

Gender Roles in War: Zweiter Weltkrieg's (World War II) Homefront against Battlefield in *A Woman in Berlin*

By

Iffat Rokaiya
ID: 18103077

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in English

The Department of English and Humanities
Brac University
January 2022

© 2022. Brac University
All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iffat Rokaiya". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Iffat" is written with a large, stylized 'I' and 'f'. The last name "Rokaiya" is written in a more standard cursive script. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Iffat Rokaiya
ID: 18103077

Approval

The thesis titled “Gender Roles in War: Zweiter Weltkrieg’s (World War II) Homefront against Battlefront in *A Woman in Berlin*” submitted by Iffat Rokaiya ID: 18103077 of Summer, 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts on 06-01-2022.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Dr. Mahruba Mowtushi
Assistant Professor, Department of English and
Humanities
BRAC University

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Professor Firdous Azim
Professor and Chairperson, Department of English and
Humanities
BRAC University

:

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my work to this present moment. Years later, as everything ages, it will stand as a perpetual representation of its time.

Acknowledgement

To my father who has encouraged me to write since childhood, and my mother, who has always loved and supported me, I can never truly express my gratitude to you neither in words nor gesture. A great part of me could only succeed in writing this thesis for the person you have raised me to be. So, my foremost appreciation goes to my parents. I am thankful to the Almighty for giving me the strength to get through all the difficulties and stay determined to work hard. I also thank every faculty member of Brac University for helping me gain knowledge on many great things for the past four years. Additionally, I am sincerely grateful to my amazing supervisor, Dr. Mahruba Mowtushi, who inspired me from the very first idea that sparked in my brain, helped me arrange my scattered thoughts, and guided me till I completed my writing. Lastly, I would like to convey a special thanks to my friends for comforting me through overwhelming times and encouraging me throughout the entire journey.

Abstract

During the hindmost months of the Second World War in 1945, as the Russian army closed in on Berlin and the war was weeks away from an armistice, one anonymous citizen of Berlin decided to keep a personal journal to record her narrative in notebooks. Writing helped her cope with the struggles of the war, and someday when her fiancé would return from the front, she hoped her notebooks would help share a portion of her experience. She was not yet aware that one-day thousands of readers from all over the world will read her perspective and her writings would contribute to the study of war. *A Woman in Berlin*'s first publication was a translated English version in 1954 in the United States. The first German version was published five years later, in 1959. The anonymous author's recount of the days of war impacts the vast unexplored topic of gender roles during a war. Although her memoir received wide popularity for portraying German women's encounters with sexual assault during the war, the author documented multidimensional aspects of the Second World War. Her contact with her immediate neighbors, confrontations with the German soldiers on the street, and later, with the Russian soldiers during the 'Battle of Berlin,' sporadically addresses the spectrum of male roles as well. This thesis analyzes the generalization of gender identities that binarized gender roles in Germany during the Second World War through the medium of the anonymous author's memoir, historical data, and scholarly research.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgement.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	5
Chapter 3: The Anonymous Diarist.....	16
Chapter 4: Militarization of a German Man.....	20
4.1. A Soldier in Training.....	21
4.2. Heroism at The Battlefield.....	24
Chapter 5: Femininity and War: An Analysis of German Women during WWII.....	29
5.1. A Commitment to Homefront.....	29
5.2. Identity Reduced to Body.....	33
Chapter 6: Conclusion	37
Works Cited.....	39

Chapter 1

Introduction

History could never have recorded the same war twice for it being tied to so many considerable factors controlling the possibility of its victor. One of such factors is gender roles, initially an ignored variable on the war field but a heated debate for scholars and researchers in post-war arguments. The anonymously published memoir, *A Woman in Berlin*, documents a German writer's experience in the Second World War that received the recognition it deserved only after her death and republication in 2003. From a first-person point of view, readers can perceive the frightful environment she has to survive in, along with her neighbors, as the Russian army takes over their city. Events extracted from her account of history can also be further categorized and critically understood as an abuse of gender roles. While targeting this particular subject, this study intends to analyze to what extent gender was involved in the war and how it acted as an incidental or intentional part of the war tactics.

The Second World War, known as Zweiter Weltkrieg in Germany, reportedly began in the year 1939 with Germany's invasion of Poland under Adolf Hitler's command. The Second World War was a continuation of the First World War (1914–1918), the deadliest war that took place in history and after a bloodbath, the war ended in 1945 with a death count close to fifty million (Royde-Smith and Hughes). A large part of the world population was affected by the event, and only stories remain with us now, told or untold. This study looks at war through one such story told by the anonymous German author of *A Woman in Berlin*. According to the book, the first entry in her diary is on 20th April 1945. A week later, on April 27th, the author notes down

about the arrival of the Red Army in her city, Berlin. “The Battle of Berlin” was a crucial move by the Soviet Union. According to the BBC report, the Russian army “outnumbered and outgunned” Germans, inevitably leading the war to an end (“VE Day”). Following Hitler’s death on April 30th and the fall of the capital city within the next couple of days, it officially marked the victory against the Third Reich (or Nazi rule) after 6 long years of despair. The author’s notes in *A Woman in Berlin* continue till June, giving a peek into post-war Berlin as well. Literary critics, for the most part, have looked at this text from a feminist perspective. As evidence of the Berlin mass rape incident, many other close observations of the author’s, on both male and female activities and behaviors have been pushed to the side. In comparison, a gendered perspective can help the book reach a new level of interpretation. The timeline mentioned in the memoir talks about the final days of the war, spanning from April to June. Although it cannot account for the entire war, hints taken from its events can be traced back to more stories shared by hundreds of others directly or indirectly inflicted by the war. One of the strong points of *A Woman in Berlin* is the author’s detailed understanding of her surroundings. The gender issues, addressed by the author in her book, bring society and its gender system to the spotlight. Gender’s tendency to always remain strictly binary through the acts of gender roles prevails in the author’s experience as a woman through her writings in the memoir during the Second World War.

The concept of Gender Order, first developed by the lecturer and author Jill Matthews, refers to the structure of the relation between the genders, existing at a particular time and place. Matthews views Gender Order as a continuous process of inconsistent power relations where the order is always in a course of being “formed and changed” (qtd. in Pilcher and Whelehan 60).

Accordingly, gender, which is something so intricately nurtured in our society, cannot just be a fixed construct and gender roles are not entirely a product of the past. The roles evolve with the population, and as people progress from generation to generation, they act as the medium through which gender roles are passed forward. The Social Role Theory by Alice H. Eagly and Wendy Wood, argues that gender role beliefs are a product of people's assumption that feminine or masculine behaviors are "innate attributes" (459) of their respective genders. When people treat gender roles as intrinsic in nature, they also expect others to behave in that entrenched manner. Eagly and Wood theorize that typically people are so mindful of gender roles that they take offense in not adhering to the norm. People would reward each other with positive responses for being consistent with gender roles and in the case of inconsistencies, they would similarly express a negative reaction and would penalize each other (Eagly and Wood 468). People engage with gender roles every step of the day, these roles are therefore a social apparatus. Among the many aspects through which a society functions, Gender is one of them. Consequently, traditional gender roles cannot be the sole performer of the actions taken, unless the people's attitude and behavior are also considered to be a part of how gender roles operate.

During a crisis, gender roles come into effect in a very similar manner where people generalize certain gender roles and attentively comply with them. But the roles of femininity and masculinity themselves can change to complement the necessity of the dire situation. Gender roles in early 20th Century Germany were preferably a traditional one where men work to feed their family and women tend to their household chores. However, the First World War brought a new challenge to their old gender ideals. The industrial era's technological advancement caused significant damage to Germany's battlefield, and to withstand the war as it progressed, German

women stepped up to take positions in factories and hospitals, temporarily removing them from their home duties which "contradicted the established prewar expectations for females" (Geglio 5). Germany's then post-war government, The Weimar Republic, hoped to re-institute their prewar gender roles after the end of the First World War. But in 1933, the Weimar Republic was deposed from its position and Nazi Regime seized the governmental power. Because the new government in power shared the same beliefs with the previous government, the restoration of old German gender ideals continued. Lynn Abrams says that, according to Nazi Government's perspective on gender roles, men were suited to perform activities out of their home and to participate in "politics and courageous struggle," because of their masculine characteristics (qtd. in Geglio 5). On the other hand, women, for their feminine characteristics, are more suited to take charge of the home and attend to their family (qtd. in Geglio 5). So, Germany's traditional binary gender role beliefs, which is the division of attributes into two distinct groups, persisted through the 1930s and reflected on the wartime roles afterward when the War began in 1939. German masculinity and femininity adapted into a rather battlefield and home front-centric approach during the Second World War. Hence, the generalization of fixed identity in the Zweiter Weltkrieg indefinitely reacted as a means to re-establish German society's binary perception of men and women.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Gender roles refer to the social expectation of how to behave as a man or a woman in a particular context. Binary gender role is a classification of the roles where it is strictly treated as two distinct but opposite pairs, masculine, and feminine. According to Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, gender roles represent how people perceive the social roles of men and women, and social roles arise from the division of labor (Eagly and Wood 459). Labor is sorted on the basis of the physical capability of a person, as Eagly and Wood explain, the division of physical labor is “the ultimate origin” behind differentiating between male and female behaviors. In such a society where “men are larger, faster, and have greater upper-body strength, and women gestate and nurse children” (Eagly and Wood 459), men carry the duty of a provider for their family and women take charge of the domestic necessities. But then society begins to perceive these male and female duties as their “innate attributes” (Eagly and Wood 459) and normalizes those attributes to the extent where roles become a normal activity for people. Normalizing gender in such a manner constitutes an expectation of all men to be “masterful, assertive, competitive, and dominant” and women, “friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive” (Eagly and Wood 462). Eagly and Wood further discuss society’s reward and penalty system for people when they abide by their roles and at times when they do not (468). Any contradictory behavior, as opposed to the normalized practices, could lead to negative reactions and harsh criticism (Eagly and Wood 468).

Gender, according to the gender theorist Judith Butler, is “neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (8) from the point of view that within a culture group gender is created and nurtured. Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* explains that if gender is indeed a cultural construction and the “cultural meanings” are applied to one’s body, then gender does not arise from the biological difference between men and women, instead establishes that there’s a “radical discontinuity” from the biological to cultural identity (9). Under the circumstances, even when the biological difference is binary there is no reason for gender to behave binary or to be treated as one, yet “The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it” (Butler 9). For the reason that men and women are separated into two categories based on their reproductive cells, their respective gender roles also follow the same pattern and divide into distinct groups. While inspecting further on the gender construction, Butler quotes the French feminist writer, Simone de Beauvoir, “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (qtd. in Butler 11), suggesting that in Beauvoir’s term women are always bound by “cultural compulsion” to become a woman (11). Gender is therefore not instinctive, men and women are a “passive medium” (Butler 12) through which gender passes through and reveals itself.

Social roles for respective genders are redefined in the context of a war where people’s priorities and demands take a major shift. Elisabeth Prugl in “Gender and War: Causes, Constructions, and Critique,” while reviewing Joshua S. Goldstein’s work on gender and war, revisits two common wartime beliefs, masculinity’s association with war and femininity, with peace. Prugl writes that a man’s gender identity during a war “help(s) to overcome men’s

reluctance to go to war and help produce a functioning army” (335). In order to obtain the qualities of a warrior, men must disregard any contradictory emotions to achieve the kind of masculinity which “force men to endure trauma and master fear, in order to claim the status of ‘manhood’” (qtd. in Prugl 335). On the other hand, Femininity symbolizes peace, a representation of a place far from the battlefield, “a place to return to, or at least to die trying to protect--a place called home or normal or peacetime” (qtd. in Prugl 336). Men and women’s association with two conflicting concepts aids in the maintenance of their opposite roles during the war.

Understanding war from a gender perspective omits the possibility of a biased interpretation of historical events. Following the Second Wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s, women’s active participation in politics, and their demand for equal rights awakened the need for a fair analysis of women’s presence in the war. Prugl specifies that the feminists used gender in three different ways- to define inequalities, to prove gender roles are constructed, and to allow “studies in the operations of difference” (337). The study of war and violence, in the light of gender, can now reclaim the neglected details of the past where men’s perspectives during the war were prioritized over women’s experiences. Gabrielle Bardall et al. in “How is Political Violence Gendered? Disentangling Motives, Forms and Impacts” explains how violence, even when it is not motivated by gender, can be performed and experienced by both men and women. However, a society’s gender beliefs and attitudes can still contribute to the formation and execution of political violence (Bardall et al. 917). Even the researchers of political violence previously focused- “[...] primarily (on) men’s experiences, such as political assassinations, bombings, and violent public protest” (Bardall et al. 919) and in comparison,

showed less concern to the opposite gender. Women's lack of presence in the studies of political violence is an example of gender's influence on the narration of history (Bardall et al. 923). Because gender interferes "with the perception of political and moral agency on every level" (Krimmer 2), gender discourse preserves arguably a notable power in a society.

The nature of gender roles' flexibility reaches only a necessary degree of modification. Although German women during the First World War and the following years after achieved remarkable progress, 1980's feminist research still named the Third Reich or Nazi Germany a patriarchal state (Krimmer 9). Elisabeth Krimmer, professor and author, preferred to call women's position in early 20th Century Germany "complex and multidimensional" (8). Women's desire to achieve recognition, fueled by the Government's encouragement that, "the Führer (leader) was counting on them," (Krimmer 8) met drawbacks in 1933's act for "the dismissal of double earners" and "marriage loan programs" (Krimmer 9). In both cases, women's professional progress had been compromised. Firstly, the law disallowed both husband and wife to be employed, and secondly, they offered interest-free loans with the condition that the wife will stay unemployed till the loan is remunerated (Krimmer 9). In addition, women were formally prohibited to become judges or lawyers in 1936 (Krimmer 9). When the Second World War started, it did not alter the Nazi notions of femininity, instead, as Krimmer suggests that either the government- "ignored ideological gender precepts or reinterpreted female labor as service for the fatherland" (Krimmer 9). There was a notable increase in women's participation in auxiliary forces- as secretaries, translators, drivers, accountants, and even plane spotters in the battlefield (Krimmer 34). Krimmer states that one of the reasons for many of these women to serve in the army is to have the opportunity to escape their life at home and "narrowly defined

gender code of a petty-bourgeois environment” (80). A profound job offered them the recognition they longed for.

Despite the diversity, the lingering traditions of feminine roles still affected women amid the progress during the war. Christabel Bielenberg in *When I Was a German* expressed that as a German woman she was expected to endorse the female roles because she had a family and was therefore tied to her responsibilities everywhere (qtd. in Geglio 7). Female auxiliaries were oftentimes received negatively by their male colleagues, some women would also face sexual harassment (Krimmer 80). Erika Summ, an army nurse, reports overseeing multiple abortions of women who were raped (Krimmer 36). Lore Voft, a passionate member of the army auxiliary, asserts that her work “does not diminish her femininity” (Krimmer 42) because women will always be women, and being in the army does not contradict that image.

Stephen G. Fritz in his book, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II*, revisits the old letters and diaries of German soldiers from the front to organize a chronicle analysis of the events of the war, from the moment of recruitment till the end of the war in 1945. He tries to understand the war from the soldiers’ perspective and critically study the psychological condition of the German men during the Second World War. Fritz argues that understanding the war from its surface-level places soldiers in the position of a “mere vehicle,” who only takes orders and performs his duty accordingly. Many factors are usually overlooked by historians, especially regarding the complexity of war, “the effects of tiredness, hunger, fear, lack of sleep, weather” (qtd. in Fritz), which is a part of a soldier’s everyday struggle. Around twenty million German men took part in the Second World War and the great majority of them

were “enlisted men, noncommissioned officers and junior officers”, who came from different social backgrounds (Fritz). To grasp the true essence of war, Fritz believes that the stories directly derived from the participants are the most suitable method since the information remains in its most raw form. Everyday life for the soldiers during a war is beyond anything normal, war is to the least the exact opposite of the idea of regularity (Fritz).

The First World War compelled poets like Wilfred Owen to accuse the old phrase “*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* (it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country),” an obvious lie in his poem “*Dulce et Decorum est.*” This English poet fought in the First World War and was killed in action, on the Western Front in 1918. The reality of war involves immense suffering and loss, it demands the soldiers to continue fighting even if one is tired or wounded. Owen detested the glorification of war because it overshadows the truth of the battlefield. In another poem titled, “*Disabled*,” Owen writes about a soldier who luckily survived the war but returned home wounded. The poetic persona looks back on time, how unaware he was of the horrific events he was yet to experience when he decided to join the war. The Russian poet, Nikolay Mayorov, in his poem “*We Are Not Blessed*” writes about soldiers' confrontation with death on the battlefield. For the fighters there is no guaranteed safety, they are trained to act on command having graves partially ready to be buried into. Gabriel Power in the article “*Seven tragic Second World War poems*,” introduces Mayorov’s works as a symbol of “a lost generation of young Soviet men” who died fighting in the Second World War. The German poet, Gerrit Engelke, in his poem “*An Die Soldaten Des Großen Krieges (To the Soldiers of the Great War)*” addresses the collective experience of the soldiers during the First World War. Engelke was a part of Germany's armed forces, he joined the German army in 1914 after the war broke out. In the

poem, he writes that the scars from the war field are his “sweet souvenir”, and like others, he too is proud of them. He left his home, his family, and loved ones just like the others to join the war. He too is a witness of the destruction and death. But the poet wishes to form a bond with every soldier and hopes that as “human may we henceforth be found,” (Engelke). One day the trees, the sun, and the mountains will all appear beautiful, the poet assures, once the violence of the war stops.

Before a soldier was sent to a battlefield, he had to at first pass the examination at the induction center and then receive basic training. The German army recruited men based on their “personality, behavior patterns, demeanor, and ability to cope, (Fritz) meaning predominantly a soldier’s ability to perform in intense situations. The rigorous training which followed right after, helped the soldiers to gain the necessary knowledge, discipline, and regulation. In Germany, as Fritz mentions, many of the recruits had already received proper training as members of Hitler Youth. The training before the war helps soldiers to develop their skills and prepares them for the worst scenarios on the battlefield.

The recruitment of soldiers in Germany was not limited only to adult men. Adolf Hitler, in 1935’s annual Nazi party rally, proclaimed that those with the power of youth are sure to gain from the future (Waxman). So Nazi Germany chose to utilize this youth, they implemented a law that required every eligible German child to join a youth group before the war in 1939. Boys aged over 10 joined the group “Jungvolk (Young People)” and girls joined “Jungmädel (Young Girls)” (Waxman). According to Olivia B. Waxman’s article “Hitler Youth and the Real Nazi History behind 'Jojo Rabbit'” published in *Time* magazine, violation of the law, which made young children’s participation mandatory in youth groups, could lead to parents’ being charged

with fines or even imprisonment. These youth groups were established to continue Nazi Germany's ideology to their future generation. Young boys were promoted to "Hitler Youth" after turning 14 and received further education to develop the skills of a German soldier- "punctuality, orderliness, reliability, subordination, gregariousness, adaptability, diligence, will power, aggressiveness, acute sensory perception, practical talents" (Waxman). On the contrary, young girls were taught to engage in activities which helped them maintain a good physique so that "they could attract a mate and raise children in the Nazi ideology" (Waxman). Young children perceived their presence in these organizations from an innocent perspective, except when the Second World War started in 1939 and the energy of a children's "camping trip"(Waxman) dissipated into a greater, more dreadful course of action. Members of Hitler Youth and BDM (the League of German Girls) became active members of Germany's warfare.

Atrocities conducted by German soldiers during the Second World War are a subject of much historical analysis. The Discovery of British and American intelligence services' secretly recorded conversations of German prisoners in 2001 by the German historian, Sönke Neitzel, unlocked a door to much larger discussions on the psychology of the soldiers. Ben Hutchinson in his article "Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying by Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer – Review" says that legal records in comparison to a memoir do not contain any personal agenda, which is why Neitzel's discovery of recorded evidence is a "military counterpart to the civilian perspective" (Hutchinson). According to the collected data, violence at war became a normal occurrence for the soldiers. Their response towards the conduct of wars- violence, assaults, and murder, suggests that they had accepted the brutality as a part of their work. Moreover, "all combatants see themselves in terms borrowed from industrial labor. They focus on hitting

"targets" and achieving "results", as an efficient way of rationalising violence and instrumentalising human casualties" (Hutchinson). German soldiers' approach concerning war adds a new perspective in understanding soldiers' mental attitudes and behavior in the Second World War.

From army auxiliaries to medical supporters and caregivers, women have persistently demonstrated their active participation in every war that was ever waged. Carol Mann holds the gender stereotypes liable for the negligence of women's contribution and comments how assigned roles- "conceal the historical participation and agency of women in warfare, resistance and peacemaking" (455). When women are entrusted with "the role personifying the nation" (Mann 465), a liability arises that they need to be protected. Rape as a weapon is a "constant reminder of personal and social humiliation and pain" (Mann 469) for soldiers who fails to keep their women safe. Future of the children of these women becomes uncertain. The weight of the matter has been so largely "depoliticized" that the mass rape in Berlin during the Second World War was not given any attention for a long period of time (Mann 466).

Regarding sexual violence being used as a weapon in war has been a subject of great scholarly discussions and deliberation in the fields of political and international law. According to the historian, Regina Muhlhauser, the weaponization of sexual violence originated from the "feminist thought in the 1970s" (367). There is now a space for constructive argument in critical analysis where "the user of a weapon can be held accountable" (Mühlhäuser 368). When at war, women as a "collective body" become a country's representation of pride from the enemy's viewpoint (Muhlhauser 369). As Elisabeth Prugle wrote in "Gender and War: Causes,

Constructions, and Critique,” primarily men’s domination over women plays the symbolic role of domination of the enemy team itself (Prugl 336). The motive is to cause emotional damage to the opposite party, break their morale. In 1998, the psychologist Libby Tata Arcel while speculating reasons why rape is not prohibited by military forces, calls the practice of rape a part of a military objective, “to mobilize the men's aggression to kill, to compensate for their fear of death, and to demonize the enemy” (Mühlhäuser 376). Mühlhäuser adds to Arcel’s argument that the practice of rape is also not confined to men being the perpetrators and women being the victim (Mühlhäuser 377). Although there is a difference in the number of cases, still “women are capable of inciting and perpetrating sexual violence (as well), [...] men and boys become victims of sexual violence, and [...] rape is sometimes deliberately deployed against transgender, lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons” (Mühlhäuser 377). Susan Brownmiller in her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, recounts the presence of rape as a German soldier’s weapon in the Second World War (Mühlhäuser 370). Tactically rape as a weapon can be employed on the field to humiliate and torture the opponents psychologically. The author of the article “‘Eine Frau in Berlin’: Diary as History or Fiction of the Self,” Jennifer Redmann states that German men upon returning from the prison camps after the war was reminded of their defeat because of the rape victims (196).

When gender roles are strictly binarized, they can be described as a dichotomous concept, meaning masculinity and femininity are indeed “a firm or polarised distinction [...] between two entities” (Pilcher and Whelehan 31). As an example, in a patriarchal society, male and female gender roles are each other’s opposites, “man is the founding principle and woman the excluded opposite of this, and as long as such a distinction is tightly held in place the whole system can

function effectively” (Eagleton 114). Social Role theorist Talcott Parsons also perceives role differentiation necessary for a society to function and uphold a good environment for interaction (Eagly and Wood 461). Jacques Derrida’s idea of “Binary Opposition” suggests that, “one term of an antithesis secretly inheres within the other,” (Eagleton 115) meaning the founding principle does not only repel its opposite but also depends on the difference that makes their identities distinguishable.

Chapter 3

The Anonymous Diarist

A Woman in Berlin is an anonymous memoir written by a German woman in 1945 during the Second World War. The author captures the events leading up to Germany's initial defeat in a long-standing battle against the allied forces of the United States, United Kingdom, China, and the Soviet Union. Amidst the fall of Berlin, the author and her neighbors fight for food, shelter, safety, and even sanity with every passing day. Occasionally, when there is time to spare, the author writes down her thoughts in notebooks she secretly keeps. She scribbles random Russian words on her pages sometimes to pretend that she is studying the language and no one doubts about what else she is writing in them. From the 20th of April to the 22nd of June of 1945, the author recorded eight weeks' worth of war-time experience in her notebook. The author's style of writing, as inferred from the revised version of the three notebooks she wrote during the war, is interpretive and descriptive. She studies people's expressions and behavior to picture their personality, understands the world from her own independent perspective, and dislikes people's dependence on modern technology. Writing gives her comfort at troubled times, so she continues to write to unwind herself from the ongoing emotional and physical distress.

Initially, the original copy was written in "shorthand and her own personal code" (Redmann 194), meaning she mostly used signs and abbreviations instead of words or phrases, which was later restructured for easier legibility. Kurt W. Marek, a friend of the author, convinced her to publish her notebooks and in 1954, a translated version in English was published in the United States, followed by a British edition in 1955 (Redmann 194). Afterward,

the book was translated into a few more languages- Japanese, Italian, Norwegian, and others, but interestingly not once in German. A German author's book on German history was not published in Germany till the very late 1950s. When *A Woman in Berlin* was first published in the United States in 1954, not even a decade after the Second World War had passed and the memories which still lingered fresh, inflicted complicated emotions for the citizens of Germany. Even when it was finally released in Germany by a Swiss publisher in 1959, publicly the book did not receive much attention (Redmann 194). A new German edition was published in 2003, two years after the author's death. As per her conditions, the new edition was kept anonymous like the previous ones and was published only after her demise (Redmann 195).

As for her identity, in the memoir, the author only discloses that she used to work for a publishing house that was shut down a week earlier in 1945 from the first diary entry. She also mentions being engaged to a man named Gerd, who is away at war and the author intends to show Gerd the diary when he returns. The author could also speak a little Russian which helped her communicate with the Russian soldiers when they arrived in Berlin in 1945. It is important to note that there are a few possibilities that could have prompted the author's decision to stay anonymous. From a historical perspective, the book talks about a monumental event that affected people in several different countries along with Germany itself, and recalling the times of war might ignite the distress, sufferings, and trauma associated with that time. Many scholars highlight the account of Berlin's mass rape in understanding why the book is a sensitive issue. But then in 2003, a German literary editor named Jens Briski revealed a possible name of the anonymous author after the new German edition was published. The publisher of the book, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, while confronting Jens Briski on revealing the author's identity said that

“She (author of *A Woman in Berlin*) wanted to spare herself further indignity until after her death” (qtd. in Harding). Burning memories of sexual assault, the author had herself encountered, combined with the accusation that her book is now- “besmirching the honour of German women,” (qtd. in Harding) impelled her to not allow a republication before her death. Despite the controversy, her book addressed the “taboo surrounding discussion of the rapes” (Heineman 53) and manifested a path towards a fair discussion on sexual assaults and trauma. There is also a possibility of the author “conveying a collective fate” (Heineman 56) by not defining herself with a name, and by staying ambiguous she becomes a veritable everywoman figure.

An appealing characteristic of *A Woman in Berlin* is that it subtly but precisely captures the features of the home front’s crisis in- shortage of food, uncertainty with the future, economic instability, and so on. On many occasions, the author obliquely talks about gender roles as well, for example, when she meets the tired German soldiers on the streets and thinks that they appeared “little like men” (*A Woman in Berlin* 36) hinting that a soldier’s courageous and strong appearance now has subsided. Or when the water radiator at the author’s apartment broke down and one Fraulein Behn, an unmarried woman, volunteered first to fix it, implying that women are taking on leadership roles in Berlin and are taking charge of the impending crisis. Although she denies having any leadership skills like Fraulein Behn, her distinctive personality of a composed thinker is her strength. On the topic of her old house in Berlin, which is now destroyed, she writes, “Now that it's gone and all I have is a small suitcase with a handful of clothes, I feel naked, weightless. Since I own nothing, I can lay claim to everything” (*A Woman in Berlin* 18). The author feels naked in a metaphoric sense and this nakedness pertains to the loss of one’s

identity and belonging associated with a home to call one's own. She lived in makeshift rooms for six long years, from 1939 until 1945. Attachment cannot be felt in such temporary places, where people come to live, to seek shelter but deserts when there is any sign of danger. The author of *A Woman in Berlin* has pointed out a few more common items or aspects of life that encountered a change in priority during the war in her memoir. The author calls money "fiction" (*A Woman in Berlin* 29) and that money has little to no purpose when there is even nothing to buy. Products in short supply are priced only a few pfennigs (German Coin) in the market which decreases the functional value of the paper money. Besides, if their banks shut down, the remaining value of money in the market would completely perish. The author also talks about relationships and people's feelings for each other, the warmth of emotions which has lost its value as well, "Heart, hurt, love, desire: how foreign, how distant these words sound now," (*A Woman in Berlin* 19) the author asks herself after finding an abandoned love letter, once belonged to the previous owner of the author's temporary house.

Chapter 4

Militarization of a German Man

Although there is no conclusive evidence as to whether war is inevitable or if it is avoidable, the struggle, sacrifice, and loss that war brings upon the people is indisputably horrifying. A gendered study of the war does not redefine its haunting events in the sense that the war's true recognition is diminished, but is restudied from a specific, constricted point of view. When we think of war, we think of the soldiers as one single unit whereas the unit is made of millions of single individuals. But every independent being ties together with a single perception of masculinity. A great part of a man's identity, his own singularity, psyche, during a war is discarded for a more defined description of their male gender roles. In general, men and women perform different duties and in times of crisis, these duties are redefined to fit the requirements of the situation. Traditionally, gender roles are divided into two categories of masculinity and femininity, and division of the wartime duties proceeds based on respective former gender roles. Perhaps in war, not necessarily masculinity but the image of strength and aggression is much needed to execute commands and achieve positive results. The rigorous physical and emotional training is a part of the process which inculcates in a soldier the strength to face and bear the weight of the war. In the early 20th century under Nazi Rule, Germany nurtured the warrior qualities within its community through the reestablishment of their traditional gender roles which eventually earned the name "militarised masculinity" (Scheub) for the impact of their militancy in both World Wars. Germany recruited men from all over the country to be a part of the battalion to fight in the war. The author of *A Woman in Berlin* talks about finding two cardboard placards on a maple tree once, one of which was to warn people to

not surrender and another “calls on all men to fight” (*A Woman in Berlin* 37), a notice which asked men to join the war. Therefore, the priority during a war is to gather all men at first, and then comes the recruiting through assessment and lastly, the military training before they are sent off to the war field. Men’s position in the society during the war hence is explicitly battlefield centered.

4.1. A Soldier in Training

The interwar period between the First World War and the Second is about 21 years and in 1939 when the Second World War started, its six long years of death and destruction continued till September of 1945. In the First World War, Germany fought against the heavily industrialized machinery mostly without any equal counterpart for their protection or to strike back. Professor Stephen G. Fritz in his book “*Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II*” describes that the German soldiers were practically defenseless, “against the full force of the weaponry of a technological age.” So, in the Second World War, Germany prioritized training their military force more efficiently, which involved a soldier’s capability of performing in disastrous situations. At the induction center before the war, where the draftees are examined, the officers of the German army focused on selecting their fighters based on their competency to perform under the pressure and so the process of recruitment consisted of tests to verify personality and mentality (Fritz). In fact, Nazi Government began its military training long before the premise of the war and with a younger generation. A great number of the German soldiers consisted of young members of the Hitler Youth. The author of *A Woman in Berlin*, when she meets young soldiers on the street “beneath oversized steel helmets” (40), being startled by their young faces and high-pitched voices, argues that it is against the law of nature to send children off to war.

Germany's leader of that time, Adolf Hitler, highly cherished the energy of the youth and believed that great things can be achieved by the young generation. So, youth organizations were established during the party's reign in the early 1930s to train both young boys and girls, whereas the operations of these youth organizations were highly influenced by Germany's gender norms.

There were separate organizations for boys and girls, and they also received different training designed to assist in developing particular skills for each gender. While girls' activities focused more on aid and domestic chores, boys learned mathematics "in terms of bullet trajectories, range-finding, sextant-reading, aerodynamics" (qtd. in Waxman). The dichotomy in training facilities created separate domains for masculinity and femininity, domains that are so significantly different that they become each other's opposites. Gender roles are a dichotomy because as the term dichotomy suggests, it is a contradistinction of two independent identities. One of the four features of dichotomous thinking, as Raia Prokhovnik describes, is the "extension of a difference between two entities into an opposition" (Pilcher and Whelehan 31), hence when particular gender roles are created by a society, in this case in pre-war Germany, male and female identities do not define just their differences but also emphasize each other's contradictions. The basic idea of gender roles prior to the First World War in Germany is where the role of a woman is to tend to her household and a man's is to provide financial support to his family (Geglio 4). Nazi Government planned to linger onto the old beliefs and promoted Germany's traditional view of masculinity and femininity among the general public. Men's characteristics which were distinguished as "heroic, intellectual" (qtd. in Geglio 5), the government believed that this particular trait of men benefits them to have jobs and also to participate in "politics and courageous struggle" (qtd. in Geglio 5). So, there is a visible

transition from the masculinity which was already established in the society towards the decision to use those very characteristics in the making of Germany's intellectual warrior.

Another feature of the dichotomous thinking Prokhovnik mentions is that there is a hierarchical relation between the two identities (Pilcher and Whelehan 31), but hierarchy might also result from the utilization of the gender roles by individuals or a group, and not due to the roles themselves. The power relation of genders in a society which is also known as 'Gender Order,' (Pilcher and Whelehan 60) can be patriarchal as much as matriarchal, but the possibility of either does not dictate the fact that the dichotomy of gender roles establishes a polarity between the genders. Jill Matthews, the first developer of the idea behind 'Gender Order,' specifies that the order is not permanent because the process in which the relation is established is continuous, "It is fashioned by actions of individuals who are themselves formed in that interaction" and thus the masculine and feminine roles are also constantly changing (qtd. in Pilcher and Whelehan 60,61). It is important to understand in which ways German people and their system cultivated the idea of heroic masculinity among the general population, even if heroism is an innate characteristic of men in general or not.

Lance Corporal Aigner during the Second World War was sentenced to death when he left his team's side, intoxicated himself with drinks, and ran away from the front (qtd. in Filtz). His behavior can be argued that he acted against the perceived masculine role. The German journalist, Ute Scheub, in the article titled "Militarised Masculinity in Germany," writes that soldiers are required to have control over their "body and mind." There is no place for sentimentality, for which emotions like cowardice are considered to be feminine. To portray a masculine image, soldiers need to repress any feminine behavior for as long as it is treated as an

equivalent of weakness in the military. “Since masculinity and femininity are each other’s direct opposites, to be distinctive, roles do not only represent a difference but also prohibit stepping outside of their respective domains.

4.2. Heroism at The Battlefield

The book, *A Woman in Berlin*, captures the last months of the Second World War, a period when Germany was heading towards a defeat against the combatants. During this time the author of the book often meets tired and dejected German soldiers on the street, soldiers who have fought the long months of war diligently. One time she shares a remark that the defeated look on their faces makes them resemble less like men. Jennifer Redmann in “‘Eine Frau in Berlin’: Diary as History or Fiction of the Self?” uses the words “demasculinized creatures” (196) to describe the author of *A Woman in Berlin*’s response towards the haggard beings. But the gravity of the war is so extreme both physically and mentally that to relate a particular state of a person without a vantage point from his personal experience is unfair. Their defeated emotions are being considered as a vulnerability rather than a state of mind, a state which is of a man’s raw emotions past his gendered impersonation. The tired men, the author of *A Woman in Berlin* met on the street, are not a failure but are humans who are simply scared, stunned by the destruction happening around them. War is glorified in literature, in films, and art, but in reality, the extreme mental and physical agony is often forgotten because common people would much rather remember the abstract concept concerning heroism and the thrill of winning a war than the actual human cost and long-term suffering perpetuated by wars and battles.

Glorification of the war rejoices the bravery of a soldier for his death but does not necessarily express how this death comes to them and in how many ways. When war is already at the door, and soldiers must march the ground because the war demands it, their contribution undeniably must be cheered, but the suppression of hardship affects the soldier's perspective on the discussion of what he truly feels at the war field. The horrors of the war and a soldier's mixed emotions regarding it- his bravery and his fear, medal for one and solace for another, every detail needs to be recognized. "*Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori* (it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country)," a famous line, taken from the Roman poet Horace, is restated in Wilfred Owen's war poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" only to be accused to be a lie by the poet. Owen is an English poet who served in the First World War as a soldier, and in his poem, he reveals a soldier's point of view at the war field where smoke and blood mix with the cry of the wounded, enemy weapons pointed at their flesh to fire till death, comrades nearby fall to the ground once hit, helplessness arises in the extremity but along with the war, the soldier who survives, keeps walking. The German poet, Gerrit Engelke, who also served in the First World War, in his poem "An die Soldaten des Großen Krieges," addresses the soldiers of the war and states that they all share a similar hardship, and like the others, the poet also has a woman he loves, a mother he adores and children he left at home to fight in the war. Nothing sweet is seen anywhere, only pain and destruction, life and death merged so neatly together that there is hardly any distance between the two. So, for the soldiers, war is not a "romantic adventure," but rather "a continual series of shattering incidents" (Fritz). In such a place, emotions cannot stay organized and an internal fight ignites within the soldier himself, between his intuition and reality. The German army needed their soldiers to be strong-headed for a reason, quick wit can save a soldier in the

battle along with his comrades, so even just for survival the ability to make “quick decisions in a confusing and disorienting atmosphere” (Fritz) can act as a drastic advantage.

Along with wit, comradeship was one of the important requirements for a German soldier, in many ways having a good bond with fellow soldiers had a good psychological impact. Battlefield became a collective experience for the soldiers who undergo similar dreadful situations and thus grew “a sense of unity and pride” (Fritz) which made their emotional sufferings less unendurable. When a soldier is away from home, living under constant fighting in foreign lands, his comrades become his family, his solace, and in some extraordinary cases, his love. The British-Indian scholar Santanu Das writes at great length about the ‘homosexual bond’ that developed between many soldiers on the battlefield during the First and Second World War. In times of extreme loneliness and fear, men look after each other and comfort one another as would a mother, a father, a son, and a lover (Das 111).

Sociability is a comforting reminder of home and all that is dear that soldiers have left behind. Comradeship grows the sense of duty for soldiers who must stand with their comrades and march forward together. Then again, the death of a friend also struck them the hardest but there is hardly time, energy, or the scope to mourn for the deceased. For many soldiers like Siegfried Knappe, encountering dead bodies for the first time during the war is appalling. Although Knappe had smelt gun powder, smoke, and gasoline before, the ghastly smell of a dead person’s flesh was new to him (qtd. in Fritz). Death and the enemy are not the only challenges for a soldier; there is hunger, bad weather, lack of hygiene, homesickness, bodily diseases, and many others. After all, soldiers are not “impersonal machines” (Fritz) and so-called ‘unmasculine’ emotions are mere human reactions that justify soldiers' reaction to loss and

misery as normal. Gender roles alone do not decide a person's identity, there are other aspects to consider as well, such as genetics, family and household environment, society, cultural practices, education system, and so on, which is why tragedy affects everyone individually. But this discrete part of a man gets buried under the weight of the war dynamics, "the personal is renounced for the impersonal" (Fritz). The war did not only obtain mass destructive weapons out of the Industrial Revolution but also mass-produced industrialized soldiers. Industrializing soldiers in war means measuring everything by numbers and "all combatants see themselves in terms borrowed from industrial labour" (Hutchinson). Food supply, medical support, wounded personnel, death count, enemy civilians- are all a number, a part of a bigger strategy in war. The recorded audio clips of German prisoners of war, discovered by Sönke Neitzel in 2001 give an insight that the soldiers rationalized violence, vandalization, and mass murder by treating them as objectives (Hutchinson).

There were various kinds of reactions from soldiers regarding their duties and experience during the Second World War, one of which was also their fierce passion to fight for the country. Karl Fuchs, formerly trained under Hitler Youth, wrote in a letter to his wife during the Second World War, that rather than the longing for the warmth of the home, the desire to fight in the war should hold more importance, and "he who avoids this struggle or fears it is a despicable coward and does not deserve to live" (qtd. in Fritz). Feeling aggrieved by men who are not contributing to the struggle of the front, whether because they are under the roof of their homes or serving far from the battlefield, is a shared feeling among many soldiers like Karl Fuchs. An unnamed soldier in his letters vented how discouraging it is to see the people at home who "want to lose their nerve" (qtd. in Fritz) and if so, what the battlefield soldiers would say or feel regarding this,

who are fighting on behalf of everyone. Will Thomas claimed that people at the home cannot even imagine what the soldier at the front felt, their stance on their duties as a soldier at troubling times is beyond comprehension (qtd. in Fritz). People at the home front, men or women regardless, were fighting a war of their own, one which cannot be compared with the battlefield but was surely life-threatening. Although the author of *A Woman in Berlin* does not differentiate femininity and masculinity, while describing how her neighbors struggle to survive during the war, she believes that men at home cannot do much to protect women from sexual harassment. In fact, having a husband scarcely matters when a woman is likely to be sexually assaulted by marauding soldiers during battle. The idea of heroic masculinity for the men at home is therefore to an extent renounced. But unlike the battlefield where unmasculine behaviors are perceived to be feminine, at the home front, men's attitude conjoins with the urge to survive and to endure till the war is over. So, in terms of their responsibilities or duties, men and women do not part away. Since necessities like hunger, shelter, security, and others do not differentiate between genders, unlike humans, every civilian of all ages gets involved in such a crisis and is required to act accordingly to sustain themselves.

Chapter 5

Femininity and War: An Analysis of German Women during WWII

The unpredictability of war could not restrict women only to housekeeping. Due to the necessity and opportunity born out of circumstances, German women took part in the Second World War from various sectors of life and for various reasons. They stood their ground as military personnel, army nurses, industrial workers, and so on. The author of *A Woman of Berlin*, like thousands of other female civilians, fights the war from her home. In a city like Berlin when it barely has anything to offer the people after sustaining the Second World War for six long years, citizens make use of the city's bare minimum to survive. There is no room for traditional German roles to interpose themselves, after all, for a woman to be a housewife there needs to be a stable house. *A Woman of Berlin's* author has lived through several houses by the time war is over, none of which can legally be called her own. Residents would use others' apartments and belongings in times of need, especially when their own is bombed or is damaged. "We take whatever we need and steal whatever we can eat," (*A Woman in Berlin* 147) the author explains; property and ownership are redundant in times of crisis. Houses do not have electricity, air-raids have shattered many walls, stores do not have enough food, water supply is limited, and many other challenges resurface every day. Because these challenges must be prioritized, women's duty expands beyond the house and their immediate family.

5.1. A Commitment to Homefront

German women's exemplary performance in both World Wars is a break from the past, however, the effect of this growth is not far-reaching. In *A Woman in Berlin*, one night in the

middle of an air-raid when the water radiator is damaged, the author, with sixteen other residents, risks their lives to stop the water from damaging their residence. Fraulein Behn fearlessly leads the group of people in the dark with bombshells flying close to their feet, indeed as a ‘lead mare,’ a name the author gives Behn for her leadership characteristic. The mission ends in victory, but for the victors “there will no books or songs to celebrate this deed, and no one will receive the Iron Cross” (*A Woman in Berlin* 56). Since women’s leadership is non-aligned to their socially perceived roles, the managerial role or the role of leadership which corresponds to masculinity collides with female roles or femininity (Eagly and Wood 464). In circumstances where any substantial progress beyond the gender-defined responsibilities cannot be detached from the gender role beliefs, the possibility of a change or acceptance in the society is limited. But then again, the frailty of limitation imposed by gender roles is in the contrast between masculinity and femininity itself since one cannot exist without the other. *A Woman in Berlin*’s author recognizes the effort of the neighborhood’s women who are taking charge in this crisis, but only when she compares that their bravery for saving their apartment from a flood is “very soldierly” (*A Woman in Berlin* 56), she realizes their risk will not be celebrated.

Jacque Derrida’s concept of “Binary Oppositions” is about two opposing forces so intricately defining each other’s nature that their existence becomes interdependent. Similarly, when gender roles are by strict means binary, roles do not act independently and instead become each other's reminder of how one is different from the other (Eagleton 115). Pre-war Nazi German ideals on gender which perceive men as “heroic, intellectual” and women as “maternal, sentimental” (qtd. in Geglio 5), are reminders for men and women on how to act.

Since the characteristic of binary roles is to be interdependent, roles fail to merge or to evolve into an alternative. If only gender roles were to be non-binary, there could have been a scope to act beyond gendered expectations and appear without any condition. When the Second World War took place, based on the pre-existing gender roles, men from every corner of the country were called to fight in the war for the country. When male duties were diverted towards the war, former duties at home associated with men were assigned to the care of women. In absence of the opposite gender, women took on both of the gender's duties and from homemakers, women's duty as a member of the society became highly home front-centric.

According to Eagly and Wood's study on Social Role Theory, the way people approach gender roles is how they would with their regular duties as a social being which is why these roles appear to be the "innate attributes of the sexes" (Eagly and Wood 459). Considering gender roles as a part of human's natural behavior results in the generalized belief that femininity and masculinity are normal occurrences, and every human being possesses the homogenous roles of its kind. To be an early 20th Century German woman meant to endorse the image of the feminine identity in that particular time and place. The condition is not only to behave in its absolute manners but also to keep distance from the opposite other, the antipode, masculinity. Homefront is a part of women's duty, a representation of a wartime identity, if violated, it is no less than an act of defiance against society. People behave differently around other people depending on how one coheres to the socially accepted roles, "women and men typically are rewarded by other people for conforming to gender roles and penalized for deviating" (Eagly and Wood 468). When the author of *A Woman in Berlin* is sent away from a field hospital because the hospital does not want any female help, the author is surprised at how they are spoken to, "As if we wanted to get

our hands on the guns, or play at being soldiers" (*A Woman in Berlin* 47). The attitude towards women who wish to take part in activities outside of their 'home,' during a war which is equivalent to the entire home front, is negative for the reason that the behavior is not discerned as normal. So, to understand how limitation is implemented when gender roles are binary, people's reaction or treatment towards the discarding of traditional gender roles in a society is just as important as the effect of generalization of gender roles. In both cases, the freedom of discretion in war is met with drastic disadvantages. While the rising active participation of women in the Second World War is about breaking away from the anticipated standard of life of German women, how society responds towards the particular action is about what the standard of life at that time is.

Elisabeth Krimmer in *German Women's Life Writing and the Holocaust* reviews works of German women associated with jobs far from the home front in the Second World War and talks about the challenges women face in the military. Many of the women who separate from their homes to join the difficult life of an army auxiliary, escape to find a life away from their household responsibilities, like Ilse Schmidt, a young German woman who joins the navy during the Second World War, finds it is an opportunity to leave her "stifling home environment" (Krimmer 54). The military compound presents them "a level of luxury that they had not known before" (Krimmer 36) and as auxiliaries, when important tasks are entrusted to their care, they gain a sense of importance considering how they too are now working with a purpose. Even though working in the army or navy detaches them from domestic chores like sweeping the house and cooking for the family, the drawback of the liberty is the "environment characterized by rampant sexism" (Krimmer 55). Before the official authorization of firearms for women in

anti-aircraft defense in 1943 and the use of anti-tank grenades in 1945, German women were not allowed to use guns and were mostly handling the supporting duties as translators, drivers, secretaries, accountants, plane spotters, and so on (Krimmer 34-35). Superior positions at work are still at the hands of the male soldiers and they have full access to the military infrastructure (Krimmer 35). Women's involvement in the military is not taken positively by many German soldiers as well as many civilians, and there are cases of sexual harassment against female military personnel as well. (Krimmer 37). Krimmer mentions Felix Römer's study on secret recordings of German prisoners of war where Römer talks about how "many German soldiers find the idea of a woman in arms unthinkable" (Krimmer 37). The Social Role Theory presented by Eagly and Wood talks about "role-inconsistent behavior" (Eagly and Wood 468) which are behaviors of an individual that do not align with his or her assigned roles and thus face the consequences. If German women's presence in the military is receiving negative reactions from the people around them, it is a sign that their presence is being perceived as an inconsistency in that particular context. To conclude, any work outside of the home front during the Second World War for women, no matter how significant it is, is nonetheless conditioned by the feminine roles.

5.2. Identity Reduced to Body

One of the prime concerns for soldiers during the war is to give protection to the local citizens of their country from the enemy. A large number of these local citizens consists of women and so, it is easier for the enemy team to treat women as the country's liability and use them as a part of the war tactic. The conversations that take place between the author of *A Woman in Berlin* and other women are fathomable that they have already accepted their fate to

be raped by the Russian soldiers. Oftentimes when they meet other women, they do not start a question with ‘whether,’ but instead how many times they have been sexually violated. Mothers in Berlin lock their young daughters in places away from the Russian soldiers where locating the girls’ presence is difficult. The daughter of the woman from Hamburg, Stinchen, spends most of her time hiding in a crawl space and has managed to keep herself safe so far, and the two sales-girls from the bakery have gone separate ways, one stays in a basement and another in a small secret room behind the shop. For the women in Berlin, it was a shared traumatic experience. It was a “part of the public discourse, as were the means of dealing with any resulting pregnancies” (Redmann 196). They talk freely of their experience and sympathize with each other for the turn of events, even the author writes in her entry of May 3rd and 4th that, “Slowly but surely we’re starting to view all the raping with a sense of humour — gallows humour” (*A Woman in Berlin* 146). Although people associate rape with humiliation, for the Berlin women speaking of rape was not a part of any taboo at first. Then the following years after the end of the war in 1945, as men headed towards their home from war fields and prison camps, the act of rape, which was already a sensitive issue for the victim, reentered the discussion as a “shameful subject, reminding men of their own fall” (Redmann 196). It is emotional abuse to both men and women, a cursed memory that already haunts the women and is now a sign of regret for men whose close ones have been raped by enemy soldiers. “It is the ultimate expression of contempt for a defeated foe since it symbolizes his helplessness more fully than any other conceivable act,” (qtd. in Mühlhäuser 369) and consequently, women’s collective trauma becomes a matter of humiliation on the subject of their men’s approach on the issue.

Gerd, the partner of the author of *A Woman in Berlin*, visits the author's house in June of 1945, almost 6 years after the last time they met in 1939. The joyful feeling of being reunited with her fiancé soon turns into a tense environment when Gerd starts to demean the women of the building, including the author, for what had happened to them. When the author tells Gerd stories of the past few months, he accuses, "You've all turned into a bunch of shameless bitches, every one of you in the building. Don't you realize?" (*A Woman in Berlin* 305) and the author falls silent in disbelief. She reminisces about the day Gerd showed her the draft notice to attend the war and now that both have survived the war together, she cannot but question whether that is even a good thing. Still, the author gives Gerd the notebooks she kept since 1945's April, the ones she has partially been writing to show him when he returns. Because her narration is not written in full sentences but in short descriptions, Gerd fails to read through the entire thing. He asks the author what she means by "Schdrg" and the author replies that it is an abbreviation of the word for rape, "Schandung" (*A Woman in Berlin* 306). Rape is an unsettling topic for many homecoming soldiers, hearing about its incidents and then reading the author's notebooks triggered a lot of troubling emotions for Gerd. One unknown day between 16th June to 22nd June, Gerd leaves the author's house to meet some people in Pomerania and never comes back. The author does not mourn Gerd's disappearance, instead, she is more driven to survive the difficulties before her. The fact that men like Gerd cannot see past the unfortunate events of the rape and sexual harassment of women, the body becomes the sole representation of the women's selfhood.

Women resorting to using their bodies in exchange for protection during a war is another example of the objectifying characteristic of wartime female identities. Since the author of *A*

Woman in Berlin speaks a little Russian, she at first tries to use her voice to stop the Russian soldiers from raping women. But after barely managing to get through a few times, her pleading fails to help her. Even when she goes to put a complaint to a commandant, he only laughs and makes useless remarks on the situation. Making a decent conversation to negotiate is impossible considering the words of a woman hold no value to most of these soldiers. Ruthless encounters with sexual assault transgress the author's patience and at last, she decides to "find a single wolf to keep away the pack" (*A Woman in Berlin* 85). In the company of a lieutenant named Anatol, and then later a major when Anatol leaves the city on duty, the author manages to temporarily defend herself from other persistent invaders. These high-ranking officers would also bring plenty of food in the apartment, which keeps the author and her two roommates warm in the cold desperate months of the war. On the topic of the mass rape of German women, Krimmer says that the severity of the moment compelled them to take drastic measures- some tried to keep distance from the Russians, some made excuses to be sick and some "entered an exclusive relationship with an officer who offered protection in exchange for sexual services" (Krimmer 116). Femininity in these circumstances turns into a symbolic one; from "maternal, sentimental" (qtd. in Geglio 5), women's identity is reduced to their body, a mundane shell.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The structure that carries gender roles does not conform much to a stringent formation. The process in which these roles are created allows for modification, alteration, and extension. Germany's gender roles in the 20th century, which includes the two World Wars, were conditioned by its circumstances as well. Although the roles were revised, they were still a direct product of German people's dichotomous thinking of gender, which subsequently held onto the idea of gender roles being a division of two unbending identities, femininity and masculinity. As a result, during the war masculinity centered around the affairs of the battlefield whereas femininity revolved around the home front. The heroic image of German men which Nazi Germany believed favors men's involvement in challenging activities, was manifested in training their armed forces for 1939's war. Masculine attributes on the war field take effect as a necessity for soldiers to maintain their control over their emotions and behavior. As a result, masculinity on the battlefield is prohibited from wavering, unsoldierly behaviors- weakness, fear, and such, are considered to be eccentric. An unrewarding and disapproving attitude towards 'unmasculine' behaviors cooperates in establishing a preferable identity. Although such an approach helps soldiers to face the hardship of the battlefield, their freedom of expression is forsaken. While applauding the soldiers for their bravery, people eventually forget the real struggle of war and how severely it affects the front. Inside the masculinized military, there was also a spontaneous effort of the women to contribute to the fight. Many of them from different sectors of life joined the army but to some extent, their presence was not welcomed by the majority of the male soldiers, officers, and other related persons. The nature of gender roles appears as two separate

domains, completely detached from each other. Far from the battlefield, the domain that separates the civilians from the battlefield, the rise of women's employment is comparatively appreciated. Since feminine roles are favored by the home front, women's identity thus becomes a representation of the homeland, which the soldiers are committed to defending. The enemy team taking advantage of this perspective on women resorts to employing rape and sexual assault as a weapon which ultimately circumscribes a woman's identity only to her body. So, the drawback of binary roles is that they constrain, define, and reduce one's identity. There is no space for individuality, uniqueness, or growth. When gender roles are each other's anti-thesis, one role will always depend on another to be distinctive, which is why binary roles fail to simply overlap.

Works Cited

A Woman in Berlin. Translated by Philip Boehm, Virago, 2006.

<https://b-ok.asia/book/3770381/66d3cb>. Pdf file.

Bardall, Gabrielle, et al. "How is political violence gendered? Disentangling motives, forms, and impacts." *Political Studies*, vol. 68(4), 2020, pp. 916-935. DOI: 10.1177/0032321719881812

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 2006.

<https://b-ok.asia/book/16675510/1a4714>. Pdf file.

Das, Santanu. *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. <https://b-ok.asia/book/6895278/8a66db>. Pdf file.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Tmi67mPXsyqyvkdSogqheJ8j33mCqwQ?usp=s_haring. Accessed 14 March. 2021.

Eagly, Alice H., and Wendy Wood. "Social Role Theory." *Handbook of Theories in Social Psychology*, vol. 2, Jan. 2012, pp. 458–476., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n49>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2021.

Engelke, Gerrit. "An Die Soldaten Des Großen Krieges." Translated by Timothy Adès, *Timothy Adès: Translator-Poet*, <http://www.timothyades.co.uk/gerrit-engelke-an-die-soldaten-des-grossen-krieges> Accessed 20 Dec. 2021.

Fritz, Stephen G. *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II*. University Press of Kentucky, 1995. . <https://b-ok.asia/book/3332278/d4f0e1>. pdf file.

Geglio, Carla. “The Soldiers at Home: Reconciling the Ideals and Realities of Gender Relations in Nazi Germany.” *Primary Source*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, pp. 4-9

<https://psource.sitehost.iu.edu/archive.html>

Harding, Luke. “Row over Naming of Rape Author.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 5 Oct. 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/oct/05/historybooks.germany>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2021.

Heineman, Elizabeth. “Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past.” *Central European History*, vol. 38, no. 1, [Cambridge University Press, Central European History Society], 2005, pp. 41–74, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4547497>. Accessed June 30. 2021.

Hutchinson, Ben. “Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying by Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer – Review.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 29 Sept. 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/30/soldaten-neitzel-welzer-holocaust-review>. Accessed 8 Dec. 2021.

Krimmer, Elisabeth. *German Women's Life Writing and the Holocaust*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. DOI: 10.1017/9781108563758. PDF file.

Mann, Carol. “The Instrumentalization of Gender in War.” *Ashgate Research Companion to War: Origins and Prevention*, Ashgate, 2012, pp. 455–471. https://www.academia.edu/6998413/The_Instrumentalization_of_Gender_in_War. Pdf file.

Mühlhäuser, Regina. “Refraining Sexual Violence as a Weapon and Strategy of War: The Case of the German Wehrmacht during the War and Genocide in the Soviet Union, 1941-1944.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 26, no. 3, University of Texas Press, 2017, pp. 366–401, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44862404>. Accessed 7 Sep. 2021.

Owen, Wilfred. "Dulce et Decorum Est." 1921. *Poetry Foundation*.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2021.

Pilcher, Jane, and Imelda Whelehan. *Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. 2nd ed., SAGE, 2017.

<https://b-ok.asia/book/11256190/21f719>. Pdf file.

Power, Gabriel. "Seven Tragic Second World War Poems." *The Week UK*, The Week, 19 Nov.

2019, <https://www.theweek.co.uk/104151/seven-tragic-second-world-war-poems>.

Accessed 8 Dec. 2021.

Prugl, Elisabeth. "Gender and War: Causes, Constructions, and Critique." *Perspectives on*

Politics, vol. 1, no. 2, [American Political Science Association, Cambridge University

Press], 2003, pp. 335–42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3688905>. Accessed 30 June 2021.

Redmann, Jennifer. "'Eine Frau in Berlin': Diary as History or Fiction of the Self?" *Colloquia*

Germanica, vol. 41, no. 3, Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH Co. KG, 2008, pp.

193–210, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23982039>. Accessed 30 June 2021.

Royde-Smith, John Graham and Hughes, Thomas A.. "World War II". *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

27 Sep. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2021.

Scheub, Ute. "Militarised Masculinity in Germany." *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, 2 Feb. 2012,

<https://www.gwi-boell.de/en/2012/02/02/militarised-masculinity-germany>. Accessed 17

Dec. 2021.

"VE Day: The Fall of Nazi Berlin in Pictures." *BBC News*, BBC, 8 May 2020,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52572544>. Accessed 17 Nov. 2021

Waxman, Olivia B. "Hitler Youth and the Real Nazi History behind 'Jojo Rabbit'." *Time*, Time,

17 Oct. 2019, <https://time.com/5700753/hilter-youth-jojo-rabbit/> Accessed 7 Dec. 2021.