

Punished women: A historiographical analysis of the history writing on the ‘*tyskerjenter*’

Victoria Lyngstad Sveberg



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Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

University of Oslo

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Abstract

With this thesis I present the first historiographical analysis to be conducted on the history writing on the '*tyskerjenter*' – the Norwegian women who engaged intimately with German soldiers during the German occupation of Norway. The analysis is based on a close and critical reading of texts, influenced by cultural historians' reading of texts after the linguistic turn.

In the first part of the thesis, I situate the historiography of the *tyskerjenter* within the wider historiography of the occupation. I discuss why works dealing with this topic as *history* started emerging precisely in the mid-to-late 1980s, as well as why this history has been granted strikingly little attention by Norwegian historians, despite the sustained interest within the discipline for topics pertaining to Norway's experience of the Second World War. I argue that part of the answer to this is to be found in how the history of these women can be perceived as a particularly 'difficult history' in multiple respects, as well as in how this history is considered part of what has widely been conceived of as a less interesting and even marginal part of history. In this part I also examine *how* the history of the *tyskerjenter* has been written and imagined, and identify and discuss silences, as well as what I argue constitutes an interesting 'empty space', in the historiography.

In the second part of the thesis, I examine the ways in which the often brutal punishment of these women during and after the war has been interpreted. Here, I transcend the national narrative by also scrutinising prominent interpretations of the sanctioning of women accused of 'fraternisation' with the Germans during the Danish and French occupations, and by discussing whether the interpretations from the three national contexts interact with each other. I also engage in a critical discussion of the understanding of the head shaving of women accused of this transgression as a 'European' phenomenon. Furthermore, I argue that the Norwegian historiography is strikingly empiricist and discuss potential reasons for this. Lastly, I demonstrate that there has been interestingly little conversation between the interpretations from the three national contexts, particularly when considering the widespread understanding of this punishment as 'European'.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The project and its relevance	3
Sources, theory, and methodology	6
Terminological clarifications	8
Organisation of the thesis.....	11
A difficult history	13
Writing the history	14
Uncomfortable truths and marginalised histories	20
Challenging the master narrative	23
Stories of good and evil: the ‘inferiority’ of the war children and their mothers.....	26
Shame and trauma.....	29
An ‘obscene’ female history	33
A history of silences.....	35
Disregarded and <i>unimagined</i> same-sex relations	37
The woman and the nation: Interpreting the punishments	45
Warring and the sanctioning of the <i>tyskerpiger</i>	47
Threats to the nation? The private and the political	49
Head shaving: a <i>European</i> punishment for women?	52
Virgili and the <i>femmes tondues</i>	55
Purge and fantasy	57
A sexist punishment	60
Why head shavings?	61
Shorn men	62
Violence, legitimacy, and the end of the practice	63
Interpreting the sanctioning of the <i>tyskerjenter</i>	64
Gender and the Norwegian context.....	64
Discussing the interpretative silence.....	67
Breaking the silence	68
Conversations across borders?	71
Conclusion	75

Bibliography	81
Literature treating the history of the <i>tyskerjenter</i> , <i>tyskerpiger</i> , and <i>femmes tondues</i>	81
Websites.....	85
Secondary literature	86

Introduction

On the 17th of October 2018, Norway received international attention. On this day, the Norwegian women who had relationships with German soldiers during the German occupation of Norway received a public apology from the Norwegian government. This apology, delivered by then Prime Minister Erna Solberg, related to how these women were treated by the Norwegian authorities after the war. Noting the general vulnerability of women in times of war, and that “the peace did not come to all on the 8th of May 1945”, Solberg called the measures taken by the Norwegian state towards the women who after the war were accused of having ‘fraternised’ with German soldiers “unworthy”. Furthermore, the prime minister stressed how these measures went against Norway’s obligations as a state governed by the rule of law.¹ However, one can note that despite such strong statements, the apology did not come with any financial compensation.

When the Germans in Norway surrendered on the 8 May 1945, after over 5 years of occupation, Norwegians entered a new and ambiguous social reality, namely that of liberation. As formulated by H. R. Kedward and N. Wood, liberation is “a complex amalgam of opening and closure”.² For Norwegians having lived through the occupation, the time immediately after its end represented both the hopeful beginning of a new post-war era, and the need to come to terms with the national trauma of having been occupied by Nazi Germany for half a decade.

In the process of coming to terms with the realities of the occupation, the Norwegian women who had engaged in intimate relationships with German soldiers during the war – commonly labelled ‘*tyskerjenter*’ [Germans’ girls] or ‘*tyskertøser*’ [Germans’ tarts]– were considered a problem that had to be dealt with. Not only was their engagement with German soldiers understood as a national betrayal, but the belief that these women were undesirable in that they suffered from lower-than-average mental capacities and had poor characters, was widespread.³ Although consorting with enemy soldiers was not a crime according to Norwegian law, women suspected of being *tyskerjenter* were sanctioned by the Norwegian authorities after the war: many were arrested, and several thousand of them were kept in specially created internment camps against their will, sometimes for several months.⁴ In these

¹ Statsministerens kontor, “Unnskyldning til ‘tyskerjentene’.” My translation.

² While Kedward and Wood are writing on the liberation of France, this description is fitting also for the Norwegian context. Kedward and Wood, *The Liberation of France*, 9.

³ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 345-353.

⁴ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 300-302.

camps, the women were subjected to medical exams and tests of their intellectual capacities, and sometimes even considered for sterilisation.⁵

One of the arguably most extreme of the punishments befell the several thousand Norwegian women who had married their German boyfriends: after the passing of a provisional ordinance on the 17th of August 1945 with retroactive power – an ordinance which became law in December 1946 – these women lost their Norwegian citizenship.⁶ Consequently, they were expelled from Norway and sent to live in a war-torn Germany, a country in which most of them had never set foot. In other words, the women in question were excluded from the national community. This exclusion was carried out regardless of the women's own wishes in the matter, and against the pleas of many Norwegian families.⁷

In addition to these official measures, women accused of being *tyskerjenter* were, both during and after the war, subjected to a range of 'social sanctions' from other Norwegians. The most emblematic of these was the act of shaving or cutting off their hair. These head shavings were carried out forcibly and often took place in public. It was usually men who carried out such head shavings, and it seems to not have been uncommon that the incidents in which this punishment occurred were marked by physical violence and other forms of sexualised abuse.⁸

The *tyskerjenter* were not alone in suffering such treatment. In other parts of what had been German-occupied Europe – in countries such as France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, and present-day Serbia, women known by different labels, but accused of the same transgression, were punished for their perceived national betrayal.⁹ In this respect, it is interesting to note that although Norway's 2018 apology to the *tyskerjenter* was duly noted in international media, none of the other countries that severely punished 'their *tyskerjenter*' have followed suit.¹⁰

Norway's apology to the *tyskerjenter* is interesting not only in that it stands alone in the European context, but also in the way it is formulated. For instance, one can note the emphasis seemingly put on presenting the *tyskerjenter* as *innocent* in the text of the apology. This impression is derived from the way in which Prime Minister Solberg, in delivering the

⁵ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 351-352; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 114.

⁶ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 306-308

⁷ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 303-308; 377.

⁸ Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 42-46; 262-268; Johannesen, "Tyskertøsene", 12; 29-33; Olsen, *Krigens barn*.

⁹ Warring, "Sexual Relations," 88; Škodrić, "Women and the German Occupiers".

¹⁰ See, for instance, "Norway apologises to women punished for relationships with German soldiers," *The Guardian*, October 17, 2018; "Norway apologises to its World War Two 'German girls,'" *BBC*, October 17, 2018; Bensch/Reuters, "Tyskerpiger i Norge får undskyldning: 70 år efter krigen," *Berlingske*, October 18, 2018; Magnå, "Solberg ber 'tysktöserna' om ursäkt," *Göteborgs-Posten*, October 17, 2018.

apology on behalf of the Norwegian government, described these women and their choice to get involved with German soldiers: “For many it was a *youthful crush*. For some a *life-long love* to one that was the enemy’s soldier. Or a *thoughtless flirt*, that was to mark the rest of their lives.”¹¹ In other words, the woman who went out with a German soldier was young, the soldier in question her one true love, or her choice to do so the result of naivety.

This portrayal of innocence is particularly interesting when considering that whether or not the *tyskerjenter* were ‘innocent’ is completely irrelevant to the question of whether the measures taken against them by Norwegian authorities constituted a breach of their rights. Solberg apologised to these women on the behalf of the Norwegian state precisely because this was understood to have been the case. That the prime minister, in the context of this apology, took care to present the relations that Norwegian women had with the occupiers as either unimportant or constituting no less than the love of their lives, demonstrates that the way in which the history of these women is presented still matters.

The project and its relevance

Precisely the matter of how the history of the *tyskerjenter* has been presented, or more accurately, how it has been written, is the overarching topic of this thesis. In other words, this is a historiographical project, in which I examine the history of these women in the second degree. This means that rather than focusing on uncovering new information about this history – that would be examining it in the first degree – I am interested in questions relating to how this history has been conceptualised and made sense of. As such, it is the history writing, and not the history itself, which is the primary subject of study and analysis in this thesis.¹² Consequently, I study texts that are typically conceived of as secondary literature on the history of the *tyskerjenter* as my primary sources.

Analysing how a part of history has been written is a worthwhile scholarly endeavour in the respect that history writing is not, contrary to what many imagine, the act of bringing a piece of the past back to life. Rather, history writing is the historian or other history writer’s *portrayal* of a piece of the past. This includes not only the historian’s interpretation of the part of the past that they examine, but also their choices regarding which elements are to be included in their portrayal, which are to be omitted from it, and how this portrayal is to be structured.

¹¹ Statsministerens kontor, “Unnskyldning til ‘tyskerjentene’.” My translation. My emphasis.

¹² However, one should here note that a historiographical analysis naturally also necessitates engagement with the history in the first degree: it is necessary to have a solid grasp of a history in order to undertake an interesting analysis of how it has been written.

Consequently, in this thesis I examine and analyse various dimensions relating to how the history of these women has been written. As such, I also explore and discuss the silences that can be found in the historiography. In this respect, it is important to note that history writing does not occur in a vacuum but is rather contingent on the context in which it is formulated. Thus, I in this thesis not only discuss questions relating to the portrayal and interpretation of history, but also to the relationship between history writing and the wider society.

When it comes to the decision to examine precisely the history writing on the *tyskerjenter*, one can note that this is an interesting undertaking for multiple reasons: for one, the history of these women is interesting in the respect that it has received strikingly little attention by Norwegian historians. This relative silence is particularly intriguing when considering the sustained interest paid within the discipline to topics relating to the Norwegian experience of the Second World War. Furthermore, the fact that this topic has largely been disregarded by Norwegian historians is even more intriguing when considering how the history of the *tyskerjenter* stands out within the wider history of this war: the Norwegian women who had married German men were the only Norwegians who were denaturalised and forced to leave Norway after the war; those who otherwise collaborated did not meet the same fate.¹³ In other words, the history of these women represents an intriguing dimension not only to the history of the war, but also to the history of Norway's settling of accounts after the war.

Moreover, it is intriguing that Norway is the only state to have apologised to the women who were abused and punished for having consorted with German soldiers during the war. This is made more interesting by the fact that within the wider European context, the case of the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* is not the case that has received the most attention. Rather, it is the case of the '*femmes tondues*' – the French women who, accused of having collaborated with the occupiers, had their hair cut off during and after the war, that is the best known. The cutting off of French women's hair as a punishment for their so-called 'horizontal collaboration' with the Germans was immortalised by photographers such as Robert Capa, and has become a symbolic event known as an 'ugly carnival' also outside of France.¹⁴ As such, this ugly French carnival has become emblematic of the ugly sides of the liberation of Europe more generally.¹⁵ Furthermore, both the French case and the case of the Danish

¹³ Being intimate with a German soldier was conceptualised as a form of 'collaboration'.

¹⁴ It was the French philosopher Alain Brossat who first theorised this event as 'an ugly carnival'. See Brossat, *Un carnaval moche*.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Beevor, "An ugly carnival," *The Guardian*, June 5, 2009.

‘*tyskerpiger*’ have been subject to more comprehensive research and theorisation by historians than the Norwegian one.¹⁶

When it comes to the wider contributions of this thesis, one can note that it is the first historiographical study of the history writing on the *tyskerjenter* to ever be undertaken. Unlike in the French case, where historians such as Claire Duchen, Luc Capdevila, and Julie Desmarais have analysed historians’ treatment and interpretations of the history of the *femmes tondues*, no such studies have been conducted in Norway.¹⁷ Furthermore, this thesis is unique in that its historiographical scope transcends national borders, as it also examines the Danish and French historiographies within comparative and transnational frameworks. Although the main focus of the thesis is on the Norwegian historiography, the Danish and French historiographies are used, continuously through the thesis, to situate the Norwegian history writing within a wider European context. As such, this project constitutes an original second-degree contribution not only to the Norwegian historiography of the *tyskerjenter*, but also to the wider European historiography of the women who had affairs with the occupiers in German-occupied Europe.

Furthermore, this thesis can be read as a case study on the writing of the history of women, and more specifically, on the writing of the history of women in war. These are both underrepresented histories – both by first and second degree. In addition, it can be seen as a case study on the history writing relating to relations between occupiers and occupied during the Second World War – another topic that has received little attention by historians. Further, one can here note that I, by examining silences relating to these histories, engage with both the history of the *Wehrmacht* in Norway, and the history of same-sex relations, which is sometimes referred to with the umbrella term ‘queer history’. Historian Guri Hjeltnes has identified the former history as the “biggest story that is missing” from the history writing on the war.¹⁸ Regarding the latter history, one can note that one of the contributions of this thesis is that it brings an almost completely *unimagined* dimension of the history between occupiers and occupied in Norway into the imaginary: namely the possibility of same-sex intimacy between German and Norwegian women during the war.

Lastly, this thesis can also be understood as a case study in the writing of history more generally. In the thesis, I discuss challenges facing historians and other writers of history

¹⁶ See, for instance, Virgili, *Shorn Women*; Warring, *Tyskerpiger*.

¹⁷ Duchen, “Crime and Punishment”; Capdevila, “La France ‘virile’”; Desmarais, *Femmes tondues*.

¹⁸ Hjeltnes, “Historiene som ennå ikke er fortalt”.

when working on subjects that for various reasons can be considered ‘difficult’. In this way, I also treat wider issues pertaining to the contingency of history writing.

Sources, theory, and methodology

As already mentioned, I examine texts which are typically conceived of as secondary literature as my primary sources.¹⁹ I have chosen to focus on published printed works – that is articles, book chapter, and books – which deal with the topic of these women as history.²⁰

The most important texts for my analysis are, in no particular order, the work of historians Kåre Olsen, Kari Helgesen, Terje A. Pedersen, Nils Johan Ringdal, and Monica Waage Johannesen, political scientist Claudia Lenz, criminologist Dag Ellingsen, sociologist of law Knut Papendorf and criminologist Kjersti Ericsson, as well as non-academics Helle Aarnes, Ebba D. Drolshagen, Sigurd Senje, Astrid Datland Leira, and Veslemøy Kjendsli.²¹ In other words, I do not limit my analysis to the treatment of this history by professional historians. Rather, I operate with an understanding of history writing which is in line with that of historian Mona Ringvej, who writes that “history production is unlimited, multifaceted and unruly. It takes place on so many levels that [professional historians] only make up a small part of the production”.²²

In this thesis, I examine the level of history production which is made up of the published works dealing with the history of the *tyskerjenter*. In order to contextualise academic writing, I also draw upon some newspaper articles and opinion pieces from the debate on the *tyskerjenter* immediately following the war, and from later debates regarding these women. When used in this respect, these articles and opinion pieces are also employed as primary sources.

My examination of the historiography of the French *femmes tondues* and the Danish *tyskerpiger* primarily draws upon the works of French historian Fabrice Virgili, and Danish historian Anette Warring, respectively.²³ I have chosen to focus on the works of these

¹⁹ Throughout the thesis I reference all my sources using shortened notes with the complete reference in the bibliography, as per the 17th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

²⁰ In order to limit the material, I have chosen not to examine master theses written on the topic, but one can note that my corpus includes two books based on the author’s respective master thesis in history. See Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*; Johannessen, *Tyskertøsene*.

²¹ Olsen, *Krigens barn*; Helgesen, “Tyskertøs”; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*; Ringdal, *Mellom barken og veden*; Johannessen, *Tyskertøsene*; Lenz, “Gendered Relations”; Lenz, “Til sengs med fienden”; Ellingsen, “De norske ‘tyskertøsene’”; Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*; Ericsson, “Love and War”; Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*; Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*; Senje, *Dømte kvinner*; Leira, *Kjærligheten har ingen vilje*; Kjendsli, *Skammens barn*.

²² Ringvej, “Krigen, moralen og historien.” My translation.

²³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*; Warring, *Tyskerpiger*; Warring, “Sexual Relations”; Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender.”

historians because they are the most comprehensive studies that have conducted on the history of these women, both within the respective French and Danish context and the wider European context.

The analysis presented in this thesis is based on a close and critical reading of the aforementioned texts. This close reading is informed by cultural historians' reading of texts after the linguistic turn. Specifically, I draw upon the works of historians such as Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann,²⁴ by examining the linguistic elements of the text in question with a particular focus on how they contribute to what the semiologist Roland Barthes has labelled a text's 'reality effect'.²⁵ The 'reality effect' of a text has to do with how the language of the text makes the text itself, and thus also its messages, feel real. Here one should note that although the text stays the same, its 'effect' is mutable in the sense that it is dependent on the wider context in which it is read and discussed.

As a historiographical work, this thesis is also informed by historian Synne Corell's analysis of how the history of the German occupation has been written in Norway.²⁶ Like Corell, I understand history writing as having to do both with the uncovering of knowledge about the past, and with its remembrance and interpretation. By studying how a topic such as the history of the *tyskerjenter* has been written, we obtain knowledge of firstly what is known about this part of the past and secondly what meaning later generations have ascribed to it. While also engaging with the former, the analysis presented in this thesis focuses on the latter dimension. As emphasised by Corell, examining this interpretative dimension means taking into account the 'historicity' of history writing, namely the insight that also historical interpretations are products of the political, social, and cultural contexts in which they are formulated.²⁷

The history of the *tyskerjenter* is one that requires a notion of the nation in order to be properly understood. As such, one can note that I operate with a concept of the nation which aligns with Benedict Anderson's understanding of the nation as an 'imagined community'.²⁸ In other words, my analysis puts emphasis on how the national community can be read as a constructed, contingent, and mutable entity, and consequently also on the imagined nature of how individuals are included into, and excluded from, this imagined national community.

²⁴ See, for instance, Dobson and Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources*.

²⁵ Barthes, "The Reality Effect"; Barthes, "Historical Discourse," 154.

²⁶ See Corell, *Krigens ettertid*.

²⁷ Corell, *Krigens ettertid*, 10.

²⁸ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

Furthermore, one can note that my analysis is sensitive to the constructed nature of gender, and to the many implications and consequences of the shifting and contextual ways in which gender is being imagined. In this respect, this thesis is inspired by the work of historians such as Joan Wallach Scott.²⁹

When it comes to situating this dissertation within existing historical scholarship, one can note that my understanding of texts as cultural products, and of textual meaning as changeable, contextual, and only available through interpretation, aligns with the research paradigm known as ‘new cultural history’.³⁰ Regarding precisely the meaning of texts, Roger Chartier, one of the paradigm’s pioneers, has noted: “Breaking with the old idea that endowed texts and works with an intrinsic, absolute and unique meaning which it was the critic’s task to identify, history is turning to practices that give meaning to the world in plural and even contradictory ways.”³¹

Terminological clarifications

Before commencing the analysis, a few central terms need to be discussed. The first of these is the term ‘*tyskerjenter*’ [Germans’ girls] – the term I operate with in this thesis to describe the Norwegian women who were intimately involved with German soldiers during the occupation of Norway. The formulation ‘intimately involved with’ is deliberately left vague, in order to reflect the fundamental uncertainty regarding the question of what exactly it was the women who were accused of being ‘Germans’ whores’ *actually* had done. The common accusation made against these women was that they had had, or were having, sex with one or several of the occupiers. However, as the sex in question found place behind closed doors, there is in most of the cases no way of verifying whether these accusations were actually true.³²

This brings us to an ambiguity inherent not only in this term, but also in the wider history of the *tyskerjenter*. This ambiguity relates to who are to be considered ‘*tyskerjenter*’ and thus the protagonists of the history of the *tyskerjenter*: is it the act of having been ‘intimately involved’ with the occupiers – which is typically conceived of as having had sex, or at least been romantically involved with them – which makes a woman a ‘*tyskerjente*’? Or is it rather

²⁹ See, for instance, Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*. For newer work by the historian pertaining to gender see, for instance, Scott, “The Vexed Relationship of Emancipation and Equality.”

³⁰ Hongtu, *History of Ideas*, 140-147.

³¹ Chartier, *Cultural History*, 14.

³² Of course, the instances in which the liaison resulted in a child or the woman herself attests to having been intimately engaged with a German soldier stand out as different. In the cases of the women who married German soldiers one does well to remember that although not unlikely, a marriage does not automatically indicate that the parties had had sex beforehand.

the experience of having been punished due to allegations of such involvement? Fabrice Virgili, who has written on the French context, has noted the paradox regarding how a woman having had her hair cut off – which in post-war France was the designated punishment for so-called ‘horizontal collaboration’ – was considered proof that the woman in question had committed the transgression of which she was accused.³³ In this respect, the punishment legitimised itself.

When considering the history of the *tyskerjenter*, one does well to remember that the punishment of a woman for such involvement does not verify the accusations made against her. The allegation of being a ‘Germans’ whore’ was largely based on rumour. Actions as ‘innocent’ as smiling at or being on friendly terms with a German soldier could be the start of such rumours or be considered proof that the rumours were true.

Interestingly, this ambiguity has not been much engaged with in the historiography of the *tyskerjenter*. In this thesis, I attempt – as far as possible – to distinguish between the women who did engage in such relations with German soldiers, and the cases in which women were punished according to accusations of such engagement, but the facts of the matter remain unknown. However, as noted above, this is an ambiguity that is inherent in the history of these women – due to the covert nature of the ultimate transgression of which they were accused, the motivations others might have had for making such accusations, as well as the role played by rumour and other fickle ‘proof’ in their condemnation. As a consequence, this ambiguity is inevitably reflected in the history writing on these women. This applies also to the treatment of this history in the second degree. As such, this ambiguity is also present in the text of this thesis.

When further considering the term ‘*tyskerjenter*’, one can note that this term can be considered problematic also in several other respects. For one, it describes thousands of Norwegian women of various ages as ‘*jenter*’ [girls]. This not only serves to infantilise those women who were in fact adults at the time of their relationship, but also perpetuates the notion that it was primarily young women and girls who had affairs with German soldiers during the occupation. Moreover, the term, which describes these women as the ‘girls of the Germans’, can be seen as problematic in the respect that it implies male German ownership over these women. In addition, the constant reference to the Germans in the description of

³³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 152; 188-189.

these women can be seen to reflect the notion that through their affiliations with German soldiers, Norwegian women lost part – or the entirety – of their ‘Norwegian-ness’.³⁴

In addition, one can note that although ringing relatively neutral to twenty-first century ears, and although less crude than the previously more common ‘*tyskertøser*’ [German’s tarts], ‘*tyskerjenter*’ was initially a derogatory term. However, the meaning of terms change over time, and despite the above-mentioned reasons for staying weary of it, I have, for lack of a better alternative, decided to use it. In this regard, the reader can note that despite its problematic history, the term is widely used within the historiography, and within contemporary treatments of the history of these women in the media, as a more neutral alternative to the derogatory label ‘*tyskertøser*’.

Another term that should be addressed here is that of ‘war children’ – the term used to describe children of German soldiers and Norwegian women conceived during the war. The Norwegian version of the term is ‘*krigsbarn*’. This term can, in both English and Norwegian, be criticised for associating these children with the war, for being imprecise in that it does not specify which war it is that these children are considered linked to, and for describing individuals who are now well into adulthood as ‘children’. However, it has the benefit of diverging from the term ‘*tyskerunge*’, which was the derogatory label used in the widespread bullying of those of these ‘children’ who grew up in post-war Norway. As the term ‘war children’ is the one operated with both in the historiography of these children, by Norwegian authorities, and more importantly, by the two organisations created by and for these individuals, I in this thesis choose to employ it.³⁵

In my analysis, I use the terms ‘punishments’ and ‘sanctions’ to describe the harassment and abuse of, and the measures taken against, women accused of ‘fraternising’ with enemy soldiers during the Second World War. I use ‘official sanctioning’ for the actions taken by the national authorities against these women, and ‘social sanctioning’ to describe the humiliations and attacks these women were subjected to by their compatriots during and after the war. My use of ‘punishments’ and ‘sanctions’ should not read as me taking a stand when it comes to the question of whether these women had committed transgressions for which

³⁴ The notion that through such conduct, the women in question became less, or even stopped being Norwegian, was widespread both during and after the occupation. The same phenomenon can be found in the French case, in which the women accused of having had sex with the Germans [*les femmes à boches*] were constructed in opposition to ‘*les vraies Françaises*’ – ‘true’ or ‘real’ French women. See Duchén, “Crime and Punishment,” 237.

³⁵ The organisations in question are *Norges Krigsbarnforbund*, established in 1986, and *Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn*, established in 1999.

they deserved to be punished. Rather, my employment of these terms is part of an effort to take contemporaries' understanding of the actions they carried out towards these women seriously. Without the notion of punishment, a central part of the meaning that contemporaries ascribed to these actions is lost.

Lastly, one can note that while for reasons of practicality, the men under German command who had affairs with the *tyskerjenter* and what can be perceived as their Danish and French 'counterparts' are referred to as 'German soldiers', the men in question need not actually have been German.³⁶ The German army employed soldiers from a range of countries, including Italy, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Austria.³⁷ In addition, the 'soldier' part of this label gives the impression that this group was more homogenous than was the case: the men under German command who had affairs with local women in occupied Europe ranged from privates to high-ranking officers, and belonged to different parts of the *Wehrmacht*, or to other German organisations operating in occupied Europe such as *Organisation Todt*. The men could also be civilians working under German command in the country in question.³⁸

Organisation of the thesis

The analysis presented in this thesis is organised into two parts, presented in two overarching chapters. In the first chapter, I examine and discuss the historiography of the *tyskerjenter* from multiple angles. First, I examine how this history has been conceptualised, when works treating this history started to emerge, and which trends and developments might help explain this. I also explore the question of who has written this history. Then, I demonstrate how the history of the *tyskerjenter* constitutes a particularly 'difficult history' in multiple respects, and argue that this can help explain the relative silence from Norwegian historians when it comes to this history. I also discuss this silence with a focus on the marginalisation of the histories that are conceived of as 'women's history'. Lastly, I identify and discuss the implications of several silences which can be found in the historiography. In this part of the chapter, I also uncover and discuss what I conceptualise as not only a silence but an 'empty space' in the historiography.

³⁶ Referring to the men under German command who engaged intimately with Norwegian women during the occupation of Norway as 'German soldiers', despite not all of them being from Germany, is in line with both the history writing and the fact that contemporaries used labels such as *tyskerjenter* and *tyskertøser* without regard for whether the man in the German uniform actually was German. See Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 17.

³⁷ Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 17; Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*, 19.

³⁸ Korsnes and Dybvig, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 20; Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*, 19.

In the second chapter, I first examine how the punishment of local women accused of ‘fraternising’ with the Germans during the war has been interpreted. Here, I transcend the specifically Norwegian context by also examining the interpretations presented in the most important works within the Danish and French historiographies. As part of my treatment of these interpretations, I engage in a critical discussion of the understanding of the head shavings that women accused of ‘fraternisation’ were subjected to as a ‘European phenomenon’. I also discuss potential explanations for why the interpretation of this punishment has been the subject of remarkably less scrutiny in the Norwegian historiography than in the history writing on France and Denmark. Lastly, I discuss whether the interpretations presented within these three national contexts interact with each other across borders. As such, this chapter situates the Norwegian historiography within a wider European historiography of the punishment of women accused of being intimately involved with the enemy during the Second World War.

In the conclusion, I summarise my main arguments and present some larger lines that can be drawn from the analysis presented in this thesis. Lastly, the reader can note that unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.

A difficult history

In order to conceive of Nazism as an absolute evil is it necessary to set against it a good which is equally so?

– Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women*

The Second World War holds a special status in the Norwegian national memory, a status reflected in the widespread tendency to refer to it as ‘the War’ [*krigen*] in public discourse and academic productions alike.³⁹ The history of this conflict started to be written shortly after its end. Today, ‘the War’ remains one of the most popular subjects for historical research in Norway. In the words of historian Guri Hjeltnes, books dealing with this Second World War continue to “flood the market”.⁴⁰

In stark contrast to this longstanding interest in the history on ‘the War’ stands the scant attention granted to one of the histories within this broader history– namely that of the *tyskerjenter*. It was not until the mid-to-late-1980s before the history of the Norwegian women who had, or were accused of having, relations with German soldiers during the occupation, started to be treated as history. Precisely the history writing on the *tyskerjenter* is the subject of scrutiny in this chapter. In it, I examine not only how the history of these women has been written and imagined, but also discuss dimensions which might contribute to explain why this history has received so little treatment by historians despite its intriguing nature. Furthermore, I discuss the many silences pertaining to the dimensions of this history which have been left untreated: as noted by historian Ruth Lawlor, one does “well to remember that all things are full of history, even silence”.⁴¹ In other words, this chapter deals not only with the specific historiography of the *tyskerjenter*, but also with pertinent issues relating to the interpretation of history and the relationship between history writing and the wider society.

The chapter is organised as follows: in its first part, I present several trends and developments which can contribute to explain why the topic of the *tyskerjenter* started to be written as history precisely in the 1980s. In this part I also examine when, by who, and how this history has been written. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss possible explanations for why the

³⁹ This should not be read as me advocating the notion that there exists one *single* ‘national memory’. Rather, I here employ the notion of a national memory to convey the prominent place typically held by the Second World War when ‘Norwegian history’ is discussed in Norway.

⁴⁰ Hjeltnes, “Historiene som ennå ikke er fortalt”.

⁴¹ Lawlor, “Contested Crimes,” 569.

history of these women has received so little attention from Norwegian historians. Here, I argue that the history of the *tyskerjenter* constitutes a ‘difficult history’ in multiple respects, and furthermore, that it is considered part of a what has widely been conceived as a less interesting and even marginal part of history.

In the third and last part of the chapter, I analyse silences in the historiography and their implications. Most importantly however, I point out and discuss the wider implications of what I conceptualise as not only a silence but an ‘empty space’ in the historiography: the possibility that Norwegian women engaged in same-sex relations with German women remains not only untreated, but, I argue, almost completely *unimagined*.

Writing the history

Although the figure of the *tyskerjente* had been present in Norwegian literature since the time immediately following the occupation, it was not until the mid-to-late 1980s that the topic of the *tyskerjenter* started to be treated as *history*.⁴² The emergence of works on the history of these women at precisely this moment in time can be tied to two developments from the same period, and furthermore, to several more general trends. The reader can note that many of these developments and trends can be seen as entangled, and furthermore, that several of them can be linked to the coming of age of the post-war generation.

The first of the two developments mentioned above was a change in the Norwegian legislation on adoption, which was approved by Parliament in 1986 and went into effect on January 1st 1987. With it, adopted war children gained the right to demand information regarding their biological parents.⁴³ As noted by Olsen, this change was interpreted to mean that *all* the war children, including those who had not been adopted, had the right to obtain information about their parents.⁴⁴ This information was stored at *Riksarkivet*.

The second was the establishment of *Norges Krigsbarnforbund* in 1986, an organisation of and for children of Norwegian women and German soldiers. Interestingly, this year – the year of the establishment of this organisation and the approval of the change in the adoption law – saw the very first publications on the history of the *tyskerjenter*: one of these was a special edition of the left-wing journal *Kontrast*, dedicated to the history of these women.⁴⁵ This

⁴² This treatment in literature started with with Torborg Nedraas’ short story collection *Bak skapet star øksen* from 1945. In the ensuing decades, multiple works of literary fiction in which the *tyskerjente* figured as a protagonist or general topic were published, including the work of authors such as Jens Bjørneboe and Ragnhild Magerøy.

⁴³ Larsen, “Krigsbarna,” 304.

⁴⁴ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 438.

⁴⁵ “I krig og kjærlighet,” *Kontrast*, no. 2/3, 1986.

edition largely focused on the question of how the *tyskerjenter* and their children were treated in Norway after the war. The two other publications from this year were two-so called ‘documentary novels’ by author Sigurd Senje and journalist Veslemøy Kjendsli.⁴⁶ The ensuing year, yet another documentary novel dealing with the history of these women was published, by author Astrid Daatland Leira.⁴⁷

These three documentary novels from the late 1980s are all based on interviews: Senje and Leira’s with so-called *tyskerjenter*,⁴⁸ who are all kept anonymous, and Kjendsli’s with one of the children from the relationship between a Norwegian woman and a German soldier.⁴⁹ The stories of these individuals are told in a manner resembling fiction: the author draws upon the interviews and other historical sources, but lends colour to the story by employing techniques from literature and often also by offering their own commentary.

However, whether some of these first publications were inspired or made possible by the two developments mentioned above, or whether these developments rather were driven by the new publications on the topic, cannot be satisfactory answered without further study.⁵⁰ It is likely that the emergence of these works and these developments in the period 1986-1987 were entangled – also amongst themselves – but these publications should also be considered in the context of other more general trends.

One of these trends is what has been identified as a European-wide shift in the perception of the history of the Second World War. As pointed out by Stenius, Österberg, and Östling, “throughout Europe, heated public controversies broke out in the 1980s and 1990s around issues related to the Second World War ... Suddenly the legacy of the war years turned out to be a rich source for political and moral discussions”.⁵¹ Examples of such discussions include those sparked by so-called ‘Waldheim Affair’ of 1986 and the ‘Bitburg Controversy’ of 1985. That the history of the *tyskerjenter*, and in particular the discussions pertaining to how these women were treated, were brought up in the works here addressed, as well as in the

⁴⁶ Senje, *Dømte kvinner*; Kjendsli, *Skammens barn*.

⁴⁷ Leira, *Kjærligheten har ingen vilje*.

⁴⁸ Senje’s book is also based on interviews with Norwegian women who volunteered as nurses in the German Red Cross during the war – the so-called ‘*frontsøstre*’. Senje groups these women together under the label ‘condemned women’.

⁴⁹ The reader can note that the year before the publication of her book, Kjendsli hosted a radio documentary [Fortapte pikers øy] on the topic of the women who, accused of being *tyskerjenter*, were interned at Hovedøya after the war.

⁵⁰ Of course, these publications and developments must also be considered in the context of the treatment of the topic within the Norwegian media, which is only briefly explored in this thesis.

⁵¹ Stenius, Österberg, and Östling, Introduction to *Nordic Narratives*, 12.

Norwegian media in the 1980s and 1990s,⁵² can be considered in line with this general trend of scrutinising the history of the war through a more critical lens.⁵³

Another relevant trend, which can also be linked to the emergence of more critical discussions of the history of the Second World War, is the increased focus on human rights in the latter half of the twentieth century. In particular the 1970s and the 1980s were important decades for the strengthening of the human rights regime.⁵⁴ The history writing on the *tyskerjenter* can be tied to this development in the respect that it since the beginning largely has focused on how the punishment of these women constituted a breach of their rights.⁵⁵

This focus is evident when examining Norway's apology to these women in 2018. The text of the apology focused on the understanding of the post-war measures taken by the Norwegian authorities against the *tyskerjenter* as a breach of Norway's obligations as a state governed by the rule of law, and on the understanding of the denaturalisation and expulsion of the women who had married German soldiers as unconstitutional. More relevant here however, is the fact that this apology was presented during a celebration of the 70th anniversary for the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. During this event, the treatment of the *tyskerjenter* was presented as an example of how the values which would later be codified in this declaration were put to the test after the war.⁵⁶

The last trend here addressed, which can be tied to the emergence of works on the history of the *tyskerjenter* in the 1980s, is the strengthening of the field of women's history in Norway which occurred in this same decade.⁵⁷ However, interestingly, the theories and methods commonly associated with the field of women's history since the linguistic turn, relating to the interpretation of *meaning*, have not been mobilised in the historiography of the *tyskerjenter*. Instead, as emphasised in chapter two, this historiography is strikingly empiricist, and only to a very little degree interacts with the interpretative opportunities offered by the treatment of, and discourses relating to, the Norwegian women who engaged intimately with German soldiers.

While not dating from the 1980s, a publication which can be directly tied to the change in legislation mentioned above should be mentioned. The work in question is historian Kåre

⁵² Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 436-437; Larsen, "Krigsbarna," 304.

⁵³ For the shifts in the treatment of the history of this war in Norway specifically see Larsen, Introduction to *I krigens kjølvann*, 25.

⁵⁴ Vik, "Internasjonale menneskerettigheter," 271-274.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Grøtnæs, "Jaktscener fra etterkrigstiden."

⁵⁶ Statsministerens kontor, "Unnskyldning til 'tyskerjentene'."

⁵⁷ Hagemann, *Feminisme og historieskriving*, 19.

Olsen's book from 1998, in which he examines the history of the *tyskerjenter* and the war children.⁵⁸ At the time of publication, Olsen was employed at *Riksarkivet*, which, as noted above, was the archive in which the documents pertaining to the war children and their parents were stored. Between 1987 and 1995 Olsen was in charge of answering the requests from Norwegian war children in search of information regarding their biological parents. Through this work, the historian became not only familiar with the history of the *tyskerjenter* and their children, but also with the lack of research on these topics. In his book, Olsen notes: "After having worked with answering requests from war children for a couple of years, I decided that it was time that the war children, their mothers and the *tyskerjenter* more generally, got their history written."⁵⁹ He also notes that he in his work on the book received valuable support from *Norges Krigsbarnforbund*.⁶⁰

Interestingly, remarkably few other historians have conducted research on the topic of the *tyskerjenter*. The topic was briefly treated by historian Nils Johan Ringdal in 1987, in the context of a book on the history of the police during the occupation.⁶¹ However, it was historian Kari Helgesen who was the first historian to treat the history of these women as a subject in its own right: in 1990, Helgesen published an article in *Historisk tidsskrift* regarding the *tyskerjenter* and the ways in which they were perceived and sanctioned during and after the war.⁶² One might have assumed that this initial treatment by historians – especially that found in Olsen's book, which is a massive volume filled to the brim with details and references – would entice other historians to follow suit. However, this has only to a very little degree been the case: In 2012, Terje A. Pedersen published a book examining how women accused of being *tyskerjenter* were treated during and immediately following the war.⁶³ In 2016 Monica Waage Johannessen published a book largely pertaining to the same topic.⁶⁴ Both books were based on the authors' respective master theses in history.

No historian employed at a Norwegian university has treated the topic more than briefly. In the next section of the chapter, I discuss various dimensions which might help explain why this is the case. However, not all can be explained by referring to structures and trends: a quick comparative view reveals that in France and Denmark, the historiographies on the *femmes tondues* and the *tyskerpiger* owe much to the efforts of two individuals, namely

⁵⁸ Olsen, *Krigens barn*.

⁵⁹ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 11.

⁶⁰ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 12.

⁶¹ Ringdal, *Politiet under okkupasjonen*.

⁶² Helgesen, "Tyskertøs."

⁶³ Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*.

⁶⁴ Johannessen, 'Tyskertøsene'.

historians Fabrice Virgili and Anette Warring – who in 1992 and 1994 wrote their PhDs on the respective topics.⁶⁵ Both historians published books based on their PhD theses, and continued their research in articles and book chapters. Widely recognised as the most comprehensive works on the topic of women who had affairs with German soldiers in German-occupied Europe, the works of Warring and Virgili have served to drive the history writing on the topic of ‘fraternising women’ also in other national contexts, including Norway. In Norway, no PhDs have been written on the history of the *tyskerjenter*.

This relative lack of treatment by Norwegian historians has led to the somewhat curious situation that Olsen, who has not worked on the topic for nearly two decades, is still considered the authority on the subject. Olsen’s book, which was published almost two and a half decades ago, still holds the place as the most important work within the historiography of the *tyskerjenter*. This is made yet more curious by the fact that the history of the *tyskerjenter* is not the main topic of Olsen’s book. It is the history of the war children that Olsen sets out to explore. However, the history of the war children cannot be told without that of their mothers, and in his book, Olsen ends up dedicating as much space to the history of these women as to that of the children. Furthermore, the historian does not limit his research on the *tyskerjenter* to those who became the mothers of the war children, but examines the history of also those women who did not have children with their German lovers.

In treating the history of these women together with that of the war children, Olsen’s work is exemplary of a general trend within the historiography, relating to how the history of the *tyskerjenter* tends to be imagined, and often also treated, together with that of their children. As this has become naturalised within the Norwegian historiography, it is useful to look at the Danish and French historiographies: in the historiographies on the *tyskerpiger* and the *femmes tondues*, the conceptual grouping together of the histories of the ‘fraternising women’ and the war children is something not found. In both Denmark and France, the history of these women has been researched independently from that of the war children. However, that the history of these women has been grouped together with that of their children within the Norwegian context, is not that surprising when considering how it seems that developments relating to the war children in the mid-to-late 1980s can be connected to the emergence of works on the history of the *tyskerjenter* in this same period. In other words, these two histories seem, in the Norwegian case, to have been imagined together from the very beginning.

⁶⁵ Virgili, “Tontes.”; Warring, “I krig og kærlighed.”

Another interesting difference between the three historiographies relates to the agency attributed to the women in question as historical subjects. While the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* and the Danish *tyskerpiger* have been treated by and large as the *subjects* of research, it is more accurate to describe the *femmes tondues* as the *object* of research within the French historiography. In the Norwegian and Danish contexts, emphasis has been put on the women's own understandings and experiences, both related to their relationships with German soldiers, and to the sanctioning to which many of them were subjected. This has largely been made possible through interviews with those women who could be convinced to talk of their experiences.⁶⁶ In France, this has been the case to a much lesser degree. It is their shorn head, not their thoughts and actions, which makes them of interest to the French historian.⁶⁷ The thinking subjects are in the French historiography the perpetrators, not the women, as the French scholar attempts to understand why these women were sanctioned by having their hair cut off.⁶⁸

In addition to those already treated, some further publications should here be mentioned. The first of these is journalist Helle Aarnes' book from 2009.⁶⁹ Interestingly, this book can be considered a revival of the documentary novel on the history of the *tyskerjenter*. Aarnes' book is based on interviews with four *tyskerjenter* and two war children. In it, the author vividly tells the stories of these women's meeting and relationships with German soldiers, and of their treatment by their fellow Norwegians, using both historical sources and techniques from literary fiction. However, it should here be noted that due to the use of footnotes, Aarnes's text comes across as more rigorous than the publications from the 1980s.

The second work which should be mentioned is the book of German author Ebba D. Drolshagen, which treats the *tyskerjenter* as part of a European history of intimate relations between German soldiers and women of German-occupied Europe. It was published in Germany in 1995 and in Norway in 2009.⁷⁰ This book is interesting in that it presents not only the women, but also the German soldiers, as its subjects. In this respect, Drolshagen's

⁶⁶ Aarnes, *Tyskerpiger*; Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*; Senje, *Dømte kvinner*.

⁶⁷ See Desmarais, *Femmes tondues*, 4.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, Virgili attempts to diverge from this trend and states that "instead of the act itself, the woman who has been punished holds the centre stage" in his study. However, this comes across as unconvincing, as his book is focused on mapping and interpreting the French head shavings of women during and after the war, rather than on these women as historical subjects. See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 4. For another example, see Brossat, *Un carnaval moche*.

⁶⁹ Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*.

⁷⁰ Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*.

book stands out in the historiography, which has largely been conceived of and written as a history of *women*.

Lastly, some further works should be noted. These all exemplify a general trend within the historiography: the history of the *tyskerjenter* has largely been written by those working within disciplines that are more concerned with current affairs. This finding seems to be in line with the notion that contemporary trends and developments have served to actualise the history of these women. The works in question include two anthologies from 1995 and 2005. The first is edited by Warring, criminologist Dag Ellingsen, and Icelandic author Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir, and the second by criminologist Kjersti Ericsson and pedagogist Eva Simonsen.⁷¹ Both anthologies place the history of the *tyskerjenter* in a wider European context. The latter anthology has the history of the war children as its overall topic, and is thus exemplary of the trend to imagine the histories of the war children and the *tyskerjenter* together.

Lastly, the works of two scholars should be mentioned. The first are two short contributions by political scientist Claudia Lenz published in 2009 and 2016.⁷² These are examined in chapter two. The last is a book by Knut Papendorf, from 2015, which examines the internment of women accused of being *tyskerjenter* from a legal perspective.⁷³ The reader can note that in addition to being a sociologist of law, Papendorf also happens to be one of the so-called ‘war children’.

Uncomfortable truths and marginalised histories

As noted by several of the authors discussed above, the writings of professional Norwegian historians [*faghistorikere*] remain scarce within the historiography of these ostracised women.⁷⁴ A perspective which can help explain this absence, as well as why this history started to be written only several decades after the war, is that of the history of the *tyskerjenter* as a ‘difficult history’. One of the respects in which the history of the women who had affairs with German soldiers can be perceived as difficult, is in the way it presents uncomfortable challenges to established narratives of the Second World War.

⁷¹ Ellingsen, Björnsdóttir, and Warring. *Kvinner, krig og kjærlighet*; Ericsson and Simonsen, *Children of World War II*.

⁷² Lenz, “Gendered Relations”; Lenz, “Til sengs med fienden.”

⁷³ Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 7; Ellingsen, Warring, and Björnsdóttir, *Kvinner, krig og kjærlighet*, 9; Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 13.

Norway stands out among the countries in occupied Europe as the country which had the largest number of occupying German soldiers relative to the local population.⁷⁵ Historian Torgeir E. Sæveraas has pointed out that when the presence of the *Wehrmacht* was at its most prominent, German soldiers made up as much as *one of six* people in occupied Norway.⁷⁶ As recently shown by historian Maria Fritsche, the overlapping physical and social realities of occupiers and occupied in German-occupied Norway led to a range of ‘everyday interactions’, and even relationships, between the two groups.⁷⁷ However, as we shall see below, the complexities inherent in the reality of occupation have largely been overlooked in the historiography of the war.

The need for a unifying and simplifying national narrative of the Norwegian experience of the five years between 1940 and 1945, which washed away the ambiguous social reality of the occupation and disassociated Norway from the occupying regime, was experienced as urgent after the war. The need to separate Norway from Nazi Germany was perhaps made even more critical because of the Nazi regime’s perception of Norwegians as a people culturally and racially akin to Germans, and its consequent understanding of a ‘special connection’ between the Norwegian and the German nations.⁷⁸ As in other previously occupied countries, a so-called ‘master narrative’ of the war, drawing upon an already existing rhetoric of resistance, started to be articulated in Norway immediately upon liberation. Attesting to the solidity of this narrative is the fact that also contemporary works challenging its contents tend to be written within the conceptual boundaries set by the master narrative.⁷⁹

The Norwegian master narrative of the war is organised around the image of Norway as a ‘resisting nation’.⁸⁰ The understanding that during the war there existed a *broad and unified* Norwegian front against the Germans, has been essential for the construction of this image. This understanding has been solidified in the master narrative through the inclusion of almost all of Norwegian society into a national community of ‘good [and resisting] Norwegians’.⁸¹ By presenting a version of the war in which an overwhelming majority of Norwegians participated in either ‘passive’ or ‘active’ forms of resistance,⁸² the master narrative unifies,

⁷⁵ Sæveraas, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 7.

⁷⁶ Sæveraas, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 7.

⁷⁷ Fritsche, “Spaces of encounter.”

⁷⁸ Sæveraas, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 131.

⁷⁹ Grimnes, “Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå?” 481.

⁸⁰ Grimnes, “Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå?” 481.

⁸¹ Grimnes, “Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå?” 483; Lenz, “Gendered Relations,” 110.

⁸² ‘Passive’ resistance could be actions such as disobedience to the occupying power or upholding the so-called ‘ice front’ towards the occupiers. See Lenz, “Gendered Relations,” 110.

in the words of Anette Warring, “the story of everyday life, the politics of collaboration, the symbolic resistance and the military-organized resistance into a coherent whole.”⁸³

Furthermore, it serves to disassociate what is perceived as a clearly defined group of collaborators from the rest of the national community.

This disassociation is done through the portrayal of ‘good Norwegians’ and those who are considered to have betrayed the country through their collaboration with the occupiers, as what cultural historians Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann refer to as ‘imbalanced binary concepts’.⁸⁴ As such, ‘good Norwegians’ are constructed as not only the *opposite* of those who are perceived as ‘national traitors’ but also as their morally righteous antithesis. Another important pair of imbalanced binary concepts within the master narrative is, of course, that between ‘resisting Norway’ and Nazi Germany.⁸⁵

However, some of these ‘good Norwegians’ have been paid more attention than others. As noted by Stein Ugelvik Larsen, resistance has been the “main topic that has stood before all others in the centre of Norwegian research” on the war.⁸⁶ Within this research, the emphasis has been put on ‘heroic acts of resistance’ carried out by the heroes of the Norwegian Resistance Movement.⁸⁷ As noted by Anne Eriksen, this emphasis has been essential for granting Norway a place among the fighting Allied nations: by emphasising the battle waged by the Norwegian Resistance Movement, and by disregarding the fact that it took a long time before its actions gained the approval of the exiled government in London, Norway “came out of the war as [a nation] actively fighting on the right side, and therefore also as *victorious* – not just liberated”.⁸⁸ In other words, the understanding of Norway as a fighting Allied nation can be seen as part of the ‘reality effect’ of the Norwegian master narrative.⁸⁹

Lastly, it is interesting to note that there is a *gendered* dimension to how Norway’s resistance has been portrayed. As put by Lenz, although Norwegian women played important roles in the Resistance Movement “the place of male heroes ... [is] never challenged by female heroines; everyone had participated, but women’s contributions were regarded as consisting

⁸³ Warring refers to the Danish master narrative, but this insight is applicable also for the Norwegian one. Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 47.

⁸⁴ Dobson and Ziemann, *The Interpretation of Texts*, 7.

⁸⁵ This imbalanced binary concept works in the respect that the understanding of Nazi Germany as ‘evil’ reinforces the understanding of those who fought against it as inherently ‘good’. This relates to what semiologist Roland Barthes calls the ‘reality effect’ of a text. For more on this, see the introduction.

⁸⁶ Larsen, Introduction to *I krigens kjølvann*, 20.

⁸⁷ Lenz, “Gendered Relations,” 110; Corell, *Krigens ettertid*, 207-208.

⁸⁸ Eriksen, *Det var noe annet under krigen*, 166. My emphasis.

⁸⁹ For more on the ‘reality effect’ of a text (or narrative), see Barthes, “The Reality Effect”; Barthes, “Historical Discourse,” 154, and the introduction of this thesis.

of their daily duties, rather than anything to do with political agency or, least of all, heroism.”⁹⁰ In other words, the Norwegian Resistance Movement and its actions are widely conceived of as both heroic and *male*.⁹¹

Challenging the master narrative

Reflecting on traumatic parts of Norway’s war experience, historian Ole Kristian Grimnes refers to the treatment of the *tyskerjenter* upon liberation as an example of “a lesser trauma”.⁹² Furthermore, Grimnes understands the trauma associated with the history of the *tyskerjenter* to be separate from what he refers to as ‘the great Norwegian trauma’: namely the fact that “tens of thousands of Norwegians placed themselves on the side of the Germans and National Socialism”.⁹³ Below, I demonstrate that the history of the *tyskerjenter* cannot be so easily separated from Grimnes’ ‘great Norwegian trauma’, and argue that, when scrutinised, the history of these women presents a far more complex and uncomfortable challenge to the Norwegian and Allied master narratives of the war than what is envisaged by Grimnes.

In a radio transmission on the 11th of May 1941, Toralf Øksnevad, who spoke through the radio to the Norwegian people on behalf of the exiled government, held a speech on the topic of ‘women and the youth’. Regarding women who frequented the Germans, Øksnevad claimed that this applied to only one single out of a thousand Norwegian women.⁹⁴ Although the actual number of women who engaged intimately with the occupiers remains unknown – estimates range from 30-40 000 to 100 000 – we know for a fact that the phenomenon was far more widespread than claimed by Øksnevad.⁹⁵ To gain an impression of what it would mean if the higher estimates strike somewhere around the truth, one can note that there during the war were about 400 000 women Norwegian women between the ages of 15 and 30 in Norway.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Lenz, “Gendered Relations,” 110.

⁹¹ This is of course another aspect of the reality effect of the master narrative. This reality effect is created in interaction with other discourses, such as those pertaining to gender. See Dobson and Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources*, 11-12.

⁹² One can ask oneself for *who* this is a ‘lesser trauma’. Certainly not for the women themselves. Somewhat shockingly, at least from the perspective of the present author, Grimnes refers to “the relationship to the Norwegian Jews” as his other example of ‘lesser traumas’ from the Norwegian war experience. Lastly, the reader can note that I am critical of the implication that all of the national community has the same experience of which parts of the war experience were the most traumatic. See Grimnes, “Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå?” 481.

⁹³ Grimnes, “Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå?” 481.

⁹⁴ Øksnevad, *Det lå i luften*, 19.

⁹⁵ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 13; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 19.

⁹⁶ Ellingsen, “De norske ‘tyskertøsene’,” 17.

The reality that a considerable amount of Norway's female population frequented German soldiers, can be experienced as uncomfortable in the respect that it, in the words of Fritsche, "[shatters] the national myth of a united front against the Nazi enemy".⁹⁷ As indicated by the attention paid to this issue by Øksnevad, Norwegian women engaging in an intimate relationships with a German soldier was for many contemporaries – contrary to what seems to be imagined by Grimnes – experienced as one of the clearest examples of how some Norwegians 'placed themselves on the side of the Germans'.

Furthermore, the prevalence of intimate relationships between Norwegians and German soldiers challenges the understanding of 'resistance' and 'collaboration' as clear-cut and binary concepts.⁹⁸ Rather, such relationships highlights "how *blurred* the lines between collaboration and resistance really were".⁹⁹ The fact that many Norwegian women voluntarily engaged with – and even fell in love with – members of the occupying power defies the black and white logics of the master narrative in favour of an analytical lens which takes the complex social reality of occupation into consideration.

Another dimension of the history of *tyskerjenter* which challenges the black and white logics of the master narrative – and thus also its reality effect – is the sanctioning of women accused of consorting with the Germans. Firstly, the social sanctioning of these women can be seen to collide with the heroic image of the Norwegian Resistance. As in Denmark and France, the Norwegian Resistance Movement played an ambiguous role in the social sanctioning of these women, which took place both during and after the war. While members of the Resistance in some instances stopped scenes of mob justice or remained onlookers, they in other instances participated in or even instigated acts of punishment towards these women.¹⁰⁰ As demonstrated by Norwegian author Kjell Fjørtoft's account of a scene he witnessed in Tromsø on the 8th of May 1945, these acts could be very brutal.¹⁰¹

When we [Fjørtoft and his friend] pass Grønnegaten, we hear the intense screams of a woman. ... Four men are cropping the hair of a girl of about 17-18. ... She lies on the ground with the dress up by her arms. Two of the men sit on top of her. They have

⁹⁷ Fritsche, "Spaces of encounter," 366.

⁹⁸ The interested reader can note that also the widely disregarded fact that some *tyskerjenter* were part of the Resistance – some of them allegedly by helping their German boyfriend in his efforts against Hitler's regime – challenges the understanding of collaboration and resistance as binary concepts, and, on a deeper level, the black and white depictions of the war. See Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 143-147.

⁹⁹ Fritsche, "Spaces of Encounter," 366. My emphasis.

¹⁰⁰ Johannesen, "*Tyskertøsene*", 36; Olsen, "Krigens barn," 267.

¹⁰¹ Fjørtoft, *Oppgjøret som ikke tok slutt*, 18. For other examples of the brutal sanctioning of these women, see Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 44; Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 264; Johannesen, "*Tyskertøsene*", 12; 29-32; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 72.

stripped her of her jacket. Her stockings are torn apart. Her breasts exposed. The third man holds her hands while the fourth wields the scissors. ... She howls and screams. But she is helpless opposite the four men who are of an age of around 30-40. – Keep fucking still, you German's whore, screams the one with the scissors. But she continues to twist. ... The blood spurts. We leave. None of us can watch it any longer. My friend vomits a bit further up the street.

If the four men had any affiliation with the Resistance, Fjørtoft does not mention it. What is important here is not whether members of the Resistance Movement were involved in this specific incident, but the fact that some members of the Resistance *did* participate in the social sanctioning of women believed to be *tyskerjenter*.¹⁰² In general, it was men who carried out the social sanctioning of these women. That the punishment, such as in the incident described above, included sexualised abuse seems to not have been uncommon.¹⁰³ The violent and often degrading sanctioning of girls and women who had little to no means to defend themselves at the hands of male members of the Resistance, does not correspond with the heroic virility and sense of justice typically associated with the Norwegian Resistance Movement.

Secondly, such scenes of punishment, which were part of the landscape of the liberation, challenge the view of the liberation as a time of glorious celebration, showcasing its uglier sides. Alongside waving Norwegian flags and ringing church bells, this time must for many Norwegian girls and women have been marked by their fear of being subjected to violence.¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, the role of ordinary Norwegians and the post-war Norwegian authorities in the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter* challenges the image of a post-war national community of morally unambiguous and inherently 'good Norwegians'. Fourthly and lastly, the punishment of women accused of being *tyskerjenter* by the Norwegian authorities after the war, including the internment, denaturalisation, and expulsion of several thousands of them, challenges the notion that the reintroduction of Norwegian rule automatically meant a restoration of legality and justice.

When considering these challenges to the master narrative, it is perhaps unsurprising that historians of the occupation, who have participated in its construction, have paid little

¹⁰² Kari Helgesen notes that the 'Home Forces' [*Hjemmestyrkene*] "played an active role in the hunt for the 'tyskertøser'". Helgesen, "Tyskertøs," 290.

¹⁰³ See, for instance, Fjørtoft, *Oppgjøret som ikke tok slutt*, 42; Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 263.

¹⁰⁴ During the first days of the liberation the police in Molde received rapports that several women who were known to frequent the Germans were seen attempting to flee the city. Helgesen, "Tyskertøs," 291.

attention to the history of these women. However, this does not explain why historians from fields such as social history, cultural history, and women's and gender history have left this history alone.

Stories of good and evil: the 'inferiority' of the war children and their mothers

After the Second World War, when the extent of the atrocities carried out by the Nazi regime became known to the rest of the world, so-called 'scientific racism', as well as racist branches of the eugenics movement, became associated with the horrors of the Holocaust and thus widely discredited.¹⁰⁵ While the Allied fight against the Axis powers was largely conceptualised in military terms right after the war, later formulations of what can be conceived of as an Allied 'master narrative', portray the Second World War as a battle over ideologies and values, and furthermore, on a more symbolic plane, as a fight between 'good and evil.'¹⁰⁶ This understanding of the war still stands strong today.

However, the notion that since the Allied nations fought against the evil of Nazism racism could not have been prevalent in their own societies during or after the war, does not correspond with reality: for instance, while fighting against Nazi Germany, the American army separated 'white' soldiers from their 'black' colleagues, and stored blood from donors of African American descent apart from blood from 'white' donors.¹⁰⁷ More pertinent here, however, is the fact that, as shown by scholars like Stefan Kühl and Ali Rattansi, eugenic and racist thinking was not uncommon in the public discourses of also the Allied nations after 1945.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, this must still, as demonstrated by the same scholars, be said to be the case.

That eugenic and racist thinking was prevalent also in Norway after the war becomes apparent when examining how prominent voices within Norway perceived the *tyskerjenter* and their children by German men as threats to the nation in a 'biological' sense. While most Norwegians today are familiar with the existence of the *tyskerjenter*, this part of their history, and that of their children, remains widely unknown. It seems likely that this collective oblivion can be linked to the particularly uncomfortable challenge represented by this part of the history of these women, not only to master narratives of the war, but also to Norway's

¹⁰⁵ 'Scientific racism' is characterised by the belief that there exist different human 'races' with different social/cultural traits and physical attributes, that some of these are more developed than others, and that the different 'races' consequently can be arranged in a hierarchy. Finally, it is believed that this can be scientifically proven. See Rattansi, *Racism*, 17; 33-34.

¹⁰⁶ Ericsson, Introduction to *Children of World War II*, 3; Eriksen, *Det var noe annet under krigen*, 170.

¹⁰⁷ Rattansi, *Racism*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Kühl, *The Betterment of the Race*; Rattansi, *Racism*, 34.

image as a tolerant and just nation. Furthermore, this dimension of the history of the *tyskerjenter* problematises Norway's post-war image as part of the nations who were on the right side in a war which to great extent has been interpreted as a war against racism.

In the introduction to an anthology on the history of the children born of local mothers and German fathers in occupied Europe, Ericsson states that "Norway was special, perceiving itself as burdened by a serious 'war-child problem'" and furthermore, that "in no other country did the 'war-child problem' get similar public attention".¹⁰⁹ The 'problem' posed by the children of Norwegian mothers and German fathers had been conceptualised and discussed by exiled Norwegian Labour Party politicians already during the war, but these efforts had not led to any official standpoint on how these children were to be treated.¹¹⁰

After the war, the 'war-child problem' began to be discussed as an urgent matter, both in the media and within medical and political circles in Norway. The discussion largely pertained to two questions: First, whether these children represented a threat because they were likely to have inherited undesirable traits or even natures from one or both of their parents – and thus risked becoming a burden to the nation or develop into a dangerous 'fifth-column' within Norway – or whether they rather, if brought up in the right environments, could become good citizens. Second, and entangled with the first, was the question of what was to be *done* with these children – in particular whether they should and could be deported to another country.

A reflection of how critical these questions were considered to be, is found in the new government's appointment of a special committee – the *Krigsbarnutvalg* – known in English as the 'War Child Committee', already on the 3rd of July 1945. This committee was to put forward a proposal regarding whether the children should be deported to Germany, as well as what measures should be put in place if they were to remain in Norway. Reflecting the perceived urgency of the situation is the government's request that the proposal be ready already before autumn.¹¹¹

It was not only within the political sphere that these children were considered a problem. Upon its return from London, the elected Norwegian government noted widespread hostility towards German-Norwegian children among the general population.¹¹² An important arena for the articulation of this hostility was the newly liberated press, in which people could participate in the debate on these children by sending in opinion pieces and letters to the

¹⁰⁹ Ericsson, Introduction to *Children of World War II*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Borgersrud, "Meant to be Deported," 74-75; Olsen, "Norwegian War Children," 24-25.

¹¹¹ Borgersrud, "Meant to be Deported," 77.

¹¹² Olsen, "Norwegian War Children," 27.

editor. One such opinion piece, expressing an understanding of the children which was not uncommon in the debate, was penned by children's doctor Johan Riis and published in *Stavangeren* on the 22 June 1945.¹¹³ In the text, Riis describes the children's mothers as in large part consisting of "defect individuals" – defects he considers to be hereditary:

The blend of Norwegian tyskertøs and German soldier will in many instances ... give an offspring of little value. The laws of heredity when it comes to congenital intellectual defects are strict. To this is added defects of the soul which also must be presumed hereditary. That ... the German soldier also carries genetic material we do not appreciate to a great degree ... must be considered according to people's individual attitude towards the race. During my service at the children's ward at Rikshospitalet I have had occasion to see part of the defect offspring. This was a frightening experience. ... No one must believe that the ... inferior children with good care can become valuable citizens.

It is telling that a Norwegian newspaper chose to publish Riis' text so shortly after the end of Norway's liberation from Nazi Germany, and furthermore, that it was reprinted in several other newspapers.¹¹⁴ In other words, although many disagreed with this grim view on the children's prospects,¹¹⁵ it is striking that thinking which, in the words of Ericsson, had a "chilling resemblance to the mentality of the Nazis" constituted a prominent part the public debate.¹¹⁶

That the fear that the war children had 'inferior' mental capacities was taken seriously, is also indicated by the fact that one of the first actions carried out by the War Child Committee was to ask the renowned psychiatrist Ørnulv Ødegaard for his opinion regarding the mental condition of the children. Based on his experience with 35 *tyskerjenter* who had been taken into psychiatric care during the war, Ødegaard estimated that as much as half of the mothers were 'inferior'. Furthermore, as this alleged inferiority was seen as hereditary, 50-60 per cent of the children would likely become inferior themselves, and the number would increase to 85-90 per cent if the father also suffered from hereditary inferiority. This was likely, noted

¹¹³ Riis, "Hva mener De om 'tyskerbarna'?" *Stavangeren*, June 22, 1945. My emphasis.

¹¹⁴ See for instance, Riis, "Tyskbarna," *Vesteraalens Avis*, July 17, 1945; Riis, "Tyskebarna: et sosialt problem," *Nordlands Arbeiderblad*, July 24, 1945; Riis, "Problemet tyskebarna," *Lofotposten*, July 10, 1945.

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Langfeldt "De norsk-tyske barna," *Morgenbladet*, July 17, 1945. However, the reader can note that while Langfeldt, who was a renowned psychiatrist also internationally, did not agree that the children could not become decent citizens if brought up in the right environments, he was of the opinion that the mothers in most instances had 'poor characters' and were endowed with mental capacities lower than average.

¹¹⁶ Ericsson, Introduction to *Children of World War II*, 2.

the psychiatrist, as there was reason to question the mental condition of soldiers who had been content with frequenting such inferior women.¹¹⁷

In the final documents presented by the committee, it concluded that there was nothing that indicated that these children had mental capacities lower than average. Nonetheless, as noted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the impression left by the committee when it came to this question was still somewhat ambiguous, given that it also chose to render Ødegaard's assessment. Further adding to the confusion was the fact that one of the committee members – psychiatrist Else Vogt Thingstad – wrote an article in *Arbeiderbladet* shortly afterwards, in which she stated her belief that most of the *tyskerjenter* suffered from defects of intellect and character, and that this in most cases had been passed on to the children.¹¹⁸

The committee ended up advising against deporting the children to Germany, as the living conditions there were considered unfit.¹¹⁹ However, the option of deporting these children to other countries was kept open, and shortly after the committee's presentation of its work, civil servant Alf. B. Frydenberg and politician Inge Debes received a delegation from Australia, who was in Norway as part of a tour for promoting post-war emigration to Australia. During this visit, Frydenlund and Debes proposed that the Norwegian war children, a group thought to consist of around 9000 children, could all be deported to Australia. The fact that most of these children were not orphans seems to have not been considered important. However, for various reasons, nothing came of this plan, nor of any of the other recommendations from the War Child Committee.¹²⁰

The imagining of the *tyskerjenter* and their children as problems also in the biological sense, is but one out of many examples of dimensions of the Second World War which begs the pertinent introductory question posed by Virgili: "In order to conceive of Nazism as an absolute evil is it necessary to set against it a good which is equally so?"¹²¹

Shame and trauma

Another respect in which this history is difficult lies in how it is, by those who lived during the war, widely experienced as a traumatic and shameful part of the history of the war, albeit in different ways. Main actors and witnesses alike have been reluctant to speak of this part of their war experience, making this a difficult history also in the sense that it is challenging for

¹¹⁷ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 346-357.

¹¹⁸ Thingstad, "Halvtyske barna et spesielt norsk problem," *Arbeiderbladet*, December 4, 1945.

¹¹⁹ Borgersrud, "Meant to be Deported," 78.

¹²⁰ For more information, see Borgersrud, "Meant to be Deported," 86-87, and Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 356.

¹²¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 6.

the historian to obtain information about the facts and about the meaning that contemporaries attributed to them.

The most obvious way in which this history is a traumatic one, is for the women themselves: women accused of being *tyskerjenter* risked stigmatisation, abuse, and harassment during the war and upon liberation. After the war, several thousands of them were arrested and interned in special camps. Women who had consorted with German soldiers were considered a problem that had to be dealt with. One can only imagine how it must have felt to have oneself and one's child, described as morally and genetically inferior in the public discourse.

Furthermore, Norwegian women who had married a German soldier during or right after the war lost their citizenship, and were expelled to an unknown and war-torn country, regardless of their own wishes in the matter. However, traumatic experiences not only came from the way in which the women were treated by their compatriots. The reality of war is a hard one, and the women who were romantically involved with a German soldier who was later sent to the front, risked receiving news that that their boyfriend, fiancé, or husband, had been killed.¹²² Traumatic experiences could also be related to the actions of the soldier in question: several of the women discovered that their partner, perhaps also their fiancé or the father of their child, was already married in Germany.¹²³ As formulated in a letter from one 'tyskerjente' and rendered in Aarnes's book:¹²⁴

I never heard anything about any of the German soldiers being married ... Then one became pregnant, and still no one was married. ... You give birth to the child. Then comes the next setback. Peter is married, has wife and children in Germany. Or refuses paternity. Again tears and tears.

Other women never discovered the truth about their German soldier. According to Drolshagen, a foreign girlfriend or fiancée contacting the German military authorities inquiring about a soldier who was already married was a common occurrence. The solution? It was reported back to the woman the soldier she sought was 'missing'.¹²⁵

Even in the case in which the woman managed to avoid most of the experiences outlined above, she could not, unless her frequentation of one or several Germans remained extremely well hidden, escape the norms of female sexual morality which prevailed in Norway during

¹²² For more on the Norwegian women who experienced this, see Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 186-191.

¹²³ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 384.

¹²⁴ Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 70.

¹²⁵ Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 120-121.

the mid-twentieth century. The shame inflicted on women presumed to be engaging intimately with the occupiers was twofold: it not only had to do with the soldiers' status as 'the enemy' and the consequent view of their female companions as 'collaborators', but also with the transgression it was for a woman to be having extramarital sex in the 1940s. This was decades before the so-called 'sexual revolution', and female sexuality was perceived in starkly different ways than it is today.¹²⁶ In the instances in which the liaison resulted in a child, this was commonly associated with deep shame. Was the child born out of wedlock, it served as living proof that immorality had found place. Even in the rare instances in which the woman was married to the child's father, the social stigma of having gotten a child with the enemy still prevailed.

Abortion, of course, was illegal. Larsen notes that the Lebensborn protocols regarding children born from German-Norwegian parents indicate that "the number of children that died during pregnancy or who were stillborn, was significantly higher than what is normal".¹²⁷ As implied by Larsen, these statistics might reflect abortions that were carried out illegally, but this remains a dimension of the history of the *tyskerjenter* of which we know little. Research on abortion in occupied France shows that the number of people who were sentenced to prison for having performed abortions skyrocketed during the occupation, and remained high during the first two years after the war.¹²⁸ In 1943, a woman in her forties became one of the last women to be guillotined in France, for the crime of having carried out abortions on twenty-six women. Multiple of these women had gotten pregnant by a German soldier.¹²⁹

It is not hard then, to understand why most of the women who had relations to the Germans in occupied Norway have chosen to remain silent about this part of their past. Drolshagen describes it as "extremely difficult" to find Norwegian women who were willing to talk to her when she was writing her book, despite promises of anonymity. When *Sunmørsposten* in 1997 published an article about how Drolshagen was planning to write a book about the *tyskerjenter*, the newspaper received phone calls from several women asking that this part of history be left alone.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ This should also be taken into consideration when considering how the often sexualised acts of mob justice must have been experienced by the women who were subjected to them.

¹²⁷ Larsen, "Krigsbarna," 302.

¹²⁸ Virgili, "Enfants de Boches," 149.

¹²⁹ Virgili, "Enfants de Boches," 141; Foucher, "L'Affaire Marie-Louise Giraud."

¹³⁰ Information obtained in meeting with Drolshagen on the on the 07.10.2022. For the article in question, see Vatne, "Skal skrive bok om tyskerjentene," *Sunmørsposten*, May 14, 1997.

This sentiment is repeated in one of the opinion pieces published in *Bergens Tidende* in 2008 as a response to Helle Aarnes' article series on the *tyskerjenter*. The author of the piece, who introduces herself as one of the women who had a German boyfriend during the war, understands research on the history of the *tyskerjenter* as a continuation of their stigmatisation. Noting that most of the other women in question have passed away, she asks Aarnes and other researchers to "leave the dead to rest in peace", also for the sake of their 'innocent' relatives.¹³¹ Such pleas illustrate one of the challenges related to the ethics of writing the history of people who are still alive, and who do not wish to have their pasts scrutinised. Who 'owns' this history? The researcher or its protagonists? And what about the few women, like those interviewed by Senje, Aarnes, and Drolshagen, for whom finally getting to talk about this part of their past is experienced as a relief?

However, it is not only the women themselves who might experience this history as shameful. In the Norwegian historiography, the voices of those who carried out the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter* largely remain silent.¹³² This is perhaps unsurprising: actions which were widely condoned and even perceived as 'patriotic' during and right after the war, shine in a very different light when considered years later, far away from the social reality of war and occupation. Of course, this shame is not necessarily confined to those who carried out the harassment and attacks on these women. This is likely also a difficult history for those who witnessed these scenes but did nothing to intervene. In Denmark, Anette Warring received hundreds of letters when it became known that she was researching the history of the Danish *tyskerpiger*. Almost none of them were from people admitting to having participated in the head shavings of women accused of 'fraternising' with German soldiers during the war.¹³³

In the letters from those who positioned themselves as critical of Warring's project, the fear that it was going to damage the image of the Danish Resistance was commonly invoked.¹³⁴ As in Norway, the Danish master narrative of the war is constructed around the notion of Denmark as a 'resisting nation',¹³⁵ and as in Norway, members of the Danish Resistance played a part in the sanctioning of the *tyskerpiger*.¹³⁶ A phone call made to Kåre Olsen

¹³¹ Av også en 'tyskertøs', "La de døde hvile i fred," *Bergens Tidende*, April 6, 2008.

¹³² A few exceptions, derived from contemporary sources such as police rapports from the immediate post-war period, can be found. See for instance, Aarnes, *Tyskerjenter*, 44; Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 264.

¹³³ Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 8.

¹³⁴ Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 10-11.

¹³⁵ For more on the Danish master narrative, see Warring, "War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender," 36;47. For more on the reception of Warring's work, see Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 7-24.

¹³⁶ Warring, "War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender," 39.

echoes this fear in the Norwegian context: when I contacted Olsen regarding the reception of his work, he informed me that after the publication of his book in 1998 he had received a phone call from a man who introduced himself as a former member of the Norwegian Resistance Movement. The man yelled at Olsen, accusing him of, through his treatment of ways in which the *tyskerjenter* had been sanctioned, discrediting the Resistance and sympathising with the Nazis.¹³⁷

Today, the situation for the historian wishing to write this part of history is different, in the sense that we now, almost eight decades after the end of the war, can be certain that almost all its witnesses and main actors have passed away. However, the challenges pertaining to the complexity of this history remain.

An 'obscene' female history

Perhaps part of the reason why this history has received scant attention by historians can be found in how it is conceived of as 'women's history'. This label is interesting in itself, given the essential role played by men in 'making' the history of the *tyskerjenter*: after all, women only became '*tyskerjenter*' through relations with German men – whether these were real or for various reasons had been conjured up by the women's compatriots.¹³⁸ Furthermore, as noted above, the social sanctioning of these women, at least more the more violent forms of it – including head shavings – was usually carried out by men. The same can be said about these women's sanctioning by the Norwegian authorities, which at the time consisted almost exclusively of men.

Despite this prominent male agency, the history of the *tyskerjenter* has been, and is still, overwhelmingly imagined as a 'history of women'. In this regard it is, when scrutinising the relative silence of professional historians on this topic, pertinent to note the tendency to regard women's history as a subsection of history, as opposed to that of men, which is commonly imagined and referred to simply as 'history'. Commenting on the subsection entitled 'women and war' in *Norsk krigsleksikon 1940-45*, historian Synne Corell notes:¹³⁹

The entry 'women and war', which probably is meant to ... give attention to a group which has often been left out from the historical representations, seems at the same

¹³⁷ Information obtained from Olsen in an email to the author on 06.10.2022.

¹³⁸ At least in the sense that the '*tyskerjente*' has commonly been imagined. See the discussion in the next part of the chapter.

¹³⁹ Corell, *Krigens ettertid*, 207.

time to emphasise that the place of women in this story is vulnerable and, in a way, must be justified ... why is there not an entry called 'men and war'?

In other words, the history of men is *naturalised*, while that of women is seen as an appendix to, rather than an integrated part of, the wider history, and consequently, as a topic for the particularly interested. In addition to this general bias, and as indicated by the quote above, comes the common understanding of war and occupation as predominately 'male' affairs. This, together with the reality that most of the historians researching these topics are male, might contribute to an explanation of why this dimension of the history of the war has been subject to so little scrutiny by Norwegian historians.

These factors do not satisfyingly explain however, why historians dealing precisely with topics pertaining to women's and gender history have left this history alone. However, although not in itself a sufficient explanation, the structural dimension should also be noted: both women's and gender history remain relatively small fields within the discipline in Norway. Naturally, fewer historians equal less coverage.

Further explanation might be found in how the history of the *tyskerjenter* largely pertains to issues which are shunned by many working within the discipline, namely those relating to sex, sexuality, and the female body.¹⁴⁰ As noted by Virgili, the history of the local women who had affairs with German soldiers during the occupation of Europe "relates to what A. Corbin has termed 'obscene objects', namely the body, pleasure and suffering".¹⁴¹ This might also help explain the silence in the historiography when it comes to question of rapes and other forms of sexual violence carried out by the occupiers.¹⁴² It might also help us understand the general emphasis put in the history writing on examining the relationships between Norwegian women and German soldiers through the lens of love – even in the instances in which we do not have any information regarding the nature of the relationship in question.¹⁴³ By reducing the history of the *tyskerjenter* to a 'history of love' one escapes its

¹⁴⁰ Drolshagen has pointed out that despite the looming presence of these topics in the history of 'fraternising' women, we never read about details related to the *actual* sex: where it took place and whether precautions were taken to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases remain topics shrouded in silence. Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 121.

¹⁴¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 6; Corbin, *Le temps le désir*.

¹⁴² For a rare mention of such rapes, see Stang, "Har sannheten en pris?" 19; 28. For a treatment of the topic of rapes carried out by German soldiers during the occupation of Denmark, see Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 158-161.

¹⁴³ See, for instance, Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri* 40; 50; Ellingsen, "De norske 'tyskertøsene'," 26; 31; Larsen, "Krigsbarna," 313.

sexual element and thus avoids precisely the parts of this history that many view as ‘obscene’.¹⁴⁴

Lastly, as further emphasised in the next chapter, this is a history which to great deal has to do with emotion. This adds a further layer of difficulty to the act of writing this history – for how is the historian to conjure up the emotions felt by the women and men in question? And in the cases where there are remnants of emotion in the form of diaries and letters, or the historian has succeeded in getting an interview with one of the main actors, the challenge of how to *analyse* such subjective and abstract ‘objects’ remains.

A history of silences

When it comes to silences in the historiography, or in other words, which dimensions of this history that have *not* been treated, an overarching silence can be pointed out – that pertaining to *men*. While men play integral roles in the history of the *tyskerjenter* as lovers and perpetrators, they have not themselves been the subject of scrutiny. Rather, these men have been treated as necessary background characters in a history in which the women who had relationships with German soldiers play the main role.

This is particularly striking in the case of the German soldiers in question. In contrast to the Norwegian women with which they engaged intimately, these men are, in the historiography, not treated as protagonists in a history which would not exist without them. While the experiences, perceptions, and motives of the *tyskerjenter* have been subjected to research and analysis, those of their German lovers remain in the shadows. A notable exception can be found in Drolshagen, who stands out in the historiography through her understanding of *also* the German soldiers, and not only the women with which they had relations, as the subject of her book.¹⁴⁵

The general silence when it comes to the ‘male dimensions’ of this history also includes another group: the Norwegian men who married German women. We know that Norwegian men had relationships with German women who were stationed in Norway during the occupation, and that some of the Norwegian men who volunteered as soldiers in the German army had relationships with German women they met during their service abroad. One of the indications of this is the fact that 28 Norwegian men got married to German women during

¹⁴⁴ Of course, not all the affairs between Norwegian women and German soldiers were the results of ‘true love’. Warring has emphasised the many different motives that Danish women had for engaging intimately with the occupiers during the war. See Warring, “Køn, seksualitet og national identitet,” 310-311.

¹⁴⁵ See, for instance, Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 98-101; 121-122.

the war. Another is the marriage applications received by the Norwegian authorities after the war from Norwegian men wishing to marry their German fiancées.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the fate and experiences of these men, their German girlfriends, and their relationships, have not at all been explored in the historiography. This contributes to the impression that the history of intimate relations between the Norwegians and Germans during the war is imagined as a history of ‘fraternising’ *women*.

The overarching silence when it comes to these men might here be seen to contradict the point made above regarding the marginalisation of *women* as historical subjects. However, I argue that this silence should rather be considered a *symptom* of how women’s history is conceptualised as a ‘separate history’. Since ‘women’s history’ is considered a field of its own, and furthermore, to pertain to precisely *women* – rather than people in general, the label ‘women’s history’ directs the historian away from the consideration of those subjects which fall outside of, or are not immediately associated with, the category of women. The reader can note that this interpretation is in line with how the history of *tyskerjenter* has been studied alongside their *children*, rather than their male lovers, boyfriends, and fiancés.

A further silence relates to the *tyskerjenter* of Sami origin. The Norwegian women who had affairs with German soldiers but at the same time happened to be Sami, have received little attention in the historiography. In some works they seem to have been completely forgotten.¹⁴⁷ In the few instances in which the existence of these women *are* addressed, the trend is for the author to note that ‘of Sami *tyskerjenter* we know little’ and furthermore, to imply that this gap in the research is a result of Nazi Germany’s view of the Sami as racially inferior.¹⁴⁸ Because German men were prohibited from marrying Norwegian women of Sami origin, and because the German regime had no interest in the children of such liaisons, few German sources treating Sami-German relationships exist. Consequently – or so the logic goes – little has been written on these women.

While the scarce German source material makes the study of the Sami *tyskerjenter* and their relationships more challenging, this silence must also be considered a consequence of the choices made by the researcher regarding what to study – or rather what *not* to. As such, it can be regarded as a symptom of a trend to imagine the Sami out, or as a marginal part, of

¹⁴⁶ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 308-309.

¹⁴⁷ See, for instance, Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*; Johannesen, ‘*Tyskertøsene*’.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 188; Ellingsen, “De norske ‘tyskertøsene’,” 17; Ringdal, *Mellom barken og veden*, 174.

the national community: by presenting the lack of research on the Sami *tyskerjenter* as the consequence of Nazi Germany's racism, the silence is not only *naturalised* but *perpetuated*. Moreover, this logic serves to disassociate women of Sami origin from the rest of the *tyskerjenter*, and thus also to free the researcher from the expectation that they are going to study this part of the history of the *tyskerjenter*.

Lastly, one further silence deserves mentioning: that relating to the *bystander*. Although one may sometimes – when faced with histories such as that of the *tyskerjenter* – get the impression that the world is separated into victims and perpetrators, reality, of course, is more complex. For one, these are not static categories: victims in one instance can become perpetrators in the next, and vice versa. Moreover, when acts of social sanctioning – such as in the incident described by Fjørtoft – are carried out in public in the presence of people who observe the act but do not actively engage with it, a third category emerges: that of the bystander who witnesses the event but does not intervene. It is interesting that the role of the bystander, which raises uncomfortable but interesting questions of complicity, has not been addressed in relation to the sometimes very brutal attack on women believed to be *tyskerjenter*.

Disregarded and *unimagined* same-sex relations

When discussing and interpreting silences, it is important to keep in mind, as noted by Virgili, “that before embarking on research into a precise historical subject the historian has to *conceive it as such*”.¹⁴⁹ In the following, I demonstrate that this insight is particularly relevant when it comes to the scant attention granted to same-sex relations within the historiography of the Norwegians who had relations with the occupiers during the war.

In most of the works within this historiography – including those of recent date – the possibility of romantic and sexual relations between Norwegians and Germans of the same sex is not even noted.¹⁵⁰ This silence rings louder when considering the fact that several of these silent works reference the work of historian Nils Johan Ringdal.¹⁵¹ Ringdal is one of few historians who have treated the subject of male same-sex relationships between Norwegians and Germans during the occupation. That the reality of such relationships is not even commented on by authors who attest to having read Ringdal's work, leads to the

¹⁴⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 5. My emphasis.

¹⁵⁰ See Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*; Ellingsen, “De norske ‘tyskertøsene’”; Olsen, *Krigens barn*; Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*; Senje, *Dømte kvinner*; Johannesen, ‘Tyskertøsene’.

¹⁵¹ For the works in question, see Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*; Ellingsen, “De norske ‘tyskertøsene’”; Olsen, *Krigens barn*; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*; Johannesen, ‘Tyskertøsene’.

conclusion that we here have to do with not only a marginalisation of but also a disregard for the topic.

A further interesting aspect of the silence on same-sex relations is that it has a gendered dimension: while male same-sex relations have received some treatment, the possibility of relationships between Norwegian and German women seems to be not only disregarded, but almost completely *unimagined* in the historiography.

The first to treat intimate relationships between Norwegian and German men as a historical topic was Ringdal, who wrote of the subject in a book published in 1987.¹⁵² The historian had also treated the topic in an article in the journal *Løvetann* the year before.¹⁵³ After this treatment in the late 1980s, it would take almost three decades before the topic again was brought up in the history writing on the occupation. This was done by historians Runar Jordåen and Raimund Wolfert, who in 2015 published an article treating the subject in *Historisk tidsskrift*.¹⁵⁴

Interestingly, Jordåen and Wolfert only dedicate a paragraph to the topic of *female* same-sex relationships, while Ringdal not even mentions the possibility that Norwegian and German women could have engaged in intimate relationships.¹⁵⁵ The latter finding is particularly interesting, as the chapter of Ringdal's book in which same-sex relations between occupier and occupied is treated is entitled '*Tyskertøser av begge kjønn*' [Germans' sluts of both sexes]. In other words, even when explicitly including both sexes, the only 'Germans' sluts' imagined by Ringdal are those – men or women – who engaged in intimate affairs with German *men*.

Furthermore, the possibility of male same-sex relationships is mentioned, although not treated, in a few works which remain silent regarding potential relationships between Norwegian and German women.¹⁵⁶ In other words, although the *tyskerjenter* are considered the protagonists of the history of Norwegians who engaged intimately with the occupiers, one group of *tyskerjenter* remains not only untreated, but largely unimagined: women engaging intimately not with German men, but with *women*. Reinforcing the impression of this subject as unimagined is a conversation I had with one of the authors who have written on the

¹⁵² Ringdal, *Politiet under okkupasjonen*.

¹⁵³ Ringdal, "Tyskertøser av alle kjønn."

¹⁵⁴ Jordåen and Wolfert, "Homoseksualitet i det tyskokkuperte Norge."

¹⁵⁵ Jordåen and Wolfert, "Homoseksualitet i det tyskokkuperte Norge," 467.

¹⁵⁶ Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 258; Fritsche, "Spaces of encounter," 365.

tyskerjenter: when I brought up the silence on the topic, the author commented that the possibility of such relationships between women had never occurred to them.

Returning to Virgili's point regarding the fact that the historian, before writing the history of any topic, first must conceive of it as history, one can note that in the case of intimate same-sex relations between German and Norwegian women during the occupation, the issue does not seem to be that this topic has not been imagined *as history*, but rather that it has not been imagined at all. As such, the metaphor of an 'empty space' rather than a silence in the historiography, seems more suitable. After all, that there reigns a silence on a given subject implies that a decision not to speak of a subject of which the individual in question is *aware* has taken place – an emptiness does not.

I refer to this topic as 'almost completely' unimagined, as I, in addition to the brief mention by Jordåen and Wolfert, have found it mentioned only once in the historiography, in a chapter written by Claudia Lenz.¹⁵⁷ In this chapter, a paragraph is dedicated to the topic of how little is known of same-sex relationships between Norwegians and Germans during the occupation of Norway. However, the mention of such relationships between women specifically, only occurs in the footnote following this paragraph.

That the silence pertaining to same sex-relations in general and between women in particular, is here only treated in a paragraph and a footnote, is more striking when considering that the chapter in question is part of an anthology dealing with the topic of 'Norwegian sexualities'. In the anthology's introduction, one can read that it seeks to illuminate "the different normative and privileged positions of heterosexuality".¹⁵⁸ However, upon reading the chapter – which deals with the topic of how the history of the *tyskerjenter* has been remembered – the reader is left with the impression that rather than illuminating how this history has been imagined through a heterosexual prism, this chapter perpetuates this way of conceptualising this history.¹⁵⁹

The point here is not to demonstrate that relationships between German and Norwegian women did find place, but rather to point to an 'empty space' in the historiography and discuss its implications. However, two potential criticisms can be addressed already here: first, some might argue that such relationships are not mentioned because there exist no

¹⁵⁷ Lenz, "Til senga med fienden," 154.

¹⁵⁸ Mühleisen and Røthing, Introduction to *Norske seksualiteter*, 17.

¹⁵⁹ As such, it contributes to upholding the part of the reality effect of the historiography relating to how the history of the intimate relations between the occupiers and the occupied during the war is understood to be fundamentally rooted in heterosexuality.

sources on the topic. To this I would answer that one cannot dismiss the possibility that there are relevant sources to be found if no one has bothered to look for them. This is well demonstrated by Jordåen and Wolfert's article, in which the two historians disprove several until then accepted 'truths' related to the sanctioning of homosexuality in occupied Norway.¹⁶⁰ This is done through an examination of both German and Norwegian sources – sources which before then had remained unexplored when it came to this topic. In other words, not only the relevant source, but also the historian interested in, or open to, these parts of the past are necessary before such histories can be written. Furthermore, one can note that a potential source-scarcity is no reason for why mere *possibility* that such relationships took place should not be mentioned.

Second, others might go deeper in their criticism and argue that it is unlikely that there existed any intimate same-sex relationships between Norwegian and German women during the war. To this I would respond that fields such as queer and lesbian and gay history continues to demonstrate that same-sex relations, including those between women, found place in contexts in which this had formerly been considered to be unlikely. Moreover, I would argue that the existence of such relationships between German and Norwegian women during the war is not all that unlikely.

Although the exact number of female German staff working in occupied Norway remains unknown, we know that there were 4806 women working for the Wehrmacht in Norway at the end of the war.¹⁶¹ German women in occupied Norway also worked for the German police and the *Rikskommissariat*. The female staff of these entities generally worked in administration as secretaries, phone, telegraph or radio operators, or did other types of office work.¹⁶² In addition to these administrative workers, German women also worked as nurses, in entertainment, or as waitresses in the *Soldatenheimen*.¹⁶³ Like the German soldiers, these women were far away from their families and communities back home, and like the soldiers, it is likely that they craved intimacy and sexual contact.

However, unlike the conscripted soldiers, the female staff in Norway was there voluntarily. For many German women, among the incentives for taking employment in an occupied country was the fact that it represented an exciting 'travel opportunity' which under other

¹⁶⁰ Jordåen and Wolfert, "Homoseksualitet i det tyskokkuperte Norge," 456-457.

¹⁶¹ Schmitz-Köster, *Krieg*, 243.

¹⁶² Information obtained from Dr. Maria Fritsche in an email to the author on 27.09.2022.

¹⁶³ See Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 119; 325; Sæveraas, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 188.

circumstances would have been unavailable to them.¹⁶⁴ Among the destinations female administrators could apply to, Norway was one of the most popular.¹⁶⁵ Even though little has been written regarding the private lives of these women, and although part of the Allied propaganda was to portray them as unfeminine and undesirable ‘grey mice’, sources indicate that it was not uncommon for these women to engage in sexual activities during their time abroad: as noted by Neitzel and Welzer, German soldiers who had been taken prisoner during the war and who, unbeknownst to them, had their private conversations recorded by Allied intelligence “often complained that the ... German women assigned to assist the Wehrmacht, were all too willing to engage in a bit of sexual fun” also with the local population.¹⁶⁶ Another sign of sexual activity is the fact that several of the female German personnel became pregnant and gave birth during their time in Norway.¹⁶⁷

Of course, that these women had sex does not prove that they engaged intimately with other women. However, the reader can note that it is highly unlikely that none of the several thousand German women in occupied Norway harboured same-sex desires. Furthermore, it is not unthinkable that women seeking romantic and sexual relationships with other women might have perceived it as safer to try their advances on local rather than German women. Although sex between women was not criminalised in Nazi Germany, the Nazi regime led to a worsening of the situation for German women who loved women: under this regime, the meeting spots of Germany’s lesbian communities were raided and harassed, and lesbian organisations and journals were shut down already in 1933. Furthermore, although not in itself a criminal act, there are indications that lesbian activity could be added to the list of incriminating circumstances if the woman in question was detained for other reasons.¹⁶⁸ In any case, female same-sex relations between Norwegians and Germans during the war is a topic which cannot be dismissed without further study.¹⁶⁹

But returning to the topic at hand, namely that the possibility that there existed such relationships remains overwhelmingly unimagined in the historiography. How is this ‘empty space’ in the historiography to be interpreted? I here present some tentative answers. Firstly, this empty conceptual space can be read as a consequence of the marginal status of queer

¹⁶⁴ Information obtained from Dr. Kathrin Kompisch in an email to the author on 28.09.2022. See also Century, *Female Administrators*, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Century, *Female Administrators*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 171.

¹⁶⁷ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Schlagdenhauffen, *Queer in Europe*, 25-27.

¹⁶⁹ Another group it would be interesting to examine in this regard are the around 1000 Norwegian women who volunteered as nurses in the German Red Cross, and who worked side by side with German nurses and women of other nationalities on the Eastern Front.

history within the discipline in Norway, as well as of the little attention paid to same-sex relationships within the general historiography of the Second World War.¹⁷⁰ It can also be linked to the little attention paid in this historiography to the women working for Nazi Germany.¹⁷¹

Secondly, and as noted above, there is a gendered dimension to this emptiness. As such, it can be connected to the aforementioned general marginalisation of women's history, and further, to the specific marginalisation of the history of women within the history writing on same-sex relations. It can also be considered a symptom of how affairs of war, conquest, and occupation are typically imagined through a gendered, and furthermore, a sexual lens. A pertinent example is found in the writing of Frantz Fanon, who, writing on the Algerian War, describes the French dream of Algeria's surrender as Algeria "*accepting the rape of the colonizer*".¹⁷² Intimate relationships between female occupiers and women of the occupied country do not correspond with the image of the male enemy soldier who rapes, or in the case of the *tyskerjenter*, rather 'steals' the nation's women.

Thirdly, this 'empty space' can to a certain extent be considered a consequence of the lack of visibility of same-sex relationships in mid-twentieth century Norway. For one, the fact that such relationships do not result in children makes them in this respect less conspicuous, and also deprives the historian of a type of source which has proved valuable in the research on the Norwegian women who engaged intimately with German soldiers: the documents relating to the children some of these women had with their German lovers. Moreover, same-sex relations, whether with one of the occupiers or a member of one's own nation, had to be shrouded in secrecy: although only sex between men was criminalised, sex between women also constituted a stark breach of the prevailing norms for appropriate female conduct.

Fourthly, this emptiness in the historiography has interesting implications when it comes to how women's sexuality is perceived. First, it can be read as a symptomatic of the understanding of women's sexuality as less potent and less interesting than that of men. That such thinking does not belong to the faraway past is well demonstrated by the following assertion from Neitzel and Welzer's book from 2012: "Sexuality is one of the most important aspects of human existence, *especially male human existence*."¹⁷³ Neitzel and Welzer are both well-published professors, of history and psychology respectively.

¹⁷⁰ See Schlagdenhauffen, *Queer in Europe*.

¹⁷¹ Interested readers can consult the work of Wendy Lower.

¹⁷² Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, 42. My emphasis.

¹⁷³ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 164-165. My emphasis.

Moreover, that the possibility of female same-sex relationships remains almost completely unimagined in the historiography of the *tyskerjenter* can be read as an indication that female sexuality is only taken seriously when interacting with that of a man: without the man, women's intimate and sexual desires become unimaginable. The finding that male same-sex relations between occupier and occupied *have* received some treatment, and more importantly, been imagined, indicates that male sexuality on the other hand, is imaginable also outside of the heterosexual prism.

Lastly, the reader can note that the silence when it comes to the topic of same sex-relationships between occupier and occupied is no Norwegian phenomenon. Warring informs me that she has often wondered why in her research she has found no sources referencing such relationships in Denmark, since, as she puts it, same-sex relationships between Germans and the civilian population undoubtedly found place.¹⁷⁴ Virgili, writing on the French case, notes that in his sources “there is never a question of homosexual relationships”.¹⁷⁵ However, one can here note the difference between commenting on and remaining silent when faced with this silence.

¹⁷⁴ Email from Dr. Anette Warring to the author on 01.10.2022.

¹⁷⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 16.

The woman and the nation: Interpreting the punishments

*We are faced with perversity driven to its utmost consequence, and witness immorality in its most extreme form. These individuals have lost their raison d'être. But they shall know, the sluts [tøsene], that one day they shall be held responsible for their actions ... The sluts are the filthiest of stains on Norway's name, and one day they must suffer the consequences of the shame they have brought upon the country.*¹⁷⁶

The above quote stems from a Norwegian underground newspaper from January 1941. Addressing the women who consorted with German soldiers, it serves as a stark reminder of the anger directed at these women by their fellow countrymen during the occupation. Also in other German-occupied countries such pieces – negatively characterising these women and promising revenge – were a familiar sight in the materials disseminated through the underground press. An example from Denmark is found in the following poem, published under the title “Hetærer”¹⁷⁷ and distributed across occupied Denmark: “Woman, you who give your favours to a stranger betray your country with no shame. You who shamelessly display your heat, you are a threat to our honour.”¹⁷⁸

The fact that the compatriots of the women who engaged intimately with German soldiers in countries occupied by Nazi Germany were provoked by these women and their choices presents itself as no great mystery. Neither does the fact that the anger felt towards these women often had real consequences in the form of sanctions. What has interested those writing the history of ‘fraternising women’ in occupied Europe, however, is the severity and brutality with which women accused of ‘fraternisation’ risked being punished, and the meaning behind the specific ways in which this punishment was carried out. Especially the practice of shaving a women’s head as punishment for having had intimate relations with the occupiers has been granted attention. According to Danish historian Anette Warring it seems “to have been self-evident” that cutting off parts or the entirety of a woman’s hair against her will “should be the penalty for socializing intimately with a soldier of the enemy” in occupied Europe.¹⁷⁹ The questions of why specifically *head shaving* was employed as a punishment for

¹⁷⁶ Hirsch, *Norsk presse under hakekorset III: Den «illegale presse»*, 116.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Hetærer’ is the Danish version of ‘hetaerae’ – a name used for women who sold sexual favours in Ancient Greece. It is interesting that the authors of the poem chose this title, as *hetaerae*, in contrast to the *tyskerpiger*, are widely considered to have held an accepted, rather than stigmatised, place in Greek society. This term was also used in the discourse on the French women accused of ‘fraternising’ with the occupiers during the Occupation of France. See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 243.

¹⁷⁸ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 41. Warring’s translation.

¹⁷⁹ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 41.

this particular transgression, and of the meaning that can be interpreted from the practice of cutting off a woman's hair in this context, are among the most frequently discussed topics in the history writing on the women who had affairs with German soldiers in German-occupied Europe.

In this chapter I examine interpretations of the punishment of women accused of being intimately involved with the enemy during the Second World War. Women were punished for consorting with the German occupiers in large parts of occupied Europe. Consequently, it is interesting to examine how the Norwegian historiography relates to the interpretations found in the history writing on other national contexts. Towards this end, I first examine the most influential interpretations from the two national contexts that have been subject to the most comprehensive theorisation, namely the Danish and the French context. Then, I examine how the punishment of the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* has been interpreted in the Norwegian historiography. Lastly, I discuss whether the interpretations explored above interact with each other across borders. As such, I employ a perspective which not only examines, but also transcends, specific national narratives relating to the history of this punishment.

In the first part of the chapter, I examine the analysis of Danish historian Anette Warring, which is based upon the sanctioning of the Danish *tyskerpiger* but has explanatory aspirations that reach beyond than this specific case. I also engage in a critical discussion of the understanding of the head shavings that women accused of 'fraternisation' were subjected to as a *European* phenomenon tied specifically to the context of the Second World War. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss French historian Fabrice Virgili's interpretation of the head shaving of French women during and after the occupation of France. In the chapter's third part, I explore the interpretative dimension of the Norwegian historiography when it comes to the punishment of the *tyskerjenter*. I also discuss potential reasons for why questions relating to the meaning of this punishment have received so little attention in the Norwegian context. In the fourth part of the chapter, I examine whether the interpretations from the three national contexts engage in a wider conversation.

Warring and the sanctioning of the *tyskerpiger*

In addition to being the leading historian on the Danish *tyskerpiger* and their treatment, Anette Warring stands out as one of few historians who, in addition to exploring a specific national context, has treated this history as part of a larger European history of ‘fraternising women’ during the Second World War. In this part of the chapter, I first briefly present the sanctioning of the Danish *tyskerpiger* and present two questions that steer Warring’s analysis, before moving on to examine and discuss the contents of this analysis.

Danish women suspected of having been intimately involved with one or several of the occupiers risked being subjected to a range of social sanctions. These included strategies of social exclusion and harassment such as being subjected to ‘the cold-shoulder policy’, loosing their jobs, being denied service in cafés, and having rumours spread about them. However, women accused of this transgression also received more brutal treatment. This could come in the in the forms of threats or having lists revealing their names and addresses and encouraging their abuse disseminated in the underground press. Moreover, they risked being subjected to physical assaults.¹⁸⁰

A common way of sanctioning Danish women accused of ‘fraternisation’ and single them out to the rest of society was to cut off the whole or parts of their hair. These head shavings were typically carried out in public, and often accompanied with other forms of sexual sanctions such as the undressing of the women and the drawing of Nazi symbols on their exposed bodies.¹⁸¹ Such sanctioning of the *tyskerpiger* by their fellow citizens started already in the early days of occupation, but increased in number and violence during the revolt in August of 1943 and in the immediate aftermath of the war.¹⁸²

Despite the fact that engaging in intimate relationships with German soldiers did not constitute a breach of Danish law, these women were also subject to sanctioning by the Danish authorities.¹⁸³ In the rare instances in which the harassed woman took the matter to court, the courts tended to let the perpetrators off without punishment. As Warring has noted, it was rather “the woman who ended up being on trial” with the argument that through her indecent and unnational conduct she had brought the harassment upon herself.¹⁸⁴ The *tyskerpiger* were also under surveillance from the police: during the occupation, the Danish

¹⁸⁰ Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 102; Warring “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 36-38.

¹⁸¹ Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88; Warring “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42.

¹⁸² Warring “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 38-39.

¹⁸³ Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 181.

¹⁸⁴ Warring “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 39-40.

police would take suspected women in for questioning as part of the effort against sexually transmitted diseases. Much to the dismay of their cavaliers, the police also performed age checks on girls found socializing with German soldiers in public. Lastly, women suspected of being intimately involved with the Germans risked being placed into the care of the Danish authorities against their will. During the occupation, they could be placed in homes and institutions, and in the days of liberation, an estimated 5000 women suspected of ‘fraternisation’ were placed in internment camps along with others accused of collaboration.¹⁸⁵ One can note that the Danish case in this respect differs from the Norwegian one, in which women accused of being *tyskerjenter* were separated from other ‘collaborators’ and interned into camps established especially for them.

Two interrelated questions can be seen to drive Warring’s analysis, which focuses on the social sanctioning of the *tyskerpiger* and their European counterparts. The first relates to why relationships between German soldiers and local women angered the populations in the occupied European countries to the extent that they did. One of the ways in which the extent of this anger becomes clear is through the sometimes very brutal sanctioning these women risked experiencing at the hands of their fellow citizens. Illustrating this brutality, Warring cites an example from Denmark in which a woman was assaulted by a large crowd during the August revolt of 1943: after attacking her on the street, the crowd pursued her to her home, where a group of young men threw her from the roof where she had fled in her attempt to get away. Unconscious and severely injured from the fall, she was violently stripped of her clothes and molested, and some of the perpetrators shaved off her hair.¹⁸⁶ This incident of mob justice was carried out during broad daylight in the Danish city of Odense, and Warring notes that despite the fact that most Danes in the first years of the German presence “dissociated [themselves] from sabotage and any other violent resistance to the Germans” there reigned “an *extensive sympathy* for the harassment of the fraternising women.”¹⁸⁷

The second question steering Warring’s analysis has to do precisely with why the upset caused by ‘fraternising women’ so often led to their punishment – punishments that were often carried out in public. In Denmark, as well as in France, Poland, and Norway, the sanctioning of girls and women accused of sleeping with the enemy by their fellow citizens

¹⁸⁵ Warring “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 37-39. For a more comprehensive discussion of the official sanctions, see chapter 3 and 5 in Warring, *Tyskerpiger*.

¹⁸⁶ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 38.

¹⁸⁷ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 40. My emphasis.

started whilst the country was under German occupation.¹⁸⁸ This is interesting because harassing women consorting with the Germans in a country occupied by Nazi Germany meant risking severe punishment from the occupying power:¹⁸⁹ German authorities saw the harassment and abuse of the women who consorted with their soldiers as not only an insult to these women and their individual German consorts, but “an insult to the Wehrmacht itself”.¹⁹⁰

Threats to the nation? The private and the political

In her exploration of these questions, Warring draws upon the understanding of the modern nation state as an ‘imagined community’ – an understanding of the nation first articulated by Benedict Anderson.¹⁹¹ Faced with the punishment of women accused of fraternisation not only in occupied Denmark but also in many other European countries, Warring presents an cultural and social analysis – attuned to the consequences of the shifting ways in which we imagine gender, the relationship between the genders, and what it means to be a woman of a nation.

For Warring, part of the answer to why compatriots were so provoked by the actions of these women lies in the fact that these actions constituted stark breaches of gendered norms regarding good moral and national conduct – norms that were amplified by the context of the war. Although the Second World War is widely considered to have been an important catalyst for the advancement of women’s rights in the West, Warring argues that the reality of war also must be seen to have strengthen traditional gender norms pertaining to women’s sexual morality, and thus also the control that was exerted over the female body.¹⁹² The historian considers this development as part of what she identifies a wider context of ‘moral panic’ in the public, political, and professional discourses in the occupied countries during

¹⁸⁸ The first known instances of head shaving – the epitome of the punishment of ‘fraternising’ women in German-occupied Europe during the war – took place in May 1940 in Norway, the end of summer 1940 in Denmark, and in 1943 in France and Poland. See Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88.

¹⁸⁹ Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 113.

¹⁹⁰ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 37.

¹⁹¹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁹² The decrease of the male labour force due to reasons such as imprisonment, the deportation and murder of Jews, men’s participation in the war, and exile, led to women occupying positions that up until then had been conceived of as ‘male’. Consequently, as noted by Claudia Lenz, “many women who had been prepared for lives as wives and mothers suddenly found themselves living economically independent lives outside the private sphere”. However, after the war, many of these women, particularly those who were married, were pushed back into what was perceived as the ‘feminine’ private sphere. Lenz, “Gendered Relations,” 103; 106.

the war – a panic that was particularly obsessed with preserving the sexual morality of the nation’s women.¹⁹³

For the historian, even more important for explaining the upset caused by seeing women socialise with the enemy is the strong connection between the woman and the nation in European nationalism: “In spite of some national variation, the woman was everywhere in European national symbolism, as a virtuous mother who embodied the nation and its continuity”.¹⁹⁴ Connected to this *symbolic* dimension, the woman is also, within such nationalisms, considered *culturally* responsible for the maintaining of the nation’s social order, including upholding norms relating to sexual morality and relations between men and women, argues Warring.

However, the connection between the woman and nation is also perceived as *biological*. When the national community is imagined according to common ancestry, as is typical in many European configurations of nationalism, women and their ability to birth new national subjects become crucial for ensuring the fate of the nation. As such, when the national community is threatened, such as during an occupation, the virtuous conduct of the nation’s women becomes a matter not of individual choice, but of the *survival of the nation*. By violently breaching these expectations, not only by acting in a way that was perceived as immodest, but also by engaging intimately with the enemy, the ‘fraternising woman’ became the “loose, sexually uncontrollable woman who gave her body to the enemy and thus *betrayed the nation itself and deprived it of its future*.”¹⁹⁵ Rather than personifying the strong nation, the woman who engaged intimately with the enemy was perceived as a symbol of its downfall and defeat.

As such, a strength in Warring’s analysis is that it presents an answer to one of the most commonly asked questions in regard to the punishment of these women: how to explain the seemingly disproportionate brutality with which they risked being punished. In the Norwegian historiography, the ways in which the relationships between Norwegian women and German soldiers are presented tend to align with the women’s own conceptualisations of their relationships with the German soldiers. By the women themselves, their decision to enter such relationships are typically perceived as an apolitical matter of individual choice,

¹⁹³ Using the example of Denmark, she attributes this panic partially to the fact that Danish women ‘fraternised’ publicly with Germans, and to the striking increase in sexually transmitted diseases during the war. In addition, she considers it linked to “the expanded entertainment industry and the growth of eroticism as a theme in mass culture”. Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42-43.

¹⁹⁴ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 43.

¹⁹⁵ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 43.

and often as no less than a tale of ‘true love’. When operating from this angle, the treatment of the woman in Odense, the brutal head shaving and assault of a Norwegian woman to the point that she attempted to commit suicide afterwards, and the Norwegian authorities’ decision to revoke the citizenship of and deport women who had married German men to a war-torn Germany, seem not only brutal but illogically so.¹⁹⁶

Rather than being concerned with proving the immorality of such sanctioning, Warring is interested in the understandings of contemporaries who were intensely provoked by seeing girls and women walk arm in arm with German soldiers. By arguing that for many contemporaries, women who ‘fraternised’ with the occupiers represented no less than a “threat to the nation’s survival and to the very order they [were] supposed to maintain and continue”, Warring goes a far way in explaining why the sanctioning of these women could take on such a severe character:¹⁹⁷ through their public ‘fraternisation’ with German soldiers, and regardless of their own understandings of their actions, these women became ‘political actors’ taking part in matters much larger than themselves. Consequently, these women risked being punished not as individuals, but rather according to the understanding that they constituted a collective threat against the nation and its social order.¹⁹⁸

In other words, another strength of Warring’s analysis lies in how it separates between how their relations with the occupiers were understood by the women themselves, and by how these relations were perceived by the women’s compatriots; the analysis distinguishes between the *motives* of these women, and the *effect* their relationships with German soldiers had in a country occupied by Nazi Germany.¹⁹⁹ In this respect, Warring succeeds in demonstrating how these women’s affairs with German soldiers can have been both private and political at the same time, depending on the perspective in question. This helps us understand not only why these women were subjected to widespread and often brutal punishment, but also why so many women chose to engage intimately with the occupiers in German-occupied Europe.

Regarding the question of why the anger directed at women known or thought to frequent Germans so often resulted in concrete action being taken against them, even during the German occupation, Warring points out that the social sanctioning of these women also had

¹⁹⁶ Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 74. The reader can also note that the following article from 1945, which reports that a Norwegian woman did commit suicide after having been subjected to such head shaving: “Hårklipping er ikke verdig. La tysker-tøsene i fred,” *Morgenbladet*, May 19, 1945, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 44.

¹⁹⁸ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 40.

¹⁹⁹ For more on this, see Warring, “Køn, seksualitet og national identitet,” 309-314.

strategic and political dimensions. For one, incidents of mob justice against women considered to be national and sexual traitors could be used to recruit people to the cause of the Resistance.²⁰⁰ The historian notes that whilst the Resistance played an ambiguous role in the sanctioning of the *tyskerpiger* – sometimes participating, sometimes only passively observing, and other times stopping it – its members were “not blind to the mobilizing effect of this explosive cocktail of sentiments and motives, national as well as personal”.²⁰¹

Moreover, Warring understands the body of the ‘fraternising woman’ to have served as a “combat zone” in the conflicts “between the occupiers and the occupied, and between collaboration and resistance”.²⁰² Through their affiliation with the Germans, these women became not only political actors who “signalled acceptance of the Wehrmacht and its presence in the country” – their bodies became battlefields on which these conflicts were played out.²⁰³ Gender played an important role in these conflicts: “Female sexuality was a constitutive part” of not only “the national”, but also the “male honour”.²⁰⁴ When Danish women consorted with German soldiers, this was by many Danish men experienced as a humiliation. The authors of both the social and the official sanctioning were usually men. In this respect, the punishments of women accused of ‘fraternisation’ can be seen as something done ‘by men to women’. This is true also for the specific punishment of head shaving.

Head shaving: a *European* punishment for women?

Warring presents a threefold interpretation of the head shavings, aiming at explaining why this specific “ritual of punishment” was used to sanction women suspected of having intimate relations with enemy soldiers: Firstly, she notes, head shaving was a gendered punishment. The women were, as seen above, punished *because* they were women, in the sense that they would not have been subjected to this punishment if they were men. They were also sanctioned *as* women: shaving off a woman’s hair is a way of de-feminizing her. Furthermore, when this act was carried out, it was typically men who wielded the scissors, shears or other instrument used to cut off the woman’s hair, and thus it also served as a “demonstration of masculine domination”.²⁰⁵

Secondly, shaving a woman’s head can be read as a ‘social strategy’, in that it is a visible sanction which signals the nature of the woman’s treason to those around, and thus also

²⁰⁰ Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88.

²⁰¹ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 39.

²⁰² Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 35.

²⁰³ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 40.

²⁰⁴ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 37.

²⁰⁵ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42.

“[alters] her relations to the society”.²⁰⁶ As such, head shaving was a form of sanctioning that invited further social exclusion and humiliation of the woman in question. Thirdly, head shaving was, when employed against women thought to be fraternising, a sexual punishment for a ‘crime’ which was largely imagined in sexual terms, and a way to punish “the body which had been given to the enemy”.²⁰⁷ For Warring, the act of head shaving, which was intended to bring shame upon the woman by showcasing her betrayal and stripping away part of her femininity, also de-sexualised her: depriving a woman of her hair for the specific transgression of sleeping with the enemy represented no less than a “*symbolic castration of the female*”.²⁰⁸ In other words, Warring sees the head shavings as an inherently sexual punishment, directed not only at the woman in question but also at her body.

Such symbolic castration in the form of head shaving, notes Warring, found place “basically all over Europe”.²⁰⁹ Based on the fact that this practice was found not only in Denmark, France, and Norway, but also in Poland, Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands,²¹⁰ the historian presents an understanding of head shaving specifically, and the sanctioning of ‘fraternising women’ more widely, as European phenomena.²¹¹

Warring is not alone in the understanding of head shavings as a European phenomenon. For instance, this is a common way of conceptualising this specific form of sanctioning also within the Norwegian historiography. However, as noted by the Danish historian, there is no record of the practice ever having taken place among the populations living under German occupation in the Soviet territories.²¹² As such, the conceptualisation of this as a European phenomenon can be criticised for implying that head shavings found place *all over* occupied Europe, when this seems to not have been the case. It can equally be criticised as a symptom of a disregard of Eastern Europe when the history of ‘occupied Europe’ is being discussed, and of a lack of interest in the non-Western dimensions of the Second World War.

²⁰⁶ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42.

²⁰⁷ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42.

²⁰⁸ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42. My emphasis.

²⁰⁹ Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88.

²¹⁰ According to Serbian historian Ljubinka Škodrić, the practice was also employed during the occupation of present-day Serbia, as a punishment for women accused of ‘fraternising’ with the Bulgarian and German occupiers, but also for other transgressions on the part of the woman or of a man associated with her – such as her husband or male family member. The practice of shaving off a woman’s hair for having consorted with an occupier was also, Škodrić notes, employed in this territory during the First World War. Škodrić, “Women and the German Occupiers”.

²¹¹ Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88.

²¹² Warring, “Sexual Relations,” 88-89.

Also the widespread conceptualisation of this punishment as an indirect anti-German or anti-Axis practice, tied to the specific context of the German occupation of Europe during the Second World War, can be criticised. For one, this was not only a punishment carried out against women accused of sleeping with German or other Axis soldiers, but also employed *by Germans* in Germany during the Third Reich in order to punish women accused of consorting with 'non-Aryan' men.²¹³ However, it should be noted that whether or not the understanding of such head shaving as a phenomenon specifically tied to the Second World War is considered problematic largely depends on whether the practice is understood as a specific punishment for 'fraternising women', or rather more generally, as a 'punishment for women'. While Warring operates with the first understanding, Virgili, as we shall see below, operates with the latter. Consequently, for Virgili, the head shavings of women during other conflicts – such as during the Weimar Republic and in the Spanish and Greek civil wars – become relevant even though women in these contexts had their heads shaved for other reasons than the accusation of having slept with the enemy.²¹⁴ What is important is rather that they were punished *as women*.

Despite considering it through this broader conceptual lens, Virgili also tentatively conceives of the practice as 'European', and does not move outside of Europe when listing non-French instances of such head shaving during the first half of the twentieth century.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, the reader can note that although any further occurrence of such head shavings outside of Europe is unknown both in the historiographies here explored and to the present author, there is evidence of the practice having found place in Algeria: British historian Simon Kitson has demonstrated that French women had their heads shaved in Algeria for engaging intimately with Axis soldiers during the war, starting from 1941. However, according to Kitson, it was the Vichy authorities who orchestrated these head shavings, apparently as part of their efforts against espionage.²¹⁶

As such, the situating of the phenomenon as European in the *geographical* sense can be criticised for indicating that it did not occur on other continents, when Kitson has demonstrated this to have been the case. To this criticism however, one could counter with the fact that French Algeria was considered an *actual* part of France, rather than merely a colony.²¹⁷ Consequently it could be argued that the head shavings described by Kitson did in

²¹³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 217.

²¹⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 217.

²¹⁵ See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 212-217.

²¹⁶ Kitson, *Vichy et la chasse aux espions nazis*, 114-117.

²¹⁷ Katz, "Hierarchies of Exclusion," 359.

fact take place ‘in Europe’. Furthermore, since they seem to have been orchestrated not by native Algerians, but by Vichy France, one could argue that this supports the understanding of the practice as ‘European’ also in the cultural sense.

I conclude that it is interesting, as argued by Warring, that women in a range of occupied countries were sanctioned in this specific manner, despite the lack of any “deep-rooted cultural tradition” in Europe for this way of sanctioning women.²¹⁸ However, I agree with Virgili regarding the fact that when it comes to the question of whether there was any causality between the different instances of head shaving more studies on the individual national contexts are needed.²¹⁹ Moreover, more studies are needed before we can establish whether this was a strictly Europe-bound phenomenon, or whether the lack of knowledge of the practice occurring in other parts of the world rather reflects a disregard within Western historiography for the histories of non-Western countries.

Virgili and the *femmes tondues*

The subject of the French historian Fabrice Virgili is the so-called ‘*femmes tondues*’ [shorn women] and the head shavings that these women were subjected to. *Femmes tondues* is the French term used for the French women who, accused of having collaborated with the German occupiers, had their hair ‘shorn’ – usually by members of their local communities.²²⁰ Virgili estimates that this fate befell around 20 000 French women in a period ranging from 1943 to the first months of 1946.²²¹ A large part of these women had their hair cut off due to accusations of intimate engagement with the enemy, or what was in France commonly referred to as ‘*la collaboration horizontale*’ [horizontal collaboration].²²²

However, the *femme tondu*e was not necessarily accused of ‘collaborating horizontally’, and Virgili’s subject thus differs in scope and focus from that found in the Norwegian and the Danish historiography. As shown by Virgili, and as opposed to what we know of the head shavings in Norway and Denmark, French women were subjected to this punishment also on

²¹⁸ Warring, “War, Cultural Loyalty and Gender,” 42.

²¹⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 217.

²²⁰ The term ‘*femmes tondues*’ is derived from the French verb ‘*tondre*’, meaning to cut or to shear. It is not usually used to describe the cutting of human hair, but rather the shearing of animals or the cutting of grass, and is rarely employed for this purpose other than in the specific context here treated. Two related terms that are derived from the same verb are ‘*la tondu*e’ [the ‘shorn woman’], and ‘*la tonte*’ – which is used to describe the act of cutting of the whole or parts of the hair of a woman accused of collaborating with the enemy as well as the event in which this takes place. In his discussion of these terms, Virgili stresses that “women who were deported to concentration camps and whose heads were systematically shaved on arrival are never referred to in this way.” Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 4-5.

²²¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 1.

²²² According to Virgili “57 per cent of women whose heads were shaved for undisputed acts of collaboration were accused of having intimate relationships with Germans”. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 15.

the basis of a range of non-sexual accusations of collaboration.²²³ As such, Virgili's work on the *femmes tondues* can be perceived as both more specific and more elaborate than the history writing on the *tyskerjenter* and *tyskerpiger*: on the one hand, his study is more narrow when it comes to the sanctioning of French women accused of 'fraternisation' in that he only deals with their head shaving. On the other, this specific focus allows Virgili to examine how also women accused of other forms of collaboration had their heads shaved, and thus to undertake a more comprehensive study of how the occupied and post-war French society imagined and punished its female 'traitors'.²²⁴ Furthermore, such a focus facilitates an elaborate analysis, attuned to the complexities of the period and the practice that sprung from it.

The French historian's work also stands out when it comes to the carefulness with which he conducts his analysis. He perceives the head shavings that happened across France in these three years as a contextual and "extraordinarily complex" phenomenon.²²⁵ While Warring's analysis aims at having explanatory power for the punishment of 'fraternising women' in German-occupied Europe as a general phenomenon, Virgili situates his interpretation firmly within the French context, making no attempt to expand its scope beyond the borders of France. Regarding the fact that head shavings took place in other parts of occupied Europe, and in other conflicts such as the Spanish Civil War or the Occupation of Rhineland, he soberly comments that "the similarity between these events, or the fact that they had existed in the past, is not enough for us to establish any causal links between them. Uncertainty prevails and it is preferable to any risky conclusions."²²⁶

For Virgili, the head shaving of French women during and in the aftermath of the war was a corporal and sexual form of violence. It not only served as a way to humiliate and punish these women, but was, more importantly, one of the many efforts undertaken by the French after the war aimed at cleansing and purification – in order to remove what was often

²²³ Typical accusations included political or financial collaboration, or the act of denunciation. Being from an Axis country could also be a reason for a woman to be labelled suspicious and having her hair shorn as a consequence. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 11.

²²⁴ Virgili's focus is in line with the general French historiography, in which it is the act of head shaving, rather than the women accused of 'fraternisation' that has been the subject of enquiry and interpretation.

²²⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 236.

²²⁶ Noting the occurrence of head shavings in occupied Europe, in the Greek and Spanish civil wars, and during both the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, Virgili does however offer the following interpretative commentary: "In each of these periods of crisis a very special violence is carried out against women who are perceived not simply as enemies, but as women. Their body and sexuality become a way in which the national and ideological identity can be expressed. The other person is punished and part of the collective self is recovered and purified through the practice of bodily markings. During times of major crisis, fathers and husbands seem to lose control over women's bodies." *Shorn Women*, 217.

conceptualised as a ‘stain’ left by the German occupiers and the French who had collaborated with them.²²⁷ Such cleansing rituals were necessary, it was believed, in order to pave the way for a new and brighter future. The practice also played a role in the reconstruction of both the local and the national community. Most importantly however, is for Virgili the inherently sexist nature of the punishment: this was a “punishment for women”.²²⁸

Purge and fantasy

Virgili’s interpretation can be seen to pertain to three overarching ‘why-questions’: why French women accused of being ‘*collaboratrices*’ had their hair, or tufts of it, shaved off all over France, why this also happened to women accused of non-sexual forms of collaboration, and “why so many people ... were so violent towards women.”²²⁹ Virgili’s elaborate attempt to answer these questions can be divided into two parts – the first having to do with the emotions and needs of the French after their liberation from the German occupiers, and the second with the relations between the genders and the ways in which the woman, her sexuality, and body were imagined.

Virgili understands the practice of such head shavings as inseparably tied to the context of war and occupation, and furthermore, to the specific context of the liberation – the period in which the overwhelming majority of the head shavings were carried out.²³⁰ According to Virgili, the German victory over the French army in the spring and summer of 1940 “traumatised French society, smashing completely those individual and collective features that had hitherto served to cement it together”.²³¹ Consequently, upon liberation the French not only had cause for celebration, but also had to deal with the trauma, and “crisis in national identity” caused by the turnings of the war and the experience of being occupied by the German forces.²³²

One of the ways in which this trauma was processed after the war was through the efforts to cleanse or purge the French nation of those who had collaborated with the oppressive German regime. This was seen as necessary preparation for a new and better future and became somewhat of an obsession in newly liberated France, to the point that the term ‘*L’Épuration*’ – which in English can be translated as ‘The Purge’, ‘The Cleansing’ or ‘The Purification’ – is used to refer not only to the efforts taken in this regard, but also to the

²²⁷ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 241.

²²⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 177.

²²⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 37.

²³⁰ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 63.

²³¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 219.

²³² Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 219.

historical period in which they were carried out.²³³ In the department of Moselle, the *comité départemental de libération* made the following written declaration: “We must purge. We must vaccinate the country in order to immunise it against the evil of collaboration and the virus of the fifth column.”²³⁴ For Virgili, the need to cleanse the nation of its traitors was “no longer just a military matter, but rather something approaching fantasy”.²³⁵

A central part of this fantasy was the shearing of the hair of women accused of collaboration.²³⁶ By shaving off her hair, the woman was branded as a ‘*collaboratrice*’ – a contrasting figure to ‘good French people’ and the ‘true French woman’ [*la vraie Française*]. By personifying their antithesis, the shorn woman reconfirmed these patriotic identities and as such played a role in the construction of a national community of non-traitors and in the construction and reinforcement of a national identity after the war.²³⁷ Emerging bald, or with parts of her hair shorn off, the *femme tondue* had been purged from the local and the national community. The absence of hair marked her body as that of a traitor and thus placed the shame associated with her perceived treason where it was seen to belong: on the body and person of the collaborating woman.

The cleansing character of the head shaving also played a role in the reconquering and purging of *places* in which the presence of the Germans and the betrayal of the collaborating French still could be felt. This included places like the town hall and the village square, through which acts such as head shavings became reclaimed patriotic spaces.²³⁸ More interestingly however, it also included the house of the woman who was to be shorn – a place which also had to be reconquered and purged.

The house of the ‘shorn woman’ had acquired an almost mythical character during the occupation, due to all the speculation and rumour relating to what was going on inside its walls, argues Virgili. Consequently, this house played an important role within the wider “geography of the Liberation”.²³⁹ Not only was it “the scene of betrayal” in which its inhabitants had received Germans, it also constituted “the place real or imagined, from which the enemy could spy on the local area”.²⁴⁰ As such, the house had to be conquered and purged

²³³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, vi; 63.

²³⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 148.

²³⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 148.

²³⁶ The head shaving of the *femmes tondues* is one of the events most commonly associated with the *Épuration*.

²³⁷ Virgili notes that in the days of Liberation, “people would underline their patriotism by carrying a national flag, by singing *La Marseillaise* and by taking part in shaving the head of a *kollabo*”. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 235.

²³⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 226-229.

²³⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 155.

²⁴⁰ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 156.

to remove both the ‘stain’ and the looming threat that it represented to the local community. This purge typically started with the arrival of a jeering crowd outside the house, before members of the crowd forced their entry into the house, thus occupying it. Once inside, the women of the house would have their hair cut off or be led to the place in which this was to happen. Often, not only the women but the house itself was branded as a scene of betrayal. Commenting on an instance from Jallais in which a house had swastikas drawn on it with coal tar,²⁴¹ Virgili observes that “the purification process continued outside, as if people had wanted to *scrub the house from the community* ... by making it transparent to everyone”.²⁴² Furthermore, after the ritual, the house of the ‘fraternising woman’ had been demystified: “With its broken door and open shutters, people could see the women with shaved heads, or with them shut, the swastikas.”²⁴³

Virgili understands such head shavings as not only a punitive, but also social event – a spectacle.²⁴⁴ In the 322 communes in which head shavings were carried out in public, the women who were to be shorn were typically strategically positioned to be as visible to the crowd as possible.²⁴⁵ As such, “the presence of the crowd [was] made part of the punishment”.²⁴⁶ For the crowd, the shearing of female traitors was a patriotic act that marked “the beginning of a new age” and reinforced the local and national community by “[allowing] them to move from a position of being the victims of violence to one where they inflicted it, and thereby reasserted their patriotic identity”.²⁴⁷ For the woman in question “the attack on [her] body [was] made ten times worse by the humiliation of the punishment being carried out in front of the woman’s own people”, Virgili notes.²⁴⁸

Moreover, as noted by Virgili, the visibility of this punishment was important in another, rather paradoxical respect: a shorn head was seen as proof that the woman whom it belonged to had indeed committed the crime of which she was accused.²⁴⁹ As such, the punishment legitimised itself.

²⁴¹ Regarding the use of Nazi symbols by the liberated French during the Épuration, Virgili notes that through such usage, the symbols were subjected to a “complete inversion” and argues that “in this there is a way of taking over the emblems used by the enemy to change the meaning of them, and even by deriding them to get rid of them completely”. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 195.

²⁴² Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 158. My emphasis.

²⁴³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 158.

²⁴⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 3.

²⁴⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 227.

²⁴⁶ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 187-188.

²⁴⁷ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 4.

²⁴⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 187.

²⁴⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 152; 188-189.

A sexist punishment

For Virgili, “the shaving of heads was not a punishment for sexual collaboration, but a *sexist one*”.²⁵⁰ While some French men did have their heads shaved, no man had his hair shorn due to accusations pertaining to his sexuality.²⁵¹ In the case of women however, accusations of sexual immorality were often central to their condemnation. Although many shorn women were accused of so-called ‘horizontal collaboration’, also general accusations of immorality having nothing to do with the Germans were commonly invoked in the cases made against them.²⁵² Examples could be accusations of adultery, of having had an abortion or sex before marriage, or of having given birth to a child out of wedlock.²⁵³ Interestingly, such claims do not only portray the woman in question as generally immoral, but also paint a picture of her as a ‘bad woman’.²⁵⁴

Virgili argues that these findings should be seen to indicate not only French men’s obsession with controlling the woman’s body and sexuality, but also a contempt of women present in the discourses of a sexist French society of the mid twentieth-century: “In any representation of women who collaborated *what is always present is the idea of the ‘weaker sex’*.”²⁵⁵ When French women engaged intimately with the Germans, this was widely considered a manifestation of “the natural immorality of women”, the French historian argues.²⁵⁶

Further confirming for Virgili that it was a woman’s perceived immorality and failure to conform that provoked her compatriots just as much as her collaboration with the enemy, is the condemnation of the French women who frequented Allied soldiers after the liberation. When women suspected of having associated with German soldiers in the past now were seen arm in arm with Allied soldiers, this was widely understood as a *continuation*, rather than a break with, their earlier transgressions. In other words, the ‘enemy’ aspect seems to have been less important than what was perceived as a scandalous breach of gendered norms pertaining to morality and ‘good womanhood’. The sexuality of women was not only repressed and policed, but “forbidden”, argues Virgili.²⁵⁷ For the French historian, the head shaving of the *femmes tondues* was not only a gendered but an inherently sexist form of

²⁵⁰ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 37. My emphasis.

²⁵¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 57.

²⁵² The reader can note that such accusations were invoked also in instances in which the woman in question was not accused of having been intimately involved with a German soldier.

²⁵³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 32.

²⁵⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 207.

²⁵⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 31. My emphasis.

²⁵⁶ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 32.

²⁵⁷ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 211-212.

sanctioning which served not only to punish these women, but also to oppress women in general.

Why head shavings?

The need to purge the nation of a shameful past, and the anger caused by what was perceived as ‘immoral’ and ‘bad’ women, contribute to explaining why women were punished, and why this punishment also befell women who were accused of collaboration but not ‘fraternisation’. However, it does not explain why the hair of these women had to be cut off. Although collaborating women were punished also in other ways, such as through arrestations, internment, and other forms of violence, the practice of shaving the heads of ‘collaborating women’ was so widespread that Virgili perceives it as “a distinctive feature” of the “violence at the Liberation”.²⁵⁸

Like Warring, Virgili sees head shaving not only as a punishment of the woman in question, but also as a way of de-feminising and de-sexualising her *body*. This is particularly relevant in the context of the punishment of women accused of ‘horizontal collaboration’. In these cases, “the body which arrived on the scene [of the head shaving] [was] the one that seduced the enemy” Virgili notes – almost completely echoing Warring.²⁵⁹ With the shearing of her hair, the woman’s body was stripped of femininity and sensuality and ‘made ugly’ in the eyes of the onlookers, argues Virgili.²⁶⁰ It was transformed from a seductive body to that of the traitor, its perceived ugliness bearing witness to the foulness that was thought to be within.²⁶¹

In addition to an attack on the body, these head shaving were for Virgili a sexual form of punishment, albeit to various degrees. He separates the head shavings into two groups, namely incidents in which the cutting off of the woman’s hair was the only form of sanctioning that was carried out and this was done in a matter-of-factly manner, and those incidents in which the woman was subjected to the anger and passions of the perpetrators and the crowd. In these latter instances, the use of other forms of sexual violence were common. These included acts such as violently undressing women and parading them through the streets, public spanking, or the painting of swastikas on their exposed breasts.²⁶² Virgili emphasises the extremely degrading and shocking nature of such punishment: “for a society

²⁵⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 232.

²⁵⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 189.

²⁶⁰ He notes that this ‘ugliness’ was not perceived by the perpetrators and crowd as revolting and “horrible, but acceptable and presentable ... about which it was possible to make jokes” and that “smiles and laughter or applause would endorse the change in appearance”. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 189.

²⁶¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 189; 195.

²⁶² Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 137; 189-193.

that was still modest and in which the body remained hidden, processions of naked women constituted a clear break with tradition”.²⁶³ Disregarding rape, which he notes has been the subject of little investigation, Virgili sees “these processions [as] the final expression of the way in which women’s bodies had been reappropriated by those who had recently won the war”.²⁶⁴

This reappropriation was heavily gendered. Head shavings and the other sanctions that accompanied it – such as spanking – were, according to Virgili, ways for French men to reconquer the woman’s body and thus also reassert their virility and the virility of the French nation. Virility played a central part in the French discourses relating to resistance, victory, liberation, and purification, both during and after the war. As the newspaper *La Renaissance républicaine du Gard* put it in the late summer of 1944: “France will be *virile or dead*.”²⁶⁵

Towards the end of the war and during the days of Liberation, the French nation “rediscovered ... a virile identity that had been completely demolished”, argues Virili.²⁶⁶ This newfound virility found “expression through a *massive demonstration of sexual violence*”, in which the shearing of women accused of collaboration played a central part.²⁶⁷ An integral part of this virility had to do with men’s domination and control over women: “By the removal of their hair, by drawing the sign of the swastika on their breasts and by giving them a good spanking, what is really being targeted is the sexual difference between women and men”.²⁶⁸

Shorn men

However, what then does Virgili make of the fact that men not only were the perpetrators of women in this regard, but also themselves could be victims of head shavings? In a seemingly contradictory manner, he argues that “the full significance of the *tonte* [the shearing] only becomes apparent in the fact that the victims were women”, while he elsewhere notes that “*la tondue* [the shorn woman] *could just as well be a man*”.²⁶⁹ For Virgili, however, this is no

²⁶³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 189.

²⁶⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 189: 193-195.

²⁶⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 242. My emphasis.

²⁶⁶ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 240.

²⁶⁷ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 240. My emphasis.

²⁶⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 192.

²⁶⁹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 53; 175. My emphasis.

For the sake of linguistic precision, the reader can note that ‘*femme tondue*’ would be a more direct translation of the English ‘shorn woman’, and that ‘*la tondue*’ is rather the feminine version of the term describing ‘one who has been shorn’, thus implying that this person is a woman. According to the gendered logics of the French language, the shorn man would be described as ‘*le tondu*’. The formulation cited above thus appears as an oxymoron. However, the reader can note that due to the overwhelming majority of victims being women, Virgili chooses to employ the feminine version of the term to describe all persons who had their heads shaved as punishment during the occupation and liberation of France. See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 57.

contradiction, as he considers the shaving of men's head an entirely different phenomenon, even in the instances in which men had their heads shaved together with the women in question. He presents the understanding of the head shavings of men and women as different phenomena by arguing that the motives behind the shearing, as well as its symbolic effect, were entirely contingent on gender.

While the policing of their sexuality is an important factor in explaining why women had their heads shaved, the discourses surrounding sexuality were absent in the cases of the shorn men: "no man had his head shaved for having had sex with a German woman or a German man."²⁷⁰ The shorn men were also less subjected to accompanying sexual sanctions such as stripping. This was because the body of the shorn man, unlike that of the shorn woman, did not need to be reconquered by the community, argues Virgili.²⁷¹ However, while not sexual, the incentive for shaving a man's head could be that he did not meet gendered expectations: "if it did not indicate a specific case of collaboration, it could be used to denounce a lack of courage, or a lack of masculinity and fighting spirit" – manifested through 'betrayals' such as that of not having participated in the resistance.²⁷²

Furthermore, Virgili notes that the shearing of men's hair had a more ambiguous and less potent effect: Unlike that of the woman, a man's head could have been shaved for a number of reasons and stood less in contrast to regular male haircuts. In uncharacteristically bold terms for the rest of his analysis, Virgili argues that the lack of sexualisation, the weaker symbolism, and the marginal number of men who had their heads shorn makes the existence of shorn men "irrelevant" for his interpretation of the French head shavings as a general phenomenon.²⁷³

Violence, legitimacy, and the end of the practice

Virgili also understands the head shavings that the *femmes tondues* were subjected to as acts of violence.²⁷⁴ However, he notes that whether the cutting of hair constitutes violence depends on the manner and context in which it is carried out. Furthermore, he notes the dissonance between the experience of the women and those who cut off their hair: "For those doing the cutting to shave the head of a woman who had collaborated was a legitimate

²⁷⁰ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 57.

²⁷¹ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 192.

²⁷² Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 56-57.

²⁷³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 57; 177. My emphasis.

²⁷⁴ He notes however, that the violence of the head shavings came in different degrees, and that while the women in some instances are reported to have been subjected to extreme violence, there were also instances in which both the perpetrator and the victim report having experienced the event as "civilised". Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 136-141.

punishment *in which violence played absolutely no part ... Violence was only seen therefore by the victims.*"²⁷⁵ Moreover, Virgili emphasises the contextual nature of how the head shavings were perceived: when head shavings were carried out in the late summer of 1944 – the period in which they were most prevalent – they were by most people considered a necessary and legitimate practice.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, the head shavings were often carried out with the approval and even the help of the new French authorities.²⁷⁷ This, however, slowly changed from the autumn of 1944, when criticisms of the practice began to be voiced more loudly and the public perception started to shift: “from being a legitimate para-legal practice, it was gradually rejected to the point that it became illegal”.²⁷⁸

Interpreting the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter*

In contrast to the French focus on interpreting the head shavings, the punishment of the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* has been treated more holistically. Since the 1980s, the consensus among those writing the history of these women has been that this punishment was an inherently gendered phenomenon. Despite not being a new interpretation, the explorations of the gendered dimensions of the understanding and treatment of these women remain superficial in the Norwegian historiography, which is largely characterised by empiricism.

Gender and the Norwegian context

Writing on the French context, scholar Claire Duchen notes that “before the mid-1980s, it was never pointed out that there was a specifically gendered dimension to the head shaving scenes – men were doing it to women. It was primarily seen as resisters doing it to collaborators.”²⁷⁹ In Norway, the understanding of the gender of victim and perpetrators as analytically significant has a longer history. One of the first to emphasise the gendered dimension of the punishment of these women was the influential Norwegian psychiatrist Johan Scharffenberg, who in the public debate after the war positioned himself as one of the most vocal critics of the condemnation of the *tyskerjenter* and the ways in which they were treated.²⁸⁰ For Scharffenberg, the anger directed at these women had to do with gendered

²⁷⁵ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 136-139.

²⁷⁶ However, the reader can note that like in Norway, as explored below, there were also instances of criticisms of the practice present in the French public debate while it was still widely condoned. See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 135-136.

²⁷⁷ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 232.

²⁷⁸ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 243.

²⁷⁹ Duchen, “Crime and Punishment,” 236.

²⁸⁰ See, for instance, Elden, *Det norske studentersamfund*, 371.

norms of sexual morality, and the understanding of women's sexuality and reproductive abilities as national property.²⁸¹

However, Scharffenberg's defence and presentation of the *tyskerjenter* provoked many of his contemporaries, attracting strong criticism and even threats.²⁸² An example of a letter containing the latter was made public by Scharffenberg himself in *Arbeiderbladet* on the 10th of July 1945, with the reasoning that this was "a typical expression of the theory of retribution and of the dangerous proclivity for vigilantism".²⁸³ In the letter, the author equates Scharffenberg to those who committed treason during the war, and makes the following eerie promise: "the one who wants to treat traitors gently shall not be safe himself, we in the Norwegian Home Front ... take the revenge we want, where we know it must be done. The punishment shall be exactly the same that good Norwegians received from the Nazi executioners".²⁸⁴

Four decades were to pass between Scharffenberg's defence of the *tyskerjenter* and the emergence of the first works on the history of these women. The understanding of the punishment of the *tyskerjenter* as a gendered phenomenon has been present in the Norwegian historiography from the start.²⁸⁵ As such, it is interesting to note the little attention paid within this historiography to questions pertaining to how this punishment and its gendered dimensions are to be *interpreted*. In general, the treatment of the gendered dimensions of the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter* gives the impression of being a mandatory topic on which the author in question superficially comments before proceeding to uncover empirical details concerning who these women were, and what happened to them.

An example of such superficial commentary regarding the deeper meaning of the acts that the *tyskerjenter* were subjected to, is found in Aarnes' book, in which she notes that "to be undressed and forced to run naked through a crowd has an obvious sexual undertone, and can be regarded as punishment for the transgression of rules of gender and sexual morality".²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Senje, *Dømte kvinner*, 37; Teige, "Det er på tide med en unnskyldning til kvinnene som valgte kjærligheten," *Aftenposten*, May 20, 2016.

²⁸² The threats made against Scharffenberg are all the more striking when considering the high regard held for the psychiatrist in Norwegian society after the war. Attesting to this regard is the fact that Scharffenberg, who had been an avid public critic of Hitler and Nazism already in 1933, was chosen to hold Norway's welcome speech for King Håkon upon the king's return from exile after the war. For more on this, see Lavik, *En psykiater i konfrontasjon med nazismen*. For an example of the criticism that Scharffenberg's defence of the *tyskerjenter* was met with, see "Dr. Scharffenberg og tyskertøsene," *Dagbladet*, October 12, 1945.

²⁸³ Scharffenberg, "Skal det frie ord kverkes i Norge?," *Arbeiderbladet*, July 10, 1945.

²⁸⁴ Scharffenberg, "Skal det frie ord kverkes i Norge?," *Arbeiderbladet*, July 10, 1945.

²⁸⁵ See, for instance, Senje, *Dømte kvinner*, 26; 40.

²⁸⁶ Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 44.

The reflection ends there, making it exemplary of a trend within the Norwegian historiography: the gendered dimension is asserted but not explored.²⁸⁷ As in Aarnes' book, questions of *why* the *tyskerjenter* were punished, and *why* they were punished in the specific manners in which they were, tend to be granted little attention in the works dealing with this history. This finding is particularly interesting when considering the fact that in Norway, women suspected of 'fraternising' with German soldiers were subjected to two post-war punishments which compete with head shavings for the position of gendered punishment *par excellence*.

The first of these punishments is the internment of women accused of being *tyskerjenter*. Against their will, thousands of women were interned into internment camps created specifically for 'fraternising' women. In these camps they were subjected to medical exams and tests of their intellectual capabilities, and in some instances even considered for sterilisation.²⁸⁸ Olsen argues that more than 14 000 women might have been interned on these grounds in the spring and summer of 1945.²⁸⁹ The second punishment is by many considered the most extreme of the punishments that the *tyskerjenter* were subjected to, namely the denaturalisation and expulsion of those who had married German men.

However, in their treatment of these punishments, authors and historians alike are typically content with signalling their gendered nature by pointing to the fact that none of the 28 men who married women working in Occupied Norway under German service were interned, nor deprived of their citizenship or expelled.²⁹⁰ Why the *tyskerjenter* were singled out and subjected to such highly symbolic punishments – interment and expulsion constitute

²⁸⁷ Examples can be found in Eriksen and Halvorsen, *Frigjøring*, 251, in Sæveraas, *Wehrmacht i Norge*, 279, and in Lavik, "Psykiatrien og den annen verdenskrig," 87. The reader can note that while these three works treat the punishment of these women as a subtopic within the wider history of the war, the trend of asserting but not exploring the gendered dimension of this punishment is, as we shall see below, true both for works dealing with the history of the *tyskerjenter* as their main topic, and for those in which this history is rather considered a subtopic in the exploration of another of the war's dimensions.

²⁸⁸ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 351-352; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 114.

²⁸⁹ Olsen, "Da freden brøt løs," 301.

²⁹⁰ That the women who had married Germans were denaturalised and expelled while the men who had married German women were not, was not merely a consequence of the gendered nature of the Norwegian citizenship law of the time. According to this law, Norwegian women became citizens of Germany upon marrying a German man. However, *they did not at the same time lose their Norwegian citizenship*. For this to happen, the woman had to leave the Norwegian territory. This posed a problem to the Norwegian authorities, who after the war wished to expel women who had entered married German men but who had not left Norway. Kåre Olsen has showed how the authorities, in an effort to get around this problem, passed a provisional ordinance on the 17th of August 1945 stating that the one who "from the outbreak of war to its settlement" had "obtained citizenship in an enemy state" lost their Norwegian citizenship. In December 1946, the Parliament adopted this ordinance as law. Despite the law's gender-neutral language, only *women* who fit this description were denaturalised and expelled. When presenting the law proposal for Parliament, the Norwegian government explicitly expressed its intention to expel women who had married German men. Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 304-308.

temporary or permanent exclusion from the national community – have been the subject of strikingly little theorisation.

Discussing the interpretative silence

This scarce theorisation is in line with a general empiricist trend in the history writing on the *tyskerjenter*.²⁹¹ In addition to the lack of a strong theoretical tradition in Norwegian historiography, this relative interpretative silence can be linked to the difficulty in treating the punishment of these women as a historical event due to its complex and often violent or degrading nature. However, as seen above, these challenges have not hindered historians such as Anette Warring and Fabrice Virgili from offering elaborate interpretations of the punishment of women within their respective national contexts.

The interpretative silence in the Norwegian historiography can also be read as a reluctance to engage with gender studies, feminist theories, and theories relating to gender more generally. Furthermore, it can be considered a symptom of the relatively marginal status of women's and gender history within the field of history in Norway. Commenting on the status of women's history in Norway, late professor of history Erling Sandmo, writing in 2010, called it a "quiet discipline".²⁹² Over a decade later, Sandmo's description still rings true.

Perhaps even more striking than the lack of engagement with such theories by those who have written the history of the *tyskerjenter* is the fact that historians of women's and gender history have remained silent when it comes to this topic. One can here note that within the French context, it is precisely a historian dealing with topics relating to gender – Fabrice Virgili – who has presented the most comprehensive interpretation of the punishment of the *femmes tondues*. Although not the loudest of disciplines, women's and gender history are established fields in Norway and have been so for several decades. One would think that the perceptions and treatment of women accused of betraying their country in the sexual sense would be exactly the kind of subjects that would spark the interest of historians working within these disciplines. One can ask oneself why this seems to not have been the case in Norway.

Lastly, the little attention paid to the meaning inherent in the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter* can be interpreted as a symptom of the little focus put within the Norwegian historiography on the perspectives of those carried out the punishment of these women. It is rather the

²⁹¹ For examples see, for instance, Helgesen, "Tyskertøs,,"; Nomeland, "I krig og kjærlighet,,"; Olsen, *Krigens barn*; Papendorf, *Siktet som tyskertøs*.

²⁹² Sandmo, "Fra kvinne- til kjønns historie – og tilbake?" 28.

understandings of the women themselves that have been emphasised.²⁹³ Interestingly, there seems to be a certain weariness within the Norwegian works when it comes to examining the perspective of those who were provoked by the relationships between the occupiers and women of their own communities. A pertinent example can be found when historian Terje Nomeland writes that “seen with the eyes of that time it is *perhaps understandable* that the outrage against all forms of assistance to the enemy was great, the fraternisation of the *tyskerjenter* included”.²⁹⁴ Such tentative language attests to the impression that addressing this part of the history is experienced as uncomfortable.

This unease can again be linked to how two different analytical dimensions have been largely conflated in the Norwegian historiography: namely that having to do with the *intent* of these women as they decided to get involved with German soldiers, and that relating to how this choice was *perceived* by their fellow countrymen. This important analytical distinction is, as noted above, emphasised by Warring in her work.²⁹⁵ One can here note that Warring’s work also happens to be the work treated in this thesis which moves the most elegantly within the challenging landscape made up of the seemingly contrasting perspectives of victims and perpetrators.

A consequence of the lack of this conceptual separation in the Norwegian history writing is that taking seriously the understandings that drove the perpetrators of these women to act as they did – which is an integral part of any interpretation of the punishments – is easily perceived as criticism of the *tyskerjenter*’s own understandings of their affairs with German soldiers.²⁹⁶ By distinguishing between the *intent* of the women in engaging intimately with the occupiers, and the *effect* of such engagement within the social reality of war and occupation, one reaches an important insight: namely that the understanding of these relations as a private matter, and that of them as political and thus provoking, are not mutually exclusive but rather operate on different analytical levels.

Breaking the silence

Some works stand out in their exploration of the interpretative dimension, however. One of these is that of political scientist Claudia Lenz, who has formulated one of the most elaborate interpretations of the punishment of the *tyskerjenter*. For Lenz, these women so provoked

²⁹³ These understandings are of course, as demonstrated by Warring, not mutually exclusive.

²⁹⁴ Nomeland, *I krig og kjærlighet*, 147. My emphasis.

²⁹⁵ Warring, “Køn, seksualitet og national identitet,” 309-314.

²⁹⁶ As expressed in the interviews given by those of the women who have been willing to talk of this part of their pasts.

their contemporaries, leading to their harsh sanctioning, because they were seen to have transgressed symbolic boundaries relating to the connection between women's sexuality and the nation. In formulating this argument, Lenz draws upon the work of sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis, who argues that the woman holds a paradoxical place in European nationalism, in that she is "constructed as being both the bearer of and threat against the nation – the potential enemy within".²⁹⁷ The woman is the 'bearer' of the nation because she ensures its survival by birthing new national subjects, and by upholding norms of morality within the national community. She is an internal threat to the same nation, however, because she is perceived as the irrational 'other' in opposition to the "rational, male citizen-subject".²⁹⁸ Thus, the policing of women, and their bodies and sexuality, and the protection of the nation go hand in hand.

Lenz' also refers to historian George Mosse, who sees European nationalism and bourgeois respectability as constructions that are both entangled and dependant on each other.²⁹⁹ Within such a conceptual framework, respectable conduct becomes an expression of patriotism, and women like the *tyskerjenter* are "seen as sick in opposition to the normal, and as perverse in contrast to the decent" Lenz argues.³⁰⁰ However, the final interpretation of the punishment of the *tyskerjenter* presented by Lenz moves not much beyond the assertion that these women transgressed entangled norms of morality and good national conduct, and the argument that their violent sanctioning was a means for the "symbolic restoration of national boundaries and national integrity, and also as a restoration of the national, sexual order".³⁰¹ In this respect, it is telling that this remains one of the most comprehensive interpretative treatments of the sanctioning of the *tyskerjenter* within the Norwegian historiography.

Another interpretative effort which stands out within the historiography is that of another non-historian, namely German author Ebba D. Drolshagen. This effort is not presented in the form of a coherent analysis however, but rather made up of several interpretative reflections that are spread throughout Drolshagens's book. As such, the fact that this is one of the most elaborate interpretations offered within the works dealing with this history also attests to the interpretative silence within the historiography. Drolshagen's interpretation of the punishments deals with the more general questions of why women who engage intimately

²⁹⁷ Lenz, "Gendered Relations," 101; Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*.

²⁹⁸ Lenz, "Gendered Relations," 101.

²⁹⁹ Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*.

³⁰⁰ Lenz, "Til sengs med fienden," 144.

³⁰¹ Lenz, "Til sengs med fienden," 163.

with enemy soldiers provoke such anger in their compatriots, and why some of these women are subjected to harsh punishments, rather than the specific case of the *tyskerjenter*.

For Drolshagen, both this anger and the punishment of women accused of such transgressions can be linked to male domination of women and the understanding of the woman as the property of the nation, and of the men in her family – a property which upon marriage is transferred to the woman's husband.³⁰² The author also mobilises what Virgili has referred to as “standard interpretations”,³⁰³ namely interpretations that attribute the sanctioning of these women to the need for scapegoats and revenge after the war, or see it as a way for those who joined the Resistance at the very end of the war to assert their patriotism.³⁰⁴ The perhaps most interesting part of the perspectives offered by Drolshagen relates to how the social class of the woman in question seems to have played a role in whether or not she was punished.³⁰⁵ As seen above, this is a dimension that has not been granted much attention by neither Warring nor Virgili. In general, the interpretation presented by Drolshagen is characterised by eclecticism and the author's own reflections, as well as by an unwavering feminist lens.

Regarding the interpretation of the head shavings, Virgili has made the following comment: “Why should hair be cut off? As a symbol of femininity the head of hair is reason enough and questions could stop here.”³⁰⁶ The interpretations found in the history writing on the *tyskerjenter* generally echo this level of superficiality: for Ericsson, these women were perceived as “sexual traitors to the nation” and their internment was “a way to cleanse the social body”.³⁰⁷ For Papendorf, *tyskerjenter* were interned “in order to satisfy the Norwegian population's great need to see them punished for their transgression of important social norms in wartime society”, and because they “represented a weak group of victims, from whom ... little resistance was to be expected”.³⁰⁸ For Pedersen, the anger directed at these women was due to a “mixture of national sentiment, jealousy and sexual morality”.³⁰⁹

³⁰² Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 53-58.

³⁰³ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 1; 5.

³⁰⁴ Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 38-40; 172.

³⁰⁵ See, for instance, Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 47.

³⁰⁶ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 181.

³⁰⁷ Ericsson, “Love and War,” 155.

³⁰⁸ Papendorf, “Accused of Being ‘German Whores’,” 187-188; 199.

³⁰⁹ Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 87.

Conversations across borders?

In the Norwegian historiography, the punishment of the *tyskerjenter* is almost always articulated as a part of a wider European history of how women accused of ‘fraternisation’ were punished in the context of the Second World War. Aarnes and Pedersen for instance, state that women suspected of ‘fraternisation’ had their heads shaved “in all German-occupied countries”, and “all over Europe”, respectively.³¹⁰

Despite this articulation of it as a case study in a broader European history, the Norwegian historiography tends to treat the punishment of the *tyskerjenter* as a national history. Admittedly, the newer works on the topic frequently cite or refer to insights from Warring and Virgili’s analyses.³¹¹ However, these citations – from what I above have demonstrated to be two complex and elaborate interpretations – are subjected to little discussion or critical engagement, and often come across as substitutes for an analytical elaboration on the part of the author. Furthermore, the authors in question rarely discuss the validity of the respective analysis for the Norwegian context. This is particularly interesting when considering the emphasis put by Virgili on the fact that his analysis pertains specifically to the context of the French head shavings and has no wider ambitions.

Furthermore, the reader can note that Olsen, who has undertaken the most comprehensive study to date on the history of the *tyskerjenter* does not at all engage with Warring’s interpretation.³¹² (Virgili’s book was not published when Olsen published his book *Krigens barn*). In a similar vein, Lenz, who notes that women accused of ‘fraternisation’ “were mocked all over Europe”, interestingly does not mention the work of Warring nor that of Virgili.³¹³ Drolshagen cites parts of the interpretations presented by Virgili, Warring, and others who have written on the history of ‘fraternising women’ in the wider European context, such as the French philosopher Alain Brossat.³¹⁴ However, the author only to a very little degree *interacts* with these interpretations in the sense that she discusses and critically engages with them.³¹⁵ The reader can note that such lack of conversations and critical engagement between works characterises not only the wider European historiography, but

³¹⁰ Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, 41; Pedersen, *Vi kalte dem tyskertøser*, 81.

³¹¹ See, for instance, Ericsson, “Love and War,” 152-153; Johannesen, “*Tyskertøsene*”, 13-14.

³¹² Olsen mentions Warring’s book, but does not interact with the analysis presented in it. See Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 436.

³¹³ Lenz, “Til sngs med fienden,” 141.

³¹⁴ See, for instance, Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 38; 158-159.

³¹⁵ An exception can be found in Drolshagen’s criticism of Warring’s argument relating to how the *tyskerpiger* became ‘political actors’ when they were seen socialising in public with German soldiers during the occupation of Denmark. See Drolshagen, *De gikk ikke fri*, 69-72.

also the ways in which different works relate to each other within the Norwegian historiography.

When it comes to Warring, one might expect, given the Europe-wide ambitions of her analysis, an interaction with interpretations that have been presented in other national contexts. However, while drawing upon the empirical findings of other scholars such as Virgili in order to present her interpretation as relevant to a wider European history,³¹⁶ Warring does not really interact with the analyses offered in these works. This must be considered in light of the fact that Warring's study of the Danish *tyskerpiger* from 1994 was the first elaborate study of the history of women who had affairs with German soldiers in occupied Europe to be conducted.³¹⁷ However, this does not explain why Warring does not explicitly engage with the interpretation offered by for instance Virgili in her later works.³¹⁸

While briefly engaging with other works within the historiography of the *femmes tondues*, Virgili does not at all enter into a conversation with Warring's analysis.³¹⁹ This is somewhat surprising, given that Virgili points out Denmark as the only country besides France in which head shavings as a practice occurring in the twentieth century has been studied in depth, and that it is Warring who has conducted this study.³²⁰ Furthermore, the French historian reveals that he is not familiar with the contents of Warring's book, when he states that "the study of sentimental relationships" between people from enemy camps, such as that between German occupier and a citizen from an occupied country "has been *completely neglected* by historians of the twentieth century and especially by those of the periods of war".³²¹ Precisely such relationships between Danish women and German occupants are part of the focus of Warring's study.³²²

Such relationships also figure prominently in the research presented in Kåre Olsen's book on the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* and their children.³²³ Interestingly, Virgili seems to be unaware of

³¹⁶ See Warring, "Sexual Relations".

³¹⁷ Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 7.

³¹⁸ In the newest edition of her book, Warring notes that the later formulations of her interpretation, which is the ones examined in this thesis, are inspired by Virgili's analysis of the French head shavings. However, being inspired by an analysis is not the same as explicitly interacting with this analysis and making this clear to the reader – which is the topic that here is under scrutiny. Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 18.

³¹⁹ See Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 5; 172; 231-237.

³²⁰ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 213.

³²¹ Perhaps this lack of knowledge can be partly attributed to a lack of knowledge of the language in which this book is written. However, this is a strong statement and thus not one that should be made without having knowledge of the contents of the only other in-depth study that has been conducted. Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 28.

³²² However, the reader can note that Warring treats these relationships from the woman's perspective. As noted in the first chapter, the perspective and agency of the German soldiers remain largely absent also in the Norwegian historiography. See Warring, *Tyskerpiger*, 61-86 and Warring, "Hverken ofre eller forrædere".

³²³ See Olsen, *Krigens barn*.

the existence of this book. In his overview of the European historiography, the French historian cites Norway as an example of a country in which “we have only found an occasional mention of the practice [of head shaving]”.³²⁴ In his book, which was published two years before that of Virgili, Olsen devotes a chapter to the examination of the Norwegian head shavings.³²⁵

I conclude that the history of the punishment of women accused of ‘fraternisation’ with German soldiers during the Second World War – although often formulated as part of a European history – largely has been written within the boundaries of the individual national historiographies. In other words, little conversation can be heard across national borders when it comes to questions of how the punishment of these women is to be interpreted.

³²⁴ Virgili, *Shorn Women*, 215.

³²⁵ Olsen, *Krigens barn*, 262-272.

Conclusion

Going into this project, I was interested in finding out how historians and other writers of history had made sense of the history of the Norwegian women who had intimate affairs with German soldiers during the occupation of Norway. These women were often subjected to punishments, both at the hands of individuals from their local communities, and by Norwegian authorities after the war. As such, I also wanted to examine how those writing the history of these women had interpreted these punishments. Moreover, I wished to find out how the Norwegian historiography related to the most comprehensive works on the histories of the French *femmes tondues* and Danish *tyskerpiger*. The dimension I was most interested in when exploring these questions, was what *meaning* could be read from the ways in which this history had been made sense of, interpreted, and from the various ways in which how it was told and imagined differed from or aligned with the French and Danish historiographies. In the following, I summarise my main arguments, before presenting some larger lines that can be drawn from my findings in this thesis.

Firstly, in this thesis I have argued that this is a history that can be pointed to as particularly ‘difficult’ in more respects than one, and that this can help explain the little attention that has been paid to it by professional historians. The history of the *tyskerjenter* presents several fundamental challenges to the ‘master narrative’ of the history of the five years during which Norway was occupied by Nazi Germany. It also, as I have demonstrated, challenges the image of the Second World War as fight war between ‘good and evil’. Furthermore, this is a history in which topics that many historians find challenging to deal with – such as those relating to sex, sexuality, emotions, and the female body – play a central role. Secondly, I have argued that this history – as it has been written – also is one of silences, and that there are intriguing gendered dimensions to be found in several of these silences.

Thirdly, I have argued that the history writing on the *tyskerjenter* is strikingly empiricist, particularly when considering the emphasis put on uncovering details relating to the punishment of women accused of being *tyskerjenter*. Questions relating to how the fact that these women were punished is to be interpreted, and to the meaning inherent in the specific ways in which this punishment was carried out, have received interestingly little scrutiny. As such, the Norwegian history writing differs from that found in France and Denmark, where the most important works on the women who engaged intimately with the German occupiers

are centred precisely around the question of how the sanctioning of these women is to be understood.

One of the wider lines that can be drawn from the analysis presented in this thesis relates to the challenges made to the understanding of the Allies as Nazi Germany's inherently 'good' opposite: pertinent challenges that have been presented have to do with how the authorities and people of the Allied nations treated and discussed members of their own nations,³²⁶ with how many Allied nations closed their doors to Jewish refugees fleeing persecution, and with how Allied soldiers behaved towards the inhabitants of the nations in which they were stationed. Interesting work in the latter regard has recently been conducted by Irish historian Ruth Lawlor.³²⁷ Lawlor's work sheds light on how the rape of local women by Allied soldiers was widespread in many of the countries in which these soldiers were stationed. Furthermore, it emphasises how the ways in which we remember history can be read as a consequence of politics: for instance, the history of how German women were raped by Allied soldiers towards the end of the Second World War is to this day "associated above all with the Soviet 'Rape of Berlin'".³²⁸

As such, Lawlor's work illustrates the importance of examining the remembrance of history with a view to how this memory serves other interests and interacts with other discourses – such as Western depictions of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Scrutinising the remembrance of history and the interests tied to this memory includes, as demonstrated in this thesis, examining the parts of history that have been granted little or no attention. In this respect, one can note that one further dimension which might explain why the history of the *tyskerjenter* and that of the war children have been paid so little attention in Norwegian depictions of the war, relates to how these histories clash with important components of Norway's national image.

An integral part of this image, which is cultivated not only within Norway but also projected outwards to the international community, is the understanding of Norway as "a great moral power".³²⁹ As shown in this thesis, the history of how the *tyskerjenter* and their children by

³²⁶ Examples include the women – such as the Norwegian *tyskerjenter* – who had affairs with enemy soldiers, as well as the children they had by these soldiers. Another pertinent example relates to the Allied nations' treatment of their Jewish inhabitants.

³²⁷ See, Lawlor, "Contested Crimes" and Lawlor, "The Stuttgart Incident: Sexual Violence and the Uses of History*."

³²⁸ Lawlor, "The Wartime Battlefield of Sex," 210.

³²⁹ Lægveid, "Humanitær assistanse som realpolitikk," 299.

German soldiers were treated and discussed by Norwegian authorities after the war challenges this notion of exceptional national morality.

But the history of the *tyskerjenter* challenges not only this wider image of Norway as a nation with a morality that goes beyond that of most other nations – it also threatens specific parts of it. These include the understanding of Norway as a defender of human rights – and linked to this – as a nation that can point to a long history of gender equality.³³⁰ The arrestation and internment of Norwegian women who were accused of having had affairs with German soldiers by Norwegian authorities after the war does not fit with these understandings: the women were punished without having committed any crime according to Norwegian law, and the Norwegian men who had affairs with German women were not subjected to such punishments. Nor were the Norwegian men who had married German women during the war denaturalised and expelled from the national territory – unlike their female counterparts.

The apology granted from the Norwegian government to the *tyskerjenter* in 2018 should be considered in line with the challenges posed by this history to Norway's nation-branding and self-image.³³¹ That the government also perceived this history as a threat to specifically the parts of Norway's image which relate to its focus on human rights and history of gender equality, is indicated by the text of this apology: this text emphasises how the treatment of these women is an example of how the values that were later codified in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* were challenged after the war. It also presents the treatment of the *tyskerjenter* as an example of the vulnerability of women in times of war.³³² Furthermore, the apology was presented in the context of an event celebrating the 70th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Consequently, this apology can be read as an attempt to turn the challenges posed by the history of the *tyskerjenter* into a display of contemporary Norway's commitment to gender equality and human rights.³³³ This is but one example of how history can help us in developing a more critical and nuanced understanding of also the present.

The topics treated in this thesis also raise interesting questions relating to the relationship between the obligations that citizens of a nation have towards this nation, and the duties that the authorities of a nation have towards its citizens. As demonstrated in this thesis, our

³³⁰ See, for instance, Larsen, "The gender-progressive Nordics", 33.

³³¹ For more on 'nation-branding', see, for instance, Larsen, Moss, and Skjelsbæk, *Gender Equality and Nation Branding in the Nordic Region*.

³³² Statsministerens kontor, "Unnskyldning til 'tyskerjentene'."

³³³ Speaking in favour of such an interpretation is the fact that this apology can be considered 'empty' in the sense that it did not come with any financial compensation.

understanding of this relationship is changeable and contextual: after the war, the women who had had affairs with German soldiers were widely considered, also by Norwegian authorities, to have acted against their duties as Norwegian citizens.³³⁴ Today, almost eight decades later, and as demonstrated by Solberg's apology to these women, the prevalent opinion is rather that it was the Norwegian authorities who acted in breach of their obligations towards the women accused of being *tyskerjenter* in their treatment of them after the war.

Furthermore, the analysis presented in this thesis naturally brings forth intriguing questions pertaining to the writing of history. One of these relates to the question of who the parts of the past that are conceived of as history 'belong to'. This becomes pertinent when the history in question relates to the personal lives of ordinary individuals, and furthermore, when these individuals are still alive and do not wish for their stories to be told. As noted in this thesis, most of the Norwegian women who had affairs with German soldiers during the occupation did not wish to speak of this part of their past, and some of them even tried to prevent this history from being written. This puts the history writer into a challenging position. Are the pasts of individuals public property? Perhaps the answer is that the parts of the past that are conceived of as history are at the same time private and common property, and that it is the task of the historian to navigate this difficult landscape. In any case, the reader can note that the ambivalence relating to whether the experiences of the *tyskerjenter* are private or public is present throughout the works dealing with this history.

A second question relating to the craft of the historian that has been brought up in this thesis, has to do with the level of agency attributed to the individuals depicted in history writing: are these individuals – as I have argued has largely been the case in the historiography of the French *femmes tondues* – written as 'someone something happens to', or are they rather given the ability to make decisions, feel emotions, and think? And furthermore, are there patterns when it comes to which groups of historical actors are granted this level of agency, and which groups are not being paid attention at all? In this thesis, I have highlighted the silences in the historiography relating to the history of the Sami *tyskerjenter* and to same-sex relationships between the occupiers and the occupied. Furthermore, I have emphasised the marginalisation of women within history writing which does not specifically flag itself as gender or women's history, and in particular within the historiography of war and conflict. There exist no tests such as the Bechdel test for works of history, but maybe this is something that should be

³³⁴ These perceived duties were of course, as emphasised in chapter two, heavily gendered.

considered.³³⁵ Such tests would serve to denaturalise the understanding of historical depictions as equivalent to ‘the true past’ by emphasising all the decisions that go into creating these portrayals of the past – decisions that too often are taken for granted, not only by the reader, but also by those writing these histories.

³³⁵ The Bechdel test is a test used to highlight the presence or absence of women within a given film, as well as how the female characters of a film are represented.

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