

A Woman in Berlin: The Complexity of Humiliation at the End of World War II

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William Ian Miller (1993) describes how humiliation can affect two parties in an interaction. His analysis illuminates the problems facing the anonymous author of *A Woman in Berlin*. Her war-time diary described how she coped with being raped by Russian soldiers. In 1954 a reviewer of the published diary accused her of shameless immorality for openly discussing the subject. The generally negative reaction of reviewers suggested that to postwar Germans the woman's identity, and that of her friends, had been irretrievably spoiled (Goffman, 1963). Moreover her fiancé had felt equally humiliated. Horrified by her willingness to write about the matter, he left her soon after returning from the war. Although the exigencies of war failed to mortify the diarist, the later negative reactions did. Other examples, such as one recalled by Edith Hahn Beer (1999), indicate how troubling postwar women's independent behavior was to their returning men.