

# Women in War: Examples from Norway and Beyond

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## **WOMEN IN WAR**

Women in War

Examples from Norway and Beyond

*Edited by*

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Kjersti Ericsson

Oslo

Prologue

The Nightgown

Sanna Ørsjødal Brattland

On 18 September 1945 an indignant question was published in the Norwegian regional newspaper *Adresseavisen*, with the headline: 'Mr Acting Bishop Fjellbu. Why did you forget the women's efforts?' The statement was signed 'Several Women', and came as a response to a speech given at a World War II memorial service outside the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. 'It is felt as injustice and ingratitude that one never once heard you mention the word "women" in connection with the heroes who fell for their country'. They continued: 'When the Bishop on Sunday mentioned those who have lost a husband, a son, a brother – some of us expected you to add those of you who have lost a mother or sister. But these words never came'<sup>1</sup> (*Adresseavisen*, 18 September 1945).

Which narratives become history and which do not? Female perspectives are limited in the official Norwegian World War II memory culture. After the war there was a tendency for women's efforts to be referred to as a sort of a *housewifely duty* (Lenz and Storeide 2011, pp. 123–126). A relative of one of the female prisoners in *SS Strafgefängenenlager Falstad*, a German prison camp in the middle of occupied Norway, stated in an email: 'My mother often pointed out that women's efforts in the service of peace, and what they were exposed to during the war, were not highlighted to the same extent as men's efforts'<sup>2</sup> (The Falstad Centre 2013). Looking for the stories that have not been included can thus be an interesting exercise, giving us information about the context in which history is made and told.

In 2013 Norway celebrated the centenary of women's suffrage. For the Falstad Centre the anniversary became a reminder of how limited knowledge about the female prisoners in *SS Strafgefängenenlager Falstad* was, compared to the knowledge of the male prisoners. Sixty-eight years after the war ended the stories of the women at Falstad became relevant. However, by this point many of the former prisoners had already passed away. A daughter of one of the women said: 'Mum chose not to talk about it. Nevertheless, I have always known'<sup>3</sup> A few families had no idea that their relative had been imprisoned, and were extremely surprised when they received a letter from the Falstad Centre: 'Neither I nor my siblings have heard anything about this. When I got the letter, I was a little shaken'<sup>4</sup> (The Falstad Centre 2013).

The women imprisoned in *SS Strafgefängenenlager Falstad* seemed to have handled their experiences in a number of different ways after the war, some keeping silent, some sharing their stories in various forums and forms. A white nightgown with a blue pattern was given to Falstad by the family of one of the female prisoners. On the front of the nightgown a dark blue heart has embroidered on it in neat white stitches the three names: 'Erling. Norvall. Trygve.' On the right there is a blue patch saying 'Falstad 1/6-20/9 1944' with uneven letters, while on the left side blue patches with white stitches show the dates when the owner was at Grini prison camp, sick in a diphtheria cell, and her prisoner number '14642'. On the back of the nightgown, 'Heim 25-4-45.' (home) is embroidered in the same white letters (The Falstad Centre 2013). The nightgown belonged to Margrethe Venæs. She was arrested as a hostage on Wednesday 31 May 1944 in the so-called Aktion Oleander. The Gestapo discovered the resistance group her husband Trygve was part of. Trygve was able to escape. A few days later Margrethe was sent to *SS Strafgefängenenlager*

Falstad. Her oldest son, Norvald, later writes in a letter to the Falstad Centre:

*A couple of days after Dad had escaped, and we had moved to Seterlia and Auntie, Mum had to go home to pick up some clothes for us. Mum said to Auntie, half in jest, that if she didn't come back, Auntie had to look after us. SHE DIDN'T COME back! Not until nearly a whole year later.*<sup>5</sup>

After the war, Margrethe's story, along with the nightgown, was kept within the family. By contrast, the media took an interest in Trygve's story and a monument was erected at the site of his escape (The Falstad Centre 2013).

Was Margrethe's effort forgotten? Was it regarded as the *duty of a housewife*? Or did she not want public attention? We may speculate on the reasons why her efforts were excluded from the public narrative, but the fact is that Margrethe did communicate her story. She embroidered it on her nightgown. However, most of us do not look for historical sources in our grandmother's wardrobe. More often we consult encyclopedias, biographies and, to be blunt, stories of heroism and resistance mostly dominated by men, both as authors and as subjects. It took almost 70 years for Margrethe's story to attract public attention, but the unusual source was there all along. Why did we not see it? Women's efforts in war and conflict have never been given as much consideration as men's efforts, and this continues to be the case. That does not mean there are no stories.

Perhaps we are just looking in the wrong places. **References**

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Sanna Brattland.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Accio Språktjenester.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by Accio Språktjenester.

<sup>4</sup> Translated by Accio Språktjenester.

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Accio Språktjenester.

PART I

Frames

## **Mittens made by a female prisoner in Falstad prison camp**

Courtesy of the Falstad Memorial and Centre for Human Rights and photographer Nils Torske  
Chapter 1

Introduction

Kjersti Ericsson

Today there is a resurgence of interest in World War II. Various aspects of this most devastating war in history are being examined and re-examined. One aim of this book is to take part in this process of examination and re-examination, evaluation and re-evaluation. Several chapters present new empirical findings, and all the chapters deal with women's experience, a topic that has still not been sufficiently explored.

The book examines how World War II and its aftermath affected women in Norway. Why is Norway interesting? No combatant or occupied countries had identical experiences. Consequently singularities are important if one is to get a full picture of how World War II affected the peoples involved. However, the singularities of the Norwegian experience do not preclude Norway's being treated as an illustrative case demonstrating general, gendered issues actualized in wars both past and present.

In the second introductory chapter Kristen Williams discusses the gender dynamics at play during and after war. Her perspective is international, and includes literature from a great number of armed conflicts in many corners of the world. Williams' chapter provides a general frame, making visible and explicit the gendered issues emerging in the following contributions.

This first introductory chapter will also provide some frames. The Norwegian context will be briefly presented, with a description of some of the main features of Norway under German occupation, followed by a sketch of the social situation of women at the outbreak of war.

The gender dynamics discussed by Williams run through the separate chapters of this book. In addition, there are some other common themes that merit attention, themes that are central to the discipline of criminology, but likely to be of interest to social scientists of all backgrounds, and to the general public as well. The themes emphasized here are the following: how the victim is conceived, social control, processes of definition and remembrance.

The book has four parts: [Part I](#), with [Chapter 1](#) by Kjersti Ericsson and [Chapter 2](#) by Kristen P. Williams contributes frames and contexts for the rest of the book. In [Part II](#) we learn about war-inflicted suffering and struggles for survival. [Chapter 3](#) by Irene Levin discusses the actions of Norwegian Jewish women faced with the deadly menace of arrest and deportation, and makes visible the silent anguish of the survivors. [Chapter 4](#) by Marianne Neerland Soleim tells the hitherto unknown story of women from Eastern Europe who were captured by the Germans and shipped to Norway as forced labour. [Chapter 5](#) by Anette Bringedal Houge gives an overview of today's knowledge of sexual violence in wars past and present. Houge also points to dilemmas that have to be dealt with in the effort to prevent this kind of violence. In [Chapter 6](#) by Jon Reitan we return to Norway and World War II, to the German prison camp Falstad and its female inmates.

[Part III](#) focuses on contested relations, although we certainly encounter suffering and struggles for survival as well. [Chapter 7](#) by Claudia Lenz discusses the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory effects of war on gender relations. In [Chapter 8](#), Kristin Hobson finds both continuity and (brutal) change in the policies targeting gay men and lesbian women before, during and after the Nazi regime. In [Chapter 9](#) by Unni Rustad and Kjersti Ericsson we meet female members of the resistance who found themselves labelled enemies of the state when the war was over. [Chapter 10](#) by Kjersti Ericsson describes the conflicting interpretations of sexual relationships between Norwegian women and German soldiers: as a personal love affair or a political choice.

Wars do not end when the weapons become silent. In [Part IV](#), some issues from the aftermath of the war are treated. In [Chapter 11](#), Per Ole Johansen examines how the courts reasoned in trials against female former employees of the State Police. The topic of [Chapter 12](#) by Knut Papendorf is the internment of women who had sexual relations with Germans, the alleged purpose of this internment and its social meaning. In [Chapter 13](#), Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen describe what

was called the 'war child problem', the authorities' approach to this 'problem' and the lived experience of the German-Norwegian war children. The final chapter of the book by Inger Skjelsbæk takes us to the international political scene. Skjelsbæk discusses recent efforts to make states agree on and implement policies to protect women during war and to involve them in negotiations and peacemaking. **Norway During the German Occupation**

When Norway was invaded by German forces on 9 April 1940 the Norwegian people had not experienced war since the Napoleonic era. As an ally of the defeated Napoleon, Denmark had to surrender Norway to Sweden in 1814. A brief war between Norway and Sweden followed, before Norway agreed to union with Sweden. A tense situation developed almost a hundred years later, in 1905, when Norway seceded from the union, but war was avoided.

Norway remained neutral during World War I, but despite its neutrality was not unaffected by the war. Soaring prices made life difficult for many families. On the other hand, neutrality created great economic opportunities for the Norwegian merchant fleet. Taking advantage of high freight prices, new shipping companies mushroomed. This business, however, became very dangerous when the Germans started their unrestricted submarine war. In the waters around the British Isles, ships were sunk without warning. Nearly two thousand sailors from the Norwegian merchant fleet were killed.

In 1940 Norway was badly prepared for war. After a short campaign the Norwegian army capitulated on 10 June. The King and the government managed to escape to Britain, where they continued as a government in exile.

Negotiations between the Germans and members of the Norwegian elite remaining in the country failed to give Norway a collaborative government with any legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Norway was subsequently governed by a civil German administration called the *Reichskommissariat*, led by Joseph Terboven. So-called 'commissary cabinet ministers' from the Norwegian Nazi party, Nasjonal Samling (NS) were subordinates of the *Reichskommissar*, as was the so-called 'minister president' Vidkun Quisling, leader of NS. In the last election before the war, in 1936, the NS got two per cent of the votes. During the occupation the NS was the only legal political party: membership peaked in the autumn of 1943, reaching 43,400.

The occupation brought between 300,000 and 400,000 German troops to Norway – a large number for a country with a population of three million people. In the sparsely populated but strategically important northern part of the country, the Germans outnumbered the natives in many communities. In addition, thousands of slave labourers were shipped to Norway, mostly from Eastern Europe. The biggest group was Soviet prisoners of war, numbering about 100,000.

Comparatively speaking, Norway experienced a 'mild' occupation regime with relatively little loss of human life. The Nazi leadership regarded the Norwegian population as racially valuable, and the SS leader Heinrich Himmler was infatuated with ancient Norwegian culture. There was no question of waging '*Vernichtungskrieg*' in Norway. However, the relative mildness of the occupation regime was probably also due to the kind of resistance that the German occupiers encountered: predominantly non-violent campaigns of civil disobedience, directed as much against the NS as against the Germans.

This is not to say that Norwegians did not experience brutality and harsh repression during the occupation. Two events stand out in this respect: the first is the deportation of 772 Jews to Auschwitz, and the subsequent murder of almost all of them. Only a handful returned to Norway after the war. The second is the scorched earth tactic employed in the northern part of the country in the autumn of 1944. The county of Finnmark, and part of Troms, was burnt and completely destroyed, and the population forcibly evacuated.

The German persecution of the resistance resulted in imprisonment, torture and execution for many Norwegians. It was not only saboteurs and armed resistance fighters who risked death if caught: non-violent resistance work could also be extremely dangerous. Of the 40,000 political prisoners in Norway, ten per cent were women. 9,000 were sent to prison camps in Germany, among them 150 women.

About 10,000 Norwegians died of war-related causes during the occupation. This figure comprises those who fell in military campaigns, those who were killed (executed or otherwise) because of resistance work, Jews deported to death camps, sailors in the merchant fleet whose ships were torpedoed, civilians, and Norwegian Nazis or informers liquidated by the resistance. Less than ten per cent of those who died were women. The largest group of war victims killed in Norway was not Norwegian nationals, but 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war made to work as slave labourers (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 1999). **The Place of Women**

The war hit a society that had just started to recover from the difficult times of the 1930s, when there had been recession and widespread unemployment. Unemployment influenced gender relations. Conflict between male and female workers was intensified when the labour movement adopted a policy of denying married women gainful employment. Married women had men to provide for them, and did not need a job, the argument ran.

The idea that men were the natural providers and women the natural homemakers was firmly rooted, not only in the labour movement, but in Norwegian society at large. According to the definitions of the day, only 27 per cent of female Norwegians over 15 years of age were working women. Among women who were married, a small minority, 3.9 per cent, were counted as working. Married women who worked on their own farm were classified as housewives, as were women who worked part time or had seasonal work (Blom and Sogner 1999, p. 345). These definitions, that made a large part of women's work invisible, both reflected and reinforced the idea that a woman's place was in the home. Countercurrents existed, but lacked the strength to challenge the self-evident truths about gender ingrained in Norwegian culture.

Norwegian women got the vote in 1913, but their political influence remained marginal. In the last local elections before World War II (1937) 2.5 per cent of those elected were women. In the last parliamentary election before the war (1936) one solitary seat out of 150 was won by a woman (Blom and Sogner 1999, p. 349). The first female government minister was appointed in 1945. She was Kirsten Hansteen, widow of the union leader Viggo Hansteen, who was executed by the Nazis. She was a minister without portfolio, representing the communists in the first post-war government, a coalition government that preceded the parliamentary election of October 1945.

Times of war are extraordinary times, at least in a stable and peaceful country like Norway. The German occupation during World War II is remembered as 'the five dark years', clearly set apart both from the period that preceded it, and the period that followed. Yet at the same time war is business as usual. Social structures, social relations and social norms do not necessarily change in fundamental ways: everyday life goes on, and most people continue in the social roles they had before the war.

During the war Norwegian women went on fulfilling their womanly duties as housewives and homemakers. They did so under strenuous and difficult conditions, and had to be both hard-working and creative to meet the needs of their families. They were expected to act in accordance with prescribed femininity with its twin pillars of domesticity and sexual modesty, and most women did.

However, some women transcended their allotted gender roles by taking on tasks that were considered to belong to the repertoire of masculinity, for example by acting as head of the

household in the absence of the husband, or by taking active part in the resistance movement. And some violated the norms of femininity by entering into sexual relationships with German soldiers, a behaviour that was regarded as a blatant demonstration of sexual immodesty.

In this book we encounter women in a wide range of roles: as victims of the holocaust ([Chapter 3](#) by Levin), as political prisoners ([Chapter 6](#) by Reitan), as employees of the State Police and defendants accused of political crimes (Johansen's chapter), as diligent housewives ([Chapter 7](#) by Lenz), as active resistance members ([Chapter 9](#) by Rustad and Ericsson), as forced labourers transported thousands of kilometres from their home ([Chapter 4](#) by Soleim), as girlfriends of German soldiers ([Chapter 10](#) by Ericsson) and mothers of German-Norwegian babies ([Chapter 13](#) by Ericsson and Simonsen), as internees after liberation ([Chapter 12](#) by Papendorf). No matter what their role, their gender was significant. As victims of the holocaust they were subjected to the deadly logic of Nazi extermination policies, which sent every deported female Norwegian Jew and her children directly to the gas chambers, since they were seen as useless as forced labour. As political prisoners they were spared some brutality on the part of the guards, but they suffered greater isolation than their male counterparts. As defendants and former employees of the State Police they actively played on gendered conceptions to minimize the seriousness of their offences, sometimes with considerable success. As housewives their duties were to feed and clothe their families, despite all the difficulties. As resistance members they were often expected to act as the subordinate 'helpers' of the 'real' war heroes (male), and their contributions to the struggle for freedom were more often than not made invisible in post-war society. As forced labourers they had to do hard and strenuous women's work in conditions reminiscent of slavery. As girlfriends of German soldiers they were vilified as whores and sexual traitors. **Various Disciplines â€”**

### **Common Themes**

This book is multidisciplinary, with an emphasis on criminology. The authors have backgrounds in criminology, history, peace and conflict studies, political science, psychology, sociology and sociology of law, social pedagogy and social work. Despite this variety, some themes run across chapters. The most central common themes, given the topic of the book, have to do with gender in war.

Today gender and war is a broad and active academic field. Like most subdisciplines of gender studies, it started with a focus on women's experiences, hitherto mostly invisible, and later expanded to include men too as gendered beings. In this book we have chosen to concentrate on the women, as there are still, 70 years after the war ended, so many stories waiting to be told and examined from a woman-sensitive angle.

The relatively recent wars in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda drew public attention to the existence of widespread sexual violence against women, triggering research, and legal and political action. After World War II, there was no such attention to the particular ways in which women had suffered. The Nuremberg tribunal more or less ignored sexual violence against women (Askin 1997, p. 163). The gendered gaze on World War II has predominantly been adopted by researchers and writers one generation or more younger than the women experiencing this war at first hand.

[Chapter 2](#) by Williams introduces gendered issues actualized in wars both past and present. Her general presentation is echoed in the chapters that follow, which mostly address Norway during World War II. In the final chapter, written by Skjelsbæk, the horizon is widened. What is done in today's world to protect women in armed conflicts, and also, above all, to include them in peace negotiations, transition processes and reconstruction? And what are the problems to be overcome? With its final chapter, this book not only looks back, but points to the possibility of using the painful experiences of the past for future benefits.

Besides gender the reader will find several themes that are touched on in more than one chapter. I will draw attention to the following: how the victim is conceived, social control, processes of definition and remembrance. **The Conception of Victim**

The US scholar Cynthia Enloe has coined the term 'womenandchildren' to characterize the role assigned to women when war is spoken of: 'To mobilize a nation for war one must, on the one hand, activate the image of the heroic male protector, and on the other, the undifferentiated passive mass of "womenandchildren" in need of protection' (Enloe 1990, p. 13).

Women are certainly victimized in war, particularly by sexual violence, as is discussed in [Chapter 5](#) by Houge and [Chapter 14](#) by Skjelsbæk. The increased international attention to sexual violence against women is an important development to be wholeheartedly welcomed. However, the two chapters mentioned also draw attention to the lack of any breakthrough in the efforts to include women as agents in processes of peacemaking. While the work against sexual violence is supported by the familiar image of the female victim, women as influential negotiators and peacemakers seem harder to envisage.

The word victim has connotations of passivity and weakness, and to be a victim is often contrasted with having agency. However, this is a false dichotomy. A victim may be inherently strong and resourceful, but still find herself in a position of impotence. All human beings will do what they perceive as possible to influence their situation, even in the most restricted of circumstances.

[Chapter 3](#) by Levin on the Jewish women in Norway clearly demonstrates that victimhood does not preclude agency. Women actively tried to save themselves and their families by escaping to Sweden. When Jewish men were arrested, women tried to help and care for their husbands, brothers and sons by finding ways to equip them with warm clothes and food. The combined stereotypes of 'victim' and 'woman', both associated with helplessness and passivity, have made it difficult to perceive the activity of Jewish women. Thus important nuances in the story of the fate of the Norwegian Jews have been lost. Irene Levin aims to restore these nuances. She also shows that agency had a high price – surviving women who did not succeed in saving their loved ones may feel guilty, and grapple with questions so painful that silence is the only way to handle them.

The position of victim may be contested. This point is illustrated by [Chapter 12](#) by Papendorf on the internment of the 'German girls' after the liberation. While the majority of the Norwegian population probably regarded these women as sexual traitors, the legitimation and practice of internment was ambiguous. Were the women in need of protection against vengeful mobs, or deserving of punishment for their unpatriotic deeds? In the first case, they would be potential victims, in the second case, they would be offenders. The 'German girls' were not offenders in the legal sense, and they were interned under the so-called 'protection directive'. However, the social function of the internment seems to have been punitive – an equivalent to prison for women who could not be brought before a criminal court.

Positions may also change over time. This has definitely been the case for the 'German girls', who, in public perception, have gone from being perpetrators of sexual treason to being victims of post-war hatred and misogyny (see [Chapter 10](#) by Ericsson). This changed perception may have to do with broad social and cultural developments, such as the improved social position of women, and the influence of feminism. A paradoxical result of this feminist re-evaluation is decreased emphasis on the 'German girls' as responsible individuals, able to make their own choices in a tense political situation. The Danish historian Anette Warring (2005, pp. 48–49) also points to other factors behind the changed perception of the 'German girls': the weakening of the nation as a source of moral obligations, and the increasing importance of human rights. The change may be partly generational – for generations that did not experience the German occupation, the question of 'sexual treason' feels less urgent.

To return to Enloe and her term 'womenandchildren', there is a cultural readiness to perceive women as victims in war: weak, passive, helpless. The connotations of the word 'victim' threaten to make women's agency, an agency that is present even in very difficult and restricted circumstances, invisible.

Today the archetypal blameless female war victim is a woman raped by the soldiers of the enemy. During World War II (and in many wars past and present) some women were also seen as perpetrators. The most conspicuous were those who had consensual sexual relationships with enemy soldiers. Both the female war victim archetype and the category of 'sexual traitor' attest to the importance of women's sexuality in war. **Social Control**

Social control is a key concept in criminology. Social control works through a range of different institutions and mechanisms, both formal, such as the police, courts and prisons, and informal, such as daily interaction within the family and peer group, and between strangers.

Sanctions against violations of laws and norms have, on the one hand, been regarded from the perspective of *harmony*. In a given society, laws and norms are shared by the overwhelming majority, who feel offended and call for punishment when their commonly held values, expressed in those laws and norms, are trampled on. On the other hand, the sanctioning of violations has been regarded from the perspective of *conflict* – those in power belong to a particular group or class, and make laws and advocate norms that serve their own interests, while oppressing other groups and classes. In the conflict perspective, the violation of laws and norms are seen as resistance by the unprivileged and oppressed (Hauge 2001).

In Norway during the German occupation legislative and law-enforcing power was in the hands of the Germans and the Norwegian Nazi party. The majority of the population regarded neither the Germans nor the Norwegian Nazi party as legitimate powers. Breaking their laws and regulations became the right thing to do, and efforts to inculcate Nazi norms in Norwegian schools, churches and organizations were something to be firmly resisted. The conflict perspective certainly fits this situation. A struggle arose between patriotic Norwegians who wanted to express their forbidden views, and the occupying Germans and the NS, who were determined to censor them. Among the banned symbolic practices were the wearing of the traditional red knitted cap, or of a paper clip in the buttonhole of one's collar.

The Norwegians lived in a situation of cross-pressures, impacted by two sources of social control: on the one hand the Germans in power and on the other the patriotic Norwegian norm-senders. The German occupiers had strong instruments of power at their disposal. The Norwegian patriots had to rely mostly on informal means of social control. Every Norwegian had to find a way to balance these cross-pressures. Many chose symbolic resistance in a small way. The price of active resistance was high.

The core of the conflict between the occupiers and their Norwegian collaborators on the one hand, and the majority of the native population on the other, was political. There was extensive use of prisons in this political struggle. As mentioned above, 40,000 Norwegians were imprisoned for political reasons during the war, and 9,000 were sent to prison camps in Germany. In [Chapter 6](#) by Reitan we meet a woman, Meta Christensen, who was imprisoned both in Norway and in Germany. The Norwegian State Police worked with the Gestapo, and had an active role in the deportation of the Jews, as described in [Chapter 11](#) by Johansen. Except for the Supreme Court, the ordinary Norwegian courts functioned throughout the war, and had to implement the new laws introduced by the Nazi regime. However, most death sentences against Norwegian patriots were passed by courts martial. And some were simply shot without any legal proceedings.

Everyday life was politicized. Even common theft could count as 'resistance' if the stolen property

belonged to the Germans. Informal norms meant Norwegians did not smile at Germans, talk to them or sit beside them in the tram, even if the only free seat was next to a German soldier. If a German entered a café or restaurant, a respectable Norwegian would leave immediately.

Not all Norwegians followed these norms. Among those who did not were the female employees of the State Police described by Johansen in [Chapter 11](#), and the so-called 'German girls' (see [Chapter 10](#) by Ericsson). The 'German girls' risked being insulted in the street by their compatriots. After such incidents, they might call upon the Germans to punish the person behind the insult. Harassing them was not without risk, as the 'German girls' were protected by the occupiers. However, the girls could not entirely escape the impact of the strong informal social control that was exercised by Norwegians on their fellow citizens. As other Norwegians they lived in a situation of cross-pressures, and had to find their balance.

When the war ended, the instruments of power passed into the hands of the Norwegians. The time to settle scores had come. This process and the feelings surrounding it are reminiscent of Durkheim's view of crime as a moral outrage, violating the collective conscience of society and demanding punishment (Durkheim 1933). In David Garland's words (1990, p. 28), 'Durkheim sees punishment as a social institution which is first and last a matter of morality and solidarity.'

The political crimes that were tried in the post-war treason trials had indeed caused moral outrage. As pointed out by Johansen in [Chapter 11](#), informing was severely punished, even if the defendant was young, female and subordinate. However, many acts that could not easily be labelled 'crime' had also caused moral outrage. Among them were Norwegian women's sexual relationships with members of the occupying forces. In [Chapter 12](#) Papendorf demonstrates how regulations were stretched to punish the 'German girls', in fact, if not in name. For decades after the war many people who had made the wrong choice during the war were subjected to ostracism and stigmatization. The effects of informal social control were felt long after the prison sentence had been served or the fine paid.

However, peace did not bring relief to everyone who had been persecuted by the Nazi regime. Homosexual acts were forbidden by law before the war, during the war and after the war in many European countries, including Germany and Norway. Even if the Nazi regime was alone in throwing homosexuals into concentration camps, [Chapter 8](#) by Hobson gives an example of a heartbreaking continuity: some concentration camp inmates wearing the pink triangle identifying them as homosexual were transferred to an ordinary prison after the liberation, because they had not served their entire sentence. **Processes of Definition**

Criminologists are interested in processes of definition. What is considered to be within the boundaries of normalcy and what is considered deviance? What *kind* of deviance is it: evil, madness, crime, or foreign and unacceptable culture? Definitions are not just a matter of words. They have practical, sometimes disastrous, consequences for the human beings who are defined, in one way or another. Some of the most bizarre and brutal processes of definition in history were rooted in the Nazi racial doctrines, and impacted Norway during the occupation. All Jewish children who were deported from Norway were sent directly to the gas chambers, because they belonged to an 'inferior race'. On the other hand, the SS organization *Lebensborn* was very active in Norway, eager to take care of the 'racially valuable' offspring of Norwegian women and German soldiers. Perhaps one can say that the Janus face of Nazi racial doctrine, extermination of the 'inferior' on the one hand and cultivation of the 'superior' on the other, was particularly visible in Norway. By a brutal historical irony, the definition of the 'racially superior' German-Norwegian children took another twist when the occupation ended. In liberated Norway these children were no longer regarded as a future elite, but as a national liability, prone to develop feeble-mindedness, social deviance and hatred against democracy, as is discussed in [Chapter 13](#) by Ericsson and Simonsen.

After the war the criminal justice system faced the task of defining what constituted treason and collaboration, and what were serious and less serious crimes. As [Chapter 11](#) by Johansen demonstrates, in the process the courts also constructed gendered figures, exemplified by the subordinate female employee of the State Police, who was pictured as a human typewriter, only slightly more responsible for the consequences of her actions than the machine her fingers were hammering on. However, not only the defendants but also the victims were affected by the sometimes implicit defining processes in the courts. Johansen points out that the courts traditionally treated violence in an individualized way: as an act committed by an individual against another individual. The atrocity of genocide, carried out by many agents through a number of small but necessary acts, was beyond the scope of courts and their traditional legal procedures. To have ordered or carried out the execution of a resistance member fitted into the courts' conception of 'violence'; to have taken part in the administration of the deportation of the Norwegian Jews was more problematic. In addition, one may suspect that courts, as well as the general public, felt stronger empathy with fallen resistance fighters than with deported Jews. Anti-Semitism was by no means unknown in Norway. The result was that the death of a Norwegian patriot carried more weight than the death of a Jew when it came to passing sentence and meting out punishment. Implicitly the deported Jews emerged as less worthy victims than tortured and/or executed Norwegian patriots.

Members of the 'Osvald' organization, who were among those most active in the Norwegian resistance, experienced a dramatic redefinition of their role when the post-war climate hardened into cold war. From being perceived above all as resistance fighters, they came to be seen as, above all, communists, enemies of the state and suspected traitors in a potential war against the Soviet Union. This redefinition was accompanied by close surveillance by the security police, a surveillance that deprived many of the 'Osvald' members of the peaceful life they had hoped for after the strain of the war years (see [Chapter 9](#) by Rustad and Ericsson). **Remembrance**

Remembrance is both collective and personal. In Norway, as in other combatant countries, a hegemonic story of the nation and people in war emerged, influenced by professional historians, authoritative voices on the victorious side, the media, popular culture, and the experiences and emotions of the majority of ordinary Norwegians. The story presented heroes and villains, and was taken as the self-evident truth of war and occupation in Norway.

The hegemonic stories that develop in a society give a collective dimension to the stories of all individuals. To those involved in the events in question, the story assigns roles that they cannot easily ignore. Whether it confirms or contests the hegemonic narrative, the individual's story and identity is not independent of the collective one.

Many chapters in this book illustrate how the hegemonic story impacted on the lives of individuals, sometimes in very painful ways. [Chapter 4](#) by Soleim, on the so-called *Ostarbeiter*, that is Soviet citizens who were captured by the Nazis and sent to Norway as forced labour, also touches on their fate after the war ended. Repatriation to the USSR was no unmixed blessing, since having worked for the Germans, even if under duress, could expose them to suspicion and contempt. The hegemonic narrative in Stalin's Soviet Union honoured 'The Great Patriotic War', where Soviet citizens fought to the death for their country rather than accepting captivity. The 'solution' for the *Ostarbeiter*, as for former prisoners of war, was to keep silent about their wartime experiences and traumas, a silence that sometimes lasted until the thaw of the 1990s.

The *Ostarbeiter* were not the only ones to keep silent. So did many 'German girls' and their children, who were made to feel shame because of their intimate connection to the enemy. In the first post-war decades, the hegemonic story was unambiguously drawn in black and white. It was not easy to be associated with the black part (see [Chapter 13](#) by Ericsson and Simonsen).

As historian Synne Corell (2010) demonstrates, the deportation of the Jews had, for many years, a marginal place in historical accounts of Norway in World War II. [Chapter 3](#) by Levin makes us understand why most surviving Jews did not challenge this marginalization for a long time. To 'look forward' and keep silent seemed to be the only way to handle heartbreaking questions and dilemmas arising in the wake of the extermination of their loved ones.

Social and personal silence may reinforce each other. The participation of women in the resistance movement was hardly visible in the hegemonic story of Norway at war (see [Chapter 6](#) by Reitan, and [Chapter 9](#) by Rustad and Ericsson). Women were commemorated in their traditional roles as mothers and housewives, struggling to keep their families fed and clothed in difficult circumstances ([Chapter 7](#) by Lenz). Many female members of the resistance shared the traditional gender norms, and felt that what they did during the war was of little significance, hardly worthy of the name of resistance. Hence, they did not speak much about what they had done and experienced, nor were they asked about this.

Hegemonic stories are not written in stone. As time passes, new knowledge accumulates and social and cultural changes open up new perspectives. Although the main narrative remains, revisions are made and nuances are added. This book is a contribution to the process of writing women into the history of World War II in Norway, with its national singularities, but also, we hope, it has a wider relevance: exemplifying how gender is played out in war and conflict.

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## Chapter 2

### Women and War

Kristen P. Williams

When considering images of war and conflict, battlefields are often front and centre. One need only think of images of soldiers in the trenches in Europe during World War I or allied soldiers

landing at the Normandy beaches during World War II. In the more recent wars and conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are images of Hutu extremists carrying machetes during the Rwandan genocide, US soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and most recently government forces bombing rebels in the Syrian civil war. These images are most likely pictures of men – men in uniform and rebel men in civilian clothing, both carrying weapons. In essence, these are depictions of men fighting. Yet one must ask: where are the women? When there are images of women, these are often pictures of women fleeing their homes, as refugees in refugee camps, and often women carrying children. In essence, these are depictions of women as victims of war. This is the standard story of war: men as soldiers/warriors, women as civilians/victims. In spite of that, we know that the standard story of war is problematic as it does not capture the full extent of war in terms of who is doing the actual fighting, who is supporting the combatants, who are the peace activists, who is fleeing and who stays behind.

This introductory chapter examines war as a gendered experience. Traditional, or mainstream, US international relations (IR) theories omit women and gender from their analysis. If women are included at all, they are often portrayed in gendered terms: as nurturers, pacifists, peacemakers and victims. Within this gender social order, women and femininity are subordinated to men and masculinity (and thus a gender hierarchy). When considering mainstream security studies in the discipline, women and gender are conflated, with men and masculinity omitted from the analysis (Sa'ar, Sachs and Aharoni 2011).

Feminist IR scholarship, which emerged in the late 1980s, provides a corrective to the omission of gender and women in mainstream IR. Such works examine both interstate and intrastate wars, generally and in individual case studies (see, for example, Cockburn 1998; Cohn 2013; Enloe 2000; Goldstein 2001; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Mertus 2000; Sjoberg 2014; Tickner 2001). While these works differ in their case studies and approaches, they all utilize a feminist gender analysis, and they all recognize that war is a gendered experience for women and men. This chapter examines the link between gender constructions and war, particularly with regards to the gender social order (sometimes expressed as gender hierarchy, gender subordination or gender system: Cohn 2013, p. 4; Sjoberg 2014, p. 7). Moreover, the chapter demonstrates that women have agency in war, whether as victims, peace activists or perpetrators of political violence.

Specifically, two gendered issues stand out: (1) the impact of war on gender relations during and after war, and (2) sexuality as a battlefield, both literally and symbolically. In terms of the impact of war on gender relations, the question arises as to whether gender relations are reinforced or destabilized, or both. When the war ends, what happens? If gender relations are destabilized during war, do they continue to be destabilized or are traditional gender relations restored? In terms of sexuality as a battlefield, traditional notions of women's and men's sexuality are often reinforced during war. Men are expected to be masculine, protectors of women. Women are expected to be feminine, the symbolic markers of the nation-state (or ethnic/nationalist group). As a result of expectations about heteronormative sexuality, in times of war women and men are often victims of gender-based sexual violence. Men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of such violence, which bolsters conceptions of masculinity and domination of women (and other men who are victims). \*

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This book examines what happens to women and gender relations in times of upheaval. The experience of Norway during World War II, with some visits to other parts of the world as well, is used to demonstrate general, gendered issues that are actualized in wars both past and present. The authors explore whether gendered cultural conceptions influence the way war is remembered and represented, both

collectively and individually. The collection discusses the various roles of women during the war from resistance fighter to 'German tart'; and how they were dealt with and treated in the aftermath. The chapters examine the position of Jewish victims of persecution, foreign female labourers and gay men, as well as the gendered response exhibited by the courts in post-war trials of female state police employees. The book concludes by following the struggle to bring women's role in war and peacebuilding onto the international agenda. This book will be of interest to students and scholars in the field of criminology, as well as peace and conflict studies, political science, sociology of law, history, social work, social pedagogy, psychology and gender studies.

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