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ARCHIVES OF MEMORY

SUPPORTING TRAUMATIZED COMMUNITIES THROUGH NARRATION AND REMEMBRANCE

IOM International Organization for Migration

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Edited by

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Beyond the Archives of Memory

Natale Losi*

In the case of Kosovo, a volume on the Archives of Memory[1] will by nature be a cross-reference, at least in my imagination, to historical events for which "Archives" have already been put together. Today, such a reminder seems to refer almost exclusively to the experience of the Holocaust and the Shoa, which in turn, by association with the Shoa Archives, refers us to the questions of History and the role of historians as a group of professionals authorized and delegated to document, to give clarity.

In the experience documented in this volume, history represents the important component of a more complex interdisciplinary intervention, one where the principal prospective was, and still is, the psychological recovery/support of a community. In what way does history and its guarantors fit into this project? In many ways, and a large part of this volume exemplifies and bears witness to some of these, since all of the contributions were written by historians and anthropologists. In this Introduction, I would like to simply describe the more complex strategic system by

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which the contributions of these historians and anthropologists also represent a precious support to the individual, family and community therapeutic work that the Psychosocial and Trauma Response programme (PTR) proposed in Kosovo.

Constellations of violence

The conversations, the stories that people exchange and construct in situations of conflict, are clearly important, whether they influence the conflict's resolution or, on the contrary, contribute to its perpetuation. When these stories are woven in an international conflict situation such as that which overcame Kosovo, even international players, often unwittingly, figure amongst the individuals active in their construction. This is especially the case for those sent to work "on the ground" (Pandolfi, 2000). Aside from these co-producers and co-narrators of conflict situation stories, the constellation, the set, the essential typology available and necessary to actually give meaning to the conflict, is made up of three principal players: the aggressors, the victims and the authorities. In the particular case of Kosovo, the international players placed in this last role of the trilogy were in fact perceived, according to different points of view and independently from their intentions, as saviour/aggressors. Many of them indeed risked contributing to the domination of a constellation, which alone was advantageous to the perpetration of the premise for conflict. In other words, by their intervention, the international actors risked perpetrating the narrative scheme contained in the trilogy: aggressor/victim/rescuer, an integral part of the conflict.

The pervasion of this trilogy in conflict situations has become an object of observation in many different disciplines. Anthropologist R. Thornton suggests that:

> Narratives of violence have a specific social and cultural function. By narrating events, we link a series of actions – whether by chronology, conspiracy or psychological predisposition – into a comprehensible framework. In this way the violent event that has radically disrupted the flow of normality appears to have been predictable, and the moment of chaos that has challenged order is tamed (Thornton, 1999).

In other words, when we "clothe" an experience or a situation of chaos with a story or narrative, we transform it, give it sense. We tame chaos. This does not happen alone however, as A. Feldman notes, "Narratives not only explain events; they are integral to how we decide what is an event and what is not" (Feldman, 1991).

In the case of Kosovo, the recurrent pattern that Bruck so well described, writing that "The human community needs to be split into perpetrators or transgressors, objects or victims, and authorities and responsible" (Bruck, 1992), was mixed, within every type of organized intervention, with the "humanitarian" aim of the different agencies and NGOs.

The media exposure/transformation of wartime events that was so particular to the Kosovo crisis also allowed the journalists to meddle with the diverse versions of this basic conflict plot. The media's tendency to break up the facts and then put them back together to produce a telling story, found its best description in the term "mythinformation",[2] a word which evokes the means by which stories can be tied to objects, intentions and events in a strong blend that appears true and credible because it is familiar, and it is familiar because it includes the fundamental trilogy: predator/victim/rescuer. Our intervention did not arrive within a neutral situation, but rather in one where "mythinformation" had effectively fossilized the environment, interpreting it through the plot: aggressor/victim/rescuer mentioned above.

The PTR project, through the Archives of Memory, tried to offer the different players involved in the Kosovo intervention a series of possible stimuli to help them break away from this rigid and limiting constellation.

In this brief introduction, I would particularly like to concentrate on the possibility that one of the constellation's components, the "Rescuer", might break away from its rigid role. To be able to break away from this set function, he or she who plays the part must be aware that the "Rescuer" model can be hidden or masked under a multitude of figures. I have briefly attempted to describe these coverings, beginning with the guise pointed out by Enriquez, the figure of the "Trainer". It is only by breaking away from his rigid role of "Rescuer", that the humanitarian worker can offer other members of the constellation (such as the "Victim") solutions that are not repetitive and fatal, insofar as they reproduce the same dynamics of violence that created the initial conflict. In other words, it is by breaking away from the set figures that the rescuer/trainer might help construct a future less exposed to the systematic repetition of violence.

Every act of international cooperation, especially if it occurs in the context of humanitarian intervention in a transition situation immediately following a conflict, and even more so in the field of psychosocial support, implies both a series of explicit models, and "ghost motors"[3] that confer upon those who carry out this work its simultaneously passionate, worrisome and frustrating aspects. The work's attraction probably resides in contemplating and sharing the desire of omnipotence with the fear of impotence, in being (at least in intention) a bearer of life, but also a

bearer (usually unwittingly) of repetition and death. The models and ghosts interacting in psychosocial humanitarian interventions therefore might, for analysis, be coupled with those described by Enriquez (Enriquez, 1980), when the humanitarian worker/trainer can be seen as a figure who:

1. Offers a good model/form;
2. Heals and restores;
3. Gives light to, helps emerge;
4. Interprets, makes aware;
5. Helps act, change, move;
6. Is dedicated to something, takes on problems;
7. Is free of taboos, prohibitions;
8. Acts so as to render the other mad (desiring destruction).

I would like to briefly discuss these images, towards two ends. The first is to show that if the humanitarian worker chooses to adhere completely to one or a few of these models/ghosts, he or she (though in our case we could call this person a psycho-sociologist) contributes to the creation of a world of doubles, in which violence inevitably rages, through the re-propositioning of the constellation many times aforementioned. This will occur, even if the person's selfless intention was to contribute to the creation of a better humanity. The second reason to discuss this list is to show how, through the use or interaction with the Archives of Memory, it is possible to offer humanitarian workers a series of possible settings that reduce the risk of perpetrating the rigid role of rescuer, therefore exempting the other implicated players (aggressors and victims) from the bond of their reciprocal role as generators of violence. Let us look briefly at what could be a series of variations in the role of rescuer in humanitarian situations:

The trainer

The trainer is interested in "forms" and intervenes to re-form, trans-form, de-form, etc. If the humanitarian workers' representations of themselves fit within the common category according to which they view themselves as "model figures", they propose de facto to deprive their interlocutors of their own experiences, their difficulties, their anguish and their trial-and-error progress, to substitute these for a "good form" that is fixed, repetitive, deadly. Enriquez notes that this temptation is alive and well, above

all among psycho-sociologists, “in that they believe to have realized, in the balance reached, a particular ideal that they wish to transmit, as is the case with educators, who desire to reform those who were ill-formed…”

The therapist

In cases of humanitarian intervention after a conflict, it is easy to feel immersed in a universe that is considered “abnormal” and to therefore assume an attitude which attempts to readapt the individuals affected by or involved in the conflict. It is easy to feel a duty to restore them, to heal them of their “behavioural insufficiencies”, and to help them lead a normal life. This is the case for most organizations that have worked with trauma. Implicit in their idea of this affliction and healing, is a model that:

- Assumes the person to have been in a stable state (health status) which was then upset by external agents (in this case the violence and aggressions of war), and that by applying the appropriate therapy to such persons, they will be restored;
- Therefore presupposes a perfect reversibility of the organism: that once healed it will not feel the consequences of the “illness” (aggression).

It is important to reflect upon the roots of this model, this ghost. In fact, at the basis of this restitutio ad integrum obsession, we find a very real tendency in our society to form a dichotomy with the “sick” on one hand, and the “care givers” on the other. This model tends to be exported in international actions, when international actors medicalize the social with each glance they cast at it.

The maieuta

The objective of those who adhere to the maieutic model is not to restore or heal but rather to give birth to or favour development and maturity, to permit the realization of prohibited or repressed potentials. Within this approach is implicit an idea of Man as essentially good. In this context, the humanitarian will not try to impose form, but rather to share a bond of trust with the interlocutors, who can let their true essence flow, liberating themselves from the elements that oppressed them.

The maieutian model, which idealizes human nature, has an important corollary in that it idealizes the humanitarian worker, thought to be the incarnation of goodness. The understanding (maieutic) attitude that they adopt and propose implies an enhanced image of themselves and others, diverting their gaze from the catastrophic situations in which they work.

The interpreter

Briefly, the vocation of an interpreter is to interpret everything, sometimes changing everything due to the pervasiveness and popularization of psychoanalysis. The corollary is that the interpreter will find a cause and reason/justification for every behaviour.

The militant

This is the ghost that believes it possible to intervene everywhere in order to guide social transformations. In this role, humanitarian workers proceed by somehow comparing themselves to a kind of prophet, confirming the participants' idea that evil comes from outside, that everything is due to society, and casting aside the fundamental problem of possible connivance between dominator and dominated, persecutor and victim of persecution.

At the time of our very first training session for the psychosocial counsellors participating in our course, I vividly remember a conversation with a young interpreter who already, at that time, (in December 1999), clearly pointed out the mutual support between victim and persecutor. In her opinion, she said, this would shortly become evident. "While the Serbs were still there," she said, "everything could be blamed on them. Now that young women are disappearing from the streets, we need to accept the idea that there is evil also among us."

The repairer

Their objective is to promote activities by which the community can be reborn, through the reparation of damages suffered. They will sacrifice themselves for others, will not waste time and energy, and will lose themselves in their work, which they see as a true mission. The question I ask myself about these workers is, first, who invested them with this mission? Further, will the act of restoring, helping, saving, and dealing with the "victims", not help to perpetuate structures of exclusion? What secondary benefits do those who thus sacrifice themselves receive? It might be suspected that the repairer, through sacrifice, also sacrifices the others, by dealing with their problems, and "devouring them" with affection. In this privileged relationship, the repairers end up alienating the very people they were trying to help. They somehow live through the death of others.

The transgressor

Although this figure is part of the typology proposed by Enriquez and which was then "adapted" to situations of humanitarian intervention, it doesn't seem to me that this model, at least in the case of Kosovo, was present in a significant manner. I will, however, describe it briefly so as to offer a comparison to the reader. The fundamental calling of this model is to favour the emergence of spontaneity, festiveness and protest of institutions. In a humanitarian context, this model "expresses a sort of megalomania of being the father, the parent that generates the unknown and promulgates transgression and generalized instability" (Enriquez, 1980: 126-127).

The destroyer

The destroyer model functions at an essentially unconscious level, in a kind of interpersonal interaction that tends to encourage or favour a conflict of affections in the other. According to Enriquez, who refers to Searles (Searles, 1978), "This kind of desire is present in every affectionately healthy individual," and therefore comes into play in every therapeutic or training relationship. I will add that in a therapeutic relationship, as is often imagined by humanitarian workers, their perceived function as "helper of 'unfortunate peoples' " and their desire to heal the other, might be reactive training: a defence mechanism responding to the desire to make the other ill. The desire to form can be affected or induced by the opposite desire to de-form, break, and shatter the other.

After all, how could a humanitarian avoid the risk of this contradiction? His position is such that he could, on one hand, give his group of "assisted people" an incentive for autonomy and encouragement to search for their own resources, but he could also refer back to their own closed interpretive system, leaving them with a situation of interpretive regression and dependency.

With this brief and concise review, I intended to indicate that every trainer (and the humanitarian worker often refers to this figure for guidance) will or is possessed by one or more of these ghosts. He must recognize them and question himself about their impacts, on himself and on others, if he does not wish, by offering his services as "rescuer", to transform his intervention into a dangerous situation that perpetuates violence.

The specificity of PTR
and of the Archives of Memory

The specificity of the Psychosocial and Trauma Response Programme is best described or simplified in the awareness that we had since the initial planning phase. We knew by then that we would have no pre-fabricated instruments to reach the objectives we had established: psychosocial support to a population traumatized by war and its horrors, through the training of psychosocial counsellors. It followed that the same training course could not be pre-coded. To apply any kind of training curriculum, even for psychosocial counsellors coming from the best Western universities, would have meant once again falling into the contradiction that I have repeatedly attempted to express in the previous pages.[4] From this awareness, we have therefore tried to create innovative paths, starting with the essential observation/conviction from which, later, the idea for the Archives of Memory was born: the notion that traumas, though experienced individually, cannot find a positive response if their significance is forcibly reduced to an individual dimension.

The Archives of Memory has proven to be and will remain one of the means of implementing this basic idea. Other instruments elaborated include social or community theatre and the community transcultural clinical approach, respectively.[5]

From individual to collective experience

I have repeated more than once that the Aggressor/Victim/Rescuer constellation occupied the dominant story in Kosovo, and its pervasiveness did not leave room for other narratives about either individuals or communities affected by war. As Renos Papadopoulos clearly described in his contribution to the first volume of these notebooks (Papadopoulos, 2000), after a traumatic event, the people and the community block and reduce the interpretation, the meaning of their lives, to the precise moment of the traumatic episode. The periods that pre-announced/pre-pared the event as such, are cancelled, just as are the after effects. To be able to help people and communities that have endured these shattering experiences, it is necessary to offer suggestions so that they might reconsider their histories and therefore the potentials of their future, beyond the reduction of all of their resources to the ashes left after such a devastating event. It is also necessary to help them consider "something different" that they might look to, once this hardship has passed.

The Archives of Memory were and are a precious source of this "something different". The Archives, and the essays collected in this volume, together represent a first expression of the wealth of materials gathered,[6] offering many starting points towards this goal. They orient us towards a reconstruction of the complexity of the experience in Kosovo and of the Kosovars,[7] which it is not possible to reduce to a dominant constellation. They offer starting points, even in clinical work, to begin re-narrativizing, re-story-ing in the communities and families damaged by unhealed wounds and deaths. They offer less restrictive and more vital alternatives to the fossilized story frozen around the dominant constellation.

Conclusion

We know that among the members of the professional community to which we belong there exist different positions, some critical of an approach like ours, which would consider only the collective dimensions of the traumas suffered. Yet to consider and stress the collective dimension of the problem does not mean that we must exclude individual experiences. Rather, we may place these in a context from which it is possible for them to take on culturally shared and appropriate meaning. Individuals are part of stories; they produce stories. We not only give sense to our lives through stories, we not only tell the story/ies of our lives, but our actual lives are the makings of stories. Stories that often no one has asked us to tell, stories in the making, stories that are part of other stories, repressed stories, stories untold. Stories that can make us mad and stories that can profoundly heal the wounds of the spirit. It is with this perspective and in this spirit, I believe, that the Archives of Memory must be seen.

Notes

1. The Archives of Memory project was conceived as a single part of the larger programme Psychosocial and Trauma Response in Kosovo, jointly implemented by the International Organization for Migration and the University of Pristina. The aim of this larger programme was to create a framework for response to the emerging psychosocial needs of the population, following their experiences of war, exile and return. In this context, the Archives of Memory were conceived as venues devoted to both the preservation and dissemination of the different kinds of materials – interviews, diaries, letters, photos, drawings – documenting the experiences lived by the Kosovar people.
2. This word was coined by television producer Danny Schelchter (Fordred, 1999: 12).

3. This term is used by Eugène Enriquez (Enriquez, 1980). I use his word and notion of “ghost” to refer to the trainer figure, in order to offer an alternative to the rigid constellation that the “rescuer” can find him/herself a part of.
4. For a more exhaustive description of the PTR approach, see Losi, 2000.
5. Apart from the volume mentioned in the preceding note, two further volumes of the Psychosocial Notebooks, are in preparation following this one. The first dedicated to theatre (a sample video tape will be included) and the second, to clinical work.
6. All of the materials collected for the Archives of Memory (interviews, diaries, letters, drawings and pictures) will be soon available on its website http://www.iomkosovomemory.int.
7. The research for the Archives of Memory was also extended outside Kosovo: in Italy and in Serbia (two of the regions most concerned by the migratory flows that occurred during and in the aftermath of the war) interviews were collected among the communities Kosovar refugees. Research was conducted in Serbia by the Italian NGO Arcs – Arci Cultura e Sviluppo (under the direction of Nicola Mai) and in Italy by the European University Institute (under the direction of Luisa Passerini).

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Chapter 1

Memory Telling. Individual and Collective Identities in Post-War Kosovo: The Archives of Memory

Silvia Salvatici*

> "[Being a refugee] is like being lost, like being a person that is lost. Maybe there were chances of a new life, but when it came to the past… I hadn't taken anything from the past with me, except my family, because everything else from the past and all the memories were left behind…"
>
> Gentiana [1]

Introduction

This essay is a first analysis of materials collected for the Archives of Memory in Kosovo. These documents were gathered as part of the Psychosocial Trauma and Response project that served primarily as a training course for psychosocial counsellors.[2] The first section of the report will describe the geographical and social environment in which the research took place, as well as the methods chosen for it. The following section of the report will focus on remembrance of the past and perception of the present, where narratives of suffering on one side seem directed at

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the construction of a monolithic national identity. Those on the other side are not unified, but appear fragmented along socio-cultural, gender and generational divisions. Finally, the essay will analyse these different narratives, observing how their fragmentations follow fractures and continuities produced and/or reinforced by the experience of conflict, and by the construction of memories within the Kosovar communities, at both an individual and collective level.

Environment and methodology

Student fieldwork

The material collected in Kosovo for the Archives of Memory was partly produced within the framework of training exercises for psychosocial counsellors, partly through specific research activities. In discussing the material that was gathered in the training course, I will refer mainly to the documents compiled in the first stage, devoted to the relationship between memory and psychosocial activities. The students were thus provided with interviewing skills, and divided into small groups. During their fieldwork, they gathered 15 interviews, partly in Pristina[3] and partly in the villages located near the region's capital or in neighbouring municipalities. All of the interviews were held within the Kosovar-Albanian community, to which the students belong. A variety of subjects were interviewed (children, adolescents, adults and the elderly of both sexes), and the conversations usually took place in a family context, thus allowing other members of the family to take part in the conversation. Exceptions to this procedure were interviews addressed to specific groups of people (a classroom of children and students in a female dormitory, for instance). Most of the people interviewed had experienced one or more instances of bereavement. The students had previously identified some of them as "cases" where psychological support was needed. In a few interviews, a prearranged questioning format was used, though not strictly followed.

The interviews focused on the experience of the war, exile and return, and were conceived as the first step in the establishment of a relationship with potential patients. In many cases, however, these interviews also became a first phase of treatment, since the sharing of these memories helped build a foundation of trust and confidence between the two participants in the conversation. This last result was achieved primarily because the interviewers not only spoke the same language and belonged to the same cultural context as the interviewees, but had also experienced the war. Moreover, the students themselves tended to lend special meaning to inter-

views, as these were considered evidence of violence suffered by Albanians, and seen as devices that could be used to incriminate the Serbs. This stance should remind us of a more general attitude which was shared by the interviewees, and prevalent in the discussions.

Diaries, drawings, memories

As we have already pointed out, the material gathered in Kosovo for the Archives of Memory also consists of documents collected or “produced” through specific research activities. Until now, the material delivered to the Archives has been remarkably varied. While on one hand, the collection met our requests and expectations, the list of materials also included items that people considered appropriate for the Archives of Memory. One example of this came from a young boy who contributed his “green card”, the identification document issued by the Serbian Interior Ministry to every Albanian still living in Kosovo between April and May of 1999. The card was handed to us with a short essay on the different purposes attributed to this document by the popular collective imagination. One contributor, a mother, wanted her 6-year-old daughter’s drawings, which depicted the experience of war and exile, to be preserved in the Archives of Memory. Another woman delivered drawings, this time her own, drawn between 1998 and 1999. There was even a boy who wanted to give us the letters he had received from his brother, who was still jailed in Serbia. We also received several diaries kept during the war, adding to the items that document the experience of the conflict in so many different ways.

With the exception of a few cases, however, it was the people directly involved with the project, (students, local professionals, local staff) who yielded documents to us. This was probably not simply a matter of knowing about the Archives (indeed, the project was widely advertised), but of a trust rooted in an awareness of the aims of the project, and in a strong relationship built in months of working together. Trust is essential to the contributions, because the experiences narrated in the documents handed to us are not only products of a very recent past, but they are also strongly connected to the present. Given the extent to which they could impact the wide debate on the present and future of Kosovo’s political and social setting, these narratives describing experiences during the time of conflict cannot be neutral. Memory can never be neutral and this is particularly evident in Kosovo. The people of Kosovo are aware of this, and this influences their decision whether to let their memories leave the private sphere. As will be shown, this issue is also central to the sharing of oral testimonies, in which two currents cross: an awareness, in both interviewers

and their subjects, of memory's role in altering the socio-political context, and the ways in which this same socio-political context may influence the process of recollection.

Interviews

The collection of interviews constituted the other main activity of the Archives of Memory in Kosovo, and was carried out by a team of local staff and so-called "internationals". Given this varied group, we were faced with the problem, at the very beginning of our research, of choosing those who would act as interviewers. By then, working with the students had shown us that having had similar experiences as the interviewees, and belonging to the same social and cultural context as they did, were assets of great potential. We also knew that the presence of one or more members of an international community, which had and still does play an important bulky role in the past and present experience of the Kosovars, could strongly influence the interviewee's form of narration and memory tracking. On the other hand, we were also aware of the fact that we, as "internationals" had been casting our presence on the outcome of the conversation even in our absence, as the interviews, which were separated from the offered counselling, were taken for the Archives of Memory: the creation of an international organization. Our presence during the interviews might simply serve to add transparency to a connection that was already implied, and would probably stress the mechanisms of a collective self-representation addressed to the international community. Between these two considerations, we thus adopted a rather flexible solution: during most of the encounter, international and local interviewers acted together, and at other times (depending upon the context in which the interview was taken, the relationship between interviewer and interviewees, etc.), the local or international researcher(s) continued the interview alone with the subject.

Another concern closely related to the composition of the interviewing group was, of course, that of language. One member of the local staff often took on the additional role of interpreter. It is important to remember that this position is not a purely technical one, as it implies a cultural mediation, nor is it entirely neutral, as the interpreter must establish his/her own relationship with the interviewee, which must be different from the interviewee's relationship with the international staff. The interpreter is thus left with potentially extensive control over the course of conversation. For this reason, interpreters were considered active members of their research group, and included in all phases of interview planning. They brought their own perspectives to these planning discussions, and the resulting interview was considered, in part, the result of their specific suggestions and contributions.

Interpreting was, however, not always requested. Some of the interviewees spoke English, French or Italian. In these cases, even if their knowledge of the foreign language was fluent, the interviewees refused to speak in their native tongue, feeling uncomfortable with the translation of their words. Their resistance to the translation taught us to view a shared language as a primary necessity, in order to reduce the gap between interviewers and interviewees, and to grant all participants of these conversations equal status. We learned to allow the interviewees to choose their words, accepting any reduction in their ability to express themselves properly. Even in the most skilful of translations, the richness of the original language is lost.

The situation became more difficult during group interviews, when some of the participants could speak several languages and others could not. At times, this mixture of tongues became overwhelming, as on one occasion where four different languages were used during the same interview. While on one hand, this Babel of idioms became an obstacle to clear communication, the confusion moved all participants to rely more on non-verbal language. The transmission of feelings and emotions became as relevant as the narration of events, and the significance of these same events came to depend upon the communicated feelings and emotions to support them.

In Kosovo, 40 interviews were collected, 21 of these amongst Kosovar-Albanians, and 19 of them amongst Kosovar-Serbs. The bulk of the research focused upon three distinct municipalities: Pristina, Mitrovica and Pec.

Pristina was one of the towns least damaged by the war, even though a great number of its population had been forcibly evacuated (as had happened throughout Kosovo) (OSCE, 1999, part I: 312). Following the end of the war, the town experienced rapid growth in its population, mainly due to mass migration from the countryside. Pristina now houses the highest concentration of international organizations in Kosovo. Only around 600 Kosovar-Serbs still reside in Pristina, most of them concentrated in specific zones with only a few families remaining scattered in other locations around the city's centre. For these Kosovar-Serbs, freedom of movement is practically non-existent, with many of them confined to their homes. Around 12,000 Kosovar-Serbs live in the villages of the municipality, protected (like the inhabitants of other Serbian enclaves) by the KFOR (UNHCR-OSCE, 2000: 38-39).

Both Pec and Mitrovica were badly affected by the war. Respectively 68 per cent and 65 per cent of their residential buildings were heavily damaged or destroyed (OSCE, 1999, part II). In Pec, the only Serbs still living in the urban area are the inhabitants of the orthodox patriarchate (the priest

and nuns) and several families of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In the countryside one Serbian village (Gorazdevac), remains, and is populated by around 12,000 people. As in the other Serbian enclaves, freedom of movement is highly restricted, though weekly bus transport to Belgrade is provided.

In Mitrovica, which is divided into two zones by a river, the North is Serbian, and only a few Albanian families still live there. Many of the inhabitants of Northern Mitrovica come from all over Kosovo, while part of the people originally living in this area have since moved to Serbia. South of the river lies the Albanian zone. The area houses most of the families who lived above the river before the war. Mitrovica is the region where tensions between the two communities most often degenerate into violence.

The interviews were gathered in these towns, as well as in villages. The subjects interviewed were chosen to represent a wide variety in terms of age, social background and gender. The context in which the conversations took place also differed. Interviews were often conducted at home, but also at the work place, in public areas, and in schools. Some of the subjects were interviewed more than once, sometimes first individually, then with a group of friends, family or classmates. These interviews of more than one subject were different, in that they allowed the relational dynamic of a group to emerge. Particularly interesting were the conversations we had with families. Usually, especially amongst Albanian Kosovars, it was the recognized head of the family (a grandfather or the oldest brother), who spoke for the entire group. The other relatives only answered questions addressed directly to them and this, usually, to confirm what the head of the family had previously said. The women's position was generally marginal: during interviews, they usually sat outside the circle of conversation, or were not present at all. The only exception to this rule was an elderly grandmother who had outlived the grandfather of the family. This tendency to attribute the role of speaker to a specific member also extended to informal groups, so that feelings and opinions recognized by all members could be expressed in one voice.

The interviews themselves were usually set up through a network of relationships that formed gradually. In many cases, connections were made through friends or relatives of the subjects, and interviewers met with interviewees more than once. Coffee, tea, and the exchange of gifts often preceded the interviews. This procedure was chosen as the most suitable to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence, as a necessary first step in changing the rhythm of interview into that of flowing conversation. The results of the project comprise not only the materials thus gathered in the

research, but also the experience of its process; the before and after of the interviews, from the students interactions with institutions and associations to their relationships with friends and colleagues, and everything that occupied, at the time, the public and private realms of their daily lives.

Beyond the war, across the community

The interviews proceeded along the lines of a framework, but these guidelines were designed to be a trail of subjects that would ideally be explored in conversation, not a rigid list of questions that had to be asked directly. This framework reflected the extent of our research beyond the specific event of the war, into both the chronology of what had happened, and the topics of our analysis. On one level the periods before the outbreak of war were considered for study, along with the subjects' perspectives on the present and future, while on another level, we attempted to draw forth the complexity of the Kosovar experience. Our guidelines for the interviews thus included different issues such as the role of the individual within a family context; the gap between the normalizing public discourse and the intensity of the popular experience of war, displacement and return; coping strategies and the emergence of suffering in the individual; the familiar, generational, gender-related and community-oriented dimensions of life; the narratives and discourse of suffering and healing; the interrelation of coping strategies past and current with discourses of identity; the people's own accounts of the Kosovars' current situation, and their perspectives, dreams, desires and projects for a future Kosovar society.

In the following analysis of the collected materials, the term "conflict experiences" refer not only to the event of the war, but also to the social, economic and political context created in its aftermath. The processes by which memory is constructed, though read in relation to specific experiences and the cultural backgrounds in which these have occurred, will be analysed across the boundaries of different communities.

Tales of present and past suffering

Forgetting as healing

As has already been discussed, the interviews collected by the students focused on the experience of war, while specific research was aimed at extending the conversation to include a wider range of topics. In most of the interviews held within the Kosovar-Albanian community, however, the interviewees made the war the centre of their conversation, and in some

cases, the researchers were unable to address other issues. The fact that war took centre-stage in their narratives provides yet more evidence of the depth and intensity of their experience, as studies on war and memory remind us. On the other hand, this centrality is probably also due to the importance of this war in the subsequent construction of a Kosovar-Albanian collective memory.

The more intense the interviewees' experience of war, the greater had become the suffering and distress produced in its wake. The past and its recollection thus become fused with affliction, grief and anguish. In these cases, the survivors usually believed it best to forget the events that they considered traumatic, in order to remove their pain and overcome this trauma. Such was the situation of Besim.

Besim joined the Kosovar Liberation Army (KLA) in early 1993 and lived in a clandestinely for a long time. During the NATO bombings, he was captured by the Serbian police and was imprisoned for seven months in Pozharevc (in the former Republic of Yugoslavia). His narration focused mainly on the time he was in prison. He considered this period his worst because he was physically and psychologically mistreated, and because of the anxiety he felt, deprived of news from his family and of the situation in Kosovo. Besim's memory of suffering focused on seemingly trivial details (noises, objects, and dreams), but he emphasized them because they brought the past into the present. He remembered:

> When they closed us in, when they closed those iron doors, it affected my psyche in a way… because there were 400 rooms there, and that means that 1,200 times a day… because they brought us food three times a day, so those doors were opened three times a day – 1,200 times… the sound was such that a grenade explosion would have hurt my ears less… it's not just because they could have come inside to beat someone, but also because of the doors… those iron knobs. […] The doors in my house are made out of iron, you know, and every time I hear that noise… but I'm going to take them off and put wooden ones in their place…

To Besim, removing the noise of his doorknobs became a means of removing this memory, and thus its suffering. This is the same solution that Blerta, the girlfriend of a former KLA fighter, chose. In her words:

> Blerta: Now he is nervous and sometimes he starts to shout without any reason and he always remembers something that he has seen before and he starts to tell me about the things he has seen before.
>
> Question: Do you think it was a relief to him, telling you what he saw and confessing his feelings to you?
>
> Blerta: Yes, maybe he needs to talk with somebody and to tell that

> person what happened to him. He feels some relief and we talk sometimes about different things and I want to help him in this way, but I think it's difficult because that [memory] is fixed in his head. I usually try changing the subject of the conversation and I shift to another one. I say things like "Let's talk about something else. It is over, let's forget it. It was war and we can't do anything". Sometimes it makes him happy.

Blerta's solution, as some students pointed out during the plenary session where the interviews were analysed after the field work, echoes the tradition amongst Kosovar-Albanians that people should not be brought back to their painful experiences, thus respecting their need to forget. From this perspective, the ability to "not remember" becomes an asset, a resource. Despite this, however, most of the interviewees led their own stories back to their painful experiences, and later admitted to feeling relieved after the conversation.

Remembering as duty

A first reason for this contradiction stems from the fact that the lack of memory, the amnesia or the effort to forget, never seems sufficient to remove the events that have produced this suffering (and still do). On the contrary, this non-remembering seems to delete everything outside of these events, levelling a *tabula rasa* around them, in which they may stand out all the more. In this way does trauma radically break the even flow of a narrative (Antze and Lambek, 1996: xvii). This was exemplified by Rahim, one of the interviewees. Rahim is a 12-year-old boy who was put in line to be executed, like all the other men of the village. Rahim was seriously wounded but survived, while his uncle died. "I always wander around in my memory", he answered the students who asked him what bothered him most, "I think about that day only". "That day", already described in great detail to the interviewers, is still vivid in Rahim's memory, though he did his best to forget it. Instead of losing "that day", Rahim forgot all the jokes he once knew. In his words:

> Rahim: When I was wounded, there were some girls that used to come for a chat. I was telling them lots of jokes, but now I've forgotten all of them.
> Student: Don't you know any of them?
> Rahim: No, I've forgotten all of them.

Another reason for this amnesia, is that forgetting can be considered helpful to recover from painful experiences, but remembering is a social duty. The oppression, mistreatment and massacres suffered by the Albanian people cannot be forgotten. The single person will therefore sacrifice his

or her wish to forget and give priority to the objectives of the national community. The individual subject leaves his personal stance to the construction of a collective stage, and the performance of this duty itself reinforces a sense of belonging to the national community, at the same time seeming to have consolatory and therapeutic effects. Still another reason for remembering is that it gives meaning to the loss. This occurred in the case of Teuta. At 18, Teuta had mourned the murder of her father and brother, (both of them active in the KLA) by the Serbian police. “We have to live for the sake of those that fought and died for us, because when they took the gun in their hands they did a great thing”, she said.

Afrim, another man who contributed by remembering, had witnessed the execution of his 16-year-old daughter. She had asked Afrim for permission to join the KLA, which he had not given her. While describing his daughter’s death, Afrim said, “Although the pain is very deep, I’m proud of her. I’m very proud.” From this perspective, the dead are no longer mere victims. Remembered, they become martyrs, and their loss is made more tolerable.

The pain of the present

The affliction, grief and anguish described by the interviewees was not limited to past events, but also tainted their descriptions of the present. To the Kosovar-Serbs, suffering is an immediate reality. From their point of view, those who chose not to leave the region are still at war, a war in which they are the victims. Within this community, the past is usually recalled only to emphasize the suffering of the present, or to show where this suffering originated. A group of men from Belo Polje (Pec) thus told how their village was destroyed by Albanians. The memory of this event, which occurred immediately after the “end” of the war, however, was invoked mainly in order to bring to light the suffering of those who saw their houses burnt down and who were forced to flee to Serbia. A narrative is shared because the Kosovar Serbs’ living conditions must be brought to the attention of the international community, which should guarantee them the right to return home. This was the case and sentiment of Sonja, now living in Gorazdevac, who remembered the painful experience of her flight, with the family, from Pristina to Belgrade, but recalled it mainly in order to raise awareness of the specific events that caused the psychological disturbances suffered by her youngest son, for whom she sought the help of international experts. To her, the memory of past experiences could be used as a tool to emphasize and intensify the suffering she bore in the present, in order, ultimately, to bring the international community to recognize the Kosovar-Serbs as victims of the conflict, and to find adequate solutions for them.

These accounts were thus usually focused on the details of living conditions in Serbian enclaves, descriptions that yielded causes and actors they could blame for their individual and collective suffering. Such a testimony was given by Dragan, an elderly teacher of Gorazdevac, a Serbian village very close to Pec. According to him, before the war people could hold various jobs in town and work in the fields only for their own consumption, but the restrictions on movement beyond the village, which came after the war, created a high rate of unemployment which could not be absorbed by the area's agriculture. As a village patriarch, Dragan expressed his worry about the consequences of the situation: "There is no work, there is no work and this is not good. What can young people do without work? They don't have anything to do. Without work there is no life, no peace." Dragan repeated this phrase many times: "No work, no life, no peace", and repeated it once more to end his conversation.

Another resident of Gorazdevac interviewed was Tamara, the 36-year-old mother of three daughters. She began her story by bearing witness to the gap between the reality she was forced to live and her desires:

> The reality is practically the place where I'm living. That means the beehive. I would like to go out of this limited place but reality is like this; I am so sorry that I cannot allow myself to go out. My wish is to walk freely. To go with my children to the parks, to the cinema, to be employed. Just to walk freely without any feeling of fear.

Biljana, another interviewee, was 25 and worked for an international organization in Mitrovica north. In describing how she spent her free time, she told the interviewer how much she missed the cinema, but continued on to say that these feelings were certainly common to most of the young people living in town:

> I guess I'm not the only one that would like so much to go to the cinema. Life is not just working, eating and sleeping. We need something else. Despite the fact that there is quite a lot of money around – because of all the international organizations present here – people cannot have the normal life we need. What is bothering me, in particular, as a person, is just the lack of a normal life. Here, even if I earn a fortune, there is no way... not to spend it, because you can always spend money, but to spend it and to feel something... something fulfilling. No, it's not just...

"Suffering in the soul": a woman's task

To the Kosovar Serbs, suffering, as it appeared in their accounts, was most often psychological, rather than "material". International and non-governmental organizations stationed in the Serbian enclaves were present to

provide indispensable items in order to satisfy at least the basic needs of the population, and at the same time they offered opportunities for employment, but the conversations on suffering tended to describe a different void. This absence was identified as the cause of the affliction, grief and anguish that permeated the Kosovar Serbian daily experience. The void thus became brick and mortar to the construction of their collective self-representation, as is evidenced by Tamara's words: "Yes, psychological disturbances are very common, we all suffer from this situation here in Gorazdevac", she said. Milica, another interviewee, similarly referred to the situation in Mitrovica: "All here have this anguish and… I saw people that have been disturbed, mentally disturbed because of it… I saw them in the street", she said. In her narrative, Tanja presented her living conditions in Pristina as particularly difficult, but then immediately extended this same experience to all the Serbs living in the region:

> Here in Pristina the space of movement is very limited, is really very limited. Home, the way to go to the place of work. Just a few hundreds metres, nothing else. It's really claustrophobic… but it's true that also in the enclaves people don't have better conditions… they also suffer a lot because of the limited space of movement.

Thus elevated to an experience common to all of the Serbs still living in Kosovo, the psychological suffering acquired the characteristics of an endemic illness, the evidence of which would emerge as physical symptoms: Tamara described how she had lost almost 20 kilos since the end of the war so that even her friends could not recognize her. Biljana complained of continuous stomach pains due to gastritis, and Tanja spoke of a chronic headache. The psychological suffering was more often felt by female interviewees and its "somatization" seemed to be experienced mainly by women. In Gorazdevac, women constituted 78 per cent of the 360 patients given medical assistance by the KFOR between March and June 2000, for diseases due to stress, depression and hypertension.[4] This phenomenon is often explained, both by the local community and the medical staff, as a consequence of the women's domestic isolation. According to Lazar, our translator: "Women [of the village] stay at home all day, they think all day long about their situation, they have less opportunity to relieve [their thoughts]".

This reason, however, did not apply to the routines of men and women of Gorazdevac. Tamara, for instance, had been a housewife even before the war, and would care for her children and tend to their home. Even after the war, when she could no longer go into town to run errands and visit friends or relatives (some of her neighbours had in fact fled to Serbia), Tamara still had a social network. She had not entirely lost the stable pattern of her life

before the war. Tamara's husband, on the other hand, had lost his job in town, and spent most of his time at a café located in the village square. There, with the other men, he faced a monotony broken only by the KFOR's weekly distribution of goods needed for his family. In comparison, and even though the women's accounts of their living conditions emphasized feelings like claustrophobia, lack of motivation and disorientation, their daily lives preserved a certain stability, rooted in the very performance of the domestic duties. It therefore seems that somehow, as women, Tamara and others were given the social duty of expressing the collective psychological suffering. It was their task to ensure that this pain emerged in physical signs on their bodies, and was again stressed in the narratives, in order to become a basic component of the Serbian community's self-representation as victims of the war.

"Traumatized by trauma"

Throughout the interviews, the Kosovar-Serbs' self-representation as victims became an umbrella concept, set to catch the uneasiness falling from other sources. Thus, in describing the wretchedness of her life in Gorazdevac, Tamara more than once mentioned that her desire to find a job was always frustrated by the current situation of Kosovo. In reality, however, Tamara had not been working before the war, having quit her job 13 years ago after the birth of her first daughter. Tamara said she had retired because she wanted to devote [herself] completely to her children, but now that they have grown, returning to work was among her greatest wishes. Though this wish for a professional experience might be more reasonably explained by a need to enrich her life after having devoted herself to her family for 13 years, Tamara found a means of justifying her desire against a background of suffering and isolation in the enclaves, which was common to the entire Kosovar community. "If I could be given an opportunity to work, then I would escape many of the problems that I have now, living in Gorazdevac", she said. This construction of a collective identity rooted in the victimization of the Serbian people seems to compress individual subjectivity and the development of an individual identity, each one building upon the other.

This same process also took place within the family, redefining it as a single unit of a greater "community victim" of the conflict. This occurred with Kosovar-Albanians, who usually see the family context as a place of celebration, consolation and protection. In the current, post-war situation, however, the household, having suffered many losses, was described as a mutilated and wounded body, an ailing identity through which families in difficulty could seek new strength and stability. The war, defined as the traumatic event, was thus presented as the only reason for the suffering of

a family's members, while other causes (that might have been exacerbated by the war, but that originated elsewhere), were left unrecognized. This appeared in the narrative of Sofije, a 21-year-old mother, whose husband was killed by Serbian paramilitaries. At the time of the interview, Sofije's baby was 11 months old, and she still lived with her parents-in-law, in a village near Vushttri. During the interview, Sofije and her husband's family focused their conversation with the students[5] on the loss of her husband, which they identified as the cause of suffering for each individual family member as well as the family itself, as a small community left without domestic harmony. As the elderly father said: "We lost our son, she lost her husband. It's too bad, it's too bad. The family is destroyed. Nothing will ever be as it was before". Later in the conversation, however, other reasons for their familial disruption emerged: Sofije wished to return home to live with her parents, but according to Kosovar-Albanian custom, she could not do this without leaving her child with the family of her husband. Sofije's suffering thus also originated in part from this difficult decision that faced her at the time: She could move into a more protective family context, more appropriate to overcome the loss of her husband, but the loss of her daughter would only add to her mourning. In her words: "I don't want to separate from her, she is all I have. But I would like to go back to my parents, to my family… you know, it's my family…" Sofije complained of psychological disturbances (she could not sleep, had no appetite, fainted often), but their origin, despite the way in which her family represented their suffering, could not exclusively be attributed to the "trauma provoked by the war".[6]

Divided families, expanding networks

Memories of the suffering created by war and forced exile quite often raised the theme of separation, and discourse on separation focused mainly on the family context. To Kosovar-Albanians, any division of the family group which later prevented it from performing its essential protective function, was described as a particularly painful experience in which gender and generational differences played a fundamental role. This was exemplified by the account of Drita, a mother of two children, who, like many other women, was forced to leave her husband:

> I don't know how to express myself. I was somehow lost when I left him. It was such a deep sorrow… because at that moment they were expelling us from Vushtrri to Macedonia, but I didn't want to go. My husband couldn't come with us.

> This "I felt lost" and "we were lost" were frequently recurring expressions amongst women who separated from their husbands. The feeling of

> "being lost" sometimes pushed them to extreme consequences, in cases when the separation was definitive. This emerged in a conversation with Shemsije, whose husband, brother-in-law and two sons had been killed by the Serbian police. At the time of the interview, she lived with her 12-year-old daughter. In her words: "We are also dead. We lost the men and we are also dead. We lost everything."

Men also perceived a dissolution of their family and upsets in its traditionally patriarchal structure as a shock, as they lost their role as protectors of their wife and children. Further, as tradition dictates that grown sons are duty-bound to take care of their parents, their inability to perform this task was perceived as deeply painful. Such was the experience of Muhamet, who had the chance to escape the country with his wife and children, but could not take his parents with him, since they were too old to move. "I had never left them before", he said. "I was very worried, I was very sorry, but I had to do it."

Several years before the war, Mahumet's younger brothers emigrated to Germany, but he himself never even considered following them, feeling that at least one son should guarantee the protection of their parents. The suffering produced by the separation of his family thus seems to spring both from the loss of his protective function within the household, and from his being forced to give up the traditional roles played there. When fulfilled, these roles are fundamental components in the construction of the individual and collective identities, since Kosovo-Albanians usually describe themselves as people who greatly value the family and respect the roles played by every single member within it. The inability to perform these functions therefore strikes at the base of the individual and collective self.

Because of the importance of kinship in the community, accounts of separation unrelated to the family were more unusual, and emerged only in different types of narrative or in contexts that, in their specificity, broke with the pattern of recurrent discourse. Thus, in a memoir written while he was refugee, Agim told of the painful separation from the woman he loved. As soon as the war broke out, Agim sent his family abroad, but he was deeply in love with a woman living in Pristina and did not want to leave the country. It was only when she pressed him not to miss this chance of escape to a safer place that he agreed to leave. In the text he wrote abroad, Agim still spoke to his beloved, remembering the painful experience of his departure: "I felt the need to scream like a wild animal when you said goodbye", he wrote. Another such "unusual" account was that of Suzana, a 20-year-old Kosovar-Albanian, who was born and grew up in Belgrade, where her parents used to work. Her father's decision to move to Pristina after the end of the war caused Suzana great sorrow. "It was awful", she said:

> I cried for two months… You know, I was born there, 18 years spent in one town with a lot of friends. Then to come to a city which is smaller, no friends, only the family… It was really… how should I say, very hard. Especially at the beginning, I looked at my pictures… I have also the videotape with my friends, with Belgrade. I still listen to songs in Serbian, but many people tell me not to do this, because it's not safe, and people here after the war are totally different, even those people who want to listen to Serbian music, they listen to it with walkmans, just so that the Serbian voice cannot be heard by the others. And because of that it was very hard at the beginning, but life goes on…

If war and forced exile were the causes of shattered families and of separation from loved ones, these ills could also result in a new network of relationships forged in different contexts, most often by women. Thus, Valbona, another interviewee, not only maintained a good relationship with the women of the family that hosted her and her children in Tetovo, but she also became a good friend. This friendship sustained her during the time of her forced exile from Kosovo, and lived on, even upon her return. After the war, Valbona's friends from Tetovo came several times to visit her and her family in Pristina.

Shyrhrete had a similar experience. When she was staying in Albania with her two daughters, her husband and her mother-in-law, the families living in her neighbourhood came to visit them every day. A friendship "mainly between women" formed there. In Valbona's words:

> Valbona: We used to prepare the food together They liked the way we prepared our specialities. So we did the work together. Even when we went downtown, we went there together. They were always with us, trying to take our grief away.
>
> Question: Did this work? Did this make you feel better?
>
> Valbona: Yes it worked. It helped me a lot. […] We are still in touch by phone and when the war was over they came here to visit us.

The war and the exile, then, extended relationship networks beyond the lines of family and kinship. This enlarged network became a resource during the war, and often was or could be a resource in the present. In narratives of war, however, forced separation, hardship and exile were almost never seen in this light. The ability, displayed in other cases, to face and overcome hardship, was not emphasized in the accounts, which focused rather on suffering and a sense of loss.[7]

A suffering with deep roots

All of the interviewees placed the origins of their suffering far back in the past and underlined its continuity into the present. The massacres that

began after the NATO bombings as well as the revenge enacted upon the Serbs by the Albanians immediately after the war, were considered merely the last phase of a much longer and continuous conflict. When did this conflict begin? On this issue, individual memory seems to step aside, leaving space for the official versions. The origin of the conflict is usually identified by Albanians as one of the historical events that led to the suppression of the Kosovar's autonomy, and by the Serbs as the demonstrations organized by the Albanians as a reaction to this crackdown.[8] Yet these chronologies never seemed to correspond to the beginning of the conflict in the individuals' daily life. For instance, in his account, Ismail told us that the struggle began when the constitution was changed (in 1990) and Kosovo's autonomy was abolished (Malcolm, 1998: 378-79), but the first event to have impacted him directly was a Serbian army's attack on a neighbouring village in 1998. Milica, another (Serbian) interviewee, situated the rise in tension between the two communities in 1981, the time of the first large-scale demonstrations organized by Albanians, but could not specify a period when she herself experienced the conflict, explaining that she "lived in perfect harmony until the end of the war", with her Albanian neighbours. This replacement of the individual memory with a collective one, structured as it is on specific historical, political and public events, is sometimes accompanied with changes in the chronological order in which these particular events occurred. For instance, when interviewed, Shyrhrete tracked the breakdown of Albanian relations with Serbs back to 1981, "when they expelled us from the schools" (she had been a teacher). In fact, however, the Serbians closed Albanian public schools and instituted the "parallel system" only ten years later (Malcolm, 1998: 382-85). It seemed that memory tended to reach further back into the past for the origins of the conflict, and that the extra length of the suffering itself reinforced the influence of this distress in the construction of the collective identity. As Haretina, an old woman living in the orthodox patriarchate of Pec, said: "[It is] because now everybody blames Serbs but… Serbs in Kosovo suffered a lot during the Yugoslavia era… they were not protected, they were the minority, they suffered a lot…" Mirdita, another interviewee and the famous journalist/director of one of the most popular radio stations in Pristina, commented that:

> All that happened in Kosova didn't happen in just one night, it happened over a long time. We suffered for a long time. And always in our society the first need was defence. Not to fight, but to defend. In the way that you always had to defend yourself from someone who was attacking you […]. It's not easy to define "Albanianship", "Kosovarship". You have to go back to that position of defence. Always we were defenders, we were used just to survive.

In the construction of a collective memory based on easily defined suffering, the relationship between communities could only be represented as subtle and multi-faceted through narratives of the recent conflict over Kosovo (Duijzings, 2000: 5-18).

Memories of war

The memory of leisure

The memory of suffering permeated the Kosovar-Albanian accounts of war, but just beyond it, for those willing to look, a great variety of experiences lay buried behind the main narrative, waiting to come out. At the time of the interview, Artan, Bekim and Florina were all 14 years old and living in Pristina. They were classmates of the Meto Bajraktari school. Artan was originally from a village. When the war started, his family joined other relatives still living there, and they later escaped to the mountains. As Artan told us:

> It was very bad. We had no food and four members of my family were killed. Then we went to Macedonia, but it was still very bad. Four members of my family had been killed.

Florina was living in Pristina at the time, and remembered the experience differently:

> We lived in the centre, where the situation was much better than in other places. So a lot of people came from the outskirts. I met many friends, Albanian friends, new friends and it was great to be in touch with them, to play with them, to talk with them.. We had a great time. I'm still in touch with them.

Bekim also remembers the friends he had the opportunity to meet:

> I was a refugee in Canada… I met some friends there, Canadian, and also Albanian already living there. And they were great… Boys and girls… We are still in touch, by e-mail.

To Bekim and Florina, as well as for many of their classmates, memories of war are also associated with a time when they had the chance to meet new friends, to share different experiences with one another, to spend time in new ways, as their lives had been entirely changed by the conflict. While their having fun with new friends was certainly a coping mecha-

nism, their account serves as a reminder that adolescents have a particular perception of the war, in which tragedy and play can live side by side (Prica and Povrzanovic, 1996; Vrecer, 1996).

Of course, during our conversations with them, Bekim, Florina and their classmates pointed out that the war had been a bad experience, even for them. According to Florina:

> We are children, so we did everything to feel better, but it was terrible. We knew that there was war and they could do everything they wanted with us... we played for several hours... for two or three hours... to save ourselves and forget, but we didn't forget...

Their conversations progressed as if this memory of "leisure" produced in them a sense of guilt and had been balanced by an equivalent memory of suffering.

A similar process occurred when the narrative of suffering focused on the present, as happened among Kosovar-Serbs. Like others, Tanja tended to stress the difficulty of the situation she was experiencing in Pristina and that of the other Kosovar-Serbs still living in the city. She explained how she could not move freely, and constantly felt as if she was in danger. She added that she had quit her job, feeling threatened by Albanians:

> I worked in the hospital. I finished medical school and I was a nurse. But after the war I had to leave, because there were only Albanians working in the hospital. I was threatened and I felt in danger. Therefore I left.

Later on, however, Tanja found new work as a reporter for a multicultural radio that was run by Albanians, Serbs and Turks. Since then, she has travelled a lot and met a lot of new friends:

> Tanja: I attended a course for journalists in Italy, in Rome. And I have travelled also inside Kosovo, I visited many towns where I hadn't been before. Before I didn't travel so much.
>
> Question: It seems to me that you are very happy about your new profession…
>
> Tanja: Oh, yes, my life is much more exciting now than it was before!

Paradoxically, the difficult living conditions created for the Kosovar-Serbs after the war both strongly limited the freedom of Tanja's daily life, and opened for her new geographical and experimental horizons. In her account, however, this positive effect remained almost entirely obscured by her emphasis on hardship.

Returning to the classmates of the Meto Bajraktari school, we find the memory of leisure re-emerging when the conversation focused on the relationship between past and present, and on perspectives for the future. At this point, their narratives demonstrated how different wartime experiences had created new divisions between the friends. Florina accused some of her classmates, who had spent the war period abroad, of being newly snobbish because they had travelled and experienced life elsewhere. In her words:

> Florina: They have changed, they've been through different countries, they've seen how life is there… Actually they were refugees there, but now they say "we've been abroad…"
> Question: So because you had different experiences – some have left, some have not – you don't see each other like you did before, is that right?
> Florina: Actually since we learnt what it means to get separated from friends, we are closer to each other.
> Question: Even though some of them are somehow more arrogant?
> Florina: Not some of them but all of them are more arrogant!

Florina's remarks should be considered in the context of more widespread friction between those who stayed in Kosovo, and those who left the country. The latter are often criticized because they left the "motherland" and, in some way, because they were safe. As Florina said: "They were safe, we were not safe, we were in Kosova and we knew that nobody could do anything for us... but they knew that someone could do something for them, because they were safe… they have been helped". For Florina, as for some of her classmates, additional "blame" is conferred upon those who left the country given the positive experiences they had abroad, and their new "status".

The varied sample of memories described by the classmates of the Meto Bajraktari school corresponded to a multiplicity of experiences. Each of these cases, however, led to a different interpretation and concept of the present, to different hopes and dreams for the future. Bekim spoke of wanting to study information technology abroad in order to work "with computers and things like this". Florina wished to study in the United States and then to "write for newspapers, or to work as a journalist on TV". Artan wanted to join the police "to defend Albanian people".

The burden of solidarity

The different individual experiences narrated in these accounts often seemed to complicate topics that recurred as basic components in the construction of the collective memory of war addressed toward the international community. Only one of these was the concept of solidarity between

Albanian people. Stories of forced exile usually tended to emphasize the warm welcome given to refugees from Kosovo upon their arrival in both Albania and Macedonia, by the Albanians living there.

This discourse on the solidarity of "compatriots" contributes to the depiction of Albanians as friendly and generous, but also draws a cultural line, identifying all Albanians as members of a same national community. Nevertheless, the social and cultural differences between the Albanians of Kosovo and those of other regions were most often, to a greater or lesser extent, openly recognized, and in some cases blamed for an even more difficult adaptation to the hard life of a refugee.

In conversations with Ardita, for instance, the memory of "Albanian solidarity" was overshadowed by a memory of oppression, when this very kindness turned into the forced acceptance of a host community's very different customs. In her account, Ardita described how an Albanian family in Tetovo hosted her and her sister. At first, her description of the accommodations pays due gratitude to the hospitality the two girls received: "The family lived in a village, the place was nice. They tried to bring us closer to them as much as they could and took good care of us", she said. Then, however, Ardita's memory swung back to the limitations they had to accept:

> They were very old fashioned and very religious, therefore women were very discriminated against. They had to stay in the house and not go outside without a male adult; they acted with us in that way, as well. We had no choice but to adapt to those circumstances, even though we tried sometimes to fight against those old fashioned habits. But we had to put up with being shut in the house since they didn't allow us to move freely... Just because we were women. Women there couldn't go into town freely. If they had something to fetch from town they had to be escorted by the head of the family… so women couldn't move without a male escort. We weren't used to things like that…

These limitations on movement worsened the suffering associated with her condition as a refugee, and even more so, when being forced to remain inside the house seemed a denial of Ardita's right to seek news about the family she had left in Kosovo. In her words:

> During that period we were very sad and bored, we were in a very bad psychological state… also, spiritually we felt very bad… We constantly received bad news about our village being attacked from every side. Someone told us that there were many victims, massacres were being performed, and we had no news about the rest of our family there. We wanted to get information somehow, but couldn't since we were stuck inside the house. I felt very bad.

Concluding her account, Ardita tried to explain that her gratitude for the solidarity she received was not without reservations:

> I would like to add something else. Because of sufferings I had in that village of Macedonia, now I look with hatred at the head of the family that hosted us. I don't know…. They took care of us… but I feel sick of him…

The individual memory here disagreed with the collective account, and demanded recognition for a specific experience that fell away from a concept of national identity. The prevailing national discourse became complicated by a question of gender identity.

Along the divides

In Pristina as in Paris

Different experiences and memories of the past were often combined with different experiences and perceptions of the present, themselves stemming from these different pasts. To shed light on this multiplicity of experiences and memories is to watch a solid and compact national identity break down into one that is much more fragmented and articulated. Between these fragments lie boundaries. Divisions separate town and country, for instance, or male and female, or the old and new generations. These distinctions have and will create rifts and differences in experience. The accounts of these men and women show fractures or continuities produced or enforced by the conflict and its aftermath, as well as the various ways in which these rifts and continuities are and were experienced. Pristina, as capital of Kosovo and point of intersection, seemed a particularly privileged observatory from which these processes might best be seen.

The Kosovar-Albanians living in the countryside were typically those who had survived the most dramatic events of the conflict and it was in the villages, rather than in more urban areas, that war found its first and most violent expression (OSCE, 1999, Part I: 26-28). While this difference in the intensity of experience between the village and city created an additional rift which further widened the already existent social-cultural gaps between urban and rural areas (Vickers, 1998: 170-71), the contrast also helped fix events to the memory of the villagers, imprinting them, vividly, onto their perceptions of present suffering, as is shown in Ardita's account:

> My village was one of the first ones in Vushttri's municipality to be overwhelmed by the war. At that time I was in Prishtina with my sister, in

> order to attend university. From the autumn of 1998, when the war was going on in my village, not only was it difficult for us to go back home, but we were also following and feeling everything that was going on. We were in the flow of the events happening there, and thus we lost our will not only to go out to walk and have fun but also to do anything. Before the NATO bombing, Prishtina was almost untouched by the war, and the situation here was as always different from the other parts of Kosovo. That bothered us… here [in Pristina] life used to go on as though nothing was happening elsewhere in Kosovo. Here life was like in Switzerland or Paris… everything was normal, you could hear music from cafés full of people, who were having fun until late in the night.[9]

According to Ardita, these different experiences of the war also determined the different conditions of the present:

> …Especially for financial aspects, Prishtina has always gained mostly, it hasn't been destroyed, people found their houses and flats without them being burned or demolished. People fled first as soon as the war began, and as soon as it was finished they came back first. They rented their houses to the foreign organizations, they started to work in different organizations. And it is much harder for the villagers since they are still as poor as they were before. Some of them have spent the winter in a tent.

Villagers in town

Following the war, a considerable migration flow brought many Kosovars from the rural areas to the towns,[10] as many people were then homeless and the economy of most villages, already seriously damaged by enormous pressure on the scarce agricultural land (Roux, 1992: 322), had been destroyed. Though at first people had returned to working the land, they soon had to find a means of supplementing their insufficient incomes, especially those who could not rely on financial support from relatives who had migrated to other countries. One solution available to them was to divide their time between agricultural activity and work found in the nearest town. This greater mobility, along with new opportunities for employment, seems to have fostered a greater interaction between the rural and urban economies, uniting them under the survival strategies of peasant families. Despite this, however, people living in the countryside maintained that life in the villages was still very hard, while towns were perceived as places where most of the changes occurred, especially because of the massive presence of the international community.

The effects of the large-scale migrations were most evident in the capital, Pristina. Migrations occurred in the usual pattern: the former villagers were hosted by relatives living in the city for a first period of time, after which the luckiest managed to find housing and a more or less stable job.

Once in the cities, however, it became more difficult for the newest migrants to recover from suffering and distress, given a social and cultural context that was so deeply different from their previous experiences.

This difficulty emerged in the narrative of Korab. When he was 12 years old, Korab lost both of his legs on a land mine. He was originally from Rezalla, a village near Skenderaj, but at the time of the interview, lived with his family in Pristina. Ever since his accident, Korab has been unhappy, refusing to talk and not wanting to go to school. When the students asked him why he would not attend school regularly, he replied: “Because these guys of Pristina would tease me. They would tell me ‘you are a village boy’. In Skenderaj nobody would tell me ‘you are a village boy’”. Korab’s fear, exacerbated by his physical disability, seems rooted in a very real complex relationship between the “citizens” and the “villagers” that had newly arrived in town.

Further, those who came from the countryside arrived in Pristina with their own tragic experiences, tied to them by painful memories. These memories soon became the basis of a collective identity, built in order for them to differentiate themselves from the people of the town, and which they legitimized as the authentic national identity.[11]

Azem, a citizen of Pristina who had spent the previous two years abroad, had been shocked by a conflict he had with a “villager” that he had met by chance in a coffee shop, and remembered the harsh conversation they had. In his words:

> I was with a friend of mine, I was telling him that I had just come back from Italy. And this guy, one of the people from the villages, was listening to us. Then he interrupted our conversation and addressed his words to me, talking loudly. “Where were you? Where were you while we were fighting against the enemy? We fought against the Serbs, we liberated Kosova! We gave freedom to Kosova!.” This is what they think, they think that we don’t have any rights in Kosova because we didn’t suffer as much as they did. We have always had different mentalities, but now there is much more tension.

Towards the villagers newly living in Pristina, on the other hand, the native inhabitants of the capital seemed to harbour different, and in some ways, contradictory feelings. They recognized first that the village-dwellers had suffered the most from the war, and the knowledge was integrated into the collective memory of abuse enacted upon the Kosovar Albanians. This sentiment was echoed by Gentiana, who had always lived in Pristina:

> …In the villages, people had terrible experiences. Nothing so terrible happened in town, but in the countryside the Serbs killed hundreds of

> people, burnt houses… Here the consequences of the war are not so visible, but outside Prishtina, terrible massacres were committed; there are villages in which you cannot find a male more than 12 years old.

Yet this narrative of the suffering villages – presented as a symbol of the suffering of the Kosovar Albanian community as a whole – became a worried criticism of the villagers' use of the past as a means of claiming advantages in the present, and of the radicalism perceived in the rural population. Azem, for instance (who probably felt both included and excluded from the Albanian Kosovar community, given his time spent abroad and his intentions to return to Italy), expressed this ambivalence without hesitation.

> The villagers come here in Prishtina and they want a house, they want a job, they want the best positions, the positions of power. They want everything because they suffered the war. It's true that they suffered a lot, but they don't have the right to obtain everything they ask for… And they are the most extremist, we don't agree with them because they are the most extremist.

Apart from this concept of competition very much aligned with divisions in Kosovar society that have heightened during the war, there also seems to be a desire amongst the city dwellers to distance themselves from a political radicalism which is not recognized by the entire Albanian community, and which, therefore, cannot be accepted within its collective identity.

Further, once conversations about the village migrants left the topic of uneven suffering, the villagers could become objects of ridicule and denigration. According to Lindita:

> They don't know the rules. I think that it is a matter of culture. The culture is not the right one. Because they don't have any education, and they didn't go out from the villages, or even from their houses so they don't know how life is. So when they come here they just don't know how to behave and from that you can recognize them. And also from the way they are dressed, from the way they talk.

Many jokes about "the villagers" are circulated and whispered throughout Pristina, along with stories that blame them for bad living conditions in the capital. According to Sevdie:

> [Many of] these people came to Prishtina and took two or three houses, but they also kept the ones they had in the village. And now here in Prishtina we don't have enough houses.

Contradicting this, Adem told the students that the "villagers" do not care about their house (something he himself considered the most important investment of a family), preferring to use the money they earned from their city jobs to buy two or three cars. As a consequence of this, he continued, the villagers allegedly did not have a place to house their families, and cluttered Pristina with too many cars. Taken together, these convictions remind us of the popular stereotype of the "country bumpkin", but further point to the fragmentation of the Kosovar-Albanian community. This division is also perceived, with varying degrees of awareness, by the Kosovar Albanians, although routinely buried by the suggestion of a monolithic national identity.

The migration from village to town also seems to have created deep rifts within the Kosovar-Serbian community of Northern Mitrovica. In conversations with Vladimir, the negative image of the "villagers" re-emerged, this time in an even more violent tone: "You can recognize them immediately", he said. "They are very different from people who have always lived here. The way in which they behave… how they speak… When I hear them speaking I vomit." In this community, the migrant villagers have fallen from favour, from being the butt of jokes to being seen as "bandits". In Vladimir's words:

> And how do they survive? They set up these horrible kiosks, these little shops… illegally, of course. And they steal. Mainly they steal. They come to town because they know that now there are no rules, no controls. They are all the shit of this town.

Here also, the political radicalism of the migrants was seized and held responsible for both the divisions within the Serbian community, and the tensions between Serbs and Albanians. As Vladimir continued:

> They are extremists. They don't want peace. They say that the Albanians don't want peace, but it's their responsibility. THEY don't want the peace. People from the town are different, although they don't take any initiative… they just tolerate them. I don't understand why they don't do anything. Those villagers are what bothers me the most about the situation nowadays in Mitrovica North.

According to widely held opinion on the village migrants, Mitrovica has not only shifted to a more radical political position (with a consequent exacerbation of the tension between theirs and the Albanian community), but has also undergone a change in its appearance, living space and social life: "I was with my colleague a few days ago", said Biljana, a resident of Mitrovica:

> …and while we were passing through one of the main roads, I said: “Oh, don’t you think that this part of the town has became too rural, that it’s full of peasants here?” [And she replied] “Oh, you are quite right, because it’s really like that!”. I had noticed that already, but now I had it confirmed by her. I mean, it was never like this; you have people without any taste just taking the pavement as if it were their own, or putting these containers [the kiosks] wherever they like. The town, the architecture of the town is really disgusting.

Neither the places nor the people are considered familiar any more. “There are a lot of new faces around, a lot of faces I have never seen before”, said Vladimir, while Biljana gave an example of feeling uncomfortable in the massive presence of “extraneous people”:

> A few evenings ago, I was in a bar with some friends and I wanted to go to a friend’s flat to pick up something. I passed by a cafe which had some live music on, and it was pretty nice. I had just a quick look inside and I didn’t know probably 70 per cent of people, I knew just a few of them. And I used to know all the youth of Mitrovica. There are too many... for such a small place, north Mitrovica is definitely now too small for so many people.

The gap between town and countryside appears even wider if we consider the younger generations. To the youth in Pristina, the war left in its wake an array of potential and new professional experiences, which made them increasingly different from young men and women of the same age living in the villages. The labour market has changed completely, the massive presence of international organizations having strongly influenced its structure.[12] New skills, from foreign languages (especially English), to computer proficiency and an ability to drive are in great demand. This, in turn, even further marginalizes the youth of the rural areas, “Because in the villages, for example,” as Ardita said:

> There have never been organized English courses. You know, now all the organizations are looking for local staff, but people from the villages are not ready for this. Even if they came to live in Prishtina, they could not work with foreigners, but just to sell cigarettes… or phone cards.

In her comments, Ardita mentioned the work generally considered typical of people living on the fringes of society, and thus let it be understood that the gap was not just a matter of differences in salary but also of professional fulfilment, something that became the privilege of the younger generation, only provided they were already adjusted to or living in the capital.

From a woman's perspective

Daily heroism

Interviews held with the women of Kosovo revealed an awareness, though rather confused, of the importance of gender differences in the fragmentation of past and present experiences. Often women only spoke of this when questioned directly, not bringing up the subject themselves. In Kosovar Albanian communities, the females interviewed immediately recognized the extra consequences of the conflict on their segment of the population, aware (as it is well known) that women were victims of rape, constituted the majority of refugees expelled from Kosovo during the war, and returned to face multiple losses within families and villages that had become largely "feminized" (OSCE, 1999, part I: 122-126). Yet the wrongs borne by women were usually presented, during interviews, as a single fragment of the Albanian peoples' tragedy, which both added value to the fragment (adding the womens' suffering to the survivalist image of the Albanians) and minimized its importance, in comparison to the more "noble" sacrifice of husbands, brothers and sons who died for the freedom of their people. The women interviewed thus shaped their accounts along the lines of the collective narrative, sharing their memories in order to reinforce a peoples' communal identity. Despite this, recognition of their own role seemed to emerge when women shifted their memory from the collective and public sphere to the familiar and private realm. Mothers and wives could thus claim a daily heroism in which they had been active leaders. In a conversation with Nazife, for instance, she told, with a certain pride, of how she had managed to feed her family, despite her very limited resources:

> When the war broke out I was in a very bad position. I didn't have money, nor any stock of food. Lenora[13] gave me something... we had only 600 DM. I lived on them together with my family for three months and I had enough for the next days. […] 600 DM for three months and I still had 200 DM when the war was over… One piece of chicken meat... only the leg, for my husband, my sister's husband and me... I prepared the lunch with just one piece of meat and... it was super!

Drita, another interviewee, remembered, in her painful story, how she had succeeded in providing for her children during their trip to Macedonia:

> ...It was very difficult to find food and also water. Like all the other people, we had left the house without taking anything. All the villages were burnt. But I always managed to have something for the children. I always took care of them.

Women at work

The memory of "daily heroism" required of these women during the war seemed to find continuity in their descriptions of the present. Many of the female interviewees remarked that after the war prices kept rising higher and higher, making it increasingly difficult for them to face the steep climb in the cost of living on their restricted (or poor) family budgets. The emphasis they placed on their role as family providers also seemed to influence their definitions of their own needs, which, in the reality of post-conflict Kosovo, were most often considered of a monetary nature.

During the interviews, it was often emphasized that mothers and wives now, more than ever, urgently need a job, in order to better provide for their families. This is especially true given that many families had lost fathers and sons, and because, given the wartime economic collapse, wide-spread unemployment was driving out the custom (especially steadfast in the countryside), that women should not be allowed to work outside of their homes. Working in a woman's craft workshop set up in Mitrovica by an Italian NGO, one woman therefore remarked, in agreement with her co-workers:

> Now women are more active, they are seeking to be employed more than they were before the war. Before the war we could not get out of the house because the Serbian army was everywhere, but we were in better economic conditions. Now we need to find a job because it's hard to live. Our economic conditions were better before the war than now, although there were more Serb[ian] employees than Albanians.

The urgency of their search for work could primarily be attributed to new difficulties in providing for their families, as the women of the workshop maintained. The money they made there was desperately needed. Further in the interview, however, they also admitted that if they could return to their former living conditions (a comfortable house, a working husband), they would still prefer to keep their extra-domestic jobs. As one woman said, "the best would be to have our houses as we had before and to continue working. Now we don't want to give up working".

The advantages of work for these women are therefore more than just financial. Their ability to work allowed them to forge relationships beyond their families, and thus to develop a new and broader social network that they felt was needed in order to cope with the hardships they encountered in post-conflict Kosovo.

Patriarchy, tradition, national identity

More difficult for Kosovar-Albanian women than recognizing the advantages of work, was understanding their past and present experiences within a socio-cultural environment characterized (especially in rural areas) by a rigid and persisting patriarchy, where womens' rights to be educated, to work, or to participate in decision-making both at home and in political realms were largely unrecognised. This patriarchal structure of the Albanian family and community had been adopted by Kosovo's Serbs, as evidence of their otherness, and of the difference between the two communities' cultures,[14] even though a patriarchal model still holds amongst the Serbs themselves.[15] The story told by Milica gives us just one example of this:

> I would like just to tell you that I only feel sorry for the Albanian women, who are abused in this war. I feel sorry for these women because I had the possibility to be with them in hospital, before the war. There was already the conflict between Serbs and Albanians, you know, in the woods. I saw an Albanian woman, she had [her] fourth baby… she was young, I think she was 21, but she had [a] fourth daughter. And when the husband heard that she had another daughter he didn't want to take her home, and she stayed there until her father came to take her. I felt very sorry for her, because it was very stupid.

Milica's account, though presented with concern and feminine solidarity, is reminiscent of the denigration campaign led by Milosevic's regime against Albanians that began in the 1990s. Yugoslavian propaganda portrayed Albanian women as victims, backward and uneducated "prisoners of the patriarchy", entirely under the control of fathers and husbands who objectified them and reduced them to "baby factories" (Bracewell, 1996: 26-27). Amongst Kosovar-Albanian women, however, the family, with its patriarchal structure, is highly valued as the basic unit of their community's culture. Though this view varied in conviction from subject to subject, the habits and customs identified with the Kosovar-Albanian tradition are also fundamental elements of the national identity. The links between the patriarchy and the construction of the national identity, probably even reinforced by the Yugoslavian propaganda and the radicalization of the conflict, make it even more difficult for women to criticize the patriarchy and to recognize their own needs and expectations either as individual women or as a group. As has already been shown, nationalism forbids any conflict that could compromise the stability of gender relations, since this stability is one of the pillars that unites and holds together the nation itself (Milic, 1996).

This complicated context creates a tangle of contradictions that often emerged in womens' accounts. While some depicted themselves as guardians of these "traditional" values,[16] others placed themselves at the centre of a whirlwind of new life experiences created by the war, and by other rapid transformations of Kosovar reality that took place after the war. Leonora and Nazife, for instance, recognize it as a woman's duty to welcome and entertain any guests (usually relatives) who come to visit her family. This is considered an exhausting process: guests arrive quite often "especially in big families composed of a lot of people, parents-in-law, sister-in-law, etc.", are usually unexpected, and entertaining them means taking time away from other (necessary) domestic work. "But this is life", it is said, and women cannot avoid their obligations.

Nevertheless, because of the changes in their daily lives, the cycles of entertaining and visiting have become more complicated for women who struggle to reconcile old habits with their new activities. This sentiment was echoed by the two friends: "Now we work much more than before the war and we don't have time to visit each other". Nazife worked full-time for a German NGO, while Leonora continued to work as a hairdresser, but also attended several courses (English, Computer Skills). Her aim was to widen her abilities and increase her chances of finding a better job.

These conflicts created by the difficult combination of old and new lifestyles seemed most common amongst the younger generation. Young women, especially, had found in the tragedy of war and of forced migration, the opportunity to experience greater autonomy and new forms of responsibility. Sadete, for example, a 29-year-old student of law, was involved in the management of a refugee camp in which she had sought shelter with her family:[17]

> A few days [after] I arrived there, a meeting [was organized] in order to create a group with all the intellectuals, like teachers, students and people who knew languages, so they could [more easily] communicate with organizations that wanted to come and help Albanians from Kosova… I heard about this initiative and somebody suggested [that I] take part in the meeting. I went with my father and my uncle. They asked each of us what our profession was, so I told them that I was a student of law and they said that I might be useful to them… Then I told them that I knew a little bit of English and since then I was involved in all the activities of the council… so we were like the managers of that camp. We were 11 people, two women and nine men… we were working all the time…

This was Sadete's first work experience, one that not only helped fill the empty days of a refugee's life, but made her popular in the camp, allowed her to connect with many international organizations, helped her improve

her English and broadened her employable skills. She came away from this experience with a still vivid sense of usefulness and power, of personal and professional fulfilment, in sharp contrast to the "impression of having just your soul, your body and nothing else", that is often central in refugees' accounts. After her experience in the camp, it was easier for Sadete to find a job within an international organization. Ever since the day of that meeting in the refugee camp, Sadete has never stopped working.

The massive presence of international organizations and NGOs is significant in that it provides more women with new employment opportunities, but also because it offers alternative models of feminine roles, even as the women of Kosovo regain their freedom of movement, and even as newly flourishing forms of entertainment are also changing the shapes and rhythms of their daily lives. Lindita, Mimoza and Blerta are three friends in their twenties, and living in Pristina. During the NATO bombings, they were all refugees abroad, but came back immediately after the end of the war. Since Mimoza and Blerta came back earlier than their families, the three friends lived alone together and experienced a period of extraordinary independence. In their words: "Well, our parents left us very free even before, but in that period it was different… It was… It was very good. Actually we felt sorry when our parents came back". At the same time, they were employed by different international agencies and their jobs gave them a certain financial independence (only Mimoza gives a portion of her salary to her family). While they had not planned to begin working before completing their education, the war left them in a different environment, where they were presented with opportunities they had never before imagined. The three friends spend their free time in pubs, cafeterias, and nightclubs. They told interviewers that they were trying to enjoy themselves, as being "in the face of death" had taught them "what life is about: to feel free to do what you feel like".

Lindita, Mimoza and Blerta also felt that gender relations were different in post-war Kosovo:

> Blerta: Three or four years ago here in Prishtina there were only girls and only a small number of boys because many of them were working abroad. I think at that time one boy had three or four girlfriends.
>
> Lindita: Maybe more! But now I think that it is just a habit of the past. They used to have many girlfriends, for example most of them used to go out for two weeks and then they broke up and started with another one, so it was a habit. So, if you managed to be with somebody longer than two weeks, it was a good relationship. […] I think that the number now is equal, it's half-half, because many guys came back from

> outside and they remained here, and finally boys understood that they are not gods.

Actually, statistical surveys documenting the proportions of men and women aged 20 to 49 still register an imbalance, probably due to the number of young men killed during the war. Accordingly, there would be 118 women for every 100 men.[18] This feeling of greater equality might therefore indicate a perception that gender relations have changed, realigned along new boundaries to reflect the new sense of independence that young women are beginning to experience.

These changing gender relations also affect the womens' perceptions of their own roles within the community. When Mimoza, Blerta and Lindita spoke of the future, they did not exclude the possibility of marrying a foreigner, something that could likely happen should they study abroad or, more likely, given the crowds of international workers currently in Kosovo. The open-mindedness expressed by the three friends might be due to the fact that their interviewers were foreign women, and thus representative of a society that values a completely different model of feminity. On the other hand, their tolerance also toys with the traditionally valued role of women as conservative guardians of custom and culture. A Kosovar woman's marriage with a foreign man is usually proscribed by tradition. Further, many of the interviewees pointed out that while it is rare for a Kosovar-Albanian male to marry outside the community, this would not present a particular problem. If a Kosovar-Albanian woman were to marry a foreigner, however, "Everybody says that is not good".

Hasime, who is almost fifty, lives in Mitrovica and works at a womens' centre set up by an Italian NGO, identified this custom as one of the major cultural differences between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. In her narrative, the practice of ensuring that Kosovar Albanian women marry within their ethnicity, (a custom which is actually widespread over the Mediterranean area), was proudly presented as evidence of a strong collective identity amongst Albanians, a characteristic presumably missing in the Serbian community.[19] "We have our tradition, they don't have anything. They don't care. For example women don't marry someone who is not Albanian. They do it."

To Nazife and Leonora, however, the prohibition for a woman to marry a foreigner was a "localism", of which they predicted a short duration:

> Nazife: I think that also here it will pass, it has just started to pass… At the moment this kind of rule is still in power in Kosova. But day by day it is going to disappear.
> Question: Do you think this is good or bad?
> Leonora: I don't know.

She seemed confused by the coexistence of new ways of living and old values, a situation further complicated by a rapid rhythm of transformation that did not allow the women's experiences to enter the realm of public awareness.

Past, present and identities

The construction of memory and the depiction of the present seem to be processes that follow different paths. On one hand, the two converge in a collective voice mainly addressed toward the international community, one that would intend to assert itself as the single expression of a national identity that is monolithic, solid, rooted in tradition and forged by the long lasting conflict. The basic components of this identity were characterized as suffering, (which, of course, is made no less real by its role in the construction of a collective identity), and self-pity. Both of these characteristics are typical of nationalistic discourses in the Balkan region, as studies of the area have shown.[20] According to this perspective, memories of past hardship and descriptions of present struggles are all considered attributable to a cause that concerns the entire community, a collective concern. Suffering, pain and struggle are elevated from private, individual spheres to the public one, and the result is one of reassurance and support. Psychological suffering thus becomes a constituent part of this self-pitying auto-representation, and claims lineage from the "trauma" produced by the war and its consequences. This collective discourse, however, fails to recognize the individual paths, the variety of family and social contexts, the specificity of an individual's needs. The collective voice tends to deny differences within itself, in order to project an image of inner cohesion and homogeneity, worthy of functioning by itself, in contrast with outside communities.

On the other hand, the accounts also revealed different memories of the past and varied perceptions of the present, reflecting the complexity of a situation: the conflict produced and still generates grief and anguish, but it had and still has other effects as well, such as unknown spaces of autonomy, conflicts between different realities (some that involve the tension of belonging to a specific community), and the experience of new resources. A plurality of voices has emerged along the boundaries marked by individual experiences, as well as those created by gender, generational and social-cultural divides. Such boundaries have grown even within the limits of a national community. These multiple voices express the research on new balances and on the rise of contradictions, lacerations and fractures produced by the experience of the war and by the rapid transformation of

the context in which the war originated. The contrast between urban and rural areas has been sharpened as a social and political separation. The status of women and young generations has begun to change. These processes and a perception of them can generate a sense of disorientation, loss, and incoherence and can often be lived with difficulty, pain and a sense of guilt at the individual or collective levels. At the same time, however, these different changes and experiences should also be perceived as resources, as they form an obstacle to the construction of a collective identity that is rigid, monolithic, and based on an inner homogeneity of its community. Instead, they reintroduce a plurality made possible by the multiplicity of the individuals' paths, but that is constructed upon commonly shared characteristics.

It has already been demonstrated that a "storied community" can provide a sense of security to both the individuals and the collectivity. In the words of Dr. Renos Papadopoulos:

> Stories of resilience based on traditional values, historic experiences, religious convictions, ideological beliefs, political positions, etc., can be most helpful in providing a solid and secure new context which can counteract all feelings of being a helpless victim (Papadopoulos, 2000: 98).

In order to be included in the construction of a healthy community, however, each story has to leave the stage to multiple voices and give value to the variety of narratives. The awareness of the differences existing within the boundaries built up around the community is the first necessary step towards the breaking of those boundaries themselves. Further, such awareness would allow for the recognition and acceptance of these "others", whose similarities and differences cannot be merely considered as descendent from their national belonging.

Notes

1. All the names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
2. See Lino Losi: Introduction to the volume.
3. For geographical names, I have alternated Albanian and Serbian spellings, using the most appropriate depending on context. In doing so, I have taken into consideration the common use of the Serbian spelling in Western literature.
4. Data collected by the Italian Kfor settled in Gorazdevac (1° Reggimento Artiglieria da Montagna – Gruppo "Aosta"), which kindly made them available to us.

5. The students met Sofije and her family in three sessions during the clinical fieldwork.
6. In his lessons on *Family Psychotherapy* held during the training course in Pristina, Renos Papadopoulos pointed out that the "dominant story" focused on the "trauma" usually hides a "subjugated story", that must be brought to light in order to place the psychological suffering in a wider context. Addressing the account towards the "subjugated story" is a basic condition to avoid cases where "people are in a certain sense 'traumatized' by the 'trauma' ".
7. According to Jean-Marie Lemaire, the identification of "residual resources" (the choice of the term serves to remind that "neither suffering nor pathology can be neglected") is the basic component of the support given by the psychotherapist to the families in need; see Lemaire, 2000.
8. The role played by the demonstrations in the construction of the individual and the collective memory has been analysed in Mertus, 1999.
9. Ardita also affirmed that "Prishtina people weren't expressing very much solidarity toward people coming from the regions affected by the war. Just a few of them received refugees from unsafe places, and mainly refugees were better welcomed and placed through surroundings rather than in town… and some of Prishtina inhabitants didn't want to hear anything about the refugees coming from war regions, they didn't shelter and help them… they were indifferent towards them…"
10. The 39.44 per cent of people who left the rural areas during the war did not go back to villages after the end of the conflict, but moved to the towns (my elaboration on data available in International Organization for Migration, 2000: 35). Migration from the countryside to the towns must be understood within the more complex transition from agrarian communities to industrial societies which played a basic role in fostering ethnic conflicts throughout the Balkan area; see Ivekovic, 2000.
11. The contrast between town (as a place with a tradition of coexistence and multiculturalism) and countryside (as a place where nationalism is more radical) is typical of all former Yugoslavia. Everywhere, migrations from rural to urban areas have complicated the situation significantly. See Ivekovic, 1995: 38-40.
12. For a wider analysis on the impact of international organizations see Pandolfi, 2000.
13. A close friend of hers, also present during the interview.
14. On the role played by culture in the construction of the "ethnic identity" see Jenkins, 1997, Govers and Vermeulen, 1997.
15. See Nicola Mai's contribution to this volume.
16. On the role attributed to women by the community in maintaining the constructed "cultural boundaries" see Yuval-Davis, 1997: 39-66.
17. On the experience of Albanian-Kosovar women refugees within the reception structures offered by the international organization see Mertus, 2000.
18. There are 93 women aged 0-19 for every 100 men, for women aged 50-59 there are 99. See International Organization for Migration, 2000: 25.
19. Hasime's testimony gives us an example of the phenomenon – largely widespread in the Balkans – of contesting the identities of other communities; see Duijzings, 2000: 15.

20. See Duijzings, 2000: 158, and references given by the author. For a more general overview of the central role that trauma and victimization have come to play within the politics of memory, see Antze and Lambek, 1996.

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Chapter 2

After the Exile: Displacements and Suffering in Kosovo

Annie Lafontaine*

Introduction

The war in Kosovo ended in the summer of 1999, and by the end of the year 2000, most of the 850,000 Kosovar Albanians who had fled the violence were back in the province. This was both the largest and quickest refugee repatriation in modern European history and by its end, Kosovo and its population were branded "free" (Chomsky, 2000; Dérens, 2000; IICK, 2000; Judah, 2000). Even in the post-war context, however, displacements past and current, violence, and suffering were still developing new forms and meanings. While this multiplicity of past hardship and present difficulty was reinterpreted and re-enacted by the people through already existing political discourse and praxis, the suffering and violence were also changing them, spreading through their living habits and relationships, transforming the old familial and political structures.

This article is based on material taken from the Archives of Memory, and on fieldwork done with Kosovar Albanians in the winter and summer of the year 2000 in different areas of Kosovo (Prishtinë/Pristina, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Pec, and Prizren, as well as in some villages of

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the Drenica region.[1] Focusing on interviews and on extensive notes from ethnographic fieldwork, this paper will explore some of the many forms and meanings that the concepts of "displacement" and "suffering" have taken, and are still taking, in Kosovo, in order to understand how people narrate their experience of suffering, in relation to these various forms of displacement. I also aim to show how these individuals link their own experiences to a greater discourse of suffering that has contributed to the development of a common identity throughout the 1990s. (After 1989, when the autonomy of the province was suppressed by the Yugoslav Government, thousands of Albanians were fired from their jobs, students were pushed out of the schools and the university, and around 400,000 people emigrated to European countries and North America). I wish therefore to explore the interweaving of displacement and suffering in the Albanian society of Kosovo.

Displacement

Displacement is a broad category which includes several different types of phenomena, from the massive and sudden exile of refugees, to the very intimate and individual experience, where the ground once taken for granted vanishes, when the dramatic change of one's living context creates the impression of being somewhere unknown. For the past decade, primarily since the war of 1998 and 1999, Kosovo seems to have been one example of this vanishing ground, and on it, every type of displacement is taking place.

At first glance, Kosovo's displacements seem to fit within documented categories such as "migration", "internal displacement", "refugee", "Diaspora", "repatriation", "immigration", and "emigration", yet these classifications belong to a study of migration dependent upon theoretical models that followed the nation-state paradigm until the end of the 1980s. This means that the only individuals and groups of people considered "weakened" by war and political violence, and thus seen as suffering or in need of assistance and protection, were those who had been forced out of the territory to which they were supposed to belong, or those who had left. This model was contested during the decade that followed, on the grounds that it too greatly reduced the category of displacement and rooted people in a specific territory (Kearney, 1986 and 1995; Borowski et al., 1994). It was further understood that the model treated displacement as a pathology and considered these displaced people or refugees as persons left without any identity, "disconnected" from a "national" collective memory. Taken one step further, these people were considered threats when away from

their own land: having been left without political attachments, they would supposedly not be able to share interests with the non-displaced community in their new environment (Malkki, 1992, 1995).

A second look at this concept of "displacement" might enlarge its definition to cover other phenomena, instances which are less visibly violent than a massive exodus, for example, but which are no less distressing to the individuals and groups involved. Amongst these "hidden", unrecognized displacements, we might consider the surge of migrations from the countryside to the cities after the war. We might even consider the changing of status from refugee to local staff as a contributing factor to the formation of unstable identities, since even this type of change can generate other forms of suffering and stress, while also generating new hopes for the individual. In another scenario, displacement might not even be seen as an imposed experience at all, but as a coveted state; the desire to escape political, economic and social contingencies might also be considered "displacement suffering", if leaving is not possible.

In this paper, some of these different forms of displacement occurring in the case of the Kosovar Albanians will be explored. I will propose the hypothesis that displacement, as a suffering-generating experience to both the individual and the community, is somehow reified, and made a powerful tool in the creation of a collective identity in the Kosovar Albanian society.

Suffering

Whether it occurs as a consequence of widespread violence (as in the destruction of homes, expulsion, murder, threat of genocide and ethnic cleansing, etc.), or as a cause of new forms of violence, the suffering experienced in the case of Kosovo is in some way related to displacement. This displacement suffering might even be caused by the frustrated desire to move out of political and economic contingencies when it is not possible, so that even when it fails to materialize, the concept of displacement can became yet another cause of hardship.

On one level, suffering might occur as a result of loss, or even from the fear of loss (of family, friends, land, home, life, mind, etc.), related to the context of war and exile. At another level, however, suffering might arise from different events: an impossibility or an insurmountable obstacle, a disappointment, and/or the imposition of a new and unexpected living environment which cannot be adjusted to, and which challenges the praxis and discourses of society, community, family or individual.

The violence perpetrated upon groups and individuals, from the most explicitly heinous to the most covert and implicit acts, penetrates identities to become constantly resurging ghosts of memory. Conversely, these events sometimes also become black holes, or memory erasers. The memory that was created by such an intense physical experience as coerced displacement may consequently become a traumatic recollection which manifests itself through the body (Pandolfi, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1999; Young, 1995). As violence manifests itself bodily in individuals, it also contributes to the formation of a collective identity. This collective identity is shaped by a politics of memory that influences, through some discourses of authority (Foucault, 1968, 1971), each individual in a different manner. One may appropriate for her/himself a rigid form of this collective identity, while another may reject it or try to change its form (to change or produce new discourses of authority). When violence targets social or ethnic categories created out of existing discourses of authority, individuals may experience violence as a consequence of being socially or ethnically identified and then reify this category.

These identities can be further made real to such an extent that they become iconic weapons in individual and local strategies of social positioning, thus generating what has been called "social suffering" (Green, 1998; Kleinman, Das and Lock, 1997). In this way, the victim of violence may become a symbol of the suffering experienced by a group targeted as a social or ethnic category, while suffering, as an experience reified into an icon, may become a means of political resistance, and the basis of the individual or the group's identity.

In the field of refugee studies, it has been suggested that because pain is a normal part of the human experience, the suffering derived from enormous events like wars should be understood on a continuum, along with the sufferings and trials of daily life (Davis, 1992). The process by which a victim becomes an icon of a reified collective memory of violence would therefore take place when "unusual" events (such as forced exodus) become integrated into this pattern of everyday sufferings. This theoretical model considers pain and suffering as social afflictions only because of their cause (one, such as war, experienced by the entire community), and because of their accumulation in the communal memory formed out of discourses of authority.

Other theories are known in the literature, however, and among them, E. Scarry's approach is particularly interesting. In 1985, she wrote of suffering as a "pre-cultural" bodily experience that lies beyond a given language. According to Scarry, the strength of political violence is derived from this unmentionable, unspeakable nature of suffering. In this model,

suffering is thus never “told” or “narrated” as it is experienced, because by nature it cannot be given words. Suffering is enacted, and its release might somehow produce a collectively shared sense-awareness of the experience.

The last approach will be used in this paper with a slight addition: that this “collectively shared sense-awareness of the experience” can be made possible through a language, both verbal and non-verbal. This language is shaped by a politics of memory, and yet will also give new meaning to the unspeakable experience of individual suffering that could otherwise eventually engender new forms of violence, and perpetuate the cycle of violence and suffering.

Narration of suffering and displacement

The work done with students in the Archives of Memory project explored different means by which suffering and displacement could be narrated. The variety of these methods came from the suggestions of an international group of teachers with different cultural and professional backgrounds. Some means were then chosen from these suggestions and employed by each of the students, according to their individual psychological backgrounds and their own readings of a collective cultural background. The chosen media were most often theatrical (re-enactments of bodily experiences) or verbal (communication through dialogues).

In the theatre workshop, students were asked to narrate their own experiences of exile during the war through the language of their bodies, gestures, and sounds, some of which were proposed by the teachers. Through this activity, the students and their teachers discovered that their different conceptions of life and different life experiences were interpenetrating. The students selected the fragments of expression most relevant to their own cultural backgrounds, then reinterpreted these gestures and expressions as performance in order to explain to “others” the meaning of suffering in the Kosovar Albanian society.

It was through these theatrical exercises that we realized how much different conceptions of life and memories overlapped and complemented one another, as the students expressed their experience of displacement and suffering through acts readable by their peers. The “pre-cultural” and “unspeakable” dimension of this suffering gradually vanished behind the acting, so that the deep and inexpressible pain derived from memories of war and exile could develop into suffering that was collectively shared. As students took turns performing and interpreting the acts of one another,

their ability to understand the meaning of these gestures revived the commonality of their recent past, of norms, values and of a collective imaginary realm.

While the IOM intervention focused on the process of rendering memory "from the individual to the collective experience", in order to influence the discursive form that this "collectively shared suffering" would take after the war, we came to realize that the commonality of the recent past's experiences was already embodied in the individuals. The IOM intervention was innovative in that it aimed at working on experiences of war and exile through different means of communication (such as theatre), but the outcomes of its activities were more than just the result of the intervention; suffering had already been included into the communal memory to which the recent war became another addition.

Students chose to represent the sufferings of war and displacement by enacting mourning rituals, funerals and legends like the *Këngë e Rexha i Nanës*, the story of a wedding that turns into a funeral. In the *Këngë e Rexha i Nanës*, a family is preparing a daughter for her wedding and waiting for the groom's kin to arrive and take her away into their family, as is the custom in the Kosovar Albanian society. While the bride's family waits, the groom is kicked by his horse as he tries to feed it and soon after dies from his wounds. Realizing that the young man is dead, the groom's family visits the family of the bride to share their bad news. The bride-to-be then faints, understanding that she has become a widow before even having her first child. She can never bear the son that would later recreate the family of his father in the next generation. Instead of a wedding, it is thus the funeral of the young man that the families will share, and they will be linked together by death instead of by the continuation of life.

This story, as well as others, was performed collectively, unlike the other bodily exercises suggested by the teachers. The aim of the performers was to express to the other Albanian students, the foreign teachers and the Albanian tutors that made up their audience, the meaning they gave to their experiences of suffering during war and exile. In this story, they communicated the death of their family members, the destruction of their homes (meaning both their families and their house), and the threat to the reproduction of their society. The meaning of the story that had become their expression was then explained verbally to the foreign members of the audience after the performance.

This little "play" stood as an example of how the once individual experiences of suffering related to war and displacement could be externalised by each body, where they were deeply hidden, to acquire a common meaning for the group. The IOM intervention gave only one more opportunity

for this process to take place, but it was also occurring beyond the project, in the "outside" world, through other means of communication including newspapers, on television, in the new songs of well-known singers, in family conversations, etc.

The play's theme of "Families linked by death rather than by life" represented elements in the memories of the students. The suffering of the bride mirrored the suffering of every woman who had lost a son, a husband, or a father. Later, through the verbal explanation of the story, their pain took on a political dimension which was addressed directly to the foreign audience: the loss and fear of loss that every individual bears became a collective icon that could be exposed to "others", and this icon became of potential political use to their collective suffering.

The performance was therefore a language, communicating meaning already shaped by the collective memory. Experiences of war and displacement were thus also incorporated into this collective meaning, further acquiring a temporal and spatial presence and a political dimension, grown from the use of a normative language (the legend itself). Individual experiences were frozen in a cultural form that already existed, that could serve to justify collective suffering that had been there long before and shape it into a political discourse.

Forced displacement, exile, and bodily suffering

The Archives of Memory project also involved a series of interviews from which I have extracted fragments in order to illustrate the hypothesis mentioned above. First, I would like to explore the experience of Elena who was successively internally displaced, then a refugee, and then, temporarily, coercively displaced to a "threatening environment".

Elena is a 50-year-old Kosovar Albanian woman born in Mikushnica, a village near Mitrovica. She now lives in the Southern part of Mitrovica. She first left Kosovo on 15 April 1999 with her husband, two of her daughters and her mother-in-law; a woman from Shkodra in Northern Albania. Elena's mother-in-law had spoken to her about Albania before and Elena had already visited the country, but she had not expected to go back there in the context of war. They reached Albania on foot, after having been displaced in Kosovo many times over. In Elena's words:

> When we left, my husband's sister was with us at home. From there we went to [...].[2] Also that cousin was with us and we walked out and queued in the column. We stayed one month in [...]… I was driven out from my house three times, and we stayed in [...] for a fortnight and then we

> returned home, but afterwards we were to flee again. So this was repeated several times. The last time in [...] we joined the column that was fleeing and we were deported to Albania. It was the first column that entered Albania.

They crossed the province of Kosovo more than once and, most of the time, on foot. They walked from Mitrovica to some villages of the Drenica region, from these villages to Peja, from Peja to Gjakova, from Gjakova to Istog, then from Istog to Kukes in Albania. Elena's young daughters were on the verge of fainting from starvation, and though she managed to find little pieces of bread in her bag, Elena and her family were left without anything, like other victims of war. One night, they slept on the ground, with nothing but pieces of nylon to protect them from the rain. There, with neither shelter, food, nor people to help them, Elena and her husband were powerless to care for their family. The next day, Albanian soldiers drove them to Lezha. They had no choice in the matter. After nine difficult hours of travel on the bad roads of Albania, a cousin of Elena's husband took them in. Later, Elena's family went to Shkodra, to stay with her husband's brother, who had just arrived there from Kosovo.

As Elena narrated this long and difficult path of exile, the tone of her voice never changed. She just added words one after the other, listing the places through which her family had passed as if she had not been there, as if others had travelled her path. The pain, in other words, was unspeakable. She seemed tired, as if she had just returned from being a refugee. The experience of displacement could be read on her face, between the dark lines that deepened her eyes.

Though the pain was unspeakable, Elena did try to explain it by describing two of its manifestations: a dream she had had about her daughter, and the sickness that sent Elena to the hospital. The first of these occurred while Elena lived as a refugee in Albania. Though she felt that she was in a safer place, she could not feel "better" because all of her children were not with her: "When I entered Albania I felt safe. But I was worried for my older daughter who had remained in Kosovo". Elena started to work in a hotel owned by the family of the cousin who was housing her. In her words:

> She [the wife of the cousin] was always with us, trying to take the grief away from us. [...] It helped me a lot [...] My daughters were there to help out, also my husband, all of them. I couldn't eat; I was crying all the time. [...] Before I came back from Albania I saw my daughter in a dream... I was scraping the foam from her lips; she was not able to speak... I stayed lying in the bed for one week. I was afraid she was killed or starved to death.

The fear expressed in her dream paralyzed her. The suffering of having experienced multiple coerced displacements and the fear of loss froze her limbs. The violence of the threat that she might lose her daughter became concrete, a reaction in her body, and a threat to her own physical survival. This happened when Elena was in Shkodra. It was not before her return to Kosovo that Elena discovered that her daughter was alive, even though she had been kept for days in her village without food.

When she came back from Albania, Elena was hospitalized because of a kidney problem and had to receive a blood transfusion: "... the illness started to appear clinically there [in Albania] but it deteriorated with the sadness and weeping". she said. She was made ill by the violence, both physical and psychological, that she had experienced during the war: "When I returned to Kosovo", she remembered in her narrative, "I looked pale. I felt weak and I was stumbling". This was the continuation of the physical suffering which had first surfaced with her dream.

During this time, Elena was staying in the hospital of Mitrovica, her town. The hospital was located on the northern side of the Ibar River, where a majority of Kosovar Serbs lived. The presence of these people, living reminders of the source of Elena's suffering, made her feel unsafe:

> Even in the night we didn't dare to sleep because we were afraid that... [...] I spent three weeks at the hospital and my husband was not allowed to come to visit me. [...] We were only three [Albanian] women.

There, in northern Mitrovica, Elena experienced another form of "coerced displacement": She was separated from her family and not even allowed to see her husband. She also suffered from the fear of losing her life. At the end of her narrative, Elena gave a collective dimension to her deep and incommunicable *individual* experience of fear and bodily suffering. While at the beginning of her narrative, she was giving meaning to her suffering by explaining her individual displacements, the division of her family and her fears (expressed in the dream), at the end of the narrative she included her own experience into a collective experience bounded by ethnic belonging:

> [...] There [at the hospital] worked a [Serbian] cleaning woman and she was complaining for their conditions [in north Mitrovica], saying that we were lucky because of our children that are working abroad. We were eating bananas and she was complaining that they had only boiled potatoes to eat. She did not move me with her complaint because we have suffered a lot from the Serbs before.

Elena ended the narration by enlarging her individual experience to a collective one, with her use of "we". This single word gave another meaning to her suffering, accounting for it by pointing out patterns within an identity. With this sentence, she gave a collective dimension to her lonely pain. She was distinguishing a collective Albanian experience of suffering, from the distress the Serbs were living after the war, not even considering their experience "suffering". Elena used hardship as an ethnic dividing line. She defined Albanian identity as one based, among other things, on a society-wide and ethnologically specific shared experience: collective suffering bounded by ethnic belonging.

The experience of this single interview was not the reason why Elena was giving an ethnic dimension to her own experience of displacement and suffering. The source of the violent events she had had to endure was already broadly claimed, through the discourses of authority diffused by the media or in official speeches, in family or public reunions, for instance, as the ethnic divisions and struggles on the territory of Kosovo. In all public events, the victims of the war (displaced, killed, captured, etc.) were presented as national heroes, whatever their individual experience. The process of collectivizing the individual experiences in a non-ethnic manner, sought by the IOM project, does not therefore seem to have been achieved in this single interview, as the collective seems to be the primary sphere of narrative, and the individual one seems to have been shaped afterwards. The notion of an individual experience does not seem to have meaning separate from the previous collective one.

Free movement, despite borders

The story of Vjoca might illustrate another relationship between displacement and suffering. Her narrative shows how a displacement forbidden at a communal level might create individual suffering, and how these individual instances of suffering penetrate the identities of both the individual and the community.

Vjoca is a 44-year-old Kosovar Albanian woman living with three of her seven children in the northern part of Mitrovica, the divided city. Everyday, on her road to the Italian Non Governmental Organization (NGO) where she works with a group of women, Vjoca passes the bridge over the Ibar River, which, because it separates both sides of the city, has become the symbol of the division between Serbs and Albanians. Every day, she experiences the crossing of a border in the most concrete sense, one guarded by foreign soldiers for security. She continues, regardless of fears and frontiers, because her friends and hopes lie on the other side.

It was this same motive and determination that moved her to cross the border between Kosovo and Albania on 15 June 1999, at a time when, on the opposite side, refugees were beginning a massive return to Kosovo. In Vjoca's words:

> I went there because I've always loved [desired] to visit Albania. I was in Durrës. I've always dreamed of studying in Albania, but this dream of mine never came true, because I was engaged when I was in the 8th class of elementary school (at 14 years old). It was the will of my father [...] my parents were old people, they didn't know that much, we didn't talk about school. My cousin was an educated person, he used to read books that were prohibited by the Serbs, and he gave me those books. We were not free, [the] Serbs didn't allow us to read the books that were written and published in Albania.

At the age of 14, Vjoca was already trying to escape the constraints imposed by the political context. She dreamed of going to Albania, which she equated with a sort of freedom, but her father had forbidden her to leave. During the war, Vjoca was displaced within Kosovo, but she still felt prevented from crossing the border on account of her son. It was only after years of waiting that she finally reached Albania, and then, only because of her brother. In her words:

> We have been here [in Kosovo] all the time during the war. We could have gone to Montenegro but I [would have] had to leave my son here, my son was a KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] soldier for 13 months. When they forced us to leave our home, we went to [a village]. From [Date]… to 2 May in [19...]. My husband lost five family members. Five men from my family were jailed in the prison of Smrekovnica. My brother was badly beaten; his body full of bruises was shown in many TV [programmes]… Three of my brothers joined KLA… Then I heard that my brother [had been] deported to Albania. When KFOR [military forces of NATO and non-NATO countries in Kosovo] came in, I asked my husband to go and try to find him. We knew that he [had been] badly beaten. My brother was [then] in Durrës… He was there with his friends that were also jailed. He went to Durrës to heal his wounds. That's why I went there (to Albania).

Vjoca therefore went to Albania because of the war, but not as a refugee. She felt as if she "had" to stay in Kosovo, to support her son who was in the KLA. She had hidden her desire to see Albania until she could combine it with her justifiable need to see her brother. Only then could she go to Albania, this "forbidden" country. As soon as she crossed the border, however, her feelings reversed, and she suddenly wished to return to Kosovo:

> Why? It was my desire only for that day because later I understood that your home is the best place for you no matter where you go. [...] I'm telling you because I've been in other places, like Switzerland, France, Italy, and I've been told also by the others that if Kosovo will be reconstructed it will become a second New York.

Vjoca was 14 years old when she first dreamed of going away. Twenty-nine years later, she decided to stay "home". She was disappointed to see that Albania was not as it was described in the smuggled books of her childhood. She also expected Kosovo to become a different land, as economically and politically healthy as the image she once had of New York, where thousands of Albanians from Kosovo went, as refugees, during the 1990s.

In the early 1990s, when the Albanian border was easier to cross, Vjoca was entertaining a friend of her brother-in-law's, who had come from Durrës in Albania:

> We have written to each other [...] the letters were opened and read. [...] We were afraid to write something else [to him] but, "how are you", "are you doing O.K", no more [...] we realized how they lived when he came to visit us. When we gave [a] present to him, he said: "Don't do it please, because if you come to visit us we won't be able to give you anything, we are very poor". Then we realized that something was wrong there. Nevertheless, people communicated, nothing could stop them from seeing Albania. My brother [crossed] the border illegally, and afterwards he went to Switzerland. This happened in 1983.

Vjoca interpreted this denial of free movement as an event that gave strength to a collective identity. As she said, "Nothing could stop 'them'". To her, this strength came from the fact that many people did manage to leave the province, despite its well-guarded borders. Crossing the border was seen as an act of resistance to the regime imposed by Belgrade on the Albanians of Kosovo.

"Diasporic" families: suffering on the land, resisting with movement

The economic and political marginalization of the Albanians of Kosovo during the 1990s helped strengthen the bonds between the Kosovar Albanians and their extended family, which generated a surge of immigration. Between 1990 and 1998, around 400,000 Albanians left Kosovo. Resistance to an oppressive regime was being constructed within these "diasporic families" of recent migrations.

It might be argued that the notion of community that developed in the Albanians of Kosovo, and mainly in the countryside, emerged in the absence of important family members. Their return to Kosovo was both a source of hope for those who had remained, and those who were suffering from their absence, and a source of stress, because of the long period of separation. One example of this might be found in Elena's narrative of her time spent outside of Kosovo. While she was in Albania, Elena was granted the special and unexpected visit of her son, who had been a refugee in Germany for seven years. He had not been able to return to Kosovo before the war. Crying, Elena explained:

> I can't describe that moment... [...] [My son] avoided serving military service; the police was looking after him. He is the only son I have... I was expecting to see him in Kosovo, but I saw him in Albania... my God...

At the time of the interview, Elena said she was expecting to see her son in Kosovo, and knew that he would be back sooner rather than later: For three months, he had not been paid his salary in Germany and was told that he would soon be repatriated to Kosovo. After seven years spent away from his home, he returned to his close family who were then refugees in Albania, and did not recognize his younger sister. His return after his long exile was therefore both a happy occasion and a difficult event, as evidenced by his inability to recognize his own family.

This blend of happiness and suffering was being experienced throughout Kosovo. The separation that every family experienced during the exile of younger family members in the 1990s slashed into the continuum of the lives of Kosovar Albanians. From this rift arose suffering that was experienced by too many families, and thus became incorporated into the collective memory of forced exile and expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians from their homes, their working places, and their land, since 1989. The individual pain of separation gradually took on new meaning, representing the resistance and survival of those who stayed behind. It was this new community that was then faced with the return of their long exiled kin, and it was at this point that the political significance of the scattered family structure began breaking down: Through the sufferings of war, family circles had tightened in the absence of their exiled members.

A similar experience was narrated by Suzana, a 29-year-old Albanian woman from a town near Mitrovica. Suzana had left Kosovo and lived as a refugee in Albania in 1999. She described how one of her two brothers, who had lived as a refugee in England for eight years (while her second brother was in Sweden), was forced to return to Kosovo. He no longer

received financial support, and was obliged to go "home" to whatever had become of his former life. His return to Kosovo made Suzana very happy. In her words:

> I had problems in my family… I was [during the years she was studying in the 1990s] sad because of my brothers...they were away...and sometimes I felt... "why should I study", ...[there] is a saying in Kosovo that goes "if my brothers are not studying why should I, as a girl study"... you know... I thought like that and I wanted my brothers to be here and [I wanted] to study with them... because my elder brother stopped studies and he wanted to go out of Kosova.

The absence of Suzana's brothers was a great source of pain for her, not only because she missed them, but also because it changed her social and familial position. She felt obliged to stay with her parents in the absence of their sons. While her only sister married, Suzana remained by her parents' side. Even at the age of 29, she felt responsible for being with them, despite the fact that most girls in Kosovo are married by then, and living with their husband's family. Because her brothers were not present, Suzana felt she could not marry, at least not until their return. By the summer of 2000, her brother did return from England, but not being able to find a job that would satisfy him, he immediately thought of leaving again. After eight years spent abroad, he could no longer bear the life of Kosovo: a small salary, the constant proximity of the family members, the absence of the "order", both material and political, that he had found in England. The economic and social constraints were too rigid for him. In Kosovo, he had the choice of pursuing a good salary (1,000 DEM a month), as a security guard with an NGO (a job that did not interest him), or trying to find work at a restaurant, as he had in England, for little pay. For him, the Kosovo that had survived the war was no better than the Kosovo he had left behind. He therefore left again, and his renewed sudden absence pushed his mother to a breakdown that led to physical sickness, which again prevented Suzana from marrying.

Collective suffering

Suzana never tried to leave Kosovo in search of her brothers. In her words: "I wanted them here… I never dreamed to go abroad even I had chance to go… but I didn't want, I wanted to be here and see what [was] going on". On March 28, 1999, Suzana was forcefully expelled from her home, along with her parents and cousins. Together, they drove to the Macedonian border, trying to escape Kosovo. They were made to wait there, in the Sharr

Mountains, sleeping in their cars and fighting cold and hunger. After four days and nights, the Serbian police sent them back to their town. Suzana had been driving during the entire ordeal. Once home, the family was forced to hide in the house, with Suzana often standing vigil outside, in the middle of the night.

Before the war, Suzana had studied Law at the University of Pristina and was sensitive to the political problems of Kosovo:

> [The war] stopped many things in my life. It stopped many things in my life… and it was… because I was not thinking of… you know… buying things, having a good life, going to the parties, no I didn't think of that.

She participated in the student protests of 1997, and to her, this was when the war truly began. She considered her first "displacement" to have been her move from her town to Pristina. She felt compelled to become involved in the student resistance movement because she could find no other way to give meaning to her life:

> ...Once I thought that there [was] no need, no reason to study if we don't finish this [movement] because it was coming 'till here [to the nose], it was everything boring, we used to go in private houses [to study], we used to do exams, we...

Because of the apartheid-like regime in Kosovo, young Albanians had to study in private houses opened to them by a few families or by the professors themselves. Some Albanians studied in garages or wrote college papers sitting on the floor. The students suffered together the collective affront to the Kosovar Albanians. Suzana spoke of this:

> Yes, everyone was tired [of] that... All the people, with President Rugova, we agreed like he said that we should fight in peace, so we should suffer, and suffer until…the cup was full, [as] people say, and the end came in 1998… there is a limit; everywhere there is a limit [to] anything… so the limit came… People had...suffered enough; they wanted something… It [had been] a kind of sacrifice… that people were dying, surviving or … living in jails and nobody would know… I mean, you were not allowed to write [what was happening] in newspapers … So we started to do that [resist] step by step…How could [we] tolerate this when Serb police started to go into our houses and to beat you up, or rape your wife or your children and … would you say [as] Rugova said "let's be quiet still because it is not [the time] to raise our voice"? … But we waited for ten years… we waited enough… 'till… but in that time even there were dangerous people… I know that everybody wants a normal life, even …if the police comes in your house and [enforces his] control and [does] everything that has been done to most of the families in Kosova… But

> you have that fear inside from them but you have also the strength that Albanians have inside… that one day all that torture will come to an end; it is not only physical torture, but also mental torture… I knew that and I wanted to be like that [opposing the violence]… sometimes I am a radical… really… but I'm not an extremist…

Looking back upon those past three years, Suzana was able to give a teleological meaning to the experience of war and its consequences: the forced displacement. She linked the collective, population-wide suffering of Albanians in the 1990s with the emerging strength of her people, and made them a pillar of her identity, and an explanation for inevitable conflict and displacement. In this section of the interview, Suzana spoke in a way that was representative of the group of Albanians in their twenties, most of them from villages (Suzana was born in a village of the Drenica region, where the ethnic majority is Albanian, and where the war began in March 1998), whose memory does not extend much further than the time when ethnic identities radicalized, sparking cycles of violence, breeding hatred, causing suffering and forced displacement.

Throughout her narrative, Suzana related her displacements (from the exile of her brothers to her move to Pristina and exodus to Albania), to the collective suffering of the Albanian people under political oppression. Every displacement Suzana endured became yet another instance of this suffering, and added to her determination to stop it. In her narrative, her experience was not isolated misfortune, but a communal affliction. This idea of suffering as sacrifice acted as a normative discourse, giving meaning to her individual experience and providing her strength that came with belonging to this Kosovar Albanian society.

Unlike this younger age group, older Albanians tended to extend their recollection of suffering over a longer period of time. During an interview, Bexhet, a 65-year-old Albanian man from Prizren, said:

> While my father was alive [resistance took place] with guns and after that, with suffering because we couldn't keep arms… This house that I have now in Prizren is the seventh one in my life. From my father's house from which he was expelled, we continued changing…houses… Then we ran away because… We have suffered a lot… always running away from here to there, no job, no school, no money… Ah, this is worse than war.

In the spring of 1999, Bexhet remained at home with his wife, who was too sick to walk. His children and grandchildren left for Albania on foot. When they came back that summer, they found that Bexhet's wife had

managed to tend to the garden, even while hiding from the police. They also brought home to Kosovo a new member of the family, a baby that had been born to Bexhet's daughter-in-law in Albania.

Though the war was over and the whole family was safe, Bexhet's suffering continued, even when the violence had ended:

> There are no pensions, I am a pensioner but I haven't received any pension for 15 months, my son is not working, the others are studying… where to take… There is no money and we need to eat… No money, no work, no pension, where… where? The son that I have in Belgium helps us a little bit otherwise we could die from hunger. We don't have… I am an old man and I don't have pension, he [his son] has four children, then parents… How to survive, from where? No work, no money, no pension. They [international organizations] don't employ people. They employed some that know languages, some that are needed, but my son doesn't know languages… and from the friends… we don't have any links. We have some friends here but some others… they don't know us… We don't have any job and this suffering is… When you don't have money, you don't have anything … I didn't receive any pension for 15 months and we don't have any news, factories are not working so, how? I think that UNMIK [United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo] and the others are not so interested.

For Bexhet, Kosovo had become a vanishing terrain, on which he and his family were surviving without the tools (education and social connections) needed to escape suffering and marginalization. For Bexhet, the economic reality of post-war Kosovo was no better than it had been before the war. To him, this meant a continuation of the suffering he had been experiencing for so many years. Though the fear of being ousted from his land had left with the arrival of an international protection force, daily life continued to be a test of endurance. The explanation given for his suffering also remained the same, and the responsibility of external elements: the institutions which should, in normal time, act as a source of income, and the United Nation Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which, like the former institutions, would not interest themselves in the well-being of the general populace. To Bexhet, this marginalization, losing his space in his own society and thus being displaced without leaving, was an experience "worse than war".

For other people, however, the end the war had brought change: their experience of displacement was transformed into an active struggle to control the vanishing ground that was their country. These are the people who experienced a shift of status, from refugee to local staff.

From refugee to local staff

This last experience, made possible in the environment of post-war Kosovo, occurred for Suzana and also for Liljana, a 19-year-old Albanian woman from Pristina. The change both added to their strength in the wake of the conflict, and left them in an ambiguous social position. Their intermediary status prevented them from incorporating the entirety of their wartime experience into the normative discourse of suffering, as this collective recollection had formed quickly around the fighting and displacements of 1998 and 1999. They were thus able to express the deeply solitary experience of being a refugee only as part of a different collective narrative.

For both Suzana and Liljana, the experience of being a refugee defied description:

> "Well, the same word [refugee] is a bad word", said Suzana, "just thinking of that word is like … I didn't believe that before… I didn't believe to my brothers who are living in England and Sweden… I didn't believe that, it is very hard to describe it… being like occupied but not… the only thing that is good on this is that you are not afraid, you don't hear helicopters, you don't hear bombardments but everything is still there, because you could have been a refugee also inside Kosova… as soon as you leave your home, you are a refugee, you were not able to go in town but it is not good when you feel that you are out of your country, and if you have fun it's not like fun, when you buy something it's not like you are happy when you buy something, even the coffee is not the same."

Like Suzana, Liljana began describing her experience as a refugee, without being able to do so:

> Well, you cannot describe it. It is awful, very hard to be like that. The name can show you, you know, R.E.F.U.G.E is like the worst thing in the world, so it is something that you cannot describe… you don't have any power and you don't have anything but your soul, your body and nothing else. This is very difficult and very hard for everybody. Even for the people who accepted refugees it was very hard … every time you feel like you are not you … So, every day you feel empty, you feel … I mean it's just very hard; without any power, without nothing.

Like hundreds of young Kosovar Albanians, Suzana and Liljana began working as local staff within the international organizations which served the refugee camps of Albania and Macedonia, and which escorted the returnees to Kosovo in the summer of 1999. With this job, their status dramatically changed. They acquired a role and a daily activity that was

considered important. They began "helping" the crowds of refugees, of which they were no longer part. They were no longer in that position of utter helplessness. By working as local staff, they had crossed a sort of border, from a role where they needed help and support as refugees, to one that provided help and support to the needy.

For Liljana, whose duty was to accompany refugees to their homes all over Kosovo, daily life meant remembering her own experience:

> You know, most of the time you just feel like it was you. The same reactions, same feelings, and same words, which were "I could never imagine that I will come back again" or these kinds of things. And, it also reminded me, and the others [who worked as staff] when we arrived [at the destinations].

As a relief worker in an international organization, Liljana was constantly sharing the suffering of "her people". At the same time, however, she was no longer in their position of collective powerlessness. She was working, and working for the reconstruction of Kosovo.

For both Suzana and Liljana, this was a first experience of work. Before the war, both of them had studied. They could not imagine themselves working, and in any case, there were not many opportunities available to them. An ethnic division ran throughout Kosovo, and very few were the Albanians who were still working in Yugoslav establishments. Since the 1990s, when many employees were dismissed from their jobs by the Yugoslav Government, Kosovar Albanians had had to develop a parallel economy, with their own socio-political institutions. Students were attending classes in private houses, professors and doctors were paid through the 3 per cent tax imposed upon the self-exiled Kosovars (the number of which grew significantly after 1991), and socio-economic support was provided by those with better positions, or with income from family working abroad, to those who were most in need.

This shift in status had therefore given Suzana, Liljana, and those like them, an intermediary status, between "their people", who were in need of help, and the "others"; the social organizations and foreigners, who were providing this assistance. Suzana described this position in her narrative:

> Sometimes there were Albanians; interpreters from Albania and they were very short when foreigners would say something or offer something, they [were even more short] when they were speaking, hiding words. I didn't like that, so I tried to be very correct and very sure of what I was translating, otherwise it would be very bad for my people… and it will [cause] a misunderstanding or loosing help that others were offering us.

Suzana considered her position as "go-between" an important one, as it gave her the opportunity to defend the rights and needs of "her people". Before the war, she had studied Law and was also involved in the student protests of 1997. Her work as a translator in the refugee camp had given Suzana her first chance to realize a hope she had held for years: to work for "her people", and defend their interests.

At the beginning, then, these young workers saw their jobs as means of giving support and help to their own people. Many of them even worked without pay, as the massive exodus of Albanians from Kosovo was still an open wound and the drama of displacement and return was still taking place. Gradually, however, the young people were themselves "displaced" from the community of those who were experiencing this arduous process. They were distanced from their families, and increasingly incorporated into the collectivity of workers, foreign and local. They were removed from the group of those who had suffered, and left between communities, forced to quickly enter the ranks of the NGOs and feeling obligated to become cultural and linguistic translators between their people and the foreigners. Some were asked to work for "minorities" (Serbs or Romany), for instance. They had to put aside their ethnically sensitive mindsets, and consequently their image of the collectively suffering, strong and unique Albanians, which had been a powerful cement in the construction of their identities. At the same time, in the world outside of the international organizations, the ethnic discourse was free to take concrete shape, as Serbs and Romany were almost non-existent on the scene of post-war Kosovo. The local staff thus experienced a cleft between their work and their "real lives". In order to fulfil their professional tasks, they had to speak the language of multiculturalism suggested or imposed by the organizations, but in their families and within their social networks, the discourse was different. As they each pursued both sides of this division, they gradually entered what might be termed a double life.

Some time later, while back in Kosovo, these young Local Staff members had established themselves in their new positions. They then began to consider their employment in a more practical light, as a source of income that gave them more freedom and power. Having learnt languages, they were privileged by their qualifications, when many other Kosovars (like Bexhet's son in Prizren) could not speak English, French, Italian or German.

When she was back in Kosovo, Suzana could work with foreigners, having learnt English in her position at the refugee camp. She then began selling her skills, quitting her local job in which she earned only 200 DEM per

month, for work within an international organization, where she made 1,000 DEM per month. This salary gap between local and international establishments was not unique to Suzana's case, but normal for most of the international organizations. In the words of Liljana:

> [Working with an NGO] was like you had more power because we needed money and we had to get the job. It was just after the war period so it means that everything was destroyed, you didn't have anything to buy and everything had to be renewed.

At this same time, however, most of the local staff were young, in their twenties. The many who stayed in the international organizations began to receive salaries that were more than twice as high as that of their parents. Traditional family structures were beginning to reverse. As local staff, these young employees also became a part of the local leaders of the so-called rebuilding of Kosovo. They had begun to work at a time of emergency, to help their people, and had simply continued to work through this period of reconstruction, when they needed money to help their families and to acquire professional skills for themselves. As Suzana said:

> … now that … the internationals [are] here, you can see with your eyes how … we [differ] from them or what we have in common, or if we want to change, or what's bad on them… because they are not so… ideal, you know … Well you know that Western life is doing what you want, getting separated from your parents, living on your own, but here in Kosova it was difficult, you had to live together with your family and you were close to your relatives, you were more… it [fits us to get] together… that's why I'm [saying] that tradition is to be more [on] our own, not asking or looking for another life… I'm not against new life, but still keeping what is more important for one Albanian: family and to go on with tradition … the role of the family will still be the same [as] it was before, but it will be more … I don't know, more modern … but [on] my own, I don't want to be exactly like Westerners are.

What Suzana was describing was a balancing act, performed, in her case, on vanishing ground. Her discourse was ambiguous and oscillated between tradition and modernity. She claimed that she did not want to see a change in tradition, but the fact that she was working helped hasten these changes. She does not live with her parents anymore, but with her boyfriend, as does Liljana, and neither of the women are married. Both keep most of their salary for their own use, and can therefore buy what they wish. Even this situation, however, is vanishing ground. They know that the organizations will eventually leave, sooner rather than later. As before the war, they cannot plan their futures. There is no stable path that will lead them to security. Because of this, Suzana saves her money so that

she can marry and support her needs as a housewife. Liljana is thinking of leaving Kosovo to study because she does not know what kind of work will be available to her once the organizations leave. Meanwhile, her job has allowed her to travel outside Kosovo, and her connections have made her aware of different opportunities in the United States. In this way, like Suzana, Liljana has one foot in tradition, and the other in "modernity". There they must carry out their balancing act, merely to remain socially aloft in both the local society and the new international circle.

As local staff, both of them have ceased to identify with the collective discourse of suffering, given their more elevated social positions. This new status, seen by the local population as highly desirable, cannot be associated with suffering because it brings economic success and political power (through repeated contact with foreigners and the local elite who work with them). This social "displacement" does, however, bring its own form of suffering: a widening economic gap between local staff and the local population (74 per cent of which are unemployed according to the UNMIK internal documents). The withdrawal of these local staff members from their previous social and familial networks, and the uncertainties of a professional future, all combine to create, in these young people, this prevalent "fear of loss".

Conclusion

In presenting these fragments of narrated lives, I have tried to show that displacement is an experience which can take multiple forms. I have also tried to illustrate how the reification of suffering by individuals, as a consequence of these displacements, can contribute to the creation of a collective identity. In my analysis, I began with the assumption that different displacements would produce different types of suffering, which are not expressed as such, but deeply hidden inside their bodies. Suffering and displacement are experienced on an individual basis. They are then narrated (with verbal language), or enacted (through body language), using the discourses of authority that shape a politics of memory. This politics of memory therefore "pre-shapes" the memory of individual suffering and displacement within a "pre-experienced" collective suffering. These individual narrations and enactments are directed or influenced by discourses of authority that reify suffering into an icon, which is communicated by individuals to become a pillar of collective identity. The collective identity itself is reified. It then deeply influences the manner in which individuals explain and narrate their personal experiences of suffering and

displacement. They may modify, reject or adapt very closely to the existing discourses of authority, and they may therefore eventually change them and change the politics of memory.

This collective identity is therefore not an essence, but a discursive construct on individual experiences that cannot be communicated as they are lived, but only as they should be understood by the others with whom the person views her/himself sharing a collective experience. According to the data presented in this paper, the individuality of the experience of suffering and displacement does not seem to have meaning by itself, without being "pre-shaped" by these discourses of authority that appear throughout narration or the enactment.

Displacement can mean being expelled from home or country after having been targeted for reasons of ethnicity, and physically suffering this pain of exile, as in the case of Elena. Displacement may also be a desire to leave a difficult political or economic situation, as was the case of Vjoca, who was at first harmed by being orced not to leave (because of the traditional rules of Albanian society), and later disappointed, when she finally reached this unreachable land she had longed for (because of her agreement with the discourse holding that a person should remain where they were born). The story of Bexhet exemplifies how the experience of displacement is rooted in the memory of Kosovar Albanians old enough to have experienced the Second World War, and how even after the war of 1998-1999, and without the threat of forced exile, the suffering of past displacements could be reincarnated as the anxiety of standing powerless on vanishing ground. In the cases of Suzana and Liljana, I have tried to present a more subtle form of displacement, occurring as a result of their new status, and pressuring them to be displaced, this time, from their former selves and "their people". Given the position of local staff, they were forced to separate themselves gradually from the discourse of authority that reified suffering as a pillar of each Albanian's identity, especially of those who experienced the greatest exodus in 1999. Albanians who became local staff members were progressively exiled from this discourse, and therefore, in a way, displaced from "the" Albanian identity. As such, they were made to build ambiguous identities with ties to both the people who had experienced loss, and a new people, one that could no longer bear the weight of this collective suffering derived from forced displacement.

From their discursive forms to their bodily and "unspeakable" states, suffering and displacement feed upon one another and contribute to the production of new forms or new processes of personal identification. During the last decade, these interlaced threads of displacement and suffering have thus been woven into the production of a collective identity of

Kosovar Albanians. They did not disappear after the war. The same threads of displacement and suffering, having taken on new colours of meaning, could rearrange the tapestry of the discourses of authority, and produce new politics of memory from the inside.

Notes

1. The cities and villages of Kosovo officially carry both Albanian and Serbian names. Since the interviews on which this paper is based were conducted in Albanian, however, we have decided to retain the Albanian forms.
2. The names of villages have been erased and the interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms to avoid identification, which could be damaging for them in postwar Kosovo.

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Chapter 3

Violence Following Violence

Anton K. Berishaj*

Systematic state violence and the changing attitudes towards it

Having long been oppressed and deprived of institutional organization, the Kosovar Albanian community has responded to every regime of the past by reinforcing its boundaries, perceiving each successive government as foreign and imposed. The community's opposition to these "foreign" regimes contributed to the strengthening and enlargement of its families, following two contrary and simultaneous currents: on one hand, the family had to strengthen and enlarge in order to be self-sufficient (and therefore "closed"), while at the same time, the family has remained, by necessity, open and dependent upon strong bonds of kinship (within the community). These trends of amassment, economic strengthening and exclusivity, paradoxically paired with the widening of branches based on kinship, were thus the result of an ambivalent attitude towards the State social apparatus. In the Kosovar Albanian community, the State is perceived and experienced as a source of violence and brutality, an entity that generates problems and tribulations. At no time was the State experienced as a provider of protection and security to its subjects; at no time were rep-

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resentatives of the State respected out of appreciation, rather than fear. Loyalty to the regime, where it existed, was not spontaneous, but enforced by memories of the horrific consequences of rebellion.

In the 1950s, the dissolution of rebellious formations in Drenice might have sparked the change in the strategy of the active opposition. Collective rebellion splintered into individual rebellions, each organized within family networks and involving at times, a circle of close relatives, and at others, an entire clan. This strategy of organized resistance also included individual acts of revenge, aimed at specific organs of the regime. At the same time, however, this familial organization provided a means for the opposition to escape the harsh crackdown imposed by the State. The louder an incriminated person screamed out the consequences of his resistance, the greater the rallying endurance of the community, and the more plentiful grew the incriminating acts of violent protest. The media was hardly involved at all, or, if it was, was so select that it served the interests of the opposite side. It justified the State's punishments and withheld the facts, for fabricated political truths do not have to be fetched from an ancient past, but fabrications, without the aid of the media, are difficult to construct. At the time, in Kosovo, the media thus worked only against the Albanian community. This pattern of resistance, repression and justification went on until the beginning of the 1980s.

Exposing the violence:
the media as an alternative form of revenge

During the last decade of the previous century, the evident changes in the reaction of the Kosovar Albanian population to State violence were intrinsic to a mindset of political survival and resistance. A pluralization of the Albanian political scene in Kosovo began, but with flexible, slow and cautious strategies. The first effort appeared in the form of networks created with the Pro-Yugoslav democratic force, the UJDI (*Ujedinjena Jugoslovenska Demokratska Inicijativa, Iniciative Jugosllave e Bashkuar Demokratike*, the United Yugoslav Democratic Initiative). Under this title, a number of somewhat moderate intellectuals cooperated, but remained faithful to the idea of preserving cohabitation. From its onset, the group was unable to realize or even conceive of any common objectives. In Kosovo, its members were soon branded as "Yugo-nostalgic" and as carriers of a failed idea, while on the pluralistic Kosovar Albanian political scene, the UJDI was only a temporary gathering without the ambition to adhere to any political topic.

This rather superficial view of the early political activity that grew out of the climate of organized and systematic state violence enacted against the civilian population of Kosovo, nevertheless hides a plethora of stances and strategies. Within a short time, the political scene would witness the evolution of opposition to the regime, from a reliance on the rigid principles of the *Kanun*[1] (with its "eye for an eye" philosophy), to a highly sophisticated strategy where violence was made politically advantageous through the lens of the media.

In this later change of strategy, a population unprotected by State law sought support in the power of the media. Such a powerful response to violence was created in the pen of the journalist and the eye of the camera, that, to some extent, media exposure provided an alternative to traditional vengeance. Meanwhile, the practice of consulting with the male head of a wronged family to elaborate a means of taking revenge against the perpetrators of violence committed within the circle of the close family (traditional mediation), proved ineffective and antiquated in the new circumstances. Kosovar Albanians began to learn the civilizing effect of transparency, everywhere exposing violence through images, recordings, eyewitness accounts, etc. For the first time in history, the long-violent Kosovar Albanian shamelessly sought and attained revenge by means of cameras, journalists, photo-reporters, foreign humanitarian workers, etc. Kosovar Albanians no longer hesitated to go naked, baring raw marks of violence in front of witnesses, neighbours and family members, ready to show that they had been wronged.

One example of this can be taken from my own experience: one day, the Serbian police located a house, the basement of which the University of Pristina's Philosophy Department had made into a makeshift lecture hall. At the beginning of a faculty meeting, the house was surrounded. We were all made to walk through the hallway under the batons, kicks, and fists of the police. As we were expelled from the house, we found another group of policemen there to meet us and finish the operation. Many colleagues were harmed. Was this not unscrupulous violence aimed at non-violent teachers, a challenge that demanded revenge? It happened, however, that the group of students watching this affront in silence from adjacent houses, and even the victimized teachers themselves, sought "healing" of these wounds not by seeking more violence, but by unravelling their story to a few journalists. I gained the impression that the presence of this small group of journalists was a gesture of sympathy and curiosity, as precisely at that time, fighting had erupted in Drenica and other places. Despite this, the interviewing and posing for photography went on with such theatrical ceremony that it was almost as if the beatings had not been degrading at all, but had somehow made us proud.

With these new political demands, newly expressed in protests, negotiations, violent conflict, and suddenly, in newspapers, the Kosovar Albanians experienced an entirely new dimension of freedom, and yet something remained unchanged, even in the altered environment of their lives: the violence targeting women and the reactions against their rape.

Violence cured by violence, and transgression of the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini [2]

Throughout these last years, there has been one area left untouched by changes in the value system of the Kosovar Albanians: the traditionally held moral norms regarding the subject of women. Even now, the Kosovar-Albanian woman is still considered a sensitive being of crystal-like fragility, who cannot endure the violent affronts of the “other”. To a Kosovar Albanian, the act of raising one’s hand to a woman tran sgresses all boundaries of curable and “proud” (honourable) violence, for according to tradition, woman was and remains a being moulded out of fragile material that easily breaks, scatters and vanishes. There is still no acceptable place in Kosovar Albanian society, for the rape of women, as they are still seen through this faded lens of tradition. The Kosovar Albanian woman is normally required to hide from the eyes and ears of everyone, and especially of the media. The violence committed against her is experienced not only as a physical wound, but as a moral stain, as pollution, filth, and denigration. Consider the norms of customary law on the subject of the violated woman:

In the *Kanun* of Leke Dukagjini, Article 129 refers to “blood for wrong doing”. Aside from their other subjects, paragraph 921 and 922 state that in the case of “the rape of women”, the “blood for guilt principle will be left to exercise its own power”. Translated into the language and practice of today, this means that customary law does not foresee any acceptable circumstance that might alleviate or pardon the wrong of someone who has committed the crime of rape, and predicts a blood feud between families of victim and perpetrator. Rape crosses the boundary of possible mediation and resolution. There is no provision that may soften the consequences of this act, only a segment discussing means of punishment to remove its guilt. Along with the “killing of a friend” and “armed threat”, “the rape of a woman” is one of the three acts for which there is no possible remedy. This trinity is sacred to any inhabitant of the *Kanun* regions, its laws are not to be transgressed, for only weapons can cleanse the harm caused by their violation. The three laws are the pillars supporting the moral world of the inhabitants, whose mountainous terrain the epic of Leke Dukagjini

united. These are the only crimes for which prohibition under the *Kanun*, however rigid it is, cannot allow for a degree of flexibility, cannot make room for reason and the institution of mediation.

Recent practice, however, has provided instances of rape and responses not aligned with *Kanun* norms. Instead of exploring the possibility of revenge towards those who committed this crime, most missions of violent retributive punishment have ended on the person of the victim. In no possible interpretation, however, does the *Kanun* law advocate the victim's repression or condemnation. Rape is not treated as the victim's transgression, but as the unforgivable immorality of the rapist, or as a call to revenge. The *Kanun* makes no mention of the victim in the context of retaliatory measures. In other words, the rape of women is understood and treated as accidental, a terrible misfortune, not as a circumstance which seals the victim's fate. The *Kanun* makes no reference to the victim as stained, polluted or fouled, but rather, discusses the dishonoured family, home, brotherhood and/or kin. Violence committed against women, according to the *Kanun*, cannot be "cured" by her expulsion and public judgement. Customary law provides no alternative but revenge taken on the rapist, and responsibility for this falls on the bearers of arms, not on the defenceless woman. An illustration of this was narrated to me many years ago by Mark Doshi, one of the men legendary in the Upper-Shkodra Highlands for his ability to mediate and settle blood feuds between families:

> In a village in the vicinity of Shkodra, two prestigious families entered into a conflict which soon culminated in the rape of a woman. One of the women was abducted and held in captivity for three nights. After the third night, she was set free. There was no dilemma regarding the actions that needed to be taken. There was, nonetheless, a dilemma as how to create a framework to correspond to the weight of the crime which would also be in accordance with customary law, especially as there was a growing risk that armed conflict could emerge with more far reaching consequences. Whole groups of mediators could not find an adequate formula for a resolution. Later on, my intervention was required, since according to custom, once those close to the family fail, more distant mediators can become involved. Without giving it much thought, I offered this solution: the family that had abducted the woman, although they claimed that they had not abused her, would have to give the victimized family one of their mature women to be held for the same period of time as the victim. After this period, the damage would be equalized and the case would be closed. There would be no need for a blood feud. But what happened was what I had expected: the guilty party did not accept this solution. Their alternative proposal was that they be made to suffer three blood feuds. And that is what happened! The family of the abducted woman killed three male members of the guilty family in an act of revenge, as an equivalent to the three nights the woman was made to spend in its house. And thus the case was closed. [3]

The narrator of this story did not, at any given moment and within any given context, condemn the woman. She was considered a victim of a conflict and in no way was it thought that she might have induced this violence upon herself. How, then, can the male, traditionally the moral power of the family, deny his responsibility to resolve the case, as has happened in recent times? How can he expulse his duty from his family, together with the victim, as also occurs now? Sevdie Ahmeti, the director of the Centre for the Protection of Women and Children, which has a base in Pristina, discussed instances of "violence after violence". Women who have been raped are often silent about the acts of violence committed against them, even in Western Europe. In Kosovo, however, this has become a phenomenon. Silence in Western Europe is often justified by the wish to spare the victim the torment of legal hearings, but it can also be explained by the need to spare them the ignominy of inappropriate treatment by their family and by those close to them. In Kosovo, this second reason has come to supercede the first: although a representative number of women agree to speak of being raped during the war, they often also discuss the "violence after the violence" which they experienced, of aggressive acts committed by those from whom they least expected violence, those who should have protected and supported them through their suffering.Another example of this "violence following violence" might be found in Agim Sopi's recent film, the first production about war in Kosovo, which focuses on violence which victimizes women. One scene of the film takes place somewhere in Junik, a town in western Kosovo, which had long been a site of battle. There, two Albanian sisters fall prey to sexual violence, and one of them is killed after she is raped. In the plot, the director found no other resolution but to portray the suicide of the other sister. When this film was released, no critics or viewers protested its message. However, women from Junik complained of the film's portrayal of Junik as a town of raped women - a rather odd response, but perhaps symbolic of the fate of the Kosovar Albanian woman. As a woman, she is now sentenced to bear the trauma of rape within her for life, without hope of being allowed to discuss her suffering openly, of explaining the circumstances of the crime, nor of denouncing the rapist, without hope of being offered the help and support of her family and community. As a woman, she is again made a victim, this time, of her own family.

In the *Kanun* of Leke Dukagjini, clause 13 discusses "the duties of husband and wife". Paragraph 32, point b, specifies that "The husband has a duty to protect his wife's honour and to keep her from having to complain of any needs". The duty to protect spousal honour is reciprocal for husband and wife. In the next clause of the *Kanun* it is written, "The wife has the duty: a) to protect the husband's honour". It is not, however, required that the obligation must stand when she cannot possibly fulfil it. The rules of

the *Kanun* are valuable, and have long circulated amongst the people, but they cannot be enforced over an entire population at all times. What, one might ask, has been the behaviour towards raped women during the war and in post-war Kosovo?

The Albanian families of Kosovo, whether small or large, modern or traditional, rural or urban, preserve traditional elements and trace their values to this customary law of Leke Dukagjini. These values are perhaps less obvious and more difficult to notice in the reality of modern Kosovo, but they are nonetheless near the surface, ready to emerge during any conflict or interaction between the family and others. Traditional clothing, for instance, which has often been associated with the isolation of women, is, on a deeper level, both a security measure and a symbol of a morality to which all adhere. Like this clothing, the *Kanun* of Leke Dukagjini, though closer to the experience of northern Albania, also provides for the physical and moral integrity of women, protecting them from the hands of outsiders.

Conclusion

Following the armed conflict and the violence of Serbian forces in Kosovo, violence aimed at women was, and remains, a source of suffering, which, by common consent, is kept silent. No one will ever know for certain how many women were raped in Kosovo. Newspaper headlines and a few files in the offices of some NGOs may offer numbers, but without any factual evidence. These numbers, as is often the case, oscillate wildly on both sides of the spectrum. Some cite tens of thousands of rapes, others fewer. Still others provide numbers that are merely of symbolic relevance. One humanitarian worker concerned with the problems of raped women even suggested that Kosovar women were less exposed to rape then those of Bosnia, if only because the war in Kosovo lasted only a couple of months, while the Bosnian war lasted a number of years. Still other observers have come to the conclusion that the violence aimed at Kosovar Albanian women was part of a greater strategy of ethnic cleansing, given that the frailty of the Albanian family to the rape of women is well known. This explanation would account for large numbers of violations. There is, however, one certainty in this instance, that Kosovar Albanian women, whether with their silence or open declarations about violence experienced, are a tragic example of how violence is followed by further violence. To speak openly, to clear one's conscience, to accept and prove honesty towards husband, children, parents and the community and as a result to be ridiculed and thrown into the gutter; or to remain forever silent,

living in trauma and the bitter memory of rape: this is the dark fate of these women following the experience of my people. This is a dilemma which can be explained by motives of a double refusal, a refusal to accept and take responsibility for this climate of hatred, and of the violence following violence. (or, as last line, for this climate of hatred, and of the violence that follows violence.)

Notes

1 The law of custom, which has been observed by the Albanian people through the centuries, especially in the northern area of Albania. Among the main principles of the *Kanun* are the respect of honour, the value of oral contracts, and the blood feud as means of retribution.
2 The most popular version of the *Kanun*, transcribed by Leke Dukagjini (comrade in arms of the Albanian national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg) in the fifteenth century.
3 Part of the story told by Mark Doshi, DinoshÎ, Montenegro, March 1978.

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Chapter 4

The Archives of Memory: Specific Results from Research in Serbia

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From December 1999 to September 2000, I was the researcher and coordinator of the Serbian section of the Archives of Memory project. The project was promoted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and set up in Belgrade and Pristina through a collaboration between IOM and ARCS – ARCI Cultura e Sviluppo, an Italian Non Governmental Organization (NGO) for which I then worked. I was requested to contribute to the project, in part as a continuation of activities already begun with young Kosovar Albanians during the months in which they were refugees in Albania, and to assist with the material and documentation gathered through contact with the refugee population during that time.[1] From the earliest days of our living and working with the refugees, we became aware of their need to remember and reconstruct their experience of war, displacement and social antagonism. ARCS responded to this need by offering cultural events such as concerts, photographic exhibitions and various recreational activities like writing, painting and theatre. It was hoped that these events would stimulate individual memories of family-related and personal events, while at the same time allowing the group to reconstruct their experiences and revive their individual memories together.

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Through this process, the refugees could be given a chance to share their experiences with a community gathered in a common space of socialization.

Our work began with a definition of identity in processual and relational terms. In other words, identity was not considered a fixed entity, but a continuous process of construction and redefinition of the self from resources belonging to different and intersecting social and cultural contexts. In this never-ending construction, memory plays an essential creative role by reinterpreting the past through a dialectical procedure that examines identity and diversity in relation to the experiences and needs of the present.

In these pages, our contribution to the Archives of the Memory project, we have interpreted the refugees' experiences of antagonism, war and exile, collecting their memories in order to identify common discursive strategies used to shape and understand these experiences. In particular, we attempted to trace patterns in methodologies of interpreting and understanding the past in relation to present conditions, in order to acknowledge the "subjective transformation" (Passerini, 1988) engendered by that experience, rather than focusing on the event alone. This transformation cannot occur in a void, but tends to be effected *a posteriori*, in light of the new needs and difficulties of the present condition. It is in the face of these needs that new discourses emerge and are mobilized to reinterpret the past.

With these dynamics in mind, it becomes important to observe exactly which cultural resources, historical events or figures, discursive formations, and social practices were "chosen" as tools and used to modify the identity of the individual in relation to a changing social and historical field. It is vital that these "choices" emerging in the narratives of belonging and antagonism are understood beyond the politicized, instrumental and reductive logic of ethnicization. Rather, they must be seen as devices enabling people to deal with new and unexpectedly changing personal and social needs. This further makes it necessary to acknowledge and analyse the process by which tradition is reinvented, even though in doing so, we run the risk of redefining cultural images, that have long existed in all coexisting local communities, as legitimate and active elements marking differences along "ethnic" lines.

Following this idea, we tried to highlight the diversity and similarities of the different cultures that have coexisted and clashed in the Balkans, wherever these differences and likenesses emerged in the interviews gathered. In order to do this, we chose to collect materials with the help of those who have perhaps been the most marginalized and deliberately repressed social groups in every ethnic or cultural setting we came across: young people. The Archives of Memory project has sought to include these young people

as both interviewers and interviewees in order to encourage critical reflection on the existence of different definitions and conditions of youth within Serbia and of different and competing experiences of ethnic affiliation across Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). All of the interviewers were Serbian, most of them 22 to 25 years old. They were asked to interview Serbs from Kosovo along with other interviewers of varying age and gender groups. This provided them the opportunity to question the homogeneity of Serbian identity by confronting experiences and realities different from those available to them in Serbia proper. I consider having provided them this occasion of reflection as one of the main achievements of the project.

A description of the condition of the Kosovar Serbian displaced in the FRY: from official reports to lived experiences

During the time I spent in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I became acquainted with many Serbian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Kosovo, in many different circumstances. I met some while I was supervising the various interviews, others as interviewees, and still others at the headquarters of local Non Governmental Organizations and community centres that were found suitable for the purposes of the project. From the different experiences they shared with me, I was given the impression that the Kosovar-Serbs exiled in the FRY found themselves in an extremely difficult position for many different reasons.

The first of these was a consequence of the timing of their exodus: they had arrived in Serbia in the wake of two prior waves of refugee migrations, (Bosnian and Croatian Serbs) and were received in an economic context characterized by extreme poverty and hardship. Worse yet, however, was the fact that they came from a very different experience of “Serbhood”, one that others had come to blame for supporting the political elite in a regime that most of the people living in rump FRY had by then come to despise. On one hand, Kosovar Serbs forced to leave their homes and villages to escape retaliatory violence were living proof of the failure of the regime’s nationalist militarism in Kosovo, while on the other hand, the Serbs of Serbia were ambivalent towards them, both because they had supported the hated regime throughout the years, and because they had eventually “surrendered” under pressure from the Albanians. Moreover, since Serbia’s economic situation had consistently deteriorated in the previous years, (the average salary being around 80 DEM when the interviews took place), and because of the fact that Kosovo has long been seen as an under-

developed area that has drained money from the Yugoslav State, the Serbian IDPs from Kosovo were considered privileged. According to many Serbs from Serbia, those arriving from Kosovo were not entitled to humanitarian aid any more than any other citizen of the FRY. A third reason for the difficult situation in which the Kosovar Serbs found themselves was that their culture and identity had evolved differently from that of the Serbs in Serbia. Most of the Kosovar Serbs, like their Albanian counterparts, had lived and worked in a rural environment, as members of large, patriarchal families. Their values were consistent with their social, economic and cultural horizon of daily experience. The Kosovar Serbs were perceived as “backwards” by the more modernized population of Yugoslavia. They were subject to discrimination and stigmatization in Serbia proper, often being called *Shiptars*, (a derogatory term used for Albanians), which, paradoxically, associated them with their Kosovar “enemies” and differentiated them from other Serbs.

At the time we collected our interviews, most of these Kosovar Serbian families were undergoing the process of resettlement alone, relying on their own resources, (apart from the very basic humanitarian aid provided by the UNHCR, OXFAM, and especially the Yugoslav Red Cross, these being the only organizations authorized to distribute aid at the time). While richer families had been able to rent homes on their own, those who could not afford this found themselves in extremely precarious situations. Most found shelter in provisionally organized collective centres, which were usually set up in abandoned schools or buildings that had once belonged to the state. Often, these shelters were situated in the outskirts of the main urban centres, in Belgrade, Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Leskovac and Vranje, as well as in Novi Sad.

The areas we identified as most suitable for the interviewing process were Novi Sad (Vojvodina), Belgrade, Kraljevo, and Kragujevac in central Serbia, and Leskovac in Southern Serbia. These last three cities, because of their proximity to Kosovo, had received the largest influx of IDPs. These areas were selected mainly because of the significant presence of Kosovar IDPs, but they were also found suitable to the purposes of the project because of the regional differences between Southern Serbia (Leskovac), Central Serbia (Kraljevo and Kragujevac), Belgrade, and Vojvodina (Novi Sad). On the basis of the number of working areas and of refugees, we decided to train and hire six interviewers: two for the Belgrade area, one for the Novi Sad Area, two for the Kraljevo and Kragujevac area, and one for the Leskovac area. Altogether, the interviewers collected more than 120 interviews, among which 40 have been selected for translation.

The rise of nationalism: the politics of perturbation

Before delving into a detailed analysis of the narrative material and the discursive strategies that have socially and culturally sustained antagonism and war, it was important to identify a theoretical framework. This framework should highlight the relevance of these social and cultural discourses in relation to both the social implications of psychological intervention and the psychological implications of social intervention. In analysing the fragmentation of contemporary Serbian society, it is very important to refer to an ongoing historical process of confrontation between two co-existing cognitive frameworks, corresponding to and re-producing two different moral and social worlds:

- A homogeneous world, sustained by a regressive, narcissistic fantasy of unity and homogeneity, which produces ontological security through the denial of difference;
- A heterogeneous world, where a social environment is constructed by accepting difference and acknowledging it as a non-threatening and inseparable part of everyday life.

According to Artan Fuga, there is an intrinsic relationship between a cognitive order and a specific conception of political power, as a type of social and political justice is tied reciprocally to a certain conception of truth (Fuga, 1998). If homogeneous thinking can be defined as a cognitive approach based on the principle of homogenization, or the appropriation of all of the conceptual space by one of the categorical poles involved in the process of intellectual confrontation, heterogeneous thinking can be defined as a cognitive approach based on acknowledgement of the value of difference and on the attempt to synthesize the arguments produced by all of the categorical poles around which the debate is structured. All philosophical logic operating within homogeneous categories thus legitimates authoritarian power, while democracy has been conceived, throughout the history of philosophy, by heterogeneous conceptual structures. (Fuga, 1988: 28).

For the purposes of this project, the emergence and permanence of discourses related to these two different cognitive, psychological and social worlds can best be traced and analysed, in their full social and psychological relevance, from a historical perspective. In order to do this, one should bear in mind, as a common thread linking current events and the discourses evoked to produce and interpret these events, a process: the formation of modern nation-states following the dissolution of non-ethnic sovereignties such as the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Since

then, this nation-building process has known historical continuity beyond any ideological disruption. Beyond the apparent fragmentation of the complex social structure of South Eastern Europe, and across the many geo-political divisions along ideological or ethnic lines, the emergence of modern nation states should be considered evidence of continuity, rather than change. This is particularly true when nation-building occurs in a social environment that has already been shaped under the hegemony of culturally homogenous forces.

Branimir Anzulevic's analysis of the historical process by which Serbian culture and society developed begins with an attempt to identify the "psychological mechanism that makes it possible for large numbers of basically normal citizens to engage in collective crimes or to accept them without protest" (Anzulovic, 1999: 2). According to the author, this happens when the dissemination of "pathological ideas", such as "the fear of being annihilated by an enemy and the confidence in one's strength to annihilate the enemy instead", create a pressure under which strong bonds develop between members of a particular group (Anzulovic, 1999; 2-3).

While evaluating and giving justice, even briefly, to the entirety of Anzulovic's analysis of the origin and development of Serbian identity would flow far beyond the purposes of this essay, some of his work is particularly relevant for the purpose of our study. He "explore(s) the process through which the old myth of an innocent, suffering Serbia, and the concomitant myth of foreign evildoers who conspire against its very existence, influenced the behaviour of Serbs at the close of the twentieth century" (Anzulovic, 1999: 4), since "the myths and legends created soon after the battle of Kosovo were reinvigorated by the Serbian intelligentsia to fan their compatriots' nationalistic passions in the 1980s" (Anzulovic, 1999: 2). Therefore, from this perspective,

> An event from medieval Serbian history permeates present-day Serbia's culture and politics. The 1389 Battle with the Ottoman Turks on the Field of Kosovo still exerts a powerful influence on the Serbs, who see it as the pivotal moment of their plunge from a prosperous, sovereign medieval Balkan state to a stateless community within the Ottoman Empire, a condition that lasted until the nineteenth century (Anzulovic, 1999: 1).

According to Anzulovic, then, the dominant Serbian myth of a Heavenly Serbia, which attributes the Serbian defeat at Kosovo Polje to the Serbian people's commitment to the heavenly kingdom and to the choice of moral purity over military victory, originally performed the useful function of helping the Serbs bear the humiliation of defeat and endure century-long domination by a foreign culture (Anzulovic, 1999: 5). Even when Serbia

ultimately became independent from Ottoman rule anyway, this myth was regenerated and revitalized. It "retained its vigour because it carries its promise that Serbia would resurrect as a mighty empire, instead of remaining a small, landlocked country" (Anzulovic, 1999: 5). Thus:

> The myths dealing with the loss of the medieval empire served to create a nationalist frenzy at the moment when the anticipated breakdown of the post-war order imposed by the communists and the Serbian domination of communist Yugoslavia's armed forces… seemed to provide a unique opportunity for the realisation of the central promise of Serbia mythology – the creation of a Second Serbian Empire (Anzulovic, 1999: 2).

From this brief description of Anzulovic's argument, and keeping in mind the fact that Serb culture emerged historically out of a sociocultural environment of hardship and repression, it is important to underline how, in Serbia, a collectivist identity sustained by a narcissist libidinal economy was hegemonic, and was articulated by narratives of self-victimization, moral superiority and omnipotence. These narratives were consistent with a hyper-moralized and authoritarian moral world and with a mode of subjectivation in which dynamics of authoritarian repression of individual impulsions and desires were widely hegemonic, as this was instrumental in guaranteeing the survival of a collectivist identity. This mode of subjectivation should be seen as an element of continuity in the process of historical development of Serbian culture and society, beyond the specific ideological narratives through which it was articulated in different forms. From this perspective, pre-Communist Serbo-centric nationalism, Communist Yugoslavism and post-Communist nationalism should be seen as different cultural and political strategies, which are in turn shaped by the same authoritarian and narcissistic model of subjectivation throughout history. This brought Serbia to be the principal promoter and main locus for the articulation of different versions of Yugoslav identity as a cultural strategy to assert hegemony over neighbouring countries.

Following this idea, one might turn to Andrew Wachtel and his analysis of the three main phases of Yugoslavian nationalism, from its first emergence in the early nineteenth century to its current expression. In the words of Wachtel, these phases could be "differentiated on the issue of how a national culture should be created and on what it should be based" (Wachtel, 1998: 5). According to the first version of Yugoslavian nationalism promoted by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs sometime between 1830 and 1840, "the South Slavs would, for all intents and purposes, have adopted a slightly modified form of Serbian culture", as the Serbs were the largest southern Slavic group as well as the first to throw off external rule and create an autonomous state in modern times (Wachtel, 1998: 5). Around

the turn of the century, another synthetic vision of a Yugoslav nation emerged along multicultural lines, claiming that a unified Yugoslav culture should be created by combining the best elements of each separate southern Slavic culture, in order to create a new culture that would be shared by all and eventually replace the separate national identities. These arguments were especially influential during the post-World War I reconstruction period, but were later "overwhelmed by political developments in inter-war Yugoslavia, which generally worked to impose Serb domination on the rest of the country" (Wachtel, 1998: 9). Finally, in the period following World War II, the Yugoslav ideal re-emerged again in new forms. This time, the separate national cultures were allowed to remain at the level of folk culture, while the Communist State apparatus in each nation became directly responsible for propounding and promoting a national culture in conformity with the ideological requirements of social realism. It was partly as a result of this that the Yugoslavian national identity was inefficient in expressing a feeling of common cultural belonging that would also enable the single national cultures to be expressed. While the cultural resources of single national cultures were ignored, the ideological attempt to introduce an artificial supranational identity and impose it from above was destined to fail along with the apparatuses that produced and promoted it. Moreover, the second articulation of a Yugoslavian cultural identity can be seen as carrying a deep Serb nationalist bias, embedded and disguised within it. As the Serbs controlled the omnipotent communist ruling party after their role in the partisan war, they had taken it upon themselves to reconfigure the national discourse and ideology in accordance with their perceived sentiment of moral superiority. This collectivist supra-national culture promoted and elaborated by the State cultural apparatuses and controlled by Serbs in the name of their own moral superiority was destined to be seen as both nationalistic and unappealing once the "themes of the partisan war had played themselves out". In fact,

> under pressure from the resurgent national cultures, in the early 1960s it was decided that political and economic forces… would be sufficient to hold the state together, and attempts to create a unified national culture of any kind were to be abandoned (Wachtel, 1998: 9).

Therefore, from this perspective, the emergence of nationalism alongside the collapse of communism should be understood in light of two parallel processes. One was the delicate passage from a collectivist and homogeneous cultural order, to an individualist, and thus heterogeneous one. The second, was the rising feeling of (ontological) insecurity and (narcissistic) frustration, related to the collapse of a social, cultural, psychological and economic order that was based on fantasies of infallibility and moral

superiority. With the collapse of communist ideology under increasing pressure for political pluralism in all parts of Yugoslavia and in particular in Serbia, but in the continuity of the hegemony of narcissistic-collectivist discourses, "more homogeneous collectivities could and did easily challenge the Yugoslav idea" (Wachtel, 1998: 10). These new collectivities were instrumentalized and incorporated into the political strategy of the conservative elite in control of the ruling Serb-dominated Yugoslav Communist party.

In retrospect, the virulent and violent fragmentation of Yugoslavia can thus be seen as part of a "purposeful and rational strategy planned and carried out by the minority of political actors in Serbia who were most threatened by democratizing and liberalizing currents within the Serbian Communist Party". It follows that "conflict along ethnic lines was (…) actively created and provoked by certain political actors in order to forestall native trends towards democratization". In addition, "war was begun precisely because of the relative strength of home-grown pressure for political pluralism and support for liberal democratic values, especially in Serbia" (Gagnon, 1994: 118). In order to conceal the political relevance of the call for pluralism that rang within the political elite of the late 1980s, the conservative section of the Yugoslavian Socialist parties articulated existing economic, social and political divisions and antagonisms into a comprehensive logic of ethnic antagonism (Gagnon 1994).

Keeping the Yugoslavian situation in mind, one might say that from the beginning of the 1980s, ethnic and nationalist discourses were mobilized by a conservative minority at the top of the Serbian Communist Party, by old-line Marxist intellectuals and by elements of the Yugoslav National Army "to prevent newly active non-communist democratic forces in Serbia from mobilizing the wider population against the regime" (Gagnon, 1994: 118). From this perspective, nationalist discourses were mobilized to conceal the alternative and opposing political categories along which Yugoslavia was re-articulating its identity according to two different moral and political worlds, as homogeneity/totalitarianism was being challenged by heterogeneity/democracy.

However, if the main culprits responsible for the explosion of Serbian violence in the Balkans of the late twentieth century were the political and cultural elite whose position of prestige and power were integrally bound to the old system, it is also true that they easily managed "to convince fellow Serbs that their moral superiority [was threatened] by a worldwide conspiracy. Thus, it is fundamental to underline the fact that the Serbian elite could not have succeeded in mobilizing the support of large masses of the population for the war had the latter not already been under the

influence of old national myths" (Anzulovic, 1999: 145-146). It might be added that this was exacerbated by the historical continuity and unbroken hegemony of a narcissist and collectivist mode of subjectivation within the Serbian culture. The Serbian people seemed particularly receptive to narratives of annihilation, and feelings of rage grew with their perceived loss of power due to the fall from a position they had felt entitled to in the name of their perceived moral superiority. Beyond this, the main responsibility for what happened falls upon the political and cultural elite of Belgrade, who were able to evoke repressed anxieties and fantasies of extermination in order to maintain a position of material, political and cultural privilege unaltered by the process of democratization.

In the words of Sigmund Freud, "every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety" (Freud, 1955a: 241). Thus, the feeling of anxiety or anguish emerging when one sees something "uncanny" should be perceived as an indication of "something repressed that recurs" (Freud, 1955a: 241, emphasis in text). Something that comes to be perceived as "uncanny" represents, in reality, "nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and well-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (Freud, 1955a: 241).

Freud emphasizes how the uncanny elements seem to re-present and re-actualize elements removed from previous stages of individual and collective cultural and social formations. This would be evident in the fantasies of omnipotence characterizing the phase of *primary narcissism*, and in the ancient animistic conception of a world "characterized by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental processes; by the belief in the omnipotence of thought… and by all other creations with the help of which men, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to fend off the manifest prohibitions of reality" (Freud, 1955a: 240).

In Freud's vision, these ideas were not limited to early humanity:

> Each of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage… none of us [have] passed though it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bring them to expression (Freud, 1955a: 240-1).

Applied to the actions of the conservative Serb cultural and political elite, Freud's idea suggests that this elite, also, succeeded in maintaining its privileges and power through the elaboration and implementation of their

own politics of perturbation of the uncanny. Beyond the theory, this has meant the politicized mobilization and revitalization of narratives of ethnic belonging, moral superiority and victimization, which were instrumental in re-actualizing and re-activating repressed fantasies of omnipotence and anxieties of extermination and competition, thus triggering narcissistic rage. According to Michael Ignatieff:

> Viewing nationalism as a kind of narcissism reveals the projective and self-regarding quality of the nationalistic discourse. The particular property of *the narcissist gaze* is that it glances up at the Other just to confirm its difference. Then it looks down again and turns its gaze upon itself. *It does not engage with the Other in any real sense*. Narcissist anxiety expresses itself chiefly in passive self-absorption. A narcissist is uninterested in others except to the extent that they reflect back upon himself. What is different is rejected if it fails to confirm the narcissist in his self-opinion (Ignatieff, 1997: 52, emphasis mine).

These dynamics have very important implications as far as the issue of personal and collective responsibility is framed within any culture and society. Moreover, this is a key issue in the narratives used by Serbian IDPs to construct a morally and psychologically sustainable meaning out of the complex events they have experienced, and thus calls for deeper analysis. In fact, when an adult regresses to a stage of primary narcissism, he withdraws his libidinal impulsions from the outside world and focuses on his/her needs and fears. It is interesting to underline how both of the main pathological implications of this regression, megalomania and paranoia, are consistent with the subject's withdrawal from reality. Withdrawal from reality implies a difficulty for the subject to cope with responsibility, which is then projected outside the narcissistic subject's world of moral perfection and the corresponding collectivist identity re-producing the subject along these lines. Subjects can therefore construct narratives of paranoia and conspiracy in order to liberate themselves from the burden of responsibility, doing so in their inability to confront the contradictory and ambivalent nature of reality, as this is experienced primarily through the fantasies and projections of his/her idealized Ego. In the remainder of the paper, some of these dynamics will be illustrated as they appear in the narratives used by Kosovar Serbian IDPs living in Serbia to create a psychologically and socially meaningful experience of antagonism, war and displacement.

Analysis of the interviews

In order to better analyse and describe the narratives of Serb IDPs from Kosovo, I have attempted to follow the interview framework according to

which their stories were collected. The original interview model consisted of 13 questions grouped into nine themes. The narratives used by Serb IDPs have been analysed here according to the four most relevant of these themes, focussing on coexistence, antagonism, war and displacement. Although care was taken to select interviewees who by their age, gender, education, and by their position on different sides of the sharp rural/urban divide, represented the diversity of Kosovo's Serbian population, their combined experiences could not possibly depict a cross section of the entire displaced population. They might, however, draw attention to certain factors and dynamics that to a greater or lesser extent concern all of the Kosovar Serbian IDPs, and that will be significant to the development of a Serbian culture and society, in its existence beyond the context of Kosovo.

Section C: between public normative logic and individual experience

Section C of the interview framework focused on the gap between normative public logic and the deep, lived experience of war, displacement and return. Some of the more important questions asked included the following:

4 (c) How did the events taking place in Kosovo in the past 10-15 years influence your life and that of your family?

5 (c) How was the situation before the recent escalation of events? When did the war begin? Why?

6 (c) Did you leave the area in which you were staying during war? – If so, how would you describe this experience? How did you feel about having to leave? Do you think you will ever go back? How did you manage to stay before you left? – If not, how do you feel about the Serbian refugees in the FRY?

7 (c) How do you feel about the role that the YNA/Militija [Yugoslav National Army] has held in Kosovo in the past years? What was this role? Whose interests were they trying to protect? Did they succeed?

Following are extracts from the responses we received:

> Ugly things were happening. There were physical conflicts, attacks, kidnapping, murders, and all of that was the consequence of the western, so called 'democratic' policy imposed by America, especially since the nineties onwards. Everything was directed so that Kosovo should leave the republic. Shiptars [Kosovo Albanians] had no rights, they are oppressed, unemployed, poor. On the other hand, when you had a look at----, that is, Kosovo in general, the biggest deals, the biggest busi-

nesses, the biggest money and the biggest smuggling actions were taken over by the oppressed Shiptars. The poor, illiterate Shiptars, as they were described in the West. Those were the people who dealt with everything. They lived really well, they drove the most expensive cars, they did what they wanted, they bribed everyone and in the end, things happened the way they happened. [(V16): Serb man, aged 60, an economist from a middle-sized urban context and with direct dramatic experiences of animosity and antagonism. He escaped an attempted kidnapping and later saw the successive kidnap and murder of two of his colleagues while at work. He is now suffering from angina pectoris].

I don't know what to say about that, but... In the last 10-15 years, as the situation got worse... I was bothered the most… during those demonstrations... that mass gave me the creeps... It was as the "alternative" ordered them, so they went out and as they ordered them… One day they say: you'll come and protest. And they come and protest. On another day they go out, in masses... It gives me the creeps, even as I speak of it... it's a mob, a mass, and among them we recognized our friends, and since then some things changed terribly. [(M4): Serb woman from an urban environment, aged 30, pharmacist, married with two children aged 3 and 4. Both she and her husband had experienced antagonism and conflict with Albanians. She has been attacked several times, and once even raped].

Well, I think Belgrade, official Belgrade, that is the government, or regime as some call it, was ruling with a use of force over something which had not belonged to it since long before… That regime in Belgrade made some moves, and they knew they couldn't finish up the job and that one day they would have to make some concessions and those concessions are felt on our backs, the backs of common people who lived there. With the help of the army and police, who more-or-less didn't care about Kosovo, they are professionals who just happened to come there, they misused their power, especially in the last period of their rule, during the bombing, during NATO aggression against Yugoslavia, particularly against Kosovo. I think they reached the peak of their abuse at that time, taking everything they could, which didn't belong to them, and left us there to pay for the damage they have done in the past nine years, for something we haven't done. That is what I think. [(V6): Serb man, aged 33, supervisor, from an urban environment. He had friends among Albanians and believed that the police had mistreated them, as his personal experience confirms].

They protected people first, then the borders and finally the army were fighting terrorism, like any army would do. They didn't terrorize the Shiptars because of their nationality, but they were merely fighting terrorism. They had never harassed or mistreated anybody. They were just protecting the borders and fighting terrorism. [(V4) Serb man, aged 26, military, He has been shot twice since the arrival of KFOR. He is currently working for the Kosovo Protection Corps in a position of great responsibility].

> … People came with masks on their faces, forcing Albanians out [of their shops], which hurt them most, let me tell you, that forcing them out of their houses. They wouldn't let them, I saw that personally, put on their shoes on their feet, but they forced them to go barefoot. Now, who these people were, nobody can tell, or dare tell. I said to one, "Why are you doing it like that, they are people too. Let them take something if they need to." "You mind your business, and don't meddle or you will go with them." And of course, I could not say a thing any more. I saw that they were not the army, that they were not the police, who they were, who came there, I don't know. [(G22) Serb woman, aged 60. The interviewee had a university degree, had come from an urban environment, and had experiences of friendship with Albanians].

> Question: You mentioned the volunteers. What was their role?
> Wife: Bad, they did most of…
> Husband: Well look, both the Shiptars and the Serbs were afraid of the volunteers. I have an example, when I was mobilized and the village I was sent to was filled with the volunteers, they are…
> Wife: They are worse than Shiptars.
> Husband: People locked themselves into their houses, that was how afraid they were, because they heard that from other villages that the volunteers come, drink a lot, shoot, and do things. I was in that village, you couldn't hear a shot; but in my village, there was shooting all the time and problems of all sorts.
> Wife: A crazy Russian was throwing bombs around, constantly drunk. Nobody could go out. ---- village suffered much from the volunteers, and that is why they [Albanians] burned it down, those Serb houses, churches, they destroyed them all. There were cases of rape and burning the houses and robbery and such things. A volunteer, it is known what he does, the worst. And the active army, normally, like any other army, did nothing of the sort.
>
> [(G20): Young married couple from a suburban context, they were both employees before having to flee Kosovo. They feel that responsibility for the situation in Kosovo is to be sought at a political level].

The main purpose of this set of questions was to register the convergence or gaps between the events as they were actually experienced, and the narratives provided by the various political and social actors who participated in, interpreted and even created these events. The majority of persons interviewed found a need to "make sense" of scattered events and emotions. Each of them, in different ways, tried to understand and explain to themselves why, in their own words, "the things that happened to them happened to them". Some found a "culprit" or "culprits" and placed all of the responsibility on them, others had fatalistic inclinations and attributed their displacement and the loss of Kosovo to the destiny of the Serbian

nation. Others still could not make any sense of the events. In analysing the life histories of Serb IDPs, it might be interesting to observe how meaning is culturally constructed, by identifying and analysing the "narrative resources" used to sustain this meaning.

Throughout the interviews, the two narratives most often used to give meaning to events were those of victimization and conspiracy. Both of these discursive sets are consistent with a narcissistic psychological and social order, characterized by the tendency to reject issues of personal responsibility outwards.

Narratives of antagonism and victimization: "Look what they did to us…"

Throughout the project, narratives of self-victimization and malevolent conspiracy recurred in the interviews collected. While many events and dynamics were reported or confirmed by the major international organizations/institutions operating in Kosovo and rump Yugoslavia, it should be made clear that it is beyond the purpose of the present essay to confirm or refute the veracity of any of these assertions (a sample of which is presented below). More relevant here, are the psychological and social implications of the fact that these explanations are *experienced* as if they were both meaningful and true. Our aim here is thus simply to identify and analyse the psychological and social implications embedded in this construct of meaning and truth.

The following self-victimizing narratives recurred in the interviewees' descriptions of the situation in Kosovo before 1998. These were identified through a qualitative discursive analysis of the interview transcriptions:

- Discrimination in the workplace: the Albanians were granted extra privileges in the public sector;
- Albanians held a monopoly over the private and informal economy;
- Discrimination in restricted access to public services: Albanian civil servants had the authority to either grant or bar access or assistance;
- Albanians often enjoyed higher economic status, due to remittances sent by friends, kin, or other migrants living abroad;
- Albanians refused to learn Serbian while the Serbs had to learn Albanian;
- Albanians never really abandoned the notion of a Greater Albania;
- Albanians had better access to education;
- "Albanians were always richer than us."

Narratives of self-victimization used to describe the situation after 1998:

- Loss of property and of status for Serbs; further improvement for Albanians;
- Fear of attacks, kidnapping and rape;
- Threats and intimidation by Albanian gangs;
- Murders and retaliatory violence enacted against Serbs;
- Repression of Serbs;
- Pressure on Serbs to leave Kosovo;
- "Our police were always impartial, Albanians were safer under the protection of Yugoslav police and army than the Serbs were under the KFOR";
- Serbs were not nationalistic; Albanians were.

Narratives of responsibility and conspiracy: "it was them!"

- Albanians began the conflict; the Serbs were defending their legitimate status;
- "They never liked us, they were pretending to be friendly";
- Albanians were manipulated (supported) from outside Kosovo; by Albania, European powers, America;
- The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was directly controlled by foreign powers;
- The western media orchestrated events in collusion with the KLA;
- The Albanians were the ones truly responsible for the NATO bombings;
- Albanians fled Kosovo exclusively in order to blame the Serbs and provoke the bombing;
- Serbian rage was a mere reaction to unjust humiliation;
- Albanian demands for greater rights were unjustified;
- It was always the Serbs who suffered most;
- The Albanians were ungrateful: they already had everything;
- NATO intervened to serve its own secret interests: since Kosovo is full of mineral resources, America has always wanted to control the Balkans;
- It was not the Albanians nor Serbs from Kosovo who did this. Some stronger power influenced them;

- All Albanians wanted a Greater Albania but they would not have acted without the greater power(s) that manipulated them from backstage;
- "Maybe my neighbours were not to blame. We are not to blame either, so someone else makes people act violently";
- The Serbian politicians and civil servants of Kosovo were corrupt, but it was the Albanians who "did it".

In order to come to a conclusion about the psychological and social implications of these hegemonic discursive narratives of conspiracy and self-victimization, it might be useful to compare these with a similar list of narratives in conversations of different kinds that I was involved with in rump Yugoslavia while coordinating the interviewing phase. It should be remembered here that in Serbia, the construction of self-victimizing narratives might be seen as the corner stone in the construction of individual or collective identities. These narratives recur across all political divisions present in the society. In the many conversations and interviews heard, held or collected in Serbia, perhaps the most striking feature was this particular selection of narratives that has been used to give meaning to wars and other events occurring during the last ten years of Serbian history:

- "Serbia has always been on the right side of history and is always unjustly losing the battle against the evil 'others' that wanted to conquer what was 'ours' (the Turks, the Nazi Croats and fascist Italians, and now, the Albanian nationalists)";
- Narratives of decadence and nostalgia of a past glory: "[Under Tito] we had everything, we were great";
- Complaints of current international isolation, as compared to a mythical (recent) past when a Yugoslav citizen could go from Moscow to New York without a visa;
- Pity exclusively or mainly for the Serbian victims of war;
- Narratives of extermination and victimization as one more element in the continuous history/fate of the Serbian people,: in relation to the assaults of the Turks, the Ustasha Croats, the Nationalist Albanians, and now of NATO;
- Conspiracy theories about the USA and NATO: that they harbour a secret agreement with the Albanians and with Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic with the intention of dismembering Serbia;
- Blame for the crumbling of Yugoslavia placed either on backward and ungrateful Kosovo and Macedonia, or on greedy Slovenia and Croatia;

- Blame for the break up of Yugoslavia assigned to western powers (typically Germany and the Vatican for having recognized Slovenia and Croatia).

The list could continue, but these examples should suffice to help us see a broader picture. What is striking in the comparison of these few scattered narratives taken from the Kosovar Serbian IDPs with the narratives gathered from Serbian intellectuals and political activists (most of which were detractors of the then ruling Milosevic regime), is that they are all instrumental in freeing Serbian collective formations and individuals from the responsibility of having started the civil wars that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia. To emphasize this is not to claim that all the responsibility can and should be assigned to the Serbs, as this position would be untenable and beyond the purposes of the present work. Rather, what the narratives suggest is that this self-victimization and conspiracy mindset is consistent with a collectivist and narcissistic world of moral superiority, a world which disavows and denies individuality, in terms of both difference and responsibility. By reiterating the idea that Albanians were manipulated by foreign powers, that the media disseminated biased information, that they had been manipulated by Albanian nationalist parties and terrorized by Albanian paramilitary formations, the Serbian people from Kosovo and rump Yugoslavia were able to project unconscious perceptions of the situation in which they increasingly found themselves. In this respect it is important to underline how the inward-directed libidinal economy of a narcissist subject does not potentially enable him/her to see the world other than through his/her idealized and moralized ego, which mediates any direct engagement with reality that could potentially alter his/her self-perception in terms of omnipotence, moral superiority, and perfection.

This brings us to another narrative strategy implemented by the Serbian displaced population, which is also consistent with a narcissist psychological order: negation. According to Freud, the content removed from a representation or from one's thought can sometimes make its way into consciousness, on the condition that it is *negated* (Freud, 1955b: 235). From this perspective, negation becomes a way for the removed to reach consciousness without the acceptance of what has been repressed. The action of negating something is thus equivalent to saying, "this is something which I should prefer to repress", for "a negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression" (Freud, 1955b: 236). Through this theory of negation, the promptness with which many Serb IDPs minimized the blatant nationalist bias of their local state-owned television, denied the existence of all forms of racism and discrimination within the Yugoslav

army and police and denied or minimized the relevance of the presence of Serb paramilitary units in Kosovo can be read in all of its psychological, social and political relevance.

The combination of these three dynamics, self-victimization, negation and conspiracy projection, might be considered both consistent with and sustaining the fantasy of moral perfection and superiority of a collective/ narcissistic subject. By experiencing events in these terms, the narcissist subject can be seen as unconsciously trying to protect his or her own psychological equilibrium from the anxiety that emerged both from the collapse of a moral and cognitive order, and from the subconscious return of some repressed complexes, evoked by perturbing (uncanny) events and discourses present in the social and cultural field. In this light, it is important to underline that it is usually those people originating from a patriarchal rural environment (thus usually lacking continuative and prolonged social interaction with Albanians), who tend to be most vulnerable to the internalization and transmission of conspiracy theories and homogenous discourses of ethnic hatred. Urbanized people, who had experienced coexistence for a long time, tended to be less adamant in their rejection of responsibility, and less virulent in their demonization of the Albanian enemy.

Having analysed the social and psychological implications of the use of narratives of conspiracy, denial and self-victimization in the social construction of meaning in relation to social antagonism and conflict, in the next section I will try to articulate the way these dynamics influence and shape the experience and understanding of suffering and healing as they are framed within Serb IDPs cultural horizon of daily experience.

Sections D and E

In sections D and E, it was suggested that the interviewers discuss the following:

D – Pathologizing life: coping strategies and the emergence of suffering in individual, familiar, generational, gender, and collective dimensions of life.

E – Narratives and discourses of suffering and healing in relation to the sociocultural and historical environment.

Questions were formulated, and answered thus:

8 (d) Have you or any member of your family or any of your friends experienced distress?
How has it been? What means have been used to cope with it?

9 (e) Could you explain what it means for you to experience suffering? How do you know that someone is distressed?

Well, it's a change, but let me tell you what it's like back home. I get up in the morning, early, make coffee for my husband, go to the cattle, at ten I go to the field, I come back in the evening, I don't get tired. When I come home, my children gather around me like chicken. Commodity, plenty of food on the table, and here... How can I not be worse off? See for yourself?. One toilet, one bathroom, children are noisy half way through the night, food...We have food, whoever gave it to us, I thank him. I don't work anywhere, I don't have anything, neither does my husband, only those two sons work, so that these children could... And how can I be well then, days only get worse, you're helpless. Before, I work all day – nothing. Now – I go to the village, my legs hurt. I don't work, the organism doesn't work, and slowly, slowly, it will whither before it's your due, parts just die out. I just stand and I think of the worse. Until now, I hoped I'd go back, now I see there's no hope. [(S6): Serb woman, aged 59, married, mother of two, housewife from a rural environment, currently living with her husband in a collective accommodation centre].

First, there is no regularity in sleeping and eating. It lasted for days. You can't realize that all of that has happened to you. Then worrying, shock, stress until it cooled down… until months have passed. You couldn't believe it, but then you get stabilized even more than you would have expected. Then you meet somebody and you fall down again, or you remember this or that. It is always present, you can't get rid of it completely, and yet you have to look ahead, because you know the essence, that you can't look back, but ahead. There you go. [(V12): Serb woman, aged 54, shop assistant, mother of two children, from a middle-sized urban environment].

Well, people mainly don't speak about it. They are mainly silent, probably when they are alone, then they play that film. I don't know how they behave. I personally don't think much about it, about Kosovo. So I always think about something else… People don't speak about it much, very little. I think that it is some kind of defence, people don't want to return to it in this way. [(V10): Montenegrin woman, aged 34, architect, from an urban environment. She was attacked by a group of Albanian children when she was nine months pregnant].

You know, we were all traumatized. Especially my folks, who were there until November, and my mother did not leave the house for the last three months, she could not go, she could do nothing, do you understand? The little food they had, my brother brought in. This was a traumatic experience… [(V15) Serb woman, 25, from a urban environment. Her Albanian neighbour had helped her by bringing five of his brothers to testify in front of KLA soldiers that her brother had not participated in the Serbian national army during the war].

The principal aim of this section was to identify the specific narratives through which Serb IDPs from Kosovo approached and dealt with the pain and suffering emerging from the memories of hardship, antagonism, war and displacement. The narrative extracts show how, in Yugoslavia, (as in most communist countries where psychology was introduced as a medical discipline at a very early stage), pathological and psychiatric vocabulary, and in particular words such as "trauma" and "stress", have floated into common use. Of particular interest are the word "trauma" and the related discourses of traumatization. These can be assimilated into the discourses of self-victimization, as an attempt to achieve moral legitimization and support from an external observer. Among the interviewees, many reported having sought medical advice from a psychiatrist and having been prescribed the use of tranquillisers. Nobody, however, admitted to resorting (or to having resorted) to traditional medicine.

Aside from trauma, the other psychiatric terms most commonly used by the interviewees were "anxiety", "depression", "nervous breakdown", and even "post traumatic stress disorder", though it occurred only once, when a former army officer was discussing the presence and impact of the volunteers working alongside regular troops. Non-technical terms used to describe their conditions were: "suffering", "pain", "sadness", "irritability", "lack of desire to enjoy life", "self-isolation", "absent-mindedness", "fear of being lost", "feeling of helplessness", and "depression". When asked how they would describe their sorrow in another way, two people mentioned "a scar in the soul". Another described what she felt as "a deep wound in her soul". Older people and parents felt burdened by the need to hide their pain in the presence of their children, who were already losing sleep and appetite.

All of the interviewees spoke of having experienced some form of physical or psychological condition that they associated with the memory of recent hardship: sleep or eating disorders, anxiety, tremors, depression, irritability. Many people explained their physical suffering in relation to their psychological suffering. Pathologies like thyroidism, ulcers, stomach aches, high blood pressure and heart conditions were somehow seen as related to some form of psychological condition. On the other hand, many reported cases of relatives and friends, both young and old, who died when their already critical health conditions were dramatically worsened by the circumstances of war and displacement. In all of the cases, suffering was related both to the memories and to the experiences of antagonism, displacement and resettlement. Particularly painful to them were the memories recalling life before the war. Nearly all of the interviewees dreamt regularly of life in Kosovo before destruction and conflict. Usually these

dreams found them living in their destroyed homes, performing routine activities. To most, the disruption of these daily routines was the origin of their anxiety, sadness and irritability.

Almost every person I interviewed had experienced violence, antagonism, repression, and discrimination. Moreover, each of the interviewees knew at least one or more people who had been killed or who had experienced a personal tragedy. While watching people retell their stories of pain and sorrow and noticing their transformation under the pressure of the resurgent pain, I was deeply shaken by their apparent sorrow, but even more so by what was not spoken; the pain that lingered above us during the interviews. The dynamics of repression and defence applied to that tremendous intensity of sorrow and pain often meant that those who were directly involved in a deeply sorrowful event did not mention it. The interviewers were often told these stories from other members of the family. One mother, for instance, forgot to discuss how her only son had been seriously wounded and his life endangered. She spoke of this later, and only when directly encouraged.

These mechanisms of suppression prevailed in those who had personally encountered life-threatening situations, or who were closely related to someone who had. These people were reluctant to speak of their deeply unsettling personal experiences. In some cases, the stories appeared only after considerable encouragement from the interviewer. On several occasions their revival caused reactions too dangerous for the interviewees, and much experienced effort was needed to settle the deeply disturbing emotions evoked in the course of conversation.

In most cases, the most painful memory was that of the moment people were forced to leave their homes. The experience of displacement and resettlement was, in fact, very disturbing for the vast majority of those interviewed, and the disruption of daily routines and of familiar, every day life activities, proved to be an ordeal for everyone. Because daily routines and social practices are essential to maintain a sense of ontological security, they play a pivotal role in sustaining and maintaining the subject's psychological equilibrium. The more these routines are integral and rooted in the subject's understanding of the meaning of his own presence in the world, the more deeply these routines have been disrupted, the more a person will tend to feel disoriented and the more vulnerable and fragile his/her psychological equilibrium will tend to be.

Urbanized people, whether young or adult, usually reacted to the context of resettlement with more resilience, since the social and cultural environment in which they used to live is not so different from that to which they must adjust. Further, since their individual identities and family lives were

usually already partially separated from their living environments (unlike a more rural individual who might work and live within a closely-knit family unit) these could be replicated in a new setting. Especially well-adapted were the students who could continue their studies, and the adults who could find some sort of occupation and whose children were able to continue their education. These people generally showed greater confidence in themselves, had hope for the future, and thought more realistically about the possibility of returning to Kosovo. On the other hand, the older people coming from rural environments felt completely disoriented and lost, as their individual identities had been rooted in a collective psychological and social environment that was entirely bound to the cycles of agricultural production and to the unity of farmhouse, patriarchal family and land.

These differences, however, should not diminish the fact that all of the interviewed people had experienced anxiety, pain and suffering related to the disruption and loss of social and cultural identities that had been, until then, intertwined with their geographic, material and cultural settings. The ensuing fear of losing themselves and of painful loss re-emerged every time memories of past routine activities collided with the present situation. The subject's former routine was often recalled vividly in the present absence of a clear social function, role and space for the displaced subject.

If we recall Anthony Giddens' definition of ontological security as "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1990: 92), the disrupted daily routines of the Serb IDPs might be understood in their full social and psychological relevance, and their consequent anxiety merely reflect this significance. According to Giddens, "all individuals develop a framework of ontological security of some sort, based on routines of various forms" (Giddens, 1991: 44). These routines are vital in controlling the feeling of anxiety, which "concerns (unconsciously) perceived threats to the integrity of the security system of the individual" (Giddens, 1991: 45). If we follow Giddens' argument about the role of routines in sustaining a feeling of ontological security, we find, at the root of the Serb IDPs psychological suffering, the destruction of a common social and cultural framework, which once treated them as privileged and entitled subjects. The displaced Serbs found themselves in an environment where homes, physical places and situations were not matching their imagined social positioning and failed to confirm the subject's configuration and organization of his libidinal economy. Bearing in mind the hegemonic presence of a narcissist and collectivist mode of subjectivation within the Serbian culture (discussed above), anxiety can therefore

be understood as the product of a contrast between a narcissistic regime of ontological security, based on fantasies of moral superiority legitimizing privileged entitlement, and the actual experience of the everyday living environment in a context of displacement. In this light, home is nothing but a network of positional routines confirming the subject in his existing libidinal configuration and self-representation. It is within this libidinally sustaining social and cultural environment that the subject will find meaning. The more a subject is rooted within this network of identitary and positional routines confirming him/her as a narcissistic privileged subject, the more the subject will feel uprooted and meaningless in a different environment. It is therefore not by chance that it is those who came from rural environments who have been most deeply hurt by their forced move, and who most want to go home.

According to Freud, in a condition of illness, the human libido retires from its external investments and concentrates on the self, thus regressing to a stage of narcissism (Freud, 1934: 39). It thus follows that both the uprooted rural subject and the deeply distressed subject can be seen as nostalgic of a libidinal environment, which once constantly repositioned them in their pre-existing libidinal equilibrium. In their eyes, home is the ideal "before" of the process of subjective transformation engendered by the change in the environment into which they have been displaced.

Throughout the interviews, it was found that most of the Serb IDPs tried to heal themselves by restoring a feeling of permanence and continuity in many different ways. Some found relief by sharing their memories with fellow IDPs: teachers might read or write away their troubles; mothers would take care of their children; fathers would help their sons/parents concentrate on the thought that not everything has been disrupted and that the children are safe (i.e.: trying to hold on to a sense of continuity in the future). However, the actual living conditions and the broader context of poverty and increasing social and political fragmentation that most Serb IDPs had to confront once displaced into Serbia, were not offering many concrete chances for this continuity to be more than a desired state. In fact, most of the displaced had to endure conditions of extreme economic and material hardship and uncertainty for themselves, their relatives and their children, with little likelihood of improvement in their living conditions in the near future. Having said this, from the analysis of Serb IDP interviews, it was very easy to see how even the temporary restoration of practices and activities such as playing cards, helping children with the homework or talking with neighbours, which used to be embedded within the pre-displacement every-day-life routines, was important and helpful in reproducing and offering a predictable horizon of daily experiences and expectations. In particular, these activities and dynamics were very im-

portant in peoples' attempt to sustain and create a meaningful explanation of their present lived experience, by re-texturing a horizon of continuity between their past and present lives.

Some of the refugees actually confessed to calming down and feeling better when they thought that they would someday go back to Kosovo, while others even claimed that they would do anything to return, a conviction that should be related to the desire to retrieve an unaltered regime of ontological security. For all of the refugees, one of the most painful experiences was that of not having adequate explanations for the pain and sorrow they had to endure. This was again more evident from people coming from a homogeneous rural environment and with a poor educational background, who were more dependent on the cultural resources and narratives provided by Serb public normative logic.

The narrative resources that sustained ethnic unity against a common and hostile other had been shattered during the Kosovar-Serb's confrontation with a radically different configuration of "Serbhood". The conflict forced them into an environment where the differences between Serbs from Serbia and Kosovar-Serbs, and similarities between Kosovar-Serbs and Kosovar-Albanians grew increasingly more defined. For many refugees, in fact, the price of displacement had been this passage from a condition of privileged entitlement to one of inferiority and estrangement. They had been Serbian in Kosovo, and yet in Serbia, they were Kosovars. Worse still, their estrangement was not merely an exclusion from a new society, but from their own nationalized identity. Many Serbs had, in fact, reported being paradoxically called "Albanians" and being discriminated against as such by the very people for whom they had striven to preserve the purity of the cradle of Serbian civilisation, in their resistance against displacement and violence. Moreover, for most of the Serbs interviewed, the ordeal of displacement had also included being confronted with a less conservative and more open and pluralistic vision of Serbian culture, one that offered their children far more opportunities to express their identities in different and varied ways, because of the range of gender and other social roles that were available to them. Many older rural parents reported being very concerned about the future of their grandchildren in this radically new environment where they had resettled. Even this was a great source of anxiety, as the protection of "traditional" social identities can be attributed to a moralized subject's need for security and continuity over time.

Part of the anxiety experienced by refugees should be related to the lack of narratives and discourses that otherwise could potentially sustain a meaningful interpretation of these experiences, which were disruptive enough to shatter a previously coherent moral, social and cognitive world. In experi-

encing social antagonism, war and displacement, these people were suddenly confronted with the consequences and contradictions embedded within their homogeneous cognitive world and lacked the cultural resources necessary to ascribe meaning to the new social and cultural environment. The experience of the reality they met in the context of displacement was shaped by the discovery of differences within their own identity (Serbian) and similarities across different cultures (Serbian and Albanian).

Among the displaced population, education, the experience of distressing events, age and the context of daily experience (urban vs. rural) were crucial factors shaping their ability to cope with their suffering. There is, however, evidence of another such indicator, to be dealt with more specifically in the next section. In general, people who had direct intense libidinal relationships with members of *different* ethnic groups seemed to cope better with pain and suffering, as they seem to have access to narratives that account for antagonism and responsibility in more meaningful terms. Their experience of love and friendship across two ethnically different cultures enabled them to acknowledge individual similarities beyond and against the influence of the hegemonic discourses which introduce and reinforce differences along ethnic lines.

As we have seen, within any culture there are competing modes of thought, referring to different cognitive frameworks and sustained by different regimes of individual and collective libidinal economy. In particular, we have underlined how individual and collective narcissism is consistent with a homogeneous cognitive framework and a collectivist form of social organization, whereby meaning is created through the celebration of the “same” and the rejection of the “other”. The exit from a narcissistic articulation of libidinal economy brought about by a meaningful libidinal relation across culturally constructed “sames” and “others” renders hegemonic explanations of social antagonism along homogeneous lines meaningfully dissatisfying. Thus, in the name of the (non-narcissistic) *libidinally meaningful* liaison with an-other person, the subject both develops alone and seeks, in the public arena, discourses offering a *cognitively meaningful* explanation of events along *heterogeneous* lines. This passage is full of implications at the political and social levels. By actively challenging an ethnicized regime of differences introduced and reinforced by public normative discourse, the subject can potentially construct a meaningful explanation only by grasping and emphasizing the relevance of *political differences* within his/her own ethnicized identity.

Sections G through H

In sections G through H, we attempted to identify and analyse the narratives used to sustain a Serbian identity from the past to the present, but also under the pressure of potential transformations created by the events that provoked and followed the dramatic break up of Yugoslavia.

Section G – accounts of the current situation in Kosovo, as compared to perceptions and expectations:

10 (g) How do you feel in the current situation in FRY? What has improved and what has worsened?

12 (h) What does it mean to be from Yugoslavia now? How has this changed in the last ten-fifteen years? What does it mean to be Serbian now? And before? Do you think that traditional culture has an important role in contemporary Yugoslavia? In what aspects of life, in particular? Do you think religion has a new role now? What kind of role?

Section F – Articulation of current and past identity-forming strategies and discourses.

Section I – Perspectives: dreams, desires, and projects for a future society in Kosovo.

13 (f) How do you imagine the FRY in ten years? How would you picture an ideal FRY?

The answers were as follows:

> A Serb has always been a symbol of courage, morale, eagerness and it is the case even now. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, but there are very few of them. Despite everything, I think the Serbs will always win, regardless of the sacrifice they have to make, they will survive all the changes, catastrophes, but they need to be united. After all, the Serbs are a humane nation, and only their Orthodox religion says you should offer bread to him who casts a stone at you. It's not the case with the Muslims, or the Roman Catholics. When Jesus Christ was sentenced to crucifixion, he carried the cross with difficulty and, being the God's son, asked the God to forgive them, for they didn't know what they were doing. [(V5): Serbian man, aged 73, a former teacher, who claims that his family has been living in Kosovo for six centuries and that an ancestor of his participated in the battle of Kosovo in 1389. At the time of the interview, he was living in a former primary school with his wife].
>
> Subject: But I don't know what kind of people we are, the Serbs. My late father used to say that maybe there is a reason why all the world hates us. We might be wicked sometimes, I don't know.

Question: Do you really think the whole world hates us?
Subject: Only the politicians in power hate us. There isn't a single nation that has a reason to hate us. Whoever came to our country, had nothing bad to say about it when he returned home.

[(G5): Serbian man, aged 50. The subject has had a meaningful experience of solidarity with his Albanian neighbours, and held hopes for a future of coexistence of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo].

Question: What does it mean to you to be Yugoslav today?
Subject : Well, it's nice. I think that simply the most beautiful nation is – to be Serb. We did lose Kosovo at the moment, but I think that we turned out to be winners after all. After all, we confronted such a great force.
Question: Are you referring to the NATO aggression?
Subject: Yes. After all, in some way, we are winners. We weren't scared off, we endured all that, and in the end, when it all stopped, then we drew back. Now, that surprised me. Then we surrendered – in the end, when we should have continued, resisted, when it was easiest maybe. And when it was most difficult, we resisted. However, to be a Serb, I think it is the best.
Question: Why?
Subject: Well, there are a lot of people who supported us, who gave us a hand, that's how we defended ourselves. I was involved too, I was there when the grenades and rockets fell nearby. And I got more strength, I became more and more brave, it didn't scare me. Simply – the heroism of the people, not just today, but from the past also, when you remember all that you've learned from history. Then you see that Serbs were so brave, such people that would not be conquered. It all has effect, and you find yourself there, you can find yourself in the past. I can't compare any nation with Serbs.
Question: You are, actually, very proud that you are a Serb?
Subject: I am proud, because we always fought some wars, and were always some kind of winners.

[(E8): Serbian man, aged 21, Law student, from urban context, strongly against the politics of Slobodan Milosevic, whom he considers to be on the pay roll of some foreign power. He believes in a future for Yugoslavia which cannot be realized without good relations between ex-Yugoslav republics].

Question: Tell me, what does it mean for you to be Yugoslav today, in comparison to before?
Subject: Pure fiction, I think – to live in a state that exists on paper only, with borders which exist on maps alone, with a tendency of getting even smaller, with lack of national consciousness, I don't know, I tell you, to me it seems to be pure fiction.
Question: And what is it like to be a Serb today?
Subject: Well, it's hard. Especially a Serb from Kosovo.

Question: Hard - how? Can you tell me more?

Subject: Something more? Well… you have the impression that everybody hates you, I mean – the whole world. First of all, because our media created that impression in people, not just the state media. Maybe they're right, I mean, when all that is happening, who in their right mind can think they like us? Not to mention, not to go back to the social side of all this, the position people are in, bare existence, wondering how to feed the family, all that. Real, real hard… But I'm under the impression that people still have the strength, the will and the wish to stand up to all that, to get back on their feet, after every new strike from the rotten West. (E4)

[Serbian man, aged 24, from urban context, a former university student, with a meaningful experience of harmonious multiethnic coexistence in the urban neighbourhood he used to live in].

Question: If someone did not know what a Serb is, how would you explain it to him? What is incorporated in the term "Serb" today?

Subject: Serb today is a great martyr, that above all. Nation that suffers, always, regardless who is guilty, it has always been over our backs. And we were those who could forgive and forget. We are like that, we offer our hand again.

[(E15): Serbian woman, aged 25, from a rural context, law student. The subject lived in a camp with her parents. After a period of estrangement and isolation, she has regained a feeling of continuity by communicating with people from "her environment"].

When asked about the present condition of Yugoslavia (the first question), all of the refugees complained that the current situation was worse than at any time they could remember. According to them, with the passage of time, the living conditions and security they enjoyed in communist Yugoslavia had not improved. On the contrary, they said, everything had deteriorated. Most of the Serb IDPs interviewed complained of poverty, unemployment and of worsening living conditions, all of which were usually blamed on the government in Belgrade. Many people actually remembered communist Yugoslavia as a happier era when people were richer, when there was no animosity between the different Yugoslav nations, and when Yugoslavia itself was appreciated, fully recognized as a country and respected by its fellow European nations. One of the issues most often recurring in both the refugees' described dissatisfaction with their present condition and their explanation of what being a Serb or a Yugoslav meant now, was concern about international isolation and the reputation of Serbia-Yugoslavia abroad. Many refugees claimed that Serbia's attempt to preserve its identity, sovereignty and territorial integrity from foreign (in particular American) cultural and military intrusion was consistent with its

historical role of defending "Europeanness" against alien cultures. This discourse was often the underlying theme in the refugees' complaints of their present marginalization and exclusion from Europe. Further, because of Serbia's historically consistent protection of Christian values (which some Serbs felt their country has preserved better than other nations), the Serb IDPs felt that they belonged to the European cultural universe.

According to this particular set of discourses, just as Serbia protected Europe from the Ottoman Empire's threat of "Islamization", Serbia is now trying to do the same once more, at a time when the new "Islamization" danger would arise from the Albanians and (American sponsored) foreign intrusion. In some interviews Serbia was portrayed as a martyr, having constantly sacrificed herself for Europe in the name of her own morally superior Christian "Europeanness", a myth which further holds Orthodox Christianity superior to other Christian religions. It is because the continuity of this sacrificial identity went unacknowledged by Europe and the West that most Serbs actually feel betrayed by the very geopolitical environment to which they turn for their identitary geopolitical positioning. These considerations are worth analysing in detail. They show how, at the crossroad of narratives of hetero-definition, framing "Serbhood" both in relation to and as opposed to Europeanness/Christianity, Islam, America and of narratives defining a Serbo-Yugoslav identity through myths of self-victimization, sacrifice and conspiracy. There is still a need to sustain and re-produce a collectivist homogeneous identity supported by a narcissist libidinal economy.

The fact that the answer to the question of what it means to be Serb-Yugoslav today is often a narrative of unacknowledged sacrifice borne in the name of Serbia's supposed westerness should be analysed in light of the continuity of dynamics of hetero-definition of Yugoslav identity, with reference to the potential internalization of the in-betweenness condition posed by the "Balkanism" discourse. "Balkanism" was defined by Maria Teodorova (based on Edward Said's seminal work on *Orientalism*), as a Western European discourse on South Eastern Europe, which was constructed gradually in the course of two centuries and consolidated at the time of the first Balkan wars and World War I. According to Teodorova, "what practically all descriptions of the Balkans offered as a central characteristic was their transitionary status" (Teodorova 1997: 11). In other words, whereas the West and the Orient are usually presented as incompatible entities and anti-worlds, but completed anti-worlds: "(…) the Balkans (…) have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroads" (Teodorova 1997: 11) In the western European imaginary, the Balkans are seen as a historical, social and cultural area located between East and West, Europe and Asia, and suspended between "stages of growth" invoking

labels [like] “semi-developed”, “semi-colonial”, “semi-civilized” and “semi-oriental” (Teodorova 1997: 16). What is interesting to our research is the degree of the Serbian IDPs awareness of this semi-colonial status and the extent to which these external definitions of them as a people “in-between” have been internalized or rejected.

For a population or its members to adhere to a narcissistic and repressive collectivist order, narratives of conspiracy, hetero-definition and self-victimization are essential strategies. They allow for the maintenance of a social and cultural order where identity and responsibility are searched for and found mainly *without*. In other words, identities and responsibilities are formed in relation (or contrast) to external and omnipotent sets of power relations, symbols and moral norms, such as Communism, the West, Europe, Islam, Albanian expansionism, etc. Within such a social and cultural order, the subject does not, however, define his/her-self by looking *within*, by starting from his/her libidinal engagement with the local sociocultural environment. This point becomes important in analysing the way in which, in the refugees’ narratives, the notion of being Serb is usually opposed to that of being Yugoslav. When asked about their understanding of the transformation from being Yugoslav to being Serb, many refugees described Serbian people as those who, of all Yugoslav nations, were the most victimized by Communism in being prevented from expressing their feelings of national belonging or their spirituality though faith or religion. From the analysis of most of these narratives it emerges how Serbs have differentiated themselves from Yugoslavs through re-invention and re-discovery of practices, customs and mythical discourses of past glory and sacrifice, some of which are traced back to a founding myth: the battle of Kosovo Polje. Interestingly, here one might also see how the hegemony of Serbs in the omnipotent Yugoslav Communist Party, (which had secured and maintained a position of power and privilege for the Serbs within Former Yugoslavia), is reinterpreted in self-victimizing terms, both projecting outwards and denying responsibility for the consequences of having held on to the desire to maintain a position of privilege in the name of a perceived moral superiority.

This dynamic is evident even in many fine academic studies where Serbs are usually seen as having been “traumatized” by the Communist Party, exactly because of their hegemony within it and of its hegemony in Serbia (Papov, 2000). In this respect, discourses of traumatization can be associated to those of self-victimization, in that they are both narrative strategies intended to divert and minimize responsibility at the individual and collective levels, by projecting it onto an “other” group. Thus, through these narrative strategies a political elite controlled by Serbs is simplistically being blamed for the victimization of Serbs in the first place. Thus

also, there is no attempt to analyse the reasons for this political regime's potential appeal to Serbs, nor the ways in which some form of consensus for such a regime must have been libidinally and thus culturally sustainable in Serbia.

Another important aspect found in the analysis of the emergence of Serbhood from the Yugoslav identity is that, although most refugees tend to refer to Serbia and Yugoslavia indistinctly, the two concepts bear a different tone. In particular, Serb identity is distinguished from Yugoslav identity by underlining the existence of a different relationship with "tradition and religion", Yugoslavia being more often related to the experience of the Communist past. When asked to decide between the two, however, most refugees chose "Serbian" as their national identity. When analysing the way different attitudes to religion were seen as marking off affiliation to the Serb rather than to the Yugoslav identity, it became apparent that most refugees perceived these differences as central in framing the difference both between Yugoslav and Serb and between Kosovar Serb and Serb identities.

Many refugees have emphasized how, unlike Serbs from Serbia, they never actually severed their ties with religion, which they kept on practising privately in times of communism. This is a major element of perceived difference between Serbs from Kosovo and those from Serbia proper. It is one of the main arguments, along with the presence in Kosovo of the most important Serb Orthodox monasteries, mobilized to sustain the idea that Kosovo is the cradle of Serb civilisation. Most of the refugees actually seemed to hold this image of Kosovo, and believed that the many values and practices related to Serbhood had been preserved intact only in the region. The Serbs of rump Yugoslavia, on the other hand, are seen as having moved away from the practices, values and traditions central to maintaining Serbian identity. Their fall away from tradition is sometimes blamed for the country's moral decay, and particularly for the events that led to the war and fragmentation of Yugoslavia. Especially criticized is the pragmatic attitude that many people had developed toward religion after the "end" of Communism, in both Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia. The renewed post-communist devotion and interest in the Orthodox Church was also often seen as instrumental and exterior. To many, this new surge of spirituality in fact disguised a desire to be seen as breaking away from Communism and to embrace a new nationalist and greedy configuration of Serbhood. Again, this lack of spirituality was usually considered to be at the basis of the moral and material fragmentation and decay of Serbia and Yugoslavia, to a varying extent.

Many refugees also pointed out how both Serbs' current exterior and superficial attitude towards religion, and their past pride in rejecting it in Communist times, have engendered in the people characteristics such as "coldness", "greed" and "envy", these attitudes being ultimately responsible for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia into antagonism and war. Many people actually underlined how Albanians, by having always kept their traditions and religions, appeared to be more united and prone to solidarity both amongst themselves and towards the Serbs than the Serbian people were. Some of the refugees even claimed to praise and envy the Albanians for this. Finally, the role of the Orthodox Church also elicited criticism, as most of the refugees believed it to have been too deeply involved in politics. To some, this meant that the Church should not have supported Milosevic's government, while to others the Church should have supported it more, by not distancing itself as much from the regime. These last, however, were very few.

As far as the future of Serbia and Yugoslavia was concerned, all of the refugees, including the people whose conspirative accounts blamed Europe and the West for everything that happened to Serbia historically, saw Serbia's integration into Europe as the only solution that could bring durable stability and peace to the country. In discussing the future of Kosovo, most Serbian refugees expressed a strong desire to return there eventually, while at the same time acknowledging the impossibility of doing so, after the tragic events of war, ethnicized antagonism and displacement.

Section H, Narratives of sameness and otherness

In Section H, we sought to elicit accounts of past and present experiences of coexistence between ethnic groups through the question:

11(h) Do you remember a time when relationships between the different ethnic groups in the area you were living were not conflictive? Did the situation change? When? How? Why?

The interviewees answered as follows:

> We were fine, we said good morning, good evening, I was doing mine; he was doing his, we did not have any problem. [(S6): Serb woman, aged 59, married, and mother of two. The subject was a housewife from a rural environment. At the time of the interview, she lived in a collective accommodation centre, with her husband].

> No, the neighbours didn't. What's more, they were there to help you, to help you out of the city, in case they had a car. The neighbours helped us a lot. While those, those new groups, not Shiptars who lived there but Albanians from Albania…. [(V2): Serb woman, aged 18. The subject

was a medical student staying in the home of her relatives, and was originally from an urban environment. She had experienced meaningful relations with her Albanian neighbours. Her uncle, however, had been strangled with a string, while her aunt was raped by six Albanians and has miscarried as a consequence of this].

I have never felt humiliated, or in danger. We did live our lives next to them, but I, it may sound funny, I never noticed them. There were more of them, we did depend on them in certain aspects. It was a known fact that shops were in their hands, that bakeries… that everything… For example, if there was an Albanian holiday, we could die of starvation, it did happen. But, basically, I did not notice them much. They did not jeopardize me directly. [(V15): Serb woman, 25, from an urban environment. Her Albanian neighbour brought five of his brothers to testify in front of KLA soldiers that her brother had not been in the army during the war].

I will tell you one example. I was going once with a neighbour of mine, an Albanian, you know, every Serb has one Albanian, as they say, we worshipped each other. He was young, 18 or 19, he used to wash my car all by himself and I would give it to him for a ride in front of his school, so that his girlfriend could see him, everything was cool. And whenever I was in need of something from the city, in the part where you have only Albanian stores, where they could hardly speak any Serbian, I used to take him with me, he spoke in Albanian, bought stuff, arranged, fixed my car cheaply. Once I was in a hurry, so I forgot my driving license and registration. We were going through the Albanian part of the town when the police stopped us. I was dirty, I hadn't shaved for days and they probably thought I was an Albanian, that we both were. They asked for my driving license and registration and I kept saying I didn't have them with me. They probably thought I had stolen the car and when I started driving backwards in order to clear the road, they thought I was trying to get away. They gave me their routine, like "Who told you to start driving" and they had their guns ready to shoot. "I'm gonna fuck your Albanian mother now", I think those were their exact words, only because they thought we were Albanians, that's my feeling. If I hadn't started to speak slowly and fluently in Serbian, they would have shot me right there, I think. I think they apologized later on with something like, "We're sorry, but he didn't have any documents, we thought he was a thief, he wanted to shoot me…" although I had no weapon. I managed to persuade them eventually that I was a Serb and it was then that I realized how those Albanians felt when they do something wrong. And I saw with my own eyes, in the middle of a street, a policeman slapping a guy because of speeding or any other reason, the guy didn't want to pay and he beat him in front of his wife and children. He takes him out of the car and slaps him. [(V6): Serb man, aged 33, a supervisor from an urban environment. He had friends among Albanians and thought the police had mistreated them, as his personal experience confirms].

My best friend was and still is (and forever will be) an Albanian girl who lived in the same building with me, on the floor below. I was looking forward to each Ramadan and Bairam in the same way I was looking forward to Christmas and Easter, it was the same for her. I mean, those were

the nicest experiences of all. I have never had any problems, absolutely no problems at all. There were no conflicts, I mean, I keep only the nicest possible memories that one can keep. Even now, at home, where I have a satellite dish, sometimes about one or two o'clock in the morning when I cannot sleep, I switch on the Turkish TV and listen to Turkish music, I cry my eyes out, I cry like a little baby. …I cannot be as happy as I used to be before. Apart from that, I can function as a normal person, but only partially. It means that I can be fine for, I would not know how long, for example for five, six, seven days and then a phase would come when something takes me back to the past. A song, that happens often, or a scent, the sun, the wind. I don't know, those are the most basic things people do not seem to notice. When such things disappear, one realizes how important they are. I miss my fork and spoon, my plate, bed, my walks along the town, I miss the Albanian language the most (she slowly starts crying). No matter how strange it could sound, I miss Albanian language. And Turkish, too, I miss the khoja five times a day and I miss the mosques. Life in a single-ethnic environment is definitely not for me (wipes the tears away)… [We] had our ritual, every year before going on holidays we would go to the eighth floor, there was a terrace and we would go sunbathing. We did it again, ignoring the planes that were flying and the bombs that were falling on the barracks. We were splashing each other with water and having fun and we were at home with ourselves. Well, if something was to happen to us, it could happen any place. At night we would not go to shelters, we had our schedule. One day it was my place, another day – hers, and on the next day it would be some other neighbour's place. We were drinking coffee, alcohol, playing cards, listening to the music. We were doing our best to forget the bitter reality. [(G27): Serb woman, 25, from an urban environment, teacher of English as a foreign language. Her best friend is an Albanian woman living in the same apartment block].

Question: What were your relations with the Shiptars before 1989 when you say they deteriorated? Was there any friendship?

Subject: Yes, there was. My Albanian neighbour, she used to come to our place at least twice or three times a day. We talked to each other after the war and she moved into our flat. We phoned twice. She told me not to worry and that they'd buy us a flat.

Question: Do you think they'll pay for your flat?

Subject: Yes, they will, they said they would.

Question: Do you think that you'd be able to live together in Kosovo again?

Subject: Yes, I do. Not all Albanians are terrorists. Not all of them want to separate. A lot of them want to live together with us. My neighbour, for example. She's like that. We used to work together. There was an Albanian, a Serbian and a Turkish woman at work. We all worked for the same person. We couldn't even eat an apple without sharing it first.

[(G5) Serbian man, aged 50, with a meaningful experience of solidarity with his Albanian neighbours and some hope for a future of coexistence of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo].

Subject: The same. On one side, we had Shqiptarian neighbours, and on the other, there were the Serbs. And I can't say anything about those Shqiptars. Maybe they were richer, maybe richer than we were, but they also helped us when we were in crisis.
Child (7): Who? The Shqiptars?
Subject: Yes, son. When we were in crisis.
Child: No, no. They didn't help us.
Subject: Yes, they did, son. Not this time. This time…But we were in crisis. They had their own stores. We could freely go there, too. There were no problems. But when we came here, I can't…We are living in a village called---- I can't say anything about the village…I would feel sorry if I said anything bad about it.

[(J2):Serb woman, aged 35, tailor, from a village near an urban area, now living with her husband and children in a private accommodation. Her house in Kosovo has been destroyed, her uncle and her brother in law were kidnapped and the son of her brother died. She has experienced solidarity with Albanian families in times of hardship].

Subject: Well, for instance, my relationship towards some people – towards Shiptars, generally. Since I, it may sound incredible, stupid – I regretted and I was sorry when they left for Albania. And the same people saw us off warmly, from the same area, only a few months later. I don't know, I had too much confidence in those people. I mean, it never crossed my mind that something like that could be expected from them, all that happened – as if those were some other people, as if they didn't do it. I mean, I don't hold it against them much – it may sound like a paradox, I eat my own words, I understand their wish for independence, and all that. I hold it against us a lot more, ourselves as a nation, because I think we're terrible, I don't know how to define it…
Question: What do you mean when you say we are terrible?
Subject: Well, it means envious, it's unlikely that someone will help you out when you need it the most. We are all great friends, on paper at least, until you really ask for something of a man. I don't know, he won't help, only if he has some interest in doing it. Everything that happened came out of that.
Question: So, you think it happened because of all that?
Subject: Well, let's say it is one of the reasons. Not the only one for sure. The first and the essential one, certainly is the fact that it suited someone, someone out there. None of us "normal" people, so to speak, can judge why it would suit anyone, I think it's definitely so. All I know is that I'm a pawn in somebody else's game of chess, and I act accordingly.

[(E4) Serbian man, aged 24, from urban context. A former university student, the subject had had a meaningful experience of harmonious multiethnic coexistence in the urban neighbourhood he used to live in].

The main aim of this question was to evoke memories of the gradual deterioration from a situation of coexistence between different social groups to open social antagonism and war, and to analyse the cultural resources used in the narratives to create and sustain a meaningful explanation of this change. Most of the refugees seemed to agree about the different phases of social antagonism as it escalated along ethnic lines.

Social relations between the different ethnic groups were considered sound until the first Albanian demonstrations of 1981. The situation before that was generally reported to be good and without problems. Most of the people interviewed described how interactions were constructive, collaborative and positive at the workplace; Albanians and Serbs worked side by side, exchanging favours and developing friendships. Instances of mutual support and cooperation between Serbian and Albanian workers or farmers were very frequently mentioned. Interethnic relationships were also positive between neighbours. Nearly all of the refugees reported having established good relations with the Albanians in their neighbourhood, while some even remembered exchanging favours across ethnic lines.

On the other hand, it is important to underline how many of these interactions were (to use an expression often recurring in the interviews) “standard and correct relationships”. These bonds were those of standardized civility; exchanged favours, occasional visits, greetings in the street, at work and between neighbours, rather than deep interpersonal and affectionate relationships. It is important to distinguish between these so-called “sound relationships” (formal and culturally codified forms of social interaction) and true friendships, which were much rarer. What was usually described as peaceful coexistence, often appeared to be in reality a rather peaceful form of mutual indifference. Bare tolerance was what ultimately seemed to exist between these different narcissist collective formations living under the hegemony of the Yugoslav discourse of collective and homogenous “brotherhood and unity”. According to its refrain, internal, national or cultural differences were to be ignored in the name of an enforced homogeneous and classless identity essential to the national Yugoslavian Communist Regime. Thus, the collapse of this narcissistic and (disguisedly) Serbo-centric discourse following Marshall Tito’s death, allowed both the Serbian and Albanian communities to express what had been repressed. Social antagonism and inequalities were exposed and given ethnicized narcissistic interpretations, and national identities, once hidden, resurfaced.

It might be said that these tensions emerged from the specific nature of the political, social and economic condition of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia. Although even a brief analysis of the nature of social antagonism in

Kosovo would need much more space than the present paper would allow, some of its key features should be examined, as they are significant and often recurring themes in the interviews and narratives.

In particular, the emergence of social antagonism in Kosovo should be understood in relation to the politics of the Yugoslav State concerning the status of Albanians. Their experience in Yugoslavia follows a history of prejudice and exclusion at the political level, an all-important area in a Communist state. Because of their unwillingness to deny their religion and their perceived implicit "non-Yugoslavian-ness", Albanians were severely restrained from joining the Communist Party, and therefore barred from the levers that controlled the most crucial state apparatus. Even when some Albanians did manage to enter these places of influence, their roles and voices were diluted and disproportionate to their demographic and cultural hegemony in Kosovo. Moreover, as a consequence of the process of further Serbianization of Kosovo, which was inaugurated with Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in 1989, thousands of Albanians were dismissed from public employment and party membership.[2]

Finally, because of their exclusion from the party-state-dominated centralized economy, the Albanians came to be at the helm of the informal economic sector, which they organized and managed. They also resorted to emigration to Western Europe (mainly Germany or Switzerland) and to America, to a much greater extent than the Serbs. Gradually, the Albanians accumulated private fortunes, which contrasted sharply with the policies and ethics of a supposedly egalitarian regime from which they had been excluded in the first place. This could not but generate animosity and tension between the various social actors and groups.

In Kosovo, the fact that Serbs were in control of all of the key political positions, meant that they were in a position of domination. Although Albanians were officially granted full political participation, they were only allowed to express their cultural identity through a formally de-ethnicized, but actually and increasingly Serbo-centric cultural and political order. On the other hand, because of their privileged position in the informal and private economy (which had come as a consequence of their marginalization or exclusion from the institutional public sector and state controlled formal economy) and of their widespread resort to emigration, the Albanians found themselves in a position of stark economic superiority, in a period of deep economic crisis in Kosovo. Despite this, their situation at the margins of political institutions placed them in a very weak position within an ever Serbianizing and exclusive Yugoslav state. Within this context, it becomes important for the purpose of present research to

identify and analyse the narrative resources used to create and sustain meaningful individual and collective identities, while events are constructed or interpreted.

Before analysing in more detail the specific narratives of antagonism and coexistence used to describe the period of growing animosity following the death of Tito, it is important to underline the implications of the co-existence of a double level of experience of cultural and ethnic difference: the inter-personal, deep one and the formal, public one. The accounts of Serbian IDPs from Kosovo provide evidence of how inter-ethnic relationships based on codified and standardized work and neighbourly interactions (or "civil relationships") were more vulnerable to irruption of the politicized discourses promoting mutually exclusive categorization along homogeneous ethnic lines, and encouraging discrimination and abuse. These interactions, which are ruled by codes of behaviour enforced by existing "good practices of working comradeship and neighbourhood courtesy", are not through the subject's libidinal attachment to another subject. These kinds of inter-ethnic relations can therefore only remain civil and respectful until politicized discourses order otherwise, since the codes of behaviour framing them stem from a wider narcissist and collectivist moral order. Conversely, relationships such as friendship and love might tend to break the homogeneity of differentialist discourses and allow for the introduction of difference and heterogeneity within and across ethnic categories. In other words, in the case of love or friendship, the diversion of libido from a collectivist narcissist subject to an external direct object undermines the collective formation. Moreover, the direct libidinal engagement of the subject with other subjects who, according to the collectivist narcissistic formation framing his/her identity as "ethnic", are intrinsically different from him/her-self, has the potential to break puncture the fantasies of unity, purity and superiority which sustain a homogenous world. From analysis of the interviews it was clear how Serb IDPs who had experienced such important friendships or strong neighbourly bonds with Albanians tended to develop a more complex reading of events that eroded the collective essentialist order promoted by (and in turn sustaining) public normative logic.

Because of his/her dis-embeddedment from a homogeneous symbolic order under the pressure of direct libidinal relationships, the subject both develops and searches for pluralist heterogeneous narratives in the social and cultural context. These then enable him to frame and understand events in more cognitively and libidinally meaningful terms. These narratives could therefore enable the subject to understand antagonism and responsibility as political (rather than ethnic) differences within and across the homogeneous categories provided by a public normative logic sus-

tained by narcissist fantasies of purity and unity. This has many important implications for the way suffering is experienced and dealt with at a subjective and collective level.

It is in the light of this encounter between homogeneous and heterogeneous cognitive frameworks and different libidinal frameworks and narratives, that events are framed and analysed. Throughout the interviews, there were very few people whose subjectivity was either completely embedded or dis-embedded in the nationalist and narcissistic collective order. Rather, most of the refugees tended to construct a meaningful analysis of reality by using narratives which were cognitively and libidinally contradictory. The more contradictory the encounter between the cognitive and libidinal underpinnings of the cultural resources available to the subjects, the more the interviewee lacked a coherent and meaningful explanation of events. Therefore, the more the subject suffered, trying to sustain and understand his/her permanence and continuity in a meaningful world, whose apparent unity had been shaken and broken by war and hatred.

From the 1980s and onwards, most of the refugees described a situation of growing antagonism between Serbs and Albanians, which they generally experienced as an increase of tension in the workplace, and as episodes of discrimination against Serbs. Most of the Serbian refugees reported living with a feeling of general insecurity. Most of them had experienced verbal hostility and harassment; most had escorted their children to school when they were forced to cross areas inhabited by Albanians. In the period following the first Albanian demonstrations until the escalation of hostility into open conflict between opposing factions in 1998, neighbourly and work relationships were felt to be "getting cold" and growing formal, while stories of harassment, rape and kidnapping of Serbs by terrorists were becoming increasingly frequent. In descriptions of the Serbian-Albanian coexistence in Kosovo after 1989, it was easy to identify an ongoing polarization between a public, official world of standard and correct inter-ethnic relationships, and a private mono-ethnic world where separation, suspicion, antagonism and hostility grew, fortified by nationalist discourses and violence promoted by different social actors in the name of their own political and economic rationales.

In discussing the period between 1989 and 1998, most of the Serbians mentioned three main events, which were usually blamed on the conscious efforts of Albanians. According to the accounts of Serb IDPs, the Albanians had orchestrated? these acts in order to attract the attention of the international media, with the ultimate aim of preparing the ground for the secession of Kosovo from Yugoslavia, and the creation of a Greater Albania. The first of these events came after Kosovo's autonomous status

was repealed in 1989. Lessons taught in Albanian were then rescinded and forbidden at the University of Pristina and at other educational institutions in Kosovo. Because of this, Albanians organized a self-financed education system, which operated in private locations. In the accounts of Serb IDPs, however, the political and cultural priority that the Albanians attributed to an education in their own language was usually dismissed as a sign of spite and lack of interest in Serbian culture and history. Many of them assumed that this parallel education system had been created in order to disseminate an extremist and nationalistic Albanian ideology. The fact that education in Albanian had actually been forbidden was usually neglected. Many refugees even claimed that Albanians had more rights than they had, even when it came to language. As evidence of this, they cited the 1974 constitution, which indicated that Serbs were forced to learn the Albanian language, "though they were living on Serb soil", as many would now put it.

The second such event occurred at the same time, when many Albanian workers protesting to regain Kosovo's autonomy, or in the name of broader human rights issues, were fired from their jobs. In the Serbian accounts, these people were usually described as having voluntarily refused to work, and therefore being fully responsible for their unemployment. Finally, the famous mass-poisoning of Albanian school children that took place around 1991 was universally dismissed as yet another attempt to attract the attention of the international media in order to promote the cause of a Greater Albania. On the other hand, the majority of the observers at the time also dismissed this case as an episode of mass-hysteria, and subsequent analyses of urine and blood samples confirmed traces of agents such as Sarin, used in chemical weapons known to be manufactured by the Yugoslav National Army. The credibility of this dramatic hypothesis was later to be confirmed by the then federal president of Yugoslavia (the Croatian Stipe Mesic) and a number of international observers (Clark, 2000: 58; Malcolm 2000: 345).

In attempting to create and sustain a meaningful explanation for, and identity within, the change from peaceful coexistence to antagonism and war, the Kosovar Serbian IDPs tended to use narrative resources that projected responsibility onto an ethnic other. Interestingly, this "other" appears to be blamed for having shaken a sense of ontological security that was based on the erasure of diversity in the name of a Serbo-centric unity. Generally, the Albanians' claims to wider political involvement and representation were often dismissed with a wide-reaching conspirative interpretation of the social, economic and political context in Kosovo. Thus, in Kosovo, the Albanians were the "real" privileged ones, whereas the "real" victims of discrimination and abuse were the Serbs. Of course, my aim in defining such an interpretative framework as "conspirative" is not to deny or con-

firm any of the assertions or interpretations of events, but to underline how, in this explanation, the responsibility of the politics and policies of the Serb state are minimized through the deployment of narratives of discrimination and self-victimization. An analysis of the narratives used by Serbian IDPs reveals that self-victimization, denial, and conspiracy are the three prevalent psychological and identitary strategies. These are generally deployed to protect the Serbian collectivist identity according to its perceived moral superiority. In the explanations provided by Serb IDPs, the Albanians have paradoxically been blamed for the injustices and inequalities caused by a political and social system that was itself entirely involved in an articulation of Serbian identity, which legitimized the Serbs' privileged entitlement in the name of their perceived moral superiority.

According to Renata Salecl's analysis of the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe' s post-communist countries, any form of "national identification" with "our own kind" is based on the fantasy of an enemy; an alien that has insinuated itself into "our society" and that constantly threatens us with habits, discourse and rituals that are not of "our kind". The perceived threat here is that "the 'Other' will not find enjoyment in the same way as we do." With his different way of finding pleasure,

> The Other further outrages our sense of the kind of nation our would like to live in. He/she steals our enjoyment. To this must be added that this Other is always an other in my interior, i.e. that my hatred of the Other is really the hatred of the part (the surplus) of my own enjoyment which I find unbearable and cannot acknowledge, and which I therefore transpose ("project") into the Other via a fantasy of the "Others' enjoyment" (Salecl, 1993: 105, emphasis in text).

For the refugees, questioning the Yugoslavian-Serbo-centric social and cultural order would have meant de-stabilizing and breaking the narcissist fantasies of moral superiority which had sustained them individually. Thus the possibility of a critical approach had been repressed and responsibility projected onto an ethnicized other. It therefore came as no surprise that when analysing the period of growing antagonism between Serbs and Albanians from the demonstrations of 1981 to the outbreak of war in 1999, Albanians were deemed responsible for:

- Spreading narratives of manipulation in cooperation with foreign anti-Serbian forces;
- Organizing strategic fictions such as the massive strikes (they were allegedly not fired, but decided to quit their jobs) and the mass poisonings (they were faking it to achieve international attention);

- Organizing hidden campaigns of terror (kidnapping, assaults) in order to destabilize the country.

Despite this, even though the discursive field in Kosovo was crowded and saturated with homogeneous narratives of victimization and conspiracy, the possibility of a heterogeneous reading of events seemed to appear for those who had experienced direct libidinal investment onto an (ethnic) other. By engaging directly with the other, the subject experienced reality in heterogeneous, pluralistic and ambiguous terms, thus bypassing the hyper-moralized projections of his/her narcissist and collectivist ego. In the presence of direct intense libidinal relations, responsibilities tended either *to be projected outwards beyond both* Serbs and Albanians onto foreign powers, or *to be assigned within both* the homogeneous ethnicities: to the power in Belgrade (more rarely), to some Albanian terrorists, to Albanians from Albania, to Serbian paramilitary formations, and/or to Serbian (from Serbia) volunteers.

Conclusion

In Kosovo, as in the FRY, the experience of ethnic antagonism, war, displacement and resettlement has engendered a process of subjective transformation and fostered the emergence of new social needs. In the presence of these needs, already existing homogenous cultural resources become strategic and are consistently brought into play. From a comparative analysis of the stories and accounts of both Albanian and Serbian people from Kosovo gathered in Albania, Kosovo and the remaining FRY in the last two years, I consider it extremely important to highlight the social and political implications of the dynamics of self-victimization and re-traditionalization that are shaping the re-construction of an (ontologically) secure (space) in Kosovo. This is potentially happening according to the very same cognitive and libidinal frameworks that produced the present situation.

With this contribution, I wish to question the possibility of actually constructing a future of security given the continuity and radicalization of these (culturally hegemonic) homogeneous values and of practices that foster ethnic hatred, denying the very potentiality of pluralism and (cultural and social) heterogeneity. In particular, I am very interested in the political and social implications of The Archives of Memory project, and of related clinical and psychotherapeutic work in general. As we are working at an intersection of anthropology, history and psychology, perhaps we should keep in mind a vital question: how far should we reinstate people

into the essentialist, self-victimizing and differentialist narratives, consistent with a social and cultural world created by antagonizing "sames" against "others", without trying to challenge those very narratives at the same time? How far should we reconstruct for them a meaningful and ontologically secure world by these existing cultural resources, if the latter were structured around binary oppositions that produced ethnic hatred and war, and that undermined not only the possibility of multiethnic coexistence, but the very process of the introduction of democracy in all of the Balkan region?

I think these questions are crucial in a project of psychosocial intervention. Perhaps we should not limit ourselves to collecting existing narratives of illness and healing, in order to reintegrate people within locally existing definitions of personhood and configurations of society, thus avoiding the risk of Western ethnocentric pathologization and psychologization. This methodology and approach is, of course, fundamental, but not sufficient, as its implicit cultural relativism carries within it a philological and conservationist approach to societies and cultures. These should not be seen as something local and separate, as something to respect and preserve in a vacuum, but rather as the outcome of a network of contradictory dynamics adjusting themselves continually to new perceived and experienced threats and needs. Local societies, however, are now increasingly becoming places of interaction and experience of both multi-local and global dynamics. Acknowledging this would also mean facing and dealing with the political and social consequences of psycho-social intervention. In this perspective, what was and still is really at stake in contemporary Yugoslavia is the process of democratization. This process cannot occur without the introduction of a cognitive and libidinal framework that acknowledges *difference* as a founding element of the natural order, rather than as a threat and anomaly.

Of particular importance to our common effort is the fact that since the homogeneous and the heterogeneous opposing cognitive worlds are also moral worlds, they will necessarily produce their own opposing definitions of justice, each of which will be tied to a definition of acceptable individual and social behaviour. It is because of these opposing definitions of political and social justice, that conflicts and "traumatic" events take place, and it is usually in the language of political and social justice, that a solution to suffering and trauma is sought and articulated by the actors of the narrated events: the refugees.

In my last visits to rump Serbia and Kosovo, I was bewildered by the fact that in both settings, people usually seek therapeutic help and are treated within their ethnic groups. At times, refugees even sought help from other

refugees. Moreover, in therapeutic sessions held in contemporary Kosovo, both narrator and listener tended to share the same homogeneous narratives and fantasies of Albanian ethnic unity and victimization. This, surely, would prevent that therapeutic space from accepting heterogeneous and democracy-compatible narratives, nor the pluralist articulations of self, society and justice that would follow. As it is, every single social problem typically has been and is being projected onto the very presence of either the Serbian or the Albanian other. This process avoids the question of the political and institutional instruments and forms that should be provided and developed for the creation of a democratic Kosovar society.

In contemporary Kosovo, society still tends to be presented as unified and homogenous through the suppression and erasure of important internal elements of social differentiation such as gender, age, education and degree of urbanization, in the name of the perceived need to emphasize the differences between the ethnic same and its other: this time the previously dominating Serbs. In other words, what is really at stake here is the very possibility of building a pluralist and democratic future for Kosovo under the shadow of the unchallenged hegemony of homogeneous thought, which has permeated the sociocultural experience of most people in every ethnic group. Consider how few are the Kosovar Albanians who are actually critical of the role that a section of the KLA still plays in controlling the trafficking of drugs and people in the region, or who oppose the systematic violence and hatred enforced against the few Serbs who have remained. On the contrary, a large part of the population believes that the difficult economic and social situation Kosovo now finds itself in stems from the fact that international forces are preventing the total exclusion of Serbs from the territory, thus preventing the complete realization of a “real Kosovar” traditionalized and re-patriarchalized identity.

In Serbia, of course, the situation in early 2000 was very different, as a substantial section of the country was increasingly critical of the political posture advocated by the nationalist regime. Having seen through the cracks, contradictions and inconsistencies of the explanations and accounts provided by official discourse, these people were trying to harness a conflict that had long been ethnicized and therefore de-politicized, for clearly political purposes, back into the realm of politics, where it belonged. In the first half of the year 2000, Serbia was a country where a new heterogeneous conformation of local culture was being constructed and diffused, countering the hegemony of nationalist discourse and social practices. This difference between Kosovo and Serbia was particularly clear to me when I worked with NGOs assisting displaced persons. Many of the people working for these organizations were Croatian-Serbs or Bosnian-Serbs, and had directly experienced the political and social con-

sequences of being portrayed and manipulated by "their own" culture and society as a victimized population, in order to justify aggression, war and displacement. Moreover, because of their hyphened belonging to Serbhood, they intrinsically resisted the homogenization of their personal experiences and histories. In other words, the dramatic events of the last ten years has allowed a large section of the Serbian population to take a critical position about the concept of a Serbia united against all of its antagonistic others. Alongside the gradual fading of the appeal of this fantasy of unity, a new, nonnarcissistically-regressive version of local culture is being articulated and advocated. This culture can now acknowledge differences within Serbdom and return to politics what pertains to politics, beyond any attempt to freeze and conceal social and political antagonism behind strategic discourses of ethnicity.

All of this reveals the necessity of doing more than acknowledging an abstract need to take responsibility for the political and social implications of our therapeutic work. In order to heal people in a non-pathologizing social and cultural context, we should also force ourselves to actually elaborate and introduce, within and around the therapeutic setting, counter-narratives of political and social justice and of subjectivation that are consistent with heterogeneous thought and democracy. We might, of course, limit ourselves to doing this by offering explanations and narratives of events which are alternative to those present in patients' accounts. We might also try and actively challenge the existing gendered models of personhood that are rooted in a patriarchal symbolic order and that libidinally sustain unity, homogeneity and authoritarianism at individual and collective levels. It is only by re-activating and giving voice to the various gender and age-related factors of social differentiation, to the differences which are suppressed *within* any ethnically homogeneous and patriarchal symbolic order, that this order can be made to collapse under the weight of its own injustices and contradictions. Only then will the liberated space offer these social components an opportunity for self-recognition, emancipation and development beyond antagonizing discourses of ethnic unity. It is not by chance that the majority of organizations striving to maintain contacts with their purported "enemy" counterparts in the times of war and confrontation following the break up of Yugoslavia were feminist and youth associations. These groups kept on seeking and finding, in their existential condition of being young or against patriarchy, or in their belief in justice and democracy, the central defining aspect of their selves as politically pluralist subjects in a forcibly homogeneous world. By acknowledging the political nature of their selves, they found the cultural resources they needed to resist an ethnicized definition of their identity, which had so long deprived them of so many aspects of a culture they found important to their self-recognition and liberation.

Beyond the political and social implications of the clinical practice, one must also try to understand the clinical implications of the political and social practice. Word games aside, what I would like to question is the very possibility of healing people, if this means healing them back into the midst of the homogenous narratives responsible for producing a paranoid and conspirative world where forced "sames" are opposed to "others", and where questions of difference and responsibility are avoided. When this ontological security based on fantasies of homogenization and unity has been shattered by war, ethnic cleansing and genocide, shouldn't healing be possible only through the introduction of a cultural perspective which potentially enables us to acknowledge the presence of difference in the "sames" as well as in the "others-that-are-supposedly-opposed", and to identify responsibility at the socio-political level, rather than at an ethnic level? Would this approach not also avoid the risk of ethnocentric pathologization and psychiatrization, simply by using and working on the very narratives of political and social justice that are offered to us in the first place?

In particular, one should be very careful about uncritically accepting concepts such as ethnicity and trauma, which have emerged gradually as strategic discourses introduced purposely by specific social actors to achieve political legitimacy in the different arenas (national and international) where they have been circulated. More specifically, the ethnicization and "traumatization" of political discourses need to be contextualized within the passage from authoritarian collectivism to individualist democracy, which is a process that encompasses and frames the post-Communist transformation. In conclusion, what we would like to advocate is *the passage from the politics of memory*, from the politicized and instrumental ethnicization of social and political antagonism through the manipulation of national symbols and narratives of national belonging, *to the memory of politics*; a potential re-politicization of an ethnicized and traumatized landscape of unity and sameness. This is a crucial passage in order to fully understand and exploit both the psychological implications of social intervention and the social implications of psychological intervention.

In Kosovo, as in the rest of Former Yugoslavia, the narratives people have used to make sense of their feelings and events were usually those that were produced and diffused, in the different cultural fields, by cultural elites, as part of their specific local strategies of survival. These narratives and discourses are key cultural resources, relating the individual and the collective understandings and experiences of antagonism, suffering and healing. At the basis of the suffering of Serb IDPs is the inadequacy and insufficiency of those narratives of ethnic affiliation and hatred in sustain-

ing a framework within which the explanations given as reasons for pain, sorrow and suffering can "make sense". The exposure and revelation of the real and disguised political and economic rationales underpinning ethnic politics and policies can offer the possibility of a parallel re-politicization of ethnicity and trauma discourses and of a de-traumatization and de-ethnicization of the political discursive field. This parallel process can offer new narrative resources for both the wider process of democratization and the therapeutic context, as it introduces the possibility of psychologically healing the individual through an understanding of the social world, which is more responsive to his/her lived experiences of increasing diversity and complexity.

Notes

1. Before the beginning of the Kosovo crisis, ARCS had been running four youth centres (since July 1998), which welcomed many young refugees throughout the duration of the war. Young refugees were included in the project both as beneficiaries of assistance, and as active participants. They actively participated in the development and organization of activities and initiatives for the refugee population and the new arrivals. The activities took place both at the youth centres and in the main refugee camps set up in the areas of Tirana, Durres, Berat and Gjirokaster.
2. For a detailed overview of the social and economic consequences of the process of Serbianization of Kosovo since 1981, please see Clark, 2000: 70-121 and Vickers, 1998: 218-287.

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Chapter 5

Migration and Cultural Encounters: Kosovar Refugees in Italy

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The protagonists

Piedmont, Northern Italy

Many Kosovar Albanian refugees live and work in the region and the city of Ivrea. Some of them have been in Italy since mid-1998; others arrived after the NATO military intervention. Many managed to find a house in one of the small towns of the area and have been able to live in close contact with their relatives. Many are of the Islamic faith, and come from the Suva Reka region, as was the situation of one family we interviewed: Altin [age: 30, male], the eldest son, acted as interpreter during the interviews held in Ivrea, as he has resided in Italy since the early 1990s. He first studied in Kosovo, and then at the University of Zagreb. After 1992, the need to support his own family took him to various cities in Italy, where he finally settled in Genoa. Alketa [age: 50, female] is Altin's mother. She reached Italy in the spring of 1999, together with her sons and daughters, after a three-day flight from her home to Valona. Now she, her husband, their two young daughters and another son also live in Pavone d'Ivrea.

Like this family, Dritan [age: 29, male] also lives near Ivrea. He is from the Suva Reka region, and he is Muslim. Following his eight years of com-

pulsory schooling, he attended a professional school for three years. He arrived in Italy in the fall of 1998, after having fought with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). He left the KLA after the Serbian Federal Army's offensive in the Drenica region.

Ornela and Teuta have also come to live in the area near Lake Viverone. They are two young women [age: 20 and 19 respectively], both married to Kosovar Albanians and mothers of children born during their stay in Italy. Also from the Suva Reka region, they are Muslim, and both of them have attended school for the eight years required by law. Ornela hopes to be able to live close to her parents, who migrated to Germany several years ago. This distance from their loved ones has lasted for both women since the early 1990s, causing them discomfort and suffering.

Ilir [age: 25, male] lives in the Provincial capital, Turin. A Muslim from Jakovica, he attended the University of Pristina for two years. He is alone in Italy, as all of his relatives have migrated to Germany. Like Altin and other young people from Kosovo, Ilir has had to abandon his studies as well as his prospects for the future, at least for the time being. Life in Turin is even harder than life outside the provincial capital: work is insecure and it is difficult to establish social relationships. In small areas, acquaintances are more easily made because of the close structure of village communities, which connect families and neighbourhoods to one another.

Lombardy, Northern Italy

The Kosovar Albanian community in the Lecco area contains hundreds of people, including dozens of families. A great many of these, especially those who arrived before the war of 1999, come from the traditionally Catholic Stubla region. One of the guiding spirits and founders of the local Kosovar association is Eduard B. [age: 53, male]. He has been in Italy since the end of the 1960s, has lived in Lecco since the mid-1970s and has been awarded a degree in Philosophy from an Italian University. Since the 1990s, during a time of intense emigration and flight from Kosovo, Eduard B. and some of his peers have set up a network of reception and information services run by Kosovars, with the help of Italian groups and associations, to assist the arriving émigrés.

Arben B. [age: 48, male, living in Italy since 1993] is also from Stubla, where he had been the headmaster of a primary school for many years until the authorities had him dismissed in the late 1980s. He first studied in Kosovo, where he later attended the University of Pristina in the 1970s. These years were generally remembered as a time of cultural rebirth in Kosovo, when universities were autonomous and remarkably open.

Unlike Arben, Merita, Lindita and Arvenola [age: 23, 14 and 15 respectively], three young sisters, were not able to complete their studies in Kosovo. The three of them had been residents of Lecco for many months at the time of this report, and had lived in Italy since the mid-1990s. Each of them had either joined their parents in Italy or accompanied one of them during the progressive emigration of their family, which began in 1990. Today they are well adjusted to the local social life, have continued their studies or found jobs and have friends who are both Italian and from Kosovo. The younger ones, in particular, would like to pursue more activities and closer relationships with their new acquaintances. This is one of the reasons they find life in the province of Lecco too simple, and prefer Rome, close to which they had lived for a number of years.

Gjolek [age: 24, male] lives in Lecco with his family: his father and mother, one brother and one sister. As a family, they adhere to the Catholic faith. Gjolek told of the hardships of being 18 in Kosovo in the early 1990s. He attended the eight years of obligatory school, and then two years of the so-called "parallel school" organized by Kosovar Albanians. At the time, he was still obliged to serve in the Federal Army, but was increasingly subject to harassment and violence. In the summer of 1999, he returned to Stubla with many other Kosovar Albanians from the Lecco area, accompanied by non-governmental associations, to bring help to the Albanian population and to families living in the surrounding Serbian villages.

Margherita [age: about 35] lives and works in a mountainous area in the pre-Alps surrounding Lecco. She, too, has been in Italy since the early 1990s. Though her family is Catholic and originally came from Stubla, Margherita is from Pristina. The only one of four brothers and sisters to attend university, she grew up amid the student conflicts that raged throughout the 1980s, until she was forced to abandon her studies just before she could obtain her degree. Today she is married to an Italian citizen, with whom she lives and works.

Rimini, Northern Adriatic Coast

Some Roma families from Kosovo have managed to settle in Rimini, on the northern Adriatic coast. All of them are of the Islamic faith. Among these families is that of Rexhi [age: 42], from Vucitrn, who was forced to flee his home by armed members of the Kosovo Liberation Army in the summer of 1999. He carries with him memories of a peaceful life, of a time when relationships were good between all communities, Albanians, Serbs, Romany, Gorans and Turks, and when there were many occasions to meet others. The situation changed during the last decade, when, espe-

cially for younger generations, the possibility of sharing common experiences came to an end. Even when they belonged to Rom communities, the children who continued to attend parallel (separate Albanian) schools were pressured to adhere to and support the resistance. This phenomenon was confirmed by Ylber [age: 21, male], Rexhi's son. Born in Vucitrn, he lives in Rimini with his wife and his son, who is a few months old.

At a host centre in Rimini, Blerta [age: 56, female] and her husband Andri [male] also found hospitality. Blerta had always lived in Pristina, where she worked in a factory and belonged to a Rom folkloric music group. Now, in Italy, her husband has been driven by need to return to work in a factory in Rimini, even though he feels too old for that kind of employment. Blerta, like many other Romany, lost everything when she fled. She hopes to return to Kosovo one day. Her greatest fear is that of dying in Italy and not being buried in her homeland.

Florence, Central Italy

In the city of Florence, meetings have taken place to unite the Romany of Islamic faith. Some members of this community are native speakers of Albanian, or *Hascalje*. Among these is the family of Tahir [age: 40, male], who come from Vucitrn. Tahir is an engineer who worked in a factory from 1987 to 1991, when he left his job to avoid having to vow allegiance to the Serbian government. Since then he has always lived in Italy, and has only made periodic trips to Kosovo to see his wife and four children. After the NATO intervention, and with the arrival of a KLA military force, his family was forced to leave their home and possessions. This latest affront was just one more episode in the hostilities suffered by the Serbs during the 1990s, the worst period being the spring of 1999, during the NATO bombings. Since November of 1999, Tahir's family has regrouped in Italy, completely reunited with the arrival of Sofia [age: 35, female] and their four children, (among which are Baftjar [age: 18, male] and Rozafa [age: 15, female]). Sofia, bewildered, told of the hardships she and her family had to endure: being forced to abandon their home and being mistreated by the Albanians, when their common language and religion had made them feel closer to the Albanians than to the Serbs. Before this, however, she had also enjoyed good relations with the Serbs, and especially with the many who resided in the apartment building she had lived in before getting married. Their children, Rozafa and Baftjar, spoke of the insults and intimidation they suffered in the parallel Albanian school they attended during the late 1990s. Although they had chosen to continue studying in Albanian (their mother tongue), ties with their classmates steadily deteriorated at school. At the same time, outside the school and on the streets, they feared the Serbian police searches just as much as the Albanians did. For these

reasons, and because of the NATO bombing, Rozafa stopped attending school in fourth grade, and Baftjar was not able to obtain his certificate as an electricity technician.

Skender [age: 34, male], also from Vucitrn, arrived in Florence two years ago looking for work. He was also prevented from returning to Kosovo because of the deteriorating political situation there. He vigorously criticized what he called the "double nationalism", both Albanian and Serb, recalling the cultural and ethnic pluralism that once existed in Kosovo, and before this, in socialist Yugoslavia.

Musa [age: 30, male] and Naim [age: 26, male] are two young men who came to Italy between 1992 and 1993, looking for work and for escape from the economic and political crisis of the former Yugoslavia. Musa was born in Mitrovica where he worked as a professional welder. In Italy, his first job consisted of cleaning car windows at traffic lights. He brought his wife to Italy a few months after his arrival. He claimed to be happy in Italy because local doctors assisted his wife in her efforts to become pregnant. They now have six children, all of them born on Italian soil. Naim was born and lived in Vucitrn, where he attended an Albanian school for six years. He joined his brother in Italy in 1993. Because of their Yugoslavian passports, he, like Musa, had no difficulty entering the country. It was, however, much harder for him and his friends to obtain residence and work permits. He receives news from Kosovo only rarely and with difficulty. He does not know how many Romany are still in the region, though he and his friends are aware that most of their possessions, including their homes, have been either confiscated or destroyed. In Italy, Naim works for a delivery agency. His main concern is finding a house; even though he has all of the necessary documents and possesses enough money, most of the Italian landlords do not want to rent land to the Romany.

Lecce and Brindisi, Southern Italy

Of the Kosovar Albanian and Rom families who fled illegally across the Adriatic on very fast motor-ships or motorized dinghies to avoid being spotted by the Italian police or other forces, many arrived in Brindisi, where a *Caritas Diocesana* reception centre is located. This is where Gezim [age: 39, male] and Violça [age: 30, female], both from Deva, found refuge, together with their two children. Gezim and his wife are Muslim. He has a degree in Commerce and worked as an entrepreneur before 1998, while Violça cared for the home. Today, their living and health conditions are precarious, especially for Violça, who contracted a case of thrombosis in Kosovo. In Kosovo, the family also witnessed killings and was subjected to military intimidation violent enough to force

the men to flee into the woods and the women to abandon their homes. They also, however, remembered acts of solidarity and kindness by Albanian and Serbian families alike.

The story of Bahrije [age: 44, female, housewife], Agim [age: 44, male, engineer] and their daughter Ajse [age: 15, student] and of the family's three other children, all of them from Dragas, is also heavily marked with violence and the dangers of flight. They had been badly burnt by a fire that destroyed their tent in Kukes, on the border between Albania and Kosovo. Ajse, in particular, suffered from the effects of her burns, but she nevertheless continued attending school in Italy until she received her middle-school diploma. In spite of the hardships they suffered, the members of this family have been able to hold onto memories of festivities and religious Islamic celebrations, happy times from the peaceful life they led before the war.

Another group of war refugees was interviewed at a reception site in the municipality of San Foca, near Lecce. Lytfi [age: 25, male] is a Rom, originally from the municipality of Lupjani; he attended elementary school and worked as a farmer. Lyfti was forced to flee Kosovo after the war of 1999, because of violence suffered at the hands of armed Albanians. According to his accounts, the entire Romany population was by then being persecuted. He saw no reason for the Albanians to act so violently against *all* the Romany, because only *some* of them had collaborated with the Serbian authorities. He also remembers a time when relations with Albanians were good, and when many young Romany still attended the same schools and mosques as their Albanian neighbours.

Elidon G. [age: 20, male, student], the second of three brothers, has come to Italy from Pec. He is one of the sons of an Islamic religious leader who supported the Kosovar Albanian cause from the United States. Elidon G. was also forced to abandon his village, this time by the Serbian army. He recalled a time when he enjoyed civil relations with his Serbian neighbours, but also held a very negative opinion of the Romany, in particular because of their behaviour during the war. He has been in Italy since January 1999 and hopes to join his parents in the United States.

Gentiam [age: 20, male, student] briefly took part in the armed KLA fighting. Then, after the Serbian offensive of 1998, he abandoned arms and returned to his village near Pec. He left Kosovo, originally heading for Germany where he had relatives, including one brother. The voyage, however, began and ended in Italy: as soon as he reached Germany, he was sent back to the first European Union country he had entered, in compliance

with European regulations. He is now living at the reception centre of San Foca without any hope of finding work and unable to move freely because of his refugee status.

Ardita [age: 38, female] is the mother of four children, who she brought to Italy with her in January of 1999. She is an Albanian of Islamic faith from Llucan, a village in Serbian territory, and she remembers the escalation of tension between ethnic groups. To her, the difficulties began in 1997, when violence erupted in her mostly Serb-inhabited neighbourhood. Her problems were made worse by the Albanian villages in Serbia, which moved to support the Albanians of Kosovo, (though mostly by helping those who had been forced from their homes). Ardita's flight from Kosovo was hurried, and occurred before the beginning of the NATO bombings.

Dritan [age: 63, male] was born in Pristina, but had lived most of his life in Albania until he and his father were forced into exile by Serbian nationalists. He is an engineer, has two children and he is an atheist. During World War II, Dritan fought with Albanian partisans, against the Nazi-Fascist occupation. When the war was over, he went to university and studied in Moscow, while the situation of Kosovo was made difficult by the widening political distance between Yugoslavia and Albania. He then began a career as a poet and writer. Now that the NATO bombings have ended, he has finally been able to visit the places of his infancy with his wife.

Arta [age 23, female] is a Romany woman who arrived in Italy just six days before the interview. She was still deeply traumatized by the murder of her mother, which took place before her eyes. Her tale was woven with the pain of one who, with her father, had to escape her home to avoid being another Romany victim of the war. Majkell [age 67, male] is Arta's father. He has lived in Kosovo his entire life before being forced to escape. He is now trying to reach his sons in Germany. He was barely able to tell the tale of his wife's murder before dissolving in tears.

Places and mediators

The South: Lecce

In order to collect interviews, researcher Patricia Ruiz chose the Regina Pacis *immigrant reception centre, which is located in San Foca, in the province of Lecce. Half of the southern Italy interviews were collected in this region: five in the centre, and one in the interviewee's home in the city of Lecce. This is how she describes the site:*

The centre lies on the edge of south-eastern Italy, in the region of Salento, or, more precisely, in the territory known as the Land of Otranto. The territory surrounds the maritime citadel of Otranto, which also bears the same name as the 60km channel of the Adriatic Sea that separates Italy from Albania.

The Salento is a border area, and according to data collected by the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT) the ISTAT, offers the largest Italian exposure to clandestine immigrant disembarkation. In 1998, 36,000 immigrants crossed the channel on motorboats, paying an average of one thousand marks each to be smuggled into Italy. According to official data, 26,000 people entered Italy by these means during the first semester of 1999. Most of these immigrants were Kosovar Albanians and Romany, and were escaping the war that had just begun in their country.

Regina Pacis was conceived as a centre that would temporarily receive a large number of these immigrants. The centre is administered by a Catholic priest, Don Cesare Lodoserto, and typically hosts people from such diverse countries as Peru, China, Pakistan, Kurdistan, Romania, Senegal, Algeria and Kosovo. Its building was initially used as summer camp for boys and girls. Arriving at the centre from the coastal highway, after having passed summer chalets, white beaches and cliffs, it is surprising to see the facility cast its shadow over the luminous sea, enclosed on all sides by a two and a half-meter railing that is constantly guarded by a garrison of the national police corps. The Centre's residents spend most of their days in a courtyard located inside the building or looking out of the two large balconies on the first floor. Few of them have the right to exit and enter whenever they wish. Only those who have obtained a resident permit have any real mobility. (An informal agreement between the police and Don Cesare allows a select few – those who have already lived at the centre for a certain period of time – to circulate in the area near *Regina Pacis*, even without a permit).

With Don Cesare's permission, I was able to go inside the centre, and found myself in a corridor crowded with residents. All of them were waiting to use the only public telephone available to them. Before us, a flight of stairs led to the first floor, where the two big dormitories, one for men, and the other for women, were located. On the second floor, a few apartments hosted the families who had been there longer than the rest. Inside the building, the dining room seemed to be the only area where people could socialize. The staff recruited volunteers from amongst the residents to prepare and serve the food. In the external part of the complex, younger residents played volleyball under the watchful eyes of the police.

The place assigned to us for the interviews was the large room typically used by the police in dealing with the legal details of the immigrants' stay. The office had a cold feel to it, with standard tables, grey cabinets and a small bathroom which policemen could enter and exit without asking permission, without warning. I recorded part of the interviews there, as we could not convince the authorities to allow us a more suitable place. We were, however, able to record the last interview in the dining room.

The only conversation held in a different context, outside the centre, was with our translator's father, who cheerfully agreed to be interviewed. In this case, the atmosphere was exceptional. I knew the kitchen where we sat to talk, as only two days had passed since our translator had invited me to her house in order to review the first part of the interviews. Though their house was small and crowded at the time, with the translator's mother and father, as well as her daughter and a cousin, the courtesy they showed me was unforgettable.

The work of Ada Prizreni, a resident of Lecce and our Albanian interpreter, was of prime importance to the project, to the point that it influenced the selection of the methodology used. A 30-year-old with a degree in Italian language, Ada has lived in Lecce, Italy for the last ten years. Professionally, she is an interpreter and translator, and has worked on several research projects conducted by the sociology department at the University of Lecce. The last of these was entitled, *Immigrants or Citizens? War Refugees and Peace Refugees in Salento; Between Expectations and Reality*. The results of this study were obtained using a participant-observation method and collected at the *Regina Pacis* centre.

Ada Prizreni therefore already knew a lot about the situation of *Regina Pacis* and its residents. Near the time of the work presented in this paper, she was working as a full-time researcher with a UNESCO project investigating the situation of immigrants in Salento. A great part of this research also dealt with what went on in *Regina Pacis*. The entirety of her prior experience allowed us to forego the phase, usually important, where potential interviewees are contacted by telephone. This was of great help to us, as primary contact with the subjects had already been made. Her work also helped us enter the centre, as did the mayhem created by the continuous arrival of new refugees. I therefore feel it appropriate to emphasize the importance of Ada Prizreni to our research.

Finally, but still of great importance, was the mediation of Don Cesare Lodoseto, the priest responsible for *Regina Pacis*. Always dressed in an explorer's waist-length jacket, Don Cesare is a man of great presence and few words. Though his communication was almost entirely limited to his steady gaze, magnified by enormous glasses, it would have been imposs-

ible to interview the Kosovar Albanian and Rom residents without his permission. It was enough for him to read our project's presentation letter to make a quick decision, almost immediately entrusting one of his assistants (a young Kosovar Abanian) to help us find potential interviewees with our translator's help. The intervention of Don Cesare was of great importance to the success of this project.

Brindisi: A Border City

The interviews collected in Brindisi, in August of the year 2000, were carried out by Laura Corradi, who thus introduces the place and situation:

Brindisi is a Mediterranean city that lies just across from Albania, a border town which shares interesting fragments of culture and history with the people living on the other side of the Adriatic Sea. During the times of violence in Kosovo and of bombings over Serbia, Brindisi was overwhelmed with refugees, with unexpected social outcomes. The *frontera* or border effect drew energies and resources, sparking compassion and solidarity both in the religious and the lay communities. This is perhaps not surprising, given that, according to a national survey, the people of Brindisi (especially the women) think about the meaning of life and death more often than those of any other provincial capital of Italy. The percentage of people who admit to being concerned about these greater matters has risen more than 10 per cent in the last decade. Previously, the area had suffered a sharp decline in its population, mainly due to emigration. Most of those who leave Brindisi head for the north of Italy and for other European countries. On the other hand, the province of Brindisi has the lowest rate of mortality, including suicide, of the entire Puglia region [Poll conducted by Indagine Gubert]. Both the rates of employment and unemployment reflect the standard of most of southern Italy, and wealth indices register Brindisi as the Italian city with the smallest per capita income. The agricultural sector of the economy is weak due to structural causes and internal competition. As has been the national trend, the agricultural sector of the Brindisi Province has lost ground in recent years [source: Prometeia]. Industry is mostly concentrated in four sectors: oil, gas and chemical production (often hazardous), the pharmaceutical industry, and aeronautics (Fiat aeroplane parts and Agusta helicopters). Small industry is limited to clothing manufacture, lumber, food production, and construction, while the harbour area and tourism have been somewhat neglected [see report "Brindisi città di frontiera"].

Even though Brindisi ranks 78th amongst all of the Italian provinces for criminality, the extra-legal sector is perceived as strong, both in terms of petty and organized crime. This sector offers various employment oppor-

tunities at different levels of risk and social exposure, from smuggling to prostitution, and includes drug dealing and thug recruitment for the bloody settling of disputes. In Brindisi, the level of homicide is the highest in the entire region, while the number of bank robberies is the lowest [see report "Brindisi città di frontera"].

The local Catholic Church is open to inter-religious exchange and promotes multiculturalism. It might be considered one of the agents of social solidarity, with a focus on immigrants and refugees, even though it operates in a culturally secular context. According to a local survey, only 44 per cent of the citizens of Brindisi believe in the Catholic after-life, while an unexpectedly high 5.5 per cent believe in reincarnation. Citizens of both sexes seem to subscribe to a pragmatic concept of life and choices, which includes a different and positive view of values like hospitality, solidarity, and volunteer work. In a recent survey conducted in Brindisi, 54 per cent of the respondents gave great importance to solidarity, almost half indicated inner strength as a value that was important to them, while faith was chosen by only 20 per cent, and success/money, by only 2 per cent. These seem to be the values held dear by a people who were candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize, because of the generous welcome they extended to the refugees.

While during the war, in 1999, Kosovar Albanians were the most prevalent group in Brindisi, finding those who had not yet returned to Kosovo in the summer of the year 2000 proved to be a very difficult task. I was assisted in my search by a women's helpcentre located in Brindisi, which referred me to Emanuele Polito, the person who manages the *Citim* (a shelter for refugees in Mesagne, where no Kosovars remained at the time) and to Don Peppino, the head of the San Vito Church.

As I later found out, the Kosovars who had remained in the Brindisi area were "special cases" – people who had a specific reason to delay their journey home. One family, which had originally agreed to be interviewed but later declined, included a pregnant woman about to give birth. Another of the families I interviewed was in the process of packing. They were planning to fly to Kosovo the following week, despite the poor health of the mother, who was suffering from thrombosis. The members of the other family I was able to interview had only just become refugees officially. Most of them needed long term medical attention because of severe injuries suffered during the war.

I therefore interviewed the members of two families. The first family was made up of a wife, her husband, and their four children. I held separate interviews with the mother, the father and with their teenage daughter, who speaks fluent Italian. In the second family, I interviewed a couple with two

children. All five interviews took place within the *Casa di Accoglienza, Betagna*, a shelter-house managed by the Caritas volunteers and the San Vito Church. The church's elderly priest, Don Peppino, is a very open person, respectful of other religions and cultures, and extremely popular in Brindisi because of his enthusiastic full-time commitment to helping those seeking refuge on the Puglia coastline. Much of his time is spent picking up refugees who have just stepped onto the beaches, from their boats, placing them in the care of local families, and raising funds for their needs throughout the community.

The following observations hinge on the interactions of two elements. The first concerns the narratives of individual and collective suffering before and after the war, particularly those recounting the death of a person (family, friend or acquaintance), and the fear of death (of those close to them, for those who have engaged in a close relationship, and of the whole Kosovar Albanian community).

The second factor was my specific mindset about death. At the time of the research, I was myself mourning a personal loss. This affected both my attitude during the interviews, and the subjects' responses. I should add that I felt emotionally involved in their narration of their grief. The *experience/knowledge* of these matters that they embodied had found an empathetic listener.

The Centre: Florence

Florence, at the geographical centre of Italy, is one of the nation's richest towns, attracts tourists from all over the world, and is one of the largest shopping destinations for those searching for "authentic" Western culture. The town has become a refuge for the Romany from Kosovo, some of whom were interviewed by Enrica Capussotti. She evokes the experience thus:

> The seven Roma I interviewed in Florence had arrived there because members of their families were already living in the city. This follows the traditional migration strategy, where the presence of already established networks serves as a primary reason for choosing a destination.

Florence, also, has its "peripheries". Today, one of the most prominent of these is the area where immigrants from the East and South of the world have come to live. By "peripheries" I refer not only to the area geographically located outside the city's centre, but also to the places in the city itself that are perceived as "marginal" in the local sense: the railway-

station, the public gardens and the squares. I gathered my interviews in a public garden in the city's centre, and in one of the disgraceful *campo nomadi* (camps for Gypsies)[1] that exist outside the town.

In the public garden, I, as interviewer, sat with the interviewees on a wooden double park bench, which had a table separating both sides. All around us children played, women chatted, men slept, and others, couples, groups, and individuals who had mostly arrived from outside Italy, congregated. I had not spent this much time in a public garden since my childhood. These little clearings of the city are often small, full of concrete, boast very little grass and only a few trees, and are usually stuck in the middle of a square, surrounded by cars, streets and traffic. This experience made me begin to see these places differently: I realized that because of the immigrants who use them, these spaces have come into a new phase in their existence, and they are needed. Some reasons for this are cultural responses to the terrible economic situation in which most of the immigrants live. Not having a decent home, people meet, eat and socialize in public gardens. They express the plurality of their cultures and of their daily problems in public places, and yet they remain "invisible", like ghosts who materialize only when associated with "delinquency" and the Italians' "fears of invasion".

On one occasion, I was holding an interview in a public garden, and discussing, with my subject, the war in Kosovo, the forced Diaspora and the request that he and others like him had made for a house in Florence. There was a woman in her late sixties sitting nearby, one of the homeless who are usually seen in public gardens, and she asked if she could ask a question. "Isn't it a problem that all these people are coming here asking for support and there isn't even enough for us?" she asked. From this point, we engaged in a serious discussion that left all of us with a lot to think about.

There is no romanticism in this story: public gardens are uncomfortable places that cannot be frequented in winter, and to have to interrupt an interview because of the rain is difficult and disappointing. Yet this place in the city, along with its visitors, can be seen as a metaphor for the "peripheries" that lie within cities. They bear witness to the existence of people who are visible, but not seen. These immigrants tell us something about themselves, the several selves that wander our cities, but also something about ourselves and our ability to listen, to recognize ourselves in them, and our willingness to share, for their survival, some of our collective economic wealth.

Language was fundamental to the encounters in which the narratives were shaped. None of the interviewers shared a common mother tongue with any of the interviewees. Some interviews took place in Italian, the language the interviewee had to learn as part of his/her immigration process,

but most of the time we asked Albanian and Rom translators to help us speak with our subjects. Language has always been an obstacle and a challenge, especially for oral historians who use narration and textual analyses, and who find important insights in the comprehension of written or oral testimonies. I wish to include the complexity of these languages in my analysis, and to present it as a sort of microcosm of processes that occur globally. The difficulties I/we faced in understanding each other are common to those faced by people of different cultures who meet in their daily lives. The mediation we used is one that is now common in our societies. In our analysis, in this maze of ambivalence and potential misunderstanding, we understood the material through it's own strong meaning, and because it spoke from within, recognizable to each participant's subjectivity whether he/she be the interviewer, the interviewee or the translator. The remarks of Ilir, a 25-year-old man who has been living in Italy since 1998, supported this point:

> I have understood the questions well but I don't know if I have explained things well… it could have been better but maybe not… Today I met an Iraqi boy, he was talking to his sister on the phone and he asked me to hold the phone while he wrote down the number… then he talked to his sister in his own language but he said the word "camera" [room] in Italian… What I want to say is that I've started thinking in Italian too, the way of thinking too has started to be a bit Italian… I don't know, will I become Italian myself? I don't know…

The mediation of the interpreter must also be considered in terms of the content he/she decides to transmit. Each translator might use different strategies, according to his point of view and background. Most of the time, the translators helped us find willing interviewees and their intervention was essential in convincing people to talk to us. Despite our request that the translators remain as close to the words spoken as possible, we have come to recognize the importance and value of their participation in the construction of meanings. The translators participated in the research both before and during the interviews, often suggesting questions, and showing their commitment to a job they found highly political. Most of them had been living in Italy for several years, either because of persecution or because they opposed the nationalistic politics implemented in Kosovo and Serbia.

With these words, we wish to thank them, but above all to point out the exceptional values of people who have maintained a strong ethical commitment to themselves and to others, in a conflict that has otherwise destroyed the grounds that once held solidarity and reciprocity.

Finally, before analysing the interviews with the Romany, specific characteristics of the Romany cultures should be taken into consideration. Traditionally, critics of oral history relate the oral narration of the interview form to the broader cultural patrimony of the interviewee, which is often transmitted, as is well known, by means of texts and research written earlier. The Roma cultures, however, exist as a plurality of languages, groups, religions, behaviours, self-representations and mainly oral cultural attitudes, all of which have complicated our interpretations of the interviews. Further, the Romany written language is still "under construction" (Friedman, 1985), and it is difficult to identify which written texts published by Kosovar Romany should be used in such an analysis. During their testimonies however, the Romany have identified themselves as members of one of two groups: the *Gurbeti*, meaning the speakers of Romane, and the *Askalije*, who use Albanian as their language.

The North

The interviews from northern Italy were mostly gathered in the provinces of Turin and Milan by Giuseppe De Sario. He described the process thus:

With the exception of Ilir, whom I met in Turin where he has lived since the end of 1998, the other people I interviewed were from two different areas, one near Ivrea in the province of Turin, and the second, which consisted of Lecco and the surrounding area in Lombardia. The first area, despite having experienced significant industrial downscaling (Olivetti, Italy's biggest information technology company, once had its headquarters there), has maintained a considerably industrial base, now sustained by the establishment of new mobile telephone and communication companies. The area of Lecco, on the other hand, has seen significant economic development, because of the "miracle surge" of small and medium sized industries that affected the northern plains of the Pô river, at the centre of Italy. These economic changes did not dominate the refugees' accounts, however, but rather gave a particular slant to both the reception and integration of the immigrants into the local social fabric.

"Full employment" and an urban landscape composed of small and medium-sized towns, with, in its most developed areas, a very active and solidarity-conscious civil society, together made rapid integration in Ivrea and in the Canavese area possible for dozens of people from Kosovo, and, before that, for people from other regions and republics of former Yugoslavia. Previously, and beginning in the 1990s, more than 500 Kosovar Albanians had settled in or passed through the Lecco area, as did some Kosovar Serbs and Romany after the spring of 1999.

As will be made evident from the accounts of the interviewees, their integration into a part of Italy that is, on average, wealthier than the rest of the country, had consequences for the lives of the refugees. The move has both affected them materially, thus influencing their plans (of returning to Kosovo, for instance), and has altered their image of Kosovo today.

On the routes a great number of these interviewees have taken to reach these areas, large cities appear only occasionally, like unexplored paths. They were always used as transit points and perceived with some suspicion. The immigrants saw Turin, for example, through their visit to the *Questura* [police headquarters] and emergency shelter, while Milan, for them, was seen from the inside of the Central Railway station, a place peopled by derelicts, the homeless, immigrants and refugees.

With the exception of a boy residing in Turin, who spoke to me in a café, all of the interviews took place in the homes of the subjects. The talks were held in a welcoming and hospitable atmosphere, sometimes made pleasantly untidy by the presence of elders, children and adolescents. In Ivrean homes, there was a constant coming-and-going of men, boys and girls going to work or coming home, the coffee pot was always simmering on the kitchen stove and freshly-opened cigarette packs, handed around the table, became the cue for conversation. The homes in Lecco extended the same kindness and hospitality. In one home, the Albanian national flag had been draped over a table and used as a tablecloth, while in another house, pictures of Mother Theresa of Calcutta, of the Virgin Mary, and pennants of the Albanian eagle on a red background, were hung on the walls and set among the ornaments on the sideboards and shelves.

The itineraries of those who had arrived in the provinces of north-western Italy from Kosovo had not been attempted without safety provisions. First, the richly networked fabric of the community, tried and tested by the wave of immigrants in the 1990s and by the arrival of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, remained strong and was almost everywhere able to guarantee real opportunities of integration to the arriving refugees. The contribution of this already fertile ground of autonomous networks, (set up by Kosovar Albanian immigrants who had been in Italy since the early 1990s), to the integration of new immigrants, must not be underestimated. In the Lecco area, in particular, these networks have proven to be especially well-organized, swift in giving assistance, and able to handle any emergency with the help of local communities, thus facilitating the reception of the arrivals. Despite this, there were and still are many former immigrants preparing to leave again, intent on joining relatives living in northern Europe.

On a darker note, many of the immigrants were forced to pass through the region, and were therefore not allowed to reach their families in other countries. As a result of this, the refugees' integration in the Lecco and Cavanese societies were not always due to the freedom of opportunity offered them, but because of bureaucratic constraints, and the limitations on free circulation imposed by the Treaty of Schengen.

The interpreter, whose role was only essential during the Ivrea interviews, was a helpful participant, and was also respectful of the final aim of the project. His was primarily a technical function, but he also acted as a guide to the interviewer and, it seems, did his best to avoid distorting the accounts or introducing ideas of his own, despite his direct involvement as a relative of some of the subjects.

Generally speaking, language did not create a problem of comprehension between interviewer and interviewees. The interpreter was always available and only those who were completely unable to converse in Italian made use of him. The goals for which we were gathering the refugees' accounts were stated before each interview, but the fact that these interviews were aimed at enlarging an archive to be set up in Kosovo, and that future readers and listeners would be primarily Kosovars, did not prompt the interviewees to rely on their mother-tongue. There might, of course, have been many reasons for this: Undoubtedly, in the case of many interviews with a higher "political" content and shaped by an attempt to interpret past or present historical facts, using Italian was their means of telling me, my country, and the West, what had happened to Kosovo, through me as interviewer. Another reason for this might have been that for many younger people, the Italian language was closer to their daily experience. Colloquial terminology and idiomatic expressions in Italian, and even in local dialects, emerged in such a way that even in an account referring to the past or to historical happenings, the interviewees' language was always rooted in their new existence.

Part I
Stories of Conflicts and Enemies

Giuseppe De Sario*

Voices of war

A war took place, a war sparked by bitter political and social conflict that had begun in the 1980s. These undeniable facts are, of course, to be found in the interviewees' stories, but with differing emphases depending on the chronology of the conflict's phases that each has created for themselves, and according to the cognitive framework through which they have given meaning to these events.

"The Serb people", "the Albanian people", "the Roma people", are phrases that occur time and again in the stories, sometimes used in the specific sense of a people, other times, as a generalization for something else, such as the behaviour or identity of individuals belonging to the group thus defined. In this paper, our analysis focuses mainly on the accounts of Kosovar Albanians. Some Roma narratives have been added in order to break the rigidity of a constructed Serbian-Albanian duality.

The stories had no endings and exuded perceptible tension. Within the space of a few lines, a bare assertion of the responsibility of the Serbian people[1] could be followed by distinctions between Serbs near and far, between civilians and soldiers, and again by a return to the attribution of collective guilt upon the Serbian people. In so many cases, this blame does not stem from confusion, from the persistence of trauma, nor from intellectual incapacity to discern facts. The mechanism that make it so difficult for these victims to *name their own enemies*, even for people forced to run away from real, flesh-and-blood persecutors, revealed indirectly and in terrible circumstances, the fragility of a definition like *ethnic conflict*. This expression, so widespread throughout western media and politics, has travelled a tortuous path prior to its acceptance in the victims' reconstruction of facts, and has never managed to convey all the nuances of what really happened. The fugitives and younger immigrants find it odd that belonging to a nationality could have been sufficient grounds to create

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social hierarchies, inconceivable that this could be the motive for crimes and massacres:

> …When first I heard of atrocities [referring here to the war in Croatia], because if you heard of some soldier dying in the war in a shoot-out, that is alas normal, the first time at Plitvice – do you know where that is? A really nice town by the way – on the television we saw civilians whose eyes had been put out by Serbs and we could not believe that it had really happened, we could hardly even believe the television news, there must have been a reason behind it we thought; and then it turned out that it had actually happened, but even worse… [Altin]

> Massacres, when I heard tell of massacres, I hoped that it wasn't true. [Margherita]

It is not a coincidence that until physical contact took place, until they were face to face with a tangible "enemy", policeman, bureaucrat or paramilitary, many people perceived the enemy as hiding beyond the borders that had brought them close to their neighbours, whether these neighbours were Albanian, Serbs or Romany.

"I didn't want to believe it", was the reaction that many expressed when they heard of atrocities committed against defenceless people, a mirror reaction to the dismay they felt before the perpetrator of violence: "You!? So why me?" This terrible consternation comes both from knowing the identity of the persecutor, a person who had not been thought capable of harm, and from realizing one's own condition, as victim. At a certain point, *personal history ceases*: this was expressed by a Rom engineer who was dismissed in the early 1990s for not collaborating with the government, and later expelled after the NATO intervention, by the armed groups who followed on the heels of the Liberation Army.

> At a certain point Kosovo is occupied, and then everybody who worked for a State company had to sign one of their… forms, recognizing the State and Serbia. Anybody who did not sign this was out of a job… and that is what happened to me personally because I was the only Rom engineer in Kosovo working there… They had always tried to push me into signing this recognition for Serbia and then, how do you say, to be undervalued by them… that is what I refuse to do… in fact more than refusing, I did not want to be that way because I saw it was not right… [Tahir]

This surprise before unexpected violence and the end of personal history also occurred when entire families received sudden orders to leave their homes. First, Albanian families were thrown out by Serbian soldiers or paramilitaries, then Roma families were forced to flee by armed

Albanians. At this point, the stories even became interchangeable. One story could replace the other because their progression and themes were so similar: The arrival of a handful of armed men, the order to leave the house, often within a few hours or by the following morning – so many stories included these scenes. The tales told by the Kosovar Albanians, however, contained added chilling twists, especially if they took place in the countryside. Their narratives of expulsion from homes and villages included scenes of execution or macabre games, where communities were sometimes rounded up and herded into town squares or football fields.

Throughout the area of the battlefields, complex mechanisms converge to result in the construction of "ethnic groups". The new identification of a group with labels like "the enemy" and/or "the victim" is fundamental to these processes. This is why it seems more appropriate to refer to *populations* and not *peoples*, at least in reference to Kosovo and the constructions instrumental to what happened there. Even when the terms "people" and "population" coincide and, for instance, when the term "refugees" coincides with "Kosovar Albanians", "Kosovar Serbs", or "Romany", it must not be forgotten that these are not natural identities but words, albeit words that confer identity. Writing of this, Michel Foucault has maintained that contemporary power systems based on "bio-power", even when aimed at the destruction of an enemy, or the power to decide whether he will live or die, end up exerting an active influence in life, defining its outlines and meanings.[2] In other words, these technical and bio-political policies of identification could lead to nothing but a definition of "expendable life". Where power is granted over these lives, death becomes a possible outcome which is neither illegal nor immoral, and at the end of this path we find mass murder as one result of this process of identification. One example of this occurred in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe. German Jews were de-nationalized,[3] then de-specified, and thus was a people reduced to a population of "terrorists", "refugees", "clandestine immigrants" – or civilian collateral to the objectives of war. In the final stages of this mechanism, a population, though still men and women, fall into the state of silent *non-persons*.[4]

In real terms, in the Kosovo conflict, each individual was separated from his neighbour, and every group was distanced from the other cultural, linguistic and religious groups, until all came to be seen as belonging to one of the two opposing camps. Whoever was known to be a *good man* or was a childhood, school or workplace friend, gradually or suddenly disappeared without any parting words or final explanations. Though exceptions do exist where victims helped one another, materially and morally, despite their differences, the suffering of the early refugees were only a preview of what would soon happen to Kosovo.

Question: And when you were small, did you have any Serbian friends, I mean of your own age, who you used to play with?

Teuta: She didn't but I did, I always had some near, we would play together; there were a lot of Serb refugees from Krajna and we became friends even though they were Serbs; they didn't have anything to wear, they didn't have anything and they would go round the houses asking and we would give them things, then we would watch videos that they had taken in Krajna showing what had happened during that war, and then they would weep, early in 1998, and they told us that that was starting to happen here too, who knows what's going to happen to you too.

Question: So you watched those films together?

Teuta: Yes, and when I left my home too, when I went into the town, they kissed me and they were weeping; they said we might never see you again, you could be killed, and they wept; and when I came back two months later, they were no longer there.

Narratives about the enemy or about persecutors were highly varied. There was an *enemy-people* (enemy Serbs, for instance) who, for the length of the conflict narrative, took the guise of a collective subject (the enemy Serbian People). The concept of a national collectivity engaged in an attack on the rights of a minority and as described from the opposite side, must, it seems, be included in the story of an oppressed people. Beyond the exceptions, or apparent exceptions, that described mutual support shared between people who otherwise would have been adversaries, the stories also contained rationalizations of the behaviour of the "others", *especially* when this behaviour contrasted with that of the nearest "other" neighbour. One example of this was the responsibility cast somewhat on the Serbs, but especially on the "people of Belgrade". Another example occurred with the harassment that many Romany were subjected to after the bombing. Protests were organized specifically against the "Albanians from Albania", who allegedly entered Kosovo after the Serbs had left, expelling the non-Albanian inhabitants and destroying their homes.

As it may be seen, the strategies the subjects used to define the adversary varied greatly, even in a context of extreme, open, large-scale conflict. There were no defined war fronts, not even in the minds of the people involved. A widespread feeling was that of alarm, of disbelief in the escalation of violence. The first acts of aggression and cruelty were followed in the narratives by a chain of unexpected events that peaked at the horror of the NATO war against Yugoslavia and the mass expulsion of Kosovar Albanians. Almost completely absent, however, at least in the evidence gathered, was a sense of inevitability in the conflict and in the degeneration of the events, just as no significant mention was made of *matters of*

blood, history, or land as irreversible and unavoidable factors of tension). In any case, even before these deep-seated questions found their way into the narratives, a retrospective "psychology" had taken root, to erode the multi-ethnic fabric:

> Back in 1981 a lot of people died in the protests, then you know you could see that Serbia had done the things that were seen; you know where we lived only a very small percentage were Serbs, but you could see they all had a job; as soon as a Serb finished middle school, he could get a job if he wanted to work, but in the Kosovo families, and there were a real lot of them and in many families maybe not even one or perhaps just one had a job… so how come they got all the jobs? …and if then an Albanian quarrelled with a Serb… you were scared to quarrel with a Serb that the police would get you; of course, there's a psychological side to it… he's a Serb? Ah well I can't say anything; it had been like this since 1981. [Altin]

In memories of a time "before it all started", on the other hand, there was a certain amount of negotiation; the peaceful diversity of the past was often underplayed or overplayed, and could be described with greater or lesser emphasis on relationships established with "others" (as they appeared in the narratives), before they became the "enemy". Coming to hate the adversary, making him out to be an enemy indistinguishable from his peers, on the other hand, has proven less easy than was imagined. The no-longer belligerent "other", like the Serb of today, who keeps guard beyond the borders of the region, worsens and amplifies the hate aimed at the enclaves of Kosovo which are still inhabited by the Serbs and Romany, and yet, at least in the minds of the interviewees, it was only through a tormented path that they arrived at vague though negative definitions of the adversary. Many interviewees, on the contrary, explicitly avoided generalizations, allocating individual responsibility to the aggressors from each group; those that were old acquaintances, those of State armed forces, and those of the paramilitary groups. They also, however, claimed to understand the hatred felt by their fellow citizens, neighbours and relatives who had been subjected to terrible violence:

> …There are all those desperate cases too; I happened to visit a family where 46 people had lived in the same house; it was a big house, very big, and there were only three people left. That meant that somebody had come, lined them up in front of the house and shot them. There's no way you can tell that person that this Serb here didn't do him any harm; he's beyond reasoning because he said to me, "I don't care a thing about Kosovo or the republic, I don't care anything about anybody, I don't care whether I live or not because there were 46 people including a child and an old woman". That means 43 people were all killed in an instant in front of the house… just imagine how much they can hate a Serb… that is, a Serb can't have any future in Kosovo… [Gjolek]

> More than anything else, they don't feel they've done anything wrong; they feel that they did what any honest Serb would have done, that they did their duty, because if he kills a dog he's got to face the responsibility, but not if he kills an Albanian; more than anything, they don't ask to be pardoned today for what they've done… [Arben].

> Their conscience tells them they acted properly; while there are thousands of people who will never know if their relatives are dead or alive… [Gjolek, Arben B.]

These points of view recurred in many of the interviews, from conversations held with ex-fighters to the accounts of subjects who went into exile early in the conflict, just as in the accounts of self-declared pacifists. This sentiment is certainly understandable, and is to a certain extent a sign of humanity, of participation in other peoples' misadventures, even of empathy. Nevertheless, these passages cannot be accepted or quoted uncritically, as the feeling expressed is not a natural reaction, insofar as this humanity is the only possible emotion in such a circumstance. It should, because of this, be considered indisputable and unchangeable. This sentiment should therefore be accepted by Kosovo political and civil society only after it has been *processed and worked-on*. It should then be maintained until the people who harbour this sentiment can confront it, in all of its implications. The necessary corollary to these emotional shocks was also expressed in the narratives, in the claims that the Serbian population should make a public apology. This, in the view of many interviewees, could change the situation both for Serbs in exile, and for those who, at their own risk, have stayed in Kosovo. Here, therefore, begins to emerge the idea of collective guilt, as it emerged in post-war Germany. This is not an easy emotion to bear: in post-war Germany, the notion of collective guilt only radiated through society *via* a great deal of suffering, and even then, it left dark shadows behind. The implementation of this change in Kosovo goes far beyond our contribution of gathering and interpreting testimonies, and it also surpasses the direct responsibility of the people interviewed. It is not our role to point to a solution or suggest how to transform an indefinite and vague request, one that does however show a desire for reconciliation, into realized fact. It must be pointed out, however, that this feeling has taken root and spread that the attitude of the interviewees is not significantly different from the declarations made in public by Kosovar Albanian political and civilian leaders, and repeated in recent months. In these circumstances, therefore, the way that should be followed for so-called "repentance" must be defined, whether it be public or private, whether symbolic and delegated to the political representatives or left to meetings between people who were once neighbours and to the initiatives of civil society.

Through these aspects, the interviews collected represent an overview of wartime emotions. The narratives bore evidence of shock that such conflict could erupt amongst people who had once been bound together by ties that went beyond differences of blood. The prevalent tone was one of disappointed surprise, that people who were once brought together by the pattern of their day-to-day existence, and who lived together in close proximity, could be thrown into a civil war that opposed *neighbours*, friends and co-workers.

Naturally, it is not only the individuals involved in the conflict who have difficulty *understanding* what happened. As researchers, our "position" in the field and our perception of the conflict, as constructed through our research, are also significant and carry important consequences. Observers and scholars should admit to the difficulty of finding categories or definitions that might be applied to contemporary conflicts. Unease and a desire to rationalize or escape these events run throughout the observations of historians and students of social sciences, particularly when war and conflict do not break out between "nations" or between so-called "peoples", but rather between subjectivities *arising suddenly and unexpectedly.*[5]

As many definitions of the enemy as there are participants

If we can, for a time, put aside the nationality-based aspect of the conflict and think instead, for a brief instant, of the differences between opponents without reducing them to the level of birth, language and religion, we might find that a new cultural diversity emerges, one with internal complexity, and which would prevent us from easily drawing borders between the various groups involved. In the accounts gathered, religion and language appeared to be the starting points, the first details of differentiation that made each person stand apart from others, even within their own community. Despite this seeming preference for language and religion, none of these characteristics appeared, in the accounts, as the *last and decisive reason for diversity*; there was always a point, just further from language or religion, where rupture took place and the "other" separated from the "same". This point also shifted: The deeper an account ventured into the conflict and into the rifts between people, the further the point of rupture moved, while, common ground and impartial solidarity unexpectedly appeared.

According to the interviewees' descriptions, the most important characteristics of the borders between groups were their fluidity and movement. One factor that appeared irremediably to differentiate Albanians and Serbs

(as opposed to Albanians and Romany) was supposedly the lack of Serbian solidarity. To others, the Christianity of some Kosovar Albanians did not stand in the way of their reaching agreements with those who were of Islamic faith, if they were also Albanians. They did not, however, extend this same guarantee of good relations to the other Islamic minorities of the region, such as the majority of Romany and Turks. Here again, however, the language barrier put the Romany at a great disadvantage in a social world dominated by Kosovar Albanians. Even the Romany whose mother tongue was Albanian[6] and who still attended "parallel schools", alongside the Albanian children, aroused the suspicion of their companions and, in some cases, suffered provocation and ill treatment.

The dispute surrounding language has therefore become one of the most significant of the Kosovo crisis. The Albanian language was alternatively silenced, or rose in protest to reaffirm its trampled rights or to express, by means of its sound, the cultural identity of the parties in conflict:

> …I went on the day for enrolment… so I went up to the school door because that's where they were doing the enrolling, and I said "Good morning" in Albanian, I said "mirdita", and he said "there's no more mirdita from now on. You've got to say dobar dan", which is mirdita in Serb. So I said "OK, if that's the only way to get to study all right", so I say again "I've come to enrol" and he replies "I can see you're stubborn but don't insist. I didn't tell you there was no more 'mirdita' from today just to say so but to make you understand that you're not to insist: this school isn't for you and there's no place for you here. Don't insist because there's the police over there." The police was there and I thought they were there just for normal checks, on duty on patrol, normal things, but they were there for us. [Gjolek]

In such short alignments of sentences, various images of "enemy" appeared: the contemptuous boys waiting in front of a school, the public employee, or the policeman. The accounts were anything but univocal. The country dwelling Serbian enemy was different from that of the town. The enemy was constructed differently, also, in the memories of young people and adults, students and workers, men and women. Again, it should be emphasized that these distinctions refer to the enemy that each person has constructed and faced, through contemplation, through real experiences, or through the image disseminated by the *vox populi*. The "real" differences between self and enemy, or those presumed to be so, were not definable in the accounts. With each narrative emerging from memories of different events occurring in different settings, there were scenes played by characters who could be described through the traditional dichotomy "people A against people B".

The enemy described by those who had lived in the countryside was often a person "from the next village" just a few kilometres away. He often lived just far enough not to enter the interviewees' direct experience, especially in the accounts of younger women and children. In the accounts of interviewees in their forties and fifties, however, relationships with people living in the next village are remembered differently: interactions between villages are recalled as friendly, with both sets of inhabitants buying and selling from one another for the common benefit of all. These interviewees remembered times of tension, but also of sharing, as when both villages participated in secular or religious celebrations. In their narratives, the interactions prior to the conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s were portrayed as civil, and their memories seemed more indicative of a complex "vicinity-distance" or "our village, their village" relationship, than of a widespread tension separating "different peoples".

> Even the fact that Croats married Serbs and Croats married Bosnians, and us too, in our context, with the surrounding villages which were Serb Orthodox, we were on excellent terms. I remember when we had the mill, my father's customers, when they came from far away, because it was slow, it was water-powered, but there weren't very many mills, and anyway they all ground that way, so they would come for a couple of days with 200 or 300 kilos of grain to be ground, so my father sent this customer, who could be a Serb or a Muslim into the town because there he could find a place to sleep properly and eat and feed the animals, "and when it's ready I'll give you a shout in a couple of days, you can come and get loaded and away". This was the kind of human relationship there was… [Pask Ballabani]

The narratives of young people should be interpreted within a different context. It should be remembered first, that the generation of those born between the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, who grew up through their childhood, adolescence and early adulthood in the 1980s, still has memories of a life shared with the "others". More importantly, many remember schools where all children were united, if not in the same classes, at least in the schoolyard, through shared interests, tastes and the consumer patterns of children of the 1990s. Young people of the generation after that one have practically no memory of peaceful interactions with neighbours from other groups. These interviewees were often unable to mention a real, face-to-face encounter with someone of their own age but of a different language, religion, culture or national identity.

In a pluralistic society in which the mechanisms of segregation operate, the minority group is more likely to conform to the culture of the majority, and not the other way around. In other words, it is the minority members who will be forced to live in two cultures, on two levels of relation-

ships: on one level, they share the culture of their own kind, but they are also made to adopt an "official culture" in the presence of the "others". This interaction, first observed in studies of African-Americans in the United States (Cross, 1990), suggests that most minority groups carry a dual identity: their own, and the identity developed in interactions with the dominant group.

In the case of Kosovo, the rule of population ratios has been reversed. Kosovar Albanians, though the "minority group" in Serbia, outnumber the other Kosovars. Despite this, the social and political organization of Kosovo is such that the relationship between the two groups still follows the same model of subordination/domination, with the Albanians as the "minority". As in the original model, adults of both groups have maintained necessary relationships, especially in administrative quarters, security facilities and other places of work. On the other hand, in "non-official" settings, civilians have separated along community lines, and create perceptions of the other, which should be further investigated.[7] While interactions based on friendship and neighbourliness therefore weakened and worsened, other "official" interactions have flourished. The regional economy, in the wake of increasing social segregation, had split into at least two parts, leaving, on one side, a survivalist system upheld by the mass emigration of Albanians and Romany and, on the other, an economic system protected artificially by the government in Belgrade.

The stories of Kosovar Albanian subjects who were children in the 1990s, especially those who grew up in the countryside, hardly ever contain encounters with the Serbs, not even in the chance meetings of everyday life. If Serbs appear in their narratives, it is as stories of the "other" told by adults as a kind of supplementary education. With the mass exodus and expulsion of Albanians from the schools in the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the last opportunity for contact between younger people of different groups was lost.

In towns, however, interviewees now in their thirties remembered a time when people of all groups congregated in cafés and public meeting places, coming together during festive occasions and even, albeit rarely, uniting in "mixed" marriages. A progressive and inexorable deterioration in these personal relationships gradually became evident in the narratives, following the separation of people in their daily routines. Indeed, such a separation always serves as the first step in relationships based on an incomplete vision of the "other", which can then easily lead to widespread myth and prejudice. Symptoms of this might be found in the subjects' imprecise knowledge of facts and political events attributed to the other side. Some Kosovar Albanian students or former students, for instance, complained of

the passivity allegedly shown by their Belgrade-Serbian classmates under the government of Slobodan Milosevic. They accused the Serbs of having endorsed his regime, if only by their consenting silence.

These factors, combined with the propaganda that strategically promoted discrimination and division between the groups, brought about an *escalation of (ethnic) identification*. Like the escalation identified by Scotto and Arielli in their analysis of the processes of conflict (Scotto and Arielli, 1999), this new reaction heralded the progressive widening of a gap between groups, in the very cafés and public places where their members once interacted. Meanwhile, the "third parties" that could possibly shatter the "duality mindset" that fed the conflict, were literally concealed. As social reality was caught in the relentless grip of this mechanism, the individuals or relationships that did not fit into these scenes of antagonism also faded from the stories:

> Ilir: …I have always been a pacifist, I believe in it, but every so often I feel as though I'm betraying something important, something sacred… I couldn't kill anybody I just couldn't do it but now I feel rather bad, I feel that this destiny is following me through life… all my friends, now I don't know, if I go back to Kosovo will my friendship with them be the same; I don't know if they'll accept me or not because they did something else in the war and I didn't, you know it wasn't just me: others too decided to leave and not fight.
>
> Question: Do you feel a bit like a traitor, as you say, or has your choice been made to weigh heavily on you [by others]?
>
> Ilir: No, just me. I feel like a traitor; nobody has said anything so far. I don't think that war is sacred, it's bad for everybody, but in cases like these... but something had to be done.

This escalation of tension that begins in perceptions and separations can then, regrettably, acquire characteristics with very real consequences: it can lead to crime, it can bend minds to the service of inhumane orders and make individuals guilty of acts of which they would never have deemed themselves capable. The path to the extreme violence that exploded in some areas of Kosovo in 1998 spread further in the months that followed, and reached its peak in the spring and summer of 1999, and was thus paved with stories; the proliferating news of crimes, plots and tit-for-tat provocations that lasted throughout the 1990s. Most of these stories were *not verifiable*, in both senses of the word first they recounted events told by unreliable sources (even if there had been people to check their accuracy, as was not the case in our project, this would have been almost impossible to do). Second, these stories could not be checked because from a single type of event sprung many episodes, and from each of these episodes, multiple versions proliferated. When asked about crimes remembered or wit-

nessed first-hand, the interviewees gave highly different accounts of circumstances, though many resembled one another, conforming to set "types", depending on the individual's sensitivity, or on the part they played in the conflicts. Woman, youth or elders, each person told their story from a different point of view, with a different emphasis, according to what they considered more symbolic or relevant to themselves. Thus did children and mothers remember the poisoning of Albanian children in their schools. This particular story was recounted often and by many interviewees, each time tainted with the fear of continuing to attend any institution controlled by the Serbian government. The speakers often omitted the precise place where an event had occurred, or the first catalyst in a long series of events. Yet whether true, probable or ambiguous, the particular example of the poisonings had made the young Albanians determined to abandon state schools. Their departure, this very real and visible action, gave all Albanian schoolchildren another reason to fear what might have happened to them in retaliation, had they decided to remain in public schools after such a symbolic stand.

To the young men interviewed, most vivid were the tales of friends, brothers, uncles and cousins who had been abused or killed during their service in the Federal Army. Like the school poisonings, these stories, these events and the stories of these events, together with the surge of conflicts within Kosovo and the drive to emigrate that many felt, led a considerable portion of young men to abandon or avoid military service in the 1990s. First, they failed to report to their summons, then they fled to other countries. As in the words of Gjolek:

> …They killed them in the barracks because they were Albanian, they killed them inside; this is not just something said to accuse somebody but it's true, it always happened during the last ten days, before finishing this military service, they kept them a year, and then maybe a week before they finished they said he died, he committed suicide, their answer was always he committed suicide… and so everybody ran away, especially of my age there is almost no one left. [Gjolek]

Other kinds of stories were told by women, in whose tales were to be found the fear of using Serbian health services, and the terrible experiences of young women giving birth. These fears, brought up by two interviewees, were expressed thus:

> …We began to be afraid that even in the hospital surgeries, where there were Serb doctors, these did not do their duty, but that they did just the opposite of their duty, so that even while giving birth the women were afraid… [Alketa]

> We could not even go to the hospitals because they just killed you, and [women] could not even give birth, if it was a boy you never saw him again, they simply said he was dead. [Merita]

The horror stories of male children being murdered in Serbian hospitals intensified the simple distrust of Serbian doctors, and this mistrust, coherent with the growing rigidity in the popular image of conflicting camps, circulated and echoed other stories, until all "different ones" were considered a potential threat for oneself and one's loved ones.

Finally, the adults in their early thirties stressed the slander strategies, the insults and "conspiracy theories" that the Serbs are said to have implemented in order to portray the Kosovar Albanians as a people of potential traitors and criminals, and even, endlessly proceeding in this crescendo of mythification, as people with inhuman traits, without respect for all that is most precious to man, such as *land, religion, women*.

> Then the Serbs prepared raids in Serb cemeteries, their own cemeteries, and threw the tombstones of their own dead to the ground, in order to make the hate grow against Albanians, so that all might see what Albanians were like, people who cannot even leave the dead in peace, so now we have started to put a guard at the cemeteries, and we found Serbs who broke their own tombstones and entered the cemeteries… [Arben B.]

More than one person's testimony contained these last themes. Many further remembered one specific incident: the rape of some women attributed to a few Kosovar Albanians, and the blame of this event, which was immediately extended via the mass media, from the single culprit to his "kind". With various nuances ranging from the Serbian authority's refusal to accept responsibility, to their manipulative use of a crime to vilify the Albanian people as a whole, this topic also re-emerged many times during the interviews:

> Altin: There was talk, from 1981 to 1989, talk of this, of Kosovar Albanians that ate children, say, that raped women, Serb women…
> Question: Is that what the people were saying…?
> Altin: No, in the mass media, in the newspapers, also what the people said, that the Serb women couldn't go out at night and not even during the day…

Here again, in the reminiscence of some witnesses, there seems to be a certain continuity between the rebellious actions of nationalist Serbs hostile to Marshall Tito, and later actions of the 1980s in which the Serbs' own

cemeteries, fields and places of work were destroyed, with the destruction manipulated to their advantage. This narrative trend seemed to link local acts of provocation to a long-term political strategy.

Again, it is not our task to evaluate the truth content of these stories. More important here is that the strategies described, in short, the anti-Albanianism, have been supported and maintained not only by the Serbian *vox populi*, but also by the mass media, which, by the end of the 1980s, was mainly controlled by the Serbian government. These tales are therefore perceived as real, insofar as they have existed in the media, to be circulated throughout a population. On the other hand, the stories in which the Kosovar Albanians were cast as victims were not spread by the media, but mostly by word of mouth, by direct knowledge or by the official and unofficial armies.

Regardless of their mode of dissemination, what all these stories reveal is the severity of the conflict, and the willingness of a people to accept unconditionally this complete image of the enemy. Whether true or false, entirely one or the other, part false or completely true, the veracity of the stories is not important here. It would be much more significant to consider them as a further step in the radicalization of the conflict, and in the creation of an “other” worse even than an adversary: an enemy who bears the marks of a *base and impious monster*.

Places of conflict

A perception and understanding of the adversary that is so removed from social experience, and that differs for young people, adults, women, or immigrants, is further evident in places where conflict developed during the 1980s and 1990s. One theme that runs vividly through the recent history of Kosovo is that of repression in the workplace and its next stage: the waves of employee dismissals. This matter was discussed without exception in all of the interviews, both by Kosovar Albanians and by Kosovar Romany. According to most interviewees, the worsening situation of some non-Serbian workers was caused by the Serbian government, which aimed at granting privileges to its supporters in Kosovo. These attentions were strategically distributed, most of them targeted at working class areas, particularly during the economic crisis of the 1980s. The resulting situation forced many to vow their allegiance to Belgrade out of need. Many still, even having done so, were dismissed and forced to consider emigration.

These discriminatory provisions were especially harmful to the Albanians who refused to collaborate with the Serbs, and who, with some of the Kosovar Romany, did not agree to count themselves amongst the supporters of Slobodan Milosevic.[8] According to the witnesses, collaborating would have meant supporting unjust acts, and would have made it impossible to maintain equality between conflicting parties. This is a recurrent theme in the interviews held with adult Romany about the workplace, or with younger Romany, who have been pressured at school to take arms for the Liberation organizations in order to earn the "right" to remain in Kosovo once the conflict ended.

The workplace therefore, along with the schools, became the conflict's battleground in anticipation of its spread to other institutions in the 1990s. What did this mean to the daily lives of the men and women who were citizens of Kosovo? What were the consequences of these measures to the experience of women and young people before they were directly involved in the school conflict and the actual war? Of course, many of the interviewees chose to emphasize that *economic exile*, in other words, dismissal from work, led to greater collective suffering to both the emigrants and those, mostly women, old people and children, who chose to stay behind in Kosovo.

Other themes recurrent in the interviews were the destinies of families and the changes in traditional family structure, as well as in gender and generational roles. With one parent abroad, and often both far away, women both young and old had to take charge. They were given new responsibilities, not so much of supporting their families financially, as this was done by a husband working in another European country or in the United States, but of interacting with public institutions, schools and health services, and of dealing with administrative offices and the police.

> Question: And when your mother left too, who stayed home, who had the responsibility of maintaining the home?
>
> Merita: I was there, and also my grandmother and aunt, and my great-grandmother who died three years ago; yes, we were an all-women family, except for the young sons of my uncle, because my brother left with our mother the first time, together with my three-month-old sister who is now ten, and my brother then was 16 or 17…
>
> Question: And when there were problems, like solving school matters, having to go to public offices for some reason, who did that, did you do that?
>
> Merita: Yes, us and our grandmother, we did not go out much alone…

Such has been the experience of many women, changing their lives, forcing them to make certain choices at school and at work, and often causing suffering, due to their solitude and their distance from their parents:

> And it was hard for us; anyhow, food was not lacking, but it was hard for us young ones without father, mother and my brother, always she [pointing at Lindita] cried at night, she was two, I mean, only two years old, she woke up at night and cried, called her mother, and after she fell asleep I felt like crying, because I felt so lonesome, without parents… [Merita]

> Question: Now, you want to stay here, in Italy, but before the war what were you thinking of doing in Kosovo? Continue studying? Find a job, and what kind? Or did you not think about it?
>
> Ornela: Before getting married I lived with my uncle; and he did not give me permission to go to school, and certainly not to work… I worked in our fields.
>
> Question: And is there anything in Kosovo that gave you pleasure and that you miss, and would want to see again?
>
> Ornela: In the event of returning, I would like my family to return too, from Germany, because I suffered a lot during their absence.

Another element of the Kosovo conflict made its way into schools and universities, sparking resistance and protest. The battle waged at school hides many themes, as the events placed adolescents in a position of resistance, and therefore was a political experience. Yet the protests were also a "generational" experience, as they led to events and later to memories which were to prove decisive to the identities of many Kosovar adolescents of several generations. One evident effect of this part of the conflict is that many adolescents, both boys and girls, found therein their initiation to the discord of Kosovo, from their demonstrations ending in clashes with the police and arrests, to their exclusion from places of study and exercise.

> Question: And when did the arrest take place, in 1989?
>
> Altin: On 27 March 1989, there was a demonstration, a protest, in the morning… then they took us to the police station, the group I was in was about ten strong, then they put us in a cellar with no light, there was nothing and you could see nothing, we lost the sense of time, we were down there for thirty-eight hours; we were in there and we were lucky to have been arrested at the beginning, because afterwards all kinds of things happened and we did not even know it; when they released us, I went outside, and I noticed that nowhere in town could you see a civilian, there were only police, then I went to see a friend who lived nearby and he told me that there had been a semi-war, this in Suhareke (Suva Reka).

At school, the first relevant encounters occurred within the Serbian institutions, (or at least, the first encounter mentioned in the interviews, and most vividly recounted, did). The first instance of organized and collective violence, told either by eyewitnesses or by participants, occurred during the school year and directly concerned education. In fact, the topic of school became important to the interviews, in that its standardized progression helped put order to the memories, providing a timeline against which broader events could be situated.

These tales of student protest were not limited to the collective story, the Kosovar Albanian demand for a return to their autonomy, but to many individual memories, from the students' initiation into groups and their discovery of teamwork and solidarity, to a taste of shared experiences. Further, in subsequent years, the student protests became one of the events that helped place in context and explain the Serbian crackdown, which was aimed, precisely, at the educational institutions.

> In 1989 I was in the fourth class of middle school, the fourth year of lyceum and the 12th of school; and 1989 was the year when things changed, alas for the worse, I was in the penultimate generation that finished school in the normal way, the one after mine also, while the one after that had to leave school because the police did not let them enter the schools, for the reason that we, the Albanian schools, would not accept the programme prescribed by the Serbian government: that is, for instance; in history, we had to study all Serb writers and Serb history without mentioning our history, to which we feel very tied, the programme was unfavourable to us; it was done on purpose, so that we would refuse it, to find an excuse to shut down the schools; they saw our schools as a powerful weapon, our university has existed since 1970, and in those 19 years very many intellectuals were born, before the seventies we did not have any, only here or there someone had studied abroad, in Belgrade or Zagreb, but nobody of our mother-tongue; in these 19 years many things changed for the better; and then came the intellectual resistance, books were written, and the Serbs started to be afraid and so from then on the target was mainly the university; and in fact in 1989 they succeeded in their intention to close it, even though the university continued to work in private homes, just like elementary and middle schools. [Altin]

On the occasion of the first student protests, or around the same time, police brutality was also concentrated upon other protesters, like factory workers and the miners who began to protest in 1981. This also fuelled the students' anger:

> I started to hate Serbs, in 1981, when I saw them repressing the workers. [Margherita]

The "Serb" appearing in these passages, the Serb who is "hated", is still very different from the civilian perceived to support the government, and does not refer to the limited number of those who were willing to fight in paramilitary formations. At this point, the "Serb" is a military man with a uniform; he is identified with the State and not really with the "People". The students soon recognized that they were confronted with a State apparatus, rather than with a vague enemy in partial or complete civilian garb. This is a theme of absolute importance: in the minds of the rioting students, the distinction between "people" and the Serbian Government was always made, and governed their actions of protest.

Throughout the 1990s, schools and universities became breeding grounds for ideas of independence, but also made up a sort of democratic training ground, with a rigorous schedule of sit-ins and peaceful protests. If what was occurring at the school in some ways was a physical manifestation of a crucial moment in the construction of a national identity, it is perhaps significant that these school groups came to support the recruitment of activists, then fighters. As places where identity was being formed, schools became the ground of disputes but also of self-definition in contrast to an ever changing "other". If the Serbs first excluded the Kosovar Albanians, these then twisted the exclusion they had suffered into a resource, which finally was turned against young Romany as a wave of accusations and discriminations.

The institutions of Kosovo have therefore been the scene of a heavy battle, one that raged for an entire decade preceding the explosion of the "real" armed conflict. With the creation of structures financially supported by the contributions of the Kosovar Albanian citizens, the foundations of self-determination were constructed in Kosovo. The parallel State's institutions, though not internationally recognized, took on the function of providing material support to the lives of some of Kosovo's citizens (especially the Albanians but also the Romany), and provided an alternative to the growth of conflict and conflicting identities in the tug-of-war over Serbian institutions. Even though these parallel institutions later led, in their own way, to direct conflict, the identities invested in spaces they had created, that were *all theirs*, and that were civilian, not military, matured differently from those forged in opposition. The civilian attempt of Kosovo's younger population and intelligentsia therefore did provide, in spite of everything, a protective atmosphere and the chance for some to mature, sheltered from daily discrimination by their own institutions. This did not, however, work to the favour of all Kosovars, as none was entirely immune to Serbian repression. Further, the Romany were not able to enjoy the material and social advantages of participation in these parallel and alternative institutions. More than from the political or allegiance dif-

ferences between the two main adversaries, the Romany therefore suffered from a progressive exclusion from places of interaction of both groups, until they were literally shut out from public spaces. As they began to be considered alien to both state and parallel schools, and as they were increasingly looked upon with suspicion in public workplaces and even in the mixed districts of the larger cities, they were progressively crushed between one opponent and the other. Even the endeavours of the Roma people to have an independent voice of their own had no result:

> …With the Roma community of the 1990s, we asked to set up a Roma association in Kosovo but we got no permission… we had some meetings to set it up… but since the Serbs in Kosovo were few and… if we had this association tying all Kosovo Roma like a federation, the Serbs were few and they needed votes… and they said: look, if you need something political, economic and social you have to be a member of SPS… that would be the Serb Socialist Party… You must be linked to that, with this you can have your rights as individuals or as a people, you can have all your political, economic and social rights here… but I was against… I did not become a member and this is also because the political motive that they sent me away from work, how can one work under the State, have a salary from the State and not have this membership card I did not want? Well, this is the political part because… I did not agree with the Serbs… [Tahir]

Part II

Death, Fear and Changing Perceptions of the Body Among Survivors of Ethnic Cleansing

Laura Corradi*

Body and war

The body is an undeniable element of visibility. This knowledge is well understood by whomever becomes the target of an "ethnic" conflict: Albanian, Romany or Serbian. Some things may change, such as the times, forms and degrees of conflict; yet the body remains, as a common place of

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vulnerability and of induced self-rejection. "Ethnic cleansing" is quite a recent definition, meant to indicate hate crimes based upon ethnicity. The category may include different levels of threat, deportation, imprisonment of those resisting and killing, especially of the male members of a group. When survivors of such "ethnic cleansing" tell of the escalation of a conflict, they tell of their body, progressively becoming an object that must be hidden. Since the body is, above all, a social construct, the war creates a climate that allows for a process of recognition where this body is perceived as dangerous. Your body and the way you look, your clothes and the way you move, and many other non-verbal elements related to the body identify *who you are*, in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, in terms of sexual, religious and political preferences, in terms of equal or enemy. The following answers are discussed regardless of the ethnic belonging of the interviewees. My purpose, in this paper, is not to assess who suffered to a greater extent. Rather, my goal is to indicate the common denominators across ethnic and social boundaries.

During the ethnic cleansing enacted in Kosovo, men faced a higher risk of death than women, the elderly and children: "For the males there was no pity" [Gezim]. Even during their escape from the region, men had to take different and longer routes to reach a safe place where they could reunite with their families. Both young males and unmarried women had to employ various strategies of *mimesis* and *passing*, as in this mother's memories (Larsen 1997):

> They piled us up there, the Serbian started to separate men and women… we camouflaged my youngest son as a woman, so they didn't detain him. [Alketa]

> My daughter made up a bundle with a piece of wood inside [which looked like a newborn baby], to pass as a married woman and avoid [the risk] of being taken by the soldiers. [Alketa]

In the narrations of these interviewees, the body becomes an object of restraint. The interviewees referred specifically to space-time restrictions, which, in some cases further included physical punishment for those who did not respect such limitations. Being beaten in public, for instance, was considered a humiliation by a male head of the family: "it is better to be arrested, rather than to be beaten in the middle of the road", in front of family and friends.

Through the interviewees' accounts, I have identified four different phases of restraint that preceded forced exodus. The first is characterized by a set of restrictions both upon job-related commuting from one city to another,

and upon leaving town for visits with family members or friends. In the second phase, the individual is restricted from attending school, and from circulating freely *within* the same town or village or any area lying in proximity to the home. The third phase of restrictions involves a higher level of risk: deaths begin to occur and it becomes dangerous even to go outdoors or to attend a funeral. The fourth phase of restraints and limitations refers to a situation that has deteriorated even further, when ethnic cleansing or aerial bombing force entire families to live underground and in basements where deaths continue to occur. At this point, even one's home begins to become a place of no safety.

Now we will listen, from the voice of the interviewees, to statements that, by painting the four different scenarios in strong and vivid colours, illustrate the progression from one phase to another in a world of ever constricting space and time. Sometimes the interviewees speak of themselves as active objects, referred to as "them" "the Albanians", "the Romany", instead of using "us". This is how they chose to distance themselves psychologically from their own experiences, when reviving an event they knew to be traumatic.

Phase one: restrictions of job-related commuting from one city to another, and of exiting town for visits with family members or friends:

> For example: if I went from one town to another, they would block me, stopping me in my car more than ten times. Road blocks, like during wartime, started again. [Agim]

> Albanians were pushed away from their jobs by the Serbians, so they gave [us] Rom the possibility of working in their place… But then, when the Albanians saw them [us] in the commuting, they did wait [for us] to beat somebody up. [Musa]

> Everywhere you went, you went with fear… always there was fear, because of the troop movements. [Alketa]

Phase two: restrictions in the freedom to circulate within a same town or village (attending school, for instance) or any area in proximity to home:

> There was no curfew, but if you walked two meters [behind the corner] that you didn't walk the day before, you ran into the police and they beat you up. [Gezim]

> You didn't have the freedom to go out and do things you liked. [Ilir]

> I was in the market with my mommy, and the Serbian police came, they took everything that was on sale by the Albanians and threw it all on the

> ground, cigarettes, everything… everything ended up in the water because it was raining… They gave a thorough thrashing to the boys in front of everybody, and they scared me. [Rozafa]

> When the Serbian police were in the streets, they used to stop people and beat them up, and take their money… Laws didn't work any more: they decided the rules as they went along. [Shapi]

> We all worked in the fields because there was a time when not just schools were closed to us, but also factories and institutions. [Dritan]

> We took classes in the Mosque… Hearing the Imam's voice drove us crazy when we were listening to the professor, because the mosque is not the right place to listen and study…. [Ilir]

Phase three: when restrictions are enforced with a higher level of risk, when deaths begin to occur and it becomes dangerous even to go outdoors or attend a funeral:

> We couldn't go out because we feared they were shooting… We didn't have funerals. Instead we ran away to avoid getting killed ourselves. I don't know what happened to my mother. [Arta]

> The Serbs were angry because of NATO, and were beating up or killing whomever they found in the streets. Because of the fear, we didn't go out, not even in the street or in the backyard. [Rozafa]

> When they killed someone at his house door, while he was going out… He would remain there. [Gezim]

> There was violence against girls, women, so they were afraid to go out, because this could have happened to them too. [Rozafa]

Phase Four: entire families are forced to live underground, in basements, where deaths continue to occur. One's home starts to become unsafe.

> At the beginning, we went in the basement. While we were there, a 20-year-old girl… with a wheelbarrow, I carried her because her legs were destroyed by a shell. My colleague's son, Iziroid, died because a Serbian shell fell right in the corner of the basement where he was staying, killing him. [Gezim]

> We lived in a house with 35 people; I stayed in a room with 12 persons. [Teuta]

> I was afraid to stay in my house… we stayed there, all in three rooms… for three weeks. [Rozafa]

> If you moved from there, you were dead. [Bahrije]

> On Italian television we could see when the aeroplane were leaving; then by calculating the time of their arrival we knew when we had to go into the basement… it was incredible because we were hiding ourselves also with small children, as young as one-month-old, and we felt bad because it was cold, all night. [Blerta]

> We were hiding in the attic, because the police was going in the houses to check if refugees had arrived, and if they could get them [us]…. [Ornela]

At this point, I believe a distinction should be made in the analysis of narrations describing violations of the home. We might identify three different steps, in order to understand to which degree the police and other subjects were still acting "legally", and the point when the law became a broken and treacherous tool. The first step involves police abuse during searches of houses for weapons, subversive materials and/or militants:

> The Serbian police was coming at midnight, they were breaking in, forcing the door. They made children and women stand up, asking for weapons that we didn't have. [Ilir]

> The *inspectia* [inspections]: when 20, 30 or 40 policemen come to your home. They made more than 20 *inspectias* in our house. [Agim]

A next step, perceptible in the described experiences of the interviewees, occurs when the violation of the home has lost any semblance of legality, when they occur for the sole purpose of creating fear and spreading panic within the targeted ethnic population. At this second step, we often find the violator appropriating the narrator's goods:

> Albanians came into my home to take away my stuff… and one of them placed a gun at my wife's throat, so that nobody would intervene. [Ylber]

> They came into the house, they said things… to my father they said "give me your wife". [Teuta]

A third step in the interviewees' experience would occur when a violation of the home is perpetrated with the aim of forcing the inhabitants to leave, to abandon their home and the land.

> Albanians came in the night, and we were forced to run away. [Dritan]

> They came and said: "within half-an-hour you must leave the house". [Blerta]

> They thought ours was an Albanian home… Ten days after the beginning of the bombing… when they burned the houses, also the scrappers came to tear them down… "If we find you here we will kill you all!" [Ylber]

The deprived body

To live for such long periods of time, in such a life threatening environment also meant experiencing physical suffering related to deprivation: hunger, thirst, lack of rest, cold, stress and displacement. Such hardship is particularly difficult to bear in the presence of children (Goldson, 1996: 809-819; Gordon-Lennox, 1994; Ferrari and Scalettari, 1996):

> We were not refugees, we were almost dead people: nothing to eat, nothing to drink, nothing… Imagine a camping tent for four people: we were 15… and with the rain and snow, and rain… [Agim]

> I had to work ten hours a day [for the Serbs] and then I couldn't sleep during the night because of the fear. [Rexhi]

> We remained a few days on the mountain. We were always wet… Some of us had lost their kids while running away. [Bahrije]

A further level of bodily-restraint and suffering involves forms of psychological and physical torture perpetrated in incarceration, and horrendous types of mutilation, some of which lead to death.

> My brother was incarcerated... I don't know how long they kept him tied to the heater. [Agim]

> They took us to a basement where there was no light, nothing, and you couldn't see anything. We lost the sense of time: we remained there for 38 hours. [Altin]

> An 80-year-old woman, they put her on a cart… since the road was uphill, they took her at the beginning and then they dropped her – and when she arrived, she was already dead. She was 80 years old… they did so to create fear among [us] the other Romany. [Blerta]

> We saw civilians on television whose eyes have been pulled out by the Serbian. [Altin]

The body, taken in the context of war, can also be the body of the "other", the frightening man in uniform (It is the uniform of the Serbian police that creates terror in the Kosovar Albanian experience, and the UCK Kosovo Liberation Army uniform that does so in the Romany experience). At times, the body of the "other" is a masked body, and this increases the subject's fear:

> They were all masked, with foulards, they made you feel the fear, you couldn't see where they had face or hands. [Ajse]

> They used to come inside the houses and kill those who happened to be there. Yes, near me an elderly woman and two small children were found with their throat cut, thrown in the backyard, two houses near me, and I saw… This slaughtering lasted so long… so long lasted the violence of the Serbian, with no judgement, without knowing anything, even during the day, because they used to wear masks, and we didn't know who they were… They were drunk or drugged, they didn't know what they did… and you used to find people dead or wounded in the street, dead and left there, cut with knives or rifles, with the throat cut. One thing I saw: I was on a bicycle and a man got out from a car, came close to another man, pulled out a knife and sliced him under the throat – and he fell down… I was just going by with the bicycle… [Rexhi]

Body and emotion

Much of the recent debate surrounding the body in sociological studies of emotions and health looks at the ways in which our emotions shape our body (Kemper, 1990), and how this process affects our identity (Kunnen, 2001). Here, however, we find a clear example of the opposite situation: when our emotions are shaped by our body, or more precisely, by what happens to it.

In a comparative analysis of two interviews held with a husband and wife who had shared the same experience and spoke of the same subject, their two accounts seemed to contradict one another. While the husband stated "I cannot be who I was any more" [Agim] at the end of the painful revival of his experience, his wife, referring to the same facts, said: "We want to become as before" [Bahrije]. I believe this divergence of feelings is related to a different perception, quality and level of bodily damage suffered by these two victims of ethnic cleansing:

Perception: Bodily perception in general, and during a traumatic situation in particular, is affected by age (Papageorgiu et al., 2000: 255-261) and gender roles (Wolmer et al., 2000: 409-15). The mother's perception of

damage to her body seemed "extended", including the damage suffered by her children's bodies. The father, however, made a clear distinction between what happened to his children and his own experience.

Level or intensity of damage: In this family, the level of damage is high, especially in the case of the children. Their daughter's face and hands are horribly devastated by fire. Even though she has already undergone reconstructive surgery, more work on her scars is needed in order to make the markings fade. The stigma she endures socially is unbearable: this adolescent girl and her little brothers cover their hands with gloves and hide their faces with a skin-coloured mask whenever they go outdoors. I was allowed into what Irving Goffman would have called the "backstage" of the family from the very beginning, a "privilege" which I explain by the way we met: I had been introduced to the group as a trustworthy person, and they never wore masks in my presence.

Quality: In the refugees' discourse, there is a distinction made between physical and psychological damage. The husband suffered little physical damage, his "fire" was internal, as the humiliation, the fear, his powerlessness burned him from the inside. The damage he suffered is irreversible: there is no cosmetic surgery that would restore his wounded male identity.

War, death and fear

In his accounts, a middle-aged graduate of philosophy [Eduard B.] reminded us that the history of a place (Kosovo) is also the history of its deaths, from the Turkish occupation to the Muslim persecution before the First World War, through the partition and Bulgarian occupation during the Second World War, until the rule of Marshall Tito, whose death brought an end to a peaceful, though difficult, ethnic coexistence.

It is significant that, in the refugees' representations, the conflict in Kosovo became a "war" only when an entire family (the Jashari) was killed:

> We all knew the war broke out when in the region of Drenica, central Kosovo, in a small village two families had been completely killed… They killed them all, and from there the war started. [Dritan]

> In my opinion [the war] started in March 1997, when an entire family in the centre of Kosovo was killed: 52 people, all with the same family name: they were brothers, from then on the war was started. [Ilir]

Few interviewees expressed anger or desires of revenge, rather, fear was the emotion most often remembered from the time preceding the exodus. Death-related fear is considered by some interpreters to be a common denominator in all cultures, an anthropological "universal" (Morin, 1967). Fear and death thus also seem tightly interrelated in the survivors' experience. This trauma will follow them throughout their entire lives (Sardavoy, 1997: 245-54), and may affect the lives of their offspring (Shoshan, 1989: 193-207). When fear is narrated, it is either related to a perceived danger of losing one's own life, or to the actual death of another person. In the words of the interviewees, asked about their fear:

> Of course I was fearful. Sure: I saw my cousins with their hands broken… We are Rom, we were not for this or that: Serbians said come on our side, and the Albanians said the same. So there was conflict… We don't know who killed our cousins. [Lytfi]

> They killed my brother and my wife, and almost massacred me. [Dritan]

> …When a person was killed and put near our house. [Alketa]

The danger of losing one's own life or that of a family member sometimes became unbearable (Bettelheim, 1979, 1991). Some of the interviewees admitted or suggested that death might be better than living with fear:[1]

> I wanted to die, for not having to think of anything… You get to a certain point that you think it is better to stop living and think nothing. [Lytfi]

> There are people who do not want to live any more, who saw many family members die. [Elidon G.]

Feelings of uncertainty also increased with the intensification of the conflict. The flight from Kosovo, when it did not take place under the threat of armed men, was described as the outcome of a sudden decision, one which didn't leave enough time for the preparation of documents, food, or luggage. In an off-the-record conversation, Gezim, one of the two males interviewed, said that the women of his household had not been told about the real level of danger, so that they would not be worried. This informal admission could partially explain why the escape found many families so unprepared:

> We didn't take anything with us, some of us ran away in their slippers. [Ornela]

> When they broke down the door, we had to make a hole in the back wall to get out. [Violça]

It was the realization of such danger, the impossibility of denying reality any longer, that determined the time of the interviewees' escape. In the survivors' narrations, a person's life was perceived to be in danger either because of direct threat (by armed individuals or bombing), because of the death of a known person (a family member, a friend or a neighbour), or because of the number of dead bodies in the streets:

> The Serbs were coming down from the mountains and shooting, so there were dead people left [on the ground]. [Gezim]

> A boy, a friend of my sister [was killed]… then they massacred two nephews of my aunt: they had gone to the mountain to get wood. We didn't know where they were: disappeared. For a week nobody knew where they were. Then some people went out to look for them, always with the fear that, if discovered, they could be massacred too. They found them: not the bodies, just the skeletons full of worms. [Ajsa]

> They massacred a woman in my uncle's family. Then his son. Then the son of my husband's friend. We had a lot [of death] in the village…. I saw a lot of violent acts… Since they had been massacred, after a week or two we dug a hole and put them inside… just not to leave them on the ground… Even my aunt's boyfriend was killed – there was no funeral. [Violça]

> They broke in the house, wanting to kill everybody. But we ran away. My mother remained and they killed her. [Arta]

> Albanians were my friends, we ate together, we worked together. They killed my brother and my wife and almost massacred me. [Dritan]

Death-related thoughts are ever present amongst refugees because of their traumatic experiences, because of the number of dead they have seen, because they had to escape in order to save their lives. I would like to conclude this section with discussion of the desire to die at home, which arose from the words of a woman and mother of already grown sons.

> What I feel as heavy is: if tomorrow I die, I die here and maybe I stay here. This is really heavy for me. My family is there and I want to be with them, there. …Then I think, if I die here in Italy I stay here, and this is not my land… What can I do, if tomorrow I die? Where will they put me? If something happens to me, I have faith that my children will not let me be left here. [Blerta]

In Blerta's statement, what emerged most clearly was a feeling of suspension: the survivors' condition, between life and death, pain and hope, a condition which clashed with the strong connection they felt between their body and their land, and with the desire to be reunited with that land, in life or in death.

Part III

"Being In Italy": Laws and Daily Life

Patricia Ruiz*

> Nobody took the decision to come to Italy; they forced us. Nobody took the decision, lady, nobody leaves its home and its property unless somebody comes and tells you "either you leave or I'll kill you". [Agim]

> Who chose to leave? There was no choice, you needed to escape and that's It. [Violça]

The assertion that they have been forced to leave Kosovo was common amongst the interviewees. The Kosovar Albanians blame the Serbs for their coerced migration, while the Kosovar Romany mostly blame Albanians. In their situation, the question of who had made the decision to leave seems to lose its meaning. The constraint imposed by others with threats or acts came before any individual decision or choice. Because of this, the words that recur throughout the interviews are those that describe imposition and the survivors' powerlessness to make decisions affecting their future lives. The speed with which the disastrous events took place is often incomprehensible to those who did not take part in the conflict. Many interviewees left their houses under the pressure of violence, sharing with their neighbours or relatives an instinct: the drive to save their own lives.

> You couldn't choose where to go, the only countries were Italy or Montenegro or Serbia. [Violça]

As Italy is the Western European country closest to the conflict, it became one of the first destinations of those who had escaped the war. Most of the interviewees staying in the *Regina Pacis* reception centre remembered this trip to Italy as the most difficult time of their lives, as almost all of them had clandestinely crossed the Adriatic Sea. Some of them, like Elidon G. have braved this border nine times. Others, in crossing, found themselves cursing their parents for having given them life, as did Lytfi. They were

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aware that they depended on merciless smugglers, people who would have thrown two-year-old girls into the sea without an afterthought, if chased by the police. (This happened in mid-October of this year, 2000, in the Adriatic channel of Otranto).

They told different stories of their time in Italy, sometimes with similar expectations but different results. The greatest wish they shared was to be back home, but only the Kosovar Albanians could hope to satisfy this desire. Others wanted to reach Germany or Belgium but could not because of European Law, which forces them to remain in the first country they reach (Italy). Most of the time, their prohibitions and rights were unknown to them before they directly experienced the limitations and constraints imposed.

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is particularly representative of the many contradictions that exist between written rights and the common experience of refugees, minority groups and migrants. It reads: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution".

The rights related to the status of individuals in civil society have been identified as the "first generation" of rights, while the "second generation" of rights refers to those which are political in nature. Article 14 is part of the so-called "third generation" of rights, consisting of the political rights obtained by Third World countries in the 1960s, and under which the unprotected social strata are defended. There is a more recent "fourth generation" of rights framed to protect the transmission of culture and knowledge.

Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should assist the Kosovars in their request for political asylum in Belgium or Germany, and yet European standards, such as the Treaty of Schengen and the Dublin Convention, limit the right of each individual to seek and enjoy protection from persecution in other countries.

Anyone reading the Dublin Convention would find within its articles clear restraints to free movement in Europe:

Article 6: When it can be proved that an applicant for asylum has irregularly crossed the border into a Member State by land, sea or air, having come from a non-member State of the European Communities, the Member State thus entered shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

Article 8: Where no Member State responsible for examining the application for asylum can be designated on the basis of the other criteria listed in this Convention, the first Member State with which the application for asylum is lodged shall be responsible for examining it.

Article 4: Where the applicant for asylum has a member of his family who has been recognized as having refugee status within of the Geneva Convention, as amended by the New York Protocol, in a Member State and is legally resident there, that State shall be responsible for examining the application, provided that the persons concerned so desire. The family member in question may not be other than the spouse of the applicant for asylum or his or her unmarried child who is a minor of under eighteen years, or his or her father or mother where the applicant for asylum is himself or herself an unmarried child who is a minor of under eighteen years.

These rules were decided upon and signed by the States that were part of the European Union (EU) in 1990. Because of these rules, the European States such as Spain, Greece and Italy that border non-European Community countries will be made responsible for the majority of European asylum requests. Though this treaty was ratified on the 15 July 1990, there have been considerable delays in its application: after the war in Bosnia, for instance, the bulk of the Balkan exiles were absorbed by the northern European nations.

From the interviews, we found that the Kosovars had emigrated mostly for work-related reasons. The Serbian repression of Kosovar Albanians and Romany included a campaign of firing employees. Non-Serbian workers were randomly dismissed from their factories and public jobs until, left without employment, the men finally left their families in Kosovo, settling in countries where they could work and send money back home.

Often, the strategy of modern émigrés consists of settling in a country where a like-community was already long established. The profile of "the typical migrant" has come to resemble a person arriving in a specific location to work along with other members of his own community, and who already has relatives settled in the new country. Since 1998, however, when violence had almost become an everyday event, the Apollonian Coast began to see the arrival of these migrants from Kosovo, primarily Albanian and Romany, most without legal documentation. According to the traditional logic of past migrations, many of these people should have gone to countries where communities were already present to welcome them, but the Dublin Convention stood between them and their goal.

Instead, of choosing their country of asylum, then, the immigrants have been forced to remain in Italy, unable to see their relatives because they could not be included in the "familiar kinship" definition as it appears in Article four of the Dublin Convention. Frustration about this has flavoured many narratives. To these interviewees, causes of discomfort oscillate between the violence of past conflicts and the violence of their lack of freedom and recognition today.

> Question: Have you seen your parents again? Would you like to visit them?
> Ornela: Yes; I want to go to Germany, but without the documents it's impossible, and they can't come here.
> Question: Then with the refugee visa you can't go to Germany?
> Ornela: No.

Almost all of the stories told by the interviewees described the impossibility of moving freely. Such is the strength of these existing, but often hidden, boundaries; they can often be crossed only by taking great risks. Some interviewees described the humiliation of failing in this crossing, and of being sent back to Italy in compliance with Article 92 of the Schengen Treaty:

Article 92: The Contracting Parties shall set up and maintain a joint information system; hereinafter referred to as the Schengen Information System, consisting of a national section in each of the Contracting Parties and a technical support function. The Schengen Information System shall enable the authorities designated by the Contracting Parties, by means of an automated search procedure, to have access to reports on persons and objects for the purposes of border checks and controls and other police and customs checks carried out within the country in accordance with national law…

> We first arrived in Italy, and from here we left to Luxembourg. We stayed there for a very short time, but we got sent back, they sent us back to Italy… they told us that the first place we got [to] was Italy, that's the only place we can stay. [Ardita]

> Question: Where do you envisage your future, where would you like to go?
> Ardita: I cannot say, it does not depend on me… I could go back to my homeland, I would like that so much but the situation is very hard, very tense… therefore they won't let me, I must stay here… We are forced to stay in this reception centre, with Don Cesare, once again I would like to thank him, we don't have relatives or friends in Italy, thus we have to stay here.

Italian legislation contributes to creating a life of constant precariousness and limitations for these immigrants. In addition to the laws, the testimonies depict daily experience deeply marked by prejudice and misunderstanding:

Question:	How was life in the Gypsy camp? As soon as you got to Florence you lived in one of the camps?
Naim:	Yes…
Question:	And how was it to live there?
Naim:	Really bad, I didn't have anywhere to sleep so I slept in the camp… nasty life… we didn't have water, electricity, anything… After I had got a job I went to live in the *Albergo Popolare* [Popular Hostel held by the municipality] for almost 3 years… but you cannot stay longer than 3 years at the *Albergo Popolare* so I bought a caravan and I returned to live in the camp… I stayed at the camp for 1 year… then some policemen came and said to me: you have all the ocuments, job permission, etc… you have a job… so you cannot stay in the camp… for this reason I was forced back to the Albergo Popolare…
Question:	Now are you living at the *Albergo Popolare*?
Naim:	Yes… but the day before yesterday a letter arrived that informed me I had to leave, I can't stay any longer at the *Albergo*… the time is expired again…
Question:	Where are you thinking of going?
Naim:	I can't afford to rent, I can't find a house to rent and so I have to go back to the camp.
Question:	Would you like to live in a house?
Naim:	Oh, I'd like to find a house to share with my brother; he also works so we could share the rent…
Question:	And why don't you find yourselves a house to rent?
Naim:	That's impossible because in Florence landlords do not want to rent houses to Rom unless members of the City Council help you… alone it's not possible to find a house because they are a little racist.

The old photographic image of a man holding a big suitcase, in pursuit of a solid destiny, is now a rare sight, while today's migrants are slowly acquiring the characteristics that come with leading a nomadic life, a forced one, since they cannot choose where they will live nor for how long. Their forced migration to western Europe was not an isolated experience, but should be seen as an extension of the violence that refugees suffered in their country. Sverre Varvin, a member of the Norwegian Psychoanalytical Society, speaking at the European Psychoanalytical Congress held in Berlin in 1999, compared the traumatic experiences of the Balkan refugees with that of the Holocaust victims and added: "The transcultural context opens new dimensions to these situations. The actual circumstance is different from the preceding one, among other things

because the transcultural perspective has acquired greater importance." We are dealing now with highly traumatized people who, even having survived experiences of war, are now finding themselves in a foreign country with an alien culture, and where stressful situations such as lack of available work, inadequate lodging or racism further prolong their trauma and hardship.

Geographic location and experience

The social conditions of Kosovar immigrants differed according to their location in Italy. Some of the people interviewed had settled in northern Italy, after their relatives had already made a home for themselves and established a network there. Following are some of the experiences of the interviewees, in trying to find housing and acquire the necessary permits, before they even had a chance to adapt to the different environment:

> Since 1990, when my relatives started to come, I always tried to help them find a job so that they could have a residence permit… I helped to find a place where they could sleep, a job, to find a house to rent… People in this zone are wealthy, but they are not very friendly towards foreigners, especially ten years ago…the first ones who got here were looked upon as beasts…refused… When we were living in a small town, in Balabio, there were seven or eight of us living in the same house… I even asked help from priests, to see if they could lend me a hand, for a house or something… but there was a lot of fear, diffidence… when finally, after a year we were able to find a house, we had a party. The situation changed also because the priest left and another one from Lecco took his place… and he was more open-minded; I started immediately to work with him in order to inform people about the war going on between Serbs and Croats… we had some conferences to explain what was happening and why people from [those] countries were arriving… people at Balabio started to understand and it became a town with a very high immigration density. [Eduard B.]

Other interviewees left Kosovo with the intention of reaching their family in Germany, but European immigration laws forced them to stay in Italy, where they had to find work:

> Ornela: The decision to come to Italy was obligatory, we used it as a passageway to Germany… yes, we wanted to go to Germany, but without passport you can't cross the frontier… we were even willing to get there as clandestine, but they offered us decent life conditions here and so we decided to stay.
>
> Question: Did your husband find work immediately?
>
> Ornela: My husband did, after ten days.

A: Also mine, after a month.
Question: Have they always worked in the same place?
Ornela: Yes, with all the necessary documents, my husband works in a factory, they produce steel…

Persons interviewed in Central Italy describe a situation quite different, in most cases because they are Romany. None of them have their own homes, and many live in the squalid Gypsy camps or in the Popular Hostel in Florence. In Rimini, a group of about 50 people shares a former vacation hostel.

> I never wanted to go to the camps. No... You lead an unhealthy life there… how can I explain myself... it's a habit, I've always lived in a house... life in the camp seemed too strange for me, above all the hygienic part... I must say that in Kosovo everyone had a house, we all had normal lives... the camps I saw when I arrived in Italy… they offered us the camps… I had never seen nothing of the sort before… [Tahir]

Tahir is an engineer, and arrived in Italy in 1991 because he disagreed with the policies that Slobodan Milosevic enforced in Kosovo. Though Tahir and his family all have permits to stay and work in Italy, they decided to move to Belgium because it was impossible to find a house for a family of five in Florence. The situation of the Romany who arrived in Italy during the summer of 1999, however, had proven much worse at times. In the words of Tahir:

> My brother travelled as a clandestine in a little boat and got here… one with five or six persons... after he had been here in Florence our Roma community asked the prefecture, the government, that those that had arrived, they were more or less 120 persons, had a place to stay… the first days they were forced to live in a public garden… it was terrible… they stayed four months in a hostel in Florence and then they were moved to Rimini... My brother lives there with his family... he is working because they gave him an opportunity, you know they can't give support to everybody... My other brother, he also has six children, daughter-in-law, nephews and so on… he saw that the employment situation here was difficult so he continued his trip to Germany where two other brothers live... but racism in Germany has grown, it is stronger than here… so he decided to go to Belgium... he lives now in Belgium, with a political asylum request… they stopped there because they received more help there than what they got here, they even give some economical support... he called me and I asked him if I could go there too… I have this idea … it's very difficult to find a job here and then there's this rapidly growing racism that started when the Berlin wall crumbled and it has got over to the Austrian nationalistic government… also I think work perspectives are scarce here... [Tahir]

Here again, these migrants are being forced into a nomadic life, created by difficulties of integration, lack of employment, racism, and imposed upon people who had been sedentary their entire lives.

In southern Italy, and more precisely in the *Regina Pacis* Reception Centre, people spoke openly about the constraints and restrictions on their liberty, even describing a sense of imprisonment.

> No… we don't have relationship with Italians because we're shut in here. [Ardita]

> What else can I tell you? I can only say that I am nervous and that's all. When you're at home you eat, but if you don't want you don't eat, you only eat when you feel like it, sleep when you want… here you're not free. It's not that I don't like it here, but I'm not free, I can't do what I want. [Elidon G.]

> I only asked to go back to Kosovo because here is like being in jail, I'm shut inside, isolated… Yes, I feel like I'm in jail because I'm in here all the time and that's it… I can't go out. [Gentiam]

The shelter is perceived as sort of merciful prison. Those who do not have residence permits cannot leave the precinct, whereas those who do possess these documents usually enjoy little socialization outside *Regina Pacis*. There are many reasons for their situation, the first of these being the region's economic poverty, which does not allow for the easy integration of these immigrants. Another reason for the restriction is local immigration law, according to which someone with political refugee status cannot work, which also hinders the immigrant's entrance into the local community.

> Question: Can you leave the Centre?
> Elidon G.: Yes, I can go out but I want to find a job and I can't because my documents are for political asylum…

> Yes… we can go out when we want, they gave us permission, we also have the residence permit, but I don't feel the need anyway. [Ardita]

The few Kosovar Albanians interviewed in southern Italy held residence permits that they had obtained through a Government Decree. Issued before the end of the NATO bombings, these permits granted the recipients the right to "Humanitarian asylum". Individuals entitled to this status cannot work, and yet there is no welfare system to help them survive. Their situation is entirely different from that of the Kosovars living in northern Italy, who have been able to secure work permits. The difference arises

partly from the diverse economic situations of the two areas, but also from the presence or absence of networks already established by other Kosovars by the time of their arrival.

A great part of the help received by the interviewees in southern Italy has come through the Catholic Church. Priests, the Caritas organization, as well as various religious associations assist the immigrants, providing them with housing and food, and guiding them through the maze of bureaucracy that should lead to the documents they need. Similar cases occur in southern, central and northern Italy. The Church's help is especially vital to those who have only recently survived traumatic situations, as was the case of Ardita:

> The reception was very warm, we're fine, and they treat us well. We haven't had any problem so far; we don't have anything to protest for. They received us very well. Fortunately I have my family with me; my husband and my four children are here. Again, I want to thank for the reception here. [Ardita]

Ardita's statement is representative of the ambivalence which shaped each interview. In her account, Ardita thanked Don Cesare, manager of the Centre, four times for his hospitality, but she could not help scattering phrases such as "we have to stay here" or "we're forced to…" throughout her conversation. In a moment when she felt comfortable with the translator, she expressed her indignation and anger at the slow drafting of the documents that would allow her to leave *Regina Pacis*.

Of course, for every interviewee, the boundary between positive and negative experiences was never easy to define. In Brindisi, southern Italy, a Kosovar Albanian family was given extensive medical assistance, but this was only after their house was burned in Kosovo and their bodies gravely wounded. Similarly, for immigrants living in northern Italy, the successful acquisition of work and residence papers did not automatically result in their easy and uncomplicated integration into the local society:

> I want to go to school in Rome… here people are too distant, I don't like it, the people and the place… I was accustomed to say "Hello! How are you? How's your sister?" to people living in my building… Here they barely nod at you… there is a lady here, with white hair, an old lady. When I see her I look up at her but nothing happens, I say hello to her just to show that I have my manners, but she doesn't answer… she thinks she has the right to do so but it seems to me she doesn't have manners at all, it seems as if I'm repellent just because I'm a foreigner… But it's not only her, the whole town is that way… I don't like the city at all, the people that live here… here if you don't have something in common, if you're not like them, they won't accept you… [Lindita]

> Work is quite normal; you earn little and work more than the Italians… For example, I earn 7,800 liras an hour because I work in a cooperative and often do heavy work… [Ilir]

> I like Italy, it's a beautiful country and we've found true friends, but I must say that some people are a little racist towards foreigners, or they take advantage of our situation as non-EC [European Community] citizens that happen to live here not because they want to but because they have to. [Dritan]

> Before I started to work, I searched for a house to rent, hoping to find one and a job but it was a very strange thing, I wasn't able to find one in two months. As soon as they heard your voice at the telephone or found out you were a foreigner, they backed away, I hate being discriminated against, I hate this thing, and it hurts me a lot. [Ilir]

In the interviewees' perspectives for the future, different opinions mingled. All of them shared the hope of someday returning to Kosovo, while at this time, the political situation is such that only Kosovar Albanians could do so.

In the meantime, Italy's current immigration and asylum laws have strongly regulated the lives of these people, and, as we have already seen, their right to seek asylum in another country has been denied them. According to Article 13 of the Declaration of Human Rights:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his own country.

Yet this article is far removed from the reality of those we interviewed.

Gentiam, a 20-year-old man, wished only to return to Kosovo and instead, found himself confined at the Regina Pacis Centre after having been expelled from Germany:

> Of course my greatest desire is to go back as soon as possible to my country. My God, if the conditions here were better, I would stay because I want to find a job. But since I'm always inside this place, I'd rather go back home, no? [Gentiam]

On 18 December 1990, the United Nations ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and the Members of their Families. The convention was intended to guarantee that families could stay together or be reunited, and yet these rights are often

neglected. Elidon G., 20 years old, has already been waiting at *Regina Pacis* for a year and a half in order to emigrate to the United States, where his mother and father have been living for almost a decade.

The Universal Human Rights Declaration also discusses the immigrants' rights of citizenship. As article 15 reads:

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Do Kosovar immigrants living in Italy have a recognized citizenship? Do they enjoy the "first and second generation" rights; the right to a suitable home and employment, the right to decide on the social and political environment in which they will live? Having just survived such recent and traumatic wartime experiences, they need to find stability that will allow them to start a new life. Their expectations change, however, as they seek employment for themselves, or education for their sons and daughters. Even if they find an environment free of prejudice, other rights, such as the cultural "fourth generation" rights, are not fulfilled.

> Question: Can you practise your religion here, pray five times a day?
> Violça: To pray? I do what I can but not as our religion prescribes, we don't have the necessary conditions.

Generally, countries apply two fundamental criteria in order to grant citizenship to an individual. The first is the *Jus sanguinis* or blood right, which allows citizenship to be transmitted from one generation to the next. The second criterion, known as *Jus soli* or right of territory, allows an individual to acquire the citizenship of the State in which he or she was born. In Italy, given the preservation of these traditional criteria, the immigrants are refused citizenship status until they have worked in the country for a fixed period. Paradoxically, the debate on national identity and citizenship in a global society that has long and loudly professed progressive ideas, promotes the idea of a citizen as any person that lives and works in a specific nation-State.

Those fighting to free themselves and other migrants from their "refugee" status have learned to place their hopes and expectations on future legislation, meanwhile focusing their efforts on giving the immigrants the freedom to work in dignity. Therefore, in the interviews, this theme of employment frequently recurred, as in the cases of Lyfti and Arta, who focus on emplyment issues in order to steer their minds away from the horrors they

have recently experienced. They spoke of work to avoid sliding back into the difficult memories of their past, and to avoid losing hope about their future.

In most cases the migrants have only scant knowledge of the few rights that their political refugee status should grant them. Some interviewees originally from rural areas did not even know the meaning of the word “right”. Such questions on the universality of human rights are raised by Antonio Cassese, in his book: *Human Rights in the Contemporary World* (Roma, Laterza, 1994). According to his work, the philosophical conception of human rights varies from the Western to the Eastern regions of the world, and from capitalist to socialist countries. Even if, therefore, the interviewees who lived in Yugoslavia under the socialist regime of Marshall Tito were guaranteed certain rights (such as those related to work, education and the home), they now find themselves in a fundamentally different situation, where Western societies do not offer their citizens the same rights as are expected in socialist societies.

On the other hand, the Balkans have often been defined as a midpoint between East and West. In the rural areas of Kosovo, in fact, an “in between” social structure has formed around large families and clans. We thus find ourselves with a different perception of rights and necessities, where the needs of the community are more important than those of the individual. One telling example of this might be found in the ongoing care shown by a family, even a dispersed one, when family members working in Italy strive to send money to the rest of their relatives, or save in order to be reunited with them.

In Italy, and more precisely in the community of Salento, the citizens have been considered for a Nobel Peace Prize, as a reward for the hospitality they extended to the refugees that have come ashore on their beaches. The Catholic Church, especially, has played a vital role in this process – and yet, one might ask, has their hospitality been entirely well received by the immigrants? To the Kosovar Albanians and Romany, Italy has often been recognized for its humanitarianism; it is “a nation that traditionally helps”. It is therefore Italy, as frontier nation between Western and Eastern Europe, but also between Europe and the Far East and Africa, that will someday have to face the great challenge of further elaborating a multicultural citizenship. It falls to Italy now to ensure that those arriving from Kosovo and beyond can also live in dignity on that side of the Adriatic Sea.

Part IV

Memory: a Complex Battlefield

Enrica Capussotti*

Prologue

The circulation between self-identification and the "external" gaze is one of the mechanisms integral to the construction of identity. In discussing memories and history, I have had to take into consideration the ways in which the interviewees presented themselves as either Kosovar Albanians or Kosovar Romany. This is a problematic point: while the sense of belonging to two different groups is often stressed during the narration, these boundaries quite often blur when the interviewees speak of languages, religions and geographic locations shared by individuals. I feel almost paralysed by the implications of the material and its analysis. In the countries that were once part of Yugoslavia, the conflicts occurred when constructed identities became "natural", with terrible consequences for millions of people. New boundaries were and are built and previous "boundary crossings" are prevented, all in the name of historical differences. The fabrication of "one" past has played a vital role in justifying agendas based on "authentic" national roots. My worry here concerns my position as a researcher: how can I avoid returning a gaze which confirms the "selves", their representation as members of distinctive groups, when the corollaries to this distinction are intolerance and aggression, expressed towards an "other"? How can I use a category such as "difference", which has been such an important tool in the political agenda of radical movements in the 1960s and 1970s, without sinking into the marshy terrain of "identity politics"? Since we know that "ethnicity" is a construction created to serve specific political interests, could its alternative not be to cease invoking it by name?

These concerns are not just mine, but are shared by many scholars. As Hermann Bausinger pointed out:

> …ethnic cleansing has been a matter of power, interests and violence and not a pre-established national and natural order. People had to be ethni-

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> cized politically, and this was done without any regard to differentiations and deviations [e.g. regarding the many mixed marriages or the former moves of populations]. …ethnicity very often is nothing but the friendly and seductive mask of a fierce and narrow nationalism. It would be a simplification if the idea of cemented ethnicity were to be reduced to the militant excesses around Sarajevo and in other areas of war. The cruel strategy of "purification" is, probably, only the worsening of a widespread idea. And one should ask if sciences like ethnology have not contributed to paving the way for this view and – more importantly – if scholars, to a certain degree, have not accepted the ethnicization of people. Even in nations with a rather homogeneous population, there are always people of other ethnic backgrounds (Bausinger, 1996: 289).

I carry these questions with me, throughout my analyses of stories told by the interviewees who have identified themselves, and have been identified by others, in one of two groups: Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Romany.

Between memories and the wish to forget

Memory is a complex sphere shaped by individual memories, forgetting, oblivion and silence. These terms are not synonymous and can also carry quite different meanings according to the language in which they are uttered.[1] The debate on the subject stresses that memory is a battlefield that, according to different geographical and historical locations, requires specific strategies, subjects and institutions in the construction of what is remembered and what is forgotten, as well as in the meanings associated with each.

Nationalism is the main ideology and political project we are encountering in this research. The conflict we ask about in our interviews has strong nationalistic roots. This means that situations of the past, fabricated by a given group for itself, are reduced to their essence, which then lends legitimacy to "ethnic and national identities". In discussing memory throughout the following pages, we are aware of the contradictory meanings and political implications that are also on stage. Several books have been written about the vital use of the past in constructing, for instance, Serbian and Croatian nationalism. In the case of these nations, World War II becomes the genesis of their two separate and clearly antagonistic narrations, as was described by R. Jambresic Kirin:

> While the memory of World War II in Croatia was evaluated with respect to the need for national reconciliation and the need for admission of Communist crimes against prisoners of war and civilians, in Serbia the memory of the same period was largely connected with the repeated

> computation of Serbian casualties presented in media and academic discussion. The past was being evoked in order to strengthen the unity of pan-Serbian people… (Jambresic Kirin, 1996: 71)

Milan Milosevic provides further insight on this matter, in his description of the so-called "media wars", and the role of television in constructing the space in which history was negotiated and narrated:

> In its effort to argue the sense of grievance in the population at large, television especially exploited World War II. The goal was to plant the idea that the official history of World War II did not tell the complete story and that the full extent of Croatian atrocities had been covered up. The number of Serbs who perished during the war in the Croatian death camp Jasenovac and from Croatian persecution, was, according to television media, much greater than had been calculated. The "demystification of history" had been launched, with television as the main medium. The campaign was in part a response to Franjo Tudjman's book *Bespuca* [Wilderness], published in 1989, a year before his election as president of Croatia, in which he alleged that official Communist history had greatly exaggerated the wartime crimes of the Croatian side. To prove Tudjman wrong, a bizarre process of systematic unearthing of World War II Serbian mass graves was undertaken in the summer of 1989 and throughout 1990 in the glare of the Belgrade television. To establish the "true" number of the dead, concrete-sealed mass graves in limestone terrain in the Krajina, and later in Herzegovina, were opened, and the skeletons displayed and bones counted. After funeral services at the site, the remains were reburied and the graves resealed, with TV cameras eagerly recording the event. The ceremonial and official character of these events slowly awakened the sense that the past might have been far worse than anyone had imagined…" (Milosevic, 1997: 111-112).

There are many other examples of the past being used to build the nationalistic agendas which have been especially effective in arousing hatred and pushing populations into war. The resulting tragic conflicts could persuade one to take a defiant position from which to propose the "absence of memory" as a way of countering the manipulations of the past that attempt to justify violence and "ethnocratic" States. Yet, if the idea of "absence of memory" can prove to be provocative rhetoric in discourses of political opposition, we, as researchers working with oral sources, must work with these subjectivities and the ways in which they arise through different identifications such as ethnicity, gender, class, race and many others.

Luisa Passerini, through the works of Marc Augé and Jean Bertrand Pontalis, amongst others, wrote of remembrance that:

> All our memories are screens, but not in the traditional sense, as traces for something which they reveal and hide at the same time. What is registered on the screen is not directly the sign of a piece of memory but a

> sign of absence, and what is repressed is neither the event nor the memory nor even single traces, but the very connection between memories and traces. From this perspective, our task as researchers can be defined in the following way: "dissocier *les* liaisons instituées", to break institutionalized links in order to establish "des liaisons dangereuses". In other terms, we cannot but look when trying to understand connections between silence and mentions, oblivion and memory, for relationship between traces or between them and their absences, and we must dare to find interpretations which run the risk of creating new associations (Passerini, forthcoming 2002).

> I have deleted all the tape about it… I cannot remember anything precise. [Gezim]

Answering a question about traditional celebration of his culture, a 39-year-old man used a metaphor taken from audio-visual technical language "I have deleted all the tape…" in order to say: "I cannot remember anything precise". There is, however, a shift in his declaration, from "I have deleted all the tape…", which presupposes the active intervention of the subject, to a more passive position: "I cannot remember". This shift can be seen as representative of the relationship between subjects and memory-forgetting: it implies both activity and passivity, as well as a combination of different psychological levels and energies.

The impossibility of remembering traditional occasions of entertainment is a recurrent theme in the interviews held with Kosovar Albanians. As one woman said: "We had many parties but with all the problems we went through… the war, the people killed, whom I knew… so I cannot remember any of them…" [Violça]. Instead she preferred to remember the people she had known who had been killed: "They have massacred a woman from my uncle's large family… then my uncle's son… then my husband's friend's son…" [Violça].

On a conversational level, the strategy of forgetting supposedly happy events of the period before the conflict serves to stress the traumatic magnitude of the violence and murder that have marked the subject's life in the last years. As is usually the case in conversations with individuals, it was also possible to trace an opposing attitude to remembering and forgetting, in this case, the clear opposition to any revival of traumatic experiences. As Gezim answered, when asked about the first violent act he saw: "I don't like to repeat those kind of things… I saw many things every day… it is better do not remember…"

A declared "wish to forget" recurred in many accounts, but varied from interview to interview in its expression. Here, however, we found two main tendencies: In the first, the wish to forget was expressed with a frag-

mented narration, in which the relationship between memory and oblivion appeared throughout the narrative. According to the second tendency, the wish to forget was used more as a figure of rhetoric by the interviewees, who, during the same conversation, would offer a significant quantity of information about the points they were supposed to forget, had forgotten, or wished to forget.

In an interview held just after her arrival in Italy with Arta, a 23-year-old Romany woman, the relationship between memory, silence and trauma appeared in every sentence. She told the interviewer that her mother has been killed in front of her by Albanians after the NATO intervention, and that she and her father had had to escape in order to save their lives. These traumatic events scarred all of the stories that Arta told, stories that often contradicted one another, and where "silence" became the main method of conversation. In her words:

> Arta: Nothing… now there is no one left in my country… my mother has been killed… and me and my father have started this travel to go to Germany where other people of the family live… we do not have anyone left in Kosovo… they also burned our house…
>
> Question: How was life before?
>
> Arta: I don't remember anything…I don't want to be back there.

Continuing her narration, Arta referred to her inability to hold a funeral for her mother, because she and her father had had to escape. This is only one instance of the dissolution of families, groups, habits, and rituals that occur in times of war. To compare these accounts with what we know of previous wars, however, it will be remembered that in each case, it was the women who took care of their dead, performing all the rituals required with this passing. One distinctive aspect of this conflict, along with its common graves, its disappearances of people and corpses, and its forced exodus of entire populations, seems to be the destruction of the traditional rituals adopted by women and men in order to cope with trauma and death.[2] Further, in most Roma cultures, funerals are considered extremely important. They include a great reunion of the family group, and reinforce cohesion between members as well as with visitors from outside the family. In the stories Arta told about her experience, however, there was no longer room for the material rituals that, performed communally with others, could have helped her face the pain of traumatic experience and death.

Arta continued to discuss this absence of ritual, and connected this pain with a certain fatigue caused by remembering what had happened, along with repeated reference to the impossibility of speaking:

> Yes, the UCK… they have beaten me too… I could not talk anymore… It happened the same to my father… I don't know what to say, I don't remember anything… the only thing I know is they have treated us badly… the Albanians came during the night and we had to escape… [Arta]

Psychological and physical suffering merge together in the body and in the narration, and the body itself becomes a sort of memory, bearing the traces of past experience. Women and men thus referred to their bodies in order to stress the traumatic consequences of the violence they had witnessed:

> He says that his wife has got heart problems and she still feels sick… she has this sickness because of the trauma she went through… [Rexhi]

> In my nephew's house… my son's son… a woman with a UCK uniform came in and before taking away the things… they scared that man so that he couldn't stop them… they put a gun under his throat to scare him…since I saw it I have had heart problems… now she has this sickness… because she saw that scene… [Blerta]

Lytfi, a Rom who left Kosovo and went to Montenegro when the conflict between Albanians and Serbs became more violent, said:

> Perhaps it is better not to talk about it [the conflict]… it is a theme that makes me feel sick… because they have killed all these people… don't ask me about that… it is better if I don't remember it… I cannot speak anymore.

As in his case, the body can be used to indicate suffering, even when it has not been directly wounded or hurt: It can therefore also be a means for physically expelling the pain that words cannot express.

Throughout the stories told during the interviews, it seemed that violent events were more difficult to face when, according to their survivors, the conflicts were unexpected:

> Arta: Before, we had a good relationship with the [Albanians]… yes, before yes… we played together, we worked together, we got on well with them… also at the wedding parties: we had our weddings and also the Albanians came… afterwards everything changed…
> Question: Suddenly?
> Arta: Yes, suddenly…

In her testimony, Arta mentioned two of the most important rituals of Roma culture: wedding celebrations and funerals. In order to stress that the Romany and Albanians once lived together peacefully, Arta referred to different aspects of daily life, drawing attention to play, work and marriages.

Marriage is a fundamental element of Roma society, both because it confers full social adulthood to individuals and because it represents and seals a social pact between the families of bride and groom (Liégeois, 1994). The fact that Albanians were invited to participate in this important social event is evoked here to underline the suddenness with which the present situation unfurled, and also, perhaps, to stress the senselessness of the Albanian acts against the Romany who had given them their trust.

Silence as discursive strategy

Another discursive strategy used in some testimonies to face the traumatic experiences of violence and war is one which I call the "rhetoric of silence". In his interview, for instance, Rexhi – a 42-year-old Rom from Vuctrin – began by saying, "I cannot talk of all they did because those were unbelievable things…" He then continued, looking for an explanation: "because they were drunk or drug-addicts and they didn't know what they were doing…" which finally allowed him to list some tragic events, given validity by the fact that he had seen them happening:

> You could find dead people on the streets, wounded people… on my way to the city centre I would find 30, 40 corpses on the streets… dead people who were left there… most of them were cut with a knife or a rifle, they had their throats cut… there is something I saw… I was riding a bicycle when a man came in a car… the man in the car went close to another man who was standing there, he took out a knife and struck him under his throat… then the man who has been hit fell down… I was passing with my bicycle… these are unbelievable things… [Rexhi]

Rexhi demonstrated great ability to speak of his life and of the events of the last decades. He talked to me without the need of frequent questions, elaborating on the topics we were discussing with apparent ease and familiarity with oral expression. He began his story with the words:

> When I was a child and I went to school, life was normal, life was all right… after Tito's death things started to change, the presidents had changed and also the system had changed… the school changed, they split into Albanian and Serb schools and we [Romany] were trapped in between… some went to Albanian schools, others to the Serb ones… After school I worked in different places for about 25 years… until I opened a car shop on my own where I had worked for 12 years before coming here… I worked in a car shop, I worked as a blacksmith… I was well off enough because I had a house, I built a family and we were all together, my work was close, downstairs my house… My documents were all right, my kids went to school, I used to work ten hours a day…life was good before, but everything has changed with this war…

> In my city I was known, also among people of my age, because I had built a new house, I was working nearby… I was like… happy…

In his speech, Rexhi put himself at the centre of the narration: he was discussing political events of the past, but related them to his life, work and family, following the evolution of his own life without the need for questions. Not all interviewees could express themselves so easily, however, and there seemed to be a generational difference in conversation, at least among the Romany. Adult women and men were able to construct a rigidly linear narrative with which they were able to follow their own discourse and goals (also adding an element which seemed to be a degree of self-reflection). Members of the youngest generation, on the other hand, expressed themselves mainly through a fragmented narration, with short answers to the questions asked of them, requiring frequent intervention. There are two main reasons that might account for this difference, both of which require further investigation. A first reason might be found in the fundamental transformations in Kosovar Roma culture, given the stimuli of mass media communications, of migration and of the so-called "global culture". Another possible explanation is the specific way in which the younger people had experienced the conflicts of the last few years.

The first point leads us to what has been called the "uniformization of cultural consumption" (Liégeois, 1994: 103), a change mostly due to the influence of television. In all of my interviews with Roma subjects, watching satellite television was listed as a common pastime. While these pages are insufficient to analyse this important detail, some proposals might be made. It might be said, first, that the spread of satellite television introduces visual images in cultures that have traditionally relied on verbal communication. A change in narration is therefore one obvious consequence of this novelty. These changes remind us of the comparison that oral historians have made in Italy, between the generation of 1968, and the generation which lived to see the reign of fascism. In this case, according to studies, the narrative quality of the younger generation was much more fragmented, due to factors such as changes in education, school, and the arrival of visual media. Further, the images appearing on the televisions of these younger Romany are not produced within their culture, but from the exterior (most common were the German, Italian and Turkish programmes). We do not know of any programme created, even in part, by any Rom or Romany. Unbalanced power relationships between the Romany and the world thus have re-emerged once again, only this time, the challenge has travelled to the global arena of mass communication.

In his narrative Lytfi seemed to compile all of these processes, releasing his words of self-representation without room for concern or resistance:

> No, we don't have many traditions, at least I was not interested in them so much… I used to work all day in a field, go home, watch a bit of TV and fall asleep… I don't know what to say…

On the other hand, the exposure to mass culture could also open new avenues of expression for the Romany. As J.P Liegois wrote: "[The Romany] are exploring art forms little used by them up to now, such as painting, small-scale distribution of recordings of original songs, collections of stories, autobiographical accounts" (Liégeois, 1994: 104). This is illustrated by the case of Tony Gatlif, well known as an exception, a Rom who was able to create and release as important a film as *Gadjo Dilo*.

Another point concerning this "fragmented narration" would bring us back to the traumatic impacts of the conflict. The young people interviewed were those who were born and grew up in a society based on hatred and violence. They went to schools already separated into institutions for Albanians or for Serbs, they had increasingly fewer opportunities to meet people from outside their own cultural group, and their experiences were those of struggle and discrimination. This, perhaps, is what caused this fragmentation in their remembering and forgetting.

Ylber, for instance, a 20-year-old Rom, only gave short answers to my questions and needed frequent stimulation in order to speak. The quoted declaration occurred at the end of the conversation, and the translator was trying to help me understand why Ylber looked so tired, and why he was having so much trouble relating his experience.

> For [me] it has been a trauma to talk about these things because [I] feel sick… just to think about the fear [I] felt, the things that happened [I] feels sick… and to talk is even worse… the past is a trauma… My head is tired…

Rozafa, a 15-year-old Romany said:

> My memory has [to] be cancelled after what happened in my life… there have been nice and bad things but they have been cancelled… I remember most things related to my house… instead the memory of school has been cancelled because of what happened…

Before this, Rozafa had explained that she had stopped going to her school, (which was managed by Kosovar Albanians), because her classmates were insulting her and suggesting she join the other Romany in a Serbian school. She later said that going to an Albanian school made her

afraid of being mistaken for an Albanian by the Serbian soldiers, because this would have meant being harassed and subjected to violence. In her words, "Life was better before…"

Though we might find some generational differences in the subjects' narrative voice, and in their experience of people outside their cultural background, all generations seemed to share a common opinion, that "life was better before…" On this topic, the self-identification of Albanians or Romany introduced a particular slant to their perceptions of the past: To Albanians, the idea that a happy age existed before, mainly under the rule of Tito, was less strong than it was to the Romany, and yet we did find this sentiment in our testimonies. Elidon G., a 20-year-old Albanian, had no doubts about this:

> Elidon: During the communist period life was very good. The school was in your language, you could also work. You could do everything you liked. After, all these stopped.
> Question: What was the Kosovar Albanians' opinion of Tito?
> Elidon: As long as he was alive they didn't want him, after his death they realized Tito had done a lot…

The subjects' recollection of a past where all Kosovars could live together was ambivalent, and memories of the past often mixed with the urgent needs of the present. This ambivalence seemed stronger amongst Albanians, while the Romany, whose people had lost everything in the war, understandably felt strongly nostalgic about a period in which they were able to live better lives. This comparison of the past to more recent events was, however, a topic strongly influenced by the subjects' present conditions and experiences. The dominant discourse in Kosovo, discussed mostly amongst the Albanian "winners", possibly gave a 15-year-old woman the ability to respond that Albanians had always been subjected to Serbian violence, which is why, for them, there had not been a better life in the past:

> Question: When did the violence start in your city?
> Ajse: Always…

Violça, another Kosovar Albanian woman (30 years old) began her conversation with the words: "We were never free because of the Serbs…" Then, further in the narration, she contradicted herself, thus confirming the ambivalence surrounding the memory of the period before the war:

> Question: Then when you were a girl there were no problems…
> Violça: No, we didn't have problems
> Question: Did you have Serb friends when you were a girl?
> Violça: No I have never talked with a Serb, ever… but I saw the ones living in the nearby village…

The image of a better past was, of course, integral to the self-representation of the Roma interviewees. They described how, before the war, they lived in Kosovo without difficulty, owning their own houses and working at their own jobs, whereas they are now forced to live scattered throughout Europe. If this memory of a golden past was associated with the experience of the Roma populations, what is most unfortunate in their situation is the total absence of any force that could transform their discourse into a successful political agenda. No other dominant and powerful discourses sustain the Roma claim that a better past should be restored nor support their "right" to return to Kosovo. Their positive reconstruction of the pre-war period has no citizenship in a world in which the dominating ideas of public history label every positive reference to a socialist past as "Yugo-nostalgic" (Jambresic Kirin, 1996).

> I had the impression that life was better… because my parents were alive, I went to school and I was happy during that period of life… after a short time my parents died of natural death and the life and the situation in general started to get worse… and I had to start to work and to take care of myself because no one was helping me… [Hadjar]

> I was not supporting anyone but I thought no one had to win…everything had to stay the way it was, that this system couldn't change… I thought it was better if nothing changed… [Baftjar]

In this journey through memory and forgetting, we found tensions and contradictions, similarities and differences amongst the interviewees. The last point I would like to stress is that the composition of the group interviewed did not allow for a better understanding of the gender dimension in which the stories were told. Of course, gender is a central force in shaping experiences and in determining the role of each interviewee, and will be discussed in other sections of the article, but what seemed interesting in the process of memory was this very lack of a gender difference, which requires further investigation.

If not gender-related, the differences noticed in the construction of memory seemed more influenced by the subject's generational and political situation, and these differences further seemed due to a realignment of the conflict along nationalistic ideologies and to a sense of belonging. To identify, and thus to be identified, with Albanians or with Romany has led to distinctions in the relationships and experiences of these individuals with Serbs and with the Yugoslav State, and these experiences then marked the memories reconstructed and the subjectivities represented in the interviews.

One powerful similarity shared by interviewees was the use of a "rhetoric of silence" in their narration of violent past events. "I cannot describe what has happened", "I have no words…" or "I don't know what to say" were common expressions used in the interviews. On this topic, Arben B. referred to an Albanian proverb that he believed could not be translated into Italian or English:

> The first thing [the refugees] say is that it is impossible to describe what they have been subjected to… they had suffered a lot… there is a proverb that I don't think can be translated into Italian… it means it is not possible to lament the suffering we have felt.

The content of this expression, however, makes sense in Italian (and perhaps even in English). The need to call upon silence to describe violence might be thought common to many cultures. Indeed, this commonality might be the sign of an approach to trauma and its evocation, which crosses boundaries of language and tradition.

The politics of history

In the prologue to this section, I have already outlined some of the strategies used in the countries of former Yugoslavia in order to construct a narration of the past that is congruent with nationalistic agendas. In the following pages, I will therefore try to analyse how different subjects recount different histories of Kosovo and its populations, after which I will focus on the Romany, and, more specifically, on their relationship with history.

Histories

Kosovo bears the weight of being the cradle of Serbian medieval culture and the cornerstone of every Serb's national identity. It is therefore not surprising that Slobodan Milosevic's nationalist party made full use of the celebration of St. Vitus Day on 28 June 1989, in order to commemorate the Battle of Kosovo of 1389. According to Milan Milosevic:

> The 1989 event took place at Gazimestan, the site of the historic battle. The commemoration had all the trappings of a coronation, staged as a Hollywood extravaganza. Milosevic descended by helicopter from the heavens into the cheering crowd; the masses were the extras. The camera focused on his arrival. In some vague way, the commentator placed Milosevic at the centre of the Serbian ancestral myth of Prince Lazar, the hero and martyr of the Kosovo battle. Exactly 600 years before, the voice-over told the viewers, on this very soil, Prince Lazar had chosen the kingdom of heaven over his earthly kingdom, the glory of death over

> survival of defeat. The relics of Prince Lazar, killed in the battle, had been carried a month previously, in a procession accompanied by unprecedented media pomp, through virtually all Serb-populated regions where war would later break out (Milosevic, 1997: 110).

According to Milan Milosevic's reconstruction, it was in Gazimestan that Slobodan Milosevic first explicitly mentioned the possibility of war, in his mind, then, in Kosovo itself (even though, as is well known, the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina erupted before the Kosovo conflict). In his speech, Slobodan Milosevic addressed the Serbs as victims living in the heart of their own ancestral land, harassed by the Albanians who were taking advantage of their autonomy and would try, sooner or later, to unite Kosovo with Albania (Milosevic, 1997).

This episode clearly demonstrates how the past was used to reinforce a collective national identity which, in the last decades, had to face the growing power of an antagonistic population identified as the Albanians. One of the results of this process was to depict the Serbs living in Kosovo as victims of Albanian nationalism. This strategy of "victimization" is common to many nationalistic discourses born in the former Yugoslavia. The Croatians, for instance, depicted themselves as victims of the Serbs and of the official memory of the socialist regimes. Renata Jambresic Kirin, in her study of the oral testimonies of Croatian refugees, emphasized the dynamics of this victimization process, which is powerful enough to legitimate the fabrication of new national identity after a conflict. Kirin has examined the case of Croatia, showing how the dominant discourse was woven around the *discourse of sacrifice* and the *discourse of renewal*, which played an important role in political negotiations and decisions. The life stories of displaced persons, however, told of women and men:

> Whose fate – in terms of the dominant ideology – symbolized the grandeur of Croatian victims in a patriotic war [including families of the killed and wounded soldiers] who would face, in their harsh everyday reality, all the misfortunes of a jeopardized social group living in the strange surroundings of big cities, isolated hotels on the coast, or living on the unsafe frontier, not very far from their inaccessible homes which are still in the occupied territories. After the first enchantment, disappointment is largely shared among displaced persons who have recently returned to their devastated homes and settled in temporary settlements with no foundations for fast reconstruction" (Jambresic Kirin, 1996: 66).

The common use of the idea of "victim" is a complex topic that warrants further investigation. In these pages I would like to stress the tension, as described in Jambresic Kirin's work, between the individuals' narrations

of themselves as victims, and the hegemonic discourses that re-appropriate and transform pieces of people's experience. Despite this tension, however, it is possible to quote some stories which resist construction of a collective identity based on hatred and exclusion, and which create movement in a picture that, it seems, the official discourses would prefer to keep frozen.[3]

The Romany and a sense of the past

In the interviews held with Roma subjects, there emerged an interesting relationship with history which seemed to contradict the "absence of a sense of past" often attributed to Roma culture. I refer mainly to the work of Isabel Fonseca who compared Gypsies and Jews in their approach to the Holocaust:

> The Jews have responded to persecution and dispersal with a monumental industry of remembrance. The Gypsies – with their peculiar mixture of fatalism and spirit, or wit, to seize the day – have made an art of forgetting (Fonseca 1995: 276).

On a large scale, this statement rings true, but I believe Fonseca's theory to be specific, not only to the two cultures involved, but to the different power positions of the two subjects, (Romany and Jews), in the international public sphere. The Romany probably had a different and particular sense of the past, shaped according to their conceptions of time and space, nomadism and permanence. This cultural attitude, however, must also be seen in connection with the other subjects and institutions active in this particular "struggle about official reconstruction of the past". If the Romany do not have a "strong" memory, they have not been helped at all by non-Roma people, who often "forget" them in the official memory of the Holocaust.

In the interviews, some of the Romany referred to the Holocaust tragedy in conversations about their present experiences. This is a meaningful connection, which shows both a sense of the past and an attitude towards self-reflection and awareness. As Tahir said:

> I thought that life in Italy was different, I knew that because of the history books I read… I could have gone to Germany, two brothers of mine live there but I had an argument with them… and after I read about the history of racism, of nazism in Germany… that it has existed there for several years, for 100 years… I was too worried about staying in Germany because of what I read about all their history I thought: it might happen again… we are at the point that history is happening again and so I didn't want to stay in Germany…

Then, further:

> In Kosovo all the people [Romany] were living in houses, we had a normal life, I have seen the camps the first time in Italy… in my jargon I call them concentration camps because they look like the ones built by the racists…

I would suggest that the experience of migration and war is changing the relationship of some individuals with their historical memory and identity.[4] Recent traumatic experiences involving movement through countries, the loss of homes, jobs, persons, objects, and the violent rejections of the "host" populations, might have helped the Romany remember previous events and to redefine their relationships with the past. This also seems to be one of the mechanisms that catalyses the act of remembering in other societies, and the contemplation of different pasts. Marilyn Young, in her study of the perception of the Korean War (1950-1953) in the United States, has pointed out that despite the extreme brutality and terrible casualties of this war, it was first discussed and analysed only after the Vietnam War, as if the Vietnam trauma had opened a window onto "the forgotten war" (Young, 1997).

For the Romany, the re-elaboration of their identity also meant struggling against the wall of prejudice they encountered during these times. The misunderstanding and violence to which they were (and are) subjected in the "host" countries were important elements in the process of remembering, and in the renegotiation of identities. An example of this is the theme of the "house", which was relevant in all of the interviews held with Roma subjects: the Romany have lost their houses in Kosovo, most of them burnt by Albanians after the NATO intervention. They have requested (and still are requesting) houses in Italy, but these are very difficult to find. Most of the time, they are therefore relocated to the insalubrious and outrageous *campi nomadi* (camps for gypsies). Even if they do have a job and a salary, it is almost impossible for them to meet with a landlord and make a deal, because of the racial prejudice rampant in the cities they now have to inhabit. Throughout the interviews then, the Romany stressed repeatedly the fact that for centuries their ancestors have not been nomads, and the most emotional passages of their accounts were often those describing the loss of their homes in Kosovo. Houses thus became one of the central elements of self-representation used by the Romany in their interviews. According to Tahir:

> Because we are not the way they think we are… we had our houses in Kosovo, we had another culture, we had another mentality… for instance we used to live in the same place, for 150 years in the some houses… and

> we are not nomadic as people here think, a day here another day there… around… what we should do around?
>
> Sofia: In the middle of October I went back to my city [Vuctrn, Kosovo] in order to get some documents and see the condition of my house… and I saw not only mine, but many destroyed houses… before destroying them they removed windows, doors, floors… I saw all the tiles broken and the kitchen… only three walls were standing, one on the back and two in the middle of this two-floor high house… everything had been taken away… also the house had been violated… I was so upset when I saw what had happened to the house that everything disappeared in front of my eyes… It was tragic… I saw all of that and everything disappeared in front of my eyes…
>
> Question: Did you faint?
>
> Sofia: Yes… fainted… I didn't imagine that it would be like that… if my house was still there I would not have come to Italy at all…

> The memory of the house was always there, of the city, of what was left… I had my fantasies about what happened to me, not about the future… [Rozafa]

> It is better if everyone goes back home… I was much happier there… [Bajtar]

The theme of the house and the story of return were both central to the refugees' narrative identity. According to research in the field, these images correspond to the Roma people's need to reconstruct the meanings and self-perceptions which have been challenged by the experience of displacement. In a completely new environment and life, the refugees need to build an image of continuity and coherence with their own past (Daniel and Knudsen, 1995). As in the words of Plejic:

> Home is a place of security, one's "life-work" and the symbol of the family's success. The loss of home and everything it stood for represents one of the fundamental motives in all our testimonies (Plejic, 1993: 234).

In the last sentence of her previous statement "If my house was there, I would not have come to Italy at all," Sofia spoke for the majority of Romany interviewees. Most of them left Kosovo because they were forced to do so by circumstances, and they wish to return. In describing their emigration, the Romany refugees emphasized this will to go home to Kosovo, and not one of them seemed to want to reconstruct their life in Italy or elsewhere. This longing was shared by all of the refugees, men and women,

old and young people. While there was less "urgency" to return in the accounts of men who had immigrated to Italy at the beginning of the 1990s, they also reported that they would like to live in Kosovo, if the economic and social situation there was better.

The Romany also positioned themselves as victims in conversations about their history as a people, and yet they described themselves in a way that was neither silent nor passive. Instead, they used their victimized position to express themselves, their identity and culture, and to claim rights and recognition for the hardships they had seen.

> I don't talk only for myself but as the Roma population… in our history we have never attacked another population, we are known as pacifists… we are never for the war and there [in Kosovo] we were in-between… trapped between two nationalisms… [Tahir]

> We are a bit of a strange population because no one takes care of us, the newspapers and TV never talk about our problems… we are outside of all discourses… [Andri]

> No one talks about our things… just nomads, nomads, nomads… [Blerta]

> Up to this point we can say that we have done so much to come here and all are against us, not only Serbs and Albanians… we are all around Europe and just 1 person of 1,000 wants to help this Rom… [Sofia]

In this last quotation, past and present merge together into a reality of continuous discrimination: the Romany have managed to escape the Albanians and the Serbs, and yet they are still pursued by prejudice and poverty in Italy and throughout Europe. In some of the interviews, the open discrimination was explained by the historical lack of political organization amongst Romany. The fact that they had no politicians, no police, no representatives in any institutions was emphasized as one of the reasons why the Romany could not counter the violence that has been aimed against them. According to some studies about the Romany living in post-Communist countries, an effort is being made to organize some of the population into Roma political parties and institutions, but the process seems quite problematic, both because of the lack of what we might call a western idea of politics, and because of opposition from other non-Roma parties. (Barany, 1995, 1998). In his account, Tahir stated that the Romany had tried to organize, in order to better deal with the conflict of Kosovo, but that the Serbs had opposed and suppressed their attempts at uniting. The conflicts and Diaspora experiences thus created a new situation for the Romany in Kosovo, excluding them from the public sphere, just as they had been in other eastern European countries. In Italy, the Romany have

set up several local organizations and one national association which assists with reception of the thousands of Kosovar refugees who arrived in the summer of 1999.

According to Tahir, the tragedy that the Romany survived in Kosovo should be attributed to the status assigned to his people since the regime of Marshall Tito. Tahir then listed the process by which this was enforced, a method common to many societies and nationalist politics. In his words:

> Roma in Tito's Yugoslavia were not recognized as a population but as an ethnic group… and as an ethnic group you are too low [in the social hierarchy] so talking about nationalities, the Roma were not included… they said that the majority were Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Albanians, Macedonians… for instance they used to say: "in Kosovar Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Muslims, Gorani and other ethnic groups live…" always other ethnic groups without name, without saying Roma.

Tahir's points lead us to a discussion of Roma culture and how it has interacted with a non-Roma system of values, in which the absence of a territory where their identities might take root, has meant discrimination and misunderstanding. The fact that the Romany have never had "their own" country, has made them targets of violence in the past and in the present. The fact that the Romany have not found the means to struggle collectively for the right to build their own nation has made them even weaker in the current power structure of Kosovo.

The histories that have been published about the Romany describe them as able to adapt to the cultures they encounter during their travels. Sometimes, they are labelled bearers of a weak identity, and in other studies, the importance of their group culture is stressed. To the Romany, however, a population is split between themselves and the non-Romany or *Gazhe*. There is a hierarchy in this division, and usually the *Gazhe* are perceived as inferior, gullible and tainted. Nevertheless, the Romany/non-Romany boundary is a cornerstone of Roma ethnicity, and the survival of the Romany depends upon crossing this boundary to negotiate a living space for themselves in the larger and dominant *Gazhe* milieu. To explore this, Carol Silverman studied American Gypsy culture and particularly the way in which Gypsies cultivate their distinct "ethnic" identity, while still appearing to assimilate into the "external" culture:

> Although many innovations have occurred in Roma culture, they do not point to loss of ethnic identity; rather, change is a strategy of adaptation to new environments – both a strategy of manipulation of new situations and a creative response to them (Silverman, 1988: 261-262).

In order to survive, the Romany had to learn how to interact successfully with non-Roma people. In her observations of the Gypsy experience in the United States, Silverman wrote:

> It is often necessary for Gypsies to submerge their Gypsy ethnicity entirely, because it is a social stigma. Gypsies pass as Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Greeks, or other ethnic groups to avoid harassment by *Gazhe* authorities such as landlords, tax officials… and to obtain housing, jobs, and welfare. Passing involves adopting the personal front of a non-Gypsy, including appearance, demeanour, language, names… (Silverman, 1988: 265)

I do not completely agree with Silverman's concept of "ethnic" culture, as an element separate from the Gypsies' daily interaction with other cultures. For what, in fact, is "ethnic" culture, if not a continuous re-negotiation between the past and the present, the "inside" and the "outside"? In spite of this distinction, Silverman's analysis of the United States as the Gypsies' environment might help us contextualize some of the stories told by the Kosovar Roma interviewees.

Throughout the accounts, Roma identity is presented as quite strong and stable. No one admitted to having any kind of problem with the larger community. Though the interviewees did disagree about the side they should take when the people of Kosovo split into two camps, this has not pushed individuals to question the culture and identity of the entire Roma people. Each of the Romany interviewed was married to a Rom or Romany, all are Muslim, all have a strong sense of family and community. In his account, for instance, Tahir, who decided to leave Kosovo because of his disagreement with the Serbian occupation of Kosovo in early 1990, did admit to occasional conflicts with the Romany who supported Serbs, and yet maintained a strong sense of himself as a Rom:

> [to the invitation to go back to Kosovo] I said: no… I cannot stay here alone, you pushed all my people away… and also what you have done till now… I come back but only with my people, if my people don't come back I don't stay in Kosovo alone… also because I am afraid of what can happen… Roma have always been victims of this war, Roma didn't want to be involved in any war… [Tahir]

Other interviewees spoke of the Roma skill of "passing" through cultures and emphasized this aspect of their identity, in order to underline the meaningless of the violence they bore at the hands of the Albanians.

> Before it was nice, everything was all right. It is crazy what has happened… I feel bad, I feel nostalgia for my country but I cannot live there,

> they forced me to escape, the Albanians I mean… They were my friends, we have eaten together, we have worked together… they have killed my brother, my wife, I have been wounded [he shows his ear]… and it is clear that I had to escape and now I feel bad because of it… I am happy to talk, it is important that everyone knows what shameful action has been done… Albanians have killed their Albanian brothers… You are Albanian, I am Albanian, it is not right that we kill each other… They asked me to call my sons from Germany to come to fight when they knew that I couldn't do that… no, I cannot, I feel bad, I feel bad… I apologize… I say goodbye… I cannot talk now… [Majkell]

> Arta: We didn't talk about tradition, we worked and no more…
> Question: What language do you talk in your family?
> Arta: Albanian.
> Question: Do you know Romane?
> Arta: Just a little because we used to stay with Albanians, we know their language… we are Roma but we always lived with Albanians… this is why I cannot speak my language properly, at school we have always studied Albanian…

> I know that we liked the Albanians, instead they didn't treat us well… I am 25, I have to say that I had a good relationship with them but for the last two years relations with Albanians have started to go badly… I don't know why the Albanians did it… I know that they wanted us to declare ourselves Albanian but I cannot write on my document that I am Albanian when I am the son of a Rom… I cannot understand it… they wanted to force us to declare we are Albanian… [Lyfti]

> I talk with my relatives, with my friends in my language… But there are no schools in Romane… some books, very rarely, not really written in Romane… [Lytfi]

This is how Romany have represented themselves and their relationship with "the others", namely the Albanians. Of course, their portrayal as victims might lead us to forget the responsibility that some Romany held in the conflict. As has been stated, however, in our work we are not interested in taking a position for or against any individual or group, beyond our legitimate empathy. What is important, rather, in the previous quotations, is the Roma ability to be close to the other culture, and to use aspects (language) belonging to the Albanian culture, apparently without losing their own sense of belonging to the Roma group. What seems a great resource, however, can also be a source of great weakness, in a world where the dominant values are exclusive identities and strong boundaries.

The gaze that the Albanian interviewees turn on the Romany clearly reveals the elements that have complicated the relations between the

people. Here, at the roots of misunderstanding, a completely different story is told:

Elidon G.:	Roma have done many bad things, they helped the Serbs, they helped to burn our houses, and they destroyed everything… Now we are doing the same but… they only helped the Serbs and not us… we gave them food, we helped them and they just nothing… No, I cannot understand Roma, when they were with the Albanians they were good, they used to say nice things about Albanians… when they were with Serbs… It is my opinion that they stay where the situation is better…
Question:	Have you ever personally known a Rom?
Elidon:	No, I haven't ever met one…
Question:	And how do you know all these things?
Elidon:	We know them… Some cousins of mine are in a political party and they tell us how things happened… all the Albanians complain about Roma because Roma steal, sack, beg…
Question:	Did you pray together with Roma?
Elidon:	No… because Roma have no religion, when they stay with Albanians they become Muslim, if they stay with someone else… they have no religion, they have nothing…

It is difficult at this point to draw any definite conclusions, as these pages represent but a brief reflection on the subject matter. In this paper, I have tried to map the complex universe shaped by memories and forgetfulness, from present stances to nostalgia for the past, of individuals and groups. Certain elements, I believe, are more problematic and need still further consideration, such as the position of the researcher in the process of selecting the group of interviewees, and the places and the languages in which the conversations take place.

One could say that throughout the 1970s, oral history was written from within a movement which would have liked "to give words" to the subaltern (the working class, for instance) and women. In our times, however, oral history is capable of prefiguring the relationships between different subjectivities and cultures and of revealing the contradictions between the individual and the community. Oral history can therefore be used to criticize the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, and the process of identity construction based on territories and nationalistic values. The tensions between the voice of the individual and the dominant discourses of the public sphere, which legitimize declaration and self position, emerge in every one of the testimonies, and might serve as a powerful "weapon" with which to enter the critical debate on public memory and the political use of the past.

Notes

De Sario, Corradi, Ruiz, Capussotti

1. The term can be translated as "Gypsy camps". Some of them are "authorized", meaning that they are legally recognized and organized by the local authorities, while others are unauthorized, meaning that a group of families has decided to settle there without asking permission. The authorized camps usually have running water and electricity and are supervised by a watchman. The houses are mainly made of concrete, or of metal and wood, or are mobile homes.

De Sario

1. Or of the Albanians according to the Romany, and vice-versa.
2. A definition of this "entity" constructed by the "bio-power" placed between individual and society is in Foucault, 1997: 218 ff.
3. For material on this subject it is necessary to begin with H. Arendt, *The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man*, 1999 (1958), and in particular Ch. IX.
4. On the many "Albanians" of Albania and Kosovo literally created by speeches on immigration and war, see Dal Lago, 1999.
5. Ethno-national or cultural subjectivities of this kind are formed and re-established with each generation, and their continued existence is therefore stimulated by processes occurring at a global scale or by events that cause their violent resurgence, see Janigro, (1993), 1999 and furthermore Ranzato, 1994.
6. Belonging to the *Hascalje* group.
7. If the image of the "Serbian official", and of the long arm of the Belgrade government developed among the Albanians, what happened in the minds of the Serbian civilians?
8. Other possible courses of action in the work conflict, such as collaborating with the Serbs in order to keep working, were either not willingly brought up in the accounts, or provoked strong discomfort to both Albanian and Roma interviewees.

Corradi

1. Many refugees have thoughts of suicide, as indicated by ongoing studies, e.g. Kociian-Hercigonia and Friedman.

Capussotti

1. See Vattimo et al., 1990; Boyarin, 1994; Passerini, 2002.
2. For a comparison with the war in Bosnia and Croatia see: Feldman, Prica and Senjkovic (Eds) 1993; Gilliland, Spoliar-Vrzina and Rudan, 1995; Huseby-Darvas Eva, 1995.
3. For a more in-depth analysis of these aspects see Nicola Mai's article in this volume.
4. I thank Luisa Passerini for helping me to formulate this specific point.

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Epilogue

An Afterthought on a Work in Progress and a Forethought towards Its Future

Luisa Passerini*

This collection of writings is linked, in various ways, with the IOM intervention in Kosovo aiming, as Natale Losi writes in his introduction, at "the psychological recovery/support of a community" and including the creation of the Archives of Memory. Within this context, the three first essays are based on research done in Kosovo, while the research for the fourth essay was done in Serbia. Then follows a contribution to the Archives by various authors based in Italy, as a place of reception for Kosovar refugees and a venue for possible dialogue with them. The researchers who engaged in this research, and whose contributions are collected here, offer a diverse range of competence: history and oral history, anthropology and social science. They found themselves placed in a situation that allowed them to perform their disciplinary competence, while being part of an experiment in assisting, or simply being in contact with, people who had suffered severely and were undergoing dramatic changes in their lives. An impulse of solidarity, the desire to know, and the effort to use one's knowledge in a way which is not only academic, were among the motivations that led the writers of this collection – except of course Anton Berishaj, who is a Kosovar sociologist – to engage in working with the

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memories of Kosovars. Therefore they participated in transformations of memory which oral historians and anthropologists can witness only in particular circumstances.

Let us be clear that this is not an easy task, and its imperviousness accounts for some of the uncertainties and contradictions which can be found in these first results. The main problem was, as we shall see, to conceptualize who the subjects are that give rise to the inter-subjective experience of the oral history interview in this situation. The problem seems to be insufficiently answered by simply referring to the original motivations of oral historians, who were anxious to give words to those who had no voice in history. Most oral history as recorded in Europe between the 1950s and the 1980s assumed homogeneity of subjective intents between the interviewees and the interviewers, or at least assumed that there were no major obstacles to an exchange between them, thus allowing them to construct a shareable narrative. Innumerable people were interviewed – and their interviews transcribed, elaborated, published – on the basis of an assumed homogeneous subjectivity and homo-positionality of the subjects involved. The work done with Kosovars indicates that we are now in a different phase of understanding this form of inter-subjectivity. As Enrica Capussotti writes in concluding her paper,

> One could say that throughout the 1970s, oral history was written from within a movement which would have liked "to give words" to the subaltern (the working class, for instance) and women. In our times, however, oral history is capable of prefiguring the relationships between different subjectivities and cultures and of revealing the contradictions between the individual and the community. Oral history can therefore be used to criticize the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, and the process of identity construction based on territories and nationalistic values.

The underlying hypothesis – which situates itself on ethical-scientific grounds – can appear hopeful and optimistic; I believe that it is not only legitimate, but well grounded, precisely because it presupposes a heterogeneity of subjectivities, which it is essential to recognize today. As expressed by another of the contributors to this volume, Giuseppe De Sario:

> It is not only the individuals involved in the conflict who have difficulty understanding what happened. As researchers, our "position" in the field and our perception of the conflict, as constructed through our research, are also significant and carry important consequences. Observers and scholars should admit the difficulty of using categories adequate to contemporary conflicts. Unease and a desire to rationalize or escape these events run throughout the observations of historians and students of

> social sciences, particularly when war and conflict do not break out between "nations" or between so-called "peoples", but rather between subjectivities which arise suddenly and unexpectedly.

The difficulties inherent in an approach which tries to respect the heterogeneity of subjectivities and the resulting problematic forms of inter-subjectivity, are not to be undervalued. In the writings of this collection, one can detect a tension between the desire to immediately establish a wide sense of solidarity – denying now the nightmare of hatred between peoples and cultures – and the desire to understand deeply the specificity of the interlocutor, whether Kosovar Albanian, Serbian or Rom. (The choice of interviewees is limited to these three, but we are aware that this choice excludes many other cultures existing in Kosovo. This restriction is due solely to the limited resources available. At the same time, it testifies to an effort to give voice to the suffering of all, refusing the tendency to blame only one group as responsible for all atrocities). As a consequence of this tension, some of the writers have chosen to discuss the interviews "regardless of the ethnic group of the interviewees" (Laura Corradi), while others have chosen to indicate who and from which culture is speaking every time a quotation from an interview is presented. I personally prefer the latter option, although I am aware that the attribute "ethnic" is very problematic in the former Yugoslavia, and the question is not resolved by using the word "cultural" in its place. I prefer the latter option because I am convinced that the effort of understanding should not avoid all the mediations that certain political positions would like to diminish or render irrelevant.

A similar tension can be seen in the cautious way of treating gender issues: questions such as the traditional status of women, the lack of "voice" of many of them, the new conditions of young women (for instance those employed in the NGOs) and new perceptions of gender and family issues are presented with attention and trepidation, but any judgement is suspended. This suspension, which has been willingly and voluntarily adopted by the researchers, is one sign that the long way leading to better understanding between peoples and cultures has begun; this way involves attention and silence on the part of some authors. At the same time, the writers are very vocal about other important points. This conjunction of silence and outspokenness on the part of the researchers themselves is part of the significance of their work, notwithstanding the different degrees of achievement. The writers are vocal in as far as they not only scrupulously report a great quantity of interesting material, but they also dare to propose interpretative hypotheses of innovative potential, in at least three respects.

What I see as relevant in this endeavour is **first** of all the direct link between the psychological engagement with people experiencing grave trauma from war, on the one hand, and the particular interaction of history and anthropology on the other. The potential novelty results from a combination of factors: the situation of the researcher who is sharing a dramatic emergency; the effort to simultaneously use socio-psycological and anthropo-historical tools, and the decision to treat narratives, considered both as resources as well as sources of problems, as a priority of the research. As Natale Losi writes, the dominant story in Kovoso was based on the constellation of aggressor/victim/saviour, but new "starting points [were found], even in clinical work, to begin 're-narrativizing', 're-storying' in the communities and families damaged by unhealed wounds and deaths". They offer less restrictive and more vital alternatives to the fossilized story frozen around the dominant constellation.

This attention to narration and narratives is coupled with attention to a multiplicity of languages, not only the spoken local idioms (which explains the importance given to the role of the interpreter in the interview), but also legends, disciplinary languages, and gestures. In fact, the IOM work in Kosovo included a theatre performance, of which Annie Lafontaine says, "The performance was a language". This part of the experience – which will give rise to a future publication – produced not only a performance, but also a video. One is moved watching it and seeing how an initial awkwardness develops into mastering an individual and collective technique which makes political use of the body. The work of the theatre group, as well as the interviews and their elaboration, testify to the efforts made to develop a new and shared language.

In fact, the tension between experience and narration seems to get stronger as the closeness between the two increases. The impression that the researchers had of finding themselves in a Babel of languages is a sign not merely of factual confusion, but of the effort to find new forms of expression which obliged them to re-discuss their own languages, both national and disciplinary. I have a strong feeling that this type of trilateral engagement (psychology, anthropo-history, narratology) should be continued on a larger scale, as it can be very fruitful for many of us. For the moment, impressive results are shown in this regard by Nicola Mai's contribution.

Mai has earnestly tried to pose at the centre of his research the question of what it means to be Serb-Yugoslav today, and has used for this purpose a combination of psychoanalytical and political concepts:

> In Serbia a collectivist identity sustained by a narcissist libidinal economy was hegemonic and was articulated by narratives of self-victimization, moral superiority and omnipotence. These narratives were

> consistent with a hyper-moralized and authoritarian moral world and with a mode of subjectivation in which dynamics of authoritarian repression of individual impulsions and desires were widely hegemonic, as this was instrumental to guarantee the survival of a collectivist identity.

This approach leads to a very interesting analysis confirming our hypothesis of "heterogeneous subjectivity", and allows for a promising outlook on the future:

> People who had direct intense libidinal relationships with members of a *different* ethnic group seem to cope better with pain and suffering, as they seem to have access to narratives that account for antagonism and responsibility in more meaningful terms. Their experience of love and friendship across two ethnically different cultures enabled them to acknowledge individual similarities beyond and against the influence of hegemonic discourses reinforcing and introducing differences along ethnic lines.

While the trilateral approach is a first contribution of theoretical and practical relevance, a **second** one concerns the relationship between remembering and forgetting, a classic theme of oral history. In the last two and a half decades, a large number of oral historians in all parts of the world have shown that the various ways of intertwining between the two constitute as many strategies put in practice by memory. Silence and oblivion appear to be not only the results of traumas, of personal and collective decisions, and of the psyche's propensity for functioning by associations, but also of rhetorical devices within a narrative universe. All this is confirmed and enriched by the papers in this collection. In general, the writings presented here evidence the spontaneity of forgetting as a defence by which, in order to remove painful memories of death and loss, people remove everything connected with the war. However, going a step further, these writings reveal the extreme complexity of the connection between individual and collective memories and its pertinence to the question of silence.

As Silvia Salvatici has written elsewhere, the first stage of the training course for psychosocial counsellors devoted to the memory of the war, focused on the role played by memory in sharing painful stories, which had been generally restricted to the experience and memory of their individual actors. Sharing that painful experience was also considered preliminary to sharing its consequences on the psychological well-being of the people, in order to point out that those very consequences could be considered as "normal" reactions to "abnormal" events (such as the war), instead of psycho-pathologies. The work done within the first stage

brought about the emergence of the powerful role of collective memory sharing in this perspective. However, the research implemented for the Archives of the Memory, together with the training course, brought to light the need to also go in the opposite direction: from collective memory to individual experience. As analysis of the interviews showed, the individual story tends to be subjugated to a collective narrative which tends to assert itself as the single expression of a national identity that is monolithic, solid and rooted in cohesion and homogeneity. It therefore became necessary to give value to the different memories carried by different subjects, memories that might become the various voices and narratives of a multiple memory able to impede consolidation of a public, nationalistic discourse. Very soon, all national identities appeared not to be cohesive at all, but rather, articulated and fragmentized.

The genesis of this realization can be tracked in the single researches. The researchers found that individual memories disagreed with collective and official accounts. As Annie Lafontaine writes, while the IOM intervention was focusing on the process going from the individual to the collective experience in order to influence the discursive form that would take the collectively shared suffering after the war, "we came to realize that the commonality of the recent past's experiences was strongly embodied in the individuals". It is this realization that brings many contributors to stress the plurality of voices emerging along the boundaries marked by the individual experiences. This is also why, I believe, most papers insist on the transversal components of identity – such as gender, generation and urban and rural belonging – which combine with the components based on nation, ethnic group or language in giving rise to new types of subjectivity. The transversal components can be shared with many other subjects throughout the world and provide a basis for new forms of solidarity, different from the traditional ones:

> The tensions between the voice of the individual and the dominant discourses occupying the public sphere, which legitimize declaration and self position, emerge in every one of the testimonies and might serve as a powerful weapon with which to enter the critical debate on public memory and the political use of the past (Capussotti).

One relevant consequence of the first two points is that individual memory can have different destinies: it can become a weapon within a defensive collective identity – which in terms of a libidinal economy is a shortcut – or be subjected to long elaboration, going towards a re-definition of the two terms, individual and collective. This necessarily brings in another set of collective and individual subjects, namely the researchers themselves and what they represent. Therefore we come to a **third** point of

relevance, which develops something implicit in our approach since the beginning. There is a multiplicity of subjects on this stage, much as there is a multiplicity of forms which subjectivity can take. The researchers from the West are one type of subject, since they represent the scientific tradition and the perspectives of the international community. In fact, one underlying trend in this work is the contact which is established between these two entities and Kosovar people. They are the central subject of the story, although, as we have seen, they are far from being homogeneous.

At the same time, the intervention of the IOM team, including the group of historians-anthropologists, cannot be understood as a *deus ex machina* which would introduce something not existing before. The contributions to this volume allow us to interpret that intervention as eliciting something which potentially was already there – perhaps hidden and subordinated to opposite drives – and offering it the opportunity of developing and appearing in daylight. “Our presence during the interviews might simply serve to add transparency to a connection that was already implied, and would probably stress the mechanisms of a collective self-representation addressed towards the international community” (Salvatici).

This can take place due to an acknowledged reciprocity between the various subjects involved in the exchange. A number of processes were either favoured, followed or set in motion by the IOM intervention. These processes include: recognition of the value of a single culture and its local aspects; its collective strength but ultimately also its oppressive nature, for instance towards women (the contribution by Anton Berishaj is of particular interest in this respect); the role of the individual, and finally, but most importantly, the role of that ambiguous entity which is called the “international community”, ambiguous because it is in its name that the former Yugoslavia has been subjected first to indifference, then to the NATO war and finally to a campaign of assistance which has often been confused and incompetent. Moreover, if we think of some components of this international community as we find them in Western Europe, we cannot help but notice various forms of Eurocentrism which relegate the Balkans to a second class status, while ignoring or distorting the history of the region. However, this international community can also represent a potential, a hope, a dream of at least a few Western and Eastern Europeans: a place capable of accepting its own multiplicity, its multiple origins, and of criticizing its own heritage in such a way as to promote exchange with other heritages.

That the range of inter-subjective relations in this research includes as one possible subject this virtual international community is a crucial point, to be further investigated. This should also involve a critique of the relation-

ship between the scientific establishment in the West and the cultures and peoples that become objects of its studies. The challenge is to transform the scientific patrimony in such a way as to reduce and then eliminate the burden of hierarchies within it – between various European areas as well as between subjects belonging to various countries and cultures. This challenge can also be referred to as the engagement to deal with one's own ghosts; Natale Losi talks appropriately of "the ghosts of the trainer", and we should remember that oral historians have their ghosts as well.

Another object of further research, along a similar line of enquiry, emerges from the section of this publication that moves to one country of Western Europe, Italy, and more specifically to those sites where the Kosovars found refuge there: in camps, centres and public gardens, but rarely in proper homes. The presentation of "The Protagonists" and of "Places" where the interviews took place (at the beginning of Mi*gration and Cultural Encounters: Kosovar Refugees in Italy*) provides a vivid description of not only the plurality of people brought together by the experience of being a refugee, but also of the plurality of the host country, and this could be explored by interviewing those who are or were the recipients of the refugees. From this perspective, the types of contradictions evidenced by Patricia Ruiz in showing the contrast between the international conventions, declarations and protocols, on the one hand, and the actual experience of the refugees, on the other, could find interesting correlates in daily life public discourse. A further line of research could aim at taking into consideration the proposal by Laura Corradi to consider the body and the emotions as central, and to develop this theme more broadly. It is heartening that, in spite of so many atrocities, many refugees' narratives do not show any sense of inevitability of the conflict and its degeneration, just as no significant mention is made of matters of blood, history or land as atavistic and unavoidable characteristics of tension (De Sario).

Final mention must be made of an issue that I hold particularly dear and which appears in various forms throughout the papers. In which ways do narratives contribute to or derive from conceptions of the continuity and discontinuity of history – not only the narratives by the interviewees, but our own narratives as researchers? This is a topic which can be treated from the point of view of individual and collective identity as well as of memory, but it can also be seen as a re-formulation of the present task and function of the practitioner of the socio-historical sciences. Hopefully, this will be one of the central themes for reflection in the continuation of this work.

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Archives of Memory

Supporting Traumatized Communities through Narration and Remembrance

This notebook is a compilation of essays based on papers presented at the *Second International Seminar on Psychosocial and Trauma Response in Kosovo*, which was held at the European University Institute; Fiesole, Italy, from 4 to 6 May 2000.

Participants in this seminar included international experts and scholars from universities and institutions worldwide. The present publication includes presentations by the following participants:

- Natale Losi
- Silvia Salvatici
- Annie Lafontaine
- Anton Berishaj
- Nicola Mai
- Giuseppe De Sario
- Laura Corradi
- Patricia Ruiz
- Enrica Capussotti
- Luisa Passerini