



Polish women, soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising, after liberation of POW camp Oberlangen.

Between gender blindness and nationalist herstory

The history of Polish women in WWII as the site of an anti-modernist revolution

by **Weronika Grzebalska**

abstract

This paper discusses the current “herstorical turn” in professional and popular historiography and memory of WWII in Poland: a growing interest in women and the distinctiveness of their wartime experiences. The paper starts by describing the three “ideal types” of professional and popular WWII history writing with regard to the position of women: the false universalism of a large part of professional historiography, the compensatory character of women’s history that adds women to the picture without reframing the picture itself, and the recent “herstorical turn”. Focusing on one dominant strand of this “herstorical turn” – nationalist herstory – the article reflects on the ways in which women’s history has become one of the platforms a broader illiberal political shift that is currently ongoing in Central Europe.

KEY WORDS: Poland, Warsaw Uprising.

In the decades following 1945 in Poland, women’s history of WWII constituted itself as field of study predominantly in response to the absence of women and gender from the historiography and the collective memory of the period. Both women’s historians and female combatants engaging in history writing critically acknowledged the invisibility of women in mainstream narratives about the war, and they sought in their works to make women visible as participants in armed resistance. In contemporary Poland, however, this state of affairs in the field of WWII history and memory, as well as the rationale for feminist historical interventions, have changed significantly. The second decade of the 2000s marks an important turning point for the visibility of women in the popular history and collective memory of WWII, and it is characterized by an outbreak of popular interest in women’s participation in the war. In recent

years, numerous books dedicated to women's participation in WWII have been published, along with documentaries, press articles, museum exhibitions, musical projects, social media initiatives, reenactment groups, and even t-shirts. In 2001 the Polish freedom fighter Elżbieta Zawacka observed critically that in the contemporary collective consciousness the Polish WWII soldier of any armed organization is a man,¹ but in 2014 the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising seemed to be all about women, with several books on the topic published and wide media coverage of the issue of women's participation.

Yet, while these various herstory initiatives certainly made women visible as actors and questioned the false universality of wartime experience, they often also uncritically naturalized femininity and masculinity, reproduced traditionalist ideas about women's place in WWII and its history, and used women's history as a didactic resource to promote a gendered and militarized concept of citizenship and nationhood. In fact, the major challenge that stands before feminist historians and herstory practitioners in today's Poland no longer seems to be the absence of women from historical narratives, but rather the mainstreaming of women into history in an illiberal, anti-modernist framework that fetishizes gender difference and reduces history writing to a tool for producing nationhood. The popularity of this nationalist herstory is of course part of a broader political shift that is currently ongoing in Central Europe. In this shift, a particular construction of WWII memory has become one of the discursive tools for the creation of an alternative illiberal mode of governance and community built on the rejection of liberalism and modernism and centered on the notions of nation, family, and tradition.²

My own work³ on the Warsaw Uprising⁴ of 1944 has been entangled in this broader shift. In the years 2009–2013, I was conducting an oral history project devoted to the gender politics of armed resistance in Warsaw. When I began my research, the myth of the Warsaw Uprising had been gaining ground, symbolically elevated and politically instrumentalized⁵ by the Right since 2004 as the origin story of the post-1989 national collective. The myth, however, has long been a largely masculine one, as women and gender did not sufficiently figure in this story. Yet, when my book was published in late 2013, it entered a completely different political and public context from the one I had originally intended it for. It was no longer primarily with women's invisibility and the "white spots" of collective memory that the book needed to enter into dialogue. Rather, it was the nationalist herstory "boom" that it had to engage with, along with the instrumentalization of history in the service of right-wing illiberalism and the intensified attacks from conservative historians and far-right groups against "gender" in academia and beyond,⁶ which also unfolded around the same time.

"OF THE THIRTEEN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS PUBLISHED AFTER 1989 THAT I ANALYZED, NONE CONTAINED A NAME OR IMAGE OF A FEMALE MEMBER OF THE UNDERGROUND."

Building upon the arguments and analyses presented in my previous work⁷ on the visibility and position of women in professional and popular historiography of the Warsaw Uprising, this paper discusses the current "herstory turn" against the background of the state of mainstream professional and popular historiography, occasionally referring to history teaching and public memory about WWII as well. It describes the three "ideal types" of WWII professional and popular history writing with regard to the position of: the false universalism of a large part of professional historiography, the compensatory character of women's history that aimed to merely add women to the picture without reframing the picture itself, and the recent "herstory turn" characterized by a growing interest in women and the distinctiveness of their experiences. Focusing on one dominant strand of this "herstory turn" – nationalist herstory – the article also situates itself in the broader context of the illiberal political transformation that is currently ongoing in Poland. It reflects on the ways in which women's history has become one of the platforms for the production of a new anti-modernist common-sense that rejects liberal democratic values, as well as a tool for the re-militarization and re-gendering of citizenship.

False universalism of the history of the Warsaw Uprising

To understand the recent "herstory turn", one must first situate it against the background of professional historiography on the Warsaw Uprising. As I have argued,⁸ this has up until very recently been written predominantly in the disciplinary framework of political and in military historiography, which centers its attention on what happened in the offices of politicians and diplomats, military headquarters, and on battlefields, limiting the scope of studied phenomena to the experiences of a narrow and predominantly male group of participants. As the German historians Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser have observed, the political-military paradigm in historiography leads not only to the writing of the history of a particular male group in society consisting of political and military elites and worthy soldiers, but also to the universalization of their experiences as the history of the whole collective: "Under the guise of studying high politics, international affairs, anonymous structures and social developments, general history is quite often centered on the history of a specific male group in society – certainly without analyzing the masculinity of its members."⁹ The invisibility of women can therefore be understood as a side effect of applying a narrow framework of political and military historiography, which focuses its attention on the center of power – high military and political ranks – a sphere where women have usually been underrepresented.

The description provided by Epple and Schaser faithfully



Warsaw Uprising: Courier bringing new orders.

renders the character of the most renowned and widely read monographs on the Warsaw Uprising, e.g. those of Jerzy Kirchmayer,¹⁰ Jan Ciechanowski,¹¹ and Norman Davies.¹² Because their aim was to present the political and military course of the uprising and the decisions that led to it, these authors largely omitted women from the narrative about the past, limiting the story to one “written primarily by men, for men, and about men”, in which “women are, by design, supporting actors whose roles reflect masculinist notions of femininity and of women’s proper ‘place’”.¹³ If women appear in these works, they usually do so as witnesses accounting for the events, often lacking biographical information, and not as active agents.¹⁴ This political-military paradigm also prevails in school curricula – out of the thirteen history textbooks published after 1989 that I analyzed,¹⁵ none featured a name or image of a female member of the underground, and only one included a simple mention that women also took part in the uprising.

Likewise, the aforementioned paradigm has also shaped the official commemorative politics of the Polish Parliament.¹⁶ Out of the 188 commemorative acts issued between 1989 and 2015 that commemorated people, organizations, and events connected to the war and the military, only one celebrated a woman – Irena Sendlerowa, who rescued Jewish children. An additional five acts mentioned women in passing while commemorating other events or organizations, albeit always as an anonymous collective – as “women” or “daughters of the Fatherland”. Non-militaristic acts were not much better in this respect. Out of the rest of the total of 419 commemorative acts we analyzed, two memorialized female figures (the actress Helena Modrzejewska and the scientist Maria Curie-Skłodowska), and two more celebrated occasions associated with women as a collective (International Women’s Day and Women’s Suffrage).

While a simple lack of female figures in the narrative is an obvious example of women’s invisibility in mainstream his-

torical accounts, another instance is the omission of certain aspects of women’s collective or individual biography that could challenge stereotypical ideas about women’s wartime involvement and complicate the neat national master narrative. For instance, in books and encyclopedias women who participated in direct combat are often described as nurses and couriers. Likewise, in his description of the London mission of the emissary Elżbieta Zawacka, Norman Davies¹⁷ leaves out the fact that one of its goals – which Zawacka personally underscores¹⁸ – was to persuade the president-in-exile Władysław Raczkiewicz to improve the situation of women within the ranks by legally acknowledging their effort as military service equal to men’s. In fact, emancipatory aspects of Women’s military service¹⁹ are ignored by most his-

torical publications in favor of accentuating the patriotic dimension of women’s military participation. The Warsaw Uprising Museum is another good example of this false universalism of national experience and its consequence – the invisibility in the exposition of issues such as women’s gendered participation or Women’s Military Service as a specific organizational structure and a lack of focus on the gendered experiences of insurgents and civilians. In fact, when I approached the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2010 to access data about the percentage of women among the insurgents, I was informed that this largest of archival institutions did not possess such data due to the fact that its database simply did not include the variable “gender”. This proved no obstacle for the helpful employees, but it revealed a lot about the character of public remembrance and history writing of the event before the “herstorical turn”. The primacy of national frames of reference rests on the assumption that men and women shared similar experiences because belonging to the same nation and undergoing the same national oppression was of much greater significance than any gender differences. This underscoring of the unity of national experience, ostensibly undifferentiated by gender or other social parameters, leads to the exclusion of issues that do not fit easily into such a narrative.

Filling in the blanks: women’s history as an appendix

The first group that was very vocal in its criticism of the invisibility of women and their military (and paramilitary) structures in historical works about WWII was female veterans themselves. In 1951, Major Wanda “Lena” Gertz complained in a letter to her subordinates that the Polish Historical Institute in London not only omitted women in its book on the Home Army, but also refused to financially support efforts by the women’s editorial committee to publish a supplement dedicated to women’s participation.²⁰ Two decades later, Lieutenant-Colonel Grażyna



Major Wanda "Lena" Gertz served in WW1 masqueraded as a man. During WWII she commanded a women's diversion and sabotage unit.



General Elżbieta Zawacka (in the center) and the commanders of the women's platoons, Garczyn 1939.

Lipińska analyzed three thousand publications on WWII and gave a speech in which she voiced concern that in the historical literature women usually lacked essential biographical information and often even surnames.²¹ In 2001, Brigadier General Elżbieta Zawacka summarized women's visibility in historical research on WWII on a similar note: "These issues are not reflected in research plans of academic institutions. It is very hard to find them in the abundant publications about the Polish underground during WWII. The existing literature is very limited in providing systematic knowledge about women's wartime participation, its geographical and quantitative scope, and the types of service women were able to participate in."²²

This disappointment with the omission of women from historical research pushed female combatants to launch various initiatives aimed at documenting and disseminating knowledge about their participation in WWII, among them publishing joint volumes, organizing conferences, setting up historical archives, and erecting monuments. The official politics of history in a given period has of course shaped the general conditions for research on women in the uprising. For example, while research on the Home Army was impossible under Stalinism,²³ the thaw of October 1956 brought about a new myth of "the unity of resistance" that permitted new research and publications on WWII.²⁴ After the thaw in the 1960s, Brigadier General Maria Wittek began the archiving of documents connected to women's military service that led in 1970 to the official founding of the Commission for Women's History in the Struggle for Independence in 1970. About the same time, materials about women's wartime participation were also being gathered by Elżbieta Zawacka. The first academic publications dedicated to Polish women's WWII participation started coming out in the 1970s and early 1980s, and although their focus was predominantly on members of the Peasant Battalions and the Polish People's Army,²⁵ and although they sometimes constructed women's participation in the framework of "the fight for the Poland of the working people",²⁶ several also concentrated on the wartime participation of women

who belonged to the Home Army and Polish Armed Forces in the West.²⁷ As the Polish sociologist Barbara Szacka has argued, along with the revival of romantic national liberation motifs and the growing significance of samizdat publications, the 1980s saw the popularization of the image of the Warsaw Uprising as a symbol of a heroic fight for freedom.²⁸ Following that shift, numerous memoirs of female insurgents were published, as well as historical works dedicated to women in the Warsaw Uprising and the Home Army, along with other formations.²⁹ In turn, Szacka observes, the breakthrough of 1989 initiated the period of "recovered memory"³⁰ – the opening of the archives in Central Europe was accompanied by efforts to write the "truer" history of WWII, countering the narratives from the communist period.³¹ On the wave of this revisionist turn, the Warsaw Uprising has gradually become elevated to the status of the founding myth of the post-1989 national collective. The sources of the symbolic potency and wide relevance of the event for the public cannot be reduced to a single political campaign, no matter how successful such a campaign may have been. However, with the erection of the Warsaw Uprising Museum on the initiative of the leader of the Law and Justice Party, Lech Kaczyński, it also became clear that the Right saw the event as a key building block of its counter-hegemonic narrative.³²

While broader political shifts have provided an important context for historical research and commemorative initiatives dedicated to the uprising and to WWII in general, I would argue that traditional historical watersheds such as 1989 have not affected history writing as far as the visibility and position of women and gender in these works is concerned. The majority of publications on female insurgents published after 1989 were still personal recollections and joint volumes authored by female veterans, and the historiographical articles and books³³ dedicated to women that came out after 1989 did not introduce new theoretical or methodological frameworks. In fact, women's history works published before and after 1989 have more similarities than differences. What is more, this observation is true of the

works written by conventional historians and of the writings of scholars associated with women's history. As the Polish historian Natalia Jarska observes, the tendency in historical publications on women during the occupation in WWII is that they "do not go beyond factographic description and heroic narrative, not asking the question of gender. The narrative on this topic is often essentialist and stereotypical."³⁴

One common feature of these works has been their methodological nationalism,³⁵ which is the tendency to analyze women's wartime participation solely in the national framework and to ignore critical socio-historical categories that could undermine the explicit primacy of the nation such as the concept of "gender" or "militarism". Another common characteristic has been what the Polish historian Dobrochna Kalwa called "methodological orthodoxy": the concentration on establishing "historical facts" – dates, names, and numbers – rather than understanding the sociopolitical processes that have shaped women's wartime situation, as well as adhesion to methodological rules of classical historiography and hostility to new methodologies and theoretical approaches such as those springing from gender studies.³⁶ Last but not least, what these works also share is that they treat "women" as a stable and essentialist category instead of reflecting on how such a category was created and mobilized in a given moment by various political actors.³⁷ All of these characteristics contributed to the ghettoization of women's history in WWII and the fact that their history has not been integrated with the broader history of the war and has resided on its margins, thus holding the status of a "feminine appendix" to the otherwise uncontested history of WWII rather than knowledge that could transform the way the war is conceptualized and narrated. Up until today, the Warsaw Uprising has not been the object of much feminist analysis apart from my own work. While the situation is less bleak in the case of feminist literature dealing with other aspects of WWII in Poland, many of these important works³⁸ have been written by authors working outside of Polish academia and have not been translated into Polish. As argued by Natalia Jarska, the body of Polish historiographical works that survey the war from a gender perspective is still in the process of being made.³⁹

Feminist activists and popular writers, however, have been an important part of the post-2010 "herstorical turn" that can be defined as a sudden increase in interest in women in the history of WWII, accompanied by the departure from viewing the past in a universalist framework in favor of acknowledging the gendered diversification of historical experiences and their unequal representation in history writing. In 2008, the feminist writer Sylwia Chutnik raised the topic of female civilian experience during the uprising in the book *Kieszonkowy atlas kobiet* [Pocket female at-

las], followed by a Warsaw city guide dedicated to women's history that also featured herstories from the Warsaw Uprising. In 2010, numerous screenings across the country of the documentary *Uprising in a Floral Blouse*,⁴⁰ produced by the feminist NGO Feminoteka, popularized the topic of women in the Warsaw Uprising. Since its premiere, the 20-minute feature has been shown at almost 30 events, been the topic of various press articles and even university courses, and been watched almost 9,000 times on YouTube and Vimeo. In 2012, the feminist and Vice-Marshall of the Sejm Wanda Nowicka organized a conference in the parliament dedicated to women in the uprising. While it is too early to make an informed judgment about the influence of the feminist strand of the "herstorical turn" on professional historiography, recent publications⁴¹ suggest that it could potentially play a positive role in influencing professional historians to study this topic in novel ways.

The anti-modernist memory boom and the securitization of memory

The growing emphasis on women as wartime actors that began in popular historiography and public memory in the second decade of the 21st century did not emerge out of the blue; on the contrary, it was preceded by a broader anti-modernist WWII memory boom orchestrated in large part by right-wing political actors, as well as attempts to securitize a particular version of collective memory. As James Mark argued, due to the absence of judicial reckoning with communist political elites, and to

the brutal social costs of the neoliberal transition, 1989 was not broadly accepted as a heroic political myth; instead, the insecurity produced by the post-1989 era has been narrated by the Right in the region as the "unfinished revolution".⁴² Moreover, in the absence of convincing left-wing political alternatives, the insecurities and disenchantment produced by the period have been channeled into identity conflicts,⁴³ and memory wars have been their key example. Memory

"THE OMISSION OF WOMEN FROM HISTORICAL RESEARCH PUSHED FEMALE COMBATANTS TO LAUNCH VARIOUS INITIATIVES AIMED AT DOCUMENTING AND DISSEMINATING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN WWII."

scholars agree that in Poland the beginning of the era of what has been dubbed the "new politics of history"⁴⁴ – the growing emphasis on the promotion of nationalist and neoconservative narratives about the past by the state and right-wing political actors – was symbolically marked by the erection of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2004. Our research on the commemorative politics of the Polish Parliament in the years 1989–2015 confirms this claim.⁴⁵ As we observed, while an increase in the number of commemorative acts was visible even before 2005, the "memory boom" – the largest increase both in absolute and relative terms – occurred during the first Law and Justice government of 2005–2007. The subsequent governments led by the conservative liberal Civic Platform continued to pass commemorative acts

at a similar rate. This post-2004 era of the politics of history has witnessed an intensification of revisionist discussions on recent history – especially WWII and state socialism – together with the emergence of two potent military myths, that of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and that of the Cursed Soldiers,⁴⁶ who led the anti-communist resistance in the post-war period. Interestingly enough, while at the turn of the century Law and Justice worked to revive the memory of the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising, the party later largely abandoned these issues and turned to celebrating the Cursed Soldiers instead. This is arguably because the myth of the Cursed Soldiers worked better with the main principles of the broader illiberal counter-revolution that Law and Justice began orchestrating. This counter-revolution claims that previous historical watersheds such as 1945 and 1989 should not be regarded as such because they brought the continuation of occupation and oppression rather than genuine change.⁴⁷ Cursed Soldiers fit better with this narrative because some of them stayed undercover in the forests after 1945 and did not accept the new post-war order.

An underlying feature of this memory boom has been right-wing anti-modernism. Stories about the glorious past produced by the Right are therefore implicated in broader narratives of cultural and national decline as a result of the communist experiment and subsequent Europeanization. As the religious studies scholar Arthur Versluis argued in defining anti-modernism, “[i]f the essence of ‘modernism’ is progress, a belief that technological development means socio-economic improvement, the heart of antimodernism is a realization that ‘progress’ has an underbelly – that technological industrial development has destructive consequences in three primary and intertwined areas: nature, culture, and religion”.⁴⁸

With the illiberal turn in Central Europe, these anti-modernist narratives have once again resurfaced, providing community and meaning to those faced with the dire consequences of contemporary risk societies. The rewriting of the past thus became the platform for the forging of an alternative to what has been seen as destructive and corrupt modern progress represented by Europeanization and globalized capitalism.

Across Central Europe, illiberal right-wing actors emerged who refer to the modern world as the “civilization of death” and who promise an alternative to the modern liberal democratic model. This alternative emphasizes the cultural and socio-economic stability of family and of religious and national communities, and it offers a militarized concept of security. Yet, as the political scientist Timothy W. Luke argues, one should not culturalize politico-economic processes by obscuring the structural regimes that produce modernism with vague terms and binary oppositions such as “progress versus tradition” or “technology versus humanity”.⁴⁹ Modernity – Luke observes – has a lot to do with the “creative destruction of capi-

talism”, including the commodification of social relations, the hegemony of market rationality, and global capitalism.⁵⁰ What follows is that while the opposition to modernity’s battleground might predominantly be the culture of modern society represented by liberal and progressive values, it is in fact often fueled by deeper structural issues such as socio-economic insecurity or the political disempowerment of some parts of the population.

As indicated by Polish parliamentary discussions, through increased attempts at passing commemorative acts politicians in Poland have sought to discursively secure historical narratives of heroism and victimhood and a certain vision of present-day nationhood and citizenship. Similarly, the Estonian scholar Maria Mälksoo observed that after EU enlargement, Central and Eastern European actors in general attempted to protect and institutionalize particular narratives about WWII and communism, on both the national and transnational level.⁵¹ This securing of a certain flow of memory, she argued, could be seen as a way to provide ontological security to a state or society undergoing rapid transition or other threats to its unity and identity. At the same time, however, the illusion of ontological security comes at serious costs. One is the securitization of memory, that is, the removal of public remembrance from the realm of normal political debate and the framing of alternative memory cultures as a security threat. Another is the militarization of memory – the use of historical narratives to promote militaristic values, practices, and notions of citizenship. As Mälksoo observes, “The social framing of issues of historical remembrance as ontological security problems and the related lax use of military metaphors [...] condition and legitimate the rhetoric and the means of security for handling them, thereby enhancing the potential of

militarizing a state’s historical self-understanding and culture as a whole.”⁵²

As our research on commemorative acts of the Polish Parliament revealed,⁵³ militarism in general and WWII in particular have been an important strand of official remembrance culture in Poland ever since the beginning of the socio-economic transformation. Acts that commemorated people, events, and

organizations connected to the war effort constituted over 45% of all acts issued between 1989 and 2015.⁵⁴ This tendency to construct collective identity primarily in relation to war by securing a certain type of historical narrative has been further strengthened by the WWII “memory boom” that began in 2004. In the years 2005–2007, the number of acts commemorating military issues grew by 100% compared to those issued under the previous government. Yet political actors did not stop at the discursive securitization of memory, but turned to legal measures as well. In 2016 and 2017, several activists faced charges for using the altered symbol of the WWII Polish underground – Fighting Poland – in the context of women’s rights demonstrations.⁵⁵ In

“WHILE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY LAW AND JUSTICE WORKED TO REVIVE THE MEMORY OF THE HOME ARMY AND THE WARSAW UPRISING, THE PARTY LATER LARGELY ABANDONED THESE ISSUES.”

one instance, the charges were pressed by an NGO dedicated to the Cursed Soldiers, in other cases the notification of a suspicion of criminal offence was filed by right-wing activists. The symbol of Fighting Poland has been legally protected since 2014 when the then-governing Civic Platform passed a bill to that effect, but attempts to legally ban activists from using it to promote struggles for an open society and human rights have begun only under the illiberal right-wing Law and Justice government.

Nationalist herstory

While the outbreak of women's history projects based predominantly on oral history sources in the context of the Warsaw Uprising is a recent occurrence, nationalist herstory as such is not a new phenomenon in Poland. The Polish historian Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein observed a similar proliferation of fighting women's autobiographies in the years of the formation of an independent Polish state after 1918. While these were written by the women themselves, the schematic character of these writings, including their entanglement with politically endorsed notions of patriotic femininity, and the careful selection of those that got published, led Kusiak-Brownstein to argue that in all these texts women "function as national metaphors of women's loyalty to their fathers, husbands, brothers, as well as the social and political institutions they represented."⁵⁶ Given the importance of WWII memory in the broader anti-modernist political project and the fact that women function in nationalist politics as metaphors of the collective and as the bearers of its values,⁵⁷ it is not surprising that women's history once again has become the key battleground for the definition of the contemporary collective.

As mentioned above, few feminist activists, writers, and academics have critically engaged in this ongoing discussion about wartime women, and it has been the newly established conservative memory institutions, right-wing authors, and reenactment groups that have played a leading role in revising history with a focus on women, researching and commemorating women as national heroines and martyrs and promoting wartime women as symbols of national struggle. Unlike feminist interventions that generally sought to open up a space for different experiences and memory cultures and to go beyond the national framework of analysis by introducing categories such as gender or militarism, works from the nationalist herstory strand are mostly written in the neo-traditional and anti-modernist framework. After the topic of women in the uprising first gained wider public relevance, the Museum instantly initiated several undertakings of its own. Patrycja Bukalska captured this new-found interest in women on the part of the Museum in the foreword to her book where she recalled: "In the summer of 2010 I received a call from the Deputy Director of the Warsaw Uprising Museum [...] He asked me if I had thought about a book on women in the Warsaw Uprising. From this conversation my work on *August Girls '44* started."⁵⁸ Also in 2010, the Warsaw Rising Museum announced a comic book contest about female participants, followed by a broad commemorative project dedicated to women entitled *Morowe Panny* [Brave Girls] in 2012. As part of this "herstorical turn", numerous popular history books on female insur-



Members of Women's Military Training (PWK), 1932.

gents were published.⁵⁹ Several exhibitions⁶⁰ and campaigns⁶¹ were launched, along with social media profiles⁶² and music projects.⁶³ The outbreak of interest in the female insurgents of the Warsaw Uprising was swiftly followed by a similar offensive of projects dedicated to the female members of the post-war armed anti-communist resistance dubbed the Cursed Soldiers. In 2017, Polish public TV, which since 2016 has been used as a tool for broadcasting the party agenda, will air the first TV series dedicated to female members of the wartime underground.

One common characteristic of these works has been their neo-traditional frame, that is, the focus on the story of women predominantly as brave and patriotic role models. While the authors of these books⁶⁴ aim to recover the history of women – those whose lives can be presented in the framework of heroism and martyrdom. This rationale was directly laid out on the Facebook fan page "Poles Serving the Fatherland that commemorates female fighters of WWII: "Polish women are not only wonderful mothers and wives, they are also dedicated patriots, actively serving the Fatherland. Every Polish woman who contributes to national defense [...] deserves respect."⁶⁵ Similarly, the author of *Girls from the Uprising*, Anna Herbich, explained in an interview the principles of the selection of female figures for her book: "If women played hardball, they would not be heroes to me. A woman who killed, stole, sold her body, who wanted to survive no matter what, would not be my hero."⁶⁶ This focus on the herstory of heroines and martyrs points to the overriding function of this type of historical writing, namely, the production and legitimization of a specific version of nationhood. The goal of these works is not so much to uncover women's experiences for the sake of learning more about the politics of the event in question. Rather, women's stories are carefully selected and used to secure a certain narrative about the past. As another author, Barbara Wachowicz put it: "Memory is important. We cannot forget our history. It's a guarantee of tradition and Polishness."⁶⁷ Here women's history becomes just another way of



From the film *Uprising in a Floral Blouse* (2009). The text reads: "Washing yourself wasn't so important, it was more important to not get shot by the Germans", "When they're shooting it's better to be dirty than to be clean and die".

telling the same romantic narrative of what the Polish feminist Sławomira Walczewska has called the story of "knights and ladies"⁶⁸ – a narrative about the brave community of men protecting "women and children"⁶⁹ and their loyal female companions who sometimes fought by their side.

The nation-building function of this type of herstory writing is of course reliant on the production of a particular gender order because the life stories of women in WWII set a scope of propagated gendered attitudes and values for contemporary women. These propagated models draw on two politicized notions of patriotic femininity established in the Polish national canon over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries – the *Matka Polka* and the female soldier.⁷⁰ In current memory politics, these two patriotic feminine ideals are often discursively juxtaposed with the "Other" of the Polish national consciousness, namely Soviet women whose ostensible lack of femininity personifies the barbarism of the USSR⁷¹ and female communists who are portrayed as demonic and lecherous criminals.⁷² Therefore, as Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein noted in regard to women's life stories which served the goal of nation-building should not be read as multidimensional testimonies of women's experiences, but rather as a record of politically accepted notions of patriotic femininity.⁷³ Of course, such a nation-oriented framing of women's past results in numerous taboos and the erasure of those elements of their life stories that challenge or outright undermine the national narrative. Therefore, in national herstory works one will not read about women who did not want to fight or to sacrifice their children "on the altar of the Fatherland", about acts of oppression or violence performed by Polish soldiers, or about women's fight against the prevailing gender order.

While the neo-traditional narrative remains the dominant

way of telling the history of women during the Warsaw Uprising, nationalist herstory sometimes also relies on what can be described as the *Alltagsgeschichte* frame. Within this frame, women's wartime lives are narrated through the prism of the spheres of life that are marked as "private" and "feminine" – motherhood, fashion, beauty, and relationships – and as such have not been the focus of conventional political-military historiography. A good example is the book *Girls from the Uprising* whose cover blurb reads: "Sławka regrets to this day that she did not kiss a young insurgent who was in love with her. Halina gave birth to a son right before the uprising and saved his life in a miraculous way, and Zosia broke the rules of the conspiracy and revealed her name to her beloved. The author lets us see the uprising from an entirely new perspective: through women's eyes."⁷⁴ In some respect, the *Alltagsgeschichte* frame can be viewed as a promising alternative to both the pompousness of national martyrology and the

abstractness of general historiography because it takes everyday experiences of ordinary women as its starting point. This concentration on the microhistory of everyday lives, emotions, and relationships could indeed have the potential to transform the dominant historiography of the uprising that predominantly serves the function of producing a narrowly defined national identity. With this transformative intention in mind, the producers of the feminist film *Uprising in a Floral Blouse* proclaimed on their website: "Monuments are many, and we do not intend to build another one. We want to know how our grandmothers lived when they were our age."⁷⁵ Yet, while the move away from the nation-building orientation is promising, equating women's history with the private history of everyday life, and understanding a "women's perspective" as restricted to the experiences of motherhood, romance, and beauty, raises serious doubts. Especially if it is not followed by a similar interest in men's everyday practices. For instance, the all-female group DiSK, named after a WWII women's diversion and sabotage unit, concentrates mostly on reconstructing the customs, clothing, and make-up of female conspirators, and not the primary activities of DiSK such as military training and sabotage operations.⁷⁶ The same rationale motivated the contest organized by the fashion blogger portal *szafiarenka.pl* in cooperation with the author of *Girls from the Uprising*, Anna Herbich, who explained the contest's rationale in the following way: "Thousands of young women took part in this battle, who even in the most dramatic circumstances did their best to look good [...] If [young girls] want to commemorate them this way, I don't see anything wrong with that."⁷⁷

However, while nationalist herstory dedicates a lot of space to women and their experiences, gender differences are unreflexively accentuated, not problematized. No questions are asked

about the cultural and political forces that shaped the notion of femininity and masculinity in a given context, and when the invisibility of women in history is acknowledged, no attention is paid to the very processes that have contributed to omitting women. One example of this fetishization of gender difference can be found in the foreword to *August Girls, 44*, where the author writes: “Their stories about the uprising are also different from the ones we are used to. There’s little about operations and shooting, numbers, data, location of troops. There are more feelings, smells, colors, recollections of rain and a first cigarette.”⁷⁸ Yet, while underscoring the specificity of women’s stories, nationalist herstory leaves readers with a mere ascertainment that men and women are fundamentally different and thus have different wartime experiences. The gender order is perceived as historical and eternal and, therefore, unworthy of analysis. Yet the fetishization of gender differences can be fraught with the same dire consequences as ignoring such differences altogether. As Sara Horowitz alerts us, the concentration on essentialist difference “inadvertently reproduces the marginalization of women”⁷⁹ by depoliticizing them and portraying them as belonging primarily to the private or biological sphere.

Nationalist herstory has its merits and should not be underestimated. By presenting examples of women from the past as politically engaged actors, and popularizing herstory as a genre, it certainly provides a powerful alternative to male-dominated historical narratives. However, what all these right-wing revisionist herstory projects have in common is their anti-modernist undertone – the fact that stories about wartime women are used as a metaphor for a utopian state of cultural normalcy – a past where women were still “proper” women and men were “real” men, and a projected future society that will be designed according to anti-modernist values. In 21st-century Poland, women’s history has thus become one of the key battlegrounds for the (re) definition of the contemporary national collective. A particular construction of the history of wartime women is played against current emancipatory tendencies in Polish society and is used to counter the feminist movement and the changes in gender roles that it advocates. While providing a powerful alternative to the values, gender roles, and modes of citizenship promoted by the liberal democratic project, this nationalist herstory also has the effect of re-militarizing the notion of citizenship through the celebration of martyrs and heroes as role models. The productiveness of securing a certain version of the past for present political goals was further revealed in 2016 by the ruling Law and Justice party’s flagship project: the creation of a new branch of the armed forces called the Territorial Defense Forces, formed predominantly from local citizens and not professional soldiers. Not surprisingly, the Forces officially took over the military tra-

ditions of the Home Army, and the first three brigades bear the names of three Cursed Soldiers. While the forces are open to women, so far women constitute only 9 percent of the cadres.⁸⁰ Thus in the creation of the Territorial Defense Forces, right-wing memory politics, a militarized form of citizenship, and an anti-modernist gender regime have been symbolically woven together.

Conclusions

The sheer number of recently published works dedicated to women who participated in important events of the past, as well as the total sales figures of these books, clearly shows that nationalist herstory has fallen on fertile ground in 21st century Poland.⁸¹ The re-emergence of nationalist herstory as a dominant way of mainstreaming women into history in 21st century Poland challenges both the rationale for, and the ways of doing, feminist history, making it increasingly harder for professional feminist historians and public historians alike to conduct and promote their research the way they used to. As right-wing circles celebrate female fighters and mothers of fighters, it is no longer credible to assert that feminist scholars are the only ones revisiting history for the sake of women and working towards advancing women’s position in society and its culture of remembrance. As feminist scholarship in the region is being delegitimized and attacked by anti-modernists, it is increasingly harder to find institutional support and financial resources to conduct and disseminate academic research to counter the anti-modernist narrative. As discussions about women’s history are brought by right-wing actors out of academia and into the public sphere in the form of books, exhibitions, reenactments, and TV series, it

“PRESENTING EXAMPLES OF WOMEN FROM THE PAST AS POLITICALLY ENGAGED ACTORS, AND POPULARIZING HERSTORY AS A GENRE, [...] PROVIDES A POWERFUL ALTERNATIVE TO MALE-DOMINATED HISTORICAL NARRATIVES.”

is no longer enough for feminists to restrict their activity to academia either. Moreover, as women’s history is turned by the Right into a platform for the promotion of a nationalist, anti-modernist model of society, some activists argue that the topic of wartime women has been lost to the nationalists and that feminists should abandon it altogether. Yet, as a politically instrumentalized history of WWII once again

fires the imagination of the people, and is used by the Right as a building block of a new illiberal and militarized model of citizenship,⁸² the danger of having a single story of war and a single story of female empowerment is all the more serious. Therefore, the critical and deconstructive potential of gender as a category of analysis is more important than ever because it can show how things that are considered natural, innate, and infinite are actually carefully constructed and mobilized.⁸³ However, in the case of WWII the deconstruction of the militarized and nationalist master narrative is not enough. There is a need to complicate this politically-endorsed single narrative with more stories that

show different experiences, values, and goals. Here the role of feminist historians as discoverers and facilitators of alternative narratives is crucial.

Moreover, instead of a simple rejection of nationalist herstory of wartime women, I believe we need to do better at understanding the sources of the popularity of these narratives and the empowering aspects of anti-modernist projects in general. Despite its tendency to depoliticize and fetishize gender difference and subordinate women's life stories to the nation-building goal, it would be a mistake to perceive nationalist herstory as purely regressive and oppressive for women. In fact, there is much to suggest that women can experience these narratives as beneficial and empowering. Back in 2009–2010, when I interviewed female participants of the Warsaw Uprising, a few of them mentioned to me the role that stories of women who had actively engaged in national struggles – like the French Joan of Arc or the Polish Emilia Plater – played in their personal development, their understanding of female citizenship, and their decision to engage in resistance. I have since found similar tropes in several interviews with female members of contemporary Polish paramilitary organizations who pointed out how they had enjoyed nationalist wartime herstory prior to joining the largely masculinized paramilitary movement. Yet the empowering potential of nationalist herstory goes beyond inspiring some to challenge the dominant gender order. In fact, for some women it is not the gender transgression, but rather conforming to politically significant female roles such as that of combative/patriotic motherhood that is considered symbolically elevating. The popularity of nationalist herstory could thus be seen as stemming from its entanglement with what Andrea Pető has described as an alternative, anti-modernist model of emancipation⁸⁴ – one standing in opposition to the modernist tradition represented by cosmopolitan feminism and (neo)liberal progress and accentuating the empowering aspects of family, nationalism, and religion. Much like in the Vatican-promoted idea of the complementarity of the sexes, in this anti-modernist vision women are seen as essentially different from men in their ontology and social role, but equal in their dignity. The salience of this anti-modernist vision of emancipation grows out of the failures of the modernist model that entangled feminism with neoliberalism and tied women's value to the labor market.⁸⁵ For those who do not find the individualistic, market-oriented model of emancipation appealing, the anti-modernist vision offered by a nationalist herstory accentuating the importance of women's patriotic involvement may be seen as a feasible and dignifying alternative. ✖

Weronika Grzebalska is a PhD researcher in sociology at the Graduate School for Social Research in Warsaw.

Note: Parts of this article are based on much revised and extended arguments and analyses presented in my previous work published in Polish: "Od fałszywego uniwersalizmu do fetyszyzacji różnicy..." [From False universalism to the fetishization of difference. the herstory turn in the history of the Warsaw Uprising], *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* (No 2(26)/2015), 139–158.

references

- 1 Elżbieta Zawacka, *Szkice z dziejów Wojskowej Służby Kobiet*, (Toruń: "Archiwum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej", 2001), 7.
- 2 For more on the recent illiberal turn in Central Europe and beyond, see e.g. David Ost, "Grappling with the Hungarian and Polish New Right in Power," *News of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies*, 56, no. 4 (August 2016); 1–4; Weronika Grzebalska and Andrea Pető, "The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland," *Women's Studies International Forum*, forthcoming (2018).
- 3 Weronika Grzebalska, *Płeć powstania warszawskiego*, (Warszawa: IBL and NCK, 2013); "Od fałszywego uniwersalizmu do fetyszyzacji różnicy" (2015); "Militarizing the Nation: Gender Politics of the Warsaw Uprising," in *Gendered Wars Gendered Memories, The Feminist Imagination – Europe and Beyond Series*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető (Routledge 2016).
- 4 The Warsaw Uprising was a military operation carried out by the underground Home Army to free Warsaw from Nazi occupation. Having lasted 63 days, it resulted in around 150 thousand civilian casualties and 85% of the city destroyed. Women constituted around 22% of active participants of the armed struggle (Grzebalska, *Płeć powstania warszawskiego*, 63) and performed not only the roles of couriers and nurses but also engaged in sabotage, explosives production, and sometimes even direct combat.
- 5 For more on the political construction of the myth of the Warsaw Uprising and broader memory politics, see note 33.
- 6 For more on anti-gender mobilizations, see, e.g., Eszter Kováts and Maari Pöim, eds., *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilisation in Europe*, (Brussels: 2015); Roman Kuhar and David Patternotte, eds., *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).
- 7 The analyzed literature consisted of books and articles published in Polish after 1945 and dealing specifically with the Warsaw Uprising and the armed underground preceding it. Due to limited space, the full list of primary sources cannot be included here but can be accessed in Grzebalska, *Od fałszywego uniwersalizmu*. While the analysis focuses on the Warsaw Uprising as one particular case study, I believe the general tendencies discovered there can to a large extent be observed in the popular and professional historiography of WWII as a whole.
- 8 Grzebalska, *Od fałszywego uniwersalizmu*, 141–144.
- 9 Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser, "Multiple Histories? Changing Perspectives on Modern Historiography," in *Gendering Historiography. Beyond National Canons* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009), 8.
- 10 Jerzy Kirchmayer, *Powstanie Warszawskie* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1957).
- 11 Jan M. Ciechanowski, *Powstanie Warszawskie: zarys podłoża politycznego i dyplomatycznego* (London: Odnova, 1971).
- 12 Norman Davies, *Powstanie*, 44 (Craców: Znak, 2004).
- 13 Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1998): 243.
- 14 One notable exception is the works by Tomasz Strzembosz, *Oddziały szturmowe konspiracyjnej Warszawy 1939–1944*, (Warsaw: PWN 1979); and partially also Adam Borkiewicz, *Powstanie warszawskie. Zarys działań natury wojskowej* (Warsaw: Instytut wydawniczy PAX, 1957), which broadened the scope of analysis to include lower military ranks and rank-and-file participants of the uprising. This widening of the scope of interest had a side effect of making women visible as identified and named participants of the events and not just witnesses. The same applies to many monographs of specific units – because they reconstruct the composition and exploits of a unit, they cannot leave women out. The lack of a gender analysis, however, means that topics and experiences important to women are omitted.

- 15 Grzebalska, *Pleć powstania warszawskiego*, 11.
- 16 *Mnemonic Dimension of the Political Transformation in the Light of Polish Parliament's Commemorative Resolutions 1989–2014*, National Science Centre grant supervised by Marcin Napiórkowski.
- 17 Davies, Powstanie '44.
- 18 See, e.g., Zawacka's own recollection in her biographical documentary *Miałam szczęśliwe życie* [I had a happy life], dir. Marek Widarski (Poland 2005).
- 19 Women's Military Service (Wojskowa Służba Kobiet) was an underground organization headed by Brigadier General Maria Wittek and established in 1942 on the basis of the pre-war paramilitary organization Women's Military Training (Przyspობienie Wojskowe Kobiet).
- 20 Anna Nowakowska, *Wanda Gertz: Opowieść o kobiecie żołnierzu* (Craców: Avalon, 2009).
- 21 Grażyna Lipińska, *Stan wiedzy o kobietach w ruchu oporu w kraju na podstawie bibliografii*, December 18, 1970, KHKwWoN, personal file of Grażyna Lipińska, II-L-9.
- 22 Zawacka, *Szkice z dziejów*, 8.
- 23 Barbara Szacka, "Powstanie Warszawskie w potocznej pamięci zbiorowej," in *Czas Przeszły Pamięć Mit* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2006), 170–171.
- 24 Joanna Wawrzyniak, *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej 1949–1969* (Warsaw: TRIO, 2009).
- 25 See e.g. Maria Jędrzejec, ed., *Twierdzą nam będzie każdy próg: kobiety ruchu ludowego w walce z hitlerowskim okupantem: sylwetki, wspomnienia, artykuły* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1968); Waclaw Jurgielewicz, "Kobiety w regularnych jednostkach Wojska Polskiego na frontach drugiej wojny światowej," *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny* no. 2. (1971); Franciszek Rudomin, *Z „drucikami” od Oki do Warszawy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MON, 1977).
- 26 Andrzej Gierczak, ed., *Kobieta w walce* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MON 1970), 6.
- 27 See, e.g., Anna Borkiewicz, "Kobiety w dywersji", *Więź*, no. 10 (1976), 110–115; Zofia Polubiec, *By nie odeszły w mrok zapomnienia: udział kobiet polskich w II wojnie światowej*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1976); Witold Lisowski, "Sanitariuszki walczącej Warszawy," *Pielęgniarka i Położna*, no. 9 (1979), 23–25; Witold Lisowski, "Pielęgniarki i sanitariuszki Armii Krajowej w powstaniu warszawskim w r. 1944," *Lekarz wojskowy*, no. 9/10 (1980), 514–519; Edward M. Car, "Kobiety w szeregach Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie, 1940-1948," in *Kobiety polskie*, ed. E. Konecka (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986).
- 28 Szacka, "Powstanie Warszawskie", 177–179.
- 29 See, e.g., Ewa Bukowska et al., eds., *Łączność, sabotaż, dywersja. Kobiety w Armii Krajowej*, (London: Zarząd Główny Armii Krajowej, 1985); Felicja Bańkowska, "Kobiety-żołnierze AK w powstaniu warszawskim i ich wyjście do niewoli po kapitulacji," in *Łambinowicki Rocznik Muzealny*, vol. 8 (Opole 1985), 5–18; Czesława Bambrowicz, ed., *Udział kobiet polskich w II wojnie światowej* (Olsztyn: ZBoWiD, 1986); Jacek Praga, "Kobiety w regularnych jednostkach Wojska Polskiego na frontach II wojny światowej," in *Kobiety polskie*, ed. E. Konecka (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986), 166–183; Bożena Urbanek, *Pielęgniarki i sanitariuszki w Powstaniu Warszawskim w 1944 r.*, (Warsaw: PWN, 1988).
- 30 Szacka, "Powstanie Warszawskie", 180.
- 31 For more on that, see, e.g., Dobrochna Kałwa, "Historia mówiona w krajach postkomunistycznych. Rekonesans," *Kultura i Historia*, no 18 (2010); Andrea Pető, *Methodological and Theoretical Problems Of Writing Women's History in Central Europe*, lecture at the Polish National Institute for Remembrance, Warsaw, September 6, 2012.
- 32 On the post-2004 political shaping of the myth of the uprising, see e.g. Lech Nijakowski, "Kult romantycznych bohaterów," in *Polska polityka pamięci: Esej socjologiczny* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2008), 220–224. On the politics of memory around the uprising, see e.g. Szacka, *Czas Przeszły Pamięć Mit*; Maria Kobielska, *Polska kultura pamięci w XXI wieku: dominanty: Zbrodnia katyńska, powstanie warszawskie i stan wojenny* (Warsaw: IBL PAN, 2016). On the role of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, see, e.g., Adam Ostolski, "Przestrzeń muzeum a polityka traumy," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, No 3 (2009) 67–88; Monika Żychlińska and Erica Fontana, "Museal Games and Emotional Truths: Creating Polish National Identity at the War Rising Museum," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* (May 2015).
- 33 Wanda Sadurska, *Kobiety w łączności Komendy Głównej i Okręgu Warszawskiego ZWZ-AK*, (Warsaw: Comandor 2002); Hanna Rybicka, *Oddział kobiecy warszawskiego Kedywu: dokumenty z lat 1943–1945* (Warsaw: WUW 2002); Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *Kobiety w służbie Ojczyzny 1939–1945* (Toruń: Fundacja Archiwum i Muzeum Pomorskie Armii Krajowej oraz Wojskowej Służby Polek, 2007); Małgorzata Klasicka, *Kobiety-powstańcy warszawscy w niewoli niemieckiej (1944–1945)* (Opole: Centralne Muzeum Jęliców Wojennych w Łambinowicach-Opolu, 2008); Joanna Dufurat, *Stan badań nad dziejami kobiet w Polsce – I wojna światowa, okres międzywojenny, II wojna światowa*, in *Dzieje kobiet w Polsce. Dyskusja wokół przyszłej syntezy*, ed. Krzysztof A. Makowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2014); Grażyna Korneć, *Udział kobiet w Powstaniu Warszawskim 1 sierpnia – 2 października 1944* (Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego, 2015).
- 34 Natalia Jarska, "Women and Men at War: A Gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe", ed. Maren Röger, Ruth Leiserowitz, Osnabrück, 2012 ; reviewed in *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 24, no. 2 (2014): 513.
- 35 For a discussion on methodological nationalism in the social sciences, see, e.g., Andreas Wimmerand and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences," *Global Networks*, vol. 2 (2002): 301–334.
- 36 Dobrochna Kałwa, "Historia kobiet – kilka uwag metodologicznych," in *Dzieje kobiet w Polsce. Dyskusja*, ed. Krzysztof A. Makowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2014), 18–19.
- 37 See Joan Wallach Scott, "Rewriting History," in: *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Patrice and Margaret Higonnet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 25. For more on gender as a category of analysis, see also Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (December, 1986): 1053–1075.
- 38 See e.g. Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); The Nation's Pain and Women's Shame: Polish Women and Wartime Violence, in *Gender & War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*, eds. Wingfield N., Bucur M. (Indiana Bloomington: University Press, 2006), 193–219; Maren Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen: Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2015). See also works on Central Europe, e.g. Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur, *Gender & War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*; Maren Röger and Ruth Leiserowitz, eds., *Women and Men at War: A Gender Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath in Central and Eastern Europe* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2012).
- 39 Jarska, "Women and Men at War", 504.
- 40 *Powstanie w bluzce w kwiatki: Życie codzienne kobiet w czasie powstania warszawskiego*, dir. Olga Borkowska (Poland: Feminoteka Foundation, 2009).
- 41 Natalia Jarska, ed., *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 26, no. 2 (2015)..
- 42 James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

- 43 See, e.g., David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2005).
- 44 Robert Traba, "Polityka wobec historii: kontrowersje i perspektywy," *Teksty Drugie: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*, no. 1/2 (2010): 300–319.
- 45 *Mnemonic dimension*.
- 46 The "Cursed Soldiers" is a term applied to armed clandestine organizations active after WWII that resisted the Stalinist government. See e.g. Rafał Wnuk, "Wokół mitu 'żołnierzy wyklętych'", *Przegląd Polityczny*, 136 (2016), <http://przegladpolityczny.pl/2016/10/08/wokol-mitu-zolnierzy-wyklętych-rafal-wnuk/>.
- 47 Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*.
- 48 Arthur Versluis, "Antimodernism," *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 137 (2006): 96–130.
- 49 Tim Luke [Timothy W. Luke], "Alterity or Antimodernism: A Response to Versluis", *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 137 (2006): 132.
- 50 Luke, *Alterity or Antimodernism*, 131–132.
- 51 Maria Mälksoo, "Memory Must Be Defended: Beyond the Politics of Mnemonic Security," *Security Dialogue* vol. 46, no. 3 (2015): 221–237.
- 52 Mälksoo, *Memory Must be Defended*, 5.
- 53 *Mnemonic Dimension*.
- 54 This includes both acts that made war and militarism their primary object of memorialization and those that commemorated them secondarily alongside other issues.
- 55 See: Anna Wójcik, forthcoming.
- 56 Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein, *Pleć kulturowa, 'doświadczenie' i wojna – kilka metodologicznych uwag o wykorzystaniu relacji wspomnieniowych*, in *Kobieta i rewolucja obyczajowa*, ed. A. Żarnowska, (Warszawa: DiG, 2006), 416.
- 57 See the vast tradition of writing on gender and nationalism, e.g., Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1998), 242–269; Tamar Mayer, ed., *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), Nagel J., "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1998), 242–269.
- 58 Patrycja Bukalska, *Sierpniowe dziewczęta '44* (Warszawa: Trio, 2013), 305.
- 59 Łukasz Modelski, *Dziewczyny wojenne: prawdziwe historie*, (Znak 2011); Bukalska, *Sierpniowe dziewczęta*, Grzebalska, *Pleć powstania warszawskiego*; Anna Herbich, *Dziewczyny z powstania* (Znak 2014); Barbara Wachowicz, *Bohaterki powstańczej Warszawy* (Warszawa: MUZA SA, 2014); Korneć, *Udział kobiet w Powstaniu Warszawskim*.
- 60 *Kobiety w powstaniu warszawskim* (Warsaw: Museum of Independence, 2011) and *Amulety 44* (Warsaw: Żeromski Park, 2011).
- 61 *Kobiety Powstania Warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Bank PKO BP, 2012) and *Morowe Panny* (Warsaw: Warsaw Uprising Museum, 2012).
- 62 See e.g. "Polki w Służbie Ojczyźnie" [Poles serving the fatherland], <https://www.facebook.com/PolkiPatriotki/>; "Polskie Bohaterki" [Polish heroines], <https://www.facebook.com/polskiebohaterki/>.
- 63 Dariusz Malejonek, *Morowe panny* (2012) and *Panny wyklęte* (2015).
- 64 See e.g. Marzena i Paweł Zakrzewscy, *Etos polskiej kobiety na tle drugiej wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Adam, 2009); Wachowicz, *Bohaterki powstańczej Warszawy*; Herbich, *Dziewczyny z powstania*.
- 65 "Polki w Służbie Ojczyźnie" [Poles serving the Fatherland], <https://www.facebook.com/PolkiPatriotki/>.
- 66 Karolina Sulej and Anna Herbich, "Kobiety nie wypinają piersi po ordery," *Wysokie Obcasy*, November 12, 2016, <http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,53662,20956648,kobiety-nie-wypinaja-piersi-po-ordery-jak-bardzo-historia-nie.html>.
- 67 Interview for [empik.pl](http://www.empik.pl), accessed: August 1, 2017, <http://www.empik.com/barbara-wachowicz-o-bohaterkach-powstanczej-warszawy-wywiady-empikultura,92619,a>.
- 68 Sławomira Walczewska, *Damy, rycerze, feministki. Kobiety dyskursu emancypacyjnego w Polsce* (Cracow eFKA, 2006), 93–94.
- 69 Cynthia Enloe, "Women and Children: Making Feminist Sense of the Persian Gulf Crisis," *The Village Voice*, September 25, 1990, 29–39.
- 70 See e.g. Maria Janion, "Kobieta-Rycerz," in *Kobiety i duch inności* (Warsaw: Sic!, 1996), 78–101; Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein, *Pleć kulturowa, „doświadczenie” i wojna*, Elżbieta Ostrowska, Matki Polki i ich synowie. Kilka uwag o genezie obrazów kobiecości i męskości w kulturze polskiej, in *Gender: Konteksty*, ed. Małgorzata Radkiewicz (Cracow: Rabid, 2004), 215–227.
- 71 See Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*; Małgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204–205.
- 72 See Agnieszka Mroziak, "Poza nawiasem historii (kobiet), czyli po co nam dziś komunizacja?" *Wakat*, no. 3 (2014).
- 73 Alicja Kusiak-Brownstein, *Pleć kulturowa, „doświadczenie” i wojna*, 420.
- 74 Herbich, *Dziewczyny z powstania*.
- 75 Wstęp: Powstanie w bluzce w kwiatki; *Życie codzienne kobiet w czasie powstania warszawskiego*, *Muzeum Historii Kobiet*, [Feminoteka.pl](http://www.feminoteka.pl/muzeum/readarticle.php?article_id=38), accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.feminoteka.pl/muzeum/readarticle.php?article_id=38.
- 76 Ewa Korsak and Małgorzata Kowalska-Sendek, "Dziewczyny z powstania", *Polska Zbrojna*, accessed, December 24, 2014, <http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl/mobile/articleshow/10896?t=Dziewczyny-z-powstania>.
- 77 M. Gąsior, "Konkurs na stylizację „na barykady..."", *Natemat.pl*, July 30, 2014, accessed, March 1, 2015: <http://natemat.pl/111669,konkurs-na-stylizacje-na-barykady-tak-szafiarki-czcza-rocznice-powstania-warszawskiego>.
- 78 Bukalska, *Sierpniowe dziewczęta*, 6.
- 79 Sara R. Horowitz, "Memory and Testimony of Women Survivors of Nazi Genocide," in *Women of the World: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing*, ed., Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 265.
- 80 "5 tys. żołnierzy w Wojskach Obrony Terytorialnej, Defence24", <http://www.defence24.pl/661500,5-tys-zolnierzy-w-wojskach-obrony-terytorialnej>.
- 81 The series "True stories" published by Znak has over 14 different titles dedicated to women from the past, and over 250,000 books have been sold.
- 82 Weronika Grzebalska, "In Central Europe, Militarised Societies Are on the March", *The Conversation*, September 28, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/in-central-europe-militarised-societies-are-on-the-march-84164>.
- 83 See Cynthia Enloe, "Introduction: Being Curious about Our Lack of Curiosity," in *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in The New Age of Empire* (London: University of California Press, 2004), 1–10.
- 84 Andrea Pető, "Anti-Modernist Political Thoughts on Motherhood in Europe in a Historical Perspective," in *Reframing Demographic Change in Europe: Perspectives on Gender and Welfare State Transformations*, eds. Heike Kahlert and Waltraud Ernst, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 189–201.
- 85 Aniko Gregor and Weronika Grzebalska, "Thoughts on the Contested Relationship Between Neoliberalism and Feminism," in *Solidarity in Struggle: Feminist Perspectives on Neoliberalism in East-Central Europe*, ed. Eszter Kováts, (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2016).