2005-2006 Hans Rosenberg Article Prize Laudatio

Mary Nolan, "Germans as Victims During the Second World War: Air Wars, Memory Wars," *Central European History* 38 (2005): 7–40.

Robert G. Moeller, "Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold-War History of World War II's Legacies," *History and Memory* 17 (Spring/Summer 2005): 145–94.

The Prize Committee decided on this rather unusual selection of two articles produced virtually simultaneously on the same topic by established, widely respected historians of the same academic generation for a number of reasons. Both pieces brilliantly illuminate recent public debates about Germans as victims in World War II and its immediate aftermath by inserting these debates into the historical contexts of earlier phases of German memory wars in the post war period. Moeller and Nolan both provide a clearly articulated analysis of the shift from the memory politics of the 1980s and 1990s, dominated by the rhetoric of Germans as perpetrators, to the intense public discussions instigated by the recent writings of W.G. Sebald, Günter Grass and Jorg Friedrich. They each employ a distinctive, wide-ranging scholarly expertise in post-war German history to demystify claims about repressed memories of German suffering, to reveal unrecognized continuities through more obvious shifts in the focus of public controversy, and especially to lengthen, deepen and diversify the historical contexts that frame current debates. Moeller's piece is especially acute in pushing the relevant contexts back to the Weimar period and in tracing the shifting rhetorics of victimization in both East and West during the early decades of the Cold War era. Nolan is especially penetrating in her readings of the rhetoric of forgetting and repression in the current debates, in situating those debates within the post-unification politics of national identity and in pointing to the diversity of generational, gender and political-status perspectives that shaped both past experiences and current memories. Both pieces are exemplary in their reflexive, historical thinking about historical memory, in the way they help the reader think through the framing assumptions of the current debate and thus open up new possibilities for future analyses that will be enriched by a full acknowledgement of the diversity of past and present perspectives.

The two prize-winning articles do not make striking claims based on new archival research. They are both synthetic pieces that encourage us to rethink present battles over public memory through reflection on the history of German identity politics since 1945.

These articles ask us to stop and think about how what we already know can help us formulate pertinent questions for future scholarship. They are, as one member of the committee expressed it, "anchor" articles, anchoring the ship of historical scholarship in preparation for new excursions and discoveries. Nolan and Moeller use their knowledge of the genealogy and shifting frameworks of Germany's postwar battles over public memory to argue that we should not strip Germans of their experiential diversity and turn them into simply victims or perpetrators; that we should recognize the construction of the complex, conflicted identities of Germans who

participated in the war as both perpetrators and victims in various degrees, that we should cease pursuing the myth of a single authentic German experience.. The task of historians, as they see it, is to illuminate the complex nuances of historical determinations and motivations, while still retaining moral clarity about the unequal balance sheet of suffering and brutality, of innocence and guilt, for both groups and individuals. In our professional reviews of our colleagues' academic achievements we normally list "scholarly publications" and "service to the discipline and profession". The articles by Moeller and Nolan belong in both categories.

The 2005-2006 Hans Rosenberg Article Prize Committee

David S. Luft, University of California at San Diego

Maureen Healy, Oregon State University

John E. Toews, University of Washington.