

Female Body and (Ethno) Political Violence

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to address rape as a weapon of ethnopolitical conflict with a focus on Bosnia and to analyze the atrocities that happened in this country during the last decade. To call rape a weapon or a strategy instead of an act might seem inappropriate. However, rape (organized and strategic) as it was planned and executed in Bosnia was a weapon of the war because of its methodic, organized and systematic use and function which had destruction of the “enemy” for its final goal.¹

Provoked by the existing work on mass rapes in Bosnia and wanting to explain the differences between the global, local, and individual discourses about Bosnian war rapes, I decided to focus on the stories of the victims in an effort to understand their experiences as individuals. What I mean by this is that we need a new theoretical framework that would allow for capturing of all the layers of discourses - international, local, and individual- in one theoretical instance and spectrum.

The main contribution of this paper is to challenge the uniformity and passivity with which the victims of rape were reduced to their collective identities (ethnic and later gender identities) in most of the analysis of this topic in the West (including not only analysis that come from the West by Western scholars, but also those works done by non-Westerners which use typically Western representations and approaches in their analysis of Bosnian war rapes). This can be done only if all the layers of the discourse on rape are included in our analysis, especially the individual testimonies given by the rape victims and witnesses. This individual- based approach that I discuss in the last part of this paper is especially valuable because it has not been addressed in any of the numerous academic works on rape in the Bosnian war.

During the Bosnian war I lived in Bihac, one of the cities under siege where many refugees (mostly women) found their shelter in 1992 and 1993. Although in the international media there was much discussion of Bosnian rape camps, I never heard anyone in Bihac mention anything about rapes. Even the refugee camps in Zagreb and Slovenia were silent. Bosnian besieged cities stayed quiet, isolated from the world’s discourse on the Bosnian rapes. Displaced women in Bihac, the ones who were forced to move from the surrounding towns and villages to Bihac, and who suffered terrible torture including rapes² did not speak out. However, once the international pressure and search for these women supported their witnessing and sharing of the stories, some of these women decided to talk.

It is important to mention that there is a general tendency to imagine and talk about the perpetrators of rape as of pathological, abnormal individuals. The reality in the case of war rapes is different because the people who committed these crimes are not pathological cases, but are “normal” people who, after they would commit these crimes, would go back to their families, wives and children. The rapes perpetrators do not, most commonly, stick out in the mass. They are the mass.

¹ Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch and the World Council of Churches as well as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights report that Serbian government officials were aware of the rapes, approved them - and in some cases even participated themselves in rapes - and that orders to rape were issued (PETWW 1993).

² Many of the stories about rapes that displaced Bosnian women from the area surrounding Bihac did not speak out, but they offered their testimonies to the ICTY.

It is necessary to emphasize that rape has been reported to have been committed by all sides (Muslims, Serbs, and Croats) of the conflict in Bosnia. However, the far largest number of reported victims have been Bosnian Muslims, and the largest number of alleged perpetrators have been Bosnian Serbs. There are few reports of rape and sexual assault between members of the same ethnic group (Commission of Experts; Final Report 1995). It is important to understand Bosnian war rapes in the context of ethnic (collectivization and objectification of a victim) and gender identities (subjectification of the collective gender identity) because both of these aspects of identity were crucial for the development of rape as a war strategy. I elaborate and challenge both of these approaches by introducing of individual identity.

Two Approaches to the Studies of Bosnian War Rapes and their Treatment of the Female Body

Objectification and Collectivization of the Victim's Experience

This approach is based on the collectivization or unification of Bosnian women's war experiences. Individual sufferings of victims, analyzed through the prism of a nation or an ethnic group, are collectively analyzed as raped Croatian, Muslim, or Serb women.

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"³ to the enemy. As a tool, rape constitutes a powerful weapon for demoralization, mobilization and humiliation. In WW II, Russian and Jewish women were raped by Nazis, and Soviet soldiers raped many German women. In other wars Chinese women were raped by Japanese, and Vietnamese by Americans (Drakulic 1993:119). However, the more recent mass rapes in Bosnia and Rwanda as well as the rapes that occurred during the partition of India differ in organization and scale.

Bosnian culture has a low number of *reported* rapes in peace time. It is not because women are equal to men, but because women belong to men, who are obliged protect them. The war in Bosnia destroyed the cultural structure in which rapes were relatively rare and on which Bosnian culture and the protection of women was built. Most of the rape victims were Muslim women and they were raped in the "rape camps". The rape camps were constructed expressly for the purpose of systematic military rape in accordance with official Serbian policy. This policy was developed by the top army officials, but the evidence and the minutes from the meetings which took place in Belgrade in 1991 were destroyed (Allan 1998:56). The enemy's women were collected in the conquered territories and transported to the rape camps. Sometimes, transportation to a nearby camp would take a whole day since women were raped on the buses as they were transported to the camps (Center for Research and Documentation of Association of Camp Prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina [CRDACP BH], 1999).

The Social and the Physical Body

The theory of rape as an element of communication has to be analyzed in the light of the relationship between social and physical body. For this analysis I use the ideas of

³ I explain what the "message" is, in the Bosnian context on pp. 28-29..

Mary Douglas on natural symbols. The author shows how certain forms of social life bring forth regularly the same varieties of symbolic expression. Douglas suggests that individual body reflects the social body so that hierarchy treats the body as a hierarchy, and sect treats it as a closed system. The body represents its broader social reality (Douglas 1970: 166). Which particular bodily margins attribute power depends on what situations the body is mirroring (Douglas 1966:123):

The Social body constraints the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of the society. There is a continual exchange of meaning between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other. As a result of this interaction the body itself is a highly restricted medium of expression...the bodily control is the expression of social control—abandonment of bodily control in ritual responds to the requirements of a social experience which is being expressed (Douglas 1970:74).

The Female Ethnic Body and Rape

There are two interrelated ways in which this idea of ethnic/female ‘Other’ operates in wars. The first one is discursive in which the symbols, identities, and values of the ethnic groups are represented through gendered, feminine metaphors. The ones that are common are “the birth of the group; the motherland that needs to be defended; the sacred soil that must not be polluted, the motherland which sends her sons to the war” (Zarkov 1995:113). The second way in which the ethnic/female concept operates in wars is not discursive, but *physical*; in the practice of ethnic war the female body is physically present and it is dealt with in bodily terms. It is an element of male power to draw the border of its own ethnic group by defining women of the ‘Other’ through rape. “In this case, the female body is seen as the *ethnic female body*” (Zarkov 1995:113). However, the conceptualization of the ethnic female other is not enough to mobilize mass rapes. In order to mobilize mass rapes Serbian political leadership used the most effective technique – propaganda saturated with manipulated historical details.

Since one ethnic group’s purity depends on women and their bodies, the boundaries of the ethnic community are defined by both ethnic and female ‘Others’. Margins and boundaries of the body are dangerous and they have to be defended (Douglas 1966:124). In most of societies the female bodies are seen as “the entry by which the pure content may be adulterated and males are treated as pores through which precious stuff may ooze out and be lost, the whole system being thereby enfeebled” (Douglas 1966:127). By killing and wounding the bodies the representation of the state or the nation in these bodies is destroyed.

“Inasmuch as ‘ethnic purity’ depends on the definition of the ‘ethnic Other’, gender hierarchy depends on the definition of the ‘female Other’ (Zarkov 1995:114). This subordination of the female/ethnic other explains why female bodies are an obvious target in times of ethnic conflict. Aggression against women through the control of their bodies was used to eat away at men’s honor, which in turn destroyed the honor of the nation. The Bosnian female body is thus “an imprinted body, imprinted with condensed memories of history” (Taylor 1999:110).

This relationship between the female body and the symbolism of rape in the Bosnian situation is brilliantly captured in Mostov:

Rape at once pollutes and occupies the territory of the nation, transgresses its boundaries, defeats its protectors. Degradating the nation's symbol of fertility and purity, it physically blocks its continuity and threatens its existence. Such rape thus promises to 'cleanse' the territory of the other and make it ours. In a war in which major goals are articulated in terms of map-making, it follows a frighteningly logical strategy (Mostov 1995:524).

V. Spike Peterson draws a similar conclusion on the relationship between the nation/ethnicity/state and the female body. The author says:

"Nation-as-a woman expresses a special, embodied femaleness: the land's fertility, upon which the people depend, must be protected by defending the body/nation's boundaries against invasion and violation. But nation-as-a woman is also a temporal metaphor: The rape of the body/nation not only violates frontiers but disrupts—by planting alien seed or destroying reproductive viability—the maintenance of the community through time" (Peterson in Mostov 1995:523).

Female Body as an Object of Communication

The raped female body is perceived as an object of communication. In this communication process, men communicate with their enemies by using the enemy's women as a sign of communication. The hypothesis about Bosnian rapes as an element of communication is suggested by Seifert:

[T]he rape of women carries an additional message: it communicates from man to man, so to speak, that the men around the women in question are not able to protect "their" women. between men became clear during the war in the former Yugoslavia, when buses with women in sixth, seventh or even eighth months of pregnancy were sent over the enemy lines –frequently with cynical inscriptions on the vehicles, about the children who will be born. The key point was the consequence for men, not the sufferings of women. (Seifert in Stiglmeier 1994:59)

This process can be represented as follows:

Men/Subjects → Raped Women/Object → Men/Subjects

In this communication process, men communicate with their enemies by using the enemy's women as a sign of communication. Muslim women are taken to carefully chosen locations (rape prisons) in an organized way based on soberly pre-determined

plans (see Alan 1996; Vranic 1996). In the rape camps the majority of women are young and fertile. Besima, a peasant woman from the area of Kljuc (Western Bosnia) was taken to a camp in which there were already nine women. Serb soldiers raped them on daily bases. All but one woman got pregnant. One of the women decided to take her life after she conceived (CRDACPBH 1999:104). Women who get pregnant are kept in the camps until they would reach 6th or 7th month of their pregnancy, and only then many of them were returned to their homes.

Once the impregnated “object” arrives at her husband’s hands it establishes a non-verbal discourse between the enemies, Serb, Muslim or Croat men. Before this communication could exist, the object/raped woman has to have associative relations enforced by the contextual meaning about the significance of the female body with the men who receive the message and this relationship has to be known to the sender of the message. This approach is in agreement with the pragmatic and metapragmatic approaches in linguistics theory that looks at the context of the message, previous knowledge, and social setting, as much as it focuses on the words themselves (in this situation, acts themselves).

Based on the cultural and traditional values placed upon women in Bosnian society, it is obvious that many men regard their masculinity as compromised by the abuse of “their” women. In this system of communication, the intended victims are men whose manliness and honor are destroyed through this communication, and the raped women’s bodies are used to achieve this victory over the enemy. Destroyed/damaged and impregnated, a woman’s body is perceived as a shattered, permanently destroyed fragment of her former whole.

Thus, in the war individual women’s bodies become both metaphoric and physical representations of the social and political body, and killing or damaging that body symbolically killed or damaged the woman’s family and ethnic group. Other kinds of messages were engraved in women’s bodies. These marks which were usually made with knives and burning cigarettes did not only cause physical pain and suffering for women. Messages such as 4S-s (*Samo Sloga Serbina Spasava* – Only Unity Saves the Serbs), names and many other symbols were meant to constantly remind the victims of what they went through and to, even more importantly, remind their husbands of what happened to their women. They were stamped by both the enemy’s sperm and the actual physical mark which characterized this product of rape as ‘women raped by the Other.’ The body of the woman literally became the paper on which the message was written. We can conclude that although the Bosnian woman was culturally recognized as a human subject, the importance of her role as an ethnically determined object in male-to-male war communication was more important, thereby subsuming her humanity. By focusing on women’s bodies as symbolic indexical elements of communication, this (dominant) approach to the study of the Bosnian war takes away the Bosnian women’s personality and individuality, since in this context she is already defined as a passive, voiceless, collective ethnic and gender entity.

Whereas the conflict between male soldiers is construed as a subject-subject conflict, the attack on women is laid out as a subject-object conflict. Unlike the attack on the body of the soldier, the attack on the female body is not perceived as a political act by the cultural awareness. Therefore, women are not provided with the possibility of

systematic defense. Thus, a conflict is fought on female bodies in which women do not have any active, immediate political part. Hence, whereas in national conflicts the female body, through its symbolic significance, serves as strategic territory, at the same time the hierarchical structurization of the genders in peacetime is reproduced and confirmed in a manner that exposes women defenselessly to the enemy's attacks. Unlike supposedly conscious soldiers, rape victims are not aware of any cultural arrangement, within the scope of which their bodies and their ordeals are used in combat, and they are employed to substantiate with their bodies, as it were, the power of a regime or an ideology (Seifert 1996).

This idea of objectification of the female body and her experience needs to be more deeply and carefully examined. I propose the following questions: What and who was the “object” that is being communicated across the ethnic lines? And how can a raped subject/human be reduced to an idea of an object and her partial self?

Collectivization of Individual Women

"The victims of rape are not included in the public rite of mourning about the lost war; they are not venerated as heroines, and they are not awarded any compensations" (Schmidt-Harzbach 1992: 43).

This part of the paper discusses and challenges the controversy of the collectivization of the raped Bosnian women. It seems paradoxical that the Western feminist and human rights groups rely heavily on the political ideology of the West that is based on the *individual* self-determination, *individual* values, *individual* human rights, *individual* experience, voice and value, but they at the same time take away (in their analysis) that very same individuality from the raped Bosnian women. This process of collectivization can be explained from several different angles such as ethnic group approach, postcolonial approach, and medical approach. In the next few paragraphs I explain these approaches and their applicability to the Bosnian situation.

Ethnicity and Rape

One of the most dominant approaches to analysis of ethnopolitical conflicts is, of course, the ethnic one. This approach is based on the conflict between ethnic groups. Consequently all analysis has this division between the bounded groups at its core. In this context the rapes of the women in Bosnia are always analyzed as rapes of Serbs over Muslim women, or Croats over Muslim women, or Muslims over Serbs, etc. This dominant approach emphasizes the group and ignores the individual experience, because ethnicity is what matters in this paradigm. One of the ways to break away from this “ethnic monopoly” in the analysis of the Bosnian war rapes is to introduce another aspects of analysis which can show some angles of experience that are omitted in the ethnic approach. Some scholars escape the “ethnic trap” by introducing gender category in their analysis (e.g. Zarkov). It is necessary to use gender as another aspect of the analysis that would transgress the boundaries of the ethnic analysis and show some gender specific sides of this crime. However, this approach has to be critically applied

and examined, since gender is only one additional, and not the final category of analysis. This fact has been often omitted by the feminist groups who stressed this aspect of analysis as crucial. The advantages and disadvantage of this approach will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Postcolonialism and Rape

The more one possess power or privilege, the more one is marked as an individual, by rituals, written accounts or visual reproduction (Foucault 1995[1997]:192).

There is a strong parallel between the way the feminist groups in the West treat the women in the Third World⁴, and the way they approach the Bosnian war rapes. In both situations there is a strong emphasis on the “Universal Sisterhood/Womanhood”—the idea that the Western women who achieved some level of equality and power in their *societies* need to export/disseminate this acquired knowledge and liberate the women in the *society* of the Third World. Chandra Talpade Nohanty observes the following:

I would like to suggest that the feminist writings I analyze here discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Third World, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular “Third World Women”—an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse. Western feminisms appropriate and ‘colonize’ the fundamentally complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, and castes in these countries (Talpade Mohanty in Ashcroft, Griffins, and Tiffin 1995:260).

In addition Talpade Mohanty adds that we cannot forget the importance of the Western feminist discourse and action for the Third World women. These Western feminists were main actors in breaking of the silence about the experiences of the Third World women, and they forged the international links between women’s political struggles. This work is essential for women around the world, but the differences (in attitudes, ethnicity, race.....) among the women have to be emphasized as well.

There is a strong parallel between this criticism and my criticism of the Western scholarship on the Bosnian rapes. It was crucial and very important to get rape on the international political agenda and to make decision makers aware of the necessity to include rape in war among the crimes against humanity (see pages 5-8). This work lead to some revolutionary changes in the treatment of women and humanity in general. Bosnian war rape reports became essential for the treatment of rape in wars in general, and the importance of numbers, thus collective experiences, were crucial from the legal point of view. Many feminist groups saw Bosnian rapes through the lenses of their own agenda, and they treated Bosnian women as such. Thus, in the service of the fictive Universal Womanhood and the human rights discourse the raped women of Bosnia were collectivized, seen as already constituted and bounded whole. They were “characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression.....and ...they were socially

⁴ This phrase *Third World Women* is itself problematic because it is both colonizing and homogenizing.

constituted as a homogeneous group identified *prior* to the process of analysis” (Talpade Mohanty in Ashcroft, Griffins, and Tiffin 1995:262).

We can conclude that subjectivity and individuality were sacrificed for the common cause. This is still 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, descriptive patterns, and individual resistance. This aspect has to be brought into our analysis.

Medicalization of Raped Women’s Experiences

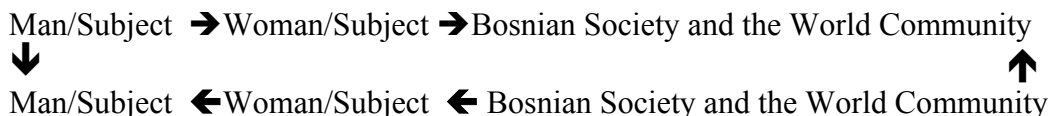
In Western reports on the Bosnian war rapes the rape victim’s suffering, if recognized, is immediately medicalized, or “social problems are transformed into the problems of individuals, collective experiences of suffering are made into personal experiences of suffering and the social traumas are, thereby, refigured, for policy and intervention programs, as psychological and medical pathologies” (Kleinman 1995:177). Many Western and local doctors and social workers, even with honest intentions to help the victims of rape, reduced the holistic experience of rape to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They used PTSD to explain the emotional and psychological state of the raped women. This approach initiated two main problems. First, it projected individual trauma (PTSD) on the raped women as a group. The suffering of the rape victims was thus often discussed in medical terms usually used in the analysis of the individual sufferings, but on a group level. An example of this discourse is “the raped Bosnian *women* suffer from PTSD, etc.” This approach masks individual differences and experiences. This attitude limits the experience of raped women in Bosnia to the medical experience of the ethnic and gender groups as a totality.

Secondly, the medical approach, by focusing solely on rape, excludes the other traumas these women experienced. These women suffered multiple traumas, such as loss of home, loss of family members, etc. To label the collection of these different traumas as PTSD is misleading; it is an attempt to mask the real scope of suffering by using medical terminology.

Now that I have explained some of the dangers in the academic analysis of the Bosnian war rapes, we can move to possible solutions that would, while keeping other categories of analysis such as ethnicity and gender in place, address individuality as well.

Woman, the Subject

The chain of communication as a hypothesis, and calculated mass rape as a weapon, could be challenged only if the objectified bodies from the earlier analysis were “given back” a space in which to exercise their subjectivity. Thus, the original chain of communication had to change to:



The stories about the rape camps in Bosnia circulated in the international arena and they received enormous attention. This was the moment when international, local, and individual contexts and aspects merged and produced a complex matrix of interpretations, punishments, and maybe even awards and satisfaction. Bosnian women were asked to speak to the world and some of them decided to share their stories. Many who agreed to speak were women who left their Bosnian homes and lives, but also some women who stayed in Bosnia decided to voice their experience. The subject, the raped woman, whose voice had been silenced for most of history, was allowed to speak and to express her identity in the limited space of the Western War Tribunal in The Hague. This did not go without a punishment. These women all became primarily “raped women” and only secondary “women.” The term “raped,” so painfully present, became their label and their main identity. Many women who were raped found this idea traumatizing, tasteless, and limiting. For example, Nusreta says: “...[W]e can not divide women into two categories: raped and not raped, as if they are some exponents in the window...as if their only identity and characteristic are that they were raped...that sounds terrible, ‘raped women’ ...we need to look for some other term, not so exclusive and limiting, maybe ‘women victims of war,’ or ‘tortured women,’ but not raped...”⁵.

Even though this approach changes the status and perception of the raped Bosnian women from object of exchange to subjects in war, this approach still ignores their individual experiences. That is why in my analysis of the testimonies I focus on the diversity of the women’s experiences and some patterns of behavior that explain the differences in the articulation of the experience of rapes. The diversity (but still not individuality) of the women’s experiences could be grasped simply by looking at the different rape strategies that were implemented by soldiers and paramilitary forces in different parts of Bosnia. There are at least two (some researches suggest four) main patterns of mass rapes in Bosnia: rural (including small towns) and urban. Women from rural areas were often raped in front of other villagers and this experience stigmatized them for the rest of their lives (Vranic 1996).

Many rural women were taken either to the rape camps or to “clubs,” “hotels,” and “houses,” (Vranic 1996). These houses were much smaller than the camps and they were composed of fewer women, usually chosen among the younger and more beautiful girls. These women were kept for sexual pleasure and the rape strategy of these women was not to necessarily impregnate them, but to use them as sex slaves. The brutality that was exercised on these women is unspeakable. Many of them had their breasts cut off and their genitals destroyed by sticks and bottles that soldiers would push “down there” (CRDACPBH 1999:106).

The urban pattern was different because there were more people to liquidate in the cities than in the villages. Some women in towns were taken to the rape camps, but many continued to live in areas controlled by the other ethnic group where they were visited during the night and raped, often in front of their families. Sometimes paramilitary forces would force men to rape their daughters, wives or mothers while they would watch it, like in a theatre. After that, they would rape them themselves. This situation occurred in cities such as Banja Luka and Prijedor (Vranic 1996).

⁵ From the movie “calling the Ghosts”

Even though there are definitively recognizable differences between urban and rural raped women, there are differences even on the level of an individual woman. The following two testimonies show, in my opinion, active resistance and individual stories of two Bosnian women in the rape camps. Enisa's story showed how the general attitude which supports the idea of passive, raped women is inaccurate since many women try to resist in order to escape the torture and rape.

Enisa, a young Muslim teacher who was raped by her student in a rape camp near Prijedor, decided to start singing and by singing to try to convince other women in the camp of her madness. The story spread around the camp that Enisa lost her mind since she never stopped singing for days, even when the Serb rapists would threaten her with knives and guns. She sang until the Serb soldiers decided to take her out of the camp and dump her near the road that lead to Croatia. Only after she made sure that she was in safe hands did Enisa stop singing. She believes that the Serbs decided not to kill a mad woman because of their superstitious beliefs that suggest that the one who kills a crazy person will be visited by demons (Vranic 1996:103).

Berina's story was another example. Berina, a beautiful, young woman from Visegrad, was continuously raped by a soldier, Mikavica, for days.

One morning Berina whispered in my ear that she would bite his penis off if he makes her perform oral sex again. I begged her not to, to be strong. One night they came inside, walking over our heads, stepping on the women who were sleeping on the floor. Ratko took me, and Misa took Berina. I was raped for 30 minutes when we heard the scream coming from the room next door. The scream came out of Misa's mouth. Ratko stopped raping me and started putting his clothes on. Suddenly, Misa entered the room we were in, screaming and waving the gun in his hand. When he saw me on the bed he shot at me twice. Ratko stopped him and took his pistol away. He came closer to me, since I was bleeding. I was shot by two bullets; one ended up in my hip, the other one between my left shoulder and my breast. I was in the hospital for 10 days. Only after I came out I learned what had happen that night. Berina was dead. She did what she said she would. Misa tried to force her to kiss his penis. She bit him so strongly that she almost cut off his penis. He, while screaming madly and in terrible pain, got his gun and killed her at the place. Then he came to our room." (CRDACPBH 1999:208).

These two examples above show the value and diversity we can find among the voiced experiences of raped women in Bosnia. It is possible that this diversity among stories, linguistic terminologies, descriptions and similar were omitted by Western academic for several reasons: they might not have had time to actually read these testimonies, or they did not speak the language and many of the sophisticated differences were lost in the translations of the testimonies from Bosnian into English, or they were falling into “gender” and/or “ethnic” trap.

Discussion

This paper is divided in two separate but connected parts. The first one deals with the objectification of the raped Bosnian women through the objectification of their bodies, which are seen as tools of communication between the ethnic groups. This focus is also a basis for the objectification and collectivization of the experience of the raped women. Once the previously silenced “body of a woman” is given back its voice through the process of individualization, we can see the complexity, diversity and subjective experiences of rape torture. This significantly enriches our analysis.

In order to show this dynamics between international, local, and individual, I focused on rape as a symbolic element and a sign of communication from three different points of view: the international discourse, the level of the group (ethnic or/and gender), and the level of an individual. All of these levels of analysis operated in a certain international political spectrum and its economic, historical, and cultural landscapes. These three levels are intertwined and in a constant dialogue with each other, and the borders between them are often fluid and sometimes artificially drawn by academics and others who need the units of analysis.

Bosnian local context existed in the broader international context, and the dynamic between the two made the “shift” in the local and global discourses of rape possible and the passivity of the raped victims was questioned. They were given an opportunity to challenge the passive role they have been given historically, and to be listened to in the international arena. This change in the attitudes towards the rape victims is today reflected in the human rights documents, which, for the first time in the history of the international law, recognized rape as a crime against humanity.

In addition to this work, we have to broaden the theoretical framework in which we examine the Bosnian rapes. Individual narratives, emotions and linguistic aspects cannot be overlooked in our analysis, because that would mean that we agree with the partial analysis. Many would say that the individual analysis is too complicated and fruitless. I think, however, that we need to follow the writings of the famous anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir who argues for an individual approach in the study of culture and its numerous phenomena. My approach to Bosnian war rape discourse can be paralleled to Sapir’s approach to culture. This approach does not ignore the existence and validity of structure and patterning that culture provides, but it, just like many practice anthropologists such as Ortner or Bourdieu suggested, sees this structure as more fluid and person centered. In my analysis I do not ignore the importance of the local and universal laws and patterns of behavior that enveloped and contextualized the war rapes. Also I do not ignore the importance of the ethnic and gender aspects of the

rapes. I suggest a more fluid and individual centered approach to the study of the war rapes.

In his writing on “The Emergence of the Concept of Personality in a Study of Cultures” Sapir claims that there is “a serious hurt done to our understanding of culture when we systematically ignore the individual and his types of interrelationships with other individuals” (Sapir 1963:593). Culture, as it is ordinarily constructed by the anthropologist, is a more or less mechanical sum of the more striking or picturesque generalized patterns of behavior which he has either abstracted for himself out of the sum of total of his observations or has had abstracted for him by his informants in verbal communication (Sapir 1963:593). We can see how some cultural elements are well within the horizon of the awareness of one individual and entirely absent in another individual’s landscape. These differences and nuances are, in my opinion, crucial for our understanding of culture of rape and processes of rape as a war strategy. Our interest has to be tingled by both personal and cultural or better to say individual and collective implications. Our study of rape has to incorporate what is international, what is local or group level, and what is individual. All three levels have to be given an equal treatment in our academic and theoretical analysis. It is true that this approach is a risky adventure which will emerge fragmentary and confused, but it will have a tougher, more vital, importance for social thinking than the tidy tables of attributes attached to this or that group of raped women which we have been in the habit of perceiving as homogeneous, collective, and bounded (Sapir 1963:59).

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