

Rape and Warfare

Rape, as the most cost-effective weapon used by militaries today, humiliates victims in a vicious demonstration of violence, power, and inhumanity. Expressive of both sexual ownership and reproductive control, rape degrades national spirit, pollutes cultural purity, and socially alienates victims. Furthermore, sexual masochism “arises with astonishing rapidity in ground warfare, [where] the penis becomes justified as a weapon in a logistical reality of unarmed noncombatants,” employed to demonstrate complete military dominance over an occupied space (Brownmiller 181). To this point, Susan Brownmiller’s *Making Female Bodies the Battlefield* and Ruth Seifert’s *War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis* illustrate the manner in which rape, used as a weapon of war, asserts military authority by objectifying women and emasculating men of dominated populations.

To begin, Susan Brownmiller’s work characterizes rape as a weapon of war utilized in dehumanizing women as well as emasculating men in order to establish military dominance. Essentially, the rape of women represents the “rape of an object doubly dehumanized - as woman, as enemy - [and] carries its own terrible logic. In one act of aggression, the collective spirit of women *and* of the nation is broken,” finalizing the authority of the occupational force (Brownmiller 181). That is to say, rape symbolizes the denial of autonomy and full personhood, classifying the subordinate victim as a lower form of humanity such that the oppressive group takes on a socially dominant role. Moreover, inhibition of women’s agency within the community correlates to suppression of reproductive self-determination. Resultantly, rape obstructs women’s physical and psychological independence, disrupting the victim’s full

participation within her society. Centrally, the objectification of women through rape dehumanizes both the women victimized and the community to which the women belong, allowing militarily dominant forces to establish both physical and reproductive authority over an occupied space.

Continuing, Brownmiller further analyzes rape as a military tactic used to emasculate men and, as a result, reaffirm military authority in a conquered region. That is to say, “for women, there is nothing unprecedented about mass rape in war...nor is it a precedent when...leaders of the overrun country call the endemic sexual violence a conspiracy to destroy their national pride [and] their manhood” in order to assert complete occupational dominance (Brownmiller 181). In other words, the rape of another community’s women represents ownership over the community’s reproductive resources and, therefore, symbolically castrates men of the dominated region. Consequently, in the context of military occupations, the rape of women corresponds to the emasculation of men through the hindrance of the men’s capacity to express virility. At the crux, employment of rape as a tactic of warfare effectively silences a dominated group’s masculinity by controlling women’s sexuality to metaphorically castrate men of the occupied region and establish complete military authority.

Similarly, Ruth Seifert’s work delves into rape in the context of war as a weapon that objectifies women and emasculates men to confirm military authority in an occupied region. Most notably, rape represents “a violent invasion into the interior of one’s body represents the most severe attack imaginable upon the intimate self and the dignity of a human being: by any measure it is a mark of severe torture” that precipitates “physical pain, loss of dignity, an attack on identity, and a loss of self-determination” over one’s corporeal self (Seifert 55). Fundamentally, rape communicates dominance over the victim’s physical and sexual self,

inhibiting the victim's capacity to express full personhood. The hindrance of one's personhood corresponds to the objectification of one's body, ultimately inhibiting agency and autonomy traditionally associated with achieving personhood. Additionally, military rapes in the context of warfare dehumanize women, denying the victims the rights of personhood and silencing victim voices. Essentially, rape, when used as a weapon, further suppresses the women of a dominated region by oppressing women's agency, hindering women's personhood, and objectifying women's bodies to uphold the authority of an occupational force.

Furthermore, Seifert depicts how the emasculating effects of rapes related to military occupation aid the establishment of military dominance. In other words, "in the context of war, rape can be considered the final symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male opponent...the rape of women carries an additional message: it communicates from man to man, so to speak, that the men around the women in question are not able to protect 'their' women" and, as a result, characterized as incompetent, undesirable representations of failed masculinity (Seifert 59). That is to say, the expression of sexual control and, therefore, ownership over a community's women symbolically castrates men of the dominated community. Denied access to women, men of the occupied region cannot demonstrate reproductive virility or physical power. Metaphorically castrated by reproductive ineffectiveness and military failure, dominated men experience emasculation that concedes physical and social authority to the occupational force. Centrally, the rape of and sexual control over women in the context of warfare asserts a dominant, masculinized group's power over a subordinate, emasculated group.

In conclusion, rape combines a deadly combination of malice, power, and humiliation used to establish complete military authority over an occupied region. Capable of dehumanizing women's bodies and symbolically castrating men, rape represents the most effective weapon in

psychological and reproductive warfare. At the crux, both Susan Brownmiller's *Making Female Bodies the Battlefield* and Ruth Seifert's *War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis* illustrate rape as an objectifying and emasculating force, delving into the manner in which military forces employ rape as a method of attaining occupational dominance over populations.