

Inga B. Kuźma

University of Łódź (Poland)

Edyta Pietrzak

Łódź University of Technology (Poland)

About Women in Conflicts and Wars: Theories of Violence and Collective Memory

Abstract: The article deals with the subject of relations between theories of violence and the category of collective memory in relation to women's war stories. The text introduces the issue of war and conflict, understanding the theory of violence, the category of collective memory and female war narratives, as well as the ways of their political interpretation. The interpretation is crucial because of method used in the research, meaning hermeneutics, but also because of the, presented here, perspective of polyphony.

Keywords: *collective memory, violence, herstory*

The aim of the article is to present a possible theoretical-methodological approach to violence involving women in situations of conflicts, wars, rebellions, revolutions, etc. from the point of view of anthropology and political science. This approach allows for the extraction of a new context and development of knowledge concerning the mechanisms of politicizing female experiences resulting from the experience of armed conflict. On the one hand, it is based on the knowledge of observable facts and cultural-social-political phenomena, described in the context of women's studies and war studies in the form of experience, memory and women's problems, and, on the other hand, the interpretation of public discourses¹.

The proposed approach is the result of previous research, including that carried out for the "Women, War and Peace" project, implemented by the authors as a part of the Europe for

¹ As part of Polish *war studies*, one still cannot find many studies on the mentality and everyday experience and research on the sphere of the so-called sub-political issues considering the intersectional dimension.

Citizens programme². The theoretical and methodological perspective developed as a part of the project sets out a path of thinking, researching and interpreting the narrative, referring to so-called difficult topics, such as conflict and violence as well as emotions, stereotypes, assessments and divisions, and perception of gender roles through these.

Interpretation of the Narrative. The Hermeneutic Method

The research consisted of a hermeneutic (according to Gadamer) interpretation of narrative from the public sphere about women, as well as narratives created by women themselves, entangled in conflicts and violent situations such as war, etc. However, these narratives do not grow out of a vacuum, as in our approach the individual experiencing them is characterized by a specific identification. This identification derives from subjecting cultural influences and shaping by a socio-cultural environment, which also does not diminish the individual role of agency and creating one's own living environment, i.e. culture and society through this single entity. These narratives also do not function outside the changing context in time.

Thus, the interpretation concerned parallel mechanisms of making these experiences and narratives political and the ways of their subsequent political use. The narrations of women / about women occur in the public sphere in the form of: testimonies about women's pasts, scientific analyzes and comments on the participants' direct words, media images, populist visions, memory policies, historical policies, textbook messages or official celebrations, but also other very different forms of their subsequent political use. Importantly, this research referred to the analysis of the broadly understood discourse, and not to direct socio-political facts.

The indicated narrative motifs can be classified according to the existing division, concerning the understanding of the individual's place in relation to the conflict as well as the systemic, political aggression: women as active participants, victims and witnesses of violence. However, it remains debatable whether this division – based on the classic approach, developed during the Holocaust research by Raul Hilberg (Hilberg, 2007, his book originally first appeared in 1992) – has heuristic application women's experiences during war and warlike situations. However, this is a kind of paradigm in the approach to research based on the ethical turnaround in science, from the 60s to the 90s of the twentieth century. This was an era of geopolitical change for the Western world and other continents, therefore it can be referred to as an ethical-political turnaround. This was a period of colonial independence and a time when independence and civil rights were gained by groups previously treated as peripheral and unimportant – their experience had been insignificant. As a result of these cultural, political and legal changes, a critical attitude was born within the very sciences,

² See: *Women War and Peace Resource and Research Book*. Retrieved from: <http://www.epageflip.net/i/748584-women-war-and-peace>

especially in the field of humanities and social disciplines, developing more and more self-reflective and self-critical. The representatives of this attitude noticed the involvement of knowledge production in the political process (Baer, 2014; Songin-Mokrzan, 2010).

Hilberg's paradigm, therefore, emphasizes the voice of anonymous individuals – mainly victims, but also accidental witnesses, individuals and non-heroic groups, proverbial pawns, unconscious influences and tendencies that affect their lives and their everyday lives during social catastrophes or social changes.

One should nevertheless ask and examine whether Hilberg's division is reflected in the structure of women's experiences, the course of these experiences and the cultural building material that creates them, at the same time creating social identification, awareness and memory of women, as well as their belonging groups (including mediated memory). The distinction of women's experiences of war and the types of experience they undergo, let alone the experience of private violence, is still treated as a cultural taboo. The narratives of women related to violence experienced as a result of armed conflict, therefore in the field of organized, official and somewhat formal violence – also inflicted by women (appearing as kapos, guards, soldiers, denounciators, etc.) – stem from the following paradigm, this time a cultural one, which is the experience of violence and aggression by women in the private sphere. This phenomenon is taboo, it is tempting to say that it exists on a large scale and is often treated as a taboo both in shame-based cultures (where loyalty to the group prevails, strong identification, or at least, a strong pressure from it is felt; where the presence of others is significant – witnesses of rule breaching), as well as guilt (where the internalization of principles, and the internally felt compulsion to behave as is expected, is important). This is because the violence suffered by women at home or from loved ones, as well as that experienced during armed conflict, is primarily of a sexual nature. Thus, it joins the sphere of intimacy and corporeality and reproduction, which is also an essential factor.

According to data from the 2016 report alone, on the experience of violence in Poland, sexual violence “on the part of men is commonly experienced by women [...]. 87% of respondents have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lives. 37% have participated in sexual activity against their will. 23% experienced attempted rape and 22% experienced rape. In most cases, the perpetrator was a person they were familiar with: their current (22%) or former partner (63%), and the incident occurred in an apartment (55%). Studies on the one hand reveal a huge scale of sexual violence against women, on the other disclose a “gray zone” of sexual violence, violence experienced within the family, which is not reported to law enforcement agencies and of which the closest environment is unaware of. “The data obtained from our research breaks the stereotypical image of rape as incidental and sporadic, the culprit of which is a man unknown to a woman” (Break the taboo ..., 2016, p. 8). EU-level research contributes to this: “[...] During the 12 months preceding interviews conducted as part of the study [conducted in 2015 – IBK, EP], about 8% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, while one in three women has experienced some

form of physical assault or sexual assault since the age of 15. Sexual violence in particular is a pervasive crime [...]" (Violence against women ..., 2014, p. 9). As the source says: "[...] Physical and / or sexual violence has been experienced by 22% of women in relationships with men. [...] About a third (31%) of the women surveyed, who admitted to having been raped by their partners, say they have been raped by their partner six or more times. Marriage rape is a reality for many women, and many of them have experienced it several times" (Violence against women ..., 2014, p. 10).

Domestic violence results from a specific structure and value system that marks gender roles and particular socio-cultural genders. It also affects the perception of actors involved in conflicts taking place in the public domain. According to the division of roles and using the perspective related to the issues of war studies, irenology and polemology, women are mostly civilians, and they bear the largest burden during conflict – according to estimates, 90% of civilians are affected by war or other organized aggression (Pokruszyński, 2017, p. 7). In addition, "the essence of the contemporary threat lies in the fact that it is unexpected, that it hits the civilian population, that we do not know how to control it" (Pokruszyński, 2017, p. 88–89). Women are therefore treated as a reward for victorious soldiers, possibly as a consolation prize, and thanks to their reproductive ability – as another battlefield, the "terrain" to conquer; of symbolic, biological, moral and material value.

As Dorota Sajewska writes, "the body, connected with the fragility of existence and the materiality of suffering of those who have passed away or are still leaving, functions as a poor cognitive category in the study of memory", noting that it means the memory in the sense given to it by Marianne Hirsch, the author post-memory concept – memory "absent" and "late" (Sajewska, 2015, p. 47). These two terms gain yet another sense when consider in the context of the study on women's experiences, where trauma is associated with violence directed at their body. These experiences, most often in the area of official and public memory, as well as in the field of private or local memory, are treated as personal, often as repressed memories, and not as testimonies with the status of factual accounts. These are too subjective, and in culture subjectivism has no political or legal value, nor does it belong to the public sphere. Thus, the stories of women on violence, being domestic or organized violence, i.e. war, are treated – as private and subjective feelings, shameful, dirty and disgracing at the same time.

As a result, according to Sajewska, text and visual documents which in culture are treated as links between the present and the past, are the focus point of the memory turn. And "the body as a post-memorial medium, functioning in a space almost devoid of witnesses, is a marginal object of interest" (Sajewska, 2015, p. 47). With the example of research on the Holocaust, a type of research paradigm has evolved, which is based on the conviction of the highly mediated experience [...] by successive generations, whose structures of imagination, projection and behavior are shaped by a common archive of narratives and images" (Sajewska, 2015, p. 47). The Polish researcher calls on Rebecca Schneider's view that "the body-event subjected to repeated remediation becomes the center of attention as a kind

of historical archive. [...] bodily practices as forms of saving, storing and updating history, and reflection on such manifestations of culture, which reveals as a space for transferring active action from body to body, as a field of incarnated history and historical incarnation. To bring out both a critical approach to the visual and logo centric character of the western archive, and at the same time, point to the possibility of the past being transmitted to the present precisely through the medium of the body” (Sajewska, 2015, p. 49–50). The above-mentioned project “Women, War and Peace”, was not only a performance involving the body, was not only a theatrical presentation and a film made by the Smashing Theater Company from Dublin, but also a set of workshops, stimulating memories – autobiographical and biographical stories, often family-related with the history of women, the recipients of project’s activities.

What is Collective Memory and What is Its Political and Social Significance?

Memory as a long-lasting project currently occupies male and female researchers in various academic areas: philosophers, neuroscientists, cultural critics, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and even quantum theoreticians. All of whom are interested in the process of creating and destroying personal, collective and biochemical memory. Projects deal with the limit of remembering, memorizing policies, the social effects of remembering, and how memorizing mixes the categories of linearity and spatiality, poetics and the subject of narrative. In addition, this research area also deals with the question of the obligation, that teachers and scientists above all have towards imperatives (Felman & Laub, 1992).

It is difficult to define the concept of memory. It can be an effect of the human ability to consolidate experience and contribute to building knowledge about oneself and the world. It is also a kind of activity related to the process of remembering (and forgetting). We deal either with the memory in the objective or functional sense. Both of these aspects cannot really be separated from each other. Therefore, instead of an exhaustive definition, there are classifications of memory (Kaniowska, 2003).

The concept of collective memory for social sciences was introduced by Maurice Halbwachs (Social Memory Framework, 2008), who believed that individual memory always functions in the context of collective memory. Perceiving one’s own past influences how we see ourselves today and who we are. The subject of memory was taken up intensively in the humanities and social sciences from the 1960s. In the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, interest in it grew even more and the subject began to be taught at universities. Key works appeared at that time, including David Lowenthal’s *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), *History and Memory* by Jacques Le Goff (1984), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* by Pierre Nora (1998 and subsequent volumes), and with them, the thesis about the growing *memory boom* or *memory turn*. This memory phrase has become as important as other earlier phrases of the humanities, such as linguistic, spatial or pictorial. Even if it is

not a breakthrough, but only a new research approach, special research centers dealing with memory studies³ are being created (Saryusz-Wolska, 2009, p. 7).

Memory is strongly associated with the identity of individuals and societies, and the past in our memory is adapted to our identity and results from ethnicity, social class or power relations. These and other elements decide what we remember and what we forget (Nowak, 2011, p. 56).

However, in addition to collective memory relationships with identity, its relationship with the authorities is also important. Collective memory refers to the legitimization of the existence of a given community, its structures and forms of political power. The rule over time and the relationship of society to time is the source of power and at the same time the way it is exercised. Political power determines what is to be remembered and how (Szacka, 2006).

The issue of commemorating and raising the topic of women's participation in war or the degree and type of their war experience has political significance. How do we write and talk about the women's participation in war and other such conflicts? We suggest that the description be enriched with women's stories and care be put to presenting their perspective, not forgetting about social issues and everyday life within a conflict. The goal should be to show people of flesh and blood, not to build bronze monuments (Janicka, 2011). Thus, such a description should not hide difficult choices and the dark sides of biographies, as well as suffering and other emotions. There is a need for both historical and gender education.

In the 80s of the twentieth century, male and female researchers using the metaphors of "gaining voice" and "uttering feminine subjectivity", referred to the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, who developed the concept of dialogicality and heteroglossia. According to this, every word is addressed to the answer: it is the dialogicality of the word and its diversity that is the fundament and the basis. Subjectivity is understood dialogically, it is shaped in the "process of social interaction". Each social group has its own language, and its members gain awareness in language and through language. Hence, multilingualism (heteroglossy) is created, that is to say, the multiplication of languages, words and meanings that complement each other. They are however also contradictory and polemical, thus remaining in constant dialogue. This theory is useful in discussions about women's narratives. Thinking about the multilingualism and social construction of consciousness assumes the heterogeneity of human subjectivity and allows to transcend thinking in terms of polarization of entities (Smith & Watson, 1998, pp. 73–74). All the more so, as with the entry into the era of restoring meaning to a witness as a participant in history and emphasizing the importance of his / her narrative, when audio and video recordings of male and female participants of past events are made, we can distinguish the work of recalling, the associative nature of this process,

³ In 2008, the Sage Publishing House initiated the periodical "Memory Studies". <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/mss>

its incoherence and difficulties as well as the experiential layer (Sajewska, 2015, p. 53, citing the thesis of James E. Young, see: Young, 2014).

In studies on the Holocaust and its settlement, three stages of documentation are distinguished: the first is the “the stage of documenting the fate of Jews live, during the war; the second stage marked the Eichmann trial and testimony understood as the prosecution, where trials took place in Frankfurt; the third was connected with restoring the meaning to the witness as a participant and narrator of history” (Sajewska, 2015, p. 53). It is worth asking whether there is a similar process taking place in relation to women affected by conflicts and involved in them; to what extent their voices are incorporated into a “great” war narrative or another kind of struggle.

The memory of women themselves – experiencing conflict in various ways – and the memory of them, i.e. functioning in the broader social discourse, thus creating collective memory, is the process of revealing evidence from concealment and non-visibility. The otherness of these stories, which often speaks of body harm, as we pointed out above, about the publicity and humiliation of female sexual and reproductive functions, demands not only inclusion, but the creation of a place in culture for this kind of emotion and expression. This is evident taking as an example Pakistani aggression towards Bangladesh in the 1970s and how this conflict was played on the bodies and by the bodies of Bengali women. This is just one example of many. As the journalist Anushay Hossain wrote: “According to the findings of the Women Under Siege Project – a project run by the American Women’s Media Center, founded by Gloria Stein and engaged in research on how rape and sexual violence are used as a weapon and a method of murder in armed conflicts – women and girls aged eight to seventy-five were kidnapped and detained in Pakistani war barracks, where they were subjected to mass rapes and often even murdered”. Women Under Siege also quotes interviews with women who survived persecution, and which describe how young girls were “chained to green banana trees and repeatedly and collectively violated”. A few weeks later, they were tied to the same tree to be slaughtered. When Bangladesh regained independence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation, gave veterans who survived rape titles «Birangonas», which in Bengali means “war heroines”. In this way, he wanted to express respect and re-integrate the raped women into society from which they had been excluded. Unfortunately, this gesture turned out to be a fiasco. After the Pakistanis abused Bengalis, mutilated and impregnated them, the veterans who survived the rape were rejected by the independent society. The word “Birangona” has become a synonym for a woman “deprived of honor”, insulted, in other words – living war loot. [...] The status of the forty-one Biragonas was officially recognized by the state – the Bengal government appointed them with the freedom fighter status that granted them the same privileges as male militants: a monthly pension, health care and places reserved for their children and grandchildren in public educational institutions” (Hossain, 2016). The local “women fought as soldiers, but they were also kidnapped, tortured and raped in Pakistani concentration camps and in rape camps that the Pakistani army founded in every city and town. It was

part of a system plan to weaken and destroy Bengali society – just like the intention of murdering Bengali intellectuals. Many of the hundreds of thousands of women and girls were later killed or rejected by their own families; their children, born of rape, were given up to foreign adoption. Most raped women were dying of neglect, never having told what had happened” (Hossain, 2016).

In this context, it is important to remember that the notion of re-sexualization of war violence functions (Münkler, 2004). It is used as a regular war and oppressive strategy. Firstly, it causes physical destruction (external and internal bodily damage, sometimes leading to disability or death, causes illness), and secondly psychological injuries, evokes trauma, sometimes incurable. Thirdly, it excludes women socially, leading in the least to the social ostracism of raped victims – as deprived of honor, not only disgraced, but shaming disgrace on the family and group, unable to enter into marital or partner relationships due to being “spoiled” (including when they give birth to children from war rape). They are therefore excluded from society (just like these children) (Konarski, 2007). War riots “often take place in public, in front of families, friends, and often in the eyes of husbands and children, so women are stigmatized in their family community” (Pansy, 2009). This kind of discourse, perhaps due to the amount of shame and guilt, is very difficult to talk about, therefore included in the general narrative, and also very difficult, if possible, to hear, which is also a condition for incorporating this type of testimony into memory, narrative and public policy.

A Figure of a Woman and How She Is Conceptualized in Political, Social or Historiographical Discourses Concerning Conflicts and Wars

In the conversation “War and occupation in Poland – the perspective of the history of women and gender. What to research and how to research this matter?”, Joanna Urbanek says that there are four topos in the narratives about women in times of wars and conflicts. The first is the female custodian – the conveyor of role models for raising future soldiers. The second is the female caretaker – waiting faithfully for a man and soothing his wounds. The third is the female soldier who sometimes fights in a man’s disguise⁴. The fourth is the figure of a woman as the subject of struggle, or a war trophy. The wartime experiences of women as victims of systemic, regime, state and any structured violence can also be presented on the basis of the following categories: soldiers (resistance movement, auxiliary service, i.e. Red Cross), prisoners of camps and ghettos, hiding, escapees, refugees, victims of rapes as well as ordinary women, leading everyday lives in the realities of conflict and war, unaffected by much suffering.

⁴ We find such role models in many countries. In Poland this is Emilia Plater, in the United Kingdom – Dorothy Lawrence, and in Serbia – Miluna Savić.

Maria Janion asked about female fighting symbols (Janion, 1996, p. 6). Writing about the fantasy of fighting and war, she meant images, pictures, emotional themes, delusions, mystifications and illusions. What in relation to reality is considered to be false, unreal or fictitious, and which shows its value in another order, in other words in the psychic reality as a special form of existence, which should not be confused with material reality. Fantasies also have their real dimension, because they create lasting consequences within the consciousness, thus they influence attitudes expressed through deeds, in words and behaviors.

There is also a symbol that sends us back to the field of transcendence, free imagination and unrestricted creative freedom. Each revolution is first symbolic, only later becoming structural. It is easier to change words than things (Durand, 1986, p. 49). The struggles of symbolic and allegorical images of the Woman-Revolution accompanied various national and ethnic histories of politics, society and mentality. They also signaled important changes, shifts and triumphs of specific laws and concepts (Janion, 1996, p. 8). Images of women are therefore characterized by ambivalence. On the one hand, women are presented as wild characters, full of transgressive power, on the other – as calm and dispassionate. These images and their interpretations were combined with moral issues, whether a woman is a virtuous or more so public, or a prostitute. This opposition, in other words, is described in European culture as the opposition of the “whore” and the “Madonna” (Janion, 1996, p. 40).

The symbolic connection of a woman with struggle and resistance was achieved due to democratic changes contributing to the development of new forms of expression and the development of romantic forms of emotionality described directly as “feminine”. The most famous advocate was Olympe de Gouges, giving women in Article X of their Declaration of Women’s and Citizens’ Rights the right to enter the tribune, analogous to the possibility of joining them on the scaffold.

Historiography, however, has shaped the tendency to connect women with madness and revolution (Janion, 1996, p. 22). After 1848, the radicalism of women taking part in the armed struggle increased: the female *communard* became a synonym of the Paris Commune. Such women were called communist amazons, furies and fire-starters that set fire to buildings and institutions, struggling with the order of existing structures. They were presented as bodies without a soul, animal beings, the image of a vice. The female *communards* crossed the borders due to actions unacceptable for ordinary women, therefore, according to literary stereotypes, they took on gorgonian features. They were deprived of all and any political and social motivations, attributed comic sexuality and a tendency to prostitution, so as to make them all the more disgusting to the public opinion. Stereotypes of this kind have been used until today (Janion, 1996, p. 35). The essence of the phenomena described is the continuous interweaving of real events with symbolic meanings rooted in mythical ideas characterized by the duality of positivity and negativity (Neuman, 1997).

The fantasies of a woman-fighter for freedom, rooted in the original dual nature of good as life and evil as death. A woman giving her life also gives her death, which is why symbolism should be handled carefully. It is impossible to fully separate politics from spirituality, hence

in some political events we can discern their distant symbolic genealogy, and in symbols at first glance distant from reality, we can find a political interpretation of the present. All paradoxes of creativity are hidden in the symbol of the Women-Freedom-Revolution. Also, in a broader sense, as a transgression of the existing system, and the woman is a “symbol of symbols” (Durand, 1986, p. 47); her duality is manifested in the fact of being both the creator of meaning and the vessel of that meaning. Femininity is passive and active at the same time (Janion, 1996, pp. 42–43).

The symbolic body of the homeland is also a phantasm (Polonia, Germania, etc.). It refers to the land and its divisions, to the fights played out on it. Thus, this phantasm turns to symbolic divisions regarding the bodies of women (e.g. abortion or rape) rooted deep into history, based on ideological divisions, different visions of history and values.

Theories Concerning Conflicts Played on Women’s Bodies

To what extent does the corporeality of women become the field of struggle, honor and humiliation? How and why corporality combines all national and community values for which enemies are fighting and which they want to destroy actually, by using sexual violence against women’s bodies on the conquered areas and in hostile groups?

Beverly Allen (1996) in a publication based on reports by Tadeusz Mazowiecki (Special Reporter of the United Nations), distinguished three tactics of raping women during the Balkan War in the 1990s: 1. attacks on villages and towns and public rapes; 2. abducting women and keeping them in special homes or camps, where they were repeatedly raped, which was considered by the aggressor as a form of torture before killing the women; 3. systematic rapes on women imprisoned until they became pregnant and became so advanced that a safe abortion could not be carried out. This tactic is otherwise termed “genocidal rape”.

Comparing Allen’s tactics of war sexual violence against women in the Balkans to dealing with women during other armed conflicts in other times and places, also in earlier periods, one can notice the repetitiveness of these three patterns and the central role of the female body.

As Margot Wallström wrote, “there has long been a silent agreement to sexual violence, which inevitably accompanies armed conflict. A UN report from 1998 on sexual violence in armed conflicts states that over the centuries armies have perceived rape as permitted war booty. During the Second World War, all sides of the conflict were accused of mass rapes, but none of the two courts appointed by the victorious Allies to charge war criminals – in Tokyo and Nuremberg – recognized the criminal nature of sexual violence. Not until 1992 did the issue of sexual violence find itself in the circle of attention of the UN Security Council, when mass rapes committed against women in the former Yugoslavia began being reported. On December 18, 1992, the Council made a declaration stating that “mass, organized and systematic detention and violation of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in

particular Muslim women” is an international crime that must be prosecuted. The statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established in 1993, recognized rape, apart from torture and extermination, for a crime against humanity, when it is committed during an ongoing armed conflict and is directed against the civilian population” (Pawłowski, 2009).

War brutality against women results from cultural sexism. Another level of war violence is the objectification of a person, in this case a woman, when his or her humanity is denied. In the eyes of the aggressor, her subjectivity of being human disappears. What distinguished her, and validated her existence within a certain order, is still present, but as something to be used, a challenge for men from her group, not the women themselves. These women are not treated as persons, but as an enemy symbol or as the personification of one of the strongest female stereotypes, above all, the stereotype of femininity: as something given to men for play or insemination, open to any gestures towards it, as passive, without will, subordinate and mute.

As Maciej Pawłowski emphasized: “The Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons During the War (1949) introduced into the canon of international law provisions concerning non-combatants and their humanitarian treatment. A ban was introduced on attacking people who do not take part in armed operations or who have laid down arms (this was supposed to concern domestic and interstate wars). Responsibility for civilians was to be taken by both fighting sides, and special protection was given to women who were to receive special protection «[...] against all attacks on their honor, especially against rape, forced prostitution and any offense of shyness»” (Pawłowski, 2009). He recalled the words of Maria Welser, a German correspondent in the former Yugoslavia of 1993, who wrote: “Rape saves you bombs. Rape is more effective and cheaper for carrying out ethnic cleansing. Rape is war economics” (Pawłowski, 2009). Pawłowski emphasizes that “women have become something “more” than just war trophies – they have become the main goal of warfare. [...] it can be concluded that both uncontrolled, mass rapes, interning women and then deporting them (in the meantime systematically raping them) or publicly abusing and showing them to be pregnant is a kind of war strategy (sexual violence strategy), being an ethnic purge without resorting to genocide. Such action leads to the creation of a system of fear and demoralization [...]” (Pawłowski, 2009). He also provided three phases of the sexual violence strategy: “Termination of the political and cultural elite, leaders, inspirers of the resistance movement, etc.; total destruction of religious and cultural symbols (places of worship, but also museums, monuments, etc.); regular rapes on women in the community (until they get pregnant), and then forcing their expulsion. [...] Rapes have become highly functional because they demoralize societies, undermine their moral values and weaken the will to fight. [...] The specifics of military rape give the winner a sense of shaming not only the woman but also the man. Many rapes take place in public places, with a large public – the woman’s body becomes a ceremonial battlefield where the winner organizes a lascivious parade. The main goal of this action is to deprive the opponent of his masculinity and to

weaken his morale. The attack, therefore, is carried out by the woman's body but its main purpose is the man – unable to defend his own home, family etc. It should be emphasized that the use of rape is another means of warfare. An action that aims to destroy the local community (ties) and to break the generational continuity. Armed actions, more and more often, aim at making the enemy suffer as much as possible rather than extorting one's political will on him" (Pawłowski, 2009).

Conclusions. The Reconstruction of the Typology of the Cultural Experience of War Violence Against Women

Narrations circulating in the public sphere, media images, populist visions, historical policies, or messages contained in textbooks, used during official ceremonies, are often appropriated by traditional discourse that spreads the image of women's dutifulness. Attempts to redefine the roles of women during war also meet with resistance from women who had participated in these events (*War and Occupation*, p. 15).

The case of Central and Eastern Europe for example, the emancipatory activation of women derived from the difficult conditions of occupation. In European countries where the system of occupation during wartime was different, such as France or unoccupied war participants such as Great Britain, where women worked in industry; the women's situation as emancipation, looked a bit different (*War and Occupation*, p. 20).

Presenting the roles of women in historiography, especially in Poland, requires redefining in order to consider the qualities of agency and subjectivity that do not fit in the classical approach, and the creation of a trend of researching women's emancipatory activity. What is particularly important is the aspect of women as perpetrators of violence, which embodies leaving behind the classical narrative of women's activities. This creates the image of a woman-monster, an inhuman creature. The starting point for this research is rejecting the conviction that there is a contradiction between violence and "feminine nature" (Alexievich, 2017; Kralowa, 2012; Röger & Leiserowitz 2012). When reflecting on the Second World War, guards in concentration camps, presented as monsters of exuberant sexuality are an example. Thus, a female perpetrator of violence is still perceived through the prism of her sexuality.

The same applies to contemporary images of terrorist women who are dehumanized. On the other hand, there are also analyzes in which the attribution of the right to be an oppressor and perpetrator of violence to women can also be seen in an emancipationist perspective (Jasbirm & Rai, 2003; West, 2004; West, 2005).

Therefore, it is necessary to establish some terminology, so as not to perceive sexuality as an intimate are when speaking about it. Good example of this kind of practice is the book by Joanna Ostrowska "Przemilczane", where the author describes the lives of women prisoners in the burdels of concentration camps. The sexuality of their bodies in this case boiled down to their being objectified and manned as an element of a crime machine torn apart from intimacy. However, such narratives and practices of interpretation only

today seem to be understood. Until now, such women have been subjected to secondary victimization precisely because of the social misunderstanding of the difference between sexuality and sexualization (Ostrowska, 2018). On the other hand, one should be aware that female and male researchers who deal with the war history of women, also within war studies, concentrate on researching military history. Issues of women's and men's privacy also appear in this research to exceed approaches objectifying and sexualizing women. Such scientific interests and interpretative and analytical attempts exceed the division into private and social history, as women's domain and military history, referring to men, thus allowing women to enter the world of international conflicts, and men to the world of private social life⁵ (*War and occupation*, p. 18).

Our postulate, therefore, is that in the context of war studies, polemology and irenology as well as in research on peace and conflict (research on peace and conflict – Brewer, 2016, pp. 1–11) more attention should be devoted to the subject of sexual violence, but also broadly understood everyday life in relation to survival strategy, adaptation to everyday difficult and changing conditions, as well as practices and rituals of everyday life. There are relatively more messages about women who are “steadfast”, devoting themselves to the good of children, family and nation, linking women with the myth of local culture, for example in the Polish context – with the topos of the Polish Mother, who did not hesitate to sacrifice for the homeland. Why is this so? There are many reasons for such a situation, ranging from the recognition of certain threads to be irrelevant in comparison with the so-called greater history, a sense of shame and guilt that translates into linguistic helplessness in the description of borderline situations. Describing stories related to sexual violence, violence and suffering is certainly a way out of fixed topos and can even be interpreted as an attempt to pave the national memory. There is no room for sexuality and corporeality, dirt, pain and physiology in this memory (*War and occupation*, p. 13).

This thesis is the result of a contradiction between the heroic approach represented by the Great Narrative about the past, which includes war as heroism and martyrdom of men in popular culture, the media and education. These attitudes are as valuable for the sense of victory as they are for defeat, as heroism and sacrifice refer to an even higher honour. This is important for the ideology of militarism based on nationalism, which mythicizes heroic defenders. Fighting women shown according to this stereotype are depicted as brave as masculine or anonymous victims (Bartuś, 2014, p. 7). The victims have no other status than being passive and casual objects of warfare. The death of such perceived victims – in contrast to giving one's life for glory and victory, for one's homeland or other cause by soldiers – is a pointless tragedy. The accidental death of anonymous victims also invalidates their lives.

⁵ These cultural interpretations of World War II would allow us to “deconstruct historiography and war mythology”, and thus open to new perspectives on research, for example, into men's stories in a *gender* perspective showing how masculinity changes during the war and how it shapes the behavior of historical heroes (*War and occupation*, p. 18).

However, the concept of war has changed. This phenomenon started to be humanised. This means that “concepts of just war appeared and differentiated, religious, ethical and then legal regulations were created which stabilized the situation of losers and, in a sense, rationalized the war, and in consequence, courts prosecuting war crimes, and finally humanitarian actions (interventions). In contemporary times, another factor is clearly visible in democratic countries, resulting from a specific political expression, determined by the electoral calendar – the lack of acceptance of war victims” (Harmoszko, 2018, p. 209). Therefore, the victims are no longer anonymous, their differentiation and the policy of military aggression against the seemingly passive crowd of civilians is recognised. It is discovered that there is no random choice as to who will become a victim. Therefore, the category of “victim” suffered by women has lost its somewhat indifferent status – as an accidental one – showing its necessity (according to the logic of war), when it was the organized military sexual violence directed at women during conflicts, became an additional tool for a deliberate fight conducted on the next front, spreading a wide wave or transferring the war to the so-called back. In such an understanding of the war there is no “back” of the front – everything is a battle and every space can be a battlefield, just like the body of women. The tamed and defeated female body – enemy women – is a sign of victory and annexation of its resources (Janion, 2006.)

Important sources include journals, photographs, artifacts and oral history. It is strongly associated with the concept of identity. While in the case of men, the way they construct narratives, how they perceive themselves, and as they talk about themselves, everything is more centrally oriented around one point; in the case of women, research shows that the perspective is more dispersed and diverse and the identity more flexible. At one moment, they are soldiers, becoming mothers in another, and then devoting themselves to their professional work (*War and Occupation*, p. 20).

For this, we need to add micro historical studies that give insight into the local specifics and can be the starting point for finding a “universal interpretive framework” (as we can observe in the study of postcolonial theory, used today for universal research). Another aspect of such local studies is the division into the countryside and the city, because the mainstream of war research is strongly urbanized. In the case of a gender perspective, this results in the image of a working man, a breadwinner and an unemployed woman. In the countryside both situation and work were different (*War and Occupation*, p. 21). The point of difference lies in the position of gender roles in the urban and village societies. It can be visualized especially in the case of power in the family. However, this only a proposal for further research, which can be conducted in this matter.

The research strategies and proposals described here are nothing more than an attempt to create a theory of “a temporary reconfiguration of the gender order” during wars and conflicts (*War and Occupation*, p. 23). In order to be able to do so, the studied issues should be seen in a multidimensional perspective, considering their heteroglossia and multilingualism in the social sense (resulting from social stratification, as also cultural identity and worldview).

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Autors

Prof. UŁ, dr hab. Inga B. Kuźma

University of Łódź, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy and History, e-mail: inga.kuzma@uni.lodz.pl

Dr hab. Edyta Pietrzak

Łódź University of Technology, Institute of Social Sciences and Management of Technologies