

Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosovo: Voices and Silence of Women

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At different times, and for different reasons, Kosovo informal and organized women's networks have dealt with wartime sexual violence in different ways: they have followed either a strategy of silence or one of speech. Throughout, they have struggled to disentangle gender from ethnicity, straddling the line between a deep connection with local culture and domestic and international norms and agendas. This article tells their story, which in broader terms is the story of the subjectivity of women's rights activists—domestic and international—as it connects with the normative framework of transitional justice. The case of Kosovo shows that transitional justice meaningfully engages local actors as a human rights project sensitive to political change, more than as a “toolkit” which packages truth, reconciliation and justice with recipes for implementation. The case of Kosovo also confirms that lobbying by women's networks is crucial to the inclusion of women's perspectives in transitional justice, and that the exclusion of women from decision making results in a net loss for women's concerns. I would take the argument even further, and suggest that the inclusion of women and their agendas, as well as the struggle by women's networks for inclusion, is necessary for human rights transformation.

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Introduction

In Kosovo director Isa Qosja's film *Three Windows and a Hanging*,¹ the village teacher, Lushe, tells a foreign journalist that she was raped by Serbian security forces during the war, and she was not alone. Her testimony unleashes a series of events that lead to her ostracism, the subversion of the patriarchal communal order, and the suicide of another survivor. For Lushe, speaking out is a relief and empowering. When she responds to the invitation of the world outside to denounce the crime she suffered, she also rebels against the control of a male hierarchy that is devoted to maintaining rules of honor and propriety—a control that in rural Kosovo oppresses women, but suffocates men too. Her revelation, however, brings no relief to another survivor, the melancholic Nifa, who hangs herself.

This story, as told in the film, is a fictional interpretation of how women and society at large have dealt with wartime sexual violence, served up to the audience in easily understood dichotomies. It's not that the tension between "tradition" and "modernity" is unreal, but it is not the whole story. Nor is it the unchanging lens through which one must understand gender relations, as the film suggests, and as a general discourse on Kosovo, or Balkan women, maintains.² Although not in large numbers, Kosovo survivors reported the sexual violence they suffered, but after the war they largely shunned the invitation to tell their stories to a wider public, and instead sought support in more private settings from each other and women's rights groups. Only lately have they resolved to ask for recognition and to lobby for reparations. At different times, and for different reasons, they have followed either a strategy of silence or one of speech. This article examines these shifting strategies in their historical and political contexts.

I examine the case of Kosovo, drawing from more than a decade of field research and in-depth interviews with all the leading activists who worked and work with survivors. The protagonists of this story are Albanians, not because they were the only victims, nor because I intend to minimize the violence perpetrated against other nationalities.³ But there is ample evidence that in Kosovo this type of crime was overwhelmingly committed by the Serbian army, police and paramilitaries and it was identified as a crime against humanity in the indictment of Slobodan Milošević and others at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY). My first concern was to inductively build a narrative that respected women's agency, and was intelligible to the women themselves. However, the same narrative offers the opportunity to reflect, through the lens of gender, on broader issues of human rights advocacy and transitional justice.

I begin with the story of how women's networks first documented widespread sexual violence during the early 1990s, at the height of the Milošević regime's repression and violence, but still well before the armed conflict with Serbia. Women activists resisted the efforts to suppress their gendered advocacy, which the Albanian political leadership criticized as a distraction from the national liberation cause. Instead, they pressed on with their activism, finding tactical and strategic support in the emerging transnational campaign about violence against women,⁴ a campaign that was in turn given a new impulse by contemporaneous reports of rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina⁵ and by the establishment of the ICTY.

Women's domestic advocacy for justice on behalf of survivors of sexual violence continued throughout the war (1998–1999) but was silenced after Kosovo was freed from Milošević's repression, following NATO's humanitarian intervention. In this phase, a United Nations–led administration (UNMIK) took over the government of Kosovo for a decade but failed to act on women's rights.⁶ Women's perspectives were completely sidelined in the state-building process, even though Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) formally affirmed the importance of making gender a central concern of peace-building. Contrary to expectations, the UN and other

international institutions involved in the interim government allowed the repetition of patterns of gender stereotyping; they even neglected to deal with the sexual abuse and trafficking already observed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and caused to flourish in Kosovo, like in Bosnia-Herzegovina before it, by the presence of large NATO troop contingents.⁷

During the same postwar period, Kosovo society as a whole remained silent on the issue of sexual violence against women—whether because this specific crime revived memories of national victimization, or pointed to stains on the honor of whole families. The political leadership that emerged from the war promoted masculine ideas of valor and patriotism, which came to dominate public discourse, leaving alternative narratives of the war below the radar.⁸ Women’s groups kept working on identifying and rehabilitating survivors, thus mitigating institutional neglect and broader social denial, but chose to remain largely silent. With the exception of a couple of eyewitnesses at the ICTY, who came to regret bitterly their decision to testify,⁹ survivors refused to come forward and speak out even in informal transitional justice initiatives such as the lobby for a truth commission, known as RECOM. Until very recently, they even resisted the invitation to take part in the feminist approach to justice of the Women’s Court.¹⁰

Finally, this article tackles the more recent shift in the strategy of women’s activists and survivors. Domestic women’s networks have challenged Kosovo society and institutions, now independent, to provide reparations for survivors of sexual violence. With the inclusion of survivors as a special category in the 2014 War Veterans Law, and Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga’s commitment to campaign on their behalf, survivors’ rights are closer than ever to obtaining full recognition. This institutional support has mattered, and in 2015 for the first time two survivors appeared in front of the Women’s Court in Sarajevo. As in the period before the war, women advocates achieved results thanks to the convergence of domestic and transnational networks: in this case, veterans of the Kosovo women’s movement and women in political institutions, and the international lobby to stop sexual violence promoted by actor/director Angelina Jolie and former UK foreign secretary William Hague.¹¹

While I am mindful of the critical literature on local translations of transitional justice as a transnational field dealing with post-conflict accountability, I found that the often-invoked dichotomy, “local” versus “international,” does not explain this “local” story.¹² What I observed in Kosovo, a case that shows striking similarities to neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina,¹³ is a pattern that can be better understood within the theoretical framework of social constructivists. These scholars of international relations have long emphasized the interaction between local and transnational advocacy networks (“the boomerang effect”)¹⁴ in fighting to reform a state that denies its human rights crimes but might come to accept these rights under coercive or persuasive conditions, eventually moving from commitment to compliance.¹⁵ This process of human rights change has been called the “spiral model,”¹⁶ and the case of Kosovo affords the opportunity to see it at work in the context of a fluid institutional

framework—from the repressive state of Serbia to the postwar international protectorate, and since 2008 an independent state enjoying limited sovereignty.

I suggest that the constructivist approach has strong explanatory power not only in analyzing Kosovo but also other domestic cases of transitional justice, because it connects in meaningful ways the subjectivity of human rights activists—domestic and international—with the normative framework of transitional justice. The story outlined in this article shows how transitional justice engages the victims it purports to serve when it works first and foremost as a human rights project that is sensitive to political change and to mutable, sometimes contradictory, priorities over time.¹⁷ But it fails in the same endeavor when it is packaged as a promise of truth, reconciliation, and justice,¹⁸ deliverable through a portable set of tactics and policy goals, often centered around specific “toolkits” and recipes for implementation. This should be an important realization for transitional justice “professionals” and those political actors—whether domestic or international, state or non-state—who pursue their agenda without negotiating it with the beneficiaries of their interventions.¹⁹

This narrative about the advocacy of women’s networks on wartime sexual violence in Kosovo also confirms what an important number of feminist scholars and advocates have long argued: that lobbying by women’s networks is crucial to the inclusion of women’s perspectives in transitional justice, and that the exclusion of women from decision making in transitional justice results in a net loss for women’s concerns.²⁰ I am aware that feminist scholars have long warned against the risk of relying too much on the power of representation, while uncritically accepting notions of law and justice: in their view, justice itself should first be “deconstructed,” and then “reconstructed,” in ways that do not support men’s oppression of women.²¹ A feminist normative criticism of transitional justice has highlighted, for example, how a focus on sexual violence even by the best functioning criminal tribunals and truth commissions ends up defining women exclusively by the violations to their bodies, thus perpetuating their domination.²² Engaging with this broader feminist theoretical debate is beyond the scope of this article, which is concerned mostly with the world of activists, where the fight for representation has remained an all-consuming concern.²³ The empirical approach that I chose focuses on women’s political subjectivity, what is often called the “women’s voice,” but which can also be expressed through silence. How this subjectivity develops and is embodied in women’s networks is the most reliable evidence we have of what survivors want, and of how can they obtain even limited women’s rights change.

I would take the argument even further and suggest that the inclusion of women and their agendas, as well as the struggle by women’s networks to obtain inclusion, makes for greater effectiveness of transitional justice as a human rights project in general. The participation of women is indeed an indicator of any innovative historical movement’s maturity, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci’s comment to those who were surprised by women’s presence in the nineteenth-century Italian Risorgimento.²⁴ It is certainly an indicator of the maturity of human rights advocacy, and particularly in the context of conflict and post-conflict.

Gender is a crucial dimension shaping social and political processes before, during and after a war, and this is also the case of the many intra-state conflicts of the post–Cold War era.²⁵ The gendered propaganda in preparation for the Yugoslav wars, which first focused on Kosovo women, and continued during the war, was a major mobilizing factor leading to the perpetration of human rights violations and war crimes, but it also stimulated transnational networks to mobilize and seek accountability for those crimes for the first time since World War II. Common gendered stereotypes that continued to exist, and were sometimes reinforced after the conflict, facilitated the exclusion of women from decision-making positions, and even led to violence against them, an occurrence not unique to Kosovo but common to other state-building contexts.²⁶ If this constitutes a serious step back for women’s rights, it also seriously weakens state-building as a project for the global promotion of human rights and democracy.²⁷ Throughout, the leadership of women, whether manifested in non-state or state actors, has been the indispensable factor in carrying out any successful transitional justice process—from participating in the campaign to include rape within the definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity, to bringing witnesses to testify in court, and finally to obtaining recognition and reparations for survivors.

Fighting the War on Women: Strategies of Networking and Information

Early on, Kosovo’s women’s rights activists struggled to disentangle ethnicity and gender, as “notions of femininity and masculinity intersected with norms of sexuality in order to produce ethnicity,”²⁸ and ethnicity became a powerful catalyst for war mobilization in all Yugoslavia. While official Kosovo coalesced around a project of national survival, these women began to document violence against women in order to raise international concern about the individual victims as well. Right at the same time, violence was becoming a main mobilizing issue for the international women’s movement, resonating much more powerfully and effectively “across cultural divides than either the Western feminist ‘discrimination’ frame or the ‘women in development’ frame.”²⁹ Among the changes this movement produced, whether in discursive practices, policy, or behavior,³⁰ there was the inclusion of rape as a crime against humanity in the statute of the ICTY.³¹ In a “boomerang pattern,” Kosovo women became both grassroots humanitarians and “activists beyond borders,” exchanging information with other actors in transnational human rights and women’s advocacy networks, as well as drawing support from them. They supported and trusted the ICTY’s promise of justice.

This story opens with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which began in Kosovo before the first shot was heard, when both victimization and militancy found their place in the symbolism of a woman’s body. This was well understood by feminists.³²

Women's rights activist Sevdije Ahmeti put it in blunt terms: "I said this is going to be a war against women on the eve of Milošević's ascent to power, in the late 1980s."³³ At that time, local Serbian activists in Kosovo and Belgrade-based nationalist intellectuals and clerics began to campaign against a growing Albanian majority in Kosovo, characterizing it as a conspiracy of sexual aggression. They cited the high birth rate amongst Albanians and alleged a genocidal plan to exterminate Serbs by using rape to inspire terror. No evidence was ever found, and none exists, that the number of inter-ethnic rapes or rapes in general was higher in Kosovo than in any other Yugoslav Republic, or that sentences handed down to rapists in Kosovo were more lenient than elsewhere.³⁴ With an annual population growth of 2.4 percent in 1987, Kosovo did have the highest birth rate in Yugoslavia, but this was largely because of rural families, reflecting well-known coping mechanisms with severe economic conditions, rather than a political conspiracy to alter local demographics. Yet, nationalist propaganda continued, unencumbered by reality.

Both in popular media and more specialized forums, Albanians were depicted as primitive villains—the men typed as oversexed, and the women denigrated as "breeders" and "washing-machines." The intensity of attack pushed Albanians as a group into a defensive position, from which they rallied around their denigrated traditionalist society and mores by upholding them against corrupting outside influence. One might read in this context the curious—and extreme—case of the respected Communist leader Fadil Hoxha, who reportedly proposed importing Serbian prostitutes to perform functions Albanian women could not possibly perform, thus solving the so-called epidemic of rapes.³⁵ This flippant and insulting statement brought thousands of Serbian women and children into the streets under banners reading, "We are not whores, we are mothers" and "We are mothers of the sons of Serbia." Building on a strong connection between gender and the ethno-nation, each group had deployed stereotypes of their own women as mothers and those of the enemy as whores.

After 1989, when Milošević revoked the autonomy of Kosovo, established martial law, and sent the Serbian police and army to enforce a repressive regime, Albanian women became vulnerable to sexual violence to an unprecedented degree.³⁶ In the cities, victims were abducted from the street or assaulted at the police stations where they had been called for questioning. In rural areas, the police barged into homes under the pretext of searching for weapons; they often showed up during the day, when the men were more likely to be absent; they targeted women during round ups of family compounds and villages. The victims themselves or their families reported the incidents to the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (KMLDNJ in Albanian, from now on, the Council), an NGO organized in 1989 by leading Albanian intellectuals and lawyers to document violations and lobby for support. The Council played a crucial role in the peaceful resistance fashioned by the Albanian leadership that had emerged from the intellectual strata and the remnants of the socialist system.³⁷ Together with the diplomatic effort deployed in Western

capitals by the self-styled President Ibrahim Rugova—the leader of an Albanian society fully separated from the Serbian state—the Council’s work was meant to internationalize the issue.³⁸

A good part of the Council’s field officers were women. Vehap Shita, the late literary critic who edited all the Council’s reporting bulletins, argued that women were “less noticeable” to the police and so were better suited to carry out research. This apparent contradiction with the vulnerability of Albanian women to police assault is explained by the strategies of camouflage adopted by field researchers. Fluency in Serbian was key, as well as careful dissimulation—efforts to perform either stereotypical girlish or assertive roles, thought to be characteristic of Serbian women.³⁹ Nazlie Bala, a tomboy since childhood, recounts how she dressed up and put on makeup as a disguise to look garish, tough, fearless of the police.

The Council knew how to report crimes, because it was staffed with experts, while Amnesty International (AI) provided a method for reporting human rights violations.⁴⁰ By the early 1990s, the political strategy of disseminating information to the outside world had already begun in earnest through connections not only with AI but also Human Rights Watch (HRW).⁴¹ All cases of rape that were reported were documented in detail, including first and last names of the victims; date, place, and circumstances of occurrence; and photos of the women’s bodies showing signs of violence.⁴² However, only the victims’ initials and a general mention of maltreatment made it to the Council’s Bulletins. The documentation produced by the Council was consistently constructed as the harrowing portrait of a nation under threat of extinction. It followed a lobbying tradition begun with the aftermath of World War I, when complaints about Albanians as an endangered minority in Yugoslavia were sent to the League of Nations and came to constitute the template for future reports.⁴³ Women remained the nameless victims of unspecified maltreatment.

But if the Council’s style and organization of reporting of human rights violations fit a well-known model, some women dissented. Vjosa Dobruna was a young pediatrician just fired from the hospital with the rest of the Albanian staff, who volunteered for the self-help organization Mother Theresa and was involved in the newly formed Parliamentary Party as its vice president. Sevdije Ahmeti was a middle-aged librarian ousted from the national library and engaged in building a women’s association independent from parties. Both were active in the Council. What bothered them was that the Council was erasing the identity of victims of sexual violence with a stroke of the pen, so that they became known just as the wife, the daughter, or the cousin of some man. Women were “collateral damage, the damage and violations didn’t really affect the women, but the men.”⁴⁴ Their objections to the Council policies did not sit very well with the political leadership, including President Rugova, and they were accused of having the wrong priority: the nation, not women, must be the focus of attention. Women activists split on the issue as well, between those who integrated into the national movement and those who insisted on mobilizing independently, as women.⁴⁵

Kosovo's women activists see their mobilization in the 1990s as a natural consequence of previous political engagements, whether in the unions and the socialist women's groups and institutions, or the illegal Albanian national movement.⁴⁶ Vjosa Dobruna, for example, grew up in a family whose men were political prisoners with a combined sentence of twenty-five years of jail.⁴⁷ Like many others, she also reacted against the unwelcome re-traditionalization of gender roles brought by Milošević's repression. Having lost their jobs when all Albanians were fired from their positions, women had suddenly lost their freedom as well. With the whole unemployed family staying at home, traditional roles re-emerged. "Take my husband for example—says Ahmeti—he began to ask me, 'where are you going?' anytime I went out." Activism was the way out of newly imposed restrictions on women's lives. Their decision to organize independently from political parties was a feminist choice even before they called themselves feminist, and feminism meant women's rights as human rights.

The major turn in women's activism occurred in connection with the international mobilization on behalf of the Bosnian victims of sexual violence. In less than a year, from the fall of 1991 to the spring of 1992, Bosnian and Croatian women's organizations and survivors had successfully lobbied for media, human rights groups, and foreign governments to take notice of the patterns of rape they experienced or observed in the war that was ravaging their countries.⁴⁸ How did they manage to get the news out and attract sympathetic attention globally, while women's groups in other conflicts had tried to do the same previously with only partial success?⁴⁹ In a close examination of the emergence of the global campaign on violence against women, Sikkink and Keck provide a convincing answer to that question as follows:⁵⁰ the issue of rape in the Bosnian war, framed as an attack against the individual and the collectivity, a method of ethnic cleansing,⁵¹ emerged as a "condensation symbol," capable of evoking deep emotions and provoking responses; its power was enhanced by the contemporaneous occurrence of two major events (the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference), functioning as "targets" for the dispersed women's networks working on the issue of violence; and the awareness created by these symbolic events was channeled into a "catalyst campaign" by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University. As one of the most publicized among the mass atrocities committed in the Yugoslav wars, sexual violence was crucial in the establishment of the ICTY in 1993.⁵²

Kosovo women's groups were near the center of this global campaign, and they quickly found their networks. Raffaella Lamberti, a feminist intellectual of the Centro di Documentazione delle Donne (Documentation Center for Women) in Bologna, had launched with others a series of initiatives after the 1992 feminist conference in Zagreb, which publicized reports of mass rapes in the Yugoslav wars. One of these initiatives was *Ponti di Donne Attraverso i Confini* (Women's Bridges Across Borders), trying to connect women from Yugoslavia with Italian activists. Lamberti's engagement had begun years earlier with women engulfed in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and events in Bosnia-Herzegovina focused her attention closer to home. Vjosa Dobruna traveled to

Bologna with the support of the League of Women, an independent political organization. She immediately hit it off with Lamberti, and brought back this important connection, which meant much needed funds from private donors and the Municipality of Bologna, as well as knowledge transfer.⁵³ It was thus that Ahmeti's and Dobruna's plan for a Center for the Protection of Women and Children, conceived in September 1993, could be realized. The Center quickly became a safe space for women to get access to health care and learn about their rights in workshops prepared after staff training provided by the Minnesota Advocates of Human Rights.

While President Rugova's strategy of internationalizing the Kosovo question was failing during the 1990s, because Kosovo was considered an internal problem of Serbia, the interconnectedness of women activists grew in former Yugoslavia and internationally. Milošević unwillingly contributed to the strengthening of bonds among women of different nationalities. Drawing inspiration from a homonymous group of Israeli women protesting the treatment of Palestinians, the anti-war feminist organization Women in Black made its first appearance in Belgrade on 9 October 1991; it gathered women from across the country, including Kosovo, whose activists joined the group's silent protests in Belgrade through 1998.⁵⁴ As the Bosnian war raged on, waves of refugees from the rape camps of Foča and Bjelina were pushed into Kosovo by Serbian authorities. The refugees heard that the Center for the Protection of Women and Children provided free services and they began to flock to it. For the Center, this became an opportunity to learn how to deal with victims of sexual violence on a larger scale, and especially how to prepare documentation for its prosecution at the ICTY. It was a rehearsal, as Ahmeti puts it, for what was to come.

With the refugees, aid groups active in Bosnia-Herzegovina arrived too. NGO activity had increased exponentially in the late 1980s and so did the availability of grants for women's issues from foundations in the United States and Western Europe, facilitating the growth of women's networks.⁵⁵ In the spring of 1994, the Swedish women's organization Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK) and the STAR Project, a USAID-funded organization that supported women's networks from former Yugoslavia, landed in Kosovo. These groups had been effective in Bosnia-Herzegovina because of their sensitivity to local concerns and their support for small organizations and projects.⁵⁶ They played a similar role in Kosovo. Their connection with the Center and other women activists in Kosovo was pivotal in preparation for the 1995 Women's World Conference in Beijing, where Ahmeti and Dobruna, together with six other women from Kosovo, were able to report on the violence occurring at home.⁵⁷

War Reporting for International Justice

The Kosovo war began at the end of February 1998, when Milošević unleashed a bloody counterinsurgency in the rural area of Drenica, a stronghold of the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). From then on, reports of rapes and violence

against women escalated and the Center collected them in a straightforward human rights reporting style, whether in daily trips to the field or on its premises. The KLA became a tactical ally of the Center and with good reasons. Reports of women's victimization both provided evidence of Milošević's war crimes for eventual prosecution at the ICTY and bolstered the Albanian case in appealing for Western intervention against Serbia. The late commander Shaban Shala, a member of the Council before the war and Ahmeti's friend, brought to the Center a few young women he had found, disoriented and without clothes, in the mountains. The Center documented thirty-six incidents of rape for the prosecution, sharing the information with international organizations through the rudimentary Internet connection available at the time, an intermittent dial-up.

The much-sought intervention arrived on 24 March 1999, when NATO launched the first sortie of what would be a three-month bombing campaign against Serbia. The intervention, however, was conducted exclusively from the air and paradoxically made the suffering of the population worse. During the bombing, Serbian forces were challenged on the ground only by the outnumbered and under-equipped KLA, and they increased the pace and violence of their activity. They expelled about eight hundred thousand Albanians from their homes, and in the process killed thousands, torturing and raping in large numbers.⁵⁸ Serbian security forces knew where the damaging documentation about their crimes was stored. On 28 March 1999, Ahmeti managed to flee her house just moments before the police arrived and trashed all her files. She was later caught, briefly detained, and tortured. Hunted down by the police, Dobruna fled the country altogether, but continued her work with refugees in the Center, which she reopened in Tetovo, a town in northwestern Macedonia.

At the end of the war, the news media reported an estimate of twenty thousand victims of rape, a "Goldilocks number" based on a statistical projection made by the Center for Disease Control of Atlanta,⁵⁹ which was in stark contrast to the low number of documented cases—ninety-six according to HRW. Consistent with their methods of investigating and reporting, both the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and HRW used the documentation collected by local activists, adding it to their own, and published reports that described in detail dozens of crimes, pointing to the evidence of widespread use of sexual violence. They reached the conclusion that sexual violence had been indeed an instrument of ethnic cleansing.⁶⁰

The Different Meanings of Postwar Silence

In postwar Kosovo, investigators who had found a small window at the height of the emergency met a wall of silence among survivors of sexual violence. Advocates were silenced as well, until 2012. Women's rights experienced a general backlash, as the mobilization of international women's networks on wartime sexual violence

decreased after the end of the conflict. In Kosovo, although the Milošević regime was gone, neither the interim international administration nor the domestic elites went past the mere formal support of women's rights. In some instances, they violated them. Survivors and their advocates stopped raising the issue of sexual violence in public.

The first casualty of peace was the support that the KLA wartime political leadership had given women activists, going along with reporting sexual violence as a means of strengthening the national cause. As Nazlie Bala commented, it was "for the consumption of the international community, to present the damages done by the war." Not uniquely to Kosovo, women were the innocent victims who constituted an important source of "narrative capital," when their suffering was displayed for national purposes during the war.⁶¹ But in postwar Kosovo, the best-known amongst the women advocates received threats and became victims of a public opinion campaign that depicted them as "uppity women." Survivors fared much worse. Many were left without close male relatives, killed in the war, and without economic or social support. Others were abandoned by their families. In the winter of 1999–2000, some survivors had babies and there were those who chose to give up their children, often lacking economic independence or emotional support.⁶² Local media published their stories under insensitive headlines that labeled the children as "bastards." It was as if "they had been raped once again."⁶³

Yet the issue of wartime rape quickly and completely disappeared from public discourse, making it easier for the whole society to enter a phase of denial.⁶⁴ Given that sexual violence had been often perpetrated in full view of witnesses, and that this crime had been quite publicized during and immediately after the war, the collective silence that surrounded it can only be understood as a tacit agreement to ignore what everyone knew.⁶⁵ History is full of narrative silences, writes Connerton, where the things that are relegated to the "not-said" suggest what preoccupies a culture better than the spoken words.⁶⁶ Postwar Kosovo's main preoccupation was building a foundational myth for the state-to-come. Emptied of the memory of rape and loss of honor, public space was filled by the memory of a liberation war fought by a few male heroes who had rescued the nation not only from foreign oppression, but also from the shame of acquiescence and victimization.

There was no room left for women—not even for women veteran fighters,⁶⁷ let alone survivors of sexual violence—in the heroic pan-Albanian narrative of the "memory entrepreneurs" who took rural traditionalism as a marker of authenticity versus the corrupting experience of Yugoslav urban life.⁶⁸ Many survivors were forced to keep silent both by the patriarchs and by older women, who acted as "the custodians of tradition."⁶⁹ This silence served to reproduce the stereotypical gender roles—men as responsible for policing behavior, and women for upholding social mores, especially chastity⁷⁰—of a conservative order dependent on the Albanian traditionalist family structure, which requires the subordination of individual identities, no matter the gender. To different degrees, this traditionalist social code was upheld in the cities as well as in the countryside.

If society's support was non-existent, at first women's groups thought they might be able to turn to the ICTY, at that time the highest expression of international transitional justice. The Center for the Protection of Women and Children and Medica Kosova prepared a few survivors of sexual violence who testified at the Tribunal, providing evidence of the mass rape and killing occurred in April 1999 in the village of Qirez. But the justice handed down at the ICTY was less than satisfactory and damaged the initial trust reposed by victims and activists in justice. In court, rape victims had to face the ignominy of direct cross-examination by Milošević, who was acting as his own defense lawyer and made a show of doubting their honesty. Witnesses were protected by anonymity at The Hague, but they found their identities had been revealed when they returned home. Activists who had encouraged them to testify suspected that the defendant himself, through his connections with the Serbian secret service, had made the identities of his accusers public. They had to intervene to help the "non-protected" witnesses relocate to a third country with the support of KtK and Medica,⁷¹ and vowed to never again ask survivors to testify.⁷² To date, there has been only one conviction based on "the crime of persecutions through sexual assaults as a crime against humanity," in the Appeal trial of Vlastimir Đorđević, the Assistant Minister of the Interior of Serbia.⁷³ General Nebojša Pavković, the commander of the 3rd Army in charge of the Kosovo operation, was convicted in the mega trial of Milutinović et al. on charges of sexual assault, because they "were reasonably foreseeable to him."⁷⁴ All the other defendants, despite their leadership positions in the Army or the Interior Ministry, were acquitted on this charge, and Milošević died in detention before sentencing.

Survivors and their advocates were no more successful when they turned to seek justice in Kosovo. They trusted UNMIK and its institutional acknowledgment of women in peacebuilding, written in the Security Council Resolution 1325, but they found that they had no serious institutional interlocutor among the state-builders. Women were consistently underrepresented, if not utterly absent from the international administrative structures.⁷⁵ The international organizations administering postwar Kosovo imposed a gender quota on the domestic political system, criticizing the reputed patriarchy of the local society, but failed to include women in any negotiation and decision-making process, claiming, when asked, that the society was too patriarchal to accept oversight by women.⁷⁶

Furthermore, there was no mention of transitional justice in UNMIK's mandate. The protectorate established in Kosovo prioritized the correction of "reversed ethnic cleansing," the term used to describe the flight of Serbs subjected to retribution, over justice for war victims.⁷⁷ Ahmeti gave all the documentation still in her possession to the Police Commissioner Kai Vittrup, but when UNMIK transferred all its war crimes files to the EU Mission (EULEX) in 2009, it had not conducted a single trial on charges of sexual violence.⁷⁸ Activists were not able to get any satisfactory answer even to their concerns for current violence against women. When Igo Rogova raised the issue of trafficking and sexual slavery, a market that had expanded significantly

with the large military NATO presence, international representatives refused to engage with her. One NATO high-ranking officer told her, “Boys will be boys. You educate your girls.”⁷⁹ Left unchecked, human trafficking became a serious problem in postwar Kosovo, feeding organized crime. By evading its responsibility and accountability for the exercise of power, the UNMIK administration acted more as an “empire in denial”⁸⁰ than a promoter of democracy and responsible governance.

Facing what they perceived as social and institutional indifference, survivors too ‘chose’ silence. If postwar Kosovo could plunge into an apparent collective amnesia about wartime rape, it was also because women quietly retreated to their private suffering. They talked only in safe spaces, as they had begun to do in the refugee camps, where tents set up only for women afforded them the freedom to share their tales about the violence experienced during the war with sympathetic activists.⁸¹ Some survivors entered into a confessional mode with doctors, but rarely did they speak outside that protected space.⁸² Passerini calls this convergence of individual and social silences a “sort of complicity” of the powerless with imposed silences, that is, a complicity constrained by social exclusion, traditions, and the dominance of certain exclusionary public discourses.⁸³ There is a wide range of historical cases germane to this point, postwar Germany and Italy for example. In both countries, traumatic and well-known experiences of mass rapes—respectively by the Russians in Berlin after surrender and by Moroccan soldiers at Montecassino—were suppressed from public discourse and mostly forgotten for sixty years, until historians stirred up a debate.⁸⁴ Closer to Kosovo, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina presented a very similar pattern.⁸⁵

However, women’s silence should be seen in this context as an affirmative, strategic choice, and it did not mean inaction.⁸⁶ A new cadre of local women activists emerged, whether in connection with the international network of human rights advocacy or on the basis of their individual experience, to build non-governmental organizations that provided essential services to survivors and also maintained a political function.⁸⁷ For example, the Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT), founded and directed by Feride Rushiti, was key in providing physical and psychological rehabilitation to a broader population of victims, but it increasingly directed its work also to delivering social assistance to women survivors and advocating for them. Specific approaches differed, but all these actors shared the central understanding that empathy was prerequisite in understanding and coming to terms with women’s silence. A brief discussion of two cases—the stories of Vepore Shehu and Kadire Tahiraj—exemplifies this.

Vepore Shehu’s engagement with Medica Kosova, a spinoff from a German organization devoted to survivors, followed her previous work as researcher of war crimes with the International Crisis Group (ICG). She had stumbled upon cases of sexual violence and was deeply moved by them. With Medica, she joined a professional staff trained by German and Bosnian psychologists, the latter being particularly effective in relating to the Kosovo experience. As Shehu tells it,

Medica circumvented the problem of women's silence by relying both on the very traditionalist culture that feminists earlier on had seen as an obstacle, and on the expertise of trained gynecologists and psychologists.⁸⁸ In the rural areas that had been hit the most by the war, Medica found out from the head of the village, an elder, often a religious leader, an imam or a priest, which were the families where men had been killed and "women had experienced terrible things when militaries and paramilitaries entered their houses." She visited these families under the pretext of offering condolence to survivors, following a local tradition that does not require one to know the deceased in order to mourn with the families. Medica's teams offered trauma and medical counseling to the women as a service to heal their war trauma in general. An all-women medical team traveling in a mobile clinic followed up this first approach, identified survivors, and later referred them to psychologists. A word-of-mouth campaign brought many more survivors to Medica, which has counseled and provided medical support to thousands of women since the war.

Kadire Tahiraj, a medical lab technician, began her work with survivors one day in 2004, after she approached a traumatized woman at the hospital and heard her testimony.⁸⁹ A resident of Drenas, a small town in one of the areas hit hardest by the war, Tahiraj closely understood the plight of that stranger. In the following month, six more women came to her to talk about their wartime experience. There are currently thirty survivors whom Tahiraj regularly meets, both in groups and individually, as the director of the Center for the Promotion of Women's Rights, a small organization she founded in 2008.

All women seeking counseling have done so under confidentiality agreements. Even in closed group discussions, the majority often talks around rape as something that happened to a third person, but do not reveal their individual experience.⁹⁰ When invited to take part in the Balkan Women's Court, set up by women activists elsewhere in South Eastern Europe, survivors declined to do so.⁹¹ They refused to participate in the truth commission-like consultations led by RECOM where they were asked to present their case, a refusal often explained by outsiders through almost exclusively culturalist discussions of shame and honor.

A better explanation of this behavior can be found in a fundamental lack of trust even in a mechanism of transitional justice that appears to avoid the traps of courtroom justice or a feminist approach to justice. When discussing the South African Truth Commission's failure in breaking women's silence on the violence suffered during apartheid, Fiona Ross wrote that it was not reticence, or a sense of propriety, that stopped women from testifying; it was the betrayal that they had experienced—betrayal by the institutions, by the society, and by their own families: "Speaking of violence calls for trust of various kinds: trust in the capacity to attend suffering, in institutions anticipated to assist, in social relations and potential support networks, in the discretion of another."⁹² In Kosovo, survivors had exhausted their reservoir of trust before RECOM called on them.

Born out of collaboration between national and transnational NGOs as a “bottom-up” initiative, RECOM works as an unofficial truth project close to the grassroots and as a lobby for an official one. It has faithfully relied on the truth commission template as one of the tools of transitional justice and upon the notion that the testimony of psychological trauma is necessary in order to tell the truth about violence.⁹³ International donors strongly support its project of building a regional dialogue amongst still hostile nations by the means of victims’ narratives. But survivors of sexual violence in Kosovo do not find reasons to trust RECOM. Their priority is not to give testimony so much as to be acknowledged,⁹⁴ and because Serbia has not recognized Kosovo and vows to never recognize it, RECOM can deliver neither recognition nor justice.

“We Don’t Want Flowers, We Want Justice!”

On 8 March 2012, women’s protest woke up both the society and the institutions. It was the idea of veteran human rights advocate Nazlie Bala and her friend Aida Derguti to have a different kind of celebration for International Women’s Day. They met with Igo Rogova of the Kosova Women’s Network (KWN), and agreed to stage a protest under the banner “We don’t want flowers. We want justice for women who suffered sexual violence during the war.”⁹⁵ That was the signal that Kadire Tahiraj was waiting for. She decided to step up her work with survivors and with the support of KWN she began to investigate five villages in her area, ultimately collecting a body of testimonies that has grown to more than one hundred.⁹⁶

Vlora Çitaku, minister of European integration and a postwar veteran politician, called Igo Rogova the same day, asking how could she help. “It’s not that I did not know about the problem—she says—but because nobody spoke about it for so long, I did not think of it, and I certainly was not aware of its dimension, until I saw the map that Feride [Rushiti] showed me.”⁹⁷ Both the minister and the president, Atifete Jahjaga, met with survivors on their own, in meetings not advertised to the public, willing to listen rather than talk. What women asked for was recognition. Çitaku set up an interministerial task force to fund and launch an awareness campaign promoting a wider acceptance of sexual violence as a crime, as a violation of human rights that is not the victims’ fault.

It was this kind of support survivors needed. Kadire Tahiraj said that after the women met privately with the minister and with the president, their status in the family was instantly lifted. No male relative had ever been granted such encounters. These powerful women’s support made it possible for a survivor to go on Public Service TV (RTK), recount her experience, and appeal for justice. Years of counseling with Medica Kosova had prepared her for that moment. As the first woman to go public with her story, she had to face the consequences. Her daughter stopped going to school for more than a week, aggrieved by taunting from her classmates. But her

husband, who had supported her, received approving comments for his understanding from a number of men in the Albanian diaspora, who posted them on Medica's facebook page. Shehu says that acceptance is exactly what this survivor and her husband needed. Since, the topic of wartime sexual violence is no longer taboo on television.

Advocates laid out specific demands. On 8 March 2012, speaking at a televised rally, Rushiti had already explicitly raised the issue of including wartime rape survivors as a separate category in the law on veterans and civilian victims of the war. When the law was discussed by the Kosovo Assembly in the spring of 2013, supporters met a strong opposition, in one instance even violent. Nazlie Bala was assaulted by unidentified aggressors.⁹⁸ For the War Veterans Association, it was a no-brainer—rape victims should be included in the broad category of civilian victims, and not stand alone. The Minister of Labor and Social Welfare said that the government could never afford the expense of such reparations. Politicians in the government coalition raised other problems—for example, how to identify beneficiaries who for the most part have chosen silence, after so much time has passed since the war. But when one lawmaker said that survivors should be medically examined, women activists in the capital of Pristina quickly reacted; they staged a symbolic performance, during which women crushed apples with kitchen mallets to criticize the lack of sensitivity towards victims.⁹⁹ In the end, the law was approved with the inclusion of wartime rape survivors,¹⁰⁰ because in less than one year women's groups had raised enough awareness, both institutionally and in the society, to overcome opposition.

Coincidentally, at the same time as the law was being discussed in the very local context of the Kosovo Assembly, President Jahjaga joined the Global Initiative for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI), sponsored by the UK Foreign Secretary William Hague in close collaboration with Hollywood star and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees special envoy Angelina Jolie. As part of the Initiative, on 8 March 2013, the President established The National Council for the Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War as a coordinating mechanism for programs of public awareness, rehabilitation, and economic empowerment.¹⁰¹ For Jahjaga, the incentive to engage in the Global Initiative was double, as a woman and as the leader of a country that needs to gain international legitimacy. But no matter her motivation, the outcome is a move from rhetorical commitment in the direction of effective compliance with international human rights and norms of transitional justice.

It is in this context that the President sponsored in June 2015 the installation "Thinking of You," by Kosovo artist Alketa Xhafa-Mripa.¹⁰² The installation consisted of the display of five thousand dresses hanging on clotheslines in the football stadium of Pristina, a symbol of the magnitude of the crime of wartime sexual violence. Dresses were collected by the artist in a countrywide awareness raising campaign supported by women's groups, in which survivors played a major role. For the large majority of Kosovo citizens, it was the first time since the war that they talked publicly about the issue. For many, it was the first time they talked about it at all. In

rural areas, the hardest hit by the war, a few men participated in the collection, openly supporting what they called their “mothers, daughters, and sisters.” While it is still early to draw conclusions about the impact that the art installation will have on the society, it has at least opened a breach in the isolation that survivors continue to experience. As the collection campaign developed through events across the country, it acquired strong media coverage. “Before the installation, nobody talked about us—said a survivor—now we are in the news every day.”¹⁰³

Conclusions

I end this article on a positive note, but I would not want to imply that continued success is certain or that the success achieved so far has progressed necessarily from one stage to another. The interaction between domestic and international organizations and institutions is indeed characterized by fluctuations that are determined by different political contexts and power relations. At the beginning, local activists emerged from a struggle within society to find their independent voice as women, and joined international networks on a politics of denunciation of sexual violence as a human rights violation. But they also found support in the KLA, an alliance that fully embraced the model of transitional justice meted at the ICTY and through NATO’s humanitarian intervention.

After the war, survivors and their advocates faced isolation and setbacks in their search for justice. This experience is an indicator of broader phenomena. First, it reveals the inaction of UNMIK and the shortcomings of the ICTY, shaking the common assumption that the international establishment is consistent in adherence to human rights norms. Second, it exposes the limits of the national heroic narrative rooted in patriarchal tradition, which the political leadership that emerged from the war has been struggling to impose in postwar Kosovo. When survivors withdrew from mechanisms of transitional justice and the public sphere, their advocates focused on building solidarity and delivering services through civil society organizations. When they refused to participate in RECOM, a transitional justice grassroots initiative enjoying unanimous support among international institutions and Western governments, it was not to oppose transitional justice. It was because they needed and wanted something different from public confessions of their suffering. As survivors and their advocates returned to advocacy, demanding reparations, they found support in local and international institutions and began to obtain some concrete results.

Throughout, women’s networks struggled to disentangle gender from ethnicity, straddling the line between a deep connection with local culture and domestic and international norms and agendas. Their communication across civil society groups and institutions has not always been consistent, but mattered. The Institute for the Investigations of War Crimes, created in 2011 by the Kosovo Ministry of Justice, has

made small inroads so far into the discovery of sexual violence incidents. It is clear from an interview with the late Pajazit Nushi, a veteran human rights leader at the Council for Human Rights and the Director of the Institute until his death in 2015, that in the all-male setting of the Institute wartime sexual violence remains clouded in mystery and misunderstanding.¹⁰⁴ It is the intervention of powerful women in the institutions that has made a difference. What women's networks have shown is how to listen to local priorities, or to what survivors need and want. This is an activity that demands both a robust commitment to human rights, and local knowledge of the specific space where history, gender, and political hierarchies are defined and transformed.

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Notes

1. I. Qosja, director, *Three Windows and a Hanging (Tri ditrare dhe një varje)* (Kosovo: CMB Production with the support of the Qendra Kinematografike e Kosovës, 2014), motion picture.

2. D. Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 143–48.

3. There are also many men among survivors of sexual violence, but they have kept completely silent about their experience, a phenomenon that deserves further research.

4. M. E. Keck and K. Sikkink, eds., *Activists without Borders. Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 165–98.

5. The first testimonies of survivors were gathered in the spring of 1992 from refugees arriving in Croatia, see S. Vranić, *Breaking the Wall of Silence: The Voices of Raped Bosnia* (Zagreb: Izdanja Antibarbarus, 1996). On the international campaign on sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see A. Stiglmeier, ed., *Mass Rape. The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

6. The whole story of state-builders' failure in implementing UNSC Res. 1325 is told in detail in Kosova Women's Network (KWN), *1325. Facts & Fables* (Pristina: KWN, 2011).

7. KWN, *1325. Facts & Fables*, 103–14.

8. A. Di Lellio and S. Schwandner-Sievers, "The Legendary Commander: The Construction of an Albanian Master-Narrative in Post-war Kosovo," *Nations & Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2006): 513–29.

9. F. Trix, "Underwhelmed: Kosovo Albanians' Reactions to the Milošević Trial," in *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy*, ed. T. W. Waters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 229–48.

10. A. Di Lellio and C. McCurn, "Engineering Grassroots Transitional Justice in the Balkans: The Case of Kosovo," *East European Politics and Societies* 26 (2012): 129–48, 141.

11. Jolie and Hague co-chaired the First Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014 in London to launch a more permanent global initiative on the issue. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chairs-summary-global-summit-to-end-sexual-violence-in-conflict/chairs-summary-global-summit-to-end-sexual-violence-in-conflict> (accessed 20 December 2015).

12. Among the burgeoning literature on the subject, see R. Shaw and L. Waldorf, eds., *Localizing Transitional Justice, Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); A. Hinton, *Transitional Justice: Global Mechanisms and Local Realities after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2011); and D. Orentlicher, "Settling Accounts Revisited: Reconciling Global Norms with Local Agency," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (2007): 10–22.

13. See the ethnographic account of women NGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina by E. Helms, *Innocence and Victimhood. Gender, Nation and Women's Activism in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2013).

14. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists without Borders*, 12–13.

15. For an overview of this scholarship, T. Risse, S. Ropp, and K. Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

16. *Ibid.*, 17–22.

17. R. Teitel, "Transitional Justice Genealogy," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16 (2003): 69–94.

18. B.A. Leebaw, "Irreconcilable Goals of Transitional Justice," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30 (2008): 95–118. I am referring here to the particular form that transitional justice has taken in the past ten years, paradoxically becoming both a more professionalized field and a less coherent one, an issue recently discussed at length in the special issue of *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 9, 2015.

19. This argument has been made for Kosovo by Di Lellio and McCurn, "Engineering Grassroots Transitional Justice."

20. For a review of the feminist debate on transitional justice, see Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, "Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (2007): 23–44.

21. This criticism appeared early on in the feminist debate on justice and the law, see H. Charlesworth, C. Chinkin, and S. Wright, "Feminist Approaches to International Law," *American Journal of International Law* 85, 4, (1991): 613–654, and was developed further in H. Charlesworth and C. Chinkin, *The Boundaries of International Law: A Feminist Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

22. V. Nesiiah, "Missionary Zeal for a Secular Mission: Bringing Gender to Transitional Justice and Redemption to Feminism," in *Feminist Perspectives on Contemporary International Law. Between Resistance and Compliance?* eds. S. Kouvo and Z. Pearson (Oxford, UK: Hart Publishing, 2011), 137–158.

23. I agree with Charlesworth's suggestion that reliance on or skepticism about the power of women's representation in producing change can be explained by differences in perspectives, with activists being more optimistic, see "Talking to Ourselves? Feminist Scholarship in International Law," in Kouvo and Pearson, *Feminist Perspectives*, 17–32.

24. A. Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere. Volume II. Quaderni 6-11 (1930-1933)* (Torino: Einaudi [1975] 2014), 903.

25. C. Chinkin and M. Kaldor, "Gender and New Wars," *Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 1 (2013): 167–87.

26. S. Harris Rimmer, *Gender and Transitional Justice: The Women of East Timor* (New York: Routledge, 2010); and S. Hunt and C. Posa, "Iraq's Excluded Women," *Foreign Policy*, July–August (2004): 40–45.

27. Christine Chinkin and Kate Paradine make the case, in their analysis of the Dayton Accords, that political participation and representation as well as security were not effectively addressed because concerns with discrimination, violence against women, and human trafficking were not included, and women were not included in the negotiation. See their "Vision and Reality: Democracy and Citizenship of Women in the Dayton Peace Accords," *Yale Journal of International Law* 26 (2001): 103–78.

28. Žarkov, *Body of War*, 22; O. Kesić, "Women and Gender Imagery in Bosnia: Amazons, Sluts, Victims, Witches and Wombs," in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in*

Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States, ed. S. P. Ramet (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 187–202.

29. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists without Borders*, 166.

30. *Ibid.*, 192.

31. Richard Goldstone recounts how, on his arrival at The Hague as the first chief-prosecutor of the ICTY, it was the lobbying of women across the world that made him more sensitive to the issue of rape as a war crime: *For Humanity, Reflections of a War Crimes Investigator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 85.

32. V. Kesić, “Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women...,” in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. D. I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 311–21, 313–15.

33. Sevdije Ahmeti, personal interview, December 2014. See also S. Ahmeti, *Journal d'une femme du Kosovo (février 1998- mars 1999). La guerre avant la guerre* (Paris: Karthala, 1998).

34. The Serbian campaign is well documented and discussed by W. Bracewell, “Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (2000): 563–90; and M. Kullashi, *Humanisme et Haine. Les Intellectuels et le Nationalisme en ex-Yugoslavie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).

35. See Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 21–24. Fadil Hoxha mentions the protests in his memoir as an orchestrated campaign against him as an Albanian leader, but does not elaborate either on the statement attributed to him or on a subsequent clumsy correction, *Fadil Hoxha në veten e parë* (Prishtinë: Koha, 2010), 424–430.

36. Nazlie Bala, personal interview, December 2014; Ahmeti, *Journal d'une femme du Kosovo*; and Oral History Kosovo Interview, Vjosa Dobruna, 2012, <http://www.oralhistorykosovo.org> (accessed 11 February 2015). See also J. Mertus, “Women in Kosovo: Contested Terrains. The Role of National Identity in Shaping and Challenging Gender Identity,” in Ramet, *Gender Politics*, 179–82, on sexual violence during detention in the prewar period.

37. N. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); B. Pula, “The Emergence of the Kosovar Parallel State, 1988–92,” *Nationalities Papers* 32 (2004): 797–826.

38. Oral History Kosovo Interview, Vehap Shita, 2013, <http://www.oralhistorykosovo.org> (accessed 11 February 2015). The Council became a corresponding member of the International Federation on the Defense of Human Rights (FIDH) in 1991.

39. Former journalist Shpresa Mulliqi, personal interview, June 2013. Safete Rogova describes how her sister Igballe (Igo) confronted the police in her Oral History Kosovo interview, 2012, www.oralhistorykosovo.org (accessed 12 February 2015); and Bala, personal interview, December 2014.

40. The lawyer Bajram Kelmendi, the Council's best-known expert, was preparing material for the indictment of Milošević when he was abducted from his home with his two young sons and killed by Serbian police on March 25, 1999. Women lawyers were also prominent, among them, a former prosecutor and judge, Lirije Osmani. See Kosovar Gender Study Center, *History Is Herstory Too: The History of Women in Civil Society in Kosovo 1980–2004* (Pristina, Kosovo: Kosovar Gender Study Center, 2008), 38, 75. Amnesty International had begun monitoring and reporting on Kosovo in the late 1980s; see *Yugoslavia: Recent Events in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo* (1989).

41. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 1993).

42. Bala, personal interview, December 2014.

43. The administrator of the Albanian Orthodox Church in the United States, Bishop Fan Noli, presented President Wilson in 1918 with a memorandum on the Albanian question for the Paris conference in 1919 and lobbied to have Albania admitted to the League of Nations in 1920. From 1976 through 1993, the Albanian diaspora in the United States compiled yearly memoranda on Kosovo, and delivered them to the Secretary General of the United Nations. They can be read in S. Bitici, *Kosovo. Path to Freedom* (New York: Vatra, 2012), 281–399.

44. Dobruna, Oral History Kosovo Interview.

45. Dobruna, Oral History Kosovo Interview; Kosovar Gender Study Center, *History Is Herstory Too*, 59–72.
46. Ahmeti, *Journal d'une femme du Kosovo*; Bala, personal interview, December 2014. These activists' testimonies confirmed the sociological argument presented by Pula, "Emergence of the Kosovar Parallel State."
47. Dobruna, Oral History Kosovo Interview.
48. Natalie Nenadic, "Femicide: A Framework for Understanding Genocide," in *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, ed. D. Bell and R. Klein (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1996), 456–64; C. McKinnon, "Rape, Genocide and Women's Human Rights," in Stiglmeier, *Mass Rape*, 183–96.
49. On the efforts by Latin American groups in the late 1970s–early 1980s to break the silence on rape, see C. Enloe, "Afterword," in Stiglmeier, *Mass Rape*, 219–30, 220–22; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists without Borders*, 176–78.
50. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists without Borders*, 180–81.
51. Reports of the UN, the European Union, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, connected rape to ethnic cleansing. UN Doc. a/48/92-S/25341, Annex, at 20, 57 (1993).
52. T. Meron, "Rape as a Crime Under International Humanitarian Law," *The American Journal of International Law* 87, no. 3 (July 1993): 424–28.
53. Dobruna, Oral History Kosovo Interview, and personal conversation with Raffaella Lamberti, January 2015. For an interesting discussion on how this knowledge transfer was not unidirectional, see P. Brunori, G. Candolo, M. Dona' dalle Rose, and M. Risoldi, *I Had a Mummy Too: War Traumas; A Psychoanalytic Experience in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (London: Free Association Books, 2006).
54. On Kosovan women participation in the Women in Black movement, see Kosovar Gender Study Center, *History Is Herstory Too*, 77–79. I am not discussing here the 1991 wave of protests that mobilized mostly women all over Yugoslavia against the army. Those protests were labeled by politicians and the media "mothers' protests" and were seen by feminists as antimilitary, although the women's demands were not the demobilization of their sons but the right to serve in their own republics. Žarkov discusses this interesting but complex topic extensively in *The Body of War*, 43–82.
55. Keck and Sikkink, *Activists without Borders*, 181–83.
56. M. Walsh, "Women's Organizations in Postconflict Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *Women & Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*, ed. K. Kumar (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 167–82; J. Mertus, *War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2000), 49–51.
57. Julie Mertus, a feminist friend and women's rights activist, later reproached Kosovan participants in the Beijing Conference for having denounced only ethnically motivated violence, omitting other forms of domestic violence experienced at home. See "Women in Kosovo: Contested Terrains. The Role of National Identity in Shaping and Challenging Gender Identity," in S. P. Ramet, *Gender Politics*, 171–86, 173. A member of the delegation, Naxhije Buçinca, says they could not have done otherwise, as they were experiencing a double violence against their men and themselves. See Oral History Kosovo interview, 2014, at <http://www.oralhistorykosovo.org> (accessed 11 February 2015).
58. Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report: Conflict, International Response, Lessons Learned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Human Rights Watch, *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001).
59. In 1999, the Center for Disease Control found that from 4 to 6 percent of the 1,358 women they interviewed had been raped and they multiplied that number by the total population, reaching the conclusion that an estimate of 23,000 to 45,600 had been raped. See K. Kuehnast, C. de Jonge Oudraat, and H. Hernes, eds., *Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: United State Institute of Peace, 2011), 72.
60. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Kosovo/Kosova as Seen as Told: An analysis of the Human Rights Findings of the OSCE*

Kosovo Verification Mission October 1998 to June 1999 (Warsaw: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 1999), 54–63; Human Rights Watch, *Rape as a Weapon of "Ethnic Cleansing"* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2000); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Assessment Report on Sexual Violence in Kosovo: Mission Completed by S. Serrano Fitamant* (Albania: UNFPA, 1999).

61. K. Theidon, *Intimate Violence and Reconciliation in Peru* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 113–14.

62. A. Di Lellio, "Kosovo Women Bear the Scourge of War," *New York Post*, 24 May 2000.

63. Igballe (Igo) Rogova, personal interview, February 2012.

64. Vlora Çitaku, personal interview, January 2015.

65. For denial as a social dynamics, E. Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

66. P. Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 76–77.

67. The biographies of the KLA fallen collected by the War Veterans Association in a multivolume series, *Feniksët e Lirisë: Dëshmorët e Ushtrisë Çlirimtare të Kosovës* (Phoenixes of Freedom: The Martyrs of the KLA), 13 vols. in 2015, include also about one hundred women fighters. But here a rhetoric of manhood and valor prevails, and women are presented as a certain type of heroines, role models for the private sphere. For example, Xheva Krasniqi-Ladrovci, a leader of the 1981 student movement, killed in an ambush together with her more famous husband Fehmi Ladrovci, is presented as the ideal partner and the "older sister" of other women fighters.

68. Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers, "The Legendary Commander," 518–19.

69. Rogova, personal interview, December 2014.

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99. E. Peci, "Kosovo Wartime Rape Controversy Sparks Protest," *Balkan Insight*, 29 March 2013 (<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/war-rape-issue-sparks-public-reactions>) (accessed 20 December 2015).
100. See the March 2014 Amendment of Law No. 04/L-172, <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/04-L-172%20a.pdf> (accessed 11 February 2015).
101. As a first concrete example of its coordinating function, in 2014 the Council funded a small clothing factory, trained thirty women and employed ten, brokering a collaboration of survivors groups, a local municipality, the school of design in Pristina, and USAID. Jeta Krasniqi, personal communication, December 2014.
102. The installation was widely covered also by international media. To quote one news report, K. Booth, "5,000 Dresses Transform Soccer Stadium in Kosovo into a Venue for Addressing Wartime Rape," *The New York Times*, 6 June 2015, <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/06/12/5000-dresses-transform-soccer-stadium-in-kosovo-to-venue-for-addressing-wartime-rape/> (accessed 20 December 2015).
103. Interview with an anonymous survivor from Drenas, 11 June 2015.
104. Oral History Kosovo Interview, Pajaziti Nushi, 2013, <http://oralhistorykosovo.org> (accessed 11 February 2015).

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