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Introduction

Uncomfortable Connections: Gender, Memory, War

Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Petó¹

The twentieth century has been a century of wars, genocides and violent political conflict; a century of militarization and massive destruction. It has simultaneously been a century of feminist creativity and struggle worldwide, witnessing fundamental changes in the conceptions and everyday practices of gender and sexuality. What are some of the connections between these two seemingly disparate characteristics of the past century? And how do collective memories figure into these connections?

For Virginia Woolf, who wrote *Three Guineas* in the aftermath of the first great war of the century, with the second approaching, the connections were quite clear. Not only did Woolf claim that the position of the “educated man’s sister” was different in “the home of freedom” than that of her brother and she questioned his claim to “patriotism;”² but went further to suggest that women had and should have “no country.” For her, women could best help men prevent war “not by repeating your words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods.”³ An essential medium for Woolf herself in her search for new words and new methods was, of course, literature—yet, this was a literature where critical engagement with memory and history remained central. “History is too much about wars; biography too much about great men,”⁴ she exclaimed, and in her diverse body of writing, Woolf practiced new methods for simultaneously challenging the ways in which women had been written out of human history, and for constructing alternative narratives to encourage, inspire and empower women. She wrote endlessly about both the genius of as well as the cruel (patriarchal) limits faced by women whose remembrance and recognition as historical subjects, she claimed, could potentially change all women’s lives. For instance, as much as she admired Shakespeare, she was curious about Shakespeare’s sister and why she

1 We would like to express our gratitude to Arlene Avakian, Ayşe Öncü, Cynthia Cockburn, Kathy Davis, Mary Evans, and Orna Sasson-Levy for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this introduction.

2 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (San Diego: Harvest, 1938), 9.

3 Ibid., 143.

4 Ibid., 107.

had died without ever writing a word. *A Room of One's Own* provided possible answers, pointing towards a hopeful future:

[Shakespeare's sister] lives in you and me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her.⁵

Where do we stand three quarters of a century after Virginia Woolf drew our attention to the intricate connections between gender, memory and war? How far have we come from histories being “too much about wars; and biography too much about great men?” Does Shakespeare's sister now have “the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh?” How about Buddha's sister, Aristotle's sister, Mevlana's sister? Where do we see the new words and new methods that can offer alternatives to the patriarchal politics of memory, of the present, and of war? Where does academia stand in recognizing Woolf's theorizing of gender, memory, and war?

Building upon Virginia Woolf's “feminist curiosity,”⁶ and inspired by contemporary feminist theorists such as Cynthia Enloe who have added new questions to hers, this book offers a diversity of cases and perspectives from different parts of the world that explore the uncomfortable connections between gender, memory and war. As uncomfortable as these connections were when Woolf explored them in between the two great wars, in the footsteps of scores of other women before her (Zabel Yesayan, Jane Adams, Emma Goldman to name just a few), they continue to cause unease, and even fury. Or they are met with silent resistance. Many of the chapters in this book analyze precisely the ongoing discomfort in the gendered narratives of war and militarism, or the silent resistance to them, not only in contemporary political debates, but in academic inquiry as well. The chapters are written from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and address a rare selection of contexts and geographies. From oral history to archival research to literary analysis, they draw from various research methodologies and introduce new sources.

In what follows, we first share the story of this book, situating it in the intersecting fields of gender studies, memory studies and war/militarism studies starting with a personal story of how we came to edit this volume. We then discuss the possible contributions of the book through three cross-cutting themes: (un)silencing, intersectionality and “situated knowledges.”⁷ While analyzing silence and the efforts “to unsilence” has a lot to do with the search for “new words,”

⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁶ Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁷ Donna J. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 183–201.

intersectionality and “situated knowledges” are themselves new words that mark creative possibilities for new methods. Altogether, we aim to identify and make modest contributions to the feminist search for new words and new methods in understanding the intricacies of war and memory.

Uncomfortable Histories, Unexpected Connections: The Book

As a way of looking back on personal histories that led to this book and into the future simultaneously, we would like to share two striking instances that impressed on us, the editors of this volume, the politics of memory and the complicated politics of feminist unsilencing projects. When Andrea Pető started to put together a “citation list” for a university report, she was astonished to see that an article she had written on rapes committed by the Red Army in Hungary around 1944–1945 was her most cited article by far (both the original Hungarian, as well as its translated versions in German and English).⁸ It was especially stunning that most of the citations of this article on “sexual violence” were in journals of history, and not of gender studies. With this feminist memory work, unsilencing a particular case of sexual violence faced by Hungarian women during the Second World War, Andrea Pető had become one of the most quoted historians by conservative and right wing academics and journalists, especially during the month of February, which marks Budapest’s liberation in 1945, and the month of April, when the war in Hungary ended in 1945.

Responses to the same article from the transnational gender studies community were mixed. For instance, when Andrea Pető discussed the troubling connections between different narrative frames regarding the sexual violence committed by Red Army soldiers during a gender studies summer school in Ukraine in 2004, her talk was followed by an uncomfortable silence. The silence was ultimately broken by a participant who enthusiastically shared her family story, focusing on the stories of her grandfathers who had fought and suffered during the Second World War fighting against Nazism. The silence and the story that followed, which despite being off-message received enthusiastic applause from the women’s rights activists and academics in the audience, constituted yet another reminder of the complicated nature of feminist unsilencing projects.

In post-1989 East Europe, there has been a diverse “market” (academic and political) for stories of brutality by the Red Army. The increasing circulation of stories of women who saw or heard other women raped have contributed to the formation of national martyrology. However, some of the women who had experienced sexual violence, such as Jewish women who were greeting the Red Army as liberators but were also raped by them, continued their silence sometimes

⁸ Andrea Pető, “Memory and the Narrative of Rape in Budapest and Vienna,” in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, eds. Dirk Schumann and Richard Bessel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129–149.

in order not to participate in the invalidation of the Red Army's role in the ending of the war. Silence for them was a form of resistance to the existing politics of memory. This story also underlines that often uneasy coalitions underlie new memory work. Feminist memory work is faced with the challenge of understanding the different layers of silencing (often self-silencing) and the politics of unsilencing, a challenge that can sometimes raise serious ethical questions (see Attarian, [Chapter 13](#)).

Another striking moment of such awareness was our first encounter with each other at a gender studies workshop in Azerbaijan more than a decade ago. When Ayşe Gül Altınay gave a talk on the recent development of feminist historiography in Turkey, mentioning the "discovery" of the Ottoman women's movement that included Kurdish and Armenian feminist activists, alongside those who identified as Turkish and Muslim, there was uproar in the audience.⁹ The conveners called for an immediate break to the workshop and asked her to stop her discussion of Ottoman Armenian feminists and move on to another topic. With Andrea Pető's helpful interventions, the group of gender studies academics in the room calmed down and the workshop was able to resume. Stunned by the aggressive response to a brief mention of Armenian feminists from a century ago in another state (as Azerbaijan had never become a part of the Ottoman Empire), Altınay realized how little she had reflected on the unexpected connections and disjunctures between the politics of memory in different sites. She had notably missed the "attentiveness to the border-transcending dimensions of remembering and forgetting" that Astrid Erll calls for in her discussion of "transcultural memory."¹⁰ In 2001, when this meeting was taking place, the naming of the "events of 1915" as "the Armenian genocide" among gender studies scholars in Turkey could have constituted serious debate, but the recognition of Ottoman Armenian feminists was becoming common place. At that point, Altınay herself was not using the term "genocide" and not yet working on its contested memories. Yet, for the Azeri gender studies scholars, who had recently experienced the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the contested Karabagh province, any mention of Armenians (even Armenian feminists from a century ago) was regarded as "offensive."

These two moments in our own personal histories as feminist scholars working on contested memories highlight the significance of context and positionality, as well as the dynamic nature of memory as "transcultural" and "multidirectional." In the words of Astrid Erll, "memory fundamentally means movement: traffic between individual and collective levels of remembering, circulation among social, medial, and semantic dimensions."¹¹ Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory" forces us to reflect also on the traffic between different memory cultures and politics.¹² How

⁹ See Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Centennial Challenges: Denationalizing and Gendering Histories of War and Genocide," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21 (2014): 307–312.

¹⁰ Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax, Special Issue: "Transcultural Memory"* 17 (2011): 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15

¹² Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009).

do collective memories of war, genocide, colonialism, slavery, military interventions, and gendered violence interact with one another? How do concepts and politics of memory travel between seemingly disparate sites? And what are the implications of such travel for feminist memory politics at each site? These are some of the questions that remain open for future research in this field. Yet another open question is how to integrate the growing field of sexuality studies and queer theory into feminist memory work.¹³ We hope that we will soon be witnessing new research exploring these questions, expanding our understanding of sources, silences and the interconnectedness of the seemingly disparate struggles of memory worldwide.

In the course of our joint research project *Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence*¹⁴ that has culminated into this book, we organized international conferences in Istanbul and Budapest. In each case, we were overwhelmed by the number, quality and diversity of the applications, and had the hard task of “rejecting” the majority of them due to limited space. This unprecedented interest signals two developments: First, it points to the growing scholarship and interest in the particular intersection of militarism/war, memory, and gender studies. Second, it signals the lack of opportunities for scholars researching this intersection to come together, present, share, and debate their work. We envision this book, which has resulted from such an interaction, to also be a facilitator for the future development of this emerging field. In the next section, we discuss gendered knowledge production and silencing in the emerging feminist scholarship.

Gendered Politics of Knowledge Production on War and Memory

In recent years, feminist scholarship has fundamentally changed the ways in which pasts, particularly violent pasts, have been conceptualized and narrated.¹⁵ Critical feminist historiographies have challenged “war stories” as we know them, and the growing field of feminist memory studies has alerted us to the ways in which the past shapes the present, and all of “us” in the present, in multiple and deeply gendered ways.

13 For instance, see Dilara Çalışkan’s discussion of “queer postmemory” in “Queer Mothers and Daughters: The Role of Queer Kinship in the Everyday Lives of Trans Sex Worker Women in Istanbul” (Unpublished MA Thesis, Sabancı University, Istanbul, 2014).

14 The joint research and teaching project was supported by the CEU-Sabancı University Joint Academic Initiative and included the development of a course syllabus to be taught at Central European University and Sabancı University, two international conferences, faculty exchange and graduate student exchange for conferences. See <http://myweb.sabanciuniv.edu/genderconf/> for the programs of the conferences, including a third young researchers conference in Istanbul, organized independently by a group of graduate students who had taken the course “Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence.”

15 See reflections on the feminist legacies and interventions in the centennial of the First World War in Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Petó, eds., “Feminist Questions at the Centennial of the First World War Open Forum,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 4 (2014): 293–312.

This book comes out of and aims to contribute to three interdisciplinary research fields: gender studies, memory studies, and war/militarism studies. Although there has been growing interaction between these fields in recent years, the particular intersection between war/militarism, gender, and memory that we explore in this book is yet to be developed theoretically and methodologically.

Let us first start by unpacking war/militarism studies and their interaction with memory and gender studies. War studies and militarism studies do not necessarily overlap. The English-speaking war studies field—even when coupled with “peace” and named “war and peace studies”—typically centers around concepts such as security, conflict, (dis)armament and terrorism, and allies closely with international relations, political science, and military history. In the well-established war/peace studies departments in major universities on both sides of the Atlantic, only rarely does one encounter the terms “militarism” or “militarization,” except in the context of Japanese or German militarism earlier in the century or militarization of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. Hence, the term “militarism” already signals a critical departure from the hegemonic field of war studies, drawing attention to the continuum between war and peace, as well as between the military and civilian realms. Scholars that critically analyze militarist discourses and processes of militarization emphasize the shaping of what is referred to as “civilian life” by practices, institutions, and values that relate to the military. Perhaps not surprisingly, this critical departure often includes a critical feminist lens that also draws on the centrality of gender in the militarization of society in all its realms.

Since the 1980s, the field of war/militarism studies has faced significant challenges posed by pioneering works by feminist scholars such as Betty Reardon and Cynthia Enloe, who have convincingly argued for the need to understand the role of femininities and masculinities in processes of militarization and war-making.¹⁶ Drawing attention to the mutual shaping between gender ideologies, militarism and nationalism, feminist scholarship has had far-reaching impact on a number of disciplines, such as political science, international relations, political economy, law, anthropology, sociology, and gender studies, as well as on the non-governmental organizations (NGO) and United Nations communities worldwide. The adoption of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace has perhaps been the most visible and substantial example of this impact.¹⁷

Yet, when one reviews the major works in this growing field of critical war/militarism studies from a feminist perspective, rarely does one see substantial

16 Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto Press, 1983); Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1985); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

17 Feminist interventions in international law not only resulted in the acknowledgment of sexual violence as a war crime but also included other measures, such as the inclusion of women's groups in peace and post-conflict processes (see [Parts I](#) and [III](#) in this volume.)

engagement with memory studies. In other words, feminist analyses of war and militarism are yet to take seriously the ways in which gendered memories and memorializations of past wars shape contemporary lives and politics, as well as the ongoing processes of militarization. A striking example of this lack of engagement with memory studies is that a title search in the prestigious *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, which has come out of the need to gender war, militarism and international studies, reveals that only one article with “memory” in its title, and two others marked with the keyword “memory,” have been published in the journal between 1999 and 2014. Similarly, the major collections of feminist war and militarism scholarship in recent years, mention memory only casually.¹⁸

In turn, major texts in collective memory studies rarely engage gender, let alone the growing literature on gender and war/militarism. Despite the fact that almost 25 years have passed since the English publication of Frigga Haug and her colleagues’ pioneering feminist theorizing of memory in *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory (Sexualisierung: Frauenformen)* and more than a decade since Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson’s influential volume *Gender and Memory*, major memory studies collections scarcely mention gender if they do at all.¹⁹ An exceptional effort to overcome the gender-blindness that continues to shape this field is the reader *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, that has two chapters that offer inspiring gender analyses, yet in the remaining 28 chapters of the reader, the term gender (and hence, gender analysis) is almost non-existent. Among the major journals in the field, *History & Memory* has published no article with the term “gender” or “women/men” in its title, between its first issue in 1996 till 2014 (only five with “women” or “feminism” among subject terms) and *Memory Studies* has published only one article with “gender” in the title between 2008, when the journal started coming out, and 2014 (with four others having “women” either in the title or among the keywords). The good news is that, beyond these readers and journals where gender is hardly visible, there is a growing body of separate

18 For instance, the term “memory” does not appear more than three times in the following prominent collections of contemporary feminist scholarship on war and militarism: Carol Cohn, ed., *Women and Wars* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Kathleen Kuehnast, Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, and Helga Hernes, eds., *Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011); Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Dina Francesca Haynes, and Naomi Cahn, eds., *On the Frontlines: Gender, War, and Post-Conflict Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, eds., *Gender, War and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2010).

19 For example see, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, eds., *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Alexander Laban Hinton, Thomas La Pointe and Douglas Irvin-Erickson, eds., *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

feminist literature on gender and memory, part of it focusing on war/militarism, that has also inspired this volume.

Lynne Hanley's pioneering *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory*; Joanna Bourke's unsettling analysis of how men remember "killing" and other wartime experiences; Marianne Hirsch's innovative feminist theorizing of memory and post-memory in connection with the Holocaust and beyond; the growing body of literature on gendered aspects of the Holocaust, its memory and memorialization; Selma Leydesdorff's research on gender and memory in relation to the war in former-Yugoslavia; Veena Das's insightful theorization of the gendered memories of the partition in South Asia; feminist analyses of the memories of war and state violence in the Middle East by Nadjé Al-Ali and others; the impressive body of memory work on the sexual slavery of women, known as the "Comfort Women," in Asia during the Second World War; Susan Jeffords and Marita Sturken's analyses of the influential medium of popular culture and film in the making of the collective memory of war; Macarena Gomez-Barris's feminist analysis of state violence and cultural memory in Chile; and Diana Taylor's innovative discussion of performance, cultural memory, trauma and state violence in the Americas constitute some of the reference points that have inspired new research and thinking on gender, memory and war.²⁰

20 Some of the pioneering work in this field include: Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Lynne Hanley, *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, Memory* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (Binghamton, NY: Vail Ballou Press, 1998); Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Ronit Lentin, *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah: Reoccupying the Territories of Silence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Anna Reading, *The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust: Gender, Culture, and Memory* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, eds., "Gender and Cultural Memory," Special Issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (2002); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Rosemary Sayigh, "Women's Nakba Stories: Between Being and Knowing," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, eds. Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 135–158; Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Macarena Gomez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Janet Liebman Jacobs, *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, Genocide and Collective Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Selma Leydesdorff, *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*, trans. Kay

Within gender studies, a dynamic and diverse research field, the main challenge has been to address differences among women, especially in their relationship with power and violence. Women perpetrators and soldiers, for instance, have only recently become subjects of critical inquiry and scholars engaged in this field demonstrate how much scholarly inquiry is embedded in contemporary political debates (see [Part II](#) and [Part III](#) of this volume). Moreover, one can see a tendency for the feminist literature on war and militarism to remain isolated from the growing body of literature on gender, bodies and sexualities.

Unsilencing, Intersectionality, Situated Knowledges

Virginia Woolf has not been alone in her cry against the great silencing of women in collective memories and histories. Feminist scholarship has historically been, among other things, a struggle for unsilencing—as well as a struggle for theorizing the intimate connections between silencing (from history and memory) and ongoing marginalization. Yet, as can be said of Woolf’s frequent conceptualization of “woman” in the singular, the efforts to “unsilence” women as historical subjects have themselves hardly been innocent of silencing and marginalization (of women and other subjugated groups). As Catherine Lutz succinctly puts it, “feminist margins have their own margins.”²¹ How can we understand the multiple layers of silencing in memories of wars? What do we choose to “unsilence” through our political and academic interventions? Who are the “subjects” who are remembered, rehistoricized, rethought in feminist memory work? Which women are remembered, which women continue to remain absent from our imagination, research and writing? What, in other words, are the politics of our own “unsilencing” projects? And who are “we,” in the first place? Asking these questions, among others, the chapters in this book struggle with the concept of “silencing,” searching for “new words and new methods” for remembering, reminding and retheorizing the gendering of wars, of memories, and of silences themselves.

“Struggle” has multiple connotations here. One important connotation is “not taking for granted”—neither the concept of silence and the gendered politics of silencing, nor the feminist politics of unsilencing. Some of the authors in this volume are themselves engaged in such feminist politics, while not uncritically approaching “woman/women” as a unified category, nor remaining oblivious to the complicated politics of “unsilencing.” The analyses in the following chapters expand the feminist project of “unsilencing” women and the workings of gender from the histories and memories of war, often drawing on two significant

Richardson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

21 Catherine Lutz, “The Gender of Theory,” in *Women Writing Culture*, eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 251.

contributions of feminist theory in recent decades: intersectionality and “situated knowledges.” It would not be possible—or even desirable—to bring together all of the authors of the volume under a single theoretical umbrella, but it is possible to argue that we share a search, in which the triple act of unsilencing, complicating the category “woman” through an intersectional lens, and reflecting on the question of positionality (and the larger question of how knowledge is produced) together constitute the key directions.

Especially since Kimberlé Crenshaw’s use of the term in her 1989 article, “intersectionality” has received unprecedented attention and adoption in feminist critique in and outside of academia.²² How should feminists conceptualize the “intersecting” structures of inequality and categories of identification among women, especially those based on class, “race,” ethnicity and sexuality? And how can we imagine a feminist movement that does not assume a universal subjecthood (woman) and privilege gender as a category of analysis exclusive from other categories?²³ These are some of the questions guiding the search for intersectional analyses, methodologies, and solidarities in the past decades. In their recent review of the productive concept of intersectionality, Cho, Crenshaw and McCall argue that “intersectionality was introduced in the late 1980s as a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics.”²⁴ The term may be recent, but the thinking behind is not, and can be found in contexts other than academic feminist practice. As Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama remind us, “long before the term ‘intersectionality’ was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, the concept it denotes had been employed in feminist work particularly women of color on how women are simultaneously positioned as women and, for example, as black, working-class, lesbian or colonial subjects.”²⁵

Critiques of knowledge production processes have accompanied the search for feminist theories and methodologies that take intersectionality seriously. Taking intersectionality seriously requires simultaneous critical attention to context, positionality and multiple structures of inequality. The main challenge

22 Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–167. Also see Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (1991): 1241–1299.

23 See Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053–1075. For a critical overview of the problematic uses of gender, including its ongoing association with women, see Joan Scott “Millennial Fantasies: The Future of ‘Gender’ in the 21st Century,” in *Gender: die Tücken einer Kategorie*, eds. Claudia Honegger and Caroline Arni (Zurich: Chronos, 2001), 19–38.

24 Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis,” *Signs* 38 (2013): 787.

25 Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama, “Intersectionality,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 13 (2006): 187.

in this search has been to articulate an epistemological framework that neither essentializes, dehistoricizes, and universalizes gender differences (“woman’s point of view,” “women’s voices,” etc.), nor falls into a radical relativism where all viewpoints are considered to be equal. In the strong words of Donna Haraway, “relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective, both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalization are both ‘god-tricks’ promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully.”²⁶ To move away from the “god-trick” of relativism and totalizing objectivism, Haraway has argued for “embodied feminist objectivity” or “positioned rationality” that regards all knowledge as being situated, all perspective as partial, and “subjugated” standpoints as promising “more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world.”²⁷ The quotations around the term “subjugated” signal a warning against taking its connotations for granted and against associating it with various categories of identification. “Subjugation is not grounds for an ontology,” Haraway reminds us, “it might be a visual clue.”²⁸ Her project, as is ours, is to develop critical positionings that problematize “single vision,” whether it is the disembodied, everywhere-and-nowhere-at-the-same-time vision of objectivism or the single, universalizing vision of a “woman’s perspective.”

The feminist situated knowledges to which we hope this volume will contribute are about developing “politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard.”²⁹ In what follows, we discuss the ways in which the different chapters in this volume locate gendered silences in histories and memories of war, position the various struggles of women and feminists for remembering and memorializing, and situate their own critical feminist vision in the larger politics of memory and memory work.

Silences, Sources, and the Struggles for Memory

Many of the chapters in this volume are first and foremost concerned with understanding the production of historical and mnemonic silences. Silences—especially silences in the histories and memories of wars that shape contemporary lives—are deeply gendered and deeply political, and unsilencing can be a form of radical, transformative political intervention—as our personal examples discussed above illustrate. Yet, both silences and projects of unsilencing need to be contextualized, situated, and examined through critical “feminist curious” lenses.

²⁶ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 191.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

A crude “silencing/unsilencing” framework embodies a number of risks. The first risk, as we have already argued, is to assume that women’s experiences and memories of wars are undifferentiated from one another and categorically different from men’s. Another is to regard all silences as equal (and equally problematic) and celebrate all forms of unsilencing as equally progressive, without taking into account the context and politics of unsilencing. In a related vein, much of the scholarship on silences assumes a normative stance on the basis of which some women can be judged for not “speaking up,” without taking into consideration the possibility that silence can, at times, be a form of resistance and self-defense. Yet another risk is to position the narrator, in this case the feminist scholar, in a privileged position of the “knower,” who uncovers what no one else has been able to see and articulate. Cynthia Cockburn and Hourig Attarian’s contributions to this book provide inspiring reflections on “this vexed question of author-ity” (Cockburn, [Chapter 14](#)). For Attarian, this questioning requires developing research and narrative skills where we are able to “listen to silence” and regard “silence as a frame of narration” and not necessarily as a code that needs to be broken by the feminist scholar. Moreover, one needs to take into consideration to existence of “multiple publics” when one talks about silences and efforts to unsilence. For which public is the silence a silence? For which public is the “unsilencing” intended?

In other words, an un-contextualized, un-critical project of unsilencing as feminist memory work may itself become the problem if we fail to engage with the complicated context and politics of memory struggles. As the editors of this volume, we can give examples of how we ourselves have fallen into these traps in our various feminist interventions. Learning from our own experiences and from the wisdom of others, we are joined in this volume by a diverse group of researchers who are searching for critical frameworks of unsilencing that take intersectionality and situated knowledges seriously, and that engage with the complicated context and politics of memory struggles. Such frameworks tend to make the uncomfortable connections between gender, memory and war/militarism even more uncomfortable, while silences appear as being more layered and more difficult to settle.

A key issue all of the authors contributing to this volume deal with, as they struggle with various silences and contestations over memory, is “sources.” It is crucial to understand the axis of forgetting and the axis of expression based on the availability of sources contributing to or help to break silences. Silences can be traced, as some of the authors in this book do, in historical and mnemonic sources (or in their lack). Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot identifies four moments when silences enter the process of historical production: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*), the moment of fact assembly (the making and collecting of *archives*), the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*) and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).³⁰

³⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

For critical memory work, all of these moments and sites constitute sources for self-reflection and analysis. The different chapters in this volume, while engaging and reading into the silences in these different moments, also expand on the notion of “sources,” exploring the ways in which films, literature, autobiography, oral history, retrieved private photos, art and digital sites constitute sites of memory. How to use different sources and how to deal with the various silences in these sources remain important political and ethical questions. As Cynthia Cockburn reminds us: “methodology deserves political evaluation” (Chapter 14).

The politics of sources, complicated by the digital turn, have been investigated by historiography and the emerging field of archive studies. Focusing on the case of sexual violence committed by German soldiers against Jewish women, Regina Mühlhauser’s chapter explores the influence of various institutional frameworks on what gets recorded and what gets remembered. Andrea Pető’s chapter also underlines the political consequences of the digital accessibility of photos of female perpetrators in the Second World War in Hungary, and how this changes not only modes of remembering, but the political communities of memory themselves. As Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney suggest “‘remembering’ is better seen as an active engagement with the past, as performative rather than as reproductive. It is as much a matter of acting out a relationship to the past from a particular point in the present as it is a matter of preserving and retrieving earlier stories.”³¹ How do such performances shape everyday life and politics in the present? What difference do the “medial frameworks”³² of memory make? And how are our own scholarly interventions implicated in the various struggles over memory? Each in its own way, the chapters in this volume seek to understand the connections between silences, sources and the struggles over memory, including our very own.

Organization of the Book

The chapters in the book are organized in four parts that begin with a commentary situating the chapters in the existing literature and raising critical questions. **Part I** deals with the difficult issue of sexual violence and the complex memory struggles over it. It is only since 2000 that sexual violence in war has been internationally recognized as a crime against humanity that requires punishment. Still, not all national laws regard sexual violence in war as a punishable crime, and even if they do, it is rarely punished in practice. In the past decades, with the development of a transnational feminist movement against sexual violence, there has been increasing public recognition and debate on sexual violence in wars, accompanied by a growing interest in the gendered articulation or silencing of such crime in

³¹ Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, “Introduction: Cultural Memory and Its Dynamics,” in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

memory works. As Andrea Pető, in her commentary, suggests, the chapters in [Part I](#) are engaged both in “uncovering traces of sexual violence: bodily and archival” and in understanding the ways in which, “silences are coded differently and de-coded differently depending on the context” (Pető, commentary). One overarching argument shared by the various authors is the significance of context in the articulation of experiences of sexual violence (who is interested in listening to the victims/survivors of sexual violence and in what terms). As Bürge Abiral underlines, “the presence of an audience that is curious about otherwise silenced experiences may change the content of the narration” ([Chapter 4](#)). And in many cases, that audience is sanctioned, first and foremost, by official narratives of the war, leaving survivors “with their experience of sexual violence as an individual, private matter” (Mühlhauser, [Chapter 1](#)).

The terms of narrating sexual violence can differ significantly depending on context. In medical narratives, “healing of the body” gets priority, while trauma narratives focus attention on the non-visible wounds that may haunt survivors long after physical recovery. In legal contexts, the concern is usually over “evidence” and punishment of perpetrators, and not on the individual experiences and stories of women. Often, as in the case of Felicia Yap’s analysis of the European and Asian women’s narratives of rape by Japanese soldiers, court records, police records and medical reports might constitute the main “sources.” How should one analyze these sources in relation to other sources, e.g. personal and collective memory narratives? Yap, as she explores the different responses that European and Asian women gave to their experiences of rape by Japanese soldiers draws our attention to the ways in which sexual violence is articulated in national memory narratives. Whether experiencing sexual violence is coded as shameful, or on the contrary is recognized as involving ‘courage, heroism and bravery’ significantly affects whether, when and how it is remembered and articulated. In many genocide and war narratives around the world, we see greater value attached to women who kill themselves and their daughters to avoid rape than to those who endure or even use their sexual labor for survival.

In recent years, it is the feminist movement, as well as feminist scholarship, that has challenged such conceptualizations of sexual violence. Katerina Stefatos and Bürge Abiral, in their analysis of memories of sexual violence among leftist prisoners in Greek and Turkish prisons respectively, show that it is not only national (official) memory cultures, but also counter-memory sub-cultures that can become obstacles for articulating sexual political violence. In both cases, women’s experiences of torture and imprisonment are marginalized in the memory narratives produced by human rights and leftist activists; and women’s ultimate articulation of such experience is constituted by major silences, including those regarding sexual political violence. Bürge Abiral draws attention to the potentialities of critical feminist interventions (shaped by intersectionality and critiques of militarism and nationalism) in such memory struggles to counter silences over women’s (and men’s) experience of sexual political violence: “A feminism which simultaneously rejects patriarchy, militarism, and nationalism would pinpoint and

challenge masculinized and militarized constructions not only within the political left but in society at large. Only such feminism carries the potential to expose and unsilence past and present experiences of gendered political violence, both in the context of Turkey and worldwide” (Abiral, [Chapter 4](#)).

Indeed, whether to narrate and problematize sexual violence has constituted a significant challenge for feminist activism and analysis worldwide. For instance, recent debates on sexual violence committed against Jewish women during the Shoah, point to the ways in which feminist scholarship can be divided in the conceptualization of sex, gender, and violence. Feminist scholars, skeptical of the view that sexual violence is merely a marginal story in the Big Narrative, have been revisiting the place of sexual violence in war. While the ethical issues (who has the authority to “unsilence” and for whom) remain key concerns, there is growing scholarship that focuses on the constitutive role of sexual violence in war and an emphasis on the need to understand the different aspects of such violence. In her insightful analysis of the denial of sexual violence against Jewish women in German sources, Regina Mühlhauser points to the significance of analyzing “the whole complexity of the phenomenon—the gendered as well as the sexual nature of the crime; the impact of such affects as arousal, inhibition, anxiety, satisfaction, repulsion, envy, longing, and ennui; and the intertwinedness of individual interests and collective (national, military) norms” (Mühlhauser, [Chapter 1](#)).

[Part II](#) deals with the gendered memories of women’s active participation in armed forces, whether as part of organized armies or as members of the resistance. This investigation entails the questioning of easy dichotomizations such as (male) perpetrators vs. (female) victims of war. As Orna Sasson-Levy remarks in her commentary to this section, “from reading women’s memoirs of war and violence, or analyzing women soldiers’ life stories, as do the chapters in this section, it quickly becomes clear that the issue of women’s military service is more complex and deserves a more sophisticated analysis that can challenge dichotomous gendered conceptions” ([Part II](#), Commentary). She also points out the need to expand the discussion of women in militaries and wars through an intersectional analysis, where we can recognize that “the obstacles that military women face have a specific gendered nature, but at the same time they are very much a result of class and race as well” and start to understand “how some women expand their resources, feel empowered and are socially mobile during military service, while for others, and sometimes for the same women, military service can be a humiliating, insulting and even traumatic experience” (Sasson-Levy, [Part II](#) Commentary). A striking case for the latter experience is that of former US women soldiers who face homelessness, militarized sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder after their military service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Stephanie Yuhl looks into both the public silence over their memories of war and homecoming, as well women’s recent interventions into this silence.

The falling short of promises of equal citizenship, even after women join national struggles and militaries, are of course not limited to the United States. Weronika Grzebalska concludes her analysis of women’s participation in the

Warsaw uprising, and its public memory (Chapter 5) with the observation that “the case of the Warsaw Uprising ... confirms the bitter argument raised decades earlier by Polish feminist Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit, that by fighting for the nation’s freedom, women have not gained rights for themselves.” Although surviving women participants and a few feminist historians have challenged the silence over women’s contributions to the uprising, Grzebalska explores the limitations of these challenges in moving away from the gendered and militarized narratives of the uprising that continue to marginalize women in its memory. As a counter example, the participation of Italian women in the female military auxiliary corps established by Mussolini during the Second World War has hardly been problematized or even remembered until recently. Gianluca Schiavo analyzes the context in which some women participants of the corps have recently chosen to write memoirs based on their experience, and how these memoirs differ from those written by male participants of Mussolini’s auxiliary corps. Setenay Nil Doğan’s close analysis of the stories of the women from the Abkhazian diaspora in Turkey participating in the Abkhazian War in the early 1990s, presents a more recent case of voluntary participation in an irregular armed force and highlights both the transnational flow of people and gender ideologies, and the gendered tensions raised by such flows. The narratives of the women, with whom Setenay Nil Doğan has conducted in-depth interviews, point to gender as a key factor that has shaped their decisions for participation, actual experiences in Abkhazia, as well as memories of the war.

Whereas the main sources in Part II are (auto)biographical texts, diaries, interviews, newspapers, public documents and official statements, Part III brings together a series of chapters that explore gendered memories of war and conflict through fictionalized and visualized memory narratives in the form of film, literature, photography and art. As Banu Karaca points out in her comments to Part III, the issue connecting the four papers together is “what *makes* women and their experiences invisible in each of the given contexts.” All four contributions are concerned with the positionality of the researcher as well as the ethics of the research as they investigate the very political processes of unsilencing of women’s experiences during wars. Sophie Milquet sheds light on the difficulties faced by women in the Spanish civil war, and on how women have struggled with official silencing, finally carving a space for their experiences in the official memory culture. Andrea Pető points out how resurfacing photos of female perpetrators not only complicates collective memory, but also offers legitimacy for the emerging far right movement in Hungary. Kornelia Slavova problematizes the position of the artist while comparing two influential accounts of war: Eve Ensler’s play *Necessary Targets* (2001) and Jasmila Žbanić’s film *Grbavica, the Land of My Dreams* (2006). She shows how these films reconceptualise witnessing and question power hierarchies. Marjaana Jauhola focuses on the emergence of an aesthetic political subjectivity in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean earthquakes and the tsunami in Aceh in 2004. Bringing in the example of the ceramic installations by Endang Lestari, she shows how they strategically use silence to challenge and resist linear and developmentalist discourses of reconstruction.

Finally, **Part IV**, which we have named ‘Feminist Reimaginings’, looks simultaneously at the past and future of feminist scholarship on gendered memories of war and political violence, offering thought-provoking self-reflection and imagining new forms of research, writing and analysis. Cynthia Cockburn investigates the afterlife of her previous projects in the former-Yugoslavia, Ireland and Israel/Palestine, exploring new research methodologies, critically analyzing processes of knowledge production, and posing questions regarding the mediation of memories during the research process itself. Hourig Attarian, as she deals with archival material and familial stories of women survivors of the Armenian Genocide, combines critical historiographical and methodological analysis with creative self-reflective writing and storytelling, bringing together the personal, the political and the academic in an imaginative polyphonic text. Attarian’s imagination of an exhibit as a new form of engaging with women’s stories from the past, and Cockburn’s recent practice of mini-exhibits, with her photographs and the narratives of feminist activists working across militarized boundaries, point to new possibilities of feminist memory scholarship that combine research, activism, creative writing, and exhibiting. Both Cockburn and Attarian address the “vexed question of author-ity,” not only criticizing existing scholarship, including their own, but at the same time imagining alternatives.

Reimagining is not only needed for scholarly purposes. The two personal stories of the editors regarding their own research also underline the shifting borders and contexts of feminist research. When every sphere of private life is militarized or re-militarized while new forms of surveillance are making the worst nightmare of biopolitics into everyday realities, nothing is more urgent than to revitalize our capacity to imagine new ways of connecting to the past to create a different future. Joan Scott warns us that we are in desperate need of feminist fantasies to make the world inhabitable.³³ The contributions to this volume point to the transformative potentials of feminist memory work for feminist fantasizing for the future.

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³³ Joan Wallach Scott, “Fantasy Echo. History and the Construction of Identity,” in *The Fantasy of History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 43–66.

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