Gender, Nation, Rape: Intersections of Gender and Ethnic Violence during the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the case of mass rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 war, the issue of systematic war rape made an unprecedented breakthrough into the international political arena. The stories of mass rapes of Bosnian Muslim women by Serbian military and paramilitary forces went on the front pages of the Western media in 1992 and 1993, which reported on the opening of rape camps throughout the country. These rapes were connected to campaigns of ethnic cleansing, which aimed at making certain territories ethnically 'pure' and homogenous, by forcing members of certain ethno-national groups to leave these territories. However, within the former Yugoslavia, long-established feminists tended to maintain gender as central to their analyses of rape, seeing it as a common weapon of war, directed primarily against women, regardless of their nationality. This anti-nationalist view was contrasted with the "genocidal rape"[1] view, which saw the rapes of Muslim women in Bosnia as a unique historical phenomenon conducted by men of the Serb ethnic group. What followed from the debates on the phenomenon of mass rapes in Bosnia are two opposing views: one looking at rape as a gender crime against women of all nationalities (but not taking into the account that men were also raped in this war), and the other looking only at those rapes perpetrated by Serb men against Muslim women (but not considering rapes committed against members of Croat and Serb ethnic groups or those rapes committed by non-Serbs). In the first view, rape was treated as a *weapon* of war, used against women; in the second, rape was a *form* not only of war, but of genocide.[2]

'Genocidal rape' view was appropriated mostly by patriotic, i.e. nationalist, feminist groups in Croatia, as well as some Western feminists who supported them (e.g. Catherine

[1] The term "genocidal rape view", as well as "global feminist view" which I use later in the thesis, is taken over from Helms (1998). The term is also widely used in Allen (1996).
[2] Hayden, 2000:28.

MacKinnon). They argued that only Serbs were perpetrators of these rapes and that only Muslim and, to some extent, Croat women were the victims. These feminist groups include Croatian organizations such as *Kareta, Trešnjevka,* and *Bedem ljubavi*, and Bosnian groups *Biser* and *Žene BiH*. This thesis,

However, in this thesis, the term *genocide* in relation to mass rapes is problematized, since not all war-time rapes necessarily qualify as being *genocidal*. It is argued that classification of rapes in Bosnia as a means of genocide is dangerous, because it poses a threat of reifying the existing gendered and ethnic divisions among people and enables political elites to manipulate wartime rapes and their victims.

There was, however, another problematic approach to the issue, the 'global feminist' approach[3], which could have been discerned during the *Mother Courage II* tour in the U.S. focusing on war rapes in the former Yugoslavia, as I discuss later in the thesis. Taken mostly by Western feminists, this approach saw the crimes as those committed by men against women, perpetrated on all sides of the conflict. However, the effect of this approach, although this was not explicitly said, was classification of the war in the Balkans as one in which 'all sides are equally guilty'. None of the mentioned approaches painted a complete picture of what was going on in Bosnia.

1.1 Thesis Statement

The thesis argues that a study of war-time rape has to incorporate an international, a local or regional, and an individual level. Thus, the thesis tries to explain the differences between the global, local, and individual discourses about Bosnian war rapes. It deals with rape as a form of warfare that appeared during the war in former Yugoslavia. Although

[3] Helms (1998).

violence, and in particular sexual violence, was characteristic of much of the conflicts throughout former Yugoslavia, this thesis specifically focuses on the episodes of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It challenges both the gender and ethnic approaches to the violence, as it tries to show that both of these views on rape are selective and do not provide a complete picture. Both of them collectivise victims of rape, one by gender and the other by ethnicity, thus subordinating the individual to the collective. The thesis shows this by contrasting the discourses which highlighted the victimization of women (but ignored the fact that men, too, were raped during the war in Bosnia) with those which looked at it only through categories of nation or ethnicity, so that women were portrayed as nameless and faceless members of a particular national or ethnic group.

Thus, the thesis argues that rapes in Bosnia have to be examined while paying special attention to both gender and ethnicity in order to see how the two overlap, and warns that focusing on either one of them only helps sustain the rhetoric of nationalist political leaders of all warring sides, who used the meaning of rape as a war strategy for their own causes and manipulated gender and national identities of the local people. Finally, the thesis suggests that, although Bosnian war rapes should be analysed within the context of ethnic and gender identities, because both of these aspects of identity were instrumental for the development and usage of rape as a war strategy, what should not be forgotten is the individual identity and individual voices of the victims, which usually tend to be voiced over by other actors in most of the analysis of this phenomenon.

1.2 Research Question

The thesis tries to delineate and analyze various local and Western feminists', scholars', and media discourses on the rapes in Bosnia during the 1992-1995 war. It differentiates three different approaches and argues that all of them failed to address the issue in its entirety and were selective in their analyses, concentrating on either only gender or only ethnic identity of the victims.

Moreover, the thesis problematizes the usage of the term *genocide* in the context of war rapes, and also looks at how this relates to other types of war-time rapes that cannot be characterised as being *genocidal*. It questions the sustainability and validity of the classification of rapes in Bosnia as a means of genocide by showing that such classification only reified the gendered and ethnic divisions among the local population and enabled the political elites to manipulate wartime rapes and their victims. Condemning only 'genocidal rape' threatens that other rapes (such as those of Serbs, of men, or intraethnic rapes) will be made invisible. The process of homogenizing (Bosniac[4]) women as rape victims and (Serb) men as rapists is dangerous because it condemns only those rapes committed in the name of ethnic groups. Because war rapes and other kinds of violence against women were so closely interlinked within categories of nation and ethnicity, they could be defined as a strategy of war and prosecuted as war crimes, i.e. punished, only if there were a "large" number of rapes happening, if they were "systematic" and followed "an overall pattern"[5].

Another aim of the thesis is to challenge the uniformity and passivity with which identities of the victims of rape were narrowed to their collective identities (ethnic and gender identities) in most of the international, as well as some local, discourses on the topic. The

[4] What is meant by 'Bosniac' is Slav Muslim population in Bosnia. The term 'Bosnian', on the other hand, is usually used to include members of all three ethnicities (Bosniacs, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats) living on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[5] Bassiouni. et. al. (1996).

controversy of the collectivization of the raped Bosnian Muslim women is discussed and challenged.

1.3. Methodology and Outline of the Chapters

This thesis uses discourse analysis, which centres on the idea that all meaning is contextual, relational and contingent, in order to analyse the theoretical framework through which (Western) scholars, feminists, and the media have examined rapes happening during ethno-national conflicts and how this was applied to the case of war in Bosnia. The main proposition of discourse analysis is that our access through reality is inevitably and always through language and that our discursive representations of reality contribute to the construction of our social and cultural realities. Discourse analysis claims that language is central to our knowledge of reality and that it is possible to know reality through linguistic construction only[6]. The language does more than just describe, so that the meaning of words is dependant on their discursive context. As Thomas Diez put it – "discourses do not 'cause' but 'enable'".[7]

Therefore, the fields of language and politics cannot and should not be separated and *political discourse* is conceived as both constitutive *of* and constituted *by* the political reality. Political discourses not only create identities, but they are also necessary in order to maintain them; in case those dominant discourses are weakened, some other discourse assumes their privileged place.

Throughout the thesis, although my analysis includes many different sources, ranging from feminist publications, academic studies to press reports, I mostly concentrate on few

[6] Weaver (2005).
[7] Diez, 1999:598-613.

selected texts, which I chose because I consider them to be particularly representative of a certain discourse. This is either because I consider them as especially well-known and influential or because they comprise the most important arguments.

Thus, I will be using mostly statements, letters and press releases of both, as I call them throughout the thesis, 'patriotic' or 'nationalist' and 'non-nationalist' feminist groups, in order to analyse the discourse(s) they were using when talking about the issue of rapes and to see how the two are contrasted. To illustrate the two sides' positions I will specifically examine the *Mother Courage II* tour, organized in the U.S. with the aim of raising the awareness about what was going on in Bosnia. What follows is a discussion of the questions raised by the debate which arose during the tour.

The thesis also looks as some Western media reports, such as articles in a feminist journal *Off Our Backs* and an issue of *Village Voice*, in order to see how the debate which followed from the tour and the split between former Yugoslav feminists was seen by their Western counterparts and whether they appropriated the same kind of discourse as feminists from the region. Moreover, I look at a publication edited by Alexandra Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape. The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, since it includes texts by Western feminist scholars (such as Catherine MacKinnon and Susan Brownmiller) and journalists (Roy Gutman), and examine how the phenomenon was understood and in what way it was presented by Western observers.

In the second chapter, the thesis discusses the theoretical framework relying mostly on Susan Brownmiller[8] and other authors on the use and meaning of rape in war. Brownmiller argues that rape is not about sex, but about gendered power. In the same way, rape committed and represented in the name of collective identities, as in many forms of wartime rape, is based on understandings of gender and sexuality.

[8] See Brownmiller (1975).

The thesis continues with an examination of the construction of ethnic 'others' and ethnic 'selves' in the nationalist ideologies of the former Yugoslavia. Next, it discusses how ethnicities were gendered before and during the war. Gender imagery in the Yugoslav wars was important, since gender identities were continually manipulated in order to gain public support for war and to sabotage any public opposition to the war. It also explores the intersections of gender, sexuality and nationalism and shows how this was manifested during the war in Bosnia.

Further, the thesis analyzes various texts with the help of Dubravka Žarkov's[9] approach, which assumes that practices are both represented and constructed through the use of certain discourses. This approach offers critical analysis of co-existing and competing discourses in accordance with basic principles of discourse analysis. Žarkov argues that discourses about "ethnic purity" of ethnic groups in the Balkans and about the victimhood of "ethnic hatred" by various 'Others' provided justification for nationalist projects and enabled ethnic war in the first place. She also provides a comparative in depth analysis of masculinities and femininities and shows how they relate to the rape victim identity in the former Yugoslavia.[10]

The thesis continues by looking at how this kind of identity was created through the use of particular discourses which victimized gender and national identities before the start of the war. The victimization discourse, which dominated the public sphere before the war, is important because it introduced a dichotomy between the feminized victim and the masculinised perpetrator. The politics which used such a dichotomy was driven by gendered assumptions, which contributed to the eventual outbreak of war and to the idea that the aim of the war was to create homogeneous identities.

[9] See Žarkov (1995).
[10] See Žarkov (2007).

As already mentioned above, the thesis, in the third chapter, turns to look at feminist debates, in order to show how the issue of mass rapes created divisions even among feminists, both internationally and in the former Yugoslavia. For this reason, the thesis looks at writings by Western feminist scholars such as Catherine MacKinnon. MacKinnon sided with 'nationalist', i.e. 'patriotic', feminists who argued that only Serb men perpetrated rapes against Muslim and (to a lesser extent) Croatian women, condemning anti-nationalist feminists from the region who tried to put an emphasis on feminist solidarity rather than ethnic identification.

Furthermore, the thesis analyzes discourses by such anti-nationalist feminists as Vesna Kesić and others, who critique the effects of MacKinnon's theory as they relate to feminist anti-war efforts in Croatia.

However, as the thesis argues, much of the feminist scholarship and organizations focused on women's (and particularly on Bosnian Muslim women's) victimization, thus disregarding the fact that men too were victims of sexual violence during the Bosnian war. Long-established feminists of the former Yugoslavia asserted gender as central to their analyses, seeing rape as a common weapon of war directed mainly against women. For this reason, few academic texts have ever mentioned that men have also been sexually assaulted during the war in former Yugoslavia, although the United Nations Commission of Experts Final Report and other reports[11] list numerous cases of sexual violence against men. That is why the thesis turns to reports such as that by M. Cherif Bassiouni and Marcia McCormick, who have reported that males, as well as females, were raped and sexually tortured during the war in former Yugoslavia, as were Serb females; and argue that Muslim and Croat forces also used rape and sexual torture as weapons of war and ethnic cleansing[12].

[11] See, for example, Amnesty International Report (1993).
[12] Bassiouni. et. al. (1996).

During the 1990s, the academic interest in conflicts in the former Yugoslavia largely focused on research on women's war victimization. In addition to the academia, the media from different parts of Yugoslavia, as well as the international media, also contributed to the creation of a new kind of identity – the Rape Victim Identity.[13] However, as I argue in the final chapter, most of the scholarship and analyses of this topic failed to address and include voices of victims themselves, as well as their testimonies and experience of what happened. For this purpose, the thesis attempts to emphasise the importance of not silencing individual voices in discussions about war-time rapes and argues against collectivization of victims and in favour of a more individual approach to the issue.

[13] This term is taken over from Žarkov (1997).

2. RAPE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, the theoretical framework on the usage and meaning of rape in war is analysed. The discussion focuses mostly on the theoretical work of Susan Brownmiller.

The chapter continues with an analysis of the construction of ethnic 'others' and ethnic 'selves' in the nationalist ideologies of the former Yugoslavia. Next, it discusses how ethnicities were gendered before and during the war and what role gendered and victimized ethnic identities played in the preparation for the war. It also explores the intersections of gender, sexuality and nationalism and shows how this was manifested during the war in Bosnia.

2.1 Meaning of Rape in Time of War

Sexual violence has been a recurring outcome of many wars. The nature of sexual violence differs within and between armed conflicts and can take many forms; it can encompass such crimes as rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, torture, forced impregnation, and forced prostitution[14]. The use of rape as a strategy of warfare is also an old phenomenon; throughout history, rape was not only a reward for the victorious soldier, but also a means of destroying the social relations among the conquered population, by creating a divide between polluted females and emasculated males. Thus, as Susan Brownmiller points out, masses of German women were raped by Russian soldiers at the end of World War II, as were Jewish and other non-German women in German-held concentration camps. Japanese soldiers used Korean and other non-Japanese women to boost their morale,

[14] Niarchos (1995).

while, more recently, Tutsi women were also raped systematically and on a large scale in Rwanda.

Christine Chinkin argues that "women are raped in all forms of armed conflict, international and internal, whether the conflict is fought primarily on religious, ethnic, political or nationalist grounds, or a combination of all these".[15] Women have been raped in countless wars for a variety of different reasons: as retaliation, to damage another man's 'property', and to send a 'message' to the enemy. However, as Skjelsbæk argues, "feminist scholarship has brought an understanding of rape and sexual violence as instances of violence, dominance and control aimed at maintaining patriarchy and women's subordinate position within this social order."[16] The use of sexual violence in times of war can, thus, be viewed as reaffirming patriarchal hierarchies between men and women. However, such interpretations do not evaluate how ethnic, religious, and political power relations interact with gender relations in an understanding of patriarchy.

Ruth Seifert, for example, outlines the purpose of rape and suggests that in the context of war (in and after), the function of rape can be theorized by five possible interpretations based on the gendered notions of masculinities and femininities. These five interpretations include: rape as part of the 'rules' of war; the abuse of women as an element of male communication; rape as the result of elevation of masculinity that accompanies war in Western cultures; rapes in wartime aiming at destroying the opponent's culture; and rape as culturally rooted contempt for women that is lived out in times of crisis[17]. Seifert suggests that much of the power of rape in war is based on the constructions of femininity and masculinity: the social construction of femininity as passive, vulnerable, in need of protection; and masculinity as the

[15] Chinkin (1994).
[16] Skjelsbæk (2001).
[17] Seifert, however, explains that these five theories are by no means exhaustive; rather it is her intent to "single out certain aspects of rape in war and make them accessible to analysis" (Seifert, 1994: 58).

active, aggressive doer.[18] Within the military, the use of violence is, to an extent, seen as an easy way to achieve masculinity, particularly as a way to exercise power over other men. The use of violence by the military can be, thus, understood as a strategy to exercise control over other people, which is effective since it strengthens the perpetrator's masculinity by weakening that of the victim.[19]

In this context, sexual violence in war has also been explained as part of a logic in which men send messages to other (enemy) men and bodies of women become simply means through which this message is sent. In this communication process, men communicate with their enemies by using the enemy's women as a sign of communication.[20] Men of the conquered nation are supposed to view the rape of 'their women' as the ultimate humiliation and as part of their defeat, as well as of their demasculinization.[21] Rape sends a message that men of the defeated side are powerless. It dishonours women and implies a connection with a symbolic castration of their men. This way of sending messages becomes even more powerful and telling when female bodies are made equal with the body of the nation, as will be discussed later.

According to Susan Brownmiller, despite the changing nature of the ways in which wars are fought, there still continues to be a realization and expectation that rape will occur during war based on the military mentality, which views rape as "standard operating procedure" during armed conflict[22]. However, Brownmiller says that the emphasis on rape as a form of warfare specific to only one side in a conflict, i.e. to the army of only one nation, was used to produce hatred and to mobilize the other side to continue fighting. She points to the fact that

[18] Seifert (1996).
[19] Although there seems to be some kind of correlation between 'masculinity' and violence, the use of violence should actually be understood as a possible means to achieve an end, namely masculinity, rather than an 'essential' component of *that* masculinity. (Žarkov, 2007).
[20] Seifert (1994).
[21] Brownmiller, 1975:38.
[22] Brownmiller, 1975: 107.

usually neither side admits that its soldiers rape, but they are all ready to point to the sexual violence committed by the enemy[23].

Brownmiller points out that, throughout history, rape was seen as part of warfare, but that it was also simultaneously accepted that male sexual needs had to be satisfied on or after the battlefield. She stresses that tolerance, expectation, and acceptance of rape during armed conflict still managed to persist in more recent wars. According to her, men still continue to rape in war because rape is the act of conqueror and thus seen as something that the winning side should do in order to show its supremacy over the enemy.[24] However, this theory proposes a view of men as essentially sexually aggressive and as releasing their suppressed masculine drives in the social situation of war, which makes it possible for them to act in this way. Brownmiller simply states that men, if given a possibility, will use a chance to rape. This is, however, a too simplistic representation which portrays masculine nature as given and unchangeable. [25]

In her work, focusing on both war-time and everyday rape, Brownmiller also argues to the fact that rape is not about sex, but about gendered power. Although rape has a sexual aspect as well, power and aggression dominate the situation. However, it remains to a great extent unexamined if and how sexual violence during wartime belongs to the same logic of patriarchal violence against women or whether it is an altogether different phenomenon from everyday, peacetime rape. If one perceives war-time rapes mainly as an expression of patriarchal violence committed by males against females, the larger context of a war remains unclear, and the roles women potentially play as agents in war remain unexamined. Thus,

[23] Ibid.
[24] Brownmiller, 1975:35.
[25] As Dubravka Žarkov notices, a similar essentialist view of Yugoslav masculinity as fundamentally violent can be found in Siglmayer (1994) and Ugrešić (1998). Ugrešić, for example, writes: "The people responsible for the war in former Yugoslavia, as indeed for every war, are men. Men invented and provoked the war, men participated in the war." (Ugrešić, 1998:120).

women will always be viewed as victims only, as I show later at the example of war-time rape victims in former Yugoslavia.

However, to move beyond Brownmiller's work, I believe that additional factors must be included in order to avoid generalizations. War-time rape cannot be fully understood outside the specific context in which it takes place. It is for this reason that I argue that we need to understand a combination of a number of factors that create the social setting and culture in which war-time sexual violence is possible and which justifies patriarchal values and traditional gender roles. I argue that nationalist ideology must be included as part of the equation, since it often views gender relations in patriarchal terms and legitimizes male domination over women. Thus, as Rejali suggests, "mass rape cannot be understood by emphasizing its unique or exceptional wartime character; rather, it can only be clarified and rendered intelligible in terms of every day forms of violence that are considered legitimate".[26]

Moreover, I propose that, to understand the widespread sexual abuse during the time of war, we must pay special attention to social situations in which the violence takes place. Some authors, discussing the context in which war rapes appear, have even determined chances of the occurrence of mass rapes during ethno-nationalist conflicts. Robert Hayden, using data from the partition of India and the war in Bosnia, argued that mass rape is likely when such conflicts take place during the partition of a territory and its population. According to him, war rapes happen in a state which is in transition between two stages and both its territory and control over it are uncertain. The use of sexual violence in this kind of conflict escalates because of the sense of unlikely consequences and retributions in the future. However, in conflicts in which territoriality of the state is not threatened, and thus groups feel that they will continue to coexist in the same territory once the war ends, Hayden claims that there is some evidence that rape is avoided[27].

[26] Rejali (1996).
[27] Hayden (2000).

In Bosnia, war rape was seen as a tool of ethnic cleansing, used in order to make sure that different ethnic groups of people could not live together again in the same territory once the war ends.[28] This was possible because many rapes have been committed by neighbour against neighbour, so that many victims knew the men who assaulted them and did not want to go back home and live in the same place as their perpetrators, after the war ended. Thus, I argue that, in order to understand the use of mass rape in Bosnia it is first necessary to put the conflict in its social context and to understand the way in which different ethnic groups coexisted and in which the Bosnian society as a whole functioned before the outbreak of the war.

2.2 *War Rapes in Former Yugoslavia – an Historical Exception?*

During the 1990s war in former Yugoslavia, rather than a sexual crime, rape became an element of national conflict. The rape of women in this war made a break through in international media and caught world-wide attention, because it was emphasized as a strategy of war. This, as a result, placed rape, occurring in the context of conflict, on the international agenda. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has argued for the explicit inclusion of wartime rape as a form of torture, as well as a crime against humanity, and has prosecuted rape in several trials.[29]

Historically, war-time rapes have attracted little international attention. Rape has been usually treated as an inevitable 'by-product' of war, which is why military tribunals rarely indicted or sanctioned acts of rape. It was ignored by the International Tribunals at Nuremberg and was not treated as a crime for which Japanese commanders would be

[28] Hayden (2000).
[29] See *Statute of the International Tribunal*, adopted 25 May 1993 as amended 13 May 1998; *Blaskic IT-95-14*; *Furundzija IT-95-17/1*; *Celebici IT-96-21*; on www.un.org/icty

separately charged at the Military Tribunal in Tokyo.[30] As they were perpetrated by the winning sides as well (but not only), war rapes were unlikely to be addressed and prosecuted in these trials. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 finally explicitly included it into its regulations.

Since rapes in Bosnia gained much public attention worldwide, they started to be discussed in the context of international human rights violation as "unique and unprecedented in history"[31]. What was suggested was that these rapes were terrible and horrid due the fact that they were committed on a large scale and had a systematic pattern. They were not condemned as violence against people as individuals, but only as far as they were seen as having 'genocidal' intent or being part of the phenomenon of 'mass' rapes. The widespread publicity of the rapes in Bosnia was actually part of a larger anger and disgust over Serb campaigns of ethnic cleansing of Bosnia's territory.

Moreover, although ICTY made an unprecedented recognition of gender-specific crimes, they were mostly understood as being directed at women, which ignored sexual crimes committed against men, as well as those rapes which did not follow a systematic pattern. These rapes were also discussed in the context of forced impregnation of women, which was seen as an attempt to destroy the reproductive potential of the whole nation, and not in the context of individual harm and trauma inflicted on the victims. Thus, it was not the individual act of sexual violence that was seen as horrific and as a crime which needed to be persecuted and punished.

The media, however, did use individual stories of victims to illustrate what was going on in Bosnia, but their stories were used in order to create the Muslim woman/girl rape victim identity, which I discuss in more detail later in the thesis.

[30] Copelon (1995); Enloe (1994).
[31] Kesić, 2001:32.

Another reason why the issue of rape in former Yugoslavia was made public, but this time by local political leaders, was because of its use as a weapon of propaganda - it suited a number of political agendas. Due to its negative social consequences, political elites turned to the use of sexual violence in order to help them reach their ultimate aim and that is the impossibility of any future coexistence among people of different ethnic groups.

Again, it seems that it was not the right of an (individual) woman to protection from sexual violation that nationalist governments saw as important, but their aim was to achieve wider political goals through (mis)use of victims' experience of violation. The use of rape in conflict to further these agendas resulted in further violations of women's dignity and integrity. They merely became victims or objects of their own experience. This status of victims for women and the image of women as victims is perhaps the most manipulated image associated with this war.

In order to see how this was made possible in the first place, one should first understand the ways in which ethnic 'others' and ethnic 'selves' were first constructed and then gendered before and during the war and what implications this had for future events.

2.3 Ethnic 'Other' in the Balkans

The representations of the war in the former Yugoslavia in both domestic and international media often included explanations such as that about the centuries-old 'ethnic hatred' among the Balkan peoples. The Balkans was presented as a primitive, backward and violent place, where ethnic hatreds were embedded in its landscape and the people[32]. The discourse employed was often merged with an 'Orientalised' discourse on the Balkans, which

[32] The most notorious example of such writing is Robert Kaplan's book *Balkan Ghosts* (1993), which is said to have even influenced the U.S. President Clinton and his (lack of) reactions to the events happening in Croatia and Bosnia.

saw it as Europe's "shadow, the structurally despised alter-ego"[33]. Thus, the Balkan people were viewed as uncivilised and racially different from the civilised Europeans.

However, the racialized 'Other' was internalised and also found many manifestations within the former Yugoslavia throughout the 1990s. The Slovene and Croat elites tried to present themselves as more civilized than other Balkan nations by trying to demonstrate their centuries-long belonging to Europe and to distance themselves from everything regarded as Balkan. However, the same rhetoric could be applied towards these nations as well, since Slovenes saw themselves as 'European' as opposed to 'Balkan' Croats, while Croatian nationalist elites thought of Croatia as being part of Europe in opposition to Serbia's (evident) belonging to the Balkans. Bakić-Hayden termed this phenomenon "nesting orientalisms"[34] and, according to her, it is evident in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states where the designation of the 'Other' has been appropriated by those who have themselves been designated as such. The way this phenomenon functions can clearly be viewed through the example of the Balkans, since the states and societies in the Balkans share the stigma of not matching the standard of Europeanness, despite their claims of belonging to Europe on the grounds of geography, history or culture.

However, all these Yugoslav peoples could still be characterized as South Slavs and Christians, while Muslims and Albanians were, on the other hand, perceived by Christians as clearly non-assimilated and alien 'Others'. Thus, this image of 'the Other' as an alien intruder was easily deployed against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslims were viewed by both Serbs and Croats as an 'artificial ethnicity' and were thus an easy target for ethnic cleansing[35]. Both Croats and Serbs saw Muslims as 'traitors' of their Catholic and Orthodox

[33] Todorova, 1997:18.
[34] Bakić-Hayden, 1995:917-931.
[35] Serbian and Croatian elites argued that Muslims were 'fallen' members of their own nation, who were forced to abandon their identity after the Ottoman conquest. This rhetoric made its easy for both sides (Serbs and Croats) to claim Bosnia's territory during the war, since both held that this was the territory of their own

religion respectively, who became 'an alien race' by converting to Islam. Michael A. Sells argues that: "Bosnian Slavic Muslims are thus doubly excluded from 'the people': first they became an alien race by converting to Islam; and second, it is the judgement of "the people" (…) that they have changed race along with religion".[36] Moreover, the problem which Muslims faced was the belief that "to convert to a religion other than Christianity was simultaneously to convert from the Slav race to an alien race".[37] This could be clearly viewed during the war in former Yugoslavia, when (nationalist) Croats and Serbs would refer to Bosnian Muslims as 'the Turks'. John Borneman, moreover, argues that:

> "because Serbs and Croats view Muslim 'betrayal' (…) as having a genetic base and therefore not a historical act (i.e. arbitrary, contingent), it marks the Muslims as non-Europeans forever more, which in turn mandates and validates Serbian action as necessary to protect 'Europe'. Submission further figures Muslims as feminine, not fully human and, therefore, not deserving of respect."[38]

By portraying the Muslims as racially different, the Croat and Serbian nationalist discourses created a ground for their annihilation, since the 'Other' is always viewed as incompatible with and in direct opposition to the ethnic 'self'. Supporters of this idea of racial differences between nations[39] also supported the idea of ethnically pure states, while employing the politics of self-victimization of their own nation and blaming others for ethnic hatred. The consequence of such thinking was the conclusion that the only possible solution to the problem is ethnic cleansing.

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people who converted to Islam in mass numbers during the Ottoman occupation. Friedman (1996); Sells (1996).

[36] Sells, 1996:46.

[37] Ibid., pp. 45

[38] Borneman, 1994:30.

[39] I understand the term 'nation' in accordance with Hurst Hannum's definition: "a self-identified group with certain shared characteristics, such as ethnicity, culture, religion or language, and a sense of political identity". Moreover, he defines 'ethnicity' as "a set of objective characteristics found in a group or a community that shares attributes such as physical traits, actual or believed common ancestry and culture, but that lacks the subjective sense of political identity that would lead to the group's designation as nation." (Hannum, 2000:405).

The violence of mass rape in Bosnia was part of the attempt to ethnically 'cleanse' this 'Other' race, and cases of forced impregnation of women from the other ethnic group demonstrated a racist ideology in these annihilation practices. The assumption was that one nation or an ethnic group could be destroyed by procreation of another nation, that is, by reducing the concentration of an ethnic group's blood. But in order to turn rape into a strategy of an ethnic war, the dominant discourse had, first, to define the female body as an *ethnic* female body.[40]

2.4 Ethnicity and Gender

As Wendy Bracewell notices, "a number of studies have explored the ways the community of the nation has been imagined and legitimated according to gendered metaphors of reproduction and kinship, and the ways nationalist politics have been structured with reference to gender."[41] The process of nation-building necessarily includes gendered roles for males and females of the nation in order to build and strengthen national identity[42].

Craig Calhoun argues that, since nationalism has been a distinctly gender-biased ideology, men are seen as "future martyrs" and "women as mothers".[43] Thus, most nationalist movements invite males to join the army and get politically involved, while females are called to maintain the nation by giving birth to its new members. In Julie Mostov's words, "women are biological reproducers of group members, of the ethno-nation. They bear sons to fight and daughters to care for the motherland."[44]

[40] Žarkov (1995).
[41] Bracewell, 2000:566.
[42] Yuval-Davis (1997).
[43] Calhoun, 1993:231.
[44] Mostov, 1995:518

But, except as reproducers of a nation, a nationalist discourse also sees women as potential enemies.[45] However, it is only the 'other' nation's women as reproducers who are seen as an enemy and a threat, which can possibly destroy one's own nation by their numerous offspring[46]. Thus, *all* women's bodies must be controlled. Since "the ethno-national concept of a nation defines the community as a family, motherhood and reproduction must be supervised by the guardians of the nation. Women's bodies as incubators are instrumental to the maintenance of the external and internal boundaries of the nation."[47] The dangerous 'Other' is thus inevitably gendered, since 'ethnic purity' is defined through birth into a community, and birth is necessarily connected with the female.[48]

Moreover, as Iveković points out, "the symbolic system of nationalism, in fact, needs the construction of 'the Other' as an indirect means for its domination; 'the Other' is thus its constituent part, painted in the negative and associated with values considered to be feminine."[49]

What follows are two interconnected ways in which this idea of ethnic/female 'Other' is understood in nationalist conflicts. In the first (discursive) one symbols, myths, and values of an ethnic group are represented through gendered, feminine metaphors. According to Žarkov, the common ones are "the birth of the group; the motherland that needs to be defended; the sacred soil that must not be polluted; the pure origin that stands no mixture; the motherland mourning the death of the sons killed by the enemy; and the motherland which sends her sons to the war"[50]. Following the logic of 'motherland' as a female construct, it is not surprising that, during the war in former Yugoslavia, one could read such formulations as

[45] Mostov (1994)
[46] One of the first gendered discourses in former Yugoslavia in the 1980s was the one on the demographic changes in the population. The high fertility rate among the Albanian population in Kosovo was the reason why the Serbian political leadership started alluding to wild and abnormal Albanian sexuality which would, eventually, result in the prevailing Albanian majority in Kosovo, a province seen as the centuries-old 'heart of Serbia'. See Bracewell (2000)
[47] Mostov, 1995:519.
[48] Žarkov (1995).
[49] Iveković, 2005:5-6.
[50] Žarkov, 1995:113.

"Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are being treated like women, women gang-raped on a mass scale."[51] However, as Rada Iveković points out, "one should not yield too easily to the belief, sometimes maintained by feminists as well, that the nationality (nation) being aggressed upon 'is the woman', which has been said of Croatia. According to this belief, 'Croatia is being raped and thus is a woman'."[52] By asserting that Bosnia and Croatia were female constructs and, thus, being raped, such discourses saw only women as rapable and reified their role as victims of rape.

The second way in which this ethnic/female concept functions during conflict is physical. The female body, in wars, is physically present and, thus, the male power has to draw the border of its own ethnic group on the bodies of 'other' ethnic group's women. This is done by defining women of the 'Other' through rape. "In this case, the female body is seen as the *ethnic female body*"[53].

In this mode of thinking, aggression against women through the control of their bodies is used to humiliate and destroy the honour of a nation's men, which in turn destroys the honour of the nation as a whole[54]. Many men, as well as nationalist discourses, see their masculinity being endangered by the abuse of 'their' women. In such system of communication, the intended targets are men whose manliness and honour are destroyed through this communication, and the raped women's bodies are used to achieve humiliation of and victory over the enemy[55]. By focusing on women's bodies as symbolic elements of (male) communication, this (dominant) approach to the study of the Bosnian war takes away the Bosnian Muslim women's personality and individuality, since in this context, the women are already defined as passive and voiceless victims. The woman victim was made visible within the war discourse through her body. She became the body itself. According to

[51] MacKinnon, 1994:193.
[52] Iveković, 2005:21.
[53] Žarkov (1995), author's emphasis.
[54] Coomaraswamy (2003).
[55] Seifert (1992).

Dubravka Žarkov, the vulnerability and powerlessness of the victimized female body justified many nationalist projects.[56]

Thus, in the war, individual women's bodies become both metaphoric and physical representations of the social and political body of the nation. Killing or damaging that body symbolically killed or damaged the woman's family and ethnic group, since an ethnic group is, according to Benedict Anderson, constructed as a "family writ large"[57]. Rape, thus, becomes meaningful when a woman's body is understood as the body of the whole nation, whose purity and fertility are degraded by degrading its symbol, i.e. the woman.

2.5 Gendered Victimization Discourses

Discourses of victimization played a central role in pre-war Yugoslavia and were significantly responsible for the creation of ethnic conflicts and the violence which followed.[58] In former Yugoslavia, victim discourses were largely gendered and political leaders manipulated gender imagery in order to mobilize population for the war.[59]

One of the most well-know examples of inter-ethnic rapes in Kosovo was used by nationalist politicians to establish a (gendered) victim discourse. The example is of a Serbian man, Đorđe Martinović, who reported having been raped by two Albanian men. Although he later took his allegations back and although the case was never clarified, fears of oppression and demographic decrease among the Serb population in Kosovo were roused by the rape

[56] However, according to Žarkov, "…the victim in the Serbian media and the victim in the Croatian media – while using similar representational strategies - are never the same. This is particularly so when the victim stands for the ethnic Self. While ultimately represented through the female body, the victimized Self in Serbian and Croatian media are very different. In the Serbian media, it is the Serbs – the ethnic group. In the Croatian media, it is not the Croats, the ethnic group, but Croatia – the nation-state." (Žarkov, 2007:85-86)

[57] Anderson (1983).

[58] This, of course, does not mean that victim identities were the sole factor for mobilizing people into ethnic conflicts and committing violence or that the two could be explained by a single factor only. On the symbolism of national victim identity in the former Yugoslavia see Denich (1994).

[59] Žarkov (1997a).

discourse. Rape and sexual assault became, in the late 1980s, a highly public political issue in the debate over the Serbs' status in Kosovo and accusations of Albanian rape of Serb women (and men) became a factor in the development of Serbian nationalism in the 1980s.[60]

The outbreak of the Kosovo war was preceded by a nationalized discourse on sexuality, in which gender imagery played a decisive role. The Kosovo Serbian population's fears of losing their status were linked to discourses on masculinity and fears of assault against Serbian women. Through nationalistic propaganda, suffering of the Serbian nation was presented as the suffering of Serbian men, who were unable to defend 'their' women from Albanian assaults. Discussions of rape were used to portray the victimization of the Serbian nation and to legitimate Serbian nationalism which, in the end, contributed to the outbreak of violence which followed the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The issue of rape in Kosovo and the sense of victimization were some of the most powerful tools used to gather mass support for Serbian separatist politics. Bracewell argues that rape in Kosovo was presented as an 'act of genocide' and 'an attack on the Serbian nation' and was used to feed the Serbian paranoia in an attempt to manipulate public opinion[61]. The nationalist political elites continued to emphasize sexual violence as a threat to the Serb nation in Kosovo, emphasizing the 'nationalist' aspect of rape in all public debates. The version of Serbian nationalism which was used by nationalist leaders, in relation to the Kosovo issue, employed a particular ideal of aggressive and competitive masculinity, which contributed to the emergence of violence in the following war.

However, when it came to sexual violence against women, Serbian nationalist interpretations of such violence did not stress the victim identity of women, but rather presented it as an attack on the Serbian masculine honour. Again, as in the case of raped Muslim women, the victim of rape was not an individual woman, but a woman of certain

[60] Bracewell (2000) and Mertus (1999a).
[61] Bracewell (2000).

nationality. Femininity was subordinated to nationality. Rape became the main method of inter-ethnic violence and ethnicities became gendered. Therefore, it was easy to use rape, later in the war, as a tool for victimization of the nation which needed a strong, masculine protection.

The way Serbian masculinity was presented in the case of Kosovo was the first step towards war – it created a belief that problems could and should be solved by the use of force. The use of violence was justified as a response to violence committed by Albanians and was seen as the only way of defending the national honour. In former Yugoslavia, the events in Kosovo introduced the idea that rape could be used by men to demonstrate their nation's power and created an atmosphere in which rape became an instrument of nationalist politics.

In discourses about rapes in Kosovo, men and women became identified only in terms of their nationality, which helped to create deep ethnic divisions among people. Their identities were constructed in terms of their differences, so that members of a different nationality were seen as 'the Others'. Throughout the former Yugoslavia, opportunistic political elites created an atmosphere in which it was possible to produce feelings of fear and danger of 'the Other'. Such mode of thinking, which saw 'the Other' ethnic group as different and dangerous, created a discourse which would later promote violence and enable the practices of ethnic cleansing.

It can be concluded, from the above-mentioned examples, that gender represented one of the most important identities in pre-war Yugoslavia and by making use of gender, the identities thus produced were ready to be used for violent causes. What can be identified in the development towards conflict and violence are genderization and victimhood through the process of blaming others, as well as the annihilation of □the Other□ through violent means. The violence of mass rape was part of the attempt to remove this □Other□, but, in order for this to be done, 'the Other' first had to be symbolically created and homogenized. Fusion of

gender and ethnicity, which was intensified during the war in former Yugoslavia, and strategy of rape as a means of ethnic cleansing caused such homogenization. Only by doing this, by turning men and women into mere members of their nations, was it possible to annihilate entire groups of people as ethnic and gendered bodies.

This vicious circle of gender and national identities was best defined by Julie Mertus:

> "Where the starting ground is a sense of national identity, the circle of self-exploration and self- discovery may appear as follows: *national identity* (based on self as a part of the nation as opposed to Other); *gender identity* (first as part of the nation, and thus still contrasted to the oppositional Other, and then eventually as part of a group called "women" and contrasted to the gender group known as "men"); *national identity with gender identity* (national identity reconstructed with an awareness as to how the gender constructs of women and men serve to promote the goals of the nation, and with possibly a desire to re-shape both national and gender identities); and then, in times of crisis, and particularly when challenged by competing nationalisms, back to *national identity* (perhaps re-shaped by awareness of gender identity)."[62]

Thus, gender and national identities were used and (mis)interpreted in nationalist discourses in former Yugoslavia in such a way as to serve political causes and achieve certain political goals. Mass rapes happening during the war in Bosnia experienced the same kind of misinterpretation in various discourses and by various actors, as the next chapter attempts to show.

[62] Mertus, 1999b:186.

3. (MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF MASS RAPES IN BOSNIA

In this chapter I discuss the debates on the phenomenon of mass rapes that happened during the Bosnian war and how they were represented by both local and international feminists, nationalists, the media and Western scholars. These debates usually revolved around the ethnicity of both perpetrators and their victims, as well as around the number of actual victims, often disregarding such facts like the one that not only women, but men as well were raped during the war. As the chapter attempts to show, these debates created three different views on the issue - the 'global feminist', 'genocidal rape' and 'non-nationalist' view. The chapter, furthermore, discusses how none of these views painted a complete picture of what was going on in Bosnia at the time and what implications these different representations of Bosnian rapes had for the victims themselves.

3.1 'Reading Formations' and Numbers Games

On August 9, 1992, a Sunday paper (*Newsday*) in the United States broke the story of mass rapes of women during the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the publication of an article written by journalist Roy Gutman. Another Gutman's article, published some days later, reported that those targeted for rape were Muslim and Croat girls and suggested that they were "systematically raped".[63] Moreover, Gutman asserted that "the Serb conquerors of

[63] Gutman, 1992:39.

Bosnia have raped Muslim women, not as a by product of the war but as a principal tactic of the war".[64]

According to Rose Lindsey, the rape stories derived from two principal sources: spin-doctors from the predominantly Muslim Bosnia and Herzegovina government who were 'selling' the rape stories to western media, and grassroots Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian women's NGOs that were working with rape survivors[65]. These NGOs published press releases asking the world press to cover the story. They also established networks with western feminist activist groups asking them to lobby their governments and national media. Lobbying of these feminist activists and continued accusations of the sides in war eventually attracted international attention, so that many international human rights groups began investigating the issue.[66] All of these investigating teams started to interview victim survivors[67] and then released their own findings, but some of them adopted the 'reading formation'[68] initiated by Roy Gutman[69]. These reports argued that mass rapes happened on a large scale and followed a 'systematic pattern' and were being perpetrated by Serb men only, while the victims were argued to be Muslim and, to a lesser extent, Croat women. However, it was not only 'the internationals' who were affected with such writing, since national governments also used this kind of discourse on war rapes in order to promote their own nationalist causes. Thus, for example, Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Institute for the Study of Crimes against Humanness and International Law from Sarajevo (a public research institution in state property) issued its own report entitled *Aggression against Bosnia and*

[64] Ibid.
[65] Lindsey, 2002:60.
[66] NGOs and human rights groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the United Nations Special Rapporteur and representatives of European, U.S. and other governments sent their investigative teams to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.
[67] An infamous example of such interviews, often told by women human rights groups' activists, is the one when 'internationals' would come into their offices asking whether there were any victim survivors willing to talk about what happened to them, but who happened to speak English.
[68] 'Reading formation' refers to a particular kind of reporting on the mass rapes in Bosnia taken over from Roy Gutman and adopted by international human rights groups and the media. (Lindsey, 2002:61).
[69] For a more detailed analysis of Gutman's ethics in reporting on the Bosnian war see Doubt (2000).

Herzegovina as a Crime against Peace, War Crime and Crime against Humanness and International Law, which reads:

> "A special form of the crime of genocide, never seen up to now in the history of mankind, is a systematic raping of Muslim women of all ages, six-year old female children as well as old women.(...) The data collected up to now points to the fact that 25,000 to 30,000 Muslim women of all ages have been the victims of such a loathsome crime. The data are not completed yet, because the matter is extremely intimate and delicate. All foreign observers (for example Roy Gutman from *Newsday*) estimate that these rapings were not the result of a certain instinct, but one of the aims of the war and a part of its tactics."[70]

Thus, the Bosnian government institutions readily adopted the kind of reporting on mass rapes in Bosnia which portrayed the crimes as being perpetrated on a large scale and following a systematic pattern, in order to argue that genocide was being committed against the Bosnian nation.

Most debates which resulted from these reports were built around a discussion on the precise number of women who were raped, and on the insistence that the nature of the rapes was systematic and that they were committed because of the victims' ethnicity. Alongside attempts to document these crimes, the estimation of numbers was used (and misused) for political purposes. 'The numbers game' was highly contested and easily manipulated by nationalist leaders, while the real number is actually very difficult to calculate and verify[71]. The estimates usually ranged from 20,000 (the number put forward by the European Community) to as much as 50, 000 (the figure used by the Bosnian government). Talking about how, in this war, often "only certain victims count", feminist Vesna Kesić argued that

[70] Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Institute for the Study of Crimes against Humanness and International Law (1993).

[71] These difficulties include such facts as that many women who had been raped were also killed afterwards, as well as the fact that many were raped repeatedly and that they themselves could not tell how many times they had been raped.

such number games only undermined efforts to ever reach reasonable figures and bring to justice those responsible for these crimes.[72]

The United Nations Commission of Experts also condemned such manipulations in its *Final Report* on rape and sexual assault, saying that:

> "examples of this type of allegation are: 20,000 have been raped. These allegations are so general that they provide no useful information for analysis. This particular allegation comes from the European Community Delegation, headed by Dame Anne Warburton, and including Madame Simone Veil among others. This mission investigated only Muslim allegations of rape and sexual assault. The investigators spoke of few direct witnesses or victims, but concluded that the most reasoned estimate of the number of the Bosnian Muslim victims of rape was 20,000. The investigators gave no reasons for their arrival at this figure and offered no evidence for this accuracy."[73]

Other reports, such as the Amnesty International report, also suggested that "all estimates as to the number of women who have suffered rape or sexual abuse must be treated with caution."[74]

Many feminists readily accepted the exaggerated numbers, since it helped them in lobbying for bringing war time rape on the international agenda and in recognizing them as gender-specific crimes. However, some also embraced these representations of rapes, since they, through their use of numbers, supported the idea that the Serbs were guilty, but also that *only* Serbs were guilty; that rape victims were of non-Serbian ethnicity, and that rapes must be looked at and understood in ethnic terms. In the remainder of this chapter I look at feminist debates and their representations of rapes. The discussion of different feminist interpretations of wartime rape delineates some of the shortcomings within these analyses.

[72] Kesić, 1994:267.
[73] Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts, 1994:6
[74] Amnesty International, 1993:26

3.2 Of Witches and Patriots: the Feminist Debates

The political context of the events happening in the former Yugoslavia, as well as the set of ideologies that dominated feminist thinking of that time, shaped feminist representations of the war. The discursive 'reality' of war, constructed through feminist narratives of rape and nationalist narratives of the ethnic 'self' and 'Other', produced a certain type of politicized feminist action. Placing their representations of war rapes into a political context of divisions among Yugoslav feminists, I explore how nationalist ideology played a role in their understanding of the war and how it subsequently influenced and shaped Western feminists' discourses on the war in former Yugoslavia.

During the war, Yugoslav feminists split into two branches[75]. The first branch preferred to identify with their nation-state (Croatia), rather than with other feminist groups and is, thus, called the 'patriotic' branch'[76]. The other branch distanced itself from any national identification and remained united, despite different religious, ethnic and other differences.

Until the start of the war, feminists insisted on their links and solidarity beyond national identity[77]. As Jill Benderly argues, "feminism posed a strong challenge to rising nationalism in Yugoslavia by linking women's groups across republic lines and by critiquing the manipulation of reproductive rights for nationalistic demographic purposes."[78] When, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, nationalist tensions erupted and ultimately lead to the outbreak of war, all feminist groups at first challenged and opposed the rising nationalisms and criticized the regimes of their own republics in the former Yugoslavia. However, not just

[75] The split happened mainly among Croat feminists, but many Serbian feminists also sided with the anti-nationalist branch of Croatian feminists.
[76] The term used by Jill Benderly (1997).
[77] Although a discussion on the role and development of feminism in the former Yugoslavia falls outside the scope of this thesis, it should be said that second wave feminism in Yugoslavia emerged in the 1970s. However, before the war, feminist groups existed only in Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade, while, since then, small groups have been formed in almost all parts of Yugoslav successor states (Benderly, 1997).
[78] Benderly, 1997:62.

feminists but also mothers from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia opposed the regime and protested in front of their respective governments demanding their sons to be sent home and held coordinated anti-war protests. But the war made communication among republics and, subsequently, among feminist groups from different republics, extremely difficult and the rising nationalism affected all sides. The split began with the campaign for international legal recognition of the rapes as crimes of war and with its focus on ethnically motivated rape. During the campaign, in late 1992 and early 1993, some feminists, within as well as outside former Yugoslavia, began to criticize the international community's focus on ethnicity. Thus, in early 1993, a huge difference of opinion emerged within the former Yugoslavian women's NGO community, specifically among those groups working with rape survivors. Some women's groups argued that the focus on numbers of victims and their ethnicity was extremely important. They stressed that the rapes were part of a planned 'genocidal' strategy, the aim of which was to ethnically cleanse specific territories in Bosnia, but in Croatia as well. Other groups argued that the framework of this debate was too simplistic and too narrow, stressing the fact that men from all ethnic groups were raping women, and that rapes should be perceived as sexualized violence against women. In Croatia, many of those NGOs that had argued that rape represented genocide began supporting the actions of their own (nationalist) government and refused to acknowledge that crimes were committed by 'their' side as well. Meanwhile, many of the NGOs that had argued against the focus on rape and ethnicity began to be branded by the Croatian government and the national media as 'disloyal' and 'as traitors' of their country.[79]

Thus, the split among feminists can be best exemplified by women's groups in Croatia, which divided into two camps. The ones in the first camp believed that their interest

[79] As Craig Calhoun notices, "nationalists resist women's movements because accepting the domination of male interests and perceptions merely perpetuates a taken-for-granted, monolithic view of the nation, while encouraging women to identify their distinctive interests and views opens claims that gender has autonomous status as a basis for personal identity which does not pale into insignificance before the commonalties of (male-dominated) nationhood". (Calhoun, 1993:231).

was in line with the interest of their nation-state, while members of the second camp tried to resist the rising nationalism and opposed Croatia's government politics. Feminists who belonged to this second group and tried to oppose nationalism were harshly attacked in Croatian media. Five female writers and journalists, who questioned Croatian nationalism and sided with non-nationalist women from Serbia, were targeted by Zagreb's yellow press. They were named "five witches" and included a feminist writer Slavenka Drakulić, philosopher Rada Iveković, and journalist Vesna Kesić. These women's personal information (such as nationality, date of birth, phone numbers and addresses) were published in an article, while the headline accused them of being feminist Communists[80] who "rape Croatia". They were also said to be hiding the truth about sexual violence as an instrument of Serbian politics, due to their insistence that Croatian soldiers as well committed rapes in war.[81]

Zagreb Women's Lobby, a coalition of anti-war women's groups from Croatia, reacted to this in a press release published in Croatia's daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* on December 13, 1992, saying that

> "it is a question of both personal and national honour to accept the deplorable fact that 'our boys' also do it. We should renounce 'our boys' if we want to be just in this unjust war. Women have never in history, and we hope in the future too, initiated a single war. Women have never been the ones who made decisions on these issues, but they have been the ones who suffered the most."[82]

In this situation, patriotic feminist groups, however, did not support the attacked women, but accused them in a similar manner, as will be shown below.

The issues of nationalism and non-nationalism emerged further with the outbreak of the war in Bosnia. When, in 1992, systematic war rapes and forced pregnancies were reported

[80] As one of the attacked women, Vesna Kesić, together with Đurđa Knežević, noticed, it is ironic, however, that "at the end of the seventies when we started the women's movement in ex-Yugoslavia, we were accused by the political establishment of "importing decadent bourgeois ideology", and were sometimes brutally attacked. Ironically, now we are being accused of "national treachery"". (see Knežević and Kesić (1993)).
[81] *Globus* Investigatory Team (1992).
[82] Zagreb Women's Lobby (1992).

to be happening in neighbouring Bosnia, feminists from Serbia and Croatia quickly organized to provide help and support for women victims of rape. However, different feminist groups expressed differently their views on what was going on in Bosnia. The crucial question which divided the Yugoslav feminists was the one on who was doing the raping and why. Some groups condemned men on all sides of the conflict for violence against women, while others singled out Serbian forces and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA).

The latter's (patriotic/nationalist feminists group's) stand was that rape was a distinctly *Serbian* weapon and that Serbian feminists, who condemned rape crimes on all warring sides, were trying to equalize the blame and responsibility for the crimes. These groups supported the 'genocidal rape' view, as they were arguing that rapes were following a systematic pattern and were part of a larger and deliberate strategy of genocide against Muslims.

Non-nationalist women's groups in Serbia and Croatia, on the other hand, shared the view that victims were primarily *women*, who needed help, support, and protection from nationalist manipulation. They held that the crimes were committed by men against women, and were perpetrated on all sides of the conflict. The difference between these two views lay in their approach to either gender or ethnicity as the main factor responsible for the rapes.

The third view which can be discerned is the 'global feminist' approach, which was readily picked up by some Western feminists who did not have any prior knowledge about the region or its people. Thus, they did not take into account the political and ethnic context in which the rapes were happening. These feminists viewed the rapes as a weapon of all men against all women and took the 'all sides did it' approach.

However, none of these views was complete in their analysis of mass rapes and all tended to collectivize women and their experience of rape, as I attempt to show below.

3.3 Feminists on Tour: 'Mother Courage II'

Croatian feminist activists, who disagreed with the 'patriotic' approach to the issue, formed *Zagreb Women's Lobby*, a coalition of the *Autonomous Women's House Zagreb*, *the Independent Alliance of Women*, *the Informative-Documentary Centre of Women*, and *Women from the Antiwar Campaign Croatia*. The group stated that "the war in the region of the ex-Yugoslavia shows all the cruelty and misogyny that is contained in patriarchy and nationalism. The rapes in Bosnia committed by Serbian troops were, in function, part of ethnic cleansing, but rapes (whether mass, group or individual) were committed by all sides."[83]

In December 1992, feminists from various organizations in Croatia also founded the *Centre for Women War Victims* and cooperated with like-minded non-nationalist groups in Bosnia and Serbia. Later, in 1993, a similar centre was established in the Bosnian city of Zenica (*Medica Zenica*) by a German feminist gynaecologist, Monica Hauser, while a Belgrade coalition (*Women in Black*, *Belgrade Women's Lobby*, and *the Group for Women Raped in War*) proposed a similar centre on the same model as those formed in Zagreb and Zenica.

In contrast, such radical feminist groups as *Kareta* and *Trešnjevka* took a stand that, as Croatian women, they viewed rape as distinctly Serbian weapon, for which they held that all Serbs should be blamed. *Trešnjevka* focused on interviewing Bosnian rape survivors and distributing their reports to the media, but tended to inflate the figures of rape victims. Their report from (as early as) September 1992 stated that "our sources indicate that there are over 35,000 women and children in Serbian-run rape/death camps, enduring the most frightful methods of terror and torture."[84]

[83] Zagreb Women's Lobby (n.d.).
[84] Women's group *Trešnjevka* (1992).

The tension among patriotic and anti-nationalist groups rose and was exported even outside the borders of the former Yugoslavia. In March and April 1993, MADRE, a U.S. women's group founded in 1983 in response to the U.S. intervention in Central America, organized a tour entitled *Mother Courage II*, focusing on war rapes in the former Yugoslavia. Local women were represented primarily by anti-nationalist women from Croatia and Serbia, who were working with war-raped women. However, four Croatian and Bosnian 'patriotic' groups (*Kareta*, *Trešnjevka*, *Biser*, *Bedem Ljubavi*) released a letter protesting the focus and content of MADRE's tour. Among other things, they criticized MADRE for universalizing rape as a weapon of war and failing to address 'genocidal' nature of the Bosnian rapes:

> "The mass-rapes in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina are not simply "weapons of war" as your tour information states, because what's happening in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia is not "simply" a war but a genocide in which Muslims and Croatians are being exterminated and therefore a context from which the rapes cannot be extricated."[85]

They also insisted that "rape as genocide is, therefore, not the universal rape your tour information states, but is very ethnically specific to Muslim and Croatian women in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia, who suffer from the double and simultaneous oppression of sex and ethnicity."[86]

However, the tour participants did say that the Serbian paramilitary and military employed a systematic pattern of rape connected with 'ethnic cleansing', but they also mentioned that rape happened on the Bosnian and Croatian side as well.[87] For patriotic groups, that meant putting equal blame on all sides, while they thought that only the Serb aggressors should have been blamed. They also insisted that this was not 'just' another war, but genocide against Muslims and Croats. Moreover, they argued that "to place Muslim and

[85] Feminist Group *Kareta*, Refugee Women's Group *Žene BiH*, International Initiative of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina *Biser*, and Women's Group *Bedem Ljubavi* (1993).
[86] Ibid.
[87] Krause and Douglas (1993).

Croatian women in forums which force on them the women of the group committing the genocide, who do not even acknowledge that genocide is going on and who are trying to convince Muslim and Croatian women that it isn't happening, is to commit further violence against these women" and even went as far as comparing this tour to forcing Jewish women into a debate with German women, while the Holocaust was still going on.[88]

Patriotic groups were disturbed not only by the presence of Serbian women on the tour, but also by the choice of participants from Croatia in MADRE's tour: Vesna Kesić (Croatian antinationalist feminist, journalist, and one of the 'witches') and Đurđa Knežević. They were against Kesić and Knežević representing Croatian (and Bosnian) women, since they did not agree with their view on who were the victims and who the perpetrators of rape in this war.

To illustrate their disagreement, it is interesting to mention the case of May 1994, when *Kareta* and *Biser* released information which, allegedly, they learned from women's groups in Sarajevo, accusing Vesna Kesić of the following:

> "Vesna Kesić (...) was on a disinformation mission to Sarajevo at the beginning of May. She approached Sarajevo women's groups with 5,000 Deutschmarks, which she promised to give to everyone under the following conditions:
>
> - that women's group in Sarajevo desist from calling the rapes of Bosnian Muslim and Croatian women by the Serbian Army "genocidal rape" or "rape in the service of genocide";
> - that Sarajevo women's groups cannot get this money unless they work with Serbian women's groups. Kesić also promised that women who accept these conditions will receive invitations to international women's conferences."[89]

Croatian non-nationalists responded by saying that:

[88] Feminist Group *Kareta*, Refugee Women's Group *Žene BiH*, International Initiative of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina *Biser*, and Women's Group *Bedem Ljubavi* (1993).
[89] International Initiative of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina "Biser" and Kareta Feminist Group (1994).

> "our view is that a simplistic use of the phrase 'genocidal rape' disguises the fact that victims of rape and sexual abuse in war and peace are women. Rape is amongst the severest means of attack on collective and individual integrity, dignity and human rights of women. Therefore we think that all attention, all rights and all reparations for the crime of rape belong to women. Not to nations or states."[90]

The feminist debates which emerged during the MADRE tour also brought out the third approach to the issue of mass rapes in former Yugoslavia. This approach was taken mostly by Western feminists and could be termed a 'global feminist' view, since it saw rape as a weapon used by men against women in wars throughout history. However, it did not take into consideration the specific political and ethnic context of the Yugoslav war and posed the danger of relativising the blame with the 'all sides do it' argument. Moreover, it had the effect of supporting writing of some Western press which tried to present the war in the former Yugoslavia as the reflection of 'ancient hatred' among the Balkan people[91]. It also provided an excuse to the international community for not getting involved into the conflict and not preventing further atrocities.

Non-nationalist feminists participating in the tour tried to distance themselves from this view by pointing to the threat that the 'everyone is doing it' argument poses by allowing the categorization of this conflict as a civil war.

Some Western feminists focused on nationalism and the war (and particularly mass rapes) in the former Yugoslavia in a way which corresponded to the patriotic branch in local feminism. Thus, for example, the 'patriotic' women's groups hired Catharine MacKinnon, a well-known U.S. feminist and University of Michigan law professor, to represent wartime

[90] Women's Infoteka, Women's Human Rights Group *B.a.B.e.*, Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, Women of the Anti-war Campaign of Croatia, and Center for Women War Victims (1994).

[91] Thus, Susan Brownmiller writes about "Balkan men" who are "eager to fight and die for their particular subdivisions of Slavic ethnicity, which they further define by their religious differences". (Brownmiller, 1994:180).

rape survivors[92]. MacKinnon agreed to provide legal assistance, but, according to non-patriotic feminists, she also accepted the 'patriotic' condemnation of Serbian and Croatian anti-nationalist feminists. According to Knežević, the witch-hunt on non-nationalist feminists became international:

> "a message distributed through electronic conferences, made in close cooperation with the office of Catherine MacKinnon, fiercely attacked two of these women, using the same repertoire of accusations: traitors to the Croatian nation, Communist, pro-Serbian, attempting to conceal information about victims (raped women in particular), equating the victims with perpetrators, etc. This time the letter was signed by four groups: the feminist group *Kareta*, the International Initiative of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*BISER*), the Bosnia and Herzegovina Refugee Women's Group (*Žene BiH*), and *Bedem Ljubavi* (Fortress of Love, or Chain of Love)."[93]

MacKinnon's biased approach neglected all the historic and political circumstances and causes of the war and gave a too simplistic explanation of the source of sexual violence in this war, which, as she argued, was to be found in pornography. One of her major arguments was that pornography, which "saturated the former Yugoslavia," was one of the by-products of, but more importantly, one of the causes of sexual violence in the current Yugoslav wars[94]. As Vesna Kesić argued, "this is dangerous and banal reductionism which can damage, if not discredit and wholly disqualify feminist analyses of armed conflict."[95]

Thus, the divisions among Yugoslav feminists affected Western interpretations of gender specific violence in Yugoslav wars. As the discourse surrounding the rape of women shifted to the discourse of ethnic conflict, the (gendered) perpetrator and the victim were given a concrete ethnic character. Interpretation of these binary oppositions took a particular

[92] On behalf of several Bosnian women, MacKinnon sued the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić for genocidal rape.
[93] Knežević, 1997: 68.
[94] MacKinnon (1993b).
[95] Kesić, 1994:267.

form in which radical feminist narratives of rape matched nationalist narratives of the ethnic self and other. As Obrad Kesić argued, "the polarization of women's groups over rape and its victims plays into the nationalists' ideology of creating homogeneity of thought within the nation which equates self-identity with the nation and seeks to manipulate women as symbols of the nation's struggle."[96]

Kesić claimed that the adaptation of MacKinnon's theory has also involved a manipulation of the numbers of women who have been raped and a one-sided attribution of blame to support MacKinnon's cause. Thus, she concludes that MacKinnon's theory is inappropriate because it does not fit the cultural context of the region. By stressing (only) the ethnic character of war rapes, MacKinnon and the feminist groups she represented were not that different from the nationalist governments, whose victimization discourse freed them from all blame by portraying their nations as victims of the Serbian aggression. In Đurđa Knežević's words,

> "those women's groups that accepted the nationalist framework (strongly supported by the government) came to the point of protecting the behaviour of the Croatian government by explaining that although it is nondemocratic, "we" are at the war and "we" should give the government space to finish it (the war) and to work in general."[97]

The same kind of discourse can, surprisingly, be found with some non-nationalist feminists who were condemned by government-run newspapers for being 'disloyal witches' and for abandoning their nation, but who still struggled to differentiate between 'us' and 'them'. Thus, in her article written for *The Nation*, Slavenka Drakulić wrote: "Of course, Croats and Muslims have raped Serbian women in Bosnia too, but the Serbs are the aggressors, bent on taking over two-thirds of the territory. This does not justify Croat and

[96] Kesić, 1999: 195.
[97] Knežević, 1997:69.

Muslim offenses, but they are in a defensive war and do not practice systematic and organized rape."[98] Moreover, she added that

> "even if the rapes were used for political propaganda, this could be justified because of the Serbian policy of exiling and destroying the Muslim population. If an entire ethnic group is systematically destroyed to the point of genocide, it is legitimate to "use" accounts of rape **(**or anything else, for that matter) as a means of getting attention and influencing public opinion."[99]

Thus, by employing the state-imposed ideological slogan 'we are the victims, they are aggressors', these women actually used the same rhetoric as nationalist political leaders and their campaigning against 'genocidal rapes' only reinforced the logic by which the rapes were committed and understood in the first place.

3.4 The Enemy's Seed: Rape and Forced Impregnation as a Means of Genocide

During the war in former Yugoslavia, the phenomenon of mass rapes was manipulated for achieving political goals when the story of rapes in Bosnia appeared on the front pages of all major world media. As soon as mass rapes were reported, an ongoing debate on their 'real' character started. Nationalist governments soon picked up some media reports on the 'genocidal' nature of these rapes, so that "for example, in 1992, the Croatian side claimed ten thousand rape victims in Croatia. The Bosnia and Herzegovina State Commission for collecting data on war crimes released the number of fifty to sixty thousand victims by the end of 1992; but some 'patriotic' women's groups set the number at 120,000 raped women in Bosnia and Croatia."[100] The numbers of rape victims in this war were used to manipulate

[98] Drakulić, 1993:271.
[99] Ibid., pp. 272.
[100] Kesić, 2003:5.

support for the cause of continuing to fight and to manipulate international public opinion, hoping to provoke an intervention that would change the course of the war. Thus, Wendy Bracewell talks of an example of: "(…) the Bosnian director of Merhamet, the Muslim charity, [who] used the outrage over the reports of rape in Bosnia to argue against the arms embargo in gendered terms: 'If Europe wants to help women in Bosnia, then it should send arms to their men' (quoted in *Vreme* 4 January 1993, 24-5)."[101]

Moreover, accusations raised in Bosnia also condemned the international community for not wanting to recognize mass rapes in Bosnia as part of a 'genocidal' strategy, since such recognition would oblige it to lift arms embargo put on all warring sides in former Yugoslavia and would also oblige the international community to act in accordance with the 1948 Geneva Convention on genocide and stop the atrocities.[102] What could also be heard were the accusations that 'ethnic cleansing' was just a euphemism for genocide[103], used by those people who did not want to admit to what was really happening in Bosnia.[104]

The way in which the Croatian government manipulated war rapes was through the announcement of raped women during the war within Croatia only *after* the Bosnian authorities broke the silence on Muslim rape victims. Biljana Kašić argues that: "One of the possible explanations at the time was that the Croatian national state wanted to bring international public attention once more to the war in Croatia and to address the war enemy."[105]

These rapes were usually interpreted as a way to remove the Bosnian Muslim population from territory the Serbian men were trying to conquer. Within this policy, the rapes

[101] Quoted after Bracewell, 2000:583.
[102] See, for example, Begman-Karabeg, (1994).
[103] I differentiate genocide and ethnic cleansing in accordance with Norman Naimark's definitions (Naimark, 1998). He argues that genocide refers to conflict in which either part or all of an ethnic, religious, or national group is intentionally killed. Ethnic cleansing, on the other hand, refers to the removal (not necessarily through killings) of a people along with any of their traces from a specific territory (Naimark, 1998). The difference between these two terms lies in the intentions of the perpetrator.
[104] See, for example, Zülch (2007).
[105] Kašić, 2000:279.

functioned in two possible ways: the rapes induced terror and thus made the Bosnian Muslims flee, and Muslim women were impregnated so that they could give birth to little *chetniks*,[106] whereby the unwanted group was to be destroyed and a population with the desired ethnicity created in the area instead.

What is, however, problematic in such interpretation of mass rapes is that, as Kesić puts it, "the concept of 'genocide by procreation' appropriates and reinforces racist ideology, because it accepts that the nation or ethnic group can be destroyed by procreation, that is, by its enlargement through the dilution of 'ethnic blood.'"[107] Forcing the women to give birth to children conceived in this way was used as a means of contaminating the 'enemy' nation in a biological, as well as cultural way. This was possible due to the fact that, in this mode of thinking, it was presumed that these children would be alien to the national community, while, moreover, it was believed they might contribute to the disruption of the relations between family and community members[108].

Borneman also suggests that belonging to a national community was understood as related to the semen, thus to the father of a child, who would always be seen as belonging to an 'alien' community, regardless of the fact that the child might be brought up in his/her mother's national community. Thus, he argues that "(…) both foreignness and nativeness are thought to derive from semen alone, which, from the moment of conception on, sets in motion a predetermined pattern of hostility that cannot be influenced by social interaction, by learning or ascribed traits that can be changed over time."[109]

This kind of understanding also assumes that a child is a product of sperm only and that ethnicity is something to be inherited from the father, while the mother is viewed solely as a

[106] *Chetniks* were members of a Serbian nationalist group that operated underground during the German occupation of Yugoslavia in World War II, but the term was also popularly applied to Serb military forces in the 1991–95 Yugoslav war.
[107] Kesić, 2003: 3.
[108] Sofos, 1996:87.
[109] Borneman, 1994:31.

'container' carrying the child. It, thus, follows that, according to the perpetrators of rape, the nation is reproduced through its male members. Even the biological/genetic contribution of mothers is not recognized as significant. In support of this view, Catherine MacKinnon writes: "It is rape for reproduction *as* ethnic liquidation: Croatian and Muslim women are raped to help make a Serbian state by making Serbian babies."[110]

This kind of discourse was, moreover, also employed by local governments, which only perpetuated and reified the idea that raping of a nation's women can destroy the reproductive potential of the whole nation and that the rapes were aimed at humiliating the nation (and not individual women themselves). Thus, the State Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes of Bosnia and Herzegovina wrote that "unfortunately, the aggressor has known very well the mentality of Bosnian Muslim women and moral value of the family. Thus, the rapes were planned in advance to serve as an attempt of humiliation and degradation of a whole nation, that is, attempt of extermination of its biological reproductive potentials."[111]

Media reports often focused almost exclusively on the forced impregnations committed by the 'other' side and opened debates on whether the impregnated women should be allowed to have an abortion, so that they would not have to carry 'the enemy's seed'.[112] One could, thus, read such formulations as: "Bosnia will be haunted by hundreds, if not thousands, of Serbian children, forced on unwilling Muslim mothers."[113]

But forced pregnancies were condemned only when they reflected intent to harm the victimized nation. Manipulations of the rapes always identified the ethnic/national membership of the rapist and the foetus as the key matter of concern, and not the raped

[110] MacKinnon, 1993a:90.
[111] State Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1993:12
[112] Thus, for example, at a meeting of the Islamic religious community in the Bosnian town of Zenica in 1993, a conclusion was reached that, if a raped woman wanted to have an abortion, this would not be considered a sin and she would be allowed to do it. Personal interview with Fadila Memišević, head of the Bosnian *Society of the Threatened Peoples*, April, 2009.
[113] Post, Stiglmayer, Lane, Brand, Gerrard Warner, and Sparkman, 1993:36.

women themselves nor the actual crime. When they did come into discussions, women were viewed more as members of their nations than anything else.

Because war rapes were viewed through the lens of ethnicity, they could have been recognized as a strategy of war and indicted as war crimes only if they were 'systematic' and 'followed a pattern' and if they supported the claim of genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Rhonda Copelon, who filed a civic suit on behalf of two Bosnian Muslim women, however, argued that a single act of rape is also a war crime and that "rape, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy [must] be viewed as crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the laws of war *whether or not* they are associated with the abominable practice of 'ethnic cleansing'".[114] Classification of rape crimes as 'genocidal' poses the question of whether we accept the implied presumption that rape by a member of a different ethnic group is somehow worse than intraethnic rape, or that rapes between particular ethnic groups are worse than those between other groups? It is also dangerous because its consequence is demeaning of victims of all other kinds of rape that appeared during the conflict, while it also forms a 'hierarchy' of rapes, which in turn establishes a 'hierarchy' of victims.[115] In this way, rapes committed by perpetrators who belonged to the same ethnic group as the victim were made invisible and unimportant or less important. The Bosnian rapes separated women from men, but also Bosniacs from Serbs and Croats, and have attributed superior/inferior gendered and national identities to these subjects.

Moreover, distinction between 'genocidal' and 'normal' rape, as Copelon remarks, "contrast the common and tolerable with the unique and heinous".[116] To characterize 'genocidal' rape as unique and an historical exception is also problematic, since such characterisation disregards rape as a weapon of war in situations in which it is used to spread

[114] Quoted after Carr, 1993:32.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Copelon, 1995:204.

political terror, to destabilize the society or to terrorize women into fleeing their homes and their communities.[117]

Thus, the characteristics of 'genocidal' rape do not reflect the full range of atrocities and suffering that a combination of genocide and rape can cause. Such classification also tells us nothing about the effect on women of rape which is not part of genocide, but which may be no less destructive to a woman's identity than when rape is associated with genocide.

Finally, the view that the rape of women is designed to destroy the nation to which those women 'belong' reflects the fundamental objectification of women, which denies their individuality and their subjectivity. The failure to acknowledge the gender dimension of these rapes enables their perpetuation. Thus, widespread or systematic rape and all other forms of sexual violence, including forced impregnation, should be viewed as crimes against humanity not only when they are tools of some other form of persecution such as genocide, but also when they exist independently. Rape can take many forms, occur in many contexts, and have many different consequences for different victims. Making the mass rapes of women in Bosnia appear 'genocidal', and thus exceptional, runs the risk of neutralizing the meaning of rape if perpetrated in a different context, which in turn demeans the suffering of their victims[118].

Thus, the central problem with this particular feminist analysis of the rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina as 'genocidal' is that it relies heavily and reifies the presumptions on racial or ethnic differences that were introduced by perpetrators themselves. As much as they are flawed, these presumptions are also assumed, or even assigned, to be part of the experience of the rape victims. This understanding, however, clashes with the reality of pre-war Bosnia and

[117] Ibid.

[118] Some authors argued that mass rapes in Bosnia were part of a postmodern genocide and, in that way, exceptional. Thus, Seada Vranić writes that "rapes committed by Serb forces in Bosnia are premeditated crimes: carefully planned, even to the particulars of the program, systematically and uncompromisingly executed. This is a specific of the Bosnian case. Rape was used as a component of the Serb political and military strategy. This is a selected and refined weapon for attaining the goal of the war and the final political aim. This specificity sets apart mass rape in Bosnia from other cases […]" (Vranić, 1996: 317).

Herzegovina, which was a multicultural place with a high rate of inter-ethnic marriages and, thus, presumably a good number of ethnically mixed children.

3.5 Masculinities and (Invisible) Sexual Violence against Men

Although much local and international attention focused on women victims of mass rapes, the evidence points to the fact that men, too, were victims of sexual violence during the war in former Yugoslavia. Feminists disregarded these facts because they did not support their theory of the 'female body as a battlefield', while the media ignored it because it would have undermined the Rape Victim Identity they had assigned exclusively to Muslim women. The shaping of this identity was made possible by patriarchal presumptions of female vulnerability and male power to protect as well as to attack. Masculinity is inseparable from power, just as maleness and manhood are presented as embodying power. Thus, men are unimaginable as victims and are seen only as perpetrators, since a victimized man is not really perceived to be a man. This persistent invisibility of male victims is strongly related to the construction of masculinity. For this reason, as Žarkov notices[119], few academic texts have ever mentioned that men too have been sexually assaulted in this war[120]. This is because those men who have survived such crimes are unwilling to speak out, since they are afraid their masculinity would be called into question and they would, once again, be de-masculinised.

It is not surprising, then, that it is easier to assign the victim role to women. As Žarkov argues, this is because, unlike men, women cannot be de-feminized, since they are not perceived as holding masculine power in the first place, which, then, cannot be taken from

[119] See Žarkov (1997).

[120] The authors who do address this issue are: Žarkov (1997), Jones (1994), Hayden (2000), Borneman (1994), and Bringedal Houge (2008). These authors, however, do not explain the phenomenon of planned sexual violence of men in camps in Bosnia and Croatia.

them either. Thus, violence committed against women, in a very ironic way, confirms their position as women – it confirms women's lack of power and men's dominance.[121]

Although the Rape Victim was always female, evidence points to a striking number of assaulted men.[122] Thus, the U.N. Commission of Experts Final Report says that "men are also subject to sexual assault. They are forced to rape women and to perform sex acts on guards or each other. They have also been subjected to castration, circumcision or other sexual mutilation."[123]

Rapes of men, however, were not publicly discussed and, as Žarkov claims, the international media, which so readily reported on raped women, was not eager to report on sexually reported men, because this was not newsworthy.[124] However, the local media's silence on male rapes had different reasons.

Žarkov's analysis of Croatian and Serbian media on rapes of men shows that, in 1992 and 1993, the main Croatian daily and weekly published only 6 articles about male victims of sexual violence, but that, however, Croat men did not appear as victims. The only sexually assaulted men whose ethnicity was stated were Muslim men, while, when the victims might have been Croat men, the ethnicity was not mentioned.[125] This was due to the fact that violated male body is not only an issue of manhood, but of nationhood as well. A male body has strong symbolical meaning for nationalist projects and the nation which hopes to become or represent itself as powerful cannot show a powerless male body.

Since men are viewed as having the power to protect and defend, emasculation through rape eliminates this power and makes the man, as well as the nation to which he belongs, powerless and defeated. Thus, ethnically other men were the only ones put in a

[121] Žarkov (1997).
[122] See, for example, Bassiouni et. al. (1996).
[123] The U.N. Commission of Experts Final Report (1994).
[124] Žarkov (2001).
[125] Ibid., pp. 75.

passive role of victims, which de-masculinised them and made them incapable of dominating another ethnic group.

Moreover, men of a nation are always viewed as powerful *hetero*sexuals, so that sexual violation denies both this heterosexuality, as well as masculinity with which it is associated[126]. *Homo*sexuality does not correspond to the dominant masculinity construct of what is seen to be 'a real man' and what is meant to be 'masculine'. A raped or castrated man would challenge the construction of a nation as powerful and manly. In order to preserve the heterosexuality and power of their nation's men, the narrative on male sexual violence was absent from the local media, as well as from local political and public discourses. [127]

However, the non-reporting of violence against men poses a danger and is damaging to feminist goals, as it is to the stigmatized men who have been subject to the violence, since it confirms the very masculinised ideals and identities that continue to undermine women (and men) in patriarchal societies and place men in hegemonic masculinity constructs. Focusing on *all* the victims of violence during the war in Bosnia, including men, can provide valuable understanding of masculinities and patriarchy. Non-reporting of male victims also reinforced the traditional gender roles which feminists try to escape – roles in which women are innocent, inherently peaceful, passive victims, and men are the opposite: independent and inherently aggressive actors, and is thus impossible for them to fill the role of victims of sexual assault.

[126] Mosse (1996).

[127] Dejan Ilić, however, argues that there are situations in which it is possible to publicly show that a man is a victim of rape, as was the case with Đorđe Martinović in Kosovo. This happens when legitimization for going into war is needed. In such a situation the assertion that a victimized man is not really a man does not hold true anymore. What becomes important is exactly the fact that the victim is a man and not a woman, since then suffering and humiliation, both physical and emotional, become all the more terrible and greater. See Ilić (2009).

4. COLLECTIVIZATION AND VICTIMIZATION DISCOURSES: WHOSE VOICES ARE TO BE HEARD?

This part of the thesis discusses and challenges the controversy of the collectivization of the raped Bosnian Muslim women. It looks at how certain collective identities were assigned to rape victims, while the voices of victims themselves were silenced. The gender and ethnic approaches to the violence during the war in Bosnia collectivised victims of rape (one by gender and the other by ethnicity), which runs the risk of subordinating the individual to the collective. I try to challenge both of these approaches by looking at women's agency in this war. Moreover, I discuss the absence of Bosniac voices on the subject of mass rape and look at the discourses employed in those cases when Bosniac women do speak out about their experiences.

4.1 Women's Agency in War

The dominant notions of masculinity and femininity are deeply rooted, and they govern our way of understanding war and conflict. We simply see all men as soldiers and all women (and children) as refugees. In every war, however, there are men who actively refuse to be soldiers. Accounts of war usually portray all men as 'doers' and all women just as passive and innocent victims. While all women are homogenized as a group and portrayed as incapable of waging wars, all men are, in the same way, generalized as blood-hungry warriors and militarized combatants.

However, not all men are eager to participate in hostilities, which evidence from the former Yugoslavia clearly proves. According to Franke Wilmer, during the war in

Yugoslavia, approximately 700,000 people had fled the country to avoid conscription at the start of the war, and there were more then 9,000 desertions in 1992 alone.[128]

Moreover, women in conflict situations need not be (and indeed are not) only victims of male violence, but take on different roles which empower them to leave behind the passivity usually attributed to them. For many years women's roles in war and other types of violent conflict were quite invisible throughout the world. Women are perceived as being more interested and engaged in peace, more tolerant of differences among people, and more ready to engage in dialogue and compromise to end the conflicts[129]. The resulting stereotypical image of women is one of peacemakers and concerned mothers and wives of (male) soldiers, which implies that *all* women (as a group) are more committed to protesting against wars and achieving peace than men. In this way, women, as well as men, are stripped of their individuality and defined in terms of their roles within patriarchal gender hierarchy[130].

The most traditional explanation behind women as peacemakers lies in the conservative ideal of women as caring, nurturing and protective mothers. This argument implies that women are inherently concerned with maintaining peace because of their connection to life and its preservation[131]. However, such role of women is not the product of some 'essential' nature and biological differences between males and females, due to which males are unable to be protective and intolerant to violence, but is the result of culture and socialization, i.e. of the understanding of different gender roles in a society.[132]

In Bosnia, as well as in other parts of former Yugoslavia, women were praised for their rising above ethnic differences and crossing ethnic boundaries by engaging in various women's NGOs, which had, as their primary goal, reconciliation and peace-building in post-conflict societies. It was perceived that women, since they did not play any significant and

[128] Wilmer, 2002:157.
[129] Žarkov (n.d.), York (1998).
[130] Mosse (1996).
[131] York, 1998:20.
[132] Helms (2003a).

prominent political roles in decisions about the war, were automatically against the war and were, therefore, active in peace building. In this way, actions of *some* women peacemakers were generalized to *all* women as a group, just as all men were generalized as warriors and military leaders. Women were, in this way, identified not as individuals, but again as members of a group which has been given a gendered role. Gendered constructions of women's roles, created by international and domestic feminists, as well as by widely accepted understandings of gender in patriarchal societies, allow them to acquire these roles and give them different possibilities then men. In her writing about women in security studies, Cynthia Enloe argues that because IR has defined 'important' roles as those dominated by males, the field is predetermined not to 'find women' in active, security promoting roles[133]. In addition to that, as Helms points out, "women as a group fall outside the category of potential (armed and aggressive) adversaries", and are thus more inclined to become active in peace-making, since "women as a group are afforded more room to engage in such activities".[134] The danger of such assigning of peaceful characteristics exclusively to women leaves men with roles of aggressors who are incapable of compromise and tolerance, and is, thus, counter-productive as it runs the risk of reifying the existing gender roles.

Women's engagement in this war was increasingly overshadowed by the attention to their victimization and their symbolic and reproductive importance. However, as Žarkov argues, victimization and agency "are not necessarily separate or opposite, but rather mutually constitutive, both empirically and discursively. For not only have many refugee women become feminist activists, but the victimization of women became one of the most powerful sources of women's and feminist activism as well as theorizing."[135]

This lack of analysis of Bosnian Muslim women's agency in war, other than the agency in the form of peace activism, could be explained with feminist and academic

[133] Enloe (2004).
[134] Helms, 2003a:22.
[135] Žarkov, 2007:216.

representations of mass rapes in Bosnia (mostly written in either Croatia or Serbia or from outside of former Yugoslavia), which tended to reinforce the image of a Bosnian Muslim woman as shamed, destroyed, and silenced victim.

4.2 The Image of a Muslim Woman as a Victim of Rape

Women who are raped are victimized not only by the act itself, but also by their transformation into victims in the public domain.[136]

During the 1990s, the academic interest in conflicts in the former Yugoslavia largely focused on research on women's war victimization. In addition to the academia, the media from different parts of Yugoslavia, as well as the international media, also contributed to the creation of a new kind of identity – the Rape Victim Identity. As Susan Brownmiller writes, women in the Balkans "have been thrust against their will into another identity. They are victims of rape in war."[137] It is, however, ironic that exactly this kind of identity finds its affirmation on the pages of the very same book, in the foreword by Roy Gutman, who argues:

> "Rape occurs in nearly every war, but in this one it has played a unique role. The degradation and molestation of women was central to the conquest. (…) In the conservative society in which the Muslims of rural Bosnia grew up, women traditionally remain chaste until marriage. Rape is a trauma with far-reaching consequences for these victims, who have well-founded fears of rejection and ostracism and of lives without marriage and children."[138]

Writing about the victims of mass rapes in Bosnia at the beginning of the war, he also asserted that "the deepest hurt seems to be moral shame. These women were from the countryside, where premarital sex is prohibited (...) Most of them think that they have been

[136] Wood and Rennie, 1994:125.
[137] Brownmiller, 1993:180.
[138] Gutman, 1994:x.

ruined."[139] Without fully understanding the country or the people he was writing about, Gutman gave a representation of Muslim women in Bosnia which suggested that these situations were indicative for Muslim communities only and asserted that rape, thus, had more serious consequences for them. In such writing, the Rape Victim Identity is reserved exclusively for Bosnian Muslim women. [140]

The same imagery of ashamed Muslim women was used in many other academic texts, which ethnicized the image of shame and cultural norms of religious traditionalism among Muslims. Caroline D. Krass, for example, reinforces this image by arguing that "this stigma proves especially severe in Muslim communities, where the religion emphasizes virginity and chastity before marriage."[141] Moreover, Elizabeth A. Kohn writes that "because of their culture, many Bosnian women, especially those in small villages, are ashamed to come forward and testify publicly about the torture they endured."[142]

In a typically Orientalised manner[143], which sees Muslims as the 'Other' race, these women were portrayed as inferior, primitive, backward and silent, whose only role in a patriarchal society is that of submissive victims of male power and domination. Thus, even feminists employed this kind of Orientalised discourse in order to show that Muslim women, due to the strict patriarchal norms of their societies regarding their chastity, suffered much more from rape than other women in this war and were its 'true' victims.[144]

Assigning such cultural norms, as Žarkov notices, affected "the visibility of the victim by providing (or withdrawing) the discursive space within which the victim can speak, or be

[139] Gutman, 1992:39.
[140] Svetlana Slapšak notices another example of Western media's one-dimensional view of women in Bosnia. As she says, "at the level of representation, the Western media would always prefer to show an old village woman rather than a modern, emancipated woman from an urban setting. This choice displays a preference for prefabricated images and stereotypes, which are not wanting in basic racism and misogyny." (Slapšak, 1997:77).
[141] Krass, 1994:3.
[142] Kohn, 1994:2.
[143] Said (1979).
[144] Dubravka Žarkov, thus, poses the questions about whether non-Muslim women are less 'chaste' and whether rape holds less consequences for them, because of that? (Žarkov, 1997a:141).

spoken about."[145] What follows is that this lack of voice from the female victims existed parallel to and in connection with the appropriation of their voices and their pain by other actors, particularly nationalist leaders for political purposes.

Although this kind of discourse was mostly employed by outsiders when talking about victims of mass rapes in Bosnia, it is interesting, however, that the same (self-)Orientalised discourse on Bosnian Muslim women had been appropriated by some Bosnian Muslims themselves, as the following two examples show. Thus Kadra Zavlić, a Bosnian Muslim working with Bosnian refugees coming to the United States, in an interview to a feminist journal *Off Our Backs*, talked about the idea of 'honour' in Muslim societies and rejection of raped women by their families:

> "they will just only start to live new lives and they will not even say that that ever happened to them. It will be a family secret, it will never come out. Especially in Muslim society - not being a virgin and coming to get married - it's very hard because of Middle Eastern ways. It is kind of shame, it's impossible."[146]

Moreover, a journalist from Sarajevo, Azra Zalihić-Kaurin, wrote that "young Muslim women today may wear miniskirts and have boyfriends, may study and work, but they still respect the commandment of virginity."[147] Thus, the same arguments used by Western feminists and journalists were used by Bosnian Muslims as well, in order to present rapes of Bosnian Muslim women/girls as particularly hard for the victims, due to strict patriarchal culture they came from.

The discussed identity assigned to these women is problematic in a number of ways. It gives an oversimplified and biased representation of women's suffering in the war by ignoring a wide range of other forms of suffering and rendering all other crimes committed against women invisible. However, what seems the most problematic is that such victimization of

[145] Žarkov, 2007:174-175.
[146] Douglas and Hamilton, 1993:6.
[147] Zalihić-Kaurin, 1994:172.

women puts them in exclusively passive roles and ignores their activities during and after the war, such as collecting evidence material and courage to give testimonies and stand trials against their rapists, who would never have been prosecuted if all women just remained silent. Thus, as Dubravka Žarkov argues,

> "while refugee and, especially, raped women have often been mentioned as silent, it is precisely their refusal to be silent and silenced that has resulted in the prosecution of rape as a war crime: they have named both the crime and the perpetrators; they have collected testimonies and documents; they have testified at the ICTY. Without them, there would be no prosecution of war rape in the ICTY."[148]

In order to get rape on the international political agenda and to include rape in war among the crimes against humanity, women were urged to speak out and some of them decided to talk about their experience. The subject, the raped woman, whose voice had been previously silenced by both war reporters and local feminists, was allowed to tell her own story before the ICTY in The Hague. However, this lead to subjectivity and individuality being sacrificed for the common cause of getting rape recognized as a war crime prosecutable by an international tribunal. Thus, these women all became primarily 'raped women' and only secondary 'women' or individuals with actual names. The term 'raped' became their label and their main identity[149].

Looking at rape survivors' testimonies before the ICTY, Julie Mertus showed how victimization of women happened even in such places where they exercised agency. She, thus, argued that the narratives employed at the trials were perpetrator-oriented and did not

[148] Žarkov (2007).

[149] In opposition to women, raped men in nationalist ideologies are allowed to keep their individuality and are remembered by their names, as was the case with Đorđe Martinović, the raped Serbian man in Kosovo. Dejan Ilić argues that this is so because, for the continuation of a nation, what is important are heroic deeds and eternal life given through the construction of a myth, which falls into the domain of the male and not female. (Ilić, 2009).

benefit the women, since they were again being reduced to passive victims. Using the example of a survivor's testimony in the Foča case[150], Mertus argues that

> "feeding into stereotypes of helpless women (and, in particular, of helpless Muslim women), this woman was portrayed as vulnerable, sexually accessible and of little importance apart from her relations to men. The grand meta-narrative of Woman Victim effaced the differences between women and undermined their agency."[151]

Collectivization of female victims still poses a problem in the analysis of rapes today, because not only are these women diverse based on their regional, religious, linguistic and other characteristics, but they differ individually and their stories are, though similar, still unique and original in their emotional experiences and individual resistance.

4.3 The Bosnian Voices

During the war, most of the Bosnian voices about mass rapes could not be heard and the majority of texts and reports on the subject have been written by either Croat and Serbian feminists, or by reporters and scholars from outside the former Yugoslavia. It is, for example, interesting to notice that participants in the *Mother Courage II* tour, representing women from former Yugoslavia (as if this was a homogenous group of women), were either Serbian or Croat feminists, while the only Bosnian Muslim woman on the tour (Kadra) had actually lived in the U.S. for several years prior to the war and did not experience the war directly.

This lack of Bosnian women's voices, however, is not that surprising, considering the fact that, during the war, these women had more pressing concerns (such as survival and

[150] In the Foča case, the ICTY sentenced three ethnic Serbs to prison for their abuse of women at a 'rape camp' near the small Bosnian town of Foča. This was the first time in history that an international criminal tribunal brought charges solely for crimes of sexual violence against women. (Mertus, 2004:113).
[151] Mertus, 2004:115.

taking care of victims) than to engage in writing and debating. But, the silence of the victims is questionable and problematic, since, apparently, they did speak out or otherwise there would be no survivors' testimonies. However, many academic and journalistic texts themselves tried to portray victims of rapes as silent and talked of their experience as something 'unspeakable'. This can be found in the titles of some of these texts, for example in Slavenka Drakulić's essay *Women Hide behind the Wall of Silence* or Seada Vranić's book *Breaking the Wall of Silence.* It is interesting, however, that Seada Vranić, for example, writes about the silence of victims as her greatest obstacle in researching mass rapes in Bosnia, while, at the same time, she reports of having collected some hundred statements from victims of rape.[152]

In addition to their Croat and Serbian counterparts, some Bosnian women's groups also spoke out about the rapes. But those were usually women working with refugees and survivors, who supported the ideas of 'nationalist' feminists about rape as a crime against non-Serb women only. Some of these women organized women's NGOs in Bosnia in order to help refugees and returnees. Thus, for example, one of the founders of *Biser*, International Initiative of Women from Bosnia and Herzegovina, spoke of the victims of rapes as being exclusively non-Serbs and of military and paramilitary Serb soldiers as the only perpetrators.[153]

But there were also other, non-nationalist, Bosnian organizations, which worked with women of all ethnicities. One of the examples is *Medica* - centre for therapy of women in the town of Zenica, in central Bosnia, founded in 1993, that gathered a team of women gynaecologists and psychologists, with the purpose of helping women and children victims of rape and war. Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serbian women all worked with the organisation. However, they mostly issued reports on trauma and physical and psychological consequences

[152] Vranić (1996).
[153] Dajdžić, 2000:143.

of rapes on their victims and did not engage in further analyses of these rapes[154]. Moreover, most of the women's NGOs in Bosnia were formed after the war had ended[155], so that not many NGO publications were issued during the heated debates on Bosnian rapes. These activists who did not want to side with any of the warring sides and were helping all victims regardless of their nationalities did not escape being condemned for their 'non-nationalist' approach. Thus, an article in pro-SDA (Bosniac nationalist party) weekly *Ljiljan* condemned the founder of *Medica Zenica*, Monica Hauser, for employing only Serb and Croat women in leading positions in the organization and accused *Medica* of being a "humanitarian trap", which tried to conceal crimes that Croats committed in central Bosnia and which did not really help a single Bosnian Muslim woman.[156]

What is also significant is that only a few Bosnian non-nationalist activists spoke of Bosniac nationalism and war time rapes and about how Bosniac leaders and pro-government media were using victimization of Bosniac women for their own causes[157]. These kinds of debates could usually be heard from Serbian and Croat feminists and in connection to Serbian and Croatian nationalism[158]. Silence about nationalism in Bosnia was mostly due to the fact that local and international constructions of Bosnia's identity portrayed it as *the* victim of this war and its representations usually revolved around victim images. Thus, this failure to critically discuss the link between Bosnian nationalism and victimization of rape survivors can be explained with the use of war-time rape as a strong and important symbol of the Bosnian nation's collective victimhood.

On the other hand, the rape survivors themselves did not usually claim their right to victim status, in opposition to the way they were being portrayed by both their government

[154] See, for example, Medica Zenica Infoteka (1997).
[155] Helms (2003b).
[156] Latić (1994).
[157] See, for example, Andrić-Ružičić, 2003:103-113.
[158] For an extensive analysis of the links between the war and Croatian and Serbian press representations of ethnicity, gender and sexuality see Žarkov (2007).

and outside of Bosnia. Women, rather, "often invoked the burdens faced by women during the war" and "more readily emphasized women's suffering through displacement, loss, and having to support families under conditions of hunger, danger and insecurity."[159] They did not see rape as a defining event of their experience of this war (as the media and some women's groups tried to assert), since they underwent many other kinds of suffering, such as being expelled from homes, losing their family members, being separated from surviving members, losing their jobs, etc.[160] However, their emphasis on other kinds of suffering could be said to have been the result of the stigma attached to victims of rape and of the fear of social rejection, although some official appeals were made for not rejecting these women from the society. Thus, the Muslim religious community in Zenica, at the end of 1992 and beginning of 1993, issued a *fetwa* (*fatwa*), a religious decree, which appealed to the raped women's families, friends and wider community and asked them not to reject these women, but to give them support and help. They also called for Muslim men to marry the raped women and to raise children born out of these rapes as Muslims.[161]

What is more, some nationalist leaders and press viewed these children as a 'lesser evil' than those which would be born out of mixed marriages, since they would be raised by both Muslim parents. In mixed marriages, on the other hand, and particularly in those in which the wife was a Muslim, there was a threat that children would not be brought up as Muslims, since "every marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim means a loss of her and her children for Islam and Muslims"[162]. Thus, a text in the Bosnian Muslim nationalist weekly *Ljiljan* stated that: "Even though these rapes are difficult, unbearable and

[159] Helms, 2006:252.
[160] On post-war identities of women who were subject to the war rapes in Bosnia see Skjelsbæk (2006).
[161] Andrić-Ružičić, 2004:113.
[162] Spahić Mujki, 1994:22.

unforgivable, from the standpoint of Islam they are easier and less painful than mixed marriages, the children and family relationships that result from them."[163]

What follows, then, is that a threat to the collective body of the nation is more important than suffering bodies of individual men and women.

As Andrić-Ružičić argues, the community's concern and government's interest in the raped women ended with their assertion to raise these children as Muslims, i.e. to make them part of the nation. Any real support, in terms of therapy and medical help, was provided only by women's local and international organizations.[164] Thus, for many years after the war the survivors received aid from women's organizations only, which was funded by foreign donors.[165] As Helms points out,

> "only in 2006, after seven years of efforts by local women's activists, did the Parliament of the BiH Federation (the Bosniac and Croat dominated 'entity' that, along with the *Republika Srpska*, RS, makes up the BiH state) pass an amendment recognizing victims of sexual violence as civilian war victims. With this status, survivors won the right to a small monthly payment from the state."[166]

It should be said, however, that, when the victim survivors did speak out about the rapes, they themselves insisted on collectivization of their experiences and on ethnic identification of victims, since this gave them a feeling of being part of some bigger strategy, which in turn gave meaning to their ordeal. In this way, they felt they were not alone in their suffering and that they were not the only ones to which the stigma of rape victim was being attached. It was, thus, easier for them to see these rapes not as an attack on their individual dignity, but on the dignity and honour of the whole nation to which they belonged. For example, a 1999 book of testimonies by rape survivors entitled *I Begged Them to Kill Me:*

[163] Ibid., pp. 22.
[164] Andrić-Ružičić, 2004:113.
[165] Helms (forthcoming).
[166] Ibid., pp. 7.

The Crime Against the Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina stressed these rapes as being part of a wider pattern of Bosniac women's suffering[167]. One of the victim survivors begins her testimony by saying "I am only one among thousands and thousands of raped and sexually abused women (...) The crime against Bosniac women was a planned attack on the dignity of Muslims, a destruction of biological substance of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina."[168]

This can be explained with the fact that dominant notions of sexuality and ethnicity are shared by both victims and perpetrators, since they both understand the cultural and social reality in the same way. Wood and Rennie argue that this is so since "in constructing their experience, women who have been raped draw on the same resources, same cultural vocabularies, as do the men who rape. And while women and men may use these resources somewhat differently, they do so for similar purposes – accounting for action and constructing identities."[169]

Thus, I argue that these collectivisations made by the victims themselves were the result of other (political, academic, feminist, media) discourses, which insisted on the existence of a general intent behind these mass rapes and which claimed that they were not isolated cases, but part of a systematic and planned strategy. It turns out that, even when they could be heard, the victims' voices were contaminated with various other discourses on their own experiences. These accounts, just as all discourses, are shaped by culture, society and ideology. By appropriating this rhetoric themselves, the victims, thus, only reinforced the logic by which the rapes were given meaning and understood in the first place.

I would like to point out, thus, to an overlapping set of meanings and discourses on which women (and men) drew their experiences and on which they constructed their identities. I also argue that individual experiences are important since each person negotiates these discourses and meanings in different ways in different contexts. In order to fully

[167] Ajanović et. al. (1999).
[168] Hasečić (2007), my translation.
[169] Wood and Rennie, 1994:146.

understand *all* ways in which discursive practices shape certain experiences and enable certain (political) actions, it is necessary to include into our research all categories and levels of analysis – individual, as well as collective; local, as well as regional.

5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have tried to delineate the various ways in which mass rapes happening during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been understood and interpreted by various actors. Starting from the theoretical perspective on the meaning of rape in war and on the construction of gender identities in relation to ethno-national conflicts, I looked at how scholars and feminists (both regional and international) treated the issue of mass rapes. I tried to show how most of these approaches failed to address the issue in its entirety and were selective in their analyses, since they were concentrating on either gender or ethnic identity of the victims and treated it as the most important category in their attempt to explain the logic of these crimes.

In my exploration of the subject, I have come to the conclusion that three different approaches can be discerned. The first one, for which I have borrowed the term 'genocidal rape' view from other authors, was mostly taken by local 'national' feminists who stressed the ethnicity of both victims and perpetrators as the most important category in the debates about Bosnian rapes. Thus, they argued that the rapes were committed by Serbian soldiers only and that Bosnian Muslim (and to a lesser extent Croatian) women were the main victims of these crimes, the aim of which was to destroy a whole nation by raping that nation's women. I argued, on the other hand, that such classifications of rapes only strengthened the already existing gendered and ethnic divisions among the local people and enabled the nationalist leaders to manipulate these rapes and their meaning. Thus, in my view, condemning only 'genocidal rape' risks turning all other kinds of rapes (as for example the rapes of Serbs, of men, or of men and women which belong to the same ethnic group as the rapist) into rapes of secondary importance or, even worse, making them completely invisible. The process of homogenizing women of a certain nationality as the only victims of rape and men of another

nationality as the only perpetrators is also dangerous, because it perpetuates the logic by which only those rapes committed in the name of ethnic groups and only if they happened in 'large' numbers and were 'systematic' should be prosecuted and punished.

The second approach, taken by 'anti-nationalist' feminists, concentrated on the gender identity of the victims, and not their nationality, arguing that these crimes carried a gendered dimension and were perpetrated by men against women (regardless of their nationality). In their view, it was exactly gender which gave meaning to these rapes and enabled its manipulation and usage as a weapon of ethnic cleansing.

However, I suggest, in order to understand and give a better explanation about what happened in Bosnia, one has to take into account and examine some additional questions. One of them is the question on how masculinities were constructed during this war and in what way they related to sexual violence committed against men. Although the evidence shows that men, too, were victims of sexual violence during the war in former Yugoslavia, there was a persistent invisibility of male victims, which was strongly related to the construction of masculinity. Since patriarchal constructions of men represent them as holding power, they came to be unimaginable as victims and seen only as perpetrators, since a victimized man, in this logic, was not perceived to be a real man.

Dubravka Žarkov's analysis of the Croatian and Serbian media showed that none of the warring sides wanted to talk about 'their' men being raped, since a nation which aspires to become or be seen as powerful cannot show a powerless male body[170]. This is due to the fact that men are viewed as embodying the power which protects and defends the nation, but this power is taken from them through emasculation by the means of rape. This, in turn, makes the man, as well as the nation he protects, powerless and capable of being defeated.

[170] Žarkov (2007).

Thus, the non-reporting of male victims in this war reinforced the traditional gender roles and sustained masculinised ideals and identities that continue to place men in hegemonic masculinity constructs.

Throughout the thesis, I argue that focusing on either the gender or ethnicity of the victims played directly into the hands of nationalist political leaders of all warring sides, who used the perceptions of rape as a war strategy for their own causes.

The third approach to the issue of mass rapes, for which I again borrowed the term 'global feminist', could be discerned when looking at writings of some Western feminists and scholars who took the 'all sides did it' stand and argued that rape was a tool of war used by men against women in the whole of former Yugoslavia. This approach, however, did not take into account all of the political and social specificities and complexities of this conflict and took it out of its context, thus posing the threat of relativising the blame for the crimes. This, in turn, opened up the rhetorical space for portraying people in the Balkans as 'Oriental', backward and inherently aggressive and primitive, driven by centuries-old 'ethnic hatreds'.[171]

Many debates about the Bosnian rapes revolved around the exact numbers of the women who were raped, and the estimations on these numbers have also been heavily used for political purposes. Thus, the numbers ranged from 20, 000 (proposed by the European Community) to as much as 50, 000 (the number given by the Bosnian government) of raped Bosnian Muslim women. However, such (exaggerated) numbers provide no useful information for analysis and only made it harder to ever reach reasonable figures.[172]

The 'numbers games' were accepted by both 'nationalist' women's groups and nationalist political elites, who argued that the rapes had a 'genocidal' nature, i.e. that they were planned, systematic and were part of a 'genocidal' strategy. They were interpreted as part of the plan to remove the Bosnian Muslim population from certain territories, either by

[171] On the negative stereotypes about people in the Balkans and on a theory that 'ethnic hatreds' in the Balkans are embedded in the landscape and its people see Kaplan (1993).
[172] Kesić (1994).

inducing terror among the population or through forced impregnation of women, so that the reproductive potential of the Muslim nation could be destroyed. This kind of understanding assumed that a nation or an ethnic group could be destroyed by procreation and that ethnicity is something to be inherited from the father, whereas mother was seen as merely a vessel or container carrying the baby. The women were, thus, viewed more as members of their nations than as individuals, and it was the nation and not an individual woman that was recognized as being victimized and humiliated.

Women, and Bosnian Muslim women in particular, were not seen as individuals by the (local and international) media either, since they were collectivized and assigned the Rape Victim Identity. I argued that this kind of identity is problematic in a number of ways. First of all, it offers a too simplistic representation of women's suffering in the war, since it ignores all different forms of suffering these women have been through (such as fleeing their homes, losing their loved ones, losing their jobs, etc.) and makes all other crimes committed against them invisible. Moreover, such victimization of women assigns them an exclusively passive role and gives them little space for agency, while, at the same time, it ignores their activities during and after the war. Finally, it is problematic because not only are all of these women individuals who differ based on their regional, religious, linguistic, personal and other characteristics, but their stories and experiences are, though similar, also unique and distinct.

In the debates about mass rapes in Bosnia, the victims' stories were, however, overlooked and their voices silenced. This happened not only in discourses of local political leaders, but in those put forward by local and international feminists as well. Bosniac leaders and pro-government media used victimization of Bosniac women for their own causes. Just as in all other parts of former Yugoslavia, nationalists manipulated gendered images of innocent, female victim of rape to justify committed crimes. This was usually done through the use of war-time rape as a strong and visible symbol of the whole Bosnian nation's collective

victimhood. Thus, once again, the collective body of the nation became more important than suffering bodies of individuals.

I, finally, suggest that, although it is important to look at how ethnic and gender identities functioned throughout this war in order to understand the usage and meaning of mass rape as a warring strategy, we should not drop the category of the individual from our analyses. For that reason, what should not be forgotten is that all these crimes happened to real people whose identities contain a number of various aspects and include much more than just their gender or membership of an ethnic group. I, thus, argue for a broader scope of the analysis in order to include individual experiences of victims themselves, and Bosniac victims in particular, since they have been the ones usually labelled as 'victims', but, at the same time, have been silenced and prevented from speaking by loudness of various other actors.

Although this may be difficult to achieve, since in that way experiences of victim survivors may become too dispersed, I argue that, in future analyses of the topic, it is important not to group people according to specific aspects of their identities and that the analyses should include and look at all levels on which identities are constructed.

By not including individual voices and by erasing the individual identities we create, in Hannah Arendt's words, "superfluous human beings"[173]. When people no more exist as individuals, they exist only as members of their ethnicity. What follows is that, by turning men and women into bearers of ethnic symbols, inscribed on their own bodies, this logic made it possible to violate people as ethnic and gendered bodies in this war in the first place.

[173] Arendt (1975).

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