



Becoming Object: Rape as a Weapon of War

BÜLENT DIKEN AND CARSTEN BAGGE LAUSTSEN

Testicles are a national symbol, a trademark of the race; other peoples have luck, tradition, erudition, history, reason – but we alone have balls. (Danilo Kis quoted in Bracewell, 2000: 57)

Rape and Warfare

For centuries organized rape has been an integral aspect of warfare. Yet, remarkably, it has been absent from the classics on warfare, which have predominantly focused on 'regular' warfare in which one army confronts another in a battle for the conquest or defence of a territory. Within the last two decades, however, there has been increasing interest in 'asymmetric' warfare and accordingly in phenomena such as guerrilla tactics, terrorism and hostage taking, together with aspects of war related to identity, be it religious fundamentalism and holy war, ethnic cleansing, or war rape (Kaldor, 1998). War rape is perhaps the clearest example of an asymmetric strategy. In war rape, the enemy soldier attacks a civilian (not a combatant), a woman (not another male soldier), and only indirectly with the aim of holding or taking a territory. The prime aim of war rape is to inflict trauma and thus to destroy family ties and group solidarity within the enemy camp. Apart from demoralization of the enemy, war rape can also become an integral aspect of ethnic cleansing.

War rape encompasses a complex range of topics usually ignored in the literature on warfare: the body, gender, religion and the psyche. This article investigates how gender differences and religious commitments can be used in war rape as an instrument of traumatizing not just the women in question but also their families and, ultimately, the community in which they live. Rape cannot be understood as 'just' a deplorable side-effect of war provoked by soldiers' sexual frustration. Rape is, literally, a weapon of war. The analysis is based on materials from the war in Bosnia (1992–4). The systematic use of rape as a war strategy was most recently employed in former Yugoslavia (mainly in Bosnia and Kosovo) and in civil wars in Rwanda, Liberia and Uganda. In a historical perspective, systematic rape was reported in the war for independence in Bangladesh, in anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia and on a massive scale by Japanese soldiers in China and Korea during the Second World War (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002).

Most studies of war rape focus either on the woman as victim or on the soldier as aggressor. The case of Bosnia, however, presents a significantly more complex picture. Regarding victimhood, for instance, in some cases family members were forced to rape one another or to witness a family member being raped. On the side of the aggressor, there is evidence to suggest that rape was used as a rite of initiation. Being forced to rape, soldiers or fellow Serbs were forced into a brotherhood of guilt. Those who refused were humiliated and in some cases castrated or even killed. In Bosnia, rape was used to recreate clear-cut distinctions between hitherto intermingled groups: Serbs, Muslims and Croats. Even though rape is often enforced upon them by a third party, both victims and perpetrators find it difficult to face each other after the event (Askin, 1997: 292).

During the war in Bosnia a considerable number of rapes were reported. A rough estimate is that between 20,000 (European Community figures) and 50,000 (the Sarajevo State Commission for Investigation of War Crimes) rape victims exist (Fisher, 1996: 91; Jones, 1994: 117; Salzman, 1998: 363). Some were raped in their own houses, others in brothels, and still others in rape camps. Particularly horrifying is the practice of forced impregnation that occurred in some rape camps set up in Brcko, Dboj, Foca, Gorazde, Kalinobik, Vesegrad, Keatern, Luka, Manjaca, Osmarka and Tronopolje (Skejlsbæk, 2001: 220). 'Horrifying', because it necessitates much planning. Women in some camps were continuously raped until a doctor or a gynaecologist established pregnancy (Fisher, 1996: 112) and held in captivity until abortion was no longer possible (Salzman, 1998: 359; Sofos, 1996: 86). Carrying a child that is the product of rape can be seen as an extremely cruel form of torture (Nikolic-Rastanovic, 1996: 202) or as an integral part of strategic ethnic cleansing.

Salzman defines ethnic cleansing as an act intended to render an area ethnically homogeneous by removing members of a given group through the use of concentration camps, torture, sexual violence, mass killings, forced deportations, destruction of private and cultural property, pillage and theft, and the blocking of humanitarian aid (Salzman, 1998: 354). The United Nations General Assembly asserted that the 'heinous practice [rape and abuse of women] constitutes a deliberate weapon of war in fulfilling the policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina' (GA Res., 49/205, 1995, quoted in Salzman, 1998: 355–6). Concerning the intention to commit genocide, it is claimed that although camps were set up and controlled by paramilitary forces, the political leadership in Beograd was secretly condoning it (Fisher, 1996: 108). Further, patterns of rape strongly suggest that a systematic rape policy existed (UN, 1994: 59).

The physical damage caused by rape can be considerable. However, the trauma of rape may, for some, be even worse than bodily harm. In the following, we make use of the literature on abjection (Bataille, 1993; Douglas, 1966; Kristeva, 1982) to investigate the trauma of rape. The rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, as a 'dirty', morally inferior person. The penetration inflicts on her body and her self a mark, a stigma, which cannot be effaced. But abjection has a communal aspect as well: the victim is excluded by neighbours and by family members. Hence the rape victim suffers twice: first by being raped and second by being condemned by a patriarchal community (Kestic, 2002: 316). In the case of forced pregnancy the child might be seen by some, if not most, women as an abject: an alien and disgusting object. The abject, in this case, is neither fully inside (the child is never hers), nor fully outside (she feels polluted by it).

We take our point of departure in this paradoxical object. It should be noted in this context that 'abject' is not merely the pathological. In a culture that celebrates order, hierarchy and guarded borders, abjects tend to be perceived in a negative light, as disgusting, ugly, anxiety-provoking, sick, unhealthy and so on. Abjects are seen as what threatens normality. However, 'abject' is more than this. It is not merely the photographic negative of an order created through the differentiation between the normal and the pathological. The abject is rather inscribed in a primordial chaos, marked by a primary indistinctness or formlessness. Which is to say that, before differentiation, ordering is a relation to lack of distinction. The abject is, in other words, not a pole in a binary distinction but indistinction itself. To substantiate this point, we begin with a discussion of rape in the Bosnian war. Then we focus on the process of abjection itself. We expand on two basic forms of abjection, pollution and shame/guilt, relating both to war

rape. We then further differentiate shame and guilt; whereas guilt can be verbalized and can perform as an element in a brotherhood of guilt, shame cannot, which is why it often results in trauma. War thus both creates and destroys communities (of the perpetrators and the victims respectively). We end up discussing this duality.

Rape as Ethnic Cleansing

To understand how rape became a crucial signifier in the Bosnian war, we need to go back to the conflict over Kosovo during the 1980s. One of the first cases of 'rape' that had political consequences was the reported rape of Djordje Martinovic. Martinovic was received in the hospital in Kosovo with splinters of glass in his anus. He claimed that Albanian men had raped him with a bottle (Bracewell, 2000: 563). This was not true; he made the unfortunate sexual experiment himself. The false story was, however, quickly used for propaganda purposes. A petition signed by Serbian intellectuals thus read: 'the case of Djordje Martinovic has become that of the entire Serb nation in Kosovo' (petition on Djordje Martinovic in Bracewell, 2000: 571). As Martinovic was, allegedly, raped, so was the Serbian nation. Serbs could no longer feel safe; they were treated like enemies in their own land (Kosovo is in Serb mythology considered as the cradle of Serbia).

As early as in 1981, Serbian clergy accused Albanian Kosovars of having raped Serbian nuns (Ramet, 1995: 111). Serbs were described as incarnations of purity itself (like nuns) while an abnormal sexual drive was attributed to the Kosovars (of which the high Albanian birth rate was often cited as proof). However, the fact was that rapes across ethnic lines were extremely rare; in fact, the Kosovan police had previously received only one report of inter-ethnic rape (Kestic, 2002: 315). The accusations had an unfortunate effect: they taught Serbian women to fear Albanian men and Albanian men to avoid Serbian women for fear of being accused of rape (Bracewell, 2000: 583). Hence two clearly demarcated camps were created: Serb and Albanian. This lesson was later reapplied in Bosnia, with the focus however shifting from propaganda to actual war – a war of words that paved the way for a war of bodies. And in contrast to the case of Kosovo, the war did not stand between two parts – it created two parts, two essentialized groups and gave their boundaries a rigidity never seen before.

Before the outbreak of the war, Serbs were warned that Muslim men planned to force their women into harems to breed soldiers for the *jihad* (Kressel, 1996: 39). The rhetoric used in Kosovo was given a rerun and, as an act of pre-emption, roles were reversed. A war, which included acts of rape, was waged against the

Muslims to prevent them from degrading Serb women: aggressor and victim swapped places. Scenes of rape were even shown on Serbian TV. The scenes depicted Muslim women being raped but an overdubbing of the voices made people believe that these victims were Serbs (Goldstein, 2001: 354; Salzman, 1998: 353). The general atmosphere was well captured in Milovan Milutinovic's text 'Laying Violent hands on the Serbian Woman', which appeared during the war:

By order of the Islamic fundamentalists from Sarajevo, healthy Serbian women from 17 to 40 years of age are being separated out and subjected to special treatment. According to their sick plans going back many years, these women have to be impregnated by orthodox Islamic seeds in order to raise a generation of janissaries on the territories they surely consider to be theirs, the Islamic republic. In other words, a fourfold crime is to be committed against the Serbian woman: to remove her from her own family, to impregnate her by undesirable seeds, to make her bear a stranger and then to take even him away from her. (Milovan Milutinovic quoted in Gutman, 1993: x)

To fully understand this quote, the myth about genetic determination that underlies Milutinovic's text must be emphasized. In the Balkans, the family name follows that of the father regardless of his religion or ethnicity. If an Albanian male rapes a Serb woman who then becomes pregnant and gives birth, then the child would be considered Albanian, even though genetically speaking it is 'half Serb' (Sofos, 1996: 86). Women are thus reduced to incubators, ensuring the reproduction of male genes (Salzman, 1998: 365). This patriarchal ideology played a crucial role when rape was turned into a weapon against 'the Muslims'. According to this ideology, Muslim women gave birth to 'Chetnik' babies, who would later kill them (Fisher, 1996: 111–13; Salzman, 1998: 359). This strategy is of course only successful if the victim shares the patriarchal ideology mentioned above. The fact that Catholic and Muslim women refer to their foetuses as 'filth', as 'that thing', or 'it' seems to indicate that this was in fact the case (Salzman, 1998: 365).

It is thus entirely appropriate that the practice of war rape is included in the genocide convention. War rape, in Bosnia and elsewhere, had as its purpose to destroy an ethnic group by killing it, to prevent its reproduction or to disorganize it, removing it from its home soil. In the Bosnian case, the only 'guilt' of raped women (and men) was that they were considered to be Muslim and hence responsible for acts and deeds that took place over many centuries and were attributed to an Islamic nation. The RAM-plan from 1991, which was authored by Serbian officers, is often taken to be the manual for the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia. The plan recommends that the army strike 'where the religious and social structure is most fragile', that is, against women, especially adolescents and children. If one aims to destroy an ethnic group, women are good targets due to their position in the family structure (Seifert, 1994: 62–3). A

traditional Muslim aphorism states: ‘as our women are, so also is our community’ (Zalichic-Kaurin, 1994: 171). Raped women should thus stand as a metaphor for a defeated community. The full quote from the RAM-plan reads:

Our analysis of the behaviour of the Muslim communities demonstrates that the morale, will, and bellicose nature of their groups can be undermined only if we aim our action at the point where the religious and social structure is most fragile. We refer to women, especially adolescents, and to the children. Decisive intervention on the social figures would spread confusion among the communities, thus causing first of all fear and then panic, leading to a probable [Muslim] retreat from the territories involved in war activity. In this case, we must add a wide propaganda campaign to our well-organized, incisive actions so that panic will increase. We have determined that the coordination between decisive interventions and a well-planned information campaign can provoke the spontaneous flight of many communities. (quoted in Allen, 1996: 57)

Rape was a strategy aimed to intervene in ‘social figures’, that is, in the ethnic composition of communities. To understand the effects of this strategy, we need to investigate the way rape and abjection link together. How is the ‘kid inside me’, the ‘it’, the ‘thing’ or the ‘filth’ produced by enemy penetration to be understood? What is abjection and is the concept suitable for describing the impurity felt by victims?

The Politics of Abjection

Basically, the abject is an object that provokes disgust. The smell and sight of a decaying corpse, for instance, repels, just as excreta and other kinds of corporeal waste threaten our bodily and spiritual purity. Such reactions towards abjected matter are all guided by a distinction between purity and impurity. We avoid filth and anything else falling under the category of impurity. However, it is documented that seemingly impure objects are not avoided in all cultures, that some objects are considered impure only when they appear as being out of place (the soup in the beard or the hair in the soup), and that in some traditions filth can be elevated into a sign of spiritual purity as is the case for the hermit. We know that nothing is filthy by nature but still we insist on treating impurity as a natural property. Abjected matter provokes corporeal responses of a bodily and reflex-like character. Why?

According to Bataille (1993: 23), the abject is a sign of a prior animal existence that threatens our identity as humans. If you eat meat from a pig, according to Jewish and Muslim faiths, you become one yourself. The prohibition against eating meat from a pig thus upholds a distinction between the animalistic and the human. Humans achieve form in distancing themselves from animal immanence. The distinction between purity and impurity is thus secondary. The most basic

attribute of the abject is not its impurity but formlessness. Those uncanny objects, or abjects, are both human and inhuman, both interior and exterior, both repelling and fascinating. Without form, and hence dangerous and taboo. The indistinct abject undermines our well-established distinctions, our culture and our identity (Kristeva, 1982: 69). And, inversely, the practice of avoiding the abject serves to uphold a culture and a tradition. We have form on one side and the lack of it on the other (1982: 65).

The object of desire and the abject are both materials for psychic and cultural investments. In themselves they are nothing; only when they are *posited* as objects or abjects of desire do they achieve their extraordinary status. In Freud's vocabulary, the object is totem and the abject taboo. Jacques-Alain Miller (1989) has coined the concept 'extimity' to describe objects of desire and it is equally useful in describing abjects. Being wanted but not possessed, the object of desire belongs to an external reality. However, as something desired, it also belongs to the interior. Objects of desire are thus given by the logic of a lack to be filled. The abject, to the contrary, is always in surplus, there is 'always too much' of the abject. The urge is therefore to get rid of it, which is precisely as impossible as obtaining *the* object of desire.

Cultures, traditions and communities are as much given by what they reject as by what they elevate. Rites of pollution uphold and support a social structure. Rape pollution aims to strengthen a patriarchal structure (see Salzman, 1998: 367). In traditional cultures, wives and unmarried women are often considered as wealth in need of protection. Etymologically speaking rape is derived from the Latin '*rapere*' which means 'to steal, seize or carry away' (Macnamara, 2002: 2). The rapist steals wealth that belongs to another man. All rites of pollution thus have a positive counterpart transforming the object under threat into wealth (Bataille, 1993: 46; Kristeva, 1982: 65). In keeping with this argument, war rape aims to devalue the women and thus the wealth of the men. A precious object is turned into an abject.

Strategic rape attacks not only the victim but also aims to dissolve the social structure of the attacked group. It taints its ethnic stock. Rape destroys communities by transforming women into abjects. To the extent that virginity and chastity before marriage is cherished, rape makes the victim unsuitable for marriage or motherhood (Fisher, 1996: 123–4). Many of the female rape victims interviewed by Human Rights Watch and similar organizations report that they are afraid that their husbands would reject them if they told them about the abuse (Stiglmayer, 1994: 137). Some even feared being killed. Rape humiliates the husband and may cause a desperate 'acting out' through which the victim is punished a second time (Salzman, 1998: 371).

In war, the abuse of the enemy's women is considered to be the ultimate humiliation, a stamp of total conquest (Goldstein, 2001: 362). It is a castrating experience aiming to illustrate the impotence of the enemy (Brownmiller, 1988: 38). In some cases, family members, inhabitants of her town or detainees were forced to watch or carry out the act of rape (Askin, 1997: 271; Pettman, 1996: 190; Salzman, 1998: 359) – all this to ensure the humiliation of the men. The setting created a two-fold feeling of impotence: the act of rape demonstrated that the Serbs were sexually superior, that the women preferred them. They might resist but secretly they were enjoying it. . . . Along the same lines, the enemy men were described as pussies, homosexuals and forced to wear women's clothes (Goldstein, 2001: 357). In several cases men were literally castrated (Askin, 1997: 271; Goldstein, 2001: 357). The aim of such acts was to demonstrate the opponent's lack of sexual power. Second, the setting should create a situation in which the enemy men were incapable of proving their manhood in protecting their women (Salzman, 1998: 365).

Religion and Abjection

We have already seen how the abject is articulated within a hygienic discourse as dirt or filth. Something similar seems to be the case in religious discourse in which the distinction between holiness and fallenness intertwines with a distinction between purity and impurity. To get at a deeper understanding of the trauma of rape, we need to investigate how and why these two discourses intertwine. In most, if not all, religions humanity is given as a double immanence in relation to both the lowest (animalism) and the highest (religion). 'Man' can either fall into animalism (that is, become abject) or can rise above the human realm towards the gods. The religious distinction between the fallen and the risen (the believer) is thus recoded as one between impurity and purity. Dirt, filth and blood indicate remoteness to the divine realm. This is expressed most clearly in the Hindu caste system, which differentiates people according to the degree of their purity: lowest is the one who deals with human waste, corpses and other kinds of abjected matter, highest is the holy man.

The theory of abjection is in fact based on a reading of the Bible. Kristeva (1982: 71) distinguishes between three kinds of abjected objects in a biblical context: abdominal food, excremental matter and menstrual blood. Perhaps it is more plausible in this respect to operate with a distinction between abjection from outside and from inside. Excrement and equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) are dangers to identity coming from the outside, while menstrual blood is a danger coming from within. Indeed, this distinction

overlaps with the portrait of abjection found in the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively. The Old Testament gives a number of prescriptions on what to consider pure or impure. Simply to avoid abjected matter is of course the easiest way to retain purity, and if pollution should occur a vast number of cleansing rites are to be found; of these, sacrifice is the most common. Abjection is described as pollution or contamination, that is, it is seen as something that does not affect the subject in any fundamental way. In the New Testament the distinction between purity and impurity is reversed. Sin is attributed to all believers. Instead of holiness gained through a constant avoidance of abjected matter, we find in the New Testament the importance of confessions through which sin (abjection) is elevated into a sign of faith. Abjection is internalized. It comes no longer from the outside but from within (Kristeva, 1982: 114).

Let us briefly consider how rape pollution relates to these two forms of abjection. Certainly, rape is to be understood as pollution from without; an enemy penetrates the body of the victim. We are so far in the domain of the Old Testament. However, there is no rite for purification here, which is usually the case regarding pollution from without. The feeling of shame indicates that rape also follows the second type of abjection (sin). In this context rape becomes an attribute that denigrates the person in question (otherwise the victims would not feel ashamed). In this respect we are in the domain of the New Testament. But again there is something that does not fit into the picture: rape cannot be elevated to a sign of faith through confession. Rape pollution resists conversion into language. Thus, rape is a hybrid of the two forms of abjection. Yet, although this is a crucial insight, we have still not answered our initial question concerning the linkage between the religious and hygienic discourses.

Douglas (1966) does not understand the commandment to avoid impurity as an expression for hygiene or health considerations. Prescriptions against pollution have to be understood in their totality. We should forget hygiene, aesthetics, morals and instinctive revulsion and take the texts' preface literally. Leviticus' preface commands people to be holy. The mere avoidance of an object X serves as a sign of conviction and thus the X could be anything. What matters is the establishment of a *practice* of faith. Kristeva goes even further. To her, food only appears as a source of pollution in so far as it crosses the boundary of the self's clean and proper body: 'Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human' (1982: 75). Hence Kristeva's most significant contribution: the abject is an indistinct, formless object. Just like excrement, food passes the border between the self's interior and its exterior. 'Abjection is, above

all, ambiguity' (1982: 9). It is the in-between, the neither-nor, the both-included-and-excluded object. As such the abject disturbs all systems and distinctions (1982: 4).

In monotheistic religions, primary prohibitions (e.g. against pollution) seem to drift towards secondary prohibitions in the form of laws prohibiting transgression. In the New Testament abjection is totalized and subsumed under the category of sin. This also changes the status of the religious subject. Faith is no longer demonstrated through the avoidance of abjected matter but by acknowledging one's status as abject, as a sinner, as someone who is unworthy of God's blessing. The rites of sacrifice aimed at pleasing the gods are thus in the context of the New Testament replaced by rites of confession. The relation between primary and secondary abjection varies from religion to religion. Within Protestantism they are mostly based on secondary prescriptions, and within Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, mostly on primary prescriptions.

So far, we have discussed abjection in its primary (pollution/contamination) and secondary (sin) forms, relating this to rape as an ambivalent hybrid of the two. Our next move is to further differentiate the secondary form of abjection into sin and shame. On the side of the perpetrator, the act of rape might serve as an act of initiation and as the sign of one's fidelity to certain goals of a gang, an army or a nation. On the side of the victim, the same act often resists translation into language and thus cannot serve as the basis of the formation of a social bond. We begin by discussing rape and shame and then move to focus on the way the act of rape can serve as a rite of initiation.

Shame

The metaphorical overlapping of the bodily and psychic interiors must be at the core if one wishes to understand the traumatic impact of rape. The body's interiority is seen, at least in a Western culture, as its most private and intimate part. 'The vagina is a gateway inside, the gate to the woman's soul by which act of entry property in her body is claimed' (Miller, 1997: 102). At the same time, however, everything that leaves this interior is considered filthy (with tears being the exception). Why this ambivalence? The question overlooks that substances are not impure in themselves but become so in passing the border between inside and outside (food can be impure because it passes through the mouth, excrement through the anus, menstrual blood through the vagina, etc.). No abject without a blurred distinction.

The argument applies to the case of rape as well: rape is traumatic because it invades our innermost intimacy (Seifert, 1994: 55). It is the border-crossing

practice *par excellence*, transforming one's inner being into an abject. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the interior is purely residual: it is the unconscious. The unconscious is what remains when all symbolical attachments are removed: I am always more than my job, more than the kind of sport I do, more than my family ties, my nationality, etc. Remove the unconscious and you have a puppet. The interior of the body metaphorically stands for that which is always more. One of the most horrible things one can do is thus to invade the interior, to fill it. In the interior everything becomes abject, because nothing properly belongs there.

A reflective twist is called for here. The inside is always *symbolized* as that which is private and intimate. We perceive some thoughts as private and intimate fantasies, and others as public and shared opinions. The realm of fantasies is a kind of shock absorber against the pressure from the outside, an image of something that escapes social forming. Fantasies are scenes of excess and transgression of social roles, norms and laws. They can take 'positive' or 'negative' forms (wishing to be raped, fearing being raped) and, in general, they reproduce widespread cultural stereotypes. One common fantasy is that of a dominant male taking a woman by force. The taking and the resisting are in this scheme considered to be a part of a game: she wants to be taken. The extension of this purports that a reason for the trauma of rape might be that it realizes the secret fantasies of the victim. And the fact that victims often feel ashamed indicates, from this perspective, that there might be something to the myth. A more 'positive' version of the argument is that people feel traumatized because the act of rape realizes what they fear; again, the victim's fantasy space is violated not in being denied but in being realized (Žižek, 1991).

Shame is produced through an act in which the subject works as the agent of its own desubjectivation, its own oblivion as a subject (Agamben, 1999: 106 ff.). Shame thus directly links to the concept of sin. Sin (and guilt) is internalized pollution, something one is responsible for, thus affecting one more deeply. However, unlike sin, shame resists verbalization, it cannot be elevated into a sign of faith or belonging. Let us give a literary example. In *Sophie's Choice*, the protagonist undergoes a process of desubjectivation. She is forced to choose between her two children; one will be sent to the gas chambers and the other will for the moment survive. Although she is at the mercy of the guards – they will kill both her children if she refuses to choose between them – she feels responsible for the decision. A forced choice like Sophie's makes ethical purity impossible. Not being able to escape from her self, she enters into a grey zone between the guilty and the not guilty.

The sexualized violence against Bosnians, and to a lesser extent towards Serb and Croat civilians, aimed to force them into a grey zone. Victims were forced

to transgress constitutive prohibitions marking their identity as human beings, for example the prohibition against murder or incest. A father was forced to rape his daughter or a son his mother. Prisoners were forced to perform oral sex on each other; internees were forced to bite off each other's testicles, etc. (Askin, 1997: 271, n. 893; Human Rights Watch, 1993: 216–19, 339).

In all these cases, the victims have to execute a perverse ritual aiming to destroy their dignity and feeling of moral worth. The victim was actively doing something: penetrating another body with his penis, biting, hitting, shooting, etc. What about the female victim of rape then? If shame is linked to an image of an active subject (forced or not), it is not obvious why rape provokes shame. The rape victim is forced into total passivity, reduced into an object of penetration and, in the case of successful impregnation, to an incubator for enemy seed. Agamben (1999: 110) writes: 'For there is certainly nothing shameful in a human being who suffers on account of sexual violence; but if he takes pleasure in his suffering violence, if he is moved by his passivity – if, that is, auto-affection is produced – only then can one speak of shame.' The task is not to investigate how women enjoy being raped – we assume they do not – but to investigate how the myth of female auto-affection provokes a feeling of shame. In this respect, the distinction between the active and the passive is of outmost importance. Even though the victim is forced into passivity, women are through rape, in accordance with the 'myth', blamed for inviting the act (Snow, 1994: 397).

She agonizes over her past actions, reviewing her role in the scenario, taking inventory of her movements, attitudes, gestures, speech, makeup, and dress, with a view to self-incrimination. In her reconstruction of the circumstances that led to rape she tries to justify her belief, whether true or false in fact, that she is to blame for being raped. . . . Passing through the victim's mind is a series of 'if only's.' If only I had done this, or not said that, or not worn that skirt, or not walked down that street, or not been so trusting, the rape would not have happened. (Snow, 1994: 397)

Women are supposed to inflame male desires by the way they dress, by their smile, by flirting and so on. Women are active (seducing) and men are inversely portrayed as the (seduced) victims of their lust. They cannot help it: they are men. There is a supplementary biological argument as well: the nature of the male's sexual organ is believed to give the male the role of the active part (penetration) and the women the passive (penetrated) (Miller, 1997: 104). Linking the two stereotypical images together, violence is easily legitimized. The 'fact' that men have to be active implies that it is the attitude of the women that decides whether the act is sex or violence. The woman is thus placed in a vulnerable position; she can be accused of lying: 'She seduced the man, but afterwards she accused him of rape.'

The victim feels guilt and is ashamed. The myth of the willing rape victim blocks the attempts to verbalize the act. 'What happened to me, happened to many, but the women keep it secret. It is shameful' (a rape victim quoted in Allen, 1996: 94). Let us, at this point, move on and investigate how the logic of abjection works on the side of the perpetrator. Does he feel shame or does the transgression function as part and parcel of the creation of a brotherhood in guilt?

Brotherhood in Guilt

Under normal circumstances the right to take life belongs to the state (due to its monopoly on the use of violence). More extreme situations, however, show that sovereignty 'belongs' to the one who decides on the state of exception (Agamben, 1998: 15–16). The sovereign power can rise above the laws, for example, by killing even though the law explicitly forbids it. This act of emergency is declared when the state attempts to defend its statehood by all possible means. The situation in Bosnia was different. The order of law was suspended but not for the purpose of producing state sovereignty, or at least not directly so. Instead of intervening in society through still more strict measures, everybody was set free. Everybody, or at least the paramilitary groups, was given the opportunity to rise to the status of a sovereign.

[T]he West which perceives Milosevic as a kind of tyrant doesn't see the perverse, liberating aspect of Milosevic. What Milosevic did was to open up what even Tijanac calls a 'permanent carnival': nothing functions in Serbia! Everyone can steal! Everyone can cheat! You can go on TV and spit on Western leaders! You can kill! You can smuggle! Again, we are back at Bakhtin. All Serbia is an eternal carnival now. This is the crucial thing people do not get here; it's not simply some kind of 'dark terror,' but a kind of false, explosive liberation. (Žižek and Hanlon, 2001: 19)

The war lifted all prohibitions and allowed soldiers to enter an erotic paradise. The young men were given an irresistible charge in holding lethal power in their hands (Ignatieff, 1993: 140–1). Milosevic made this festival possible and thus indirectly commissioned rape, burglary and other crimes (perhaps even directly so, if there is substance to the RAM-plan). Bataille's festival, like Bakhtin's carnival, captures something essential about the behaviour of Serb paramilitary troops in Bosnia. The festival is a state of exception: it is sacrifice, lawful crime and sovereignty established (Bataille, 1993: 124). One of Bataille's examples is the Hawaiian islands where the death of the king signalled a period in which all prohibitions were lifted: 'No sooner is the event announced than men rush in from all quarters, killing everything in front of them, raping and pillage to beat the devil' (1993: 89). It all lasted until the king's body turned into a hard and

incorruptible skeleton. Then a new king was introduced and order restored (1993: 89). Bataille's example allows us to grasp an important detail. The festival did not threaten royal power. On the contrary, it served as an outlet, allowing people to partake in it. The festival is a reactionary state of exception, an attempt to strengthen and legitimize royal power.

Even the 'festival of the king's death,' in spite of the formless aspect it assumes, is still in a sense lawful: the rule authorizes it by the *regular* suspension of its effects, during the time when the king's corpse is rotting. (Bataille, 1993: 129)

Bataille's festival is not spontaneous in the strict sense of the word, and neither was it in Bosnia. Milosevic allowed the paramilitary groups to share his power, his prerogatives, in return for unlimited 'love' and loyalty. And the same logic was repeated at lower levels. After having forced the soldiers to transgress a taboo, they became like clay in the hands of their leader. The aim was to baptize a brotherhood in guilt. Morrow writes the following on 'White Eagles':

White Eagles have made rape a gesture of group solidarity. A man who refuses to join the others in rape is regarded as a traitor to the unit, and to his Serbian blood. Sometimes, that impulse to bond with the male group becomes a kind of perverse inflaming energy inciting to rape. Lust is only a subsidiary drive. And sometimes, young men in war may commit rape in order to please their elders, their officers, and win a sort of father-to-son approval. The rape is proof of commitment to the unit's fierceness. A young man willing to do hideous things has subordinated his individual conscience in order to fuse with the uncompromising purpose of the group. A man seals his allegiance in atrocity. (Morrow, 1993)

Rape, burglary and killing fascinate because they are not allowed. Rules and norms are not missing, only lifted/suspended. Abjection thus works on both sides. On the side of the victim, abjection has a destructive impact because it cannot be verbalized, and on the side of the offender, it works to create a strong symbolic bond, a brotherhood in abjection or in guilt to use the more common term. There can be a brotherhood in guilt, but never a sisterhood in shame. The first kind of abjection produces shame, the second, 'sin' (guilt). The distinction between sin and shame, however, easily dissolves. What, within a closed community of soldiers, is understood as guilt (as a transgression which proves one's manhood and loyalty), is transformed into shame as soon as the soldier leaves this community – which is why he does not and why the officers force soldiers to break taboos. This also explains the frequent use of gang rape. By sharing the crime, a brotherhood in guilt was established.

By forcing individuals to transgress norms, at the same time they were forced to choose sides. Either they were Serbs, Croats or Muslims. No other option existed. Some neighbours even became enemies overnight. '[P]aramilitary groups are using rapes "to build up a kind of solidarity" among the rapists, to teach who

is “good” and who is “contemptible,” and to destroy bonds of friendship that had existed between former neighbours’ (Card, 1996: 10). This also explains why knives were a favourite weapon. By forcing unwilling soldiers to use a knife against their opponent (neighbour or friend), the act was intensified and personalized in a way that would not have been the case if a machine-gun had been used. The act of rape was used as a rite of initiation, which made men true Serbs (implying the rejection of multiculturalism in any form). Soldiers were not just soiled in blood but also baptized in it. Inside Serbia, the paramilitary groups were heroes, outside they were stigmatized as perverts.

The 23-year-old Cvijetin Maksimovie from Lukavac near Brcko in the northern part of Bosnia is one of those who were forced to perform rape attacks. He was forcibly mobilized by the Serbian troops at the beginning of the war and served in the Luka internment camp where more than 3000 Muslims were killed. In his own words:

It was outside the camp area – there was a sentry box there where we used to hang out, and two men came to get me. They were called Dino and Colo; they were either Arkan or Seselj soldiers, I’m not sure which. . . . They came to get me to butcher three men. They led them outside and gave me a knife. I said I’d never done anything like that, and I couldn’t do it. I said up until then I hadn’t even butchered a calf, let alone people. Then this Dino, I think it was Dino, he took my hand and put the knife into it and said, ‘then I’ll show you how you butcher,’ and then we did it together. Three other guys held the man down. He was about forty years old and not too tall. I looked at him while I was killing him. It was very hard for me to do it, I was afraid because of all the soldiers who were watching, and I was unhappy to have to do it. The soldiers were laughing and talking together. I don’t know what they said; I was completely . . . I felt terrible. Then they cursed my mother and my father: ‘What kind of a Serb are you anyway? We travelled four or five hundred kilometres to fight here in Bosnia, and you’re not even a real Serb!’ Then I had to kill the other two. They said, ‘If you don’t butcher them, we’ll butcher you.’ I never thought I would ever do such a thing. I don’t know what the other two men looked like, they were in a bad way, they looked like, they were in a bad way, they looked like they’d been beaten, and the things they had on were torn. And then I killed them; they died quickly. The other soldiers said I wasn’t a real Chetnik, not a real butcher. ‘Let’s go get eighty of them so we can see if he can at least kill them with a gun.’ They gave me a machine gun, and eighty people had to go stand in a row; some of them were women. And so I shot them. With a few rounds in the chest. I took one or two minutes. Later on after they led me away I heard some more shots, probably some of them were only wounded. They said I wasn’t a real Chetnik and now I would have to prove to them if I was at least a real man. They led me into a room in the camp halls. . . . ‘Here are twelve broads for you.’ The women were already there when I got there, and five or six soldiers came in too. I was supposed to rape the women. . . . At the end they said they’d forgive me this time, but not next time. And then they let me go. (quoted in Stiglmeyer, 1994: 156–7)

Cvijetin Maksimovie did rape the women and afterwards killed some of them. Was he guilty or not? Just as the rape victim, he entered a grey zone. If he had refused, he might have been killed as some were (Askin, 1997: 293: n. 923;

Stigelmeyer, 1994: 120), sent to the front line or jailed (Stigelmeyer, 1994: 147–51). Many were forced into situations that they could not control, as are soldiers everywhere. It is perhaps difficult to be harsh on Cvijetin. This is not the case, however, in dealing with his superiors and those who killed and raped out of free will.

Pharmakotic Warfare

We have shown that bodily margins cannot be understood in isolation from other margins (Douglas, 1966: 122). As land is penetrated by enemy troops, so is the body and vice versa: the concern for the unity and order of the body politic is mimetically reproduced in the preoccupations about the purity and impurity of the physical body (Douglas, 1966: 128). A vast literature exists on the nature and importance of borders, on the othering of the other and, in more general terms, on the importance of difference. In our argument, instead, the focus is on formlessness, indistinctions, abjection and abandonment – all concepts designating the blurring of an inside/outside divide. Which also illuminates some important aspects of contemporary ‘postmodern’ warfare: the importance of asymmetry, the paradoxes of identity formation and finally some preliminaries on the way gender, body and the psychic can be used in inflicting trauma.

What, at a surface level, appears as a primitive barbaric act is in fact complicated, and more advanced than conventional warfare. A knife can be a high-tech weapon. The war in Bosnia was not an echo from a long-forgotten past. It is rather what lies ahead of us. The practice of rape war was well planned and informed by modern scientific knowledge. Lotringer and Virilio (1997) remind us that every technology is defined by the ‘accident’, the catastrophe, it makes possible. This applies to psychology, too; the knowledge produced to help overcome trauma can be employed to create it.

Some of the local Serbs wore black stockings on their head to disguise their faces because they didn’t want to be recognized. [Nevertheless] I recognized many of them. [They were] colleagues – doctors with whom I worked. The first [man] who raped me was a Serbian doctor named Jodic. He knew I recognized him. He saw my name on the list and called it out. I had known Jodic for ten years. We worked in the same hospital. I would see him every day in the employees’ cafeteria. We spoke generally, ‘Hi, how are you?’ He was a very polite, nice man. Another doctor whom I had previously known also raped me: [his name was] Obrad Filipovic. I wasn’t allowed to say anything. Before he raped me he said, ‘Now you know who we are. You will remember forever.’ I was so surprised; he was a doctor! (Human Rights Watch, 1993: 216–19)

War rape is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it aims to create grave trauma. On the other hand it creates a brotherhood in guilt (Card, 1996: 7).

Hence one is tempted to label this new kind of war pharmakotic. Like the pharmakon, war is medicalized, addictive and poisonous. It is at the same time 'a contagious disease of the body politic and an addictive drug with a unique capacity to temporarily restore political health' (George, 2002: 169). It destroys the enemy's body politic and constitutes ours. War is pharmakotic in a second sense, too. The pharmakon is, in its Latin use, not just a remedy or a poison, but also a scapegoat. The pharmakos is typically a stranger, who, symbolically speaking, can be linked to a perceived threat towards a community (George, 2002: 169–70). By sacrificing the pharmakos, by expelling or killing him or her, the polis was cleansed or purged of disorders and dissenters (2002: 164). Obviously, the pharmakos is the person who, later on, in Roman law, became *homo sacer*. 'Pharmakotic wars create political power out of that aspect of the collective unconscious that is structured not, as in Lacan's formulation, like a language, but rather, as in the words of Phillippe Sollers, like a lynching' (George, 2002: 165).

References

- Agamben, G. (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, G. (1999) *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone Books.
- Allen, B. (1996) *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Askin, K.D. (1997) *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Bataille, G. (1993) *The Accursed Share*, vols 2 and 3. New York: Zone Books.
- Bracewell, W. (2000) 'Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 6(4): 563–90.
- Brownmiller, S. (1988) *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. London: Penguin.
- Card, C. (1996) 'Rape as a Weapon of War', *Hypatia* 11(4): 5–18.
- Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.
- Fisher, S.K. (1996) 'Occupation of the Womb: Forced Impregnation as Genocide', *Duke Law Journal* 46(1): 91–134.
- George, L.N. (2002) 'The Pharmakotic War on Terrorism: Cure or Poison for the US Body Politic?', *Theory, Culture & Society* 9(4): 161–86.
- Goldstein, J.S. (2001) *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutman, R. (1993) *A Witness to Genocide*. New York: Macmillan.
- Human Rights Watch (1993) *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, vol. 2. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Ignatieff, M. (1993) *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. London: Macmillan.
- Jones, A. (1994) 'Gender and Ethnic Conflict in ex-Yugoslavia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17(1): 115–34.
- Kaldor, M. (1998) *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kesic, V. (2002) 'Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women ...',

- pp. 311–22 in D.I. Bjélic and O. Savic (eds) *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Kressel, N.J. (1996) *Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lotringer, S. and P. Virilio (1997) *Pure War*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Macnamara, D. (2002) 'History of Sexual Violence', available online at: <http://www.interactive-theatre.org/resc/history.html>, visited 1 March 2003.
- Miller, J.-A. (1989) 'Extimité', *Prose Studies* 11(3): 121–31.
- Miller, W.I. (1997) *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morrow, L. (1993) 'Unspeakable', *Time* 22 February: 50.
- Nikolic-Rastanovic, V. (1996) 'War and Violence against Women', pp. 195–210 in J. Turpin and L.A. Lorentzen (eds) *The Gendered New World Order: Militarism, Development, and the Environment*. London: Routledge.
- Pettman, J.J. (1996) 'Boundary Politics: Women, Nationalism and Danger', in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds) *New Frontiers in Women's Studies: Knowledge, Identity and Nationalism*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Ramet, S.P. (1995) 'The Serbian Church and the Serbian Nation', in S.P. Ramet and L. Adamovich (eds) *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics and Culture in a Shattered Community*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Salzman, T.A. (1998) 'Rape Camps as a Means of Ethnic Cleansing: Religious, Cultural, and Ethical Responses to Rape Victims in the Former Yugoslavia', *Human Rights Quarterly* 20(2): 348–78.
- Seifert, R. (1994) 'War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis', pp. 54–72 in A. Stigelmayer (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Skejlsbæk, I. (2001) 'Sexual Violence and War: Mapping Out a Complex Relationship', *European Journal of International Relations* 7(2): 211–37.
- Snow, N.E. (1994) 'Self-blame and Blame of Rape Victims', *Public Affairs Quarterly* 8(4): 377–93.
- Sofos, S.A. (1996) 'Inter-ethnic Violence and Gendered Constructions of Ethnicity in Former Yugoslavia', *Social Identities* 2(1): 73–91.
- Stigelmayer, A. (1994) 'The Rapes in Bosnia Herzegovina', pp. 82–169 in A. Stigelmayer (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- United Nations Security Council (1994) *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant of Security Council Resolution 780*, 49th Sess., Annex, UN Doc. S/1994/674, at 55–69.
- Watts, C. and C. Zimmerman (2002) 'Violence against Women: Global Scope and Magnitude', *Lancet* 359(9313): 1232–7.
- Žižek, S. (1991) 'Formal Democracy and Its Discontents', *American Imago* 48(2): 181–98.
- Žižek, S. and C. Hanlon (2001) 'Psychoanalysis and the Post-political: An Interview with Slavoj Žižek', *New Literary History* 32(1): 1–21.
- Zalichic-Kaurin, A. (1994) 'The Muslim Woman', pp. 170–4 in A. Stigelmayer (ed.) *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Bülent Diken teaches at Lancaster University, Department of Sociology. His research focuses on social theory, urbanism, post-structuralist philosophy, mobility and immigration. He has previously authored *Fraøsttyrkiet til Vestdanmark* (1995) and *Strangers, Ambivalence and Social Theory* (1998).

Carsten Bagge Laustsen teaches at University of Aarhus, the Department of Political Science. His research fields include political theory, psychoanalytical theory and international relations. He has co-authored *I Terrens Skygge* (in Danish) and edited several books on French philosophy and political theory.