

CHAPTER 7

All the Men Are in the Militias,  
All the Women Are Victims

*The Politics of Masculinity and Femininity  
in Nationalist Wars*

Borislav Herak was an ordinary man.<sup>1</sup> He had not yet married and so lived with his parents in Sarajevo. Although ethnically a Serb, he, like so many Sarajevans, lived within an ethnically mixed family. His sister had married a Sarajevan Muslim Bosnian man. Borislav himself didn't have much luck with girlfriends, and maybe that is why he read pornographic magazines up in his room. This disturbed his father, a welder. Nor could his son's work life have been called a success. He had done poorly in school and had an undistinguished career as a conscript in the Yugoslav navy. In the early 1990s he was employed pushing a cart in one of the city's textile factories. Yet Borislav didn't seem to be a violent man. In his twenty-one years there were no records of his having vented his personal frustrations with assaults on women. And politics did not appear to provide an alternative out-

let. He scarcely knew anything about either Yugoslav or Serbian history. Perhaps the political debates that had grown steadily more intense since the outbreak of controversy over control of Kosovo just seemed to this twenty-one-year-old less immediately relevant than the centerfolds of the magazines he stored in his bedroom.

All this changed in 1991. War came to Sarajevo. Like many of the besieged city's residents, Borislav fled to its surrounding mountains. He was taken into one of the scores of semi-autonomous militias formed with the intent of pursuing ethnic Serbian territorial control. One could, however, scarcely describe Borislav Herak as having "joined" or been enlisted into this militia. The process was a far cry from the formal routines by which young men were conscripted into the now-disintegrating Yugoslav state army. From his own rather vague account, he seemed, rather, to have fallen into the company of these Serbian militiamen. They offered shelter and protection in the midst of an increasingly chaotic social environment. Gradually, his new comrades would also provide this unfocused and listless young man with a purpose larger than himself.

We know these details about Borislav Herak because he had nothing to do in prison but talk. Speaking to French and American journalists broke the boredom during the days he waited for his trial. By late 1992 he had been captured by the Bosnian forces he had come to see as his militia comrades' and his own enemy. He was to be tried on charges not only of murder, but of rape. Mass rape. He was prepared to confess. Borislav Herak, a man who merely a year before had been one of history's nonentities, now had his photograph on the front pages of major newspapers. He would forever after be among the most widely recognized

human faces behind that abstracted horror that had come to be called "the Bosnian rapes."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that a student of ethnicity and nationalism has much to explain before the story of Borislav Herak makes sense. Why did he come to sexually assault Bosnian Muslim women when a person of the same religion and ethnicity was the object of familial affections? How had such an apparently unpoliticized individual come to take risks in the name of Serbian nationalism? But these questions expose only the tip of the analytical iceberg.

Buried in the story of this once unexceptional person are important puzzles—and potential revelations—about how ethnicity gets converted into nationalist consciousness, how consciousness becomes organized, and how organized nationalism becomes militarized. None of these transformations is automatic. Nor is their sequence from one to the next. Each calls for explanation. But exploring these questions, melting down the analytical iceberg, requires taking a close look at gender.

For Borislav Herak was more than simply (or not so simply) a Serbian working-class Sarajevan who grew to young adulthood under the post–World War II Yugoslav multiethnic Communist state. He was a man. More to the point, he was a man raised in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s to think of himself as masculine. Or perhaps it is more useful to say that Borislav was a man raised to think of himself as *needing* to be masculine. If we leave this process out of his story, if we treat this process as unproblematic, then we leave out an exploration of the gendered politics of nationalism. With such a gaping omission, we will have a hard time arriving at a satisfactory explanation of why a factory worker became a militarized rapist.

There has been a burgeoning literature in recent years on the gendering of nationalist identities and — quite distinct — the gendering of nationalist ideologies and organizations. Most of this revealing research has been done by feminist scholars. They have found the existing literature on ethnicity and nationalism incapable of fully describing, much less explaining, how it is that women have experienced either ethnic communalism or nationalist politics so differently from men, differently even from those men who have shared common ethnic, generational, and class conditions with them.<sup>3</sup> These feminist researchers have, quite wisely, focused their primary attention on women's experiences of ethnicity and of nationalism precisely because so much of the previous attention — particularly that concerning nationalism — privileged men's experiences.

Written between the lines of many of the most influential ungended investigations of politicized ethnicity or of nationalist movements were several assumptions. First was the frequent assumption that men's experiences of both politicized ethnicity and nationalism deserved to be featured because it had been men (in Ireland or Algeria or Kenya or Quebec) whose ideas and actions had been the crucial shapers of those processes, leaving women to be spectators on the side of the collective road. Second, there was the common unspoken belief that men and women in any given community had roughly the same experiences, and since the experiences of men were the easiest to research — they left the most evidence in their wake — the investigator need not look further. Third, while few imagined that women and men actually cooked, negotiated, shot, or gave birth equally, it seemed convenient for some observers to assume that uneven task distribution had little

impact on individuals' senses of belonging or on the strategies selected for collective mobilization.

New feminist research starts from the conviction that assumptions this sweeping are worthy of explicit testing. The result has been evidence that all three assumptions not only are seriously flawed, but that they yield an imperfect understanding of how both ethnic and nationalist processes actually operate.<sup>4</sup>

The research that takes women's experiences of nationalism seriously reveals that many more decisions are made that determine the course of any ethnic transformation or nationalist mobilization than most of us could ever imagine. Decisions about what to cook, decisions about who would drop out of school, decisions about what to wear, decisions about whether to use contraceptives, decisions about who should go to meetings at night — decisions that frequently have been treated as merely "personal" or "trivial" — suddenly were shown to be significant. They also were found to be contested.

Decisions involve power. Many observers of nationalism, by ignoring women's experiences and by trivializing relationships between women and men, have underestimated the number of decisions it has taken to construct nationalism. Those who have underestimated the number of decisions it actually has required to develop ethnic consciousness, to politicize it, to transform it into nationalism, and — on occasion — to turn it into a violent force, in turn, have vastly underestimated the flows of power.

Furthermore, paying attention to women's experiences of nationalism not only made women visible, it also made it possible for researchers to see men. Where once there were militiamen, workers, and political elites, now there were women workers, men workers, women refugees, men refugees, *militiamen*. That

is, as soon as we start making the experiences of Bosnians problematically gendered, we no longer can subsume all women under the sprawling canopy of "victims" nor all men under the category of "militia fighters." In fact, we may hesitate before we even use the easy term "militiamen" unthinkingly. Instead, we try to determine if there were some men in Bosnia or the other regions of the former Yugoslavia who perhaps were more likely to have been marginalized, silenced, or injured — to have been victimized — than at least some women. We have to ask which women exactly have been the most likely targets of assault, which women by contrast have been best situated to speak out publicly for themselves, which women have developed antiviolent interpretations of nationalism, which women have theorized in ways that led them to reject nationalist political identities altogether. To engage in this analytical activity is not designed to push women's vulnerability back into the shadows; rather, it is to roll back the canopy that discourages observers from taking a close look at women's varied experiences of nationalist conflict and thereby to specify the conditions and decisions that have turned some women into victims. Accepting a priori the assumption that women are best thought of as victims in any nationalist mobilization that has turned violent dulls analytical curiosity. Ultimately, this dulled curiosity produces explanations that are naive in their descriptions of power and camouflage men in the garb of ungendered actors.

Thus it would be a mistake to file Borislav Herak's experiences solely under "militia fighter" or "factory worker" or "Sarajevo Serb." He is also a man. We don't know at the start if his maleness is significant in making sense of how and why ethnicity becomes nationalist and how nationalist consciousness feeds violent

conflict. Did all Sarajevo men join militias? Was there something in the 1990s gendered urban labor force that pushed more male factory workers than female factory workers to resort to arms? Having put on our gender goggles, we are compelled to inquire whether Borislav's being male has mattered and, if so, why. The answers may reveal something about the gendered ethnic and nationalist processes that shaped the actions of Borislav Herak. Pursuing gendered lines of inquiry also may expose more about the path of intercommunal violence in the 1990s, which could help us to make fuller sense of how and why nationalisms develop so differently in Flanders, Burundi, Scotland, Armenia, Quebec, and Slovenia.

Borislav Herak, from the little we know, did not seem motivated by nationalist conviction to join the Serbian militia in the hills above Sarajevo. From his recounting, it would appear that the sequence was the reverse: he began to see his Serb identity as justifying military action only after he joined the militia. Although there are reports of some Serbian and Croatian women having joined militia forces, the particular militia Borislav joined in 1991 was an all-male company composed of men who self-consciously thought of themselves as Serbs.<sup>5</sup> The micro-culture these men were developing was simultaneously masculinized, militarized, and ethnically politicized. From the older men in the militia, Borislav first learned that Muslims, ancestors of his urban neighbors and his extended family, had oppressed his own ancestors. According to his new militia tutors, it was Muslims, from the Ottoman imperialists in the past to Islamic believers in the present, who were largely to blame for his own personal lack of success. Borislav Herak, he now learned, was a man oppressed. A

*man* oppressed. Maybe that was why he was pushing a textile cart to earn a living. Maybe that was why girls didn't find him attractive. Maybe that was why he had to find solace in pornographic centerfolds.

While the young man's entrance into the evolving world of Serbian militias apparently was not politically premeditated or deliberate, there still are decisions here to explore. First, some Serbian men made the decision to form armed all-male militarized groups rather than to trust their destiny to civilian parties or to the state's own shrunken but still potent and largely Serbian military. What calculations prompted their decision? Perhaps a number of these male militia founders already had done their tours as military conscripts in the Yugoslav army and had learned there that the manly thing to do when faced with a perceived threat was to take up arms in company with other men. Perhaps as conscripts in the Yugoslav army they had mixed with Slovene, Muslim, and Croatian male conscripts, but had been socialized by their Serb officers to think of military activity as the special calling of men who identify themselves as Serbs. We don't have the answers yet, but we need them if we are going to make adequate sense of the Yugoslav conflict and if we are going to use that conflict in any comparative analysis of post-Cold War nationalism. Have the British, Russian, Canadian, and Indian armies, for example, had the same impacts on the masculinization of ethnic identities of their respective male enlistees?

There is evidence that the warrior is a central element in the modern cultural construction of the Serbian ideal of masculinity. Researchers are also demonstrating that the ideals of Serbian femininity have been constructed in ways deliberately intended to bolster the militarization of masculinity. Constructing ideals of

masculine behavior in any culture cannot be accomplished without constructing ideals of femininity that are supportive and complementary. Thus, many feminist analysts search for the decisions and actors that have the greatest stake in controlling notions of feminine respectability, feminine patriotism, and feminine attractiveness. For it is these ideas that need to be shaped and monitored if standards of manliness are to remain persuasive and legitimate. For instance, cultural constructions of masculinity in many societies have been dependent not simply on celebrating men as soldiers, but on simultaneously elevating women as mothers-of-soldiering-sons, valuing women chiefly for their maternal sacrifices for the nation. Consequently, pro-natalist policies by government officials espouse a militarized nationalism. This means that to make full sense of what has been happening to Borislav, we need to be curious about his mother and his sister as well. Journalists who tried to understand the Serb militiaman spoke only to his father. That is a start, but it is not enough.

Paying attention to cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity and the processes by which they are propagated and made mutually reinforcing, however, should not be the end of the investigation of the gendering of nationalism. Cultural ideals under certain circumstances can be challenged — they can become confused, contradictory; even widely accepted ideas about what it means to be manly or to be a good woman can become the objects of social controversy rather than veneration. Thus, for example, the notion of communally legitimated maternalized femininity has been contradicted by the occasional promotion of women as fighters for the Serbian nation, though the contradiction has been partially contained by assigning far more impor-

tance to the patriotic mother than to the patriotic woman soldier. Such norms, even when bolstered by potent historical myths, as in Serbian communal lore, do not, however, automatically lead all men to take up arms all the time. Borislav's father didn't. Nor apparently did his brother. Thus, the existence of such norms and legends is not a sufficient explanation for the rapid multiplication of mostly male militias in the early 1990s.

When war with Croatia broke out in 1990, many young Serbian men, often with the explicit assistance of their mothers — women whom Serbian nationalist propagandists were urging to meet the standards of the Serbian “patriot mother” — in fact fled the country to escape the increasingly dangerous and politically controversial military service.<sup>6</sup> We do not yet have a gender-curious analysis of the pre-1990 Yugoslav military, so we do not yet even know how successful or unsuccessful cultural elites and public authorities were in masculinizing soldiering and militarizing manliness. We do know, however, that in the decades prior to the recent conflict some Yugoslav women activists had complained that by so thoroughly masculinizing the idea of national service, the central federal government was diminishing women's contribution to the creation of the post-World War II nation. By raising this as a public issue, these women were not only attempting to pry military service apart from masculinity; they were also attempting to problematize the gendered historical memory of nation-building.<sup>7</sup>

Militarization of ethnic nationalism often depends on persuading individual men that their own manhood will be fully validated only if they perform as soldiers, either in the state's military or in insurgent autonomous or quasi-autonomous forces. But although the most persuasive socialization strategies succeed

because they manage to portray soldiering as a “naturally” manly activity, in reality socialization requires explicit and artificial construction, sometimes backed by coercion. Large advertising budgets allocated to defense ministries in countries that rely on volunteer militaries, and harsh penalties assigned by the state to draft-dodgers in countries dependent on conscription, both signal a degree of deliberateness in sustaining militarized notions of masculinity. One of the most interesting studies on the artificiality of the connection between manhood and soldiering comes from South Africa. Zulu men have been deliberately encouraged by leaders of the Inkatha movement to imagine their ethnicized manhood as rooted in the performance of warrior roles. Not all Zulu men have been persuaded. Furthermore, as in contemporary Serbia, the contradictions within the nationalist rhetoric over whether the ideal woman should be herself a fighter for the nation or merely a maternal supporter of the nation's male fighters have served to undermine the militarizing process.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the process by which the Serbian men in Borislav's militia initially decided to form an armed group and the process by which they recruited other men are not at all obvious. Each of these social processes calls for detailed descriptions and subtle analyses. If Borislav Herak's story is at all representative, it may well be that many Serbian men were very incompletely militarized in their manhood by their experiences as lowly conscripts in the Yugoslav state military, so they fell into militias in the early 1990s rather than self-consciously seeking them out, and that they were militarized in their own ethnicized masculinity only after they experienced physical and emotional dependence on these deeply masculinized groups.

There are yet other decisions that need investigation. What

were the decisions — and by whom were they made — that led Borislav Herak to rape sixteen Muslim Bosnian women, some of whom were murdered afterward? An ethnicized, masculinized man, even one enrolled in a group that wields violent weaponry, does not *inevitably* commit atrocities.

A blueprint for conducting this investigation may be found in another study of men who committed war atrocities. Historian Christopher Browning's curiosity was provoked by a group of working-class men from the city of Hamburg, who in the early 1940s had been conscripted by the Nazi government into a special police unit that took part in several mass murders of Polish Jewish civilians in the later years of World War II.<sup>9</sup> How should one think about these men? Is it enough to assume that they were anti-Semitic in their German identities before joining Reserve Police Battalion 101? Maybe some of these men sought service in a police unit because they hoped it would save them from performing more militarized duties that would involve killing other people. Were their own notions of themselves as manly — as longshoremen or as fathers or as heterosexuals — deliberately manipulated by their police superiors in an effort to ensure that they would kill Jewish civilians? Was that manipulation totally successful? All of these questions are relevant to our making sense of Borislav Herak's behavior in 1991–92 Bosnia.

Each question suggests that the location of a man — or woman — in an organized group such as an autonomous militia or a state police force has to be understood if the processes of militarized nationalism are to be accurately portrayed.

Christopher Browning used archival documents, postwar trial testimonies, and more recent interviews with the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 and their bureaucratic superiors to answer

the question: What would make ordinary German men shoot defenseless Jewish children, women, and men between June 1942 and early 1943? Browning's intent was not to relieve these middle-aged policemen of responsibility. Rather, he was curious to know what exactly it took to turn these men into mass killers.

According to Browning's account, these shootings were not preceded by rapes. Why not? Were the men's sexual frustrations less intense before they joined the armed unit? Was their anti-Semitism less dependent on misogyny? Did their officers construct their male subordinates' ethnic militarism with less reliance on sexuality? Browning didn't inquire. Perhaps if he or another historian looked at these policemen's killing activities in light of the puzzle surrounding Borislav Herak, these questions would be pursued.

What Browning did discover was that most of the German men in Battalion 101 had not been actively involved in politics before the war, although some had joined Nazi youth groups. He also found that, while several of their commanders were committed Nazi careerists and self-conscious anti-Semites, and while anti-Semitic messages were part of the battalion's training manuals, an anti-Semitic form of German nationalism was not deeply embedded in the personal identities of most of the men who eventually followed orders to shoot unarmed Polish Jews. What Browning uncovered instead were conflicting messages coming to these men from their officers — their immediate superior tried to give his men a nonkilling option. On the other hand, these men were socialized to kill by a steady stream of assignments devised in Berlin over several months, assignments that gradually escalated in their levels of dehumanizing harshness.

These male police troops' male superiors, however, did not as-

sume that either the troops' preconstruction notions of their masculinity or their personal commitments to German nationalism would in themselves be sufficient to guarantee that they would follow orders to shoot on command. Documents reveal that steps were taken by male superiors to lower the "psychological stress" they believed would be experienced by the men on killing assignments.<sup>10</sup> An effective commander does not leave morale to chance. Yet morale is thoroughly gendered in the minds of most military commanders. Dignity as fathers, reassurance as boyfriends, pride as sons, comradeship as fictive brothers-in-arms, satisfaction as masculinized heterosexuals — each has been weighed and employed by commanders in male military forces as different from each other as the American army in 1960s Vietnam and the German police in 1940s Poland.

From his interviews, Browning learned that the men who chose their commander's nonshooting option worried especially that they risked being ostracized by fellow policemen: "The non-shooter was potentially indicating that he was 'too good' to do such things." Rather than risk losing his comrades' valued masculine friendship, nonshooters appealed to their fellow policemen to excuse their failures of masculine toughness: "They pleaded not that they were 'too good' but rather that they were 'too weak' to kill."<sup>11</sup> But Browning is not a feminist investigator. Thus it is only toward the conclusion of his otherwise richly detailed account that he confronts directly the role played by the social construction of masculinity. Considering the pressures to shoot on command that came from within the group rather than simply from above or outside, Browning observes, "Insidiously, therefore, most of those who did not shoot only reaffirmed the 'macho' values of the majority — according to which it was a pos-

itive quality to be 'tough' enough to kill unarmed, noncombatant men, women and children — and tried not to rupture the bonds of comradeship that constituted their social world."<sup>12</sup>

Browning's study of these particular Nazi male police conscripts suggests that ungendered nationalist propaganda alone is not sufficient to transform a male recruit into a committer of atrocities. Nor did he find that mere maleness or even simply a culture of masculinity was adequate. Instead, it took a complex set of bureaucratic relationships among officers at different ranks who had not always held harmonious ideas about what policing or soldiering might rightly justify. It also took the sometimes confusing relationships between male officers and male troops. And it required the evolution of a particular brand of masculinized comradeship among peers. Each factor was infused with deliberateness.

Another study of military men that might shed light on the making of Borislav Herak is the U.S. Defense Department's 1993 "Tailhook Report."<sup>13</sup> While it does not portray violence at the extreme levels found in 1940s Poland or 1990s Bosnia, this report's authors also seek to explain what caused an all-male military unit to engage in assaults and the harassment of women. Like Browning, the Defense Department investigators looking into the Tailhook convention of 1991 concluded that a potent mixture of bureaucratic decisions and masculinized social pressure to turn men in military units into assailants was at fault. The American aircraft carrier pilots, according to this highly critical report, only adopted misogynist practices at their annual Las Vegas meeting after their hospitality suites were no longer sponsored by weapons manufacturers but instead were sponsored by different pilots' units, which had been encouraged by their commanders to look at one another as fierce competitors. Compe-



tion in fighter-raid targeting hits off aircraft carriers translated, it seems, into competition in stripping women of their clothes in hotel corridors. These pilots' naval superiors explained that they had come to believe that aircraft carrier pilots — "tailhookers" — were a particular breed of men, that they were especially brash, immature males who needed to have the opportunity to drink in excess and chase after women if they were going to perform successfully as fighter pilots. The Pentagon investigators, unfortunately, did not devote any attention to nationalism. But they did note in passing that the 1991 convention — the gathering that first attracted public criticism when one naval woman officer went to the press after her own superior officer brushed aside her charges of abuse — was held in the heady atmosphere of victory of United States military forces against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, an atmosphere that may have intensified the male pilots' peculiar form of masculine behavior.

The following excerpt is from an interview with Borislav Herak conducted by *Dallas Morning News* reporter George Rodriguez.<sup>14</sup>

Borislav: We had an order to go to restaurant Sonja in Vogosca. We were told that we were going to rape girls there.<sup>15</sup>

Journalist: Who told you this?

B: My captain. The commander of our unit. So as to increase the morale of our fighters. . . .

J: You had never raped a woman before this?

B: No, I had not.

J: And if the women had been Serbian, would you have thought it OK to rape them?



Borislav Herak went on trial in 1993, accused of raping and killing Bosnian Muslim women. Not shown here, however, are the older men in the Serbian militias who manipulated Herak's anxieties and insecurities. Systematic wartime rape is fueled by men's relations to each other. (AP Photo/Michael Stravato, courtesy AP/Wide World Photos)

B: The order was to rape them. . . .

J: What would have happened to you if you had not?

B: They would have sent me to the worst front line in Trebinje, in Herzegovina, or sent me to jail.

J: They would not have killed you?

B: I cannot say that. But I know they would have taken away the house that they had given me. . . .

J: They picked out one girl for the four of you?

B: Yes.

J: You were all in the room when she was raped?

B: Yes.

J: Didn't this seem strange to you?

B: Just a little bit.

J: Why did you do it?

B: Because I had those guys with me. I had to listen to the order, or I would have consequences if I did not. . . . We told her to take off her clothes. . . . She didn't want to. And that guy Damjanovic Mish started to beat her. . . .

J: Did he beat her with his rifle butt or his hands?

B: With his hands. And then she took her clothes off and we raped her. And she put her clothes back on, and we took her away.

J: Did you feel good about this, or guilty?

B: I felt guilty. But I didn't want to say anything or to show it to the others. . . .

J: I do not want to sound anti-Serb, because I am not. But how could you stand to fight for such people?

B: I could not return to Sarajevo to join the Bosnian army. . . .

J: What happened on the drive back after you had killed this woman? Was anything said? Did anyone laugh, or say they felt bad?

B: We never talked about that.

J: Was this good for your morale?

B: Not at all. And before that and after that I had to go to the front lines, so it was the same for me. . . .

J: Was there anything good about fighting with the Serbs? A feeling of togetherness or being part of a team? A feeling of being important?

B: The only good time was when we found schnapps, and we could drink together. Or when we had barbecues. Then we could be together and drink and eat.

J: But I think that in the same way your bosses gave you the drink and food, they gave you the women. As a way to show you were important. Is that right?

B: Yes. For me and for all the soldiers. They wanted to keep us together.

Reports of the number of women raped by male combatants during the 1991–93 war in the former Yugoslavia vary between three thousand and thirty thousand. Muslim women residing in Bosnia appear to comprise the majority of women raped by male soldiers, but human rights monitors have documented rapes of ethnic Croat and Serb women as well. Rapist men include soldiers both in the Yugoslav army and in the militias, and Serbs as well as Croats and Muslims. Yet the incidence of rape by Serbian men serving in autonomous militias fighting in Bosnia appears to be the highest.<sup>16</sup>

Even a skeletal outline of one male militia fighter's thinking about his participation in wartime rape leaves more puzzles than certainties. Borislav Herak, the twenty-one-year-old former navy conscript, a lonely textile worker from an ethnically mixed family, fought with fellow Serbs. But he seemed to weigh the possibilities of returning to Sarajevo to join their Bosnian adversaries. He did not object to raping Muslim women when commanded to do so, but he appears to have felt that male bonding was most authentic over barbecues and schnapps. He was accepted as a Serb man among Serb men, but what he cared most about was avoiding the front and holding on to the once Muslim-owned house given to him. He acted violently on numerous occasions but expressed no warrior's joy in his actions.

The gendered politics of militarized ethnic rape in Bosnia will

not end when the leaders of each faction finally call a halt to the war. There will be thousands of men who will be left to make sense of their militarized or nonmilitarized actions, including figuring out — with help from cultural elites in their own communities — whether they should have been able to protect “their” women from male opponents’ assaults and, if they could not, what this means for their own ideas about manliness and the future relations of men toward women in their ethnic groups. These women will not be mere victims, real or symbolic. There will be thousands of women who will attempt to reimagine what it means to be feminine in a postwar society, who will actively respond to pressures to restore the community’s purity or replenish their community’s pool of male fighters, who will devise ways to come to terms with having been raped or with having lived in fear of being raped.

Out of these efforts at social construction — imagining, policymaking, persuasion, and response — will come postwar societies. Borislav Herak, now convicted of murder and rape, may not be alive to take part in this process. But there will be other ordinary men and ordinary women. And their notions about masculinity and femininity will call for just as much serious attention as did that of the youth who pushed a cart by day and read pornographic magazines by night when life was peaceful in Sarajevo.