better to construct independent military organizations. At any rate, the long-range goal would be to terminate both domestic and international protection rackets and thereby change the symbolic meaning of “rape” at the same time as that of “female.”

A major long-range aim of resistance to martial rape would be to eliminate patriarchal and protectionist values. One good way to begin is to reject the idea that women should not be armed and skilled in weapons use. The idea here is not simply to equip females for self-defense against rapists but to equip females generally to need no more protection than males. Just as the domestic protection racket must be dismantled for us to be safe in our homes during times of so-called peace, the transnational protection racket, where men on all sides claim as their reason for going to war that they are fighting to protect their women, must be dismantled as well. One way to undermine it is for women to have the same access to weapons and to military training as men have presently. Probably the best all-around training in combat at the present time, certainly the most expensive (supported by general taxes), is in military institutions, although even military institutions might be encouraged to give more attention to rape resistance, incorporating relevant attitudinal training from feminist self-defense practices. Suppose the response to martial rape were not for men to reject wives, mothers, and daughters, nor for women and girls to commit suicide, run away, or hide, but rather for those raped to get abortions, if pregnant, and for women generally to become informed, armed, trained, and fight back, as Alexandra Stiglmayer reports (1993, 91-93, 98-99) that Hatiza and Razija did after they were raped in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Suppose women entered military institutions in large numbers, at every rank, in every department. There would be, first, fewer civilian females to be raped, although there would still be children, the old, the sick, and their caretakers. But what is the likelihood that males would rape in war if they fought side by side with equally trained and armed females and under the command of even more powerful females, in a society in which this phenomenon was not exceptional? Gang rape is an unlikely instrument of heterosexual peer bonding. All-male armies might still treat female soldiers of other armies as Achilles is reputed to have done with the Amazon Penthesilia during the Trojan War, but female soldiers would not be easy targets. It seems unlikely that rape could continue to symbolize dominance if women could dominate as well as men.
Many, not only extreme pacifists, will object to this strategy of resistance as a perpetuation of values that we should wish to replace rather than instantiate. Is it possible to participate in military institutions without succumbing to martial values? Without getting so caught up in supporting military practices that we lose sight of the goal of dismantling protection rackets and instead come to enjoy participating in the rites and rights of the masters?

It may be possible to participate to a greater extent than most women in the United States do today in some military institutions without succumbing to indefensible values. What counts as participating in military institutions? Those who pay taxes without withholding a portion that would support military institutions already participate. Yet one may feel ambivalent about that, regarding it as, at best, a questionably tolerable evil rather than something to be expanded. More important from a feminist point of view is the example of the women’s self-defense movement. Since the 1970s major cities throughout the U.S. have been sites of martial arts training of women by women for the purpose of both physical skill acquisition for self-defense and attitudinal change with respect to options of resistance involving uses of violence. Such relatively informal individual training for one-on-one encounters by acquaintances or civilians has been important in saving and transforming individual lives. Yet it puts only a small dent in protection rackets in a world in which formally organized violence, such as war, is an ever-present possibility. We may need to be able to rely on each other in a more organized way than the women’s self-defense movement has recognized so far, not simply on our individual raised consciousnesses and on our readiness to defend ourselves as lone individuals. If it makes good sense to be prepared to defend ourselves as individuals, why does it not also make sense to be prepared to defend ourselves as communities? When wars of self-defense are fought not primarily by those who enjoy war but primarily by those who hate it and are inclined to do it only under grave duress, there may be significantly less likelihood that military values will come to dominate the societies of those who participate in the fighting. This is one reason to prefer a universal draft to reliance on mercenaries or exclusively on voluntary enlistment.

What do you suppose the ancient Amazons did in war with their double-axes? (Why do you suppose male historians are so adamant and unanimous in their denial that the Amazons referred to by ancient Greek historians and geographers ever existed?) What would you be tempted to do with male rapist captives in war if you had a double-axe? For improvements in the direction of justice that were envisaged for males by Rawls (1971, 248) to occur also for females, female threat advantage needs to be improved, and, more basically, female image needs to be changed.

If the double-axe in battle fantasy makes you shudder, consider that changing the symbolic meaning of rape might also be achieved by attaching different social consequences and penalties—legal or extra-legal—to rape. Rape is
presently a crime that is highly tolerated in civilian and military life even by men who do not do it, many of whom regard it as natural. The tendency to regard rape as natural has roots in the symbolic significance of rape as dominance. Wars have often been fought with the explicit goal of domination. In civilian life, those who find rape natural tend to find male dominance natural.

The penalty instituted by men for martial rape has often been death, a penalty almost never carried out where there has been no murder unless there is a racist reason, and then the rape charge may be purely inflammatory. Instituting death for rape is a sure way to guarantee that the penalty will not be inflicted unless there is another reason (such as racism). I doubt that women would be more willing than men to apply the death penalty. Even where the penalty is imprisonment, rapists are seldom convicted. It could be advantageous to have a penalty that communicated that rape is unnatural and that its reward is not power, a penalty that did this so dramatically that it would be effective even if inflicted on a relatively few but well-publicized perpetrators.

I have a fantasy of such a penalty made possible by medical technology. Although only a fantasy, it is serious, not frivolous. It is not, however, serious in the sense that I would urge its legal enactment under present circumstances. I would not wish to trust a patriarchal state with power to inflict it (nor would I support setting the kind of precedent in a patriarchal state that my fantasized penalty would set). But that is moot, because a patriarchal state would not inflict this penalty in any case. My fantasy is serious in the sense that being able to regret the inadvisability of carrying it out under present circumstances may be an important step forward attitudinally and may serve as a catalyst for the envisaging of more practical fantasies. My fantasy may be best understood either as set in a nonpatriarchal state (assuming that such a state might still have occasion to fight wars and might still have recognizably female citizens), as a response to martial rape by patriarchal (or phallocratic) enemies, or as a fantasy of feminist guerilla warriors within a still patriarchal (or phallocratic) state. It might be expensive, although appropriately funded research could reduce the expense. Expense almost never deters the development of effective military weapons. And imprisonment is an expensive domestic penalty, although that does not keep states from continuing to expand its use.

My fantasy penalty is what for lack of a better term I will call compulsory transsexual surgery, that is, removal of the penis and testicles and construction of a vagina-like canal, accompanied by whatever hormone treatments may be advisable for the sake only of bodily health. I do not have in mind transgender training, such as sometimes accompanies currently voluntary applications for transsexual surgery. Part of the point is to impact social conceptions of gender. The resulting "she-males"—as Janice Raymond (1979) has called male-to-female transsexuals—would tend to be recognizable as unnatural females, as
male bodies tend to differ from female bodies structurally throughout (consider the bone structures of hands, hips, and jaws, for example), and the surgery would leave most body structures intact. Where recognition was not easy, we might devise ways of distinguishing she-males from natural females in certain contexts. There might be reasons to segregate them in prisons, for example, and all-female organizations might have reasons to want to exclude them. No doubt voluntary she-males would also want to distinguish themselves from compulsory she-males, a matter I leave to them.

Castration is an old feminist fantasy penalty for rape. In that fantasy, castration has been thought a more dramatic piece of surgery than it often is (as in Freud’s castration complex fantasies and in the case of the Amazons and their double-axes). Castration for sterilization need remove only the testes. That is not enough for present purposes. It would prevent impregnation but not rape nor the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The message of domination is communicated not only by the ability to impregnate but by the ability to penetrate forcibly. Penis removal would not, of course, prevent rape with other phallic physical instruments. But it would attack the primary symbol of male dominance (which is what suggests the use of such other weapons) with which a rapist or potential rapist is most likely to identify intimately. What needs to go is the phallus.

A natural objection to this fantasy is that treating male-to-female transsexual surgery as a punishment reinforces misogyny. An analog to this objection has been raised against “outing” prominent lesbians and gay men as punishment for bad behavior: that doing so relies on and thereby reinforces homophobia. The intention of the transsexual surgery would be partly and temporarily to deter potential rapists primarily by appealing to their fear of being perceived as female, but more importantly it would be to combat the current symbolic meaning of rape as dominance, to combat rape as a symbol of power over females (and through females, over other males). If the symbolic meaning of rape were changed, there would be less to fear about being perceived as female. The primary aim would be to combat the symbolic meaning of rape and thereby to eliminate the impulse on the part of those with power to rely on rape as a weapon of war at the level of strategic planning. I envisage this penalty not as a substitute for but as a supplement to such penalties as court martial and imprisonment, which would be needed for deterrence and prevention in certain kinds of cases anyway, a matter to which I will return.

It might also be objected that transsexual surgery is mutilation and thus violates a valuable prohibition against cruel and inhumane punishments. The objection against cruelty and inhumanity deserves to be taken more seriously than it usually is with respect to penalties currently in common use in penal systems. I doubt that transsexual surgery would be worse. In keeping with respect for humanity, however, my fantasized surgery would be carried out
under appropriate anesthesia in sanitary conditions by appropriately qualified medical personnel and would transform the offender into a reasonably healthy but unnatural female. This might be viewed as an extension and reversal of a strategy that men use already to encourage rape. Apparently, they do not regard it as inhumane.

Interviews such as those published by Alexandra Stiglmayer illustrate how at present male soldiers are goaded into raping females by threats from other males of being treated like, or regarded as, females. It works. The military has used this strategy for centuries without going all the way surgically. Radical theologian and philosopher Mary Daly (1978) quotes David Halberstam (1972) on former U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson as saying of a member of his administration who was becoming a dove on Vietnam, “Hell, he has to squat to piss.” Why not attach the threat, or promise, of being “regarded as a female” and “treated like a female” not to failing to rape but to doing it (or ordering it done or tolerating its being done)?

I envisage the infliction of this penalty in wartime. But it might be natural to extend it to civilian rapists. Further, I imagine the penalty inflicted not necessarily on the individual soldier rapist, who may have been coerced, but on those directly or indirectly responsible for the choice and on those who tolerate it by choosing not to exercise their power to investigate reports.

Here a problem may arise. What if the officer issuing the orders or refusing to investigate is female? We should not dismiss this possibility. Nazis included females who ordered and inflicted sexual tortures. Such a case indicates limitations of my fantasy penalty with respect to both deterrence and justice (insofar as justice requires inflicting the same penalty on offenders who have committed the same crime). Such cases would be limited to such conventional penalties as court martial and imprisonment. Female-to-male transsexual surgery could not make the same point in a patriarchal society. Recall, however, that the primary point is not deterrence through fear but to change the symbolic meaning of rape in society at large so that it no longer communicates dominance, thereby undermining the most important point (pun intended) of rape as a weapon of war. It is an admitted disadvantage from the point of view of justice that the penalty could not be applied to every conceivable perpetrator and, more seriously, that it might be irreversible in cases of wrongful conviction.

I call this a fantasy because until women have more political power, including military power (by which I mean martial power, the power to engage in war), such a penalty has no chance of being implemented as official policy and little chance of success even as a guerilla strategy. Yet it should be an interesting fantasy, as it directs our attention to the symbolic significance of rape. It suggests a different strategy for responding to rape than the strategy of focusing our attention on individual males who are so inclined and trying simply to prevent or deter them from acting on that inclination. Instead of taking such
inclinations as givens, my fantasy suggests a process of the social reconstruction of male inclinations regarding females as an indirect consequence of the surgical reconstruction of a few bodies of male perpetrators in the context of societies where females are vulnerable to rape (either by male neighbors or by males from other societies). This fantasy penalty of compulsory transsexual surgery is less important than the general idea that the symbolic significance of rape needs to be changed from domination to something else, to undermine men's spontaneous inclinations to use it as a weapon. Hopefully, those who dislike this fantasy will propose better ones toward that end.

NOTES

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1. This feudal custom, also known as marquette, was discussed from a radical feminist point of view in 1893 by Gage (1980). See chapter 4, "Marquette."

2. Such reliance on terrorism, however, needs to be balanced by an appreciation of our ability, also, to dissociate under stress.

3. For an exposé of fraternity gang rape, including testimony by former fraternity members who defected, see anthropologist Sanday (1990).

4. Storm (1972, 106-109) offers a fictionalized portrayal of the rape of Native American women, drawing on his knowledge of history from a Native American perspective.

5. Achilles is said to have fallen in love with Penthesilia's corpse after he slew her, which some translators take to be a euphemistic way of saying that he raped her body.

6. The case against military thinking has been well developed in Ruddick (1989).

7. For success stories, see Bart and O'Brien (1985) and Caignon and Groves (1987).

8. One commentator on an earlier draft of this essay suggested a suitably positioned scarlet "R."

9. Squatting may be culturally specific, but the point is communicated in the context in which the remark was made.

REFERENCES


