METAPHOR AND GENDER IN CONFLICT: DISCOURSE, THE BOSNIAN WAR, 
THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE, AND THE CHECHEN WARS

by

Lauren Janora-Leigh Lydic

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements 
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
Centre for Comparative Literature 
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Lauren Lydic (2010)
Metaphor and Gender in Conflict: Discourse, the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars

Lauren Lydic

Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Toronto

2010

Abstract

This study considers the ontological value of metaphor as a site of ceaseless interaction among multiple (gendered) subjects, drawing on the theoretical work of Max Black, Victor Turner, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricœur, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson. Its focus is on the particular function of metaphor, locally and internationally, in three of the “new wars” of the twentieth century. The first chapter examines how the bridge metaphor, undergirded by cultural discourses on Mostar’s Old Bridge and Ivo Andrić’s *The Bridge on the Drina*, shaped knowledge of gendered experiences in the Bosnian War. The second chapter historicizes the cockroach metaphor, which features in many representations of the Rwandan Genocide, and identifies how “the cockroach” is gendered by metaleptic reference to *ubuhake*, or pastoral clientship—which gained metaphoric significance through populist movements in the 1950s, when Saverio Naigiziki published *The Optimist*. The third chapter explores depictions of female civilians, combatants, and suicide-bombers as “prisoners,” considering this metaphor’s gendered variations from Aleksandr Pushkin’s “Prisoner of the Caucasus” to discourses on the Chechen Wars. These three metaphors are of central importance to the production
of knowledge about how and in what ways post-cold-war conflicts are gendered.

Frequently, the international community objectifies “distant conflicts” through the same metaphors that, for local agents, articulate political self-identifications and enact gendered violence. Locally-initiated metaphors, thusly circulating among multiple discourses, produce interactive sites of semantic investment and imaginary exchange. Global and regional representations in metaphor of the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars enter into common if asymmetrical networks of geopolitical and temporal interactions structured in part by human rights norms in the 1990s. By tracing the historical, cultural, and modal transformations of bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors, this study investigates how fiction, poetry, journalism, memoir, testimony, film, and performance gender knowledge of the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars.
Acknowledgments

I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Linda Hutcheon, whose generosity, enthusiasm, and insight strengthened this study. Her close readings and analytical questions invigorated my research throughout the long process of completing this dissertation.

I express hearty thanks to my committee: Ralph Bogert, Uzoma Esonwanne, and Thomas Lahusen. Since 2002, Ralph Bogert has contributed profoundly to my knowledge of Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian texts. His expertise greatly enriched this study. I also have accrued a significant intellectual debt to Uzoma Esonwanne. He has offered key insights, recommended many books, and posed challenging questions from the outset of this project. Thomas Lahusen, too, has informed this work in important ways. His thoughtful comments and queries indelibly have shaped my engagement with cultural history.

I am most grateful to my parents, who always have emphasized the power of words. I thank Asima and Huso, who have been like parents to me, and Dina and Senka, who have become my sisters. I extend heartfelt gratitude to my dear friend, Elena, with whom I have shared much—including many drafts. Ariel, Eileen, and Valerie also deserve a special mention for their steadfast and inspiring friendship.
For my grandmothers, Millie and Penny

In Loving Memory of my Tatik
Arpiné Levonian Baghdoyan 1926-2009
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgments iv

Dedication v

List of Figures xii

1. Introduction 1

   1.1. International Human Rights and Women’s Rights in the 1990s 3

   1.2. Theories of Metaphoric Interactions 7

      1.2.1. Max Black’s “Interaction Theory” 7

      1.2.2. Victor Turner’s “Social Dramas” 8

      1.2.3. Jacques Derrida’s “Tropic Supplementarity” 8

      1.2.4. Paul Ricœur’s “Intersecting Discourses” 9

      1.2.5. George Lakoff’s and Mark Johnson’s “Metaphorical Concepts” 9

   1.3. Metaphors in Conflict 10

2. The Bosnian War, Gendered Subjects, and Ontological Metaphors:

   Bridging Selves and Others through *Stari most* 11

   2.1. Introduction 11

   2.2. Imagining Ontological Foundations 17

      2.2.1. Between East and West: The Balkans and Balkanization in Cultural Geography 17

      2.2.2. Between Earth and Sky: Navigating Human Rights Law,
Religion, and Being 22

2.2.3. Between Selves and Others: Yugoslav Inscriptions 26

2.3. Finding the Bridges to Say It 34

2.3.1. Taking Sides 34

2.3.2. Mourning in the Abstract: Lost Connections 37

2.3.3. The Day *Stari most* “Died”: Anthropomorphizing the Bridge as a Casualty 43

2.3.4. Carving Faces and Footprints on the Bridge: Family Portraits 45

2.3.5. Bridge-beings in the Philosophical Tradition 49

2.4. Gendered Violence on the Bridge 54

2.4.1. Real Bodies in Figurative Discourse 54

2.4.2. War Crimes and Bridges 57

2.4.3. Holding Breath: The Bridge Dive, Circa 1992-3 63

2.5. The New Old Bridge 71

2.5.1. Reconstruction 71

2.5.2. Ceremony 76

3. The Rwandan Genocide, Metalepsis, and Gendered Practice: Deconstructing *Inyenzi* and *Ubuhake* Metaphors 81

3.1. Introduction 81

3.2. Defining “Hutu,” “Tutsi,” and “Twa”: Colonial Contact, Myth, and *Ubuhake* from 1894 until 1957 86

3.2.1. Colonial Narcissism, Dualized Identifications, and Triple Chieftaincy 86
3.2.2. The Hamitic Myth, Benegihanga, and Fraternal Origins

3.2.3. Ubuhake, Metaphor, and Colonial Law from 1923-1956

3.2.4. Ubuhake, “Inter-Marriage,” and Saverio Naigiziki’s L’optimiste: Metaphors of the 1959 Revolution

3.3. Politicizing Ubuhake and Exiled “Inyenzi”: Metaphor and Metalepsis

After the 1957 Hutu Manifesto

3.3.1. The 1957 Hutu Manifesto: Establishing Ubuhake Metaphors

3.3.2. The First Republic (1962-1973): Militarizing Inyenzi and Fetishizing the Hoe

3.3.3. The Second Republic (1973-1994): Inventing Euphemisms

3.3.4. Sexualizing the Inyenzi Metaphor and Sublimating Ubuhake

3.4. Inyenzi and Ubuhake Metaphors in International Literature on the Rwandan Genocide

3.4.1. Derrick Burleson’s “Beasts”

3.4.1.1. A Giant Cockroach

3.4.1.2. A Giant Earthworm

3.4.1.3. Chiggo

3.4.1.4. Chameleon

3.4.1.5. Mountain Gorilla

3.4.2. Gil Courtemanche’s A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali

3.4.3. Julien Pierce’s Speak, Rwanda

3.5. Survivors’ Testimonio: Esther Mujawayo and Yolande Mukagasana
4. The Chechen Wars, Gendered Prisoners, and “Black Widows”: Staging Captives in Literature and Life

4.1. Introduction

4.2. Women Journalists and Gendered Prisoners in the Chechen Wars:
   Civilians, “Criminal Mothers,” and Three *Boevichki*

4.2.1. Civilians

4.2.2. “Criminal Mothers”

4.2.3. *Boevichki*: Larissa, Sazhi, and Rosa
   4.2.3.1. Anne Nivat’s Larissa
   4.2.3.2. Barry Renfrew’s Sazhi and Olivia Ward’s Rosa

4.2.4. Khava Baraeva, the First “Black Widow”

4.2.5. “Black Widows”

4.3. Pushkin’s “Prisoner,” Shamil’s Golden Cage, and a Circassian Maiden’s Unveiling, 1822-1859

4.3.1. Real-life Captivity Narratives

4.3.2. Shamil as Captive, Captor, and Liberator

4.3.3. Populating the Literary Caucasus with Captors

4.3.4. Self-Identifications in Captivity

4.3.5. Pushkin’s Captivating Maiden

4.4. Tolstoi’s “Prisoner,” Wooden Dolls, and a “Tartar” Girl Named Dina, circa 1872

4.5. “Mountain Women,” Bride-Kidnapping, and the Prisoner Metaphor after 1922
4.5.1. How Tolstoi’s Dina became Gaidai’s Nina in 1966 218
4.5.2. The Caucasus Mountains as Seen from Kazakhstan, 1944-57 229
4.5.3. Old Memorials and New Memories after 1989 233
4.6. The First and Second Chechen Wars, 1994-6 and 1999-? 236
  4.6.1. Hostages for Ransom and Captives of (Counter-)Terrorism 237
    4.6.1.1. Bodrov’s Prisoner of the Caucasus 239
    4.6.1.2. Makanin’s “The Captured of the Caucasus” 242
  4.6.2. Mass Hostages in State Institutions 244
    4.6.2.1. “Prisoners” in Hospitals 244
    4.6.2.2. Romance in House of Fools 246
  4.6.3. Remembering Nord-Ost through Metaphor 252
    4.6.3.1. Prisoners as Actors 252
    4.6.3.2. Widows in Transit 257
    4.6.3.3. Youzik’s “Masked Ball” 259
    4.6.3.4. In Whose Eyes? 261
    4.6.3.5. Icons of Terror 262

5. Conclusion 267
  5.1. “New Wars” and Metaphors 267
  5.2. The Bridge 269
  5.3. The Cockroach 270
  5.4. The Prisoner 271
  5.5. Imaginary Interventions 272
Cases, Conventions, and Declarations Cited 273

Works Cited 274
List of Figures

**Figure 1- p. 39-** A 1994 photograph by Josef Koudelka, courtesy of Magnum Photos. This image was included in Michael Ignatieff’s 2002 article in *The New York Times Magazine*: “When a Bridge is not a Bridge.” Interestingly, Koudelka returned to Mostar in 2005 to stage a similar photograph: the artist’s hand holding up a postcard to the New Old Bridge.

**Figure 2- p. 58-** This frame narrative is from “Around Goražde, Part I” in Joe Sacco’s *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia, 1992-5* (210).

**Figure 3- p. 60-** A shot from Xavier Lukomski’s 2005 documentary “A Bridge on the Drina,” courtesy of Cobra Films (Belgium). This placid image is juxtaposed with Mevsud Poljo’s disturbing testimony.

**Figures 4 and 5- p. 74-** Two stills from Jean-Luc Godard’s 2004 film *Our Music*. Judith Lerner (Sarah Adler) takes pictures of the mostište, or bridge area, surrounding Gilles Péqueux’s project: the construction of the New Old Bridge. In this scene, both Judith’s camera and Godard’s pause on three stereotypically stoic witnesses.

**Figure 6- p. 227-** Nina, veiled in white, enacts a parodic vendetta according to 'ādat in Leonid Gaidai’s *The Female Prisoner of the Caucasus, or Shurik’s New Adventures*.

**Figure 7- p. 250-** A scene from Andrei Konchalovskii’s 2002 film *House of Fools*. Here, Zhanna, in a white, bridal hat and clownish makeup, is a foil to her new “husband,” Akhmed, in a black hat and camouflage.
Figure 8- p. 263- A widely circulated image of Kaira from NTV footage of the Moscow Theatre Siege. Dan Reed incorporated this NTV footage into his 2003 HBO TV documentary, *Terror in Moscow*, and John Keane in turn used it in his “Our women, old folk and children are dying” (see figure 9).

Figure 9 - p. 265- “Our women, old folk and children are dying” by John Keane, 2004, courtesy of Flowers East, London. Oil on linen. 212 x 282 cm. This painting is part of the series *57 Hours in the House of Culture*. 
Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

This study seeks to address the importance of metaphors in the production of knowledge about how and in what ways post-cold-war conflicts are gendered. Armed conflicts involving non-state actors — or, in Mary Kaldor’s idiom, “new wars” — proliferated in the 1990s. Since World War II and the Shoah, if not before, violent conflicts have taken a genocidal turn: the systematic murder of ‘others,’ ‘ethnic cleansing,’ and attempts at cultural erasure. By assimilating the locally-produced metaphors of genocidal discourses, global knowledge production often represents “new wars” as “ethnic conflicts”—even when they are better understood in political terms. Through transnational cultural discourses and humanitarian interventions, local sites of conflict articulate disparate global interests, including the enforcement of international human rights norms. Metaphors situate “new wars” (and their independent agents) as objects of global humanitarian concern and intervention.

---

1 Humanitarian interventions may include international peace-keeping operations, as exemplified by the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO); aid and reconstruction efforts by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs); as well as emergency responses to refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).
As international human rights have become the *lingua franca* to denounce genocide, crimes against humanity, and “ethnic violence,” the very same metaphors that appear in discourses of otherness often re-appear in representations of violent conflicts. Frequently, the international community objectifies “distant conflicts” through the same metaphors that, for local agents, articulate political self-identifications and enact gendered violence. Locally-initiated metaphors, thusly circulating among multiple discourses, produce interactive sites of semantic investment and imaginary exchange. The “international community”\(^2\) makes sense of “distant conflicts” through local metaphors. In other words, global discourses on and of conflict assimilate local discourses’ metaphors, using them as metonymic points of access to “culturally-specific” knowledges.

In local and global representations of conflict, metaphors enter into knowledge production aimed at positing causes, explaining dynamics, and proposing intervention or regulation. As displacements and extensions of meanings, metaphors always precede all genocidal discourses. Genocidal discourses, like all discourses of ‘otherness,’ depend in part on metaphor. The first three predictable if overlapping processes of any genocide—according to Gregory H. Stanton of *Genocide Watch*—are always classification, symbolization, and dehumanization. Metaphors therefore present discernible transformations from antebellum to war-time cultural discourses. These dynamic

\(^2\) By the “international community,” I mean the global power relations that have intervened in local sites of violent conflict in various ways since the 1948 ratification of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). These power relations—which include State actors, political alliances, non-governmental organizations, media systems, human rights norms, and diverse cultural discourses—often privilege the European Union and the United States over other actors, such as the African Union.
metaphors frequently gender violent conflicts and their representations. As global discourses reproduce the metaphors of genocidal discourses, they gender—implicitly or explicitly—events within, representations of, and cultural responses to “new wars.”

This study will consider global and regional representations of metaphors from the Bosnian War (1992-95), the Rwandan Genocide (1994), the First Chechen War (1994-96) and the Second Chechen War (1999-?). Certainly, these conflicts evoke multiple cultural traditions, varied geopolitics, divergent histories, numerous languages, and unique identifications—but their representations in metaphor enter into common if asymmetrical networks of geopolitical and temporal interactions structured in part by human rights norms in the 1990s. Tracing historical, cultural, and modal transformations of bridge metaphors, cockroach metaphors, and prisoner metaphors, I explore the ways in which multiple cultural discourses gender the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars.

1.1. International Human Rights and Women’s Rights in the 1990s

Raphaël Lemkin coined the term ‘genocide’ in 1944, combining genos (race) with the suffix –cide (murder). Genocide may be defined, per Article Two of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereafter, Convention), as any act “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” Inherent to the Convention’s definition are two key problems: determining intent and defining group identifications.

Legal definitions of “crimes against humanity,” unlike those of “genocide,” presuppose group identifications without stipulating intent. The Nuremberg Charter of
International Military Tribunal (IMT), in Article 6(c), defines crimes against humanity as the “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations” in peace or war. Customary international law since the Convention and the Nuremberg Charter holds human rights norms to be jus cogens and subject to universal jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, until the 1990s—when the Bosnian War (1992-95), the Rwandan Genocide (1994), and the First Chechen War (1994-96) took place—human rights norms did not change significantly to reflect global feminisms’ concerns. Of course, this omission does not mean that the violence of World War II—and other conflicts since—hasn’t been gendered in discernible ways. Svetlana Slapšak asserts that Simone de Beauvoir’s Le deuxième sexe (The Second Sex) was influenced, in part, by the Nuremberg Trials’ failure to recognize the systematic deployment of rape during World War II: “the horrors of war made de Beauvoir think and write about one horror which was not listed” in European philosophical thought “about war responsibility, genocide, violence, bare life”—that is, patriarchy (93). Regardless of whether one accepts this corollary as articulated by Slapšak, it is notable that de Beauvoir published her seminal text—which asserts “On ne naît pas femme, on le devient” (“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman”)—some six months after the ratification of the Convention.

Arguably, the Convention incorporates women’s rights into human rights as Friedrich Nietzsche or Martin Heidegger include women in their concepts of Man. However, as Catharine A. MacKinnon put it in 1993:

Human rights have not been women’s rights—not in theory or in reality, not legally or socially, not domestically or internationally. Rights that human beings have by virtue of being human have not been rights to which women have had
access, nor have violations of women as such been part of the definition of the violation of the human as such on which human rights law has traditionally been predicated. (“Rape” 183)

Only in 1993, after much international media attention in 1992, did legal responses to gendered violence in the Bosnian War (and later in Rwanda and Chechnya) situate women’s rights as human rights.

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights included violence against women in the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action (VDPA). Article 18 of the VDPA stipulates:

The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community. Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated.

The Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established in 1993, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), were the first to define rape as a crime against humanity.4

As international human rights norms define rape as a crime against humanity, cultural discourses produce knowledge of violent conflicts as inconsistently gendered.

---

3 For example, Alexandra Stiglmayer notes that “the news about the mass rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina spread like wildfire in the German media in November 1992” (161).
4 Whereas the ICTY and ICTR try individuals for committing crimes against humanity (including rape), the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which was established permanently in 1998, hears Chechen civilians’ cases against the Russian state.
When focusing on rape as a specific iteration of violence against women, cultural discourses represent violence in “new wars” as gender-specific. Yet, when arguing that rape and/or forced impregnation metonymically target an *ethnos* (rather than women), cultural discourses attempt to represent “new wars” as “de-gendered.” This inconsistency is further complicated by the global adoption of local metaphors that are ontological\(^5\) (and often masculinized), dehumanizing (and thus de-gendering), or explicitly oriented towards male gazes.

Journalists and news media shape transpositions of these purportedly “culturally-specific” metaphors into transnational discourses in significant ways. They play a significant part in *selecting* and *emphasizing* the metaphors that constitute particular conflicts for the “international community.” As mentioned previously, journalistic coverage of mass rapes in the Bosnian War precipitated changes in international human rights norms. In the context of “new wars,” it is now commonplace for journalists to publish memoirs of violent conflicts. There are numerous books by English- or French-speaking journalists who reported on and—in different ways—participated\(^6\) in the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and, to a lesser extent, the Chechen Wars. Together, all of the aforementioned historical, legal, and journalistic contingencies shape

\(^{5}\) By “ontological,” I mean the world-making and world-determining processes that organize human experiences.

\(^{6}\) This participation has taken diverse forms of which I will give only a few examples. Blaine Harden, of the *Washington Post*, reports being ordered to throw the bodies of murdered Bosniak men from the bridge into the Drina River (see Maass 9). Howard Tumbler, in his discussion of journalistic engagement and the “journalism of attachment” that emerged in the 1990s, notes that “[a] number of European journalists and documentary film makers” have testified as witnesses at the ICTY and ICTR (263). And, during the Second Chechen War, Andrei Babitsky, of Radio Liberty, was imprisoned in the Russian filtration camp of Chernokozovo (see Gordon A10).

1.2. Theories of Metaphoric Interactions

Before discussing the specific tropes that have come to represent the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars, I first will summarize briefly the theoretical currents that inform my thinking about metaphor in general. I understand metaphor to be a site of contestation, always already in conflict. Metaphor is not merely the substitution of one word for another; it transgresses the categorical order that begets it—displacing, extending, and producing meanings (Ricœur). Always manifesting a theory of similitude (and thus implicitly of difference), I assert that metaphor always potentially includes in its frame a theory of gender.

1.2.1. Max Black’s “Interaction Theory”

Max Black recognizes the word as the focus of metaphor, but asserts that its meanings depend on a broader context of interaction, or a “frame.” Black’s interaction theory, as outlined in the influential 1962 *Models and Metaphors*, defines metaphor as comprised not only of primary (or literal) and secondary (or non-literal) subjects, but also of their interactions (44-5). Interaction among metaphoric subjects—which are “systems of things” rather than “things”—“selects, emphasizes, suppresses and organizes features of the principal subject” (44-5). This interaction at once involves both clashes and rapprochements. Through such unresolved negotiations, metaphor offers “a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown” (44). In other words, metaphor facilitates a way of thinking beyond the self.
1.2.2. Victor Turner’s “Social Dramas”

Victor Turner’s 1974 *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* draws on Black’s interaction theory to argue that metaphors are “metamorphic” and “transformative,” shaping social dramas (25). Turner posits that “models and metaphors carried in the actors’ heads” produce the diachronic structure of social dramas (36), which include both institutionalized processes (such as the judicial and ritual) and ungoverned events (such as political movements) (67). Turner argues that all paradigms, which consist of the metaphoric and symbolic, “mediate for men [sic] between ideals and action in social fields full of cross-purposes and competing interests” (96). Metaphor is ontological for Turner, and the enactment of metaphors in social dramas makes ontology visible.

1.2.3. Jacques Derrida’s “Tropic Supplementarity”

Jacques Derrida’s 1972 *Mythologie blanche* (“White Mythology”) further disrupts “l’opposition classique ... de la métaphore et du concept” (314; “the classic opposition ... between the metaphor and the concept,” 263). Presenting metaphor itself as “un philosophème classique, un concept métaphysique” (261; “a classic philosopheme, a metaphysical concept,” 218), Derrida challenges any metaphysical division between language and experience. To this (unending) end, he asserts: “la métaphore semble engager en sa totalité l’usage de la langue philosophique” (249; “metaphor seems to involve the usage of philosophical language in its entirety,” 209). In other words, concepts emerge in philosophical discourse through *networks of concepts* that seem to

---

7 Throughout this study, unless otherwise marked, all translations are my own.
erase metaphysics’ own production—that is, its reliance on metaphors of the natural \((physis)\). Accounts of metaphor must appeal to the *supplémentarité tropique* (tropic supplementarity) that represents the subject’s *déhiscence* (dehiscence), or the ceaseless overflow and dislocation of ideas.

### 1.2.4. Paul Ricœur’s “Intersecting Discourses”

In the 1975 *La métaphore vive (The Rule of Metaphor)*, Paul Ricœur conceives of metaphor as the infinite intersection of metaphorical (creative) and speculative (claim-making) discourses. This discursive universe is kept in motion by an interplay of attractions and repulsions that ceaselessly promote the interaction and intersection of domains whose organizing nuclei are off-centered in relation to one another; and still this interplay never comes to rest in an absolute knowledge that would subsume the tensions. (302)

This ceaseless interaction and intersection proceed from human thought, and ultimately allow for the assertion of “vérité métaphorique” (“metaphoric truth”) and a hermeneutics of metaphor.

Ricœur writes of metaphoric truth as “tensionelle” (“tensive”), mandating the inclusion of “la pointe critique du ‘n’est pas’ (littéralement) dans la véhémence ontologique du ‘est’ (méthaphoriquement)” (321; the critical incision of the (literal) ‘is not’ within the ontological vehemence of the (metaphorical) ‘is’, 255). In other words, metaphor’s “ontological vehemence,” or world-making power, incorporates both difference and similitude, reaching beyond the figure’s primary subject.
1.2.5. George Lakoff’s and Mark Johnson’s “Metaphorical Concepts”

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their 1980 *Metaphors We Live By*, focus on metaphor as a world-determining concept. Integrating Black’s interaction theory, cognitive linguistics, and a theory of the embodied mind, they assert that “[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (3). Lakoff and Johnson argue that the experiential basis of metaphor facilitates its comprehension and representations. Accordingly, *orientational* metaphors are conceived of in relation to the body-schema of inside-outside, while *ontological* metaphors represent events, activities, emotions, and ideas as entities and substances.

1.3. Metaphors in Conflict

With these theories as my backgrounded influences, and therefore taking metaphor as a dislocated site of contestation, interaction, and intervention among multiple cultural discourses, I consider three different metaphors that have been significant to local and transnational gendered representations of the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars: respectively, the bridge, the cockroach, and the prisoner. These metaphors have specific discursive histories in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Chechnya/Russia, but the metaphors are not culturally specific in themselves. Nor are the metaphors equivalent to each other—international discourses do not appropriate them uniformly or evenly. Each metaphor, however, is “ontological,” asserting worlds of experience that are here gendered, and there de-gendered, in representations of “new wars,” as we shall now see.
Chapter 2

The Bosnian War, Gendered Subjects, and Ontological Metaphor: Bridging Selves and Others through Stari most

2.1. Introduction

During the 1992-1995 Bosnian War, the image of the bridge functioned metaphorically in complex and contradictory ways. Bridge metaphors circulated among otherwise incongruous discourses: militant nationalisms, human rights law, and domestic and international journalism. When the Hrvatsko vijeće obrane (HVO, or Croatian Defense Council) shelled Mostar’s Stari most (Old Bridge) on November 9, 1993, the act was perceived widely as a direct assault on metaphor. While this attack physically separated the predominately Croat west bank from the largely Bosniak east bank, it also enacted and redefined the metaphoric connections invested in the bridge since its sixteenth-century construction during the Ottoman Empire.

---

1 The identificatory category of “Bosniak”—meaning a Bosnian Muslim—has emerged recently. A 1948 Yugoslav census belies the earlier perception of Islam as a religion but not a national or ethnic identity, offering three choices to Muslim citizens: Serbian Muslim, Croatian Muslim, or Muslim of Undetermined Nationality (see Landry 32).

2 The Ottoman army seized control of Bulgarian, Macedonian, and southern Serbian lands in 1371; under Mehmed II, it conquered Bosnia in 1463 and Herzegovina in 1482 (Jelavich 32). Mostar’s Stari most (1566) and Višegrad’s čuprija (1567) were built at the Ottoman Empire’s height, during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) (32). Although stylistically unique (Stari most is a single arch, while čuprija has eleven masonry arches), both structures symbolize Ottoman heritage and function as the referents and even embodiments of the bridge metaphor. References to Stari most
In targeting the Old Bridge as a militarily strategic object, the HVO refuted commonalities between Croats and Bosniaks, rejecting mutual Ottoman heritage in the name of establishing Herzeg-Bosnia, a distinct territory tied to Croatian history with aspirations to a Greater Croatia. The HVO also did violence to the concept of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity), itself a figurative, ideological bridge promoted officially among ex-Yugoslav peoples under Tito. The bombing of *Stari most* emphasized the differences that the bridge once negotiated literally and metaphorically. Accordingly, the metaphoric significance of the HVO attack impacted upon the perceived “ethnic” symbolism of many sites—architectural, artistic, literary, and political—representing various groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As individuals and communities struggled to understand why Yugoslavia split apart so violently, local and international news media, literature, art, and film often emphasized the historical and symbolic connections between Mostar’s Old Bridge and Višegrad’s Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge, as fictionalized by Ivo Andrić (1892-1975) in the 1945 *Na Drini Ćuprija* (*The Bridge on the River Drina*).

The post-1993 positioning of Andrić’s *Ćuprija* as a supplement to *Stari most*—or

---

In the early Middle Ages, the western part of Herzegovina belonged to the Kingdom of Croatia; in the fourteenth century, the Croat ruler Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić bore the title “Herzog” after which the region was named.

There are two important bridges in Višegrad. One (*most*) is over the Rzav River and the other (ćuprija) is over the Drina River. The lexical differences between *most* and Ćuprija should be noted. While Ćuprija implies a hallowed memory-laden edifice, *most* requires an epithet to acquire any commemorative status. There are no Ćuprije in Serbia or Croatia; there are only mostovi. Accordingly, for Andrić, Ćuprija embodies the topic of his PhD dissertation: Ćuprija is a symbol of the cultural influence of Turkish rule on spiritual life in Bosnia-Herzegovina. After Andrić, my focus in Višegrad is on the sixteenth-century Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge. I hereafter refer to the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge as Ćuprija and Andrić’s novel as Ćuprija.
vice versa—reflects not only the novel’s central role in canonizing the bridge metaphor within Yugoslavia, but also the author’s international renown as a Nobel Prize winner. For international journalists and their audiences, previously unfamiliar with political identifications in the Balkans, Andrić’s novel offers an immediate point of cultural reference through which to focalize the Bosnian War. Writers, artists, and filmmakers appropriated Andrić’s bridge metaphors because of their perceived prominence in the Yugoslav cultural tradition. Since Ćuprija is thematically relevant to the metaphoric meanings projected onto the destruction of Stari most, numerous journalists, politicians, and academics re-read Andrić’s novel anachronistically as a prophesy of “ethnic conflict” in Bosnia-Herzegovina—and as an explanation for the bridge metaphor’s “betrayal.”

The context in which Andrić wrote Ćuprija further contributed to such anachronistic (and Orientalizing) readings; Andrić penned the manuscript in Belgrade from 1942 to 1943 (Hawkesworth, Andrić 124), when ongoing war and genocide challenged metaphorical investment in the existence anywhere of a bridge between peoples. Certainly, Andrić’s longue durée considers the shared cultural memory “located” in bridges, beginning the novel by describing the metaphorical archetype of the bridge in local folklore and tracing the “life” of Višegrad’s ćuprija from its construction in 1557 to its partial destruction in 1914. Even as Andrić’s bridge metaphor unites, it also separates. The ćuprija is a site of differentiation between Turks, Serbs, and Croats; Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity; men and women; the Ottoman Empire and Europe; nationalism and pan-Slavism;⁵ and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

---

⁵ Pan-Slavism was a Romantic, nationalist movement which aimed to unify Slavic peoples. The first Pan-Slav conference convened in Prague in 1848 (Mazower xxvi).
and *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia, a political group with which Gavrilo Princip self-identified). Both concretizing and idealizing, the bridge metaphor at once focuses life (individuals’ perspectives) and art (the narrator’s perspective). Andrić’s narrator is a “supra-individual storyteller, the modern day incarnation of the *guslar* (bard)” (Wachtel, “Imagining” 92)—but one who is particularly sympathetic to the *raja* (the Ottoman Christian peasant subjects) from Višegrad’s outlying villages. As a site of differentiation, the bridge provides coordinates for the socio-political changes it transcends, concretizing the relationship between time and space, between human history and human nature.

Andrić’s own literary identifications—and persona aggrandized by the 1961 Nobel Prize—complicate postwar readings of *Ćuprija* and/or its author as bridging Yugoslavia’s constituent groups. Andrew Baruch Wachtel emphasizes that Andrić “was a lifelong proponent of an inclusive Yugoslav nationalism” (“Imagining” 83). Of all the writers featured in Yugoslav textbooks during the 1950s and 1960s, Andrić was the only one not identified as belonging to a specific constituent group (Wachtel, *Making* 180).

But, as Ralph Bogert observes in “Ivo Andrić Out of Exile: Claiming and Reclaiming a Croatian Writer,” there is often a difference between self-identification (in Andrić’s case as a Roman Catholic Croat living first in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later in Serbia) and categorization by others (in Andrić’s case as Yugoslav, Croat, Serb, etc.).

Regardless of how a reader identifies Andrić, or perceives his narrator’s allegiances, *Ćuprija* elucidates how the bridge acquires additional meaning through acts

---

6 During his youth, Andrić participated actively in the *Mlada Bosna* movement (Wachtel, “Imagining” 83), an association for which he was imprisoned and exiled during WWI (in the immediate aftermath of Princip’s June 28, 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne).
of readerly and writerly interpretation. Andrić details the processes of meaning-making that Heidegger categorized as building (*Bauen*), dwelling (*Wohnen*), and thinking (*Denken*). The building of the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge is dwelling, being-in-the-world, for Andrić’s characters. The bridge creates their world. To use Heidegger’s terms, the bridge “gather” the landscape, organizing particular understandings of nature, politics, and ritual. In Andrić’s Ćuprija, each group believes itself to be seeing the bridge in a way that is empirically true, when in fact *seeing-as*:

> svaki je o kasabalijskih učenjaka na svoj način čitao i tumačio Badijev *tarih* na kamenoj ploči, koji je kao svaki tekst, bačen jednom u javnost, stajao tu, večit u večjom kamenu, zauvek i nepovratno izložen pogledima i tumačnjima svih ljudi, mudrih i ljudi, zlih i dobronamernih. (78)

Thusly showing how political texts are layered onto the bridge’s Turkish inscription, Andrić provides a figure for how metaphor acquires cumulative meanings. His characters read the chaos of WWI as Andrić’s contemporaries might have applied Ćuprija’s metaphors to the events of WWII — or as a twenty-first-century reader might apply Ćuprija’s metaphors to the events of the Bosnian War, or *vice versa*. The bridge provides an enduring artifact that records all political transformations in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the end of the Ottoman Empire.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, as elsewhere, bridge metaphors aptly describe the mediation, creation, or rejection of difference among individuals and groups. They connect, transcend, and divide individuals, cultures, places, historical periods, and ideas.
Bridges metaphors are so pervasive that one may use, for example, the English “to bridge,” the French “jeter un pont,” and the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian “premostiti” without consciously referring to a material structure such as *Stari most.* Andrić tellingly depicts the people of Višegrad as dependent on the bridge metaphor: “Upravo, kad se kaže ‘veže,’ to je isto toliko tačno kao kad se kaže: sunce izlazi izjutra da bismo mi ljudi mogli da vidimo oko sebe ida svršavamo potrebne poslove” (10; “to say ‘linked’ was just as true as to say that the sun rises in the morning so that men may see around them and finish their daily tasks,” 13-4). Indeed, the bridge is what Lakoff and Johnson define as “a metaphorical concept” (6). The bridge translates bodily acuities into a theory of knowledge that organizes lived—and, I will argue, gendered—experiences.

From the 1993 destruction of the Old Bridge to its 2004 reconstruction as *Novi stari most* (New Old Bridge), Mostar’s *most* and Višegrad’s *ćuprija* functioned in international news media as metonyms for the Bosnian War and represented a unified, tolerant Bosnia-Herzegovina in ex-Yugoslav fiction. Although bridge metaphors occur in multiple cultures, these invocations of the *most* and *ćuprija* were characterized as specifically and uniquely Bosnian—often implying or even stating that Bosnia-Herzegovina is particularly amenable to “bridging.”

---

7 To the ancient Romans, the Black Sea was known as “the bridge.” Andrić—during his internal exile in Travnik during WWI—entitled his meditative *Ex ponto* after Ovid’s *Epistulae ex Ponto.* By thusly identifying with Ovid’s banishment to the shores of the Black Sea, Andrić contemplates the exilic condition of humanity. Andrić links the *pons,* the Balkans, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—*metaphorically* connecting with the bridge—as-Bosnia (not with Bosnia-as-bridge, which is an orientalizing misinterpretation of Andrić). Thus, in Andrić’s later *Ćuprija,* many characters—including the builder, Mehmed Paša Sokolović, and the bridge’s *mutevelia* (caretaker), Ali Hodža—suffer the very internal exile that the *ćuprija* was built to transcend.
2.2. Imagining Ontological Foundations

2.2.1. Between East and West: The Balkans and Balkanization in Cultural Geography

The bridge metaphor has accumulated dynamic material referents and connotative meanings contingent on Bosnia-Herzegovina’s specific geographical location in the Balkans. Most generally, the “Balkans” is a bridge in geopolitical discourse. Maria Todorova, in her seminal *Imagining the Balkans*, asserts that the region has “always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroad” (16). She reprises the bridge metaphor’s usage in historical scholarship, travel writing, literature, and political decrees on and of the region. Dušan Bjelić agrees in *Balkan as Metaphor*: “For the Ottomans ... [and] Western colonial cultures, the Balkans formed the ‘bridge’ between the East and the West” (15). Mark Mazower likewise describes the historical perception of the Balkans as “an intermediate culture zone between Europe and Asia—in Europe but not of it” (xxxiv). Discourses on the Balkans change according to political transformations in Europe, but maintain this concept of intermediateness.

The term Balkan acquired more frequent usage as the Austro-Hungarian empire perceived the rise of pan-Slavism during the 1880s as a threat to its governance (see Mazower xxvi). “Balkan” did not acquire pejorative connotations until the outbreak of WWI, after Gavrilo Princip (1894-1918) assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

---

8 Maria Todorova argues that the term “Balkans,” which derives from the Persian word *balk* (mud) and the Turkish diminutive suffix –an, entered into cultural geography with the arrival of the Ottomans, who first applied the term to the mountain range once known as Haemus (22).
(1863-1914) on Sarajevo’s *Latinski most* (Latin Bridge). As war spread throughout Europe, balkanization began “to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units,” becoming “a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian” (Todorova 3).

Fears about the “Balkanization of Europe” persisted after World War I. The term entered into American usage when, on 20 December 1918, the *New York Times* predicted “the Balkanization of Europe” (Todorova 33). By the early 1920s, the Yugoslav avant-garde movement of *zenitizam* (zenitism) addressed the “Balkanization” of Europe as the degeneration of Western Europe. Ljubomir Micić (1895-1971), who published *Zenit* (*Zenith*) from 1921-1926, advocated for the “barbarogenius,” a “decivilizer” of Europe, who would introduce new ideas from the “irrational Balkans” and re-invigorate post-World War I Europe.9 Balkanization remained a pejorative term, applied liberally to diverse African conflicts during and after independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s.

Balkanization again became an important self-designation in the Yugoslav context by 1990, when the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje* (*Liberation*) lamented a return to the cultural space Micić once celebrated: “we are again becoming the Balkans, we are sinking into it” (qtd. in Todorova 53). International news media, writers, and artists

---

9 Aleš Erjavac characterizes the barbarogenius as “Eastern meta-cosmic type of superman” (42), while Dubravka Djurić defines it as a “Balkan” adaptation of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, to whom “Man” is a bridge (69). It should be emphasized, however, that the barbarogenius is not a balkanizer of Europe. Micić did not advocate Europe’s balkanization, but its reinvigoration by exposure to fresh “Balkan” ideas. Micić was equally against all socio-political revolutionary agendas (internationalist communist as well as nationalistic fascistic).
engaged this negative discourse of balkanization throughout the 1990s. Most famously, perhaps, Emir Kusturica’s 1995 *Podzemlje* (*Underground*) portrays a network of smoke-filled tunnels leading from Germany to a clearly signed “Balkans,” where blood drips down into the earth during the Bosnian War. Throughout the Bosnian War, in many cultural artifacts, balkanization connoted the destruction of bridges among Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—as well as between Europe and the Balkans.

Prior to, during, and after the Yugoslav wars of succession,10 bridge metaphors remain more resonant in the terrain and socio-political climate of Bosnia-Herzegovina than elsewhere in the Balkans. Of all Balkan territories, Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular has been perceived as between the East and the West in location, religion, politics, and nationality (or “ethnicity”). This symbolic mapping of the Balkans and Bosnia is “a regime of knowledge production, ... relying on figurative language and metaphor” (Bjelić 15). The concept of the bridge always locates the Balkans in relation to an elsewhere. After Said’s *Orientalism*, Bjelić terms this symbolic mapping *Balkanism*, a discourse “organized around a sense of binaries (rational/irrational, center/periphery, civilization/barbarism) arranged hierarchically so that the first sign ... is always primary and definitional of the second ... , and so that the second is always a grammatical, internal effect on the first” (3). Europe becomes primary to and definitional of the Balkans, which

---

10 This term includes all the wars of succession fought in the territory of the former Yugoslavia: the 1991 Slovenian War of Independence, the 1991-1995 Croatian War of Independence, the 1992-1995 Bosnian War, and the Kosovo War (1998-1999). It also includes the Preševo Valley Conflict (1999-2001) and the Macedonian War of 2001, both of which were fought between state actors and Albanian rebel groups, respectively the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA, or *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*) and the National Liberation Army (NLA, or *Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*) (2001).
has a grammatical, internal effect on Europe. This relationship renders the Balkans a facile site for European socio-political investment, a “hunting ground for strong feelings, thrilling political speculations, moral recuperation, and real political engagement” (Ugrišić, “Balkans”). Constructed discursively as always in between East and West, in Europe but not of it, the Balkans functions symbolically as a screen onto which various beliefs may be projected and explored.

Dubravka Ugrišić confronts this screen as she finds herself to be a citizen of a “small Balkan country” that no long exists. She attributes binaries to the categories of Western and Eastern Europe: “organized-disorganized, tolerance-intolerance, civility-primitiveness, rational consciousness-mythic consciousness, predictability-unpredictability, citizen-nationality, and so on” (“Zagreb” 251). Ugrišić imagines her “sad Eastern Europe” as her “sister”; they “look at each other as if in a mirror” (“Zagreb” 251). While this feminized Eastern Europe sits at Ugrišić’s café table and “talks with its eyes,” the Balkans—at least to the Europeans and Americans she describes—remains a genderless abstraction “down there,” where there are “mounds of deaths” (“Zagreb” 251-2).

During the Bosnian War, as the Balkans widely was characterized as the site of the first genocide on European soil since 1945, the discourse of humanitarian intervention allowed for the exploration of neo-Orientalist sentiment in a “barbaric region.” Europe and North America attempted to define their roles as arbiters and enforcers of international human rights law through their participation in UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force), the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR), the European
Union Force (EUFOR, which replaced SFOR in 2004), and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Discourses that seek to explain identitarian violence through theories of ancient tribal antagonisms—such as Robert Kaplan’s influential “New Barbarism” thesis—regressed the “Balkans” to an “uncivilized” time of “ethic hatreds.”

The “New Barbarism” thesis conflates Bosnia-Herzegovina’s discursive location between “East” and “West” with reductive and essentializing categories—Bosniak (Muslim), Croat (Catholic), and Serb (Orthodox)—rather than community affiliations and political identifications. As Mary Kaldor writes:

The Balkans, it is argued, situated at the confluence of civilizations and caught historically between the shifting borders of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, has always been characterized by ethnic division and rivalries, by ancient hatreds that persist just beneath the surface. These divisions were temporarily suppressed during the communist period, only to burst forth again in the first democratic elections. (36)

This ethnicizing focus provides a conceptual model for (erroneously) characterizing many post-Cold War conflicts as eruptions of “ethnic hatreds,” rendering the Bosnian War a paradigmatic example of 1990s warfare (see Kaldor 33). Within this framework, “Balkanization” is roughly synonymous with a return to “tribalism” (see Kaldor 36).

In this meaning, “Balkanization” maps regions of conflict, defining the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Africa—to name a few examples—as “bad neighborhoods” in the world economy and society (Kaldor 116). This imaginary mapping does not take

---


12 Kaldor, by her own admission, adopts the term “Bad Neighborhoods” from Myron Weiner. Numerous journalists have appropriated this concept and conflated it with intimate violence. Many English-language titles suggest that “bad neighbors” populate
into account self-perceptions of cultural or geographic distance from other “neighbors in conflict.” In today’s globalized political imaginary, all such “bad neighborhoods” occupy an in-between space because their deviance from legal norms is voiced in the self-referential discourse of “good neighborhoods”—that is, human rights. Jürgen Habermas polemicizes that human rights is “the only language in which the opponents and victims of murderous regimes and civil wars can raise their voices against violence, repression, and persecution, against injuries to their human dignity” (153). In this language, the bridge can become a facile, ontological metaphor for inviolable human rights that are *erga omnes*, owed to all.

### 2.2.2. Between Earth and Sky: Navigating Human Rights Law, Religion, and Being

As the discourse of Balkanism situates Bosnia-Herzegovina as a bridge between the broad categories of East and West, that of International Human Rights connects all persons, all communities, and all “neighborhoods” according to a shared “humanness,” an ontological bridge. Naming and preserving artifacts that represent this “humanness,”

---

13 A scene in Danis Tanović’s 2001 film *Ničija zemlja (No Man’s Land)* illustrates this divergence between self-representations and global perceptions. While guarding a Bosniak trench sometime in 1994, a soldier distractedly reads a newspaper article about the genocide in Rwanda. He declares: “Da vidiš ... sranje u Rwandi!” (What a mess in Rwanda!). His friend replies, with his gun still pointed at the no man’s land: “Ti stvarno nisi normalan!” (You’re really nuts!).

14 This discourse evokes the Heideggerian conception of neighborliness as intrinsic to building and dwelling: “a covert trace of it [the real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell] has been preserved in the German word *Nachbar*, neighbor. [...] The Nachbar is the *Nachgebür, the Nachgebauer*, the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby” (Heidegger 145-6).
the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage program identifies select natural and/or cultural sites as belonging to all humanity. UNESCO includes Stari most and čuprija on its current list of 890 sites (“World Heritage List”). Certainly, both bridges are important Ottoman constructions, designed by Mimar Sinan. Like all World Heritage sites, they constitute “our legacy from the past,” as well as “what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.” Together, Stari most and čuprija symbolize the universalized human experience that International Human Rights Law seeks to protect as a preemptory norm, or jus cogens.

As Stari most enters into the symbolic vocabulary of what it means to be human, representing the ideals of International Human Rights, it engages the foundational self-referentiality and metaphoricity of the law. Even as all human beings have inherent and inviolable dignity, secular explanations for human rights are often inadequate. Ontological metaphors can avoid defining human experience precisely, asserting whether human rights were discovered or created, or singling out a source of human rights: religion, “natural law,” or a majority human creation. Seen on this onto-theological axis, the concept of the bridge intercedes between actual events and legal or religious principles.

Since Stari most’s construction in the sixteenth century, writers have contemplated the significance of its vertical axis between the earth and the sky, in conjunction with its horizontal one, between East and West. In “Gazel o Mostaru” (“Poem on Mostar”), for example, Derviş-paša Bajezidagić (c. 1560-1603) describes
Mostar as “druga Sirija” (another Syria) and “rajska bašća” (heavenly [or paradisical] garden) (21). *Stari most* not only brings the East to the West, but also it here embodies Allah’s will and human willingness.

Gauging the spiritual course of human life, Medžazi (d. 1610) considers *Stari most* as “kompas svijeta” (26; the world’s compass). The bridge is a monument to faith and to human accomplishment. The bridge-as-compass instills religious awareness, directing the human gaze to the sky: “[p]ošto je stvarni most slika (mosta na onom svijetu)” (26; the real bridge is a picture [of the bridge in the next world]). *Stari most* is a reminder of *as-sirāt*, the hair-thin and sword-sharp bridge over which observant Muslims cross over hell and ascend to paradise. (26)

Thusly connecting the earthly to the heavenly, *Stari most* represents what is to be and what has been. It is “most iznad i ispod koga teče voda” (Čelebi 464; the bridge under and above which water flows). By day, it is “dug[š]aren[š]” (Bajezidagić 21; a dappled rainbow). By night, it is heaven’s vault, “po kojem zvjezdice hodaju svojim putem” (qtd. in Hasanbegović 44; along which where little stars are walking). The bridge rises into the heavens, framing and holding stars beneath its arch. The bridge encircles the sky and the Neretva, like “luk duge koji se uzdiže do Kumove Slame i pruža s jedne litice na drugu” (Čelebi 464; the arch of a rainbow that rises to the Milky Way and extends

---

15 Bajezidagić uses redundancy for emphasis, as the Turkish čennet (like the Arabic jannat) means both paradise and garden.

16 Rendered in Turkish as *sirat köprüsü* or in Bosnian as *sirat-ćuprija*, this bridge stands between (and differentiates between) *jahannam* (çehennem, or hell) and *jannat* (çennet, or heaven).

17 Evliya Čelebi (Evlja Čelebi, 1611-82) recounts his travels throughout Ottoman Europe in his 1664 *Seyahatnâme* (*Putopis* or *Travelogue*).
from one cliff to another). Medžazi concludes: “Budući da mu je glava na nebu, a noga na zemlji/ Nije čudo sto mu je jedan kraj na istoku a drugi na zapadu” (25; Since his head is in the sky and his legs on the ground./It is no wonder that he has one side in the East and the other in the West). In the Sufi tropes of Bajezidagić’s, Čelebi’s, and Medžazi’s texts, the bridge navigates between the secular and the religious, the earth and the sky.

The bridge is an ontological metaphor in many other religious and secular traditions, too. For example, Heidegger imagines the bridge as a vault that organizes human experiences, gathering the landscape around the bridge: “Even where the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more” (151). Heidegger’s reverence for the bridge recalls the Pontifex Maximus, the greatest bridge-maker, who was the high priest in the early Roman period. Writing in 2000, Rusmir Mahmutčehajić (1943-) uses this Latin title to assert humanity’s universal purpose: being “pontifex na mostu između Zemlje i Neba (93; “a pontifex on the bridge between the Earth and the Sky”). All people are mostari, bridge keepers, and every ontology must “bridge” the relationships among Being and the World.

Andrić positioned himself as a mostar when he became a nobelovac (Nobel recipient) in 1961. Describing the artist as a mostar, he located himself “beyond the imaginary demarcation line between past and present”—yet “eye to eye with the human condition” (“Banquet Speech”). Indeed, Andrić’s fictional treatment of the real Višegrad

---

18 Catholicism later assimilated the title Pontifex and, from it, derived Pontiff. Referring to the unifying head of the Roman Catholic Church, “pontiff” means “bridgemaker.”
19 Mostar takes its name from the bridge keeper, mostar.
ćuprija theorizes real, lived experiences and categories of being through the bridge metaphor. Andrić identifies selves and others in relation to the ćuprija and the mostište, the bridge-area. Like Heidegger, Andrić considers how the bridge is ontological, always producing and organizing worlds.

In sixteenth-century poetry about Stari most, Andrić’s Ćuprija, and continental philosophy, bridges not only link East and West, but also connect the earthly to the transcendent through metaphor. Real and metaphoric bridges embody the discursive effects and experiential instances of diverse philosophical concepts. The metaphorical concept of the bridge could be seen as a figure for the processes of metaphor itself, as well as all language. According to Max Black’s interaction theory, metaphor is a bridge wherein two concepts interact at the level of the word and the phrase to produce meaning (38). The bridge metaphor’s interactions, as we shall see, often specifically reveal the inscription of gendered difference in ontology and in women’s experiences.

2.2.3. Between Selves and Others: Yugoslav Inscriptions

Through the bridge metaphor’s cumulative meanings and ontological associations, the destruction of Stari most at once signifies balkanization and globalization, human rights abuses and ethical obligations, as well as intolerance and pluralism. During the Bosnian War, when adherents to the “New Barbarism” thesis sought evidence of “ancient hatreds” momentarily repressed by socialism, the bridge metaphor represented negotiations among diverse communities within the former Yugoslavia. As the discourses of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Interventionism romanticized lost Yugoslav “multiculturalism,” wartime “identity
“politics” came to be understood as the “betrayal” of a bridge among Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs fighting in the Bosnian War—even though other identifications arguably had been as or more important, especially before the 1980s (when nationalist politics became more prominent after Josip Broz Tito’s death).20

Certainly, *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity)—the slogan under which *partizani* (partisans)21 fought during World War II—unified Yugoslavia’s entities while simultaneously differentiating them through brotherhood (Wachtel, *Making* 132). The partisans, who merged into the Yugoslav army in 1945, were valorized in Yugoslav historiography. At the same time, the terms *усташе*22 and *ћетници*23 became historically-loaded insults for Croats and Serbs. Svetlana Slapšak interprets this political focus as consciously avoiding the ethnicization of responsibility for war crimes during WWII:

---

20 Within Yugoslavia, ethno-national groups included Albanians, Bulgarians, Croats, Hungarians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Muslims (who, in today’s terminology, are Bosniaks) Roma, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, and Slovenes. Six constituent socialist republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) and two socialist autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) comprised Yugoslavia.

21 Under Tito’s leadership, the partisans—the People’s Liberation Army (*Narodno-oslobodilačka vojska*, or NOV) and the Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia (*Partizanski odredi Jugoslavije*, or POJ)—formed a resistance movement against the Axis forces and established a provisional government in Jajce, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1943. In the 1960s, partisan films emerged as a distinct genre of Yugoslav cinema. Stevan Bulajić’s *Bitka na Neretvi* (*The Battle on the Neretva*) and Hajrudin Krvavac’s *Most* (*The Bridge*) exemplify the genre, each glorifying the partisans in part through bridge metaphors.

22 The *усташе* were “put in charge” of the *Nezavisna država Hrvatska* (NDH, the Independent State of Croatia) in 1941 by the Axis powers. Throughout WWII, they were actively involved in killing, converting, and deporting Serbs, Roma, and Jews.

23 *Četnici* (Chetniks) were officially known as the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, or *Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini* (JVUO). They were royalist resistance fighters, who fought both Germans and *усташе*, as well as partisans who were communist. (In earlier history, the term *ћетници* referred to guerilla fighters opposing the Turks.)
The inter-ethnic atrocities of WWII in Yugoslavia, including the extermination of Jews (by local quisling forces in Croatia and Serbia, by Hungarian and German occupation forces in Vojvodina and Macedonia) and of Serbs and Roma in Croatia (especially in the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia), were an important issue of the post-war communist cultural production (education, literature, film, theatre). In an attempt to avoid the allocation of ethnic guilt to any nation in the new multi-ethnic state, the focus was placed on the individual, class, and ideological aspects of responsibility. (92)

The discourse of “brotherhood and unity” bridged partizani, ustaše, and četnici—at least officially—before nationalistic revisionism overtook this multi-faceted concept of wartime responsibility. (Of course, the history of partizani, ustaše, and četnici is much more nuanced than explored here, but it should suffice for our study of the bridge metaphor to say that these three groups featured prominently in Yugoslav [counter-]discourses and deferred the nationalization of blame for WWII atrocities.) By the 1980s, policies that ostensibly fostered “brotherhood and unity” effectively served to institutionalize “ethnic” differences.

Furthermore, a policy of “brotherhood” marginalized the political relevance of sisterhood—even as Yugoslav legislation sought to eradicate gender inequality.\(^2\)\(^4\) Official socialist policies framed gender inequality as a byproduct of class inequality (deriving from the structure of pre-socialist society), minimizing any continued need for feminist action.\(^2\)\(^5\) Because state socialism was ostensibly synonymous with women’s

\(^2\)\(^4\) Yugoslav women received universal suffrage in 1946, and article twenty-four of Yugoslavia’s first post-WWII constitution declared: “Women enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of state economic and social life” (Ramet 94).

\(^2\)\(^5\) It should be noted that proto-feminisms had begun developing in South-Eastern Europe by the 1860s. In 1871, just two years after its original English publication, a translation of J.S. Mill’s *The Subjugation of Women* became available in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (see Ramet 93). Women began to form political organizations around this time. For example, in 1895, the nationalist *Srpska demokratska stranka* (SDS, Serbian Democratic Party), created an affiliated women’s organization (see Ramet 93).
emancipation, independent feminisms of the 1950s and 1960s were seen as “virtually synonymous with [national] disloyalty” (Jancar 209). By the early 1990s, this patriarchal attitude inflected militant nationalisms as media denounced women authors, such as Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić, and Dubravka Ugrešić, as “insufficiently patriotic” “Croatian Witches” who “rape” Croatia (Slapšak 94). As militant nationalisms became increasingly prominent discourses in early 1990s Yugoslavia, they often projected an imaginary screen of collective guilt onto women, displacing and gendering culpability for the war crimes of WWII (Slapšak 100). Gendering discourse in this way allowed for the displacement of frustrations which were newly defined in “ethnic” or “national” terms.

Negotiating these aforementioned political and gendered contingencies, as well as many others, Miško Šuvaković imagines Yugoslavia’s histoires croisées (entangled histories) as “impossible histories” of “conflict, flux, and redefinition” among “kindred yet opposed ... communities,” “[a]ll the transcendent political models of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” and “voices for and against a real state, a real culture, or a virtual Yugoslavia” (3). Bridges, in this reading, (dis)connect many communities, ontologies, and selves. Within Yugoslavia, political discourse assigned Bosnia-Herzegovina the most “impossible” of histories: being a bridge.

Perceived as best representing Yugoslav pluralism, Bosnia-Herzegovina often was characterized as a bridge. Indeed, Wachtel asserts that the bridge is a metonym of Bosnia-Herzegovina (83). Geographically at the center of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina often was imagined as bridging Serbia and Croatia, yet of neither. While all Socialist Republics in the former Yugoslavia had diverse populations,
Bosnia-Herzegovina was the most “mixed,” with the 1991 population consisting of self-identifying Muslims (43.7 per cent), Serbs (31.4 per cent) and Croats (17.3 per cent) (see Kaldor 34). Architectural diversity often symbolizes Bosnian pluralism: the integration of Ottoman and Austrian architecture, as well as the proximity of mosques, synagogues and churches. In the Western imagination, the incorporation of Mostar’s Stari most and Višegrad’s Ćuprija, two artifacts of Ottoman heritage in this “multicultural landscape,” likewise characterizes Bosnia-Herzegovina as a bridge.

Contemplating Bosnia-Herzegovina’s liminality in multiple historical discourses, Meša Selimović (1910-82) writes: “Mi nismo ničiji. Uvijek smo na nekoj međi, uvijek nečiji miraz. [...] Živimo na razmeđu svjetova, na granici naroda, uvijek krivi nekome” (18; We belong to nobody. We are always on some boundary line, always the dowry of someone. [...] We have been living on the borders of worlds, on the boundary of peoples, always guilty to someone). The bridge, elliptically evoked here by the concept of the in-between, represents the succession of Empires, Kingdoms, and Republics that followed the fall of the Ottoman Empire. As in Andrić’s Ćuprija, the bridge metaphor speaks more broadly of how an enduring artifact can reflect, alter, and preserve its environment while organizing the interactions of diverse individuals and groups.

Further explaining the bridge metaphor’s relationship to Yugoslavia, Miroslav

26 Dževad Karahasan thusly describes his Marindvor neighborhood of Sarajevo in Dnevnik selidba (Sarajevo, Exodus of a City). The prime example, however, is found in Andrić’s “Pismo iz 1920” (“Letter from 1920”), a short tale in which the narrator encapsulates Bosnia in the sounds (bells, clock-striking) of the Catholic cathedral, the Orthodox church, and the Grand Mosque standing practically side by side along the Miljacka River in Sarajevo.
Krleža (1893-1981) writes to American readers in 1962:

When we say that our country is a bridge between East and West, we state a tragic truth and one which describes the dominant feature in our history and the political and cultural formula of its present mission. We are an Adriatic and Mediterranean country, western European by tradition, where Latin was a living language until the revolution of 1848. But we have also been hypnotized by the century-old tradition of Slavic solidarity, by the cultural and national unity of all the Slavs with Russia, the dream of Orthodox Mother Moscow which we cherished for centuries. (76)

Post-WWII international discourse incorporates the bridge metaphor into mappings of Eastern Europe and Western Europe, wherein Yugoslavia is between the two after it split with the Soviet Union in 1948. As Yugoslavia pursued its own identity at home and “between curtains” on the international stage, the bridge metaphor also became a representation both of the country’s past and its unification. Both the Višegrad čuprija and Stari most were symbols of Yugoslavia: its history, its culture, and its socialist ideals.

Within these overlapping cultural semiospheres, bridge metaphors also signify relationships among Yugoslavia’s constituent groups. For example, in the 1977 Zapis o zemlji (A Note on the Country), Neđo Šipovac (1938-) characterizes Stari most (and, as a secondary subject, Yugoslavia) as a bridge built—along with “kultur[a] tolerantnih međunacionalnih, čak međucivilizacijskih odnosa” (a culture of tolerant, international, even intercivilizational relationships)—by “naši” (our people) (169). He also lauds the bridge as “spomenik zajedništva, muslimanskog, srpskog, i hrvatskog” (169; a monument


of Muslim, Serbian, and Croatian fellowship) written by “vakat” (time). Šipovac asserts that these monuments are always under construction. They are built “svakog dana, bratskom ljubavlju, širokim obrazovanjem i kulturom” (169; “every day, with brotherly love, broad education, and culture,” 169). Such monuments are essential to Herzegovina, to SR Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to Yugoslavia because of their power to unite “brothers.”

Reformulated as an entreaty to the international community (rather than to Yugoslav “brothers”), this discourse of monument-building became prominent during the Bosnian War. For example, in a 1994 speech the United Nations General Assembly, Alija Izetbegović (1925-2003) pleaded:

What we call “Bosnia” is not merely a small piece of land in the Balkans. For many of us, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only a homeland: it is an idea; it is a belief that peoples of different religions, different nationalities and different cultural traditions can live together. Were this dream to be forever buried, were this idea of tolerance among the peoples of the area to be irretrievably lost, the guilt would lie not only with those who have been relentlessly killing Bosnia with their mortars for over 30 months now but also with many of the powerful elsewhere in the world who could have helped yet have chosen to do otherwise.

Izetbegović not only locates the fate of Bosnia-Herzegovina indirectly in the metaphor of the bridge, but also asserts that Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a referent of the bridge metaphor, belongs to the world.

This political rhetoric identifies the Ottoman bridges of Mostar and Višegrad as objects of what the wartime Bosnian Ambassador to France called a “topographie du destin” (Kovač 54; topography of destiny). Similarly, for the HVO, Krešimir Šego

---

27 Vakat comes from the Turkish vakat. The writer’s use of this word for “time,” as opposed to the more Slavic vr(ij)eme, seems to emphasize Stari most’s Ottoman beginnings.
memorializes as a bridge the “[g]raditeljski rukopis Mostara” (7; “architectural manuscript of Mostar,” 24). When political discourses locate Stari most and čuprija in this imaginary landscape, the bridges are conflated as two material representations of a singular system of metaphors, wherein Bosnia-Herzegovina is an idea.

Sarajevo, especially, was represented as epitomizing the international community’s perception of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an idea: the semantic outcome of the interaction between the bridge metaphor’s subjects. Writing as Sarajevo remained under siege, Jean-Luc Nancy considers the metaphoric terrain:

> ‘Sarajevo’ est devenu l’énoncé d’un système complet de réduction à l’identité. Ce n’est plus un signal sur un chemin, ni dans une histoire…. C’est un point sans dimension sur un diagramme de souveraineté, un repère orthonormé sur ordinateur balistique et politique, une cible immobilisée dans un viseur, et c’est le chiffre même de l’exactitude de la visée, c’est la visée pure d’une essence. Quelque part, un pur Sujet déclare qu’il est le Peuple, le Droit, l’Etat, l’Identité au nom de laquelle ‘Sarajevo’ doit être purement et simplement identifié en tant que cible. (171)

> ‘Sarajevo’ has become the expression of a complete system for the reduction to identity. It is no longer a sign on the way, or a sign in history…. It is a dimensionless point on a diagram of sovereignty, an ortho-normative gauge on a ballistic and political computer, a target frozen in a telescopic sight, and it is the very figure of exactitude taking aim, the pure taking aim of an essence. Somewhere, a pure Subject declares that it is the People, the Law, the State, the Identity in the name of which ‘Sarajevo’ must be identified purely and simply as a target. (145)

The image of the bridge becomes an icon of these essentialized Identities. “Urbicide,” whether in Sarajevo, Mostar, or elsewhere, posits a city’s universalized (but implicitly or explicitly masculinized) Subject—and the bridge provides visual representation for both this Subject and “urbicide.”

> Violence foregrounds the bridge’s reference to essentialized categories of
ethnicity. Reacting to the JNA and the destruction of the city, Krešimir Šego writes in the HVO-published monograph *Mostar '92: Urbicide* (*Mostar '92: Urbicide*): “u njegovo ljudsko biće zasijecao je nož, s jednim ciljem da se zatre hrvatsko i muslimansko biće” (7; “a knife cut into its human being with the singular aim of exterminating the Croatian and Moslem being,” 24). The city—whether Mostar or Sarajevo— is anthropomorphized, ethnicized, and mourned as a person. In this ethnicizing universalism, the bridge metaphor *purports* to represent both Bosniaks and Croats, as well as men and women. In fact, however, this usage of the bridge metaphor invents and stabilizes ethnicized masculine identities. Dubravka Ugrešić observes: “Rat donosi destrukciju identiteta, ali i brzu mogućnost za njegovo stjecanje” (*Kultura* 96; “The war carries with it the destruction of identity, but also a rapid ... possibility of acquiring one,” *Culture* 82).

Metaphor, as an interactional trope whose innovative use frames—rather than overwrites—earlier historical meanings, is instrumental in the wartime acquisition of gendered in-group and out-group identities.

### 2.3. Finding the Bridges to Say It

#### 2.3.1. Taking Sides

During the Bosnian War, “Balkanizing” invocations of Yugoslav “multiculturalism”\(^{28}\) foreground the bridge metaphor’s polysemy. By identifying differences among Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, bridge metaphors can serve to assign

---

\(^{28}\) As Aida Hozic observes: “Sarajevo’s multiculturalism—a term that before the war had little meaning in the Bosnian context since it presumed the preexistence of separate cultures—was an obvious projection of America’s own fears of and hopes for diversity” (235).
culpability for the bridge’s “betrayal.” However, Slavenka Drakulić (1949-) asserts that it is irrelevant who destroyed the bridge when we consider its metaphoric meaning:

For four centuries people needed that bridge and admired its beauty. The question is not who shelled and demolished it. The question is not even why someone did it—destruction is part of human nature. The question is: What kind of people do not need that bridge? The only answer I can come up with is this: People who do not believe in the future— theirs or their children’s—do not need such a bridge. (15)

Drakulić argues that who destroyed Stari most is relevant only to considerations of the bridge as a metaphor for the relationship between the present and the future.

In contrast, when focusing on the destruction of Stari most as an attack on “multiculturalism,” Western news media proclaimed a need to identify and to punish the perpetrators. Journalistic accounts often focused on the fact that the HVO delivered the final blow to Stari most. Testimony from proceedings at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) provides a somewhat broader context, in which both the HVO and the Yugoslav People’s Army (Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija, JNA) targeted Stari most. The JNA first shelled Mostar on April 3, 1992 (IT-04-74-I).

The Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Armija Bosne i Hercegovine, ABiH) and the Croatian Defense Council (Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane, HVO) joined forces against the JNA. After the ABiH and HVO forced the JNA troops out of Mostar on June 12, 1992, the HVO sought Croatian control and targeted their former allies, the ABiH, beginning a campaign of mass executions, “ethnic cleansing,” and rape against Bosniak civilians (IT-04-74-I). On December 22, 1993, Reuters reported that the HVO formally acknowledged fault for Stari most’s destruction.
The international community—that is, the post-1948 global power relations that enforce human rights norms—pressured the HVO’s admission in a context of ongoing violence in Mostar and “crimes against humanity” throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even as the HVO continued to detain Bosniak men at the Dretelj, Heliodrom, and Vojno camps until 1994 (IT-04-74-I), the HVO “ordered the arrest of three members of a tank crew for the criminal offence of ‘destroying cultural and historical monuments’” (Reuters).

Nonetheless, the de facto commander of the HVO in Mostar, Slobodan Praljak (1945-) continued to live in the city’s west bank throughout the war—and thereafter (see Ignatieff 58). It was only in 2004 that Praljak surrendered to the ICTY. At the time of writing, his trial continues at the Hague.

In selecting Stari most as an image of the bridge metaphor, the international community often projected its own preconceptions onto the violence in Mostar. In December 1993, L’Actual published a picture of Stari most with rubber tires hanging from its parapet to diminish damage, interpreting the image according to the widespread perception of Serbs as unilaterally guilty. Accompanying text read:

Pont stratégique à éliminer pour les Serbes, le pont de Vukovar était une splendeur du patrimoine architectural et historique de la ville croate. Depuis le début de la guerre, près de 500 églises, forteresses, musées et autres monuments historiques de l’ex-Yougoslavie ont été laminés par l’artillerie serbe et réduits à l’état de cailloux. (qtd. in Collon 19)

A strategic bridge for the Serbs to eliminate, the bridge in Vukovar was a splendor of the Croatian city’s architectural and historical patrimony. Since the war began, nearly 500 of the former Yugoslavia’s churches, castles, museums and other historical monuments have been razed by the Serbian artillery and reduced to the state of pebbles.

There is no such bridge in Vukovar, Croatia, which sits at the confluence of the Danube
and Vuka Rivers. Furthermore, the picture, although published in December, was taken some time before the ninth of November, when the HVO destroyed Stari most. The L'Actuel caption confirms, however, that international news media, NATO tactics, and UNPROFOR apologists often position two particular groups at either ends of this bridge metaphor: Serbs and Croats. Journalists “knew” the Višegrad and Mostar bridges’ real and metaphorical histories.

2.3.2. Mourning in the Abstract: Lost Connections

To eulogize Stari most, international and ex-Yugoslav journalists, writers, and artists adapted metaphors popularized by Andrić’s Ćuprija. This shared discourse on the bridge-as-metaphor identifies “brotherhood and unity” as among the concepts that the Bosnian War so violently dismantled and re-worked, in part, through Stari most’s engagement with metaphor. In the week after Stari most’s destruction, North American and European news media immortalized it as a Yugoslav lieu de mémoire—in Pierre Nora’s terminology—for the international community.29

Simultaneously, Stari most was mourned as a violated symbol of unity and interconnection, of Mostar, and of pluralistic dreams. The destruction of Stari most soon became a qualitative symbol of the Bosnian War, whereas the July 1995 Srebrenica Genocide—in which Bosnian Serb génocidaires murdered at least 8,372 Bosniak men (ic-mp.org)—later became a quantitative symbol of suffering and gendered violence

29 Notably, only the Ottoman Stari most and Ćuprija received this symbolic attention. Neither Mostar’s Lučki most (Port Bridge), Carinski most (Toll Bridge), Titov most (Tito’s Bridge), Most Hasana Brkića (Hasan Brkić’s Bridge), Avijatičarski most (Aviator’s Bridge), Most u Vojnu (Bridge at Vojno), nor Željeznički most u Sutini (Railway Bridge at Sutina) were treated as attacked metaphors when they were destroyed.
While a vast body of work memorializes Srebrenica, the metaphorical concept of the bridge has been grieved as visually symbolizing what was “lost” — momentarily if not permanently — in the war. For example, architect Nicholas Adams proclaims the bridge “a symbol of loss in wartime and a symbol of hope for peace” (390). Above all, when Stari most was destroyed, what was mourned was the idea of different cultures coming together. In short, Stari most’s destruction was perceived widely as inverting Andrić’s metaphors of the bridge — betraying ideals of connection, transcendence, and inclusion.32

By emphasizing the symbolism of the Stari most’s destruction and engaging the bridge metaphor, the international news media constructed an image of the Old Bridge to represent “ethnic violence” which was, as Aida Hozic notes, “not particularly conducive

---

30 On June 5, 2005, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) confirmed that DNA results had established the identity of 6,186 Srebrenica victims. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Federal Commission for Missing Persons (FCMP, or Federalne komisje za nestale osobe) now counts 8,372 on its preliminary list of Srebrenica victims.

31 Srebrenica has been remembered through plays, operas, orchestral pieces, writings, films, paintings, and so on. Below is an abbreviated list of some works on Srebrenica. Eric Stover’s and Gilles Peress’ 1998 Les Tombes: Srebrenica et Vukovar documents exhumation at the two sites. Olivier Py’s 1999 play for three women, entitled “Requiem pour Srebrenica,” incorporates documents and testimony of the 1995 massacre. The Bosnian National Opera Company first performed Ivan Ćavlović’s Srebreničanke (Srebrenica Women) on October 14, 2004. And, Isnam Taljić penned a historical-fictional account in 2004, Roman o Srebrenici (A Novel about Srebrenica).

32 Multiple academic titles have represented this idea, including: Celia Hawkesworth’s 1985 Ivo Andrić: Bridge between East and West, Michael Sells’ 1998 The Bridge Betrayed, and Wayne Vucinich’s 1996 Ivo Andrić Revisited: The Bridge Still Stands.
to visual representation” (230). The bridge metaphor, as accessed through an image of *Stari most*, thereby created and filled a “visual chasm” in “Western” representations of “new wars” (see Hozic 230). It also supplemented (or stood in for) knowledge of Yugoslavia, by providing a visual index of what was “lost” (see figure 1, above).

To this effect, Chuck Sudetic describes “the four-century-old arch” as “one of the most formidable metaphors for the common life that the Muslims, Croats, and Serbs of the old Yugoslavia enjoyed before the country’s violent breakup” (18). *Le Monde* similarly reported on 11 November the destruction of “un symbole du mélange des
cultures en Herzégovine” (a symbol of the mix of cultures in Herzegovina). The
Washington Post also focused on Stari most’s symbolism in an editorial entitled “When
Bridges Fall”:

The symbolism is melancholy. […] Bridges imply communication, and this
bridge, besides being an architectural masterpiece and a beloved symbol of the
region’s culture over the centuries, had historically been identified with attempts
to link East and West. (A24)

Likewise, in “Timeless treasures among casualties—Bosnian battle takes heavy toll,” The
Globe and Mail quotes Belgrade historian Dragan Vlahović as saying: “The bridge
symbolized the unity of two different cultures, [b]ut as it crumbled into the Neretva
River, so did our history” (A11). Similarly, Rosemary Menzies (1939-) memorializes the
bridge in her 1994 Poems for Bosnia: “The symbolism is different now—/the meeting of
east and west/ a drowned thing, blown apart” (9). In these journalistic and poetic
engagements with the bridge metaphor, Stari most’s destruction symbolizes
Yugoslavia’s. The destruction of the bridge becomes the terminus of a particular history
of pluralism.

Others, such as Alan Finkelkraut, mourn the bridge’s destruction as “an attack
against the beauty of the world” (137). Luko Paljetak (1943-), in his 1993 “Poniženje
ljepote” (“The Disgrace of Beauty”), grieves for the bridge as “vez[a] koja nika ne poriče
Drugog” (86; the link that never denies the Other). Once a symbol of beauty and
connection, the bridge has been reduced to “bijel[a] kamen[a] kost u panorami smrti” (86;
a white stone bone in a panorama of death). This skeleton—signifying the deaths of
Mostar’s citizens, the destruction of an idea, and the exposed foundation of the bridge
trope—continues to recall tolerance and pluralism for all who seek symbolic evidence of
Accordingly, Bogdan Bogdanović (1922-) imagines Stari most as an interpreter and judge for Mostar: “grad se kao ličnost predstavio, i sebi je ime nadenuo, sagradivši jedan neverovatan most, a taj je most, kao neka vrsta graditeljske sage, uzeo na sebe najplemenitiju ulogu a zauvek bude tumač grada” (84; the town has introduced itself as a person, and named itself, built itself an incredible bridge, and that bridge, as a sort of architectural saga, took upon itself the most noble role of being the town’s interpreter forever). If Stari most is Mostar’s “eternal interpreter,” as the cuprija is for Višegrad, it is because of the bridge’s always changing relationship to the metaphors that the town and the outside world assign.

Bosnian journalist Zlatko Dizdarević asserts that Stari most, as a metaphor, cannot be destroyed. In “Pucanj u metaforu” (“A Shot at Metaphor”), he recognizes that Stari most is “sinonim grada” (29; “a synonym of the city,” 23), but maintains that the bridge’s visual representation in art is more important than any architectural monument to the persistence of its metaphors. He quotes the painter Afan Ramić (1932-):

Lako je pucati u metaforu. Ali stvaralačka misao, bez obzira da li dolazila sa istoka ili zapada, sa sjevera ili sa južnih prostora, ne može biti uništena. Taj pucanj u Stari most, to je pucanj u srce Hercegovine, u srce Mostara, u naše orijentalno nasljede, unaše mostarsko djetinjstvo. To je, nažalost, u isto vrijeme i pucanj u vlastitu kulturu onih koji odlučiše da ubiju jednu metaforu. Ali misao će ostasti, jer je ona zapisana u vječnosti. (qtd. in Dizdarević 30)

33 Bogdanović made the “Flower of Stone” (1966) monument to the victims of Jasenovac—“a large concrete mass that in the author’s fancy blossomed into a flower, hiding the memorial crypt at its foot”—as well as the partisan monument in Mostar (1965), “a fenced stone space with terraces leaning on a hill, populated by abstract forms” (Krečić 361).
34 This essay was published as “Between Two River Banks” in the English collection Portraits of Sarajevo.
It is easy to shoot at a metaphor. But creative thought, whether it comes from the East or the West, the North or the South, cannot be annihilated. That shot at the Old Bridge was a shot at the heart of Herzegovina, at the heart of Mostar, at our Eastern heritage, at the Mostar of our childhood. Alas, for it was also a shot at the culture of those who have decided to kill the metaphor. But the thought will live on, because it is inscribed in eternity. (qtd. in Dizdarević 24)

In other words, the metaphorical concept of the bridge invites its own destruction (through the production of new metaphors) while precluding its own annihilation. As an ontological metaphor, the bridge encompasses the located and dislocated passages of gendered selves and others, as we shall now see.

Dizdarević imagines the Neretva as an invention of the bridge and of the artist who portrays the bridge. The metaphor’s subject cannot be reduced to nature (physis) or invention (tekhnē); it is always both. The river “teče samo još radi tog mosta iznad nje, i radi Afanovih slika” (28; “flowed only for the sake of this bridge and for the sake of Afan’s paintings,” 22). As a philosophical trope, the bridge is immortal, even inescapable. Dizdarević muses:

Na tu drugu obalu Afan će uvijek preći is nje se vraćati na ovu, preko odsjaja koji je od Mosta vječno ostao u Neretvi. Tu nikakve granate i nikakav dinamit ne mogu ništa. Problem je što dinamitaši to ne znaju. (30)

Afan Ramić will always be able to get to the other side and return from it to this one by walking on the reflection of the bridge, left in the Neretva to remain there forever. No shells or dynamite can touch it. The only problem is that the men with the dynamite know nothing of such things. (24)

Although the attack on the bridge targeted the symbolic, Ramić suggests that the symbolic cannot really be targeted, for there is always a trace of its subject remaining.

After the bridge’s destruction, some suggested that only suffering continued to link the two banks of the Neretva. For example, Pascal Barollier, in “Mostar, laboratoire
européen” (“Mostar, European Laboratory”), conjectures that the sadness of women and children crossing the Neretva unifies the two sides: “on a pléuré dans les quartiers croates comme dans les bastions musulmans” (109; one cried in the Croatian quarters as in the Muslim strongholds). Others, such as Suha Özkan, suggested that “the Neretva River was shedding tears,” too (5). Stari most’s demise became a thematic supplement to Ćuprija, an unhappy ending to stories of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a bridge between places and among peoples.

2.3.3. The Day Stari most “Died”: Anthropomorphizing the Bridge as a Casualty

Many journalists mourned Stari most as if it were a person, producing an affective metaphor for all “unspeakable” suffering in the Bosnian War. For example, on November 9, 1993, Reuters ran the headline “World-famous Medieval Bridge Succumbs to Bosnian War.” The verb “succumb” suggests that Stari most valiantly resisted the violence, as if it were a brave and peaceful citizen of Mostar. The article identifies this “citizen” as Bosniak, describing Stari most as “a symbol of the Turkish occupation.” On November 10, Chuck Sudetic published an article entitled “Mostar’s Old Bridge Battered to Death” in the New York Times Magazine. By anthropomorphizing the bridge as a “casualty” who “succumbed” to and “died” in the war, these articles humanize the bridge as a universalized victim, reduced to what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life” (see Homo Sacer).

Even when The Independent (London) mentioned the real, material effects of the bridge’s destruction, Mostar’s citizens are objectified as speechless. The destruction of Stari most was a disaster for the 25,000—mostly Bosniak—habitants trapped on
Mostar’s east side. To retrieve drinking water, these citizens ran across a makeshift bridge under threat of sniper fire. Yet, rather than expounding on what this crisis meant for any one person or family, news media mourned the bridge as a person or people.

Through this anthropomorphization, the bridge enters into a media-produced “exhibition” of images in effect similar to the “Family of Man” as described by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*. *Stari most*, as an icon of the bridge metaphor, is a portrait of “humanisme classique” (Barthes 175; “classic humanism,” 101) that “vise à supprimer le poids déterminant de l’Histoire” (Barthes 174; “aims to suppress the determining weight of history,” 101). As the bridge’s anthropomorphization obscures specific modes of experience and formulates a static view of the world, it assesses the significance of *Stari most*’s destruction by retroactively (and anachronistically) projecting the war-time trifecta of essentialized identifications: Bosniak, Croat, and Serb.

Ultimately, the bridge metaphor—like much western phenomenology—constructs a Subject that purports to be universal but is in fact masculinized. When each end of the bridge becomes a metonym for each bank’s inhabitants, these “banks” not only are ethnicized as Bosniak or Croat, but also are gendered—even if only implicitly. As we shall see, the anthropomorphization of the bridge implicitly and often explicitly contains the “othering” of women within all projected categories which are imagined as a universalized “ethnicity” or situated oppositionally at either bank of the bridge—Bosniak and Croat, Serb and Croat, and Bosniak and Serb.
2.3.4. Carving Faces and Footprints on the Bridge: Family Portraits

While many representations of the bridge position it as in the “Family of Man,” still others incorporate Stari most into more personal family histories. Sudetic quotes Bogdan Bogdanović as saying of Stari most, “it was as if one of my closest relatives has died.” He muses: “a person simply loses the sense of himself at times like this.” Salko Abdulić shares Bogdanović’s sentiment: “I felt like someone I loved had died” (qtd. in Radović). Abdulić expects that many of Mostar’s inhabitants also feel personal grief: “They have now lost a part of their being” (qtd. in Radović). Both men project their personal anguish and Mostar’s human losses onto the artifact of the bridge without explicitly gendering it.

While numerous writers mourned Stari most as a genderless or doubly-gendered family member, other writers recalled the individual—and gendered—relationships they had with relatives through the bridge as a lieu de mémoire. For example, Borjanka Šantić—a relative of Aleksa Šantić, Mostar’s most famous nineteenth-century poet—stresses how many people have crossed the bridge. She reminisces: “the walkway’s stones were rubbed so smooth by the footsteps that you had to hold on to the rails to avoid slipping even when it was dry” (qtd. in Sudetic). Her own footsteps traced and retraced those of other women and men. Together, all the footsteps convey the passage of time, but each one is a trace of a particular, gendered body with a certain way of moving through the world.

Rubbed smooth by footsteps, the bridge becomes an archive of the town’s collective history and a repository of unique family memories. The bridge, as “znamenje
naraštaja” (an emblem of generations), is a record of family history inscribed into the stone (Matvejević 117). Predrag Matvejević (1932-) suggests that the bridge’s limestone contains these memories: “U nj[u] su ugrađena pamćenja naših djedova” (117, my emphasis; Our grandfather’s memories were built into it). The bridge becomes a site for inherited memories, a grandfather itself. Tellingly, the Old Bridge shares its nickname “Stari” (“Old Man”) with Tito and other fathers, symbolic and real.

After the destruction of Stari most, living family relationships carry on in the bridge’s stead. Alma Fazil-Obad addresses her son, Đani, in “The End of the World, November 9th 1993”: “Ti i ja smo/ Jedini most/ Koji jos poštoji” (305; “You and I/ The only bridge/ Which still exists”). Their interconnection persists as a unique manifestation of all that the bridge once symbolized. Fazil-Obad’s son is the future once represented by the bridge.

Jasmina Musabegović (1941-) collects family stories through the bridge. She dedicates her novel, Most (The Bridge), to her brother Alića Teufik, a diver who was killed in Sarajevo in 1992. In building a textual monument to him, Musabegović’s first-person narrator evokes Stari most through her relative’s movements. She follows not her own but “majkin put na most” (8; her mother’s path to the bridge). Her mother’s body builds a bridge to her own: “Dvije rijeke i dva mosta se sudaraju u našim tijelima, iskustvu, i pričama. Majkine i moje rijeke. Mamin i moj most” (8; Two rivers and two bridges collide in our bodies, experience, and words. My mother river and mine. My mom’s bridge and mine). Their gendered identities each emerge as metaphoric processes of interaction. These rivers not only mark the passage of time, but also represent Stari
most’s imaginary mutability.

Referring to Stari most, Musabegović writes: “Most je slika” (8; the bridge is a picture). This statement seems tautological as Most self-reflexively pieces together the past through the imaginary (while recognizing the project’s impossibility): the picture is a bridge. Images of Stari most serve to connect past experiences with the present tense of her narrator’s telling. The narrator wonders about the Bosnian War’s effects on memory, as she retraces her mother’s path to the bridge: “Koliko slika poderem svojim korakom: bezbroj” (8; How many pictures do I tear with my stride: countless). The imaginary bridge, like a photograph, retains what Roland Barthes describes as “un point énigmatique d’inactualité, une stase étrange, l’essence meme d’un arrêt” (*La chambre* 142; “an enigmatic point of inactuality, a strange stasis, the stasis of an arrest,” *Camera* 91). Musabegović’s pictures introduce her reader to individuated and gendered subjects, arrested by her narrator’s memory.

Slavenka Drakulić also uses pictures to connect Stari most with her own memories of her father. She uses three photos to discuss the bridge; the first one, dating from 1953, is a souvenir postcard of her father’s visit to Mostar, reading: “I think of you as I walk over this bridge” (14). Writing some forty years later, Drakulić in turn imagines her father through the bridge’s image:

Coming to the middle, to the place where young boys used to jump into the river to prove their courage, he must have leaned over the stone railing and looked into the Neretva below, quick and silent as a snake. He must have stopped there, overwhelmed by the stone construction. When his hands touched the bridge, he must have felt its smoothness and warmth, as if he had touched skin instead of stone. (14)
Through the interactional qualities of the bridge metaphor, Drakulić measures her imagining of her father’s experience in the vocabulary of her own body’s tactile perception. She imagines him touching the bridge as she would—if she could still visit the Old Bridge. The figure she places on Stari most vivifies both the father’s experience and her inherited memory as his daughter.

Drakulić muses: “Serbs and Turks, Croats and Jews, Greeks and Albanians, Austrians and Hungarians, Catholics, Orthodox, Bogumils and Muslims—all had stopped at the same spot” (14). She suggests that the bridge’s metaphorical history governs each group to stop in the same place, as each group knows exactly from where the bridge-divers jump: the arch’s apex. After imagining her own hypothetical bridge experience through her father’s, Drakulić chooses not to “build in” more generational memories after the bridge’s destruction. She places her daughter outside these ex-Yugoslav groups, speculating that she “will only remember a story about a beautiful stone bridge that, once upon a time, existed in a far away country shattered by a long, long war” (15). The bridge that matters for Drakulić now, is the one between present and future, herself and her daughter. Drakulić herself has “no memory of [her] own bridge now, when [she] need[s] it the most” (15); her memories are her father’s.

Although Drakulić conjures memories of her father, evokes her own Yugoslav experiences, and foretells how her daughter will respond to the legacy of the bridge metaphor—and although she conceptualizes the abstract suffering of each group in the Bosnian War in relation to a central spot on Stari most—she wonders why the bridge has such an emotionally-charged effect on her. Drakulić asks the question implied by many
news articles about *Stari most*: “Why do I feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed bridge than the image of the woman [with ‘a long, dark knife-cut along her throat’]? Perhaps it is because I see my own mortality in the collapse of the bridge, not in the death of the woman. We expect people to die. [...] A dead woman is one of us—but the bridge is all of us, forever” (15). As the photograph distorts temporal boundaries by reproducing what has happened only once (as Barthes suggests in *La chambre claire* [*Camera Lucida*]), so too does the metaphorical concept of the bridge. *Stari most*, as an imaginary referent of the bridge metaphor, translates inherited memory into collective memory.

2.3.5. Bridge-beings in the Philosophical Tradition

Defining not only the representation of human experience but also the human as inherently metaphorical, Friedrich Nietzsche (1884–1900) asserts that “Man” is always in metaphor (Cazeaux 104). “Man”—which is rendered “human” by contemporary English translations—is a bridge: “The human is a rope fastened between beast and Overhuman—a rope over an abyss. [...] What is great in the human is that it is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in the human is that it is a going-over and going-under” (*Zarathustra* 12). For Nietzsche, this metaphor—and all metaphors—are a process of making the world and inventing truths. Truths are also figurative: “[a] mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms” (“On Truth” 92). The “truths” produced by the bridge metaphor, when applied to *Stari most* and ćuprija during the Bosnian War, indeed seem to fit Nietzsche’s definition of a “sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage...
seem to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding” (“On Truth” 92). One might count Western philosophy’s masculinization of Being among such illusions.

Although Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) does not acknowledge Nietzsche’s (or his own) gendering of Being, he asserts that the bridge produces knowledge by organizing the daily lives of nearby dwellers. In other words, the bridge mediates their relationships with each other and their environment. Heidegger stresses that the bridge invents categories of difference:

The bridge [...] does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. (151)

The figurative bridge enables humans to negotiate their relationships with what Heidegger calls the fourfold: the earth, the sky, divinities, and mortals.

Luce Irigaray (1932-) criticizes the earthly focus of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s bridge metaphors, exploring their separateness from what’s underneath or beyond—the water or the air. She addresses Nietzsche as a lover who is incapable of recognizing and loving the feminine other, the liquid denied by his privileging of fire and earth. Irigaray suggests he has forgotten women and the “immemorial waters”—the seas or the wombs—from which humans are born. Irigaray sees the eternal return and Nietzsche’s Übermensch as denying the gift of life that comes from mothers. She asks: “Est-ce vraiment en l’homme que tu crains de retomber? Ou plutôt dans la mer?” (Amante 19;
“Are you truly afraid of falling back into man? Or into the sea?,” *Lover* 13). Similarly, Irigaray criticizes Heidegger for his forgetting of air, that is, his oblivion towards feminine being and the fullness of space. As “[l’]air reste ressource d’être impensée” (*L’oubli* 20; “[a]ir remains the unthought resource of being,” *Forgetting* 14), the space between selves and others seems unbridgeable. For Irigaray, air is place, generating life without expectation of recognition.

As Irigaray argues in *L’amante marine* (*Marine Lover*) and *L’oubli de l’air* (*The Forgetting of Air*) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) argues in *Éperons* (*Spurs*), both Nietzsche and Heidegger project sexual difference onto Being, in effect reducing gender to the masculine. In other words, when the bridge’s anthropomorphization appears neutral, it still privileges ontological differences over gendered difference. The purportedly ungendered (doubly gendered) bridge—whether Nietzsche’s, Heidegger’s, or that of discourses on the Bosnian War—necessitates questioning whether Being precedes being masculine or feminine. When the bridge metaphor stands metonymically for the Bosnian War, its “neutrality” covers over individual gendered experiences. Furthermore, this Heideggerian conflation of Being with Dwelling obscures an underlying definition of Being as “la maison de l’homme” (*L’oubli* 64; “the house of man,” *Forgetting* 67).

This forgetting of women—in representations of the Bosnian War that depend upon the bridge metaphor—is complicated by the Western philosophical affinity for figuring liminality—and truths—as feminine. Bosnia-Herzegovina is metaphorized as a bridge, and it is also metaphorized—like many other nations, territories, and places—as ‘woman.’ For example, Mak Dizdar’s (1917-1971) well-known “Zapis o zemlji” (“Notes
about the Country”) conceptualizes Bosnia-Herzegovina as a bridge and as a woman with a conditional future: “Gdje li je ta/Odakle je/Kuda je/Ta Bosna” (Dizdar 211; “Where is she/Where is she from/Where to/That Bosnia,” 13). The philosophical figure of “Woman” conveys the metaphorical concept of a bridge between now and then, here and there.

Jacques Derrida’s response to Nietzsche’s allegorical use of “Woman” (as truth) offers insight into this figure’s “non-figure”:

‘la femme’ n’est peut-être pas quelque chose, l’identité déterminable d’une figure qui, elle, s’annonce à distance, à distance d’autre chose, et dont il y aurait à s’éloigner ou à s’approcher. Peut-être est-elle, comme non-identité, non-figure, simulacre, l’abîme de la distance, le distancement de la distance, la coupe de l’espacement, la distance elle-même si l’on pouvait encore dire, ce qui est impossible, la distance elle-même. La distance se distance. (Éperons 48)

the ‘woman’ is not a determinable identity. Perhaps woman is not some thing which announces itself from a distance, at a distance from some other thing. In that case it would not be a matter of retreat and approach. Perhaps woman—a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum—is distance’s very chasm, the outdistancing of distance, the interval’s cadence, distance itself, if we could still say such a thing, distance itself. Distance out-distances itself. (Spurs 49)

The indeterminable ‘woman,’ always ‘out-distanced,’ appears as the chasm that the bridge metaphor creates and crosses.

Andrić’s Ćuprija offers another image of woman as “bridge-being” through Ilinka, who believes her children have been taken as a foundation sacrifice to the bridge. Convinced that her infant twins are walled into the kapija, the bridge’s “crowning” central section, she is unable to express herself in words about the bridge—the logos which, in Irigaray’s reading of Heidegger, determines that “l’élémentaire de la phusis ...
est toujours déjà néantisé (L’oubli 70; “the elementality of physis... is always already reduced to nothingness,” Forgetting 74). Ilinka reveals to the bridge-builders her lactating breasts. Described through and desired by the male gaze, her breasts are “bolne i nabrekle, na kojima su bradavice već počele da pucaju i krvare od mleka koje je neodoljivo nadolazilo” (38-9; “painful and swollen, on which the nipples had already begun to crack and bleed...from the milk that flowed from them irresistibly,” 37). Ilinka lives and nurses on the bridge, unable in her madness to understand the loss that others attempt to communicate to her (the stillbirth of the children she seeks).

As she attempts in vain to nurse, the bridge becomes an extension of her body, standing in for her children. Legend tells that Rade Neimar—who is associated with all the palaces and towns mentioned in the epic ballads (Hawkesworth, Andrić 128)—is said to have left openings in the bridge for the mother to feed her children. All the local children ‘know’ that “već stotinama godina teče iz zidina majčino mleko” (13; “the mother’s milk has flowed from these walls for hundreds of years,” 16). Ilinka’s story posits the bridge’s mythical origin—based on sacrifice—for those who “know” that her milk flows from the čuprija’s walls. The narrative also situates woman as “bridge-being.” As Irigaray writes: “L’autre—l’une—s’est laissée utiliser en être-pont au bout duquel rien n’est: ce passage n’est qu’un éternel retour au même” (28; “The other—or the female one—has let herself be used as a bridge-being at the end of which is nothing: this passage is but an eternal return to the same,” 24). Ilinka’s body is appropriated as an object of discourse on the bridge.
2.4. Gendered Violence on the Bridge

2.4.1. Real Bodies in Figurative Discourse

The imagining of nationalist projects always already includes the appropriation of women’s bodies as objects. “Whatever happens,” writes Vesna Kesić, “women are depicted as bodies. [...] Women are bodies in pain, regardless of which ethnic group is at some point recognized as aggressor and which as victim” (311). Nationalist rhetoric treats women’s bodies as metaphoric objects: metonyms for one group and, in Susan Brownmiller’s phrasing, “battlefields” for multiple groups. Because the biological reproduction of the family is conflated with that of the “nation” or “ethnic group” (as in Ilinka’s nursing of the bridge), “women’s bodies, individually tortured and in pain, are transformed into national symbols” (Kesić 314). This process metaphoricizes women’s bodies as bridges between the mythical origins and future of a group’s national or ethnic perpetuation. Among the practices of gendered violence affiliated with this discursive use of women’s bodies are rape, sexual slavery, and forced impregnation.

Arguably for the first time in Western media, journalistic representations of these war crimes foregrounded the issue of war rapes as one of human rights (first in the former Yugoslavia and, then, in Rwanda). As Catharine A. MacKinnon has noted, “[h]uman rights have not been women’s rights—not in theory or in reality, not legally or socially” (“Rape” 183). However, as “women’s rights” came to be understood as “human rights,” 1990s’ legal discourses shaped media, testimonial, and literary representations of mass rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ICTY Statute was among the first to define rape as a “crime against humanity.”
At the same time, however, rape often was framed as targeting an “ethnic group” (rather than being specific to women) when committed with the intent to impregnate. For example, MacKinnon writes: “Xenophobia and misogyny merge here; ethnic hatred is sexualized; bigotry becomes orgasm” (“Pornography” 75). This combined focus on intent and “ethnicity” characterized rape as genocidal, reinforcing ethicizing discourse and nationalistic metaphors for women’s bodies (and the bridge). As Kesić observes:

Rape as a weapon of war was entirely positioned within the category of ethnicity as a part of ‘genocidal’ strategy, and women were turned into metaphors: ‘A raped Croat or Bosniak woman stands for a raped Croatia or Bosnia.’ At the same time, the rapists’ existence as ‘men’ and military figures was obliterated by their ethnicity. Serbs (Croats, Muslims) rape, not Serbian (Croatian, Muslim) militaries and paramilitaries. (312)

In other words, both militant rhetoric and its critical representations share the same figurative discourse, suggesting that women were raped as Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs, etc.

In interviews with Alexandra Stiglmayer, Bosniak women survivors testify to how the rapists’ discourse(s) ethnicized and metaphoricized their bodies:

Hatiza: “They were showing us their power. They stuck their guns in our mouths. They tore our clothes. They showed the ‘Turkish women’ they were superior.” (92)

Fatima: “They used to get together and sing ‘O beautiful bula, a Chetnik’s beard will scratch you,’ of about how Muslim women would give birth to Serbian children.” (104)

Mirsada: “They told us we were going to give birth to Serbian children.” (109)

Azra: “They shouted curses: ‘Fuck your Turkish mother’ or ‘Death to all Turkish sperm.’” (109)

The use of historical epithets, like bula and četnik, essentialize women’s “ethnic” identities in ex-Yugoslav political terms, while a mythico-history of Ottoman domination positions all Bosniaks as Serbs or Croats who converted to Islam (isturčiti se) and
became “Turks” (poturice) in the Ottoman Empire. In this discourse of otherness, emphasis on women’s potential to produce children for one group or another in effect ethnicizes gender, “subordinat[ing it] to ethnicity, even before it appears as an ‘autonomous discourse’” (Kesić 314). This ethnicizing discourse describes rape not as a gendered crime, but as a violation of an ethnos.

Dževad Karahasan (1953-) claims that literature opens up this liminal space for the metaphoricization of women’s bodies. He argues that it is because of l’art pour l’art and heroic literature (in which whatever happens to a character happens because of ethnicity, faith, etc.) that wartime rapists forcibly impregnate women, which not only humiliates them personally and debases their capacity to be mothers, but degrades even that sublime gift of the woman to objectify, to embody, to show love as the highest form of relationship between two people, by giving birth to the fruit of love. (84)

This objectification of women’s bodies as national symbols and symbolic battlefields reveals formerly hidden referents of still other metaphors, such as that of the bridge, which locates women as “bridge-beings” in what Julia Kristeva calls “le temps des femmes” (women’s time).

Numerous attempts at “explaining” the gendered violence of the Bosnian War cite the violence literally embedded in the construction of Andrić’s ćuprija (as a product of Christian peasants’ suffering and forced labor), focusing in particular on Andrić’s

---

35 At once connecting and dividing, the bridge, in this reading, conveys an idea from Andrić’s 1924 dissertation, Die Entwicklung des geistigen Lebens in Bosnien unter der Einwirkung der Türkischen Herrschaft (The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under Ottoman Rule): the Empire maintained “the opposing virtues of unity, absolute administrative centralization, iron discipline, and blind obedience” (15). As the raja
veristic description of spiritual martyrdom—the impalement of Radisav on the čuprija.

For example, Michael Sells considers the resonances of this “crucifixion image” with what he interprets as the religious dimension of violence of the Bosnian War. Lynda Boose conceptualizes the impalement as “a four-hour rape scene” where the “Turkish phallic emblem of power ... feminize[s the] image of [Radisav’s] penetrated body” (85). Boose argues that the persistence of the čuprija through the Bosnian War “ironically rememorializ[es] the scene of Serb subjection to Turk impalement” in “a gesture of appreciation for Andrić’s empathetic depiction of the Serb story” (84). While some survivors’ testimonies recall Andrić’s descriptions of Radisav’s torture, Sells and Boose exaggerate the opacity of the relationship between the bridge metaphor and wartime violence. The public rapes of Bosniak women on Višegrad’s čuprija were, above all, the public rapes of women.

2.4.2. War Crimes and Bridges

Stiglmayer’s interview accounts of Višegrad Bosniak women convey interaction between the ethnicized figuration of each woman (as a metonym for an ethnos) and Višegrad’s metaphoricity (as link between East and West). This interactional metaphoricity inflects ICTY testimony about the Bosniak seizure of the hydroelectric dam on the Drina after the JNA attacked Višegrad on April 6, 1992. Still more so, it frames the international reception and representations of ICTY testimony about violence (Christian peasants) resist and embrace the Ottoman presence, the bridge incorporates through metaphor their feelings towards the empire and their town.

36 For example, survivor named Hasiba, in an interview with Alexandra Stiglmayer, testifies that génécidaires decapitated Hamet Kesmer and carved Serbian crosses on Hussein Vujić’s skin (129).
committed by some Bosnian Serbs in the name of the “Serbian Municipality of Višegrad” after the JNA withdrew on May 19, 1992. When Bosniaks were murdered and thrown into the Drina, genocidal discourse suggested that the men’s bodies were tossed to the “other” side of the river, the essentialized Turkish face of the bridge (see IT-98-32/1-T).

Joe Sacco’s *Safe Area Goražde* graphically depicts genocidal violence on the Ćuprija in a frame narrative focalized by self-identified witness, Rasim (see figure 2).

![Figure 2](image)

Presented in a linear grid with black gutters, Rasim’s testimony appears in white narrative
boxes superimposed over images of the bloody ćuprija. In three equally sized frames (in the top row), Rasim’s viewpoint—rather than being fixed at his home (situated between Višegrad’s two bridges and from which he witnessed these atrocities)—shows the ćuprija from multiple angles: looking upward from the Drina, downward from over the bridge, and almost straight-on. The middle frame in this row, without any narrative box, emphasizes the brutality of a young boy’s imminent death. Uniforms visually distinguish the militants from their victims, but only Sacco’s addition of one woman wearing dimije (or šalvare, Turkish trousers) and a maramica (scarf) marks the victims as Bosniaks—subverting gender to “ethnicity.” Although this narrative concludes with a close-up of Rasim saying in a speech bubble “I was an eye-witness,” Sacco’s graphic journalism also depicts the ćuprija as a witness.

Xavier Lukomski’s 17-minute 2005 documentary, “Un pont sur la Drina” (“A Bridge on the Drina”) also offers a testimonial representation of the violence on the bridge. The film considers the discarding of corpses in the Drina in relation to Ćuprija’s metaphors, reformulating Andrić’s title and symbolism in indefinite terms. In other words, Lukomski shows “un pont” (“a bridge”)—not “le pont” (“the bridge”)—through interwoven still shots filmed at different times of the day. Light and shadows change, but the bridge seems to remain unaltered. There is almost no movement. No one crosses the bridge. The ćuprija’s arches form peaceful circles in the water’s reflection (see figure 3, page 60).

Suddenly, an audio transcript from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) disrupts the meditative still life. A man’s voice—Mevsie
Poljo’s—describes his attempts to retrieve corpses from the Drina during the Bosnian War. Poljo was a witness in the ICTY case against Mitar Vasiljević (see IT-98-32-T). Vasiljević and, later, Milan Lukić stood trial for—among other crimes against humanity—forcing seven Bosniak men to line up along the Drina River bank and opening fire, killing five men on or about 7 June 1992. With the introduction of the audio transcript of Poljo’s testimony for the ICTY, what was once a peaceful shot of the Drina, becomes terrifying. The legal testimony about corpses floating down the Drina contrasts with a quotation from Andrić’s novel about the eternal nature of the bridge. Ultimately, the viewer experiences what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub term a “crisis of witnessing” through Lukomski’s juxtaposition of human rights testimony with the hauntingly placid scenery.

In another post-war representation of the Ćuprija, Jim Bartley’s narrator in Drina Bridge, Chris Maitland, suggests that the truth of the Ćuprija — and what happened on it — is contradictory. Bartley’s postmodern adaptation of Andrić’s Ćurpija weaves multiple, unreliable narratives of WWII and the Bosnian War, each with numerous inconsistencies, into Chris Maitland’s self-reflexive, first-person narration. When Chris moves to a monastery in Western Serbia in 1992, hoping to learn the true history of his recently deceased partner, the narrator encounters memoirs of WWII Višegrad as written
by Slobodan (Slobo) Kusić, a 60-year-old refugee in hospital. After Chris reads Slobo’s and Andrić’s texts, the “infernal bridge” (288) becomes a keystone—riddled with truths, half-truths, and lies—to understanding the violence of the Bosnian War.

Chris reads in a letter what Slobo found upon returning to the ćuprija after fleeing Višegrad during the Bosnian War. Slobo alludes to the murder of Bosniaks on the bridge in relation to his own childhood accident of losing a thumb: “Is my thumb bone still at the bottom of the river? But which bone would be mine?” (285). In the tradition of Andrić’s tarih, the “parchment” of history, Bartley records the graffiti written on the bridge by militant Bosnian Serbs:

Here before me on the bridge is the stone tablet, re-erected, the Turkish inscription re-carved, history researched and polished up by Father Tito, and now, I plainly see, sullied again by anti-Turks, this time with paint from spray cans. Hajduk, they spray: OUTLAW. Like tomcats marking a post. FOK ALIJA (a Sarajevo Turk). FOK UNPROFOR (the peace-fakers). FOK BUSH (though we would all like to be American). HVALA ARKAN (thank you to a Belgrade Criminal). (285)

Slobodan himself refers to Bosniaks as Turks, reproducing the essentialist categories of genocidal discourse and drawing a direct historical connection between the bridge and Bosniaks. Chris remembers Slobo’s words when he visits the ćuprija because of Andrić and Slobo. Whereas Slobo understood the ćuprija’s virulent epithets in relation to his own distorted memories, Chris comprehends them through Slobo’s and Andrić’s writings. Their metaphors structure Chris’ own understanding of the Bosnian War, underscoring how representation shapes post-war truths. Drina Bridge’s concern about the construction of histories parallels anxieties about what Stari most’s reconstruction means for Bosnian identities.
Although much international attention has been given to how the bridge metaphor—as represented visually by the reconstruction of Stari most—will reshape post-war “ethnic” identifications, few voices have considered the bridge as a metaphor for gendered negotiations and peace-building. The Belgrade network of Žene u crnom (ZUC, Women in Black), which was founded on October 9, 1991, has consciously engaged the bridge metaphor to enact feminist rememberings of the Bosnian War. For example, in a 2000 Women’s Day statement, ZUC affirms the decision to: “Da govorimo o represiji, ratu, bedi, nasilnoj mobilizaciji, lažnim mostovima, zapaljenim selima... jer nas čutanje neće spasti” (“Speak out about repression, war, poverty, compulsive conscription, non-existent bridges, and burned villages because silence will not bring salvation,” “March 8,” my emphasis).

ZUC continues an annual rite of remembering on the Višegrad čuprija each May. Senka Knežević, who participated in the 2008 commemoration, describes the ZUC’s purpose on the bridge: “to be silent, to be ashamed, bowing our heads, like the red roses all over the bridge walls” (71). She reports that “[o]ut of the 3,000 who were killed or who disappeared in Višegrad [during the Bosnian War], 600 ... were killed on ... Andrić’s bridge” (70). By tossing 3,000 roses into the Drina, one for each person thrown into the river, ZUC constructs the čuprija itself as a grave marker for gendered violence during the Bosnian War.

---

37 The international movement of Women in Black (WIB) began in January 1988, one month after the first Palestinian Intifada, when a group of Israelis began protesting weekly wearing black clothing. On a transnational homepage, WIB self-describes as “a world-wide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence” (womeninblack.org).
In her description of the 2009 ceremony of 3000 roses, Ljiljana Radovanović uses quotation marks around the phrase “under the Drina Bridge,” emphasizing the elliptical relationship of the bridge’s representations to the acts of violence being remembered. The bodies of those present, men and women for peace, express indignation and outrage non-verbally—acknowledging the air between gendered bodies. To quote Irigaray: “Air gives what is indispensable to live, to grow and to speak—to each one, man or woman, to a relation between two not dominated by one or by the other. [...] Respecting the air between us ... grants an approach that nourishes the existence of each one, that allows each to be and to become” (The Way 67). ZUC visibly introduces the feminine into postwar discourse, remembering the air—forgotten by Heidegger—above the bridge.

2.4.3. Holding Breath: The Bridge Dive, circa 1992-3

Since July 2006, another tradition has been established on the ćuprija by the Turistička organizacija Višegrad (Tourist Organization of Višegrad): “Skokovi s višegrad ske ćuprije” (Dives from the Višegrad ćuprija). Unintentionally (but unavoidably), these dives evoke the memory of the 3,000 Bosniaks who were murdered and, in “sport atrocities,” thrown into the Drina. Intentionally, the Višegrad dives conjure Mostar’s 400-year-old diving tradition, which persisted throughout the Bosnian War—first from a tire-covered Stari most in 1992 and then, from 1993 until 2004, from temporary bridges.

Stari most’s “appeasement” has always taken the form of young men diving from the bridge into the Neretva. Architect Bogdan Bogdanović describes the skokovi (dives) that have “mollified” Stari most since the sixteenth century:
Mostovima se moralo ugrađiti, naročito na samom početku gradnje. Mostovi su, eto, i u moderno doba još uvek mogli biti demonska bića, ali što se mostarskog mosta tiče, on je, onako lep kao Apolon, oduvek bio samo dobar, boljeni Bog među Bogovima. I što je naročito važno, umesto velike žrtve, zadovoljavao se veštim ali opasnim skokovima mladih, koji su se sa krune mosta obrušavali u ledenu Nertevu. U tim odvažnim skokovima, bar za moje poimanje simboličnih činova, oduvek je bilo nečeg ritualnog. (84)

Something had to be built into the bridges, especially at the very beginning of their construction. So, even in modern times, the bridges could be demonic beings. But as far as Mostar Bridge is concerned, it was, somehow, as beautiful as Apollo, always nice, a virtual god among gods. And what is particularly important, instead of a great sacrifice, it was satisfied with the skillful but dangerous dives of youngsters, who dove off the crown of the bridge into the ice-cold Neretva. There always was something ritualistic about those courageous dives, at least in my interpretation of the symbolic acts.

Whereas builders propitiated čuprija with human sacrifices, young men offered their dives to Stari most in adoration. Furthermore, in Andrić’s Višegrad, when young women jump from the čuprija, their leaps take another trajectory than when men dive from Stari most: one is a rebellious act of desperation, the other a death-defying leap of faith; one is a place of suffering, the other a place of bravery (and bravado); one femininized, the other masculinized. Young men leap from Stari most “for money and for girls,” while Andrić’s female characters jump from the čuprija because of money and love.

Mostar’s bridge dive has been of symbolic cultural importance from the Ottoman period on and into the Yugoslav years. Mišo Marić (1942-) writes: “Kroz istoriju, most je bio velika matura mostarskih mladića na kojoj se polagao ispit zrelosti” (Throughout history, the bridge used to be the final high school exam of Mostar’s young lads, where they took their test of maturity). In the tradition of the bridge dive, boys and young men

---

38 Evlija Čelebi’s 1664 Seyahatnâme (Putopis or Travelogue), the first written document of this ritual, describes the leaps’ stylistic variations and the gifts of appreciation that young men received from viziers upon resurfacing from the Neretva (see 464).
interacted physically with the metaphorical significations of *Stari most* to “prove” their masculinity, bravery, and love.

Exploring the bridge dive’s metaphoric subjects during the Bosnian War, Velibor Čolić and Michael Sells suggest that tradition symbolized the continued efforts of Mostar’s citizens to maintain their collective identity as a town of “bridge-keepers.” Čolić’s “Mostar”—from the collection *Les Bosniaques (The Bosniaks)*—celebrates the activities that preceded the annual bridge dive. Here is the micro-essay “Mostar” in its entirety:

Lors des dernières opérations pour libérer la cité, les troupes de la Défense territoriale bosniaque durent mener un combat acharné dans les vieux quartiers du centre historique, mais elles parvinrent cependant à sauver le vieux pont, que les Serbes avaient déjà miné.

Le lendemain, les habitants de Mostar organisèrent, comme ils le font d’ailleurs tous les ans, le concours traditionnel de saut dans la rivière, du haut du pont.

Ensuite, ils le recouvrirent d’un coffrage de bois, pour le protège. (89)

During recent operations to liberate the city, Bosnian Territorial Defense troops had to conduct a fierce battle in the old historic city center, but they nevertheless succeeded in saving the old bridge, which the Serbs had already mined.

The next day the people of Mostar organized, as they do every year, the traditional competition of the leap into the river from the top of the bridge.

Then, they covered it with a wooden casing, to protect it.

This condensed description of the labor involved in protecting *Stari most* with a wood and tire covering, removing it, and finally replacing it—all to continue the diving ritual—frames the *skokovi* as a sublime ritual. Čolić’s prose emphasizes the bridge metaphor’s significations of connection, peace, and hope—qualities read into Andrić’s *ćuprija* and mourned after *Stari most*’s destruction.
Michael Sells similarly romanticizes tenacity of Mostar’s skakači (jumpers) after Stari most had already been destroyed:

In the summer of 1994, in the wake of the siege, when east Mostar had been pummeled into ruin and its inhabitants starved, shelled, and confined to cellars for months, the people came out for the annual event. The spectators got their swimsuits and sat along the banks of the river. An improvised, temporary bridge was placed over the blasted-out central section of the great bridge, and the divers dove. (114)

For Sells, this Mostar ritual demonstrates “the stubborn propensity of Bosnians to think in terms of bridges instead of walls” (154). After the 1994 ceasefire, when men seventeen and older still were banned from crossing the (temporary) bridge over the Neretva, a few continued to dive from it as they had from Stari most.

By plunging into the Neretva, Mostar’s skakači connected their past and their future through their interaction with the image of the bridge. Emir Balić, who made some 1000 dives from Stari most, describes the tradition’s significance: “Skočiti sa Starog mosta nije samo sport. […] Odvažnost, oteti se sili zemljine teže, hrabrost i ljepota leta, opasnost. Predvidljivost nepoznatog” (192; To dive off the Old Bridge is not only a sport. […] It is] the daring to fight gravity, the courage and beauty of the flight, the danger. The predictability of the unpredictable). The dive from Stari most allows for the enactment of transcendence on a personal, local, and national level. It enables the skakač to interact with the bridge metaphor, sketching old and new bridges with the movement of his body in time.

If the Old Bridge represents the connection and the passage of time, diving from it is a meditation on (masculinized) Being. Ćamil Sijarić, writing seven years before Stari
most’s collapse, contemplates the solitude of the skakač as a reproduction of the bridge-maker’s vision:


What did that man dream when he made up his mind to make this leap? To take such a leap across the water. To lay stone upon stone, string them together, and catch hold of two banks. He must have thought about the crescent Moon—when the Moon is shaped like a sickle. To have something like that in his hand and toss it over the water. But for it to stay there forever. Unharmed by time. To be equally old and young, as the Moon above it is both old and young.

The skakač becomes the bridge’s builder, laying stones as if they were prayer beads in a tespih (misbaha) or rosary. He is ageless for a moment before hitting the water. Even in the experience of solitude, the diver engages the bridge’s historical associations, such as the crescent moon of sixteenth-century poetry.

Vladimir Pištalco considers the multiple associations that a skakač takes upon himself when he takes flight from the Old Bridge. Pištalco recalls that Stari most has been compared to a rainbow and a stone gull, asserting that the skakač adapts his body to these images. Becoming a bird in flight, the skakač acquires “orlovsk[i] pogled” (Pištalco 152; an eagle’s view) of Mostar. He embodies the idea of the bridge, not unlike Andrić’s fictionalized Mehmed Paša Sokolović (sokol, incidentally, means “falcon”). Pero Zubac considers the young men who dive from Stari most to be “prave laste” (187; real

39 Sokolović’s thoughts are falcon-like in their emotional “flight” to the banks of the Drina, where the road once ended. By building the čuprija, he bridges (premostiti) this agony by linking the place of his origin and the places of his life—a kind of phora that evokes the metaphor’s Greek etymology: meta-+ pherein (to bear)= metaphorein (to transfer).
swallows). Swallow-dives, named after their resemblance in style to the eponymous bird’s flight and quick resurfacing, create new metaphorical meanings for the bridge through masculinized physical enactments repeated over centuries.

Introducing *jouissance* to her description of the *skakač*, Jasmina Musabegović imagines the male body in flight from *Stari most* as a negotiation between pure energy and the bridge’s stones:

Skok. To most vrhom skače. Gore. Produžava se u tijelu. Puknu svojim rascvjetanjem. Dolje. Te naslage, te gomile, ta masa sve veća i jača, uzima zamah, hrli jedna na drugu, nagomilava se, jedna nadrasta drugu. Sloji se. Jače i jače, više i više, duže iduže. Da se vrhom, da se onim jednim varničim lukom u energiju pretvori. To kamenje i masa skače pod nebo pa u rijeku. To je taj most. To je njegova tajna i magija: nagomilana masa se u onom namjerljivom ciku odirivanja dva luka *pretvara u energiju*. (15-6, Musabegović’s emphasis)

The leap. It is the bridge diving with its peak. Up. It elongates its body. They explode with their own flowering. Down. These layers, these piles, this mass, ever bigger and stronger, gains momentum, hurls itself from one to the other, piles up, one overgrows the other. It accumulates. Stronger and stronger, higher and higher, longer and longer. So that with its top, with its welded arch, it transforms itself into energy. This mass of stones leaps under the sky and into the river. This is that bridge. This is its secret and magic: the accumulated mass with its peak resolutely striking two touching arches *transforms itself into energy*.

A male body enacts the bridge, and makes new meanings for it. The *skok* (leap) is the bridge itself in motion, moving from its apex at once up into the air and down into the water. Victor Turner’s understanding of ritual applies to the dive from *Stari most*, wherein through metaphor and metonymy “yesterday’s liminal becomes today’s stabilized” (16). In other words, *skokovi sa Starog mosta* (dives from the Old Bridge) conventionalize particular meanings of the bridge metaphor, many of which purport to be universal, when they are in fact gendered either explicitly or implicitly.
Until more recently, women *skakačice* did not compete in the official competitions from *Stari most*. *Klub Skakača u vodu “Mostari”* (Dive Club “Mostari”) records the names of three women: Seka Vasković, Zijada Demirović Humo, and Paulina Seseljević—but they are not nearly as iconic as Emir Balić (“Istorijat”). One dives from *Stari most* with intention or aggression, not out of the desperation that directs women’s leaps from Andrić’s Ćuprija. Indeed, when cultural texts depict women jumping from *Stari most* or Ćuprija, it is usually to “escape” their fate.\(^\text{40}\)

One well-known example of such a flight is the 1987 film *Hajde de se volimo* (*Let’s Love Each Other*)—named after a song by pop icon Lepa Brena (Fahreta Jahić-Živojinović), who stars as herself. Chased through Mostar’s Old Town, Lepa Brena runs onto the Old Bridge to evade capture by three men. Balancing on its peak, she karate chops two of them before leaping fully-clothed into the Neretva. The camera zooms in on her wide-eyed expression (and perfect hair), before cutting to a wide shot of a shadowed figure diving from *Stari most*. As Lepa Brena’s stunt double, Jadranko Fink, a (male) champion *skakač*, performs a graceful *lasta* (swallow). When the villains hold their noses and jump feet-first after Lepa Brena, her exaggerated athleticism (as performed by Fink) humorously inverts tropes of male suitors diving from *Stari most* to captivate women’s hearts. This gendered reversal recalls with a certain irony the conventions of *sevdalinka*, wherein a woman may pose as a male lover, singing to his female beloved, to serenade him.

Lepa Brena’s campy escape contrasts with representations of tragic female

---

\(^\text{40}\) As we shall soon see, Fata’s leap in Andrić’s Ćuprija exemplifies this trope. She dove from the bridge to “transcend” her earthly (patriarchal) existence.
characters—such as Andrić’s Fata, or “Fate,” Osmanagić—leaping from bridges to their deaths. Fata commits suicide by jumping from the čuprija to avoid her own fate (an unwanted marriage agreed upon by her father). As Radmilla Gorup notes, “the fate of Andrić’s heroines [often] is predestined by the time and circumstances in which they live and which presuppose ... suffering” (161). Andrić’s narrator suggests that Fata has no choices other than marriage or suicide. At the center of the bridge, Fata is “na najbezizlaznjem mestu” (131; “at an inescapable impasse,” 109-10) between these two options, the two towns on the opposite banks, and “između svoga ne i očevog da” (131; “between her father’s yes and her own no,” 109-10).

The narrator’s male gaze focalizes Fata’s suicide as a “natural” consummation of her betrothal. In the days and moments leading up to her jump, the narrator lingers in describing the sensations of her body, “a naročito grudi” (129; “and above all her breasts,” 108). In her bosom, to the rhythm of her own breath, Fata feels “kako ceo brežuljak, sa svim što je na njemu, sa kućom, zgradama, njivama, diše, toplo, duboko, jednomerno, i diže se i spušta zajedno sa svetlim nebom i noćnim prostranstvom” (129; “the whole hillside with all that was on it, houses, outbuildings, fields, breathing warmly, deeply, rising and falling together with the bright sky and nighttime space,” 108). The Drina preserves this feminine “purity” for the narrator’s libidinal male gaze. The day after Fata’s suicide, the river tosses her body onto the shore with her veil turned back, and her wedding dress removed.
2.5. The New Old Bridge

2.5.1 Reconstruction

Much anticipation preceded the construction of a new Stari most. Prior to the project’s completion, there were many concerns as to whether the new bridge would have the same metaphoricity as the old one. Michael Ignatieff, writing for the New York Times in 2002, enumerates some of the international community’s many investments in the bridge:

It has become a metaphor, a bridge from the past to the future, a bridge between Croats and Muslims, a bridge between the internationals and the locals and a bridge between the Muslim world and Europe. The problem with all the metaphors is that the promised reconciliation hasn't actually occurred. Yes, people cross from one side to the other. But they still live completely separate lives. [...] The rebuilding of the Mostar Bridge is one last chance for a happy ending, a metaphor as important to the internationals as it is to the locals. (59)

Ignatieff suggests that the metaphoricity not only persists during the reconstruction process, but also takes on additional new meanings as a site of internationally enforced reconciliation.

Amir Pašić, Gilles Péqueux, and the Turkish company ER-BU worked with both Croats and Bosniaks from Mostar to rebuild the bridge. Many writers wondered: when Péqueux and his workers re-assemble Stari most’s remaining stones together with new ones quarried from the original sixteenth-century source, will it still be the old bridge in metaphor? Accordingly, Péqueux trained his workers in two sixteenth-century methods of stone-cutting, one European, one Ottoman.

This approach did not assuage everyone’s concerns about the new bridge. Ljupko
Antunović, for example, articulates his own anxiety about whether the new bridge’s metaphoricity will be effective emotionally: “Volio bih da Stari most ne izgubi dušu, a tamo gdje ne dođe ljudska ruka kamen nema dušu” (132; “I wish the old bridge never loses its soul, and where the human hand never reaches, the stone has no soul”). Similarly, Ramić, who painted Stari most hundreds of times, is skeptical about the new bridge’s metaphoricity in a 2003 interview: “Sumnjam da će njegova nova kostrukcija imati trag vremenske patine, hercegovačkog sunca, i kiša” (qtd. in Jusufbegović 104; I doubt that its new construction will bear the trace of time’s patina, of the Herzegovinian sun and rain). Before the New Old Bridge opened in 2004, even Péqueux shared Ramić’s concern, declaring that “beauty … is built from mistakes” (qtd. in Ignatieff 59).

Treating Péqueux’s reconstruction work as a meditation on communication with the Other, Jean-Luc Godard’s 2004 Notre Musique (Our Music) visits the bridge’s worksite. When Israeli journalist Judith Lerner travels to Bosnia-Herzegovina to question the possibility of reconciliation, she sees the bridge as a liminal space that exists “because of Palestine” and the desire to see a place “where reconciliation seem[s] possible.” In Mostar, Judith visits a grade school classroom where children are learning about the history of sixteenth-century Stari most, which the pupils born in the 1990s never would have seen in real life. For them, the bridge is a site of what James E. Young calls secondhand memory, mediated by various cultural representations.

The students, boys and girls, sing the refrain to “Mostarac pravi” (“A Real [Male] Mostar Citizen”): “Ko, zar ja, da se bojim/Mostarac pravi od glave do pete?/Ja sam skakao sa Starog mosta/Još dok sam bio dijete” (Who am I to fear, indeed/a real
Mostarac from head to toe?/ I jumped from the Old Bridge/When I was still a child). The song narrates a young boy becoming a man and proving his love to a girl by jumping from the bridge. As much about Mostar as about masculinity, the song might as well be called “Muškarac pravi” (“A Real Man”). Judith focalizes the scene from the back of the classroom, hearing the music, but not understanding the words (which the film does not translate).

Leaning against a fence near the reconstruction site for the Old Bridge, she reads Levinas’ *Entre nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre* (*Entre nous: Essays on Thinking-of-the-Other*). Contemplating this ontological work, she considers the Levinasian idea that there are always “two faces and one truth: the bridge.” Péqueux, playing himself at the *Stari most* reconstruction site, reiterates the same phrase. The tagline seems to condense Western philosophies of embodiment, perception, and comprehension (wherein the body is an instrument of comprehension, weaving all perceived objects into its schema) (see Cazeaux). The two faces remain masculinized, but the “truth” of the bridge is questioned.

Godard suggests that representation—whether gestural, written, oral, or visual—creates any truth that may exist. Seeking truth herself, Judith perceives the rescuing, counting, and labeling of bridge stones that had fallen into Neretva as being “like rediscovering the origin of language.” The camera lingers over these white stone pictographs, scattered across the ground and labeled with black numbers. The piecing together of the bridge’s stones metaphorizes the editing and splicing of his film. Some 140 such limestone pieces were eventually incorporated into the new Old Bridge, and
more than a third as many films have been produced about the Bosnian War.

A voiceover recalls the interactional ritual of the bridge dive—which, in another time, one could once have watched from Judith’s current vantage point, a rock at the bank of the river. Suddenly, three Native Americans appear on the bank of the Neretva, figures from the United States’ own genocidal past. These displaced, nameless figures—silent (and problematic) icons of suffering—skip stones on the river before driving away in an old car. These Native Americans seem to enact the minhag, or Jewish traditional custom, of leaving stones at a gravesite—here, that of Stari most.

Godard repeatedly draws parallels among the genocides of the Americas’ indigenous peoples, the Shoah, and the Bosnian War. As Judith remains perched on a rock, hesitantly raising her camera to document the reconstruction, the same Native Americans return to stand stoically in front of the scaffolding-encased bridge (see figures 4 and 5). One man now wears deerskin leggings; the other is on horseback and wears a
headdress. The woman wears a deerskin dress. They stare straight at Judith, and straight at the camera. Godard offers no clues whether this encounter is a de-centering experience for the masculinized Subject, something approximating Levinas’ positive infinite of the Other—or whether the essentialized and silenced Other is invented and taken hold of by the bridge. Ultimately, Godard’s iconic use of people intimates multiple questions about the ethnicizing politics of the bridge and the universalizing language of human rights. What—or who—is the foundation sacrifice of the new Old Bridge and its metaphors?

The renowned Mostar painter Afan Ramić contends that being a bridge always represents some sacrifice: “Ako imaš namjeru ili želju da budeš most između nečega i nekoga, moraš se pomiriti sa činjenicom da ćes biti gažen” (qtd. in Jusufbegović 104; If you intend or wish to be a bridge between something or somebody, you need to accept the fact that you will be stepped on). Discourses on the reconstruction of the Old Bridge downplay this aspect, asserting that Novi stari most would benefit everyone universally.

In the international community, Stari most’s reconstruction was widely interpreted as reconciliation among “ethnicities.” To this end, UNESCO explains the reasoning behind including Stari most and its surroundings on the list of world heritage sites: “With the ‘renaissance’ of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the City of Mostar—as an exceptional and universal symbol of coexistence of communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds—has been reinforced and strengthened, underlining the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and powerful co-operation in the face of overwhelming catastrophes” (“Old Bridge Area”). One has to question the value of this post-war discourse, however,
when even in 1996—for example—a seventeen-year-old Bosniak boy was murdered by Croatian police for crossing (another) bridge to the west bank after curfew (see Ignatieff 58).

2.5.2. Ceremony

After nine years of reconstruction, the New Old Bridge opened with much pomp on July 23, 2004, featuring a program of over 2,000 participants. Under the headline “Bridge Opens With Splash,” the BBC reported that “the reopening is being seen as symbolic of the healing of divisions between Muslims and Croats.” This statement is the corollary to the international news media’s response to the bridge’s destruction, which was perceived as the concretization of a metaphoric divide between Muslims and Croats. Numerous politicians, celebrities, and well-wishing citizens attended the event.

Among them was Chris Patten (1944–), who spoke on behalf of the European Commission: “There is another bridge as clearly visible as Stari Most. A bridge which Bosnia needs to cross. On the other side one can clearly see Bosnia’s future. A European future. Your country will cross that bridge one day soon.” Patten, drawing on metaphors of Bosnia-Herzegovina as between East and West, situates the New Old Bridge as a pathway to eventual membership in the European Union. The Ottoman bridge no longer merely connects; it now points westward.

Other speeches also focused on what future the reconstruction might symbolize and welcome for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Lord Ashdown, then the High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina, proclaimed: “The destruction of this great bridge a decade ago
brought home to millions around the world the full force of the evil that was happening here. [...] I hope and believe that its reopening today will be an equally powerful moment” (BBC, “Mostar Bridge”). In other words, Ashdown hopes that the construction of the bridge will catalyze metaphoric innovation just as its destruction did.

Cultural figures, such as actor Goran Matović, likewise celebrated the return of a physical artifact as a visual representation of the bridge metaphor: “Spajanje Starog mosta nema samo simbolično značenje… To je jezik ljubavi između ljudi i on se ponovo kreira zahvaljujući tom mostu i toj ideji da se pređe na drugu stranu” (172; “Finishing the Old Bridge does not only have a symbolic meaning... It is a language of love between people, and it is recreated thanks to the bridge and the idea to cross to the other side”). What was reconstructed was the physical form of a metaphorical concept.

The bridge plays into what Ignatieff terms “metaphor-mongering,” which amounts to seeking reconstruction in symbolic images rather than in real reconciliations and memorializations (59). The bridge becomes an icon of what Aida Hozic terms “the unwanted colonies”—the undesired sites of “distant conflicts” which are taken as visual objects by the global media. Accordingly, the new Mostar becomes a site not only for Yugo-nostalgia, but also for anyone wishing to elliptically engage with the Bosnian War. Some postcards cater to this kind of tourism, juxtaposing a sepia-toned image of Emir Balić’s pre-war lasta with a faded color photograph of his war-time leap from a makeshift platform. Journalist Richard Bernstein likens the new bridge to “a slightly whitened reincarnation of the old bridge, as seen on picture postcards, paintings and the beaten copper plaques available in the local tourist shops” (A3). Such commodification
simultaneously offers access to an exoticized Ottoman past, Yugoslav pluralism, and wartime suffering mediated by international intervention. The opening ceremony proclaimed the bridge’s cultivated metaphoricity—the ostensible reconciliation and reconstruction of post-Dayton Bosnia—with speeches, concerts, and dances. Mladen Vojičić (1960–), a singer popularly known as Tifa and a former member of rock band Bijelo Dugme (White Button), sang “Stari” (“The Old One”) at the opening ceremony of the New Old Bridge. The refrain conveys the masculine perspective of the anthropomorphized Stari most: “Ja pogoden, nisam ni umro, ni pao/samo sam morao skočiti dole” (246; I was shot, but did not die or fall/I only had to dive down). The song suggests that Stari jumped into the Neretva, imitating its adoring divers who articulated their affection for “the old guy” with the lasta (swallow) and other techniques.

The ceremony also incorporated a diving demonstration. The legendary swallow-diver Emir Balić was among the ceremonial officiaries, declaring: “Veoma sam uzbuđen! Nikada nisam mogao ni pomisliti da ću nadživjeti Stari most, da ću skočiti sa nekog novog Starog mosta” (182; I am very excited! I never could have thought that I would live longer than the Old Bridge, that I would dive off a new Old Bridge). Balić’s participation in the ceremony foregrounds the established and novel metaphoricity of the diving tradition, positing a continuum from Yugoslavia, to war-time Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the present post-Dayto n state.

Balić’s dives, according to Hazim Akmadžić, are flights rather than falls: “podsjeća na one fantasticne skokove Emira Balića, kad se figura i prostor tolio

41 Zlatan Fazlić (1959–), affectionately known as “Fazla,” and Kemal Monteno, or Kemo, accompanied.
poistovjete da postaju jedno, pa imate dojam da prostor izlijeće iz skakača a skakač iz prostora” (196; reminds one of those fantastic dives of Emir Balić, when figure and space become so much the same that they become one, and it seems to you that the space leaps out of the diver, and the diver from space). Perhaps this understanding contributes to Balić’s memorialization on a 2 KM stamp, designed by A. Hafizović and issued by BH Pošta in 2001.42 Balić’s figure seems to coalesce multiple discourses on Stari most and Novi stari most, Yugoslavia and post-1995 Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The tradition of the bridge dive continues to this day, as does the creation of new metaphorical interactions with the reconstructed bridge in Mostar. For Bosnian women and men, the way in which the bridge metaphor enters into post-war cultural memory determines in part how their war-time experiences are remembered and addressed through law, social programs, and literary, filmic, or painterly accounts. Emphasizing different metaphorical interactions produces conflicting post-war histories about the relationship among the Ottoman Empire, Yugoslavia, and contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some perceive Novi stari most as a mere simulacrum; others applaud the reconstruction as metaphorically linking cultures, faiths, and historical periods.

The bridge metaphor continues to accrue gendered as well as ethnicized meanings and associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whether enacted by Andrić, sixteenth-century cultural geography, or the actions of Yugoslav citizens, attacked as a metaphor, or rebuilt

42 There are three postal authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sarajevo’s Bosna-Hercegovina Pošta (Bosnia-Herzegovina Post), Mostar’s Hrvatska Pošta (Croatian Post), and Banja Luka’s Srpska Pošta (Serbian Post).
by international or local news media or writers, the bridge remains an interactional metaphor in many representations of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s real and imagined complexities. The bridge metaphor’s diverse references reveal multiple gendered ontologies.
Chapter 3

The Rwandan Genocide, Metalepsis, and Gendered Practice: Deconstructing

_Inyenzi_ and _Ubuhake_ Metaphors

3.1. Introduction

Between April and July 1994, over 800,000 Rwandans were murdered in the Rwandan Genocide. Before and during this _itsembabatutsi_ (genocide against the Tutsi)\(^1\), RTLM (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines) and _Kangura_ (_Wake Up_) called for the “extermination” of Tutsi _inyenzi_ (cockroaches).\(^2\) Numerous novels, plays, films, and poems now reproduce this same metaphor, articulating the very genocidal discourse being condemned. The cockroach metaphor also enters into legal testimony at _gacaca_ courts and the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda), as well as _testimonios_ published abroad by survivors, including Esther Mujawayo and Yolande Mukagasana.

---

1 Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa are contested social categories in Rwanda, generally represented as approximately 85%, 14%, and 1% of the population, respectively. (As we shall see, the Twa rarely figure into considerations of post-colonial Central African politics—or into discourses of and on the Rwandan Genocide.) The Kinyarwanda terms for Hutu and Tutsi are _umuhutu_ (plural, _bahutu_) and _umututsi_ (plural, _batutsi_). Peter Uvin provides an excellent summary of three conflicting positions regarding how “Hutu” and “Tutsi” came to have meaning: 1) essentialist, 2) social-constructivist, and 3) radical constructivist (“Reading” 76-8).

2 In emphasizing genocidal violence, “the Rwandan Genocide” and “_itsembabatutsi_” both subsume Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) murders in 1994 of tens of thousands of Hutu, as well as ongoing FPR and violence against Hutu refugees in Congo (see, for example, Uvin, “Reading” 75). While recognizing that violence has also targeted Hutus, I use the terms “the Rwandan Genocide” and “_itsembabatutsi_” to refer specifically to genocidal violence against Tutsis.
Tracing backwards from these survivors’ testimonios to genocidal propaganda, mid-century political discourse, and nineteenth-century institutions reveals inyenzi to be a site of metalepsis (transumption), defined by Quintilian as “a transition from one trope to another” (323) and by Harold Bloom as “a trope-reversing trope, a figure of a figure” (102). Metalepsis distances the cockroach metaphor from the oppressive social institutions in which genocidal discourse identifies Tutsi exploitation of Hutu.

In particular, metalepsis falsely separates the cockroach metaphor from ubuhake—a private contract between a male patron (shebuja), who provides one or more cows (ingabane) to a male client (mugaragu), who in turn rendered his services by caring for the cows and cultivating. In the early twentieth century, colonial historiography foregrounded ubuhake, emphasizing its perceived similarity to European feudalism. This emphasis, according to Catharine and David Newbury, often imagined ubuhake as a “social glue” that “gave the appearance of political homogeneity to Rwandan culture” and its social categories (“Peasants” 836). Colonialists— and Rwandans seeking to gain from colonial cooperation— constructed ubuhake as an inherently “Tutsi” institution, locating evidence of racialized political power in the “Tutsi” role of patron (on which the “Hutu” client depends).

Changing perceptions of ubuhake also have informed post-colonial discourses on “Hutu” and “Tutsi” social categories. Since the mid-twentieth century, “Hutu” political discourses have represented ubuhake as the epitome of systemic Tutsi oppression against Hutu. It follows that ubuhake has been understood variously as recommandation, or council, during the colonial period; servage pastoral, or pastoral servitude, during Kayibanda’s First Republic (1961-1973); and clientélisme, or clientship, during
Habyarimana’s Second Republic (1973-94). Each of these three historical interpretations renders *ubuhake* as a metaphor for inequality between the (male) Hutu client (umugaragu) and the (male) Tutsi patron (shebuja).³ Although *ubuhake* was outlawed in 1954, it long has metaphorized Hutu-Tutsi power relations in political discourse. By invoking *ubuhake* metaleptically, the cockroach metaphor veils the political history of genocidal discourse and further essentializes “racial” categories.

On its own, *inyenzi* remains an odious bestializing metaphor. But when Anglophone and Francophone texts characterize the cockroach metaphor as an independent *expression* of primordial hatred, rather than as a metaleptic *instrument* of genocidal violence, they reproduce uneven power relations between “Africa” and the “West.” Such Africanist discourse opposes “Africa” and the “West,” forcibly locating all local phenomena within this imaginary opposition. According to Christopher Miller, Africanist discourse often invokes “Africa” not only as a location, but also as a trope: “a part for a whole or a whole for a part” that often “recount[s] a colonial history, designating a difference” (10). Like Orientalism (as defined by Edward Said), and like Balkanism (as delineated by the previous chapter), Africanist discourse consists of “repeated rhetorical moves” (Miller 14). All three discourses of otherness employ veils of “realism” to project a symmetrical (and objectified) Other in relation to “Europe,” “the

---
³ As Jean-Damascène Gasanabo notes, the term *recommandation*—as used by the colonial historian de Lacger, for example—suggests that a weak solicitor (*umuhakwa*) asks a stronger individual to protect him (Gasanabo, “Akazi” 52). This interpretation falsely equates *ubuhake* to European feudalism, wherein the *shebuja* is the lord and the *umugaragu* is the vassal. Similarly, Alexis Kagame’s use of the term *servage* emphasizes the *umugaragu*’s dependence and obligation to the *shebuja*. Gasanabo counters that the patron’s “direction of control is more marked than the [client’s] search for protection” (“Akazi” 52).
West,” and various other “subjects.”

Africanist discourse, always generating concepts of alterity, further veils the metaleptic relationship between inyenzi and ubuhake, positioning the Rwandan genocide as a spatially and temporally unbounded conflict. And, in this attendant generalized and dehistoricized context, the Kinyarwanda terms inyenzi and interahamwe (“those-who-aim-at-the-same-target,” the predominantly Hutu génocidaires) shape knowledge production of Rwandan genocidal discourse as especially or uniquely demonizing.

The inyenzi metaphor thereby contributes to dismissals of Rwanda as exceptional to both European and African historiographies. Mahmood Mamdani (1947-) observes: “For Africans, [the 1994 genocide] turns into a Rwandan oddity; and for non-Africans, the aberration is Africa” (7-8). To the contrary, both inside and outside Africa, all genocides depend on “discourses of otherness,” such as the one shaped in the Rwandan context by metaleptic investments in the inyenzi metaphor. All discourses of otherness, Josias Semujanga notes, incorporate “des stéréotypes, des préjugés, des clichés, des mythes et des idéologies dans l’identification de soi et de l’autre en rapport avec le passé” (41; “stereotypes, prejudices, clichés, commonplace statements, myths, and ideologies in the identification of the self and the other with regard to the past,” 62). I contend that the inyenzi metaphor, as a site of metalepsis, makes the discursive features of the Rwandan Genocide, produces semantic and historical displacements, and effects psychic and material violence. Even when literature, film, and news media represent the Rwandan
genocide as having neither history nor precedent, the reproduced cockroach metaphor still invokes through metalepsis a mythico-history\textsuperscript{5} structured by \textit{ubuhake} metaphors. By metaleptically referencing \textit{ubuhake} (as gendered practices), the cockroach metaphor simultaneously bestializes Tutsis as less than human and sexualizes Tutsi women as women.

The \textit{inyenzi} metaphor first gained prominence during the 1960-61, 1962, and 1963 massacres in post-independence Rwanda as a political self-designation by the pro-Tutsi FPR (\textit{Front patriotique rwandais}-Rwandan Patriotic Front). At the same time, militant Hutu discourse emphasized \textit{ubuhake} metaphors. Grégoire Kayibanda’s\textsuperscript{6} 1957 publication of the \textit{Manifeste des Bahutu} (\textit{The Hutu Manifesto}) explicitly linked Hutu oppression to \textit{ubuhake}. The concurrent development of \textit{ubuhake} metaphors in Hutu discourse and \textit{inyenzi} metaphors in Tutsi discourse established a metaleptic relationship between \textit{ubuhake} and \textit{inyenzi} metaphors. By the late 1980s, militant Hutu discourse used the metaphor \textit{inyenzi} to refer to all Tutsi, men and women. In the early 1990s, the \textit{inyenzi} referred to \textit{ubuhake} more and more elliptically, but gender continued to intervene in the two metaphors’ metaleptic relationship, as well as among the contested identificatory categories of Hutu and Tutsi.

This chapter will historicize the post-1994 circulation of the ‘cockroach’

\textsuperscript{4} The language of Rwanda is Kinyarwanda. Inhabitants of Rwanda are \textit{Banyarwanda} (singular, \textit{Munyarwanda}). The language of Burundi is Kirundi. Inhabitants of Burundi are \textit{Barundi} (singular, \textit{Murundi}).

\textsuperscript{5} Liisa Malkki defines “mythico-history” as “an interlinked set of ordering stories which converged to make (or remake) a world” (\textit{Purity and Exile} 55). As Malkki emphasizes, mythico-history is “[m]ythical not in its truth or falsity, but in its concern with order in a fundamental, cosmological sense” (\textit{Purity and Exile} 55).

\textsuperscript{6} Grégoire Kayibanda (1924-1976) was president of Rwanda from 1962 until 1973,
metaphor by exploring its metaleptic—and gendered—relationship to *ubuhake* in Rwandan cultural history. Colonial historiographers and diverse Rwandan historical actors used *ubuhake* metaphors to render Hutu and Tutsi increasingly static categories, where they had once been fluid and mobile. Throughout the political transformations associated with *ubuhake* metaphors, gender—a seemingly more rigid category than Hutu or Tutsi—intervened in politically-charged, anachronistic readings of labor history and contemporary marriage practices.

3.2. Defining “Hutu,” “Tutsi,” and “Twa”: Colonial Contact, Myth, and *Ubuhake* from 1894 until 1957

3.2.1. Colonial Narcissism, Dualized Identifications, and Triple Chieftaincy

*Ubuhake*, to which, as we shall see shortly, the *inyenzi* metaphor always referred metaleptically in genocidal discourse, is inextricable from the historiography of Hutu and Tutsi categories. The pre-colonial history of Hutu and Tutsi, as well as *ubuhake*, is always necessarily a contingent discourse because it describes an oral civilization. For example, the colonial historiography of Albert Pagès, Louis de Lacger, Léon Delmas, Jean Hiernaux, and Marcel d’Hertefelt projected racialized and ethnicized connotations onto the categories of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Narcissistic colonial ideology positioned the initial moment of contact—when German Count von Götzen became the first European to reach King Rigeri IV Rwabugiri’s court in 1894 (C. Newbury, *Cohesion* 53)—as a benchmark of Rwandan historical progress. As colonial histories were often dynastic in focus, Rwabugiri’s late nineteenth-century kingdom, by virtue of bridging pre-colonial

when Juvénal Habyarimana took over in a coup.
and colonial Rwanda, came to represent “pure” Rwandan history. By re-imagining identifications in Rwabugiri’s pre-colonial kingdom, various historical actors have asserted different “true” meanings of “Hutu” and “Tutsi”, as well as of “ubuhake,” in support of diverse ideologies.

Since any understanding of identifications (whether imposed or chosen) and institutions (whether legislated or elective) engages with contemporary post-genocide politics, there is much debate about the meaning(s) of Hutu and Tutsi categories during King Rwabugiri’s rule from circa 1860 until 1895. René Lemarchand highlights the anachronism of this focus, arguing that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa all identified with the same symbolic universe in pre-colonial Rwanda (Burundi 36). Catharine Newbury likewise asserts that Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa were fluid political labels, wherein one’s loyalty to the king functioned as a source of local status. The meaning and significance of these categories differed by region, as did Mwami Rwabugiri’s powers (C. Newbury, Cohesion 9, 52). Current historiography suggests that clan and regional affiliations were more important to self-identifications and socio-political exchanges in late nineteenth-century Rwanda than the categories of Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa.

Nonetheless, early colonial historiography—and, after 1959, the discourse of PARMEHUTU (Parti du mouvement pour l’émancipation Hutu—Party of the Movement

---

7 *Abiru* (bards with knowledge of the esoteric code, or *ubwiru*) connected the performance of harvest rights, pastoral activities, and marriage rituals with the royal succession of kings, whose status was represented through a rich vocabulary of metaphor and metonymy (see Kagame, *Code*; de Lame).

8 Similarly, in Burundi, “status, not ‘ethnic identity’ was the principal determinant of rank and privilege. Status derived from things like historical connection to the monarchy (as in between Tutsi Banayaruguru and Tutsi Hima)” (Lemarchand, *Burundi* 10-1).
for Hutu Emancipation)—conflated Rwabugiri’s system of ‘triple chieftaincy’ with a dualistic understanding of Hutu and Tutsi (effectively eliminating Twa from political discourse): land chiefs were Hutu; livestock chiefs were Tutsi; and army chiefs were Tutsi or Hutu. In this dualistic reading of Rwabugiri’s triple chieftaincy as Hutu/Tutsi, colonial administrators, functionaries, and historians located “evidence” of Tutsi superiority. These binary interpretations of Rwabugiri’s “triple chieftaincy” contributed to a similarly dualistic understanding of ubuhake, wherein the patron is Tutsi and the client is Hutu.

The socio-political valence of Hutu and Tutsi categories began shifting perceptibly after Rwabugiri’s death in 1895, when European competition to colonize southwestern Rwanda intensified. Outside of Rwabugiri’s central court, “there were at least two major zones that were culturally—but not politically—Banyarwanda” (Mamdani 52). Internal conflicts arose among Tutsi-led factions (from central regions) seeking to control the royal court; between regional elites and central authorities; and among different classes (C. Newbury, Cohesion 54). Once Germany established colonial rule in 1898, the Tutsi elite began acting as intermediaries for the colonial administration

---

9 According to Semujanga, when Kayibanda founded this populist, anti-Tutsi party on October 9, 1959, he “va inscrire l’idéologie du génocide ... dans le champ politique du Rwanda contemporain” (139; “register(ed) the ideology of genocide … in the political domain of contemporary Rwanda,” 151).

10 Rwabugiri used a system of chiefs to increase the power of his central court. As umwami, he appointed a provincial chief, umutware w’ubutaka or umutware w’intebe, to represent him in each polity. In turn, they appointed hill chiefs, abatware b’umusoozi, who collected land préstations (duties), or amakoro y’ubutake (see C. Newbury, Cohesion 42). (Note that hills, rather than villages, constitute(d) the primary organizational unit of rural Rwanda. Each hill is divided into quarters.) Additionally, most hills had a land chief, or umunyabutaka; a livestock chief, or umunyamukene; and
Colonial administrators—and Tutsis seeking personal gain—sought justification for seizing power in dualistic and increasingly racialized interpretations of Rwandan systems of social organization.

Although Hutu and Tutsi are neither “races” nor “tribes,” early colonial law personified them as both. Mamdani emphasizes: “Through its discourse on race and ethnicity, the colonial state tried to naturalize political differences” (27). In other words, a “semantic restructuring”—as Semujanga terms the racialization of political power—attributed physiognomic characteristics to “Hutu” and “Tutsi.” Of course, Rwandans too, in their daily lives, always have acted in the development of this “semantic restructuring.”

3.2.2. The Hamitic Myth, Benegihanga, and Fraternal Origins

For European colonialists in the African Great Lakes region, the Hamitic myth served to classify and control local clans, lineages, and regional affiliations. Colonial discourse, drawing on scientific racism, characterized Tutsi as a “Hamitic race” (descendants of Noah’s son, Ham) superior to the “Bantu race.” As the Hamitic myth instituted false binaries between Tutsi/Hutu, it also inflected clan, lineage, and “tribe”

---

11 While German functionaries favored Tutsis, missionaries evangelized Hutus. A group of elite Hutu clergy developed around missions until a “modernizing” movement effectively rendered the Church became Tutsi (de Lame 49/50-1). Semujanga explores in detail the role of the Church in reconfiguring the tripolar structure of pre-Christian Rwanda (Hutu-Tutsi-Twa) to a bipolar structure (bakristu-bapagani [Christians and pagans]).

12 Peter Sklaník notes that socially-constructed distinctions between categories of “tribal peoples” and “non-tribal peoples” suggest “that the former are still tribal: they represent an earlier stage in human social evolution when people belonged to ‘tribes’ rather than to
with a European conception of “race.” Citing comparative measurements of Hutu and Tutsi skulls, heads, legs, and noses as “evidence,” propagators of the Hamitic myth falsely conflated clan (*ubwoko*) with “race.” Rather than representations of somatic realities, stereotypes attributed to Hutu and Tutsi are anthropomorphic manifestations of hateful ideologies.

European colonialists first essentialized social categories according to indigenous production activities, such as hunting, agriculture, and herding. They identified hunter populations (Pygmies and Twa), agriculturalist populations (Bantu and Hutu), and herders (Hima and Tutsi) in multiple nineteenth-century kingdoms, including: Rwanda and Burundi; Bunyoro, Buganda, Ankole, and Toro (modern Uganda); Buha and Karagwe (modern Tanzania); and Bushi (modern DR Congo) (see Semujanga 98/114). Only in Rwanda and Burundi, however, did the Hamitic myth strengthen the institutions “that reproduced the Tutsi as a racialized minority” in their relationship to the colonial state (Mamdani 87).13 John Hanning Speke (1827-1864), the English explorer who wrote *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, first expressed the Hamitic theory that Tutsi (and Hima in Uganda) are Abyssinian descendents, whereas Hutu (and Iru in Uganda) are Bantu (see Chrétien, *Great Lakes* 71). The seminal colonial works of Rwandan historiography — including Albert Pagès 1933 *Un royaume hamite au centre d’Afrique (A Hamitic Kingdom in Central Africa)*, Louis de Lacger’s 1939 *Le Ruanda (Rwanda)*, and Jules Sassereth’s 1948 *Le Ruanda-Urundi, Étrange royaume féodal au modern nations” (68). Additionally, tribes often are imagined as “distinct and separate units” whose identities are “ancient and powerful”—and therefore predisposed to conflict (Sklaník 69).
cœur d’Afrique (Ruanda-Urundi, A Foreign, Feudalist Kingdom in the Heart of Africa)— developed further this Hamitic myth.

Racializing mythology within ethnographic historiography invested Tutsi with “superiority” by locating connotative meanings for Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa in mythical time, where cosmology and history are indistinguishable (see Anderson 36). These myths present each Rwandan social group as having a historically known common ancestor (umulyaango), essentializing difference among socio-political groups as “fraternal.” The Hamitic myth racialized the Rwandan myth of Benegihanga, the sons of Gihanga, which describes both Hutu and Twa as cursed by Imana. Tradition associates the founding of the Rwandan monarchy with Gihanga, and I paraphrase Semujanga’s telling:

When Gihanga was near death, he needed to choose a lineage chief from among his three sons— Gahutu, Gatutsi, Gatwa, givers of the names and mythic ancestors of the Bahutu, Batutsi, and the Batwa. Imana gave each of the three sons a jug of milk, commanding that he return it still full. The next day, Gatutsi welcomed Imana and presented him with the full jug, saying that he saved the milk to share it. Gatwa’s jug was already empty, and Gahutu’s half full. Imana cursed Gatwa, and ordered Gahutu to be subordinate to his brother Gatutsi, whom he appointed chief. (Origins 86-7)

The myth of Benegihanga positions Tutsi as “natural rulers” according to their giving of milk. “In the popular consciousness of most Barundi [and Banyarwanda],” René Lemarchand (1932-) claims, “the exercise of power is virtually synonymous with gift

---

13 In Congo and Uganda, for example, Hutu and Tutsi once belonged to a single political identity, the Banyarwanda (Mamdani 36).
14 Kagame, in his Abrégé I, dates Gihanga’s reign c. 1091-1124 (37). Like Semujanga, Mamdani consider the myth of Benegihanga in relation to the Rwandan Genocide (see Victims 81).
giving” (12). Although the oral traditions make no reference to the Hutu-Tutsi antagonism, or to other pre-colonial difficulties (Lemarchand 34), (post-)colonial emphasis on ubuhake underscores the significance of Tutsi giving milk in this narrative. As colonial law—and the ways in which Rwandans accessed power—racialized Hutu and Tutsi categories, creation narratives served to qualify socio-economic difference as essential. Rwandans assimilated Hamitic metaphors, in part, by relating them to the gendered practice of ubuhake.

3.2.3. Ubuhake, Metaphor, and Colonial Law from 1923-1956

Under the Belgian administration, Hamitic ideology catalyzed changes in political, social, and cultural relations as represented by ubuhake. In 1918, after the Treaty of Versailles made Ruanda-Urundi a League of Nations protectorate to be governed by Belgium, colonial discourse began politicizing ubuhake. The Belgian administration increasingly defined social categories on an ethnic basis, as the colonial government was standardized in the 1920s. In 1924, the Belgian administration codified uburetwa (forced labor, also known as akazi) as an obligation for forty-two days a year (Mamdani 97). In 1926, the Mortehan Law weakened indigenous royal authority by suppressing the functions of the triple chieftaincy (Semujanga 123/138). This law’s detrimental effects on the Hutu were intentional. Colonial authorities, such as Father Léon Classe, considered it Georges Mortehan’s job as Belgian Resident to

15 Lemarchand notes that ubugabo – man, husband, umpire, authority, virility, force—derives from the root kugaba, meaning both “to rule” and “to give” (12).
16 The Belgian empire consisted of three colonies from 1901-1962: the Congo Free State, the Belgian Congo, and Ruanda-Urundi.
17 Georges Mortehan was the Belgian Resident four times: 1919, 1920-1923, 1926-1928, and 1929.
reserve power for the Tutsi.

After 1926, the Belgian colonial administration required Rwandans to carry an ‘identity card,’ designating their affiliation as either ‘Hutu,’ ‘Tutsi,’ or ‘Twa’ (see, for example, Semujanga 86/103). Due to the European misconception that all Tutsi are herders and all Hutu are farmers, identity cards contributed to the racialization of Rwandan social categories and the metaphorization of ubuhake. This process reconfigured normative aspects of power relationships in Rwanda according to ubuhake’s patron-client frame. As Danielle de Lame observes, “la fascination des Européens pour le bétail et ses pasteurs, liée à des phénomènes d’ethnicité, [...] amènera certains à négliger les aspects économique de élevage” (220; “the European fascination with cattle and herders led to neglect of economic aspects of cattle keeping, producing new perceptions of ethnicity,” 343). Perceiving the ubuhake role of patron and kingship as Tutsi, the Belgian administration championed Tutsi as essentially powerful.

In this spirit, Léon Classe reminded Georges Mortehan—in a letter dated September 21, 1929—that Tutsi power is in “l’intérêt vrai du pays” (“the country’s true interest”) (Classe 71). Classe, Mortehan, and the Belgian administration conflated Tutsi power with “racial superiority.” Concurrently, they racialized important symbols of the Rwandan monarchy—such as the kalinga (ritual drum) and intore (lit. “the chosen ones,” dancers who performed for the royal court)—as “Tutsi.” Once metonyms for the mwami (king), these dynastic symbols came to represent political power of the Tutsi
subject class (see, for example, Mamdani). By extension, these dynastic symbols also came to signify the unequal power relations of *ubuhake*.

Although the colonial administration favored the Tutsi, *ubuhake* didn’t always coincide with Belgian indirect rule. Historically, *ubuhake* didn’t always coincide with administrative relations either—competition might exist between the *shebuja* (patron) and the *mugaragu* (client) (de Lame 46/47). In pre-colonial Rwandan regions controlled by the court, one way of preserving one’s personally owned cows (*imbata*) from arbitrary takeover was to place oneself under protection of a chief. *Ubuhake*, expressed through tokens of allegiance, thus functioned as a means of control primarily among Tutsi with political positions (de Lame 221/346). Of course, as Catherine and David Newbury note: “labor relations extended far beyond clientship forms; they were tied to state power, to land access, to mobility factors, to local power relations, to the politics of kinship, and to power relations within the residential unit: drought, commercial opportunities, marriage relations, and health” (“Peasants” 861-2). Forced cultivation of cash crops in the 1920s and two major famines, from 1924-5 and 1928-30, are also mitigating factors in the history of *ubuhake*. Together, they changed agricultural and social practices, weakening the king’s powers. Political, social, and historical focus thereafter shifted from regions to royalty, from ecological distinctions to ethnicity, and from the local initiatives to a mythico-history of external origins (Newbury and

---

18 Because historical events in Rwanda and Burundi have often been independent but convergent, it is worth noting here as a point of contrast that kingship in Burundi “derived much of its legitimacy from its symbolic identification with Hutu elements” (Lemarchand, *Burundi* 38).
Newbury, “Peasants” 849). As Belgium unified and enlarged regional units of governance, two different Tutsi monarchs administered the two territories (later to become Rwanda and Burundi).

Toward the end of 1931, Belgium began trying to replace King Yuhi V Musinga (1896-1931). Father Léon Classe pressured the colonial administration to install a younger king open to Catholicism, and on November 16, 1931, Musinga’s son Mutara III Rudahigwa (c.1912-1959) was crowned. Shortly thereafter, the 1933-4 census classified whoever owned ten or more cows as a Tutsi (Mamdani 98). After this census, Hutu and Tutsi were enforced as legal identities. This legal personification of Rwandan social categories emphasized the perception of a herd as ishyo, an asset (compatible with monetarization), over its symbolic representation as isibo, a moving body with liquid qualities (such as flowing) (de Lame 219/341).20 Furthermore, it limited possibilities for kwihutura (the social rise of a Hutu man to Tutsi status)21 and gucupira (the social fall of a Tutsi man to Hutu status) (see Mamdani 101). Intermarriage intervened in and catalyzed these socio-economic transformations between Tutsi and Hutu, even after political alliances shifted in response to calcifying Rwandan social categories.22

Shortly before Rwanda became a United Nations Trust Territory in 1946,

---

19 Several proverbs show dependency relationships positively: dependence makes one wealthy; he who does not have a protector will never get rich; and sorghum grows in the shade of subjection (Lemarchand, *Burundi* 13).
20 The myth of how Gihanga forcibly seized a herd arising out of a lake attests to the metaphoric assimilation of cattle to water (de Lame 219/341).
21 It should be noted that a concept of kwihutura also exists in Burundi (see Lemarchand, *Burundi* 9).
ordinance number 21/258 of August 14, 1943 replaced the Hutu sous-chefs in the North and West with Tutsi ones (Gasanabo, Mémoires 53). Although these transformations further racialized discourse on Rwandan social categories, initial political opposition in Kinyaga (Cyangugu prefecture, southwestern Rwanda) was based on class criteria. Poor Tutsi sided with other peasants (de Lame 48/49). In the 1950s, missionaries and Belgian authorities began shifting alliances again, replacing Tutsi members of the administration with Hutu ones. New political parties began formalizing and radicalizing ethnic definitions of Rwandan social categories during the pre-electoral period of the 1950s. From 1952, however, elite Hutu began speaking about the existence of a “Hutu/Tutsi problem” (see Gasanabo, Mémoires 57). Significantly, as we shall see, Saverio Naigiziki published his L’optimiste: pièce en trois actes (The Optimist: A Play in Three Acts) in 1954.

On April 1, 1954, Mwami Rudahigwa prohibited ubuhake. This ministerial order (number 1/54) specified how cows, but not pastureland, were to be distributed (de Lame 239/377). Thereafter, it became more difficult for those with only a few cows to find pastureland, as much of it had already been reserved by rich former patrons. By 1956, out of the 40 percent of the Rwandan population who owned cattle, 49.5 percent of the cows belonged to Tutsi, while 43.3 percent belonged to Hutu (de Lame 226/354). Militant Hutu discourse connected this inequality—which is staggering when one remembers that Hutu accounted for roughly 85 percent of the population—to ubuhake.

After ubuhake and akazi were outlawed, ubukonde continued among Hutu patrons

---

22 At the same time, there was rural unrest in Ndora, Burundi in 1934. Three hundred huts and ten schools were burned (Lemarchand 46).
and their Hutu clients in northern and north-western Rwanda, a region traditionally less affected by ubuhake (Semujanga 122/137). Semujanga argues that ubukonde’s continuance emphasizes that “la Révolution de 1959 ... ne visait pas ... l’émancipation du menu people hutu mais le groupe tutsi présenté par la propagande comme synonyme de l’oppression” (122; “the 1959 Revolution ... did not aim ... at the emancipation of the humble Hutu people, but at the identification of the Tutsi group with oppression,” 137). Indeed, as the 1959 revolution emphasized ubuhake, pastoral clientship came metonymically to represent Tutsi and metaphorically their oppression—real or imagined—of Hutu.

Ubuhake became obsolete by the time that PARMEHUTU began invoking it metaphorically in 1957 (see Semujanga 122/137). After akazi was prohibited in 1958, other labor relations changed as well. For example, by the end of the 1950s, women laborers were responsible for seventy percent of the coffee production (the primary colonial crop) (Newbury and Newbury, “Peasants” 862). Even as labor came to be gendered in new ways, ubuhake metaphors—engaging a mythico-history rooted in nineteenth-century Rwanda—remained staunchly masculine.

The ways in which labor is gendered shaped agrarian and pastoral metaphors during the 1959 revolution. Only men were drawn away from the homestead to do uburetwa, adding to the burden on women for domestic production (see Newbury and Newbury, “Peasants” 862). Although gukora uburetwa designates a power relationship unrelated to ubuhake, PARMEHUTU discourse considered both as institutions of Tutsi oppression. Mamdani notes that some Tutsi overseers chose to benefit financially from making Hutu do uburetwa: “For the chief willing to collaborate, colonialism turned into a
profitable partnership: the chief could and did add his own exactions on top of whatever the colonial power demanded, and then proceeded to apply the degree of force necessary to ensure compliance with demands he inevitably presented as ‘traditional’” (97). PARMEHUTU discourse later framed Tutsi enrichment from *uburetwa* as identical to Tutsi enrichment deriving from *ubuhake*. Since *uburetwa* usually involved the cultivation of cash crops or weeding roads, it came to be associated with the system of agrarian metaphors considered Hutu.

The Belgian administration—and, later, PARMEHUTU—interpreted both *uburetwa* and *ubuhake* according to fraternal myths that primarily recognized male labor and Tutsi political power (see Semujanga 122/137). As “Tutsi” and “Hutu” emerged as state-enforced political identities under the colonial administration, they were always already metaphorically gendered identities. After PARMEHUTU naturalized *ubuhake* metaphors in the 1950s, the verbal phrase *gukora uburetwa*, meaning ‘to do forced labor for a fee,’ came to connote Hutu oppression. In 1994, the verb *gukora*, “to work,” often stood in for “to kill” in genocidal discourse, evoking the forced labor of the colonial period. In genocidal discourse, *gukora* explicitly references gendered and racialized labor practices, while *inyenzi* metaleptically engages *ubuhake*.

Knowledge production of *ubuhake*—in colonial historiography and in Rwandan political discourse—has structured diverse theories of power and oppression since the early twentieth century. To (re)define *ubuhake* is to (re)imagine a particular meaning of this Hutu and Tutsi political relationship. Mid-century conceptions of *ubuhake* as “clientship,” signifying Hutu oppression by Tutsi and by colonialists, shaped pre-and post-independence political movements in Rwanda. The discourse of the 1959 “Hutu
“Revolution” metaphoricized *ubuhake* as the Rwandan model of socio-economic and political inequality between “Hutu” and “Tutsi” men. Although the power relationship between patron and client is masculinized, the imagined in/availability of Tutsi women for marriage intervenes in how *ubuhake* metaphors are gendered in political discourses.

### 3.2.4. *Ubuhake*, “Inter-Marriage,” and Saverio Naigiziki’s *L’optimiste*: Metaphors of the 1959 Revolution

Saverio Naigiziki’s 1954 *L’optimiste: pièce en trois actes* (*The Optimist: A Play in Three Acts*), published the same year that a ministerial order suppressed *ubuhake*, metaphorizes *ubuhake* to depict Tutsi oppression of Hutu. Setting *L’optimiste* in pre-colonial Rwanda, Naigiziki interprets *ubuhake* anachronistically according to 1950s’ Rwandan politics. He uses the *ubuhake* metaphor to define Tutsi and Hutu as static, racialized castes, thereby dramatizing the organizing myth of colonial historiography: the Tutsi are foreign Hamites, while the Hutu are indigenous Bantus.

The *Groupe scolaire* in Astrida, who published Naigiziki’s play, similarly enforced the Hamitic myth through its curriculum, attributing Hutu oppression in part to *ubuhake*. By locating the origins of inequality in an institution that preceded colonial contact, and by attributing *ubuhake* to the Hamitic myth, *Groupe scolaire* — like PARMEHUTU — essentialized social differences as racial ones. Emma Maquet, introducing *L’optimiste* on the group’s behalf, frames as irrefutable Naigiziki’s perception of Rwandan social orders and institutions. She describes Tutsi and Hutu as

---

23 Semujanga notes that missionary schools such as the *Groupe scolaire* began establishing in its students’ minds the racist connotations of the Hamitic myth as early as the 1940s (135/148).
racialized castes:

[Rwanda] était habité par trois groupes racialement différents qui constituaient des castes séparées: au sommet les Tutsi, pasteurs éthiopes, formaient environ 10 p.c. de la population; puis les Hutu, cultivateurs bantous, représentaient à peu près 90 p.c. des habitants du Ruanda; enfin, en très petit nombre, les Twa pygmoides qui exerçaient les métiers de potiers et de chasseurs. (i)

[Rwanda] was inhabited by three racially different groups who constituted separate castes: at the top were the Tutsi, Ethiopian shepherds, forming around ten percent of the population; then the Hutu, Bantu cultivators, representing at least ninety percent of Rwanda’s inhabitants; finally, in a very small number, the Twa, pygmies who excelled in ceramics and hunting.

To explain Tutsi privilege and Hutu oppression, she conjoins the Hamitic myth with cattle-owning as features of imagined Tutsi foreignness.

The characters in Naigiziki’s play—two families, one Tutsi and one Hutu—enact the Hamitic myth, identifying their own social categories as opposing and racialized castes. The richer family of cattle-owners is Tutsi; the poorer family of farmers is Hutu. Félicien, brother to Martin (Monica’s father), is a Tutsi shebija, while Jules’s father, Joseph, is their mugaragu. Joseph understands ubuhake as a “contrat sans échéance” (9; never-ending contract), inherited from fathers and transmitted to sons. The transmission of ubuhake, to Joseph, represents the generational transmission of history. This view speaks to how political discourse in the 1950s employed the ubuhake metaphor to project a mythico-history uninterrupted by colonialism. Precisely because he accepts this mythico-history, Joseph’s son, Jules, who is an agricultural assistant, refuses to inherit “l’âme de serf” (9; the serf spirit). Jules is a member of the “new social class” of Hutu évolués among whom Maquet counts Naigiziki. Despite being a nineteenth-century character, Jules embodies the discourse of Hutu Power in which Naigiziki immersed
himself.

Jules, through his devotion to (Tutsi) Monica, embodies—and engenders—the 1959 Hutu Revolution’s ostensible objectives: “égalisation des Tutsi et des Hutu par l’éducation nouvelle commune” (ii; making Tutsi and Hutu equal through new common education). Jules’ marriage to a Tutsi woman represents the realization of his desire for equality among all Banyarwanda. *L’optimiste* does not consider the socially transformative power of marriage in Monica’s life—only its potential for negotiating social categories and restructuring *ubuhake* among men. For Monica, marriage simply marks the passage to adulthood, giving her the only social status possible for a woman: wife and mother (see de Lame 245/385). Monica’s male family members speak for her. Marriage is primarily a contract among the elder men in Jules’ and Monica’s families.24

It is the exchange of women, in this case Monica, more than that of cows that sustains the patrilineage (see de Lame 243/384). Gendered systems of exchange, as epitomized by marriage rituals, ultimately mediate negotiations between *shebuja* and *umuragu*, between Mututsi Joseph and Muhutu Jules. Jules and Joseph are not, according to Maquet, indifferent to the *shebuja’s* reclaiming his cattle, because they are necessary for Jules’ marrying a Tutsi girl (ii). *L’optimiste* discusses marriage as potentially beneficial for Jules on the basis of Monica’s racialized “Tutsi-ness.” Marriage to a Tutsi woman is a source of optimism for Jules’ personal future—and, in the political climate in which Naigiziki wrote, for Hutu socio-political involvement in independent Rwanda.

24 Since every bride is also the ritual spouse of her husband’s ancestors (de Lame 75/82), marriage articulates a woman’s peripheral relationship to the patrilineal *inzu*. 
It is significant that this mediation occurs by virtue of Monica’s participation and her family’s wealth. As Semujanga notes about intermarriage: “il ne suffisait pas d’épouser une femme tutsi pour qu’il y ait phénomène d’ukwihutura; il fallait en plus que cette femme soit de grand lignage, c’est-à-dire très riche” (88; “it was not enough to marry a Tutsi woman for the phenomenon of kwihutura [the social rise of a Hutu man to Tutsi status] to take place, because in addition to this it was necessary for that woman to come from a great lineage, that is, to be very rich,” 105). The ubuhake metaphor, as Naigiziki employs it, emphasizes that the socio-economic distinction between Tutsi and Hutu amounts to the difference between wealth and poverty.

Although Naigiziki focuses on ubuhake as the root of Hutu-Tutsi socio-economic inequality, gendered exchange indirectly reveals clientship’s effects. Maquet, in the play’s introduction, briefly considers how racial patrilineage affects Rwandan marriage practice. She remarks of Tutsi fathers:

Ils interdisaient à leurs files d’épouser des Hutus, car ces mariages menaçaient de supprimer leurs caractéristiques physiques qui avaient tant de poids dans leur affirmation de supériorité. (ii)

They forbade their daughters to marry Hutus, because these marriages threatened to suppress their physical characteristics that had so much weight in their assertion of superiority.

Maquet, like Naigiziki’s characters, predicates her argument on a conviction in the existence of defining racial features for Hutu and Tutsi. Although Maquet and Naigiziki advocate Hutu equality being achieved through intermarriage, they do so by further racializing the Rwandan social categories to which they ascribe conscripted roles of ubuhake.
Prefiguring the discourse of the 1959 revolution, the Hutus in Naigiziki’s play are convinced that equality should be attainable—and young Jules is the celebrated optimist of the play’s title. As a foil to Jules, Joseph is a pessimist, unconvinced that changing the socio-political meaning of Hutu and Tutsi could be possible. Joseph critiques the national curriculum, worried that his son’s optimism will have detrimental effects: “La formation scolaire de nos enfants tend de plus en plus à remplacer la race par la classe et suscite de fâcheuse prétentions dans la cervelle de l’évoluant Muhutu” (5; Our children’s school education is increasingly replacing race with class, raising disturbing pretensions in the brains of the ‘evolving’ Hutu). Joseph embraces racialized definitions for Rwandan social categories, but resists defining Hutu and Tutsi as socio-economic classes.

When Joseph learns that Jules intends to wed Tutsi Monica, he insists that race should determine Jules’ spouse. Joseph warns his son: “Tu es Muhutu, tu dois te marier dans ta race” (12; You are Hutu, you must marry within your race). Joseph’s shebuja, Martin, reacts as virulently as Joseph anticipated: “Je l’aime mieux morte que mariée à ce vil Muhutu” (16; I prefer her dead than married to this vile Hutu). Both Martin and Joseph understand marriage would unite their houses by ‘race,’ since Jules’ and Monica’s children would be Tutsi.

Martin and Joseph perceive this union as potentially debasing or elevating their houses, respectively. Martin understands marriage could facilitate kwihutura, or “tutsification,” for Joseph: “Quel rêve pour lui. Ce qui est une mésalliance pour nous est un honneur et un avancement social pour lui” (19; What a dream for him. What is a misalliance for us is an honor and a social advancement for him). Joseph perceives
change, while not personally imminent, as socially inevitable. Martin, on the other hand, resists any mobility among Rwandan social categories. When reminded that times are changing in Rwanda, he replies: “Les temps et pas mon sang! Je suis de ma race. Je reste de ma race” (19; The times and not my blood! I am of my race. I remain of my race). Martin maintains that Hutu and Tutsi are racial, essential, and immutable categories.

Although Martin and Joseph conceptualize “Hutu” and “Tutsi” as opposing, racialized castes, they both define themselves as Munyarwanda—and not Munyekongo. Alluding to the Hamitic myth that characterizes Tutsi as “foreigners,” Martin compares being Hutu to being Congolese. To his mind, the terms are roughly equivalent: “ma fille est trop bien éduquée … pour aller dormir dans les bras d’un congolais repu ou d’un Muhutu enrichi” (21; my daughter is much too educated … to go sleep in the arms of a sated Congolese or an enriched Hutu). Joseph emphasizes that, although he is Hutu, he is just as much Rwandan as a Tutsi man because he is not Congolese: “je ne suis pas disposé à verser le cadeau de mariage en houes comme de vulgaires Bahutu, ou en argent comme les Congolais. Je me dois de le verser en vaches” (30; I am not amenable to paying the wedding gift in hoes like vulgar Hutus, or in money like the Congolese. I must pay it in cows). Joseph’s self-differentiation from a Munyekongo depends on his “Tutsi” ability to secure the marriage contract in cows. Through their symbolic relationships to cows and ubuhake, Joseph and Martin symbolize Hutu-Tutsi relationships in the political discourse of Naigiziki’s mid-century Rwanda.

Semujanga notes that the term Munyarwanda (man of Rwanda) self-defines in opposition to Murundi (man of Burundi), Mugande (man of Uganda), Munyekongo (man of the Congo) (89/106).
Martin uses his cows not only to situate himself as authentically Rwandan, but also to prevent Jules’ marriage to Monica or any other girl—even a Muhutu one. By ‘blocking’ Joseph’s cows (i.e., making them unavailable for the marriage contract), Martin destroys Joseph’s future. While Martin and Joseph discuss the marriage’s “racial” implications, they determine its economic effects through gendered practices. *Ubuhake* allows Tutsi patrons, like Martin, to influence a still more important social institution—marriage—since the cow given by a fiancé to the father of his future bride (*inkwano*) amounts to the marriage contract that legitimates future children (see de Lame 225/353). It is important to note that this cow is not bridewealth, but a sign of an alliance distinguished from *ubuhake* relationships.\(^{26}\) The bride actively participates in differentiating these systems of exchange because when attending the feast at her future father-in-law’s, she cannot take the path followed by the cow on way to her father’s, or both gifts would balance out, canceling the bond between the houses (de Lame 235/369). Monica walks an altogether different path, catalyzing Martin’s change of heart when she runs away. Yet, it is the Hutu and male Jules, not the Tutsi and female Monica, who has agency in this transformation. His agency stems from his gendered relationship to labor; his pursuit of Monica ultimately translates into a reworking of the *ubuhake* relationship between their families.

When Martin receives a letter, asking forgiveness, in Monica’s handwriting, he credits Jules with finding and returning her. He concludes:

---

\(^{26}\) De Lame suggests that the gift returned (*indongoranyo*) by the bride’s father to her husband when the first child is born differentiates this system of symbolic exchange from *ubuhake* (225/353).
Car le bien est toujours victorieux du mal, comme l’optimisme de Joseph, dont je me suis défendu si longtemps, me ramene ce soir ma fille et triomphe, par vous, de mes préjugés. (58)

Because good is always victorious over evil, like Joseph’s optimism, from which I have defended myself for so long, it returns to me this evening my daughter and triumphs, through you, over my prejudices.

Monica’s return invalidates Martin’s belief that her marrying a Hutu would amount to a loss. Naigiziki suggests that Martin would have lost her if he didn’t accept inter-marriage. Although inter-marriage, by definition, stems from a racialized understanding of Tutsi and Hutu, Naigiziki emphasizes that equality will exist only when Rwanda abandons the social categories of Tutsi and Hutu, officially acknowledging only Banyarwanda (36). This contradiction reveals that, even as Naigiziki denies focusing on class, he uses race and class almost interchangeably. In L’optimiste, Hutu and Tutsi characters embrace racial categories; Tutsi characters celebrate the socio-economic impact of these racial categories, while Hutu characters renounce them; and inter-marriage, although discussed in racial terms, mitigates the socio-economic impact of Rwandan social categories. The exchange of women through marriage catalyzes all of these interactions. Naigiziki exhorts women to further the “fusion des races par l’intermariage” (36; fusion of races through intermarriage). In other words, he expects Tutsi women to denounce their own social category as irrelevant, while emphasizing the importance of the Hutu category by seeking it in marriage.

Naigiziki was not alone in focusing on marriage as a means to Hutu political ends. Toward the end of the 1950s, Semujanga notes, “[l]es mariages entre les groupes avaient tellement augmenté que même les chefs de file du mouvement hutu étaient parents par
alliance des Tutsi” (160; “[m]arriages between groups had increased so much that even the leaders of the Hutu movement were relatives of Tutsi through marriage,” 172). Yet, after the 1959 revolution, during the First Republic, Hutu and Tutsi became more delineated as legislation prohibited first ubuhake (1954) and then akazi (1958). As the society distanced itself from traditional monarchy, marriage rites came to embody vestiges of royal rites. Marriage functioned not only as a site of implicit racial negotiations, but also political ones.

As Naigiziki prefigured, marriage increasingly—in conjunction with the further monetarization of Rwanda during the Second Republic—became a step to individual capitalization rather than a collective moment of social reproduction (de Lame 282/450). No doubt numerous marriages were formalized independently of the above considerations, but from the 1950s, Hutu political discourse focused on marriage—and, in particular, the role of Tutsi women in marriage and society—with growing virulence and influence. An interview by Mahmood Mamdani with a survivor named Callixte suggests a prevailing societal awareness of this discourse. Callixte notes that by the time of the 1994 genocide in the Natarama sector:

About one-third of Tutsi daughters would be married to Hutu. But Hutu daughters married to Tutsi men were only one percent: Hutu didn’t want to marry their daughters to Tutsi who were poor and it was risky. Because the Tutsi were discriminated against, they didn’t want to give the daughters where there was no education, no jobs… risky. Prospects were better for Tutsi daughters marrying Hutu men. (qtd. in Mamdani 4)

Callixte’s observations mark a sharp reversal from Naigiziki’s depiction in the 1950s, showing how dramatically Hutu political discourse impacted marriage.
3.3. Politicizing *ubuhake* and Exiling ‘*inyenzi*’: Metaphor and Metalepsis after the 1957 Hutu Manifesto

3.3.1. The 1957 Hutu Manifesto, *Ubuhake* Metaphors, and the 1959 Revolution

On March 24, 1957, Godefroid Sentama, Louis Mbaraga, Maximilien Niyonzima, Grégoire Kayibanda, Calliopé Mulindahabi, Claver Ndahayo, and Joseph Sibomana transmitted *Manifeste des Bahutu (The Hutu Manifesto)* to the Vice-Governor General. Like *L’optimiste*, the *Manifeste* emphasizes the symbolism of *ubuhake*, but in more radical terms. It identifies the shortage of pastureland as being most dire in “les régions les plus hamitisées” (3; the most ‘hamiticized’ regions). The *Manifeste*’s extreme rhetoric derives not only from such explicit vilification of the Tutsi, but also from its figurative use of clientship. *Ubuhake* metaphorizes a hierarchical power relationship in which each Tutsi is likened to a *shebuja* and each Hutu is likened to the *umuragugu*.

While the *Manifeste* promises to address “la situation actuelle des relations muhutu-mututsi au Ruanda” (1; the actual situation of Muhutu-Mututsi relations in Rwanda), it uses *ubuhake*—then already outlawed for three years— as an anachronistic metaphor for social injustice. The authors directly attribute inequity to *ubuhake*, which—from their perspective—enables the Tutsi (whom they quantify as fourteen percent of the population) to rule the Hutu (the majority): “La situation actuelle provient en grande partie de l’état créé par l’ancienne structure politico-sociale du Ruanda, en particulier le buhake, et de l’application à fond et généralisée de l’administration indirecte” (1; The current situation arose to a great extent from the state created by Rwanda’s ancient socio-political structure— in particular *ubuhake* and its thorough and
generalized application by the indirect administration). The Manifeste suggests that ubuhake was always already problematic, but became more so as the colonial administration began regulating it and instituted uburetwa (forced labor, or akazi). Ubuhake became increasingly oppressive as the colonial administration eliminated other indigenous Rwandan social institutions without replacing them with anything. Praising the establishment of “syndicalisme” (trade-unionism), the Manifeste glorifies an emerging, strong middle class — by which it means Hutu with a modest cash income independent of subsistence agriculture (1). It concludes that — to whatever extent they persist — the Hutu “peur, le complexe d’infériorité et le besoin ‘atavique’ d’un tuteur” (“fear, inferiority complex, and ‘atavistic’ need for a guardian [i.e., shebuja]”) are all consequences of the “système féodal” (“feudal system”) (1). In other words, the Manifeste blames social inequity on voluntary Tutsi complicity in Belgian-regulated ubuhake before the 1950s.

The Manifeste purports to seek “l’émancipation du Ruanda intégral” (the emancipation of all Rwanda), but arguably only advocates male Hutu power. In the section called “Objections prétextes contre la promotion Muhutu” (“Pretextual Objections against the Promotion of the Muhutu”), it systematically anticipates and refutes historical arguments against kwihutura (social advancement from Hutu to Tutsi). It refutes conceptions of Tutsi social “privileges” as natus ad imperium, suggesting that colonial law and practice cultivated them. Like Naigiziki’s L’optimiste, the Manifeste identifies ubuhake as imposing “l’infériorité économique” (economic inferiority) on the Hutu and systematizing their “fonctions ... subalternes” (2; subalter functions).

Countering this history, the Manifeste enumerates the features that have prepared the
Hutu évolué for an ascent to power. It questions the “tendance au buhake que les gens ont abandonné” (2; tendency towards ubuhake which people abandoned). In short, the Manifeste asserts that Rwandan independence should not preclude Hutu empowerment.

In the next section, “En quoi consiste le problème racial indigène?” (“Of What Does the Indigenous Racial Problem Consist?”), the Manifeste insists that the inequality extends beyond race. It argues that Tutsi monopoly is “politique, économique et social” (2; political, economic, and social). The Hutu are contributing to Rwandan independence “sans savoir ce qu’ils font” (2; without knowing what they are doing). The Manifeste warns that the Tutsi tri-partite monopoly will soon become cultural, too, condemning the Hutu to remain “manœuvres subalternes” (2; sub-altern laborers). The Manifeste argues that this “cultural monopoly” will replace ubuhake as a system of oppression. For example, even when one speaks of the harvest, the Kinyarwanda expression praises the cow: amata y'iisuka, literally “milk of the hoe” (Kimyeni). This linguistic manifestation of a “cultural monopoly” is only one example of how Kinyarwanda privileges the pastoral over the agricultural. The turn of phrase, ntakirut’inka— “nothing surpasses the cow”—reveals the cultural centrality of the pastoral that the Manifeste re-interprets as the Tutsi cultural monopoly.

The third section, “The Proposal of Immediate Solutions” (“Proposition de solutions immédiates”), outlines a plan that conflates Rwandan independence with Hutu empowerment. This section emphasizes socio-economic changes, including the suppression of forced labor known as uburetwa or akazi. Forced laborers should be replaced by “un service de Travaux publics engageant les ouvriers vraiment volontaires,
qui seraient défendus par la législation sociale” (3; a service of Public Works hiring truly voluntary workers, who would be defended by social legislation). The authors conceive of this service being modeled after Kinshasa’s Regideso (Régie de distribution de l’eau, or Municipal Water Company), an autonomous public company within the governmental Department of Mines and Energy. They anticipate that “la suppression des corvées donnerait aux populations un minimum de liberté pour entreprendre des initiatives utiles” (3; the suppression of akazi would give the population a minimum of freedom for undertaking useful initiatives). They demand “[l]a reconnaissance légale de la propriété foncière individuelle dans le sens occidental du mot” (3; legal recognition of individual property in the Western sense of the word). In other words, they advocate suppressing the bourgeoisie’s bingi, or pastureland.

As Rwandan elite divided themselves along party lines after Mwami Mutara III Rudahigwa’s death on July 25, 1959, ubuhake metaphors became entrenched in political discourse, further diminishing the perceived legacy of Belgian and Tutsi political power. Between February and October of 1959, multiple Hutu political parties were formed, including: APROSOMA (Association pour la promotion sociale de la masse, or Association for the Social Promotion of the Majority),\(^27\) UNAR (Union nationale rwandaises, or National Rwandan Union),\(^28\) RADER (Rassemblement démocratique rwandais, or Rwandan Democratic Union),\(^29\) and PARMEHUTU (Parti du mouvement

\(^{27}\) Created 15 February, 1959; led by Joséph Habyarimana; favored a constitutional monarchy; anti-Tutsi.

\(^{28}\) Conservative, monarchist party created September 3, 1959.

\(^{29}\) Created September 14, 1959. Mix of ‘moderate’ Hutu and Tutsi.
pour l’émancipation Hutu, or Party of the Movement for Hutu Emancipation).³⁰

Rwandan history textbooks uniformly cite November 1, 1959 as the beginning of the “Hutu Revolution,” when members of UNAR and PARMEHUTU began killing, pillaging, and hunting powerful Tutsi chiefs (Gasanabo, Mémoires 142). This increasingly hostile climate and political massacres forced numerous Tutsi into exile in Uganda and Tanzania.

Nonetheless, in May 1960, the National Committee of PARMEHUTU issued a declaration saying: “le Ruanda est le pays des Bahutu (Bantu) et de tous ceux, blancs, ou noirs, tutsi, européens ou d’autres provenances qui se débarrasseront des visées féodocolonialistes” (Nkundabagenzi, qtd. in Gasanabo, Mémoires 60; Rwanda is the country of the Hutu (Bantu) and all of those, whites, blacks, Tutsi, Europeans or of other provenance who will free themselves of the feudo-colonialist aims). Regardless of politics, class, or personal affiliations, Tutsis were invested with “feudo-colonialist” sympathies. To this effect, Esther Mujawayo— who was born in 1958 (the same year that akazi was abolished)—testifies that “être Tutsi au Rwanda de 1959 à 1994, c’est être un citoyen de seconde classe” (36; to be Tutsi in Rwanda from 1959 to 1994 was to be a second class citizen). Militant discourse suggested all Tutsi had been complicit in the colonial administration, exploiting and impoverishing Hutu through ubuhake.

Rather than decreasing the symbolism of the cow or rendering ubuhake obsolete, the Manifeste —and, later, the 1959 revolution— emphasized clientship in the national imagination. The Manifeste and the 1959 revolution highlighted the centrality of the cow

³⁰ Created October 9, 1959. Anti-Tutsi party favoring democracy pre-independence. Later became MDR.
as a cultural symbol. As *ubuhake* accumulated metaphorical functions in political discourse, it constantly incorporated—whether implicitly or explicitly—quotidian use of bovine characteristics, activities, and products (milk, butter) as established metaphors in Kinyarwanda. In short, the *ubuhake* metaphor emphasizes an order of symbolic significations and socio-economic relations, representing a political domain influenced but not determined by Belgian colonialism.

### 3.3.2. The First Republic (1962-1973): Militarizing *Inyenzi* and Fetishizing the Hoe

Throughout the First Republic, *ubuhake* metaphors evolved in relationship to political discourse in Rwanda, which became increasingly racist and regionalist after Rwanda was granted independence and Burundi separated in 1962. After the first massacres took place in 1960-61, many Tutsi refugees fled to Uganda, where certain male members of the community began self-identifying as *inyenzi*. “*Inyenzi*” was an acronym of “*ingangururugo yemeye kuba ingenzi*,” meaning a member of the *ingangururugo* [an army division under Mwami Rwagubiri Rwabugili] who has committed himself to bravery (Vianney Higiro 84). To counter this rhetoric, President

---

31 David Newbury, in his article “Understanding the Genocide,” emphasizes the importance of considering post-independence events in Rwanda and Burundi as “convergent catastrophes” that are “independent in origin, even as they were interdependent in their evolution” (75). As Peter Uvin observes: “Events in one country are interpreted and used by its (radical) neighbors to confirm their worst suspicions and fears. The rulers in Rwanda have reinforced the ‘truth’ of their racist ideology by pointing to the massacres of Hutu (by the Tutsi-dominated army) in Burundi in 1965, 1972, 1988, 1989, and 1993 to ‘prove’ that all Tutsi seek the ruthless oppression of the Hutu. Conversely, Tutsi rulers in Burundi have pointed since 1960 to Rwanda to demonstrate that, if given the chance, the Hutu are little more than genocidal killers” (“Ethnicity” 266).

32 Vianney Hirigo notes that the name *ingangururugo* derives from the expression “kugangura urugo rw’ibwami,” meaning to provoke trouble at the king’s court (84-5).
Kayibanda employed *ubuhake* metaphors and prohibited the state-run media from using the term *inyenzi* (Vianney Higiro 85).

Notably, Alexis Kagame used the term *inyenzi* to discuss the 1963 raids in his 1975 *Un Abrégé de l’histoire du Rwanda de 1853-1972*: “le terme *Inyenzi = Cancrelas [sic] nous est très familier” (353; the term *Inyenzi* is very familiar to us). Foreign media also used the cockroach metaphor, distancing it from its acronymic origins: “The greatest fear in [Kigali] is of the *inyenzi*, the cockroach. It is not an insect but the [Tutsi] terrorists who stalk in the darkness and call themselves inyenzi because the cockroach moves freely and easily at night” (*NYT* 18). In at least one New York Times article, *inyenzi* represented the nebulous, global threats of the Cold War: “Kigeri [V Ndahindurwa] has formed émigré bands dominated by a secret terrorist society called Inyenzi or the Cockroaches, whose principal leaders are in Chinese pay. [...] When there are no more Cockroaches in the woodwork, Peking will find other agents” (Sulzberger 30). This re-contextualized usage of *inyenzi*, like some literary and filmic appropriations of the metaphor after 1994, situates Rwandan history as a footnote to broad, “global” concerns.

As the *inyenzi* movement began growing abroad, Radio Rwanda began broadcasting PARMEHUTU rhetoric—and its *ubuhake* metaphors—to Burundi and to Hutu communities living in Kivu (Semujanga 155/163). This Hutu discourse valorized the 1959 Revolution—or, as Semujanga calls it, “la jacquerie populaire de 1959” (157; “the 1959 peasant revolt,” 164)—and denounced *ubuhake* though “une histoire officielle, épique, et légendaire” (158; “an official, epic, and legendary history,” 164). At the same

---

33 Kigeri V was *mwami* (king) from 1959-61, at which point he fled to Uganda.
time, the government prohibited popular songs mentioning *ubuhake* (Semujanga 157 fn/169 fn). The National Assembly also drafted a bill to enforce the use of the hoe over the traditional *inkwano* used in the marriage contract. Semujanga claims that “la peuple a refuse parce que, dans l’ordre symbolique et économique, la figure de la vache est plus positive que celle de la houe” (157; “[p]eople refused because, on the symbolic and economic levels, the figure of the cow was more positive than that of the hoe,” 164). Yet, by consciously developing agrarian symbols over pastoral ones, the government nonetheless emphasized the importance of *ubuhake* metaphors.

### 3.3.3. The Second Republic (1973-1994): Inventing Euphemisms

Juvénal Habyarimana—like Grégoire Kayibanda before him—used “racial” prejudice to maintain power, frequently engaging *ubuhake* metaphors indirectly by glorifying agricultural symbols associated with Hutu labor. On May 1, 1974, Habyarimana said of agriculture: “Remember that this is the way we want to fight … [the] intellectual bourgeoisie and give … physical labor its value back” (qtd. in Verwimp 1). The hoe became a central symbol in Habyarimana’s political discourse, made more resonant by the fact that ninety-five percent of the population lived in rural areas.

Figurative language provided a way of discussing what was happening in Rwanda

---

34 It must be remembered that more massacres against Rwandan Tutsi accompanied Habyarimana’s ascension to power on July 5, 1973, when the MRND replaced the MDR PARMEHUTU. The 1972 massacre of 150,000 Hutu Burundi contributed to this 1973 violence against Tutsi in Rwanda. From 1973-7, the entire ruling class from the First Republic, including former president Grégoire Kayibanda (and more than 700 Hutu, according to Semujanga [7/31]), was murdered (Berry 78).

35 As of 1993, ninety-five percent of the Rwandan population still lived in rural areas (Verwimp 10).
without naming issues or events specifically (see Semujanga 140/151). For example, in
everyday speech, Tutsi often referred to the 1973 massacres as *les événements* (the
events). *Les événements* alludes more specifically to general political changes than to
personal trauma and loss. Perhaps even more elliptically, Habyarimana’s government
referred to the massacres as a natural component of political change, *muyaga* (the wind).
This metaphor depicts the violence as a normal, if unpredictable, meteorological event.
When “les événements” concluded in April, the government announced: “le vent s’est
calmé” (Mujawayo 122; the wind [*muyaga*] has calmed). Whereas “les événements” and
“muyaga” divorce the atrocities from human agency, the verb *gukora* (to work)
emphasized the labor of the Hutu who used a machete or hoe—everyday farming tools—
to kill Tutsi. When *gukora* signifies “tuer ou chasser les Tutsi, bréler, piler leurs
propriétés, et consommer leurs vaches” (Mujawayo 127; to kill or hunt the Tutsi, to burn,
to steal their property, and to consume their cows), it metaleptically invokes *ubuhake* and
*akazi* as what once oppressed Hutu. Use of this expression was not limited to Hutu.
Mujawayo reports that Tutsi, when addressing other Tutsi after massacres, began saying:
“Et chez toi, ils ont travaillé?” (152; And, in your house, did they work?). During the
Second Republic, anti-Tutsi discourse conflated *gukora* with *amajyambre* (development,
literally “things that go forward”).

Development, like the original meaning of *gukora*, was connected to agricultural
work in the countryside. By the end of the 1980s, Habyarimana’s government conducted
broad national surveys, assigned every commune a project, and placed burgomasters in
charge of local development. In this way, Rwanda’s predominantly subsistence economy
was incorporated into a state located on the outskirts of the global economy, forming a
system of social practice within the broader one of globalization, wherein capitalist penetration often depends on international aid (de Lame). These transformations invested the symbolism of the hoe—and its metaleptic reference to *ubuhake*—with new meanings as monetarization altered rural labor practices.

Monetarization—that is, the socio-political transition to a cash-based economy—affected men and women differently. Men spent more time in the cabaret, bank, and commune; women in the enclosure, fields and clinic (de Lame 90/119). Monetarization freed men from former local allegiances (such as *ubuhake*), and women from managing granaries and seeds. At the same time, it increased women’s dependency on their husbands, who now amassed money to buy seeds (de Lame 63/76). While men had means of acquiring cash and the power to spend it, women still—as always in the countryside—managed everyday life. In general, money increased gender inequality by making accumulation possible (de Lame 158-62/236-46) and further classified labor activities by gender.

Traditionally, rural women did an estimated 65-70 percent of the agricultural work for their house (Nowrojee 22). By late 1980s, there was a persistent stereotype of elite women—often designated as Tutsi— as doing no manual work. In response, Tutsi wives and Hutu women civil servants sometimes flaunted contributions—real or staged—to agricultural labor. Agathe Habyarimana (1942-), for example, arranged to be photographed with hoe in hand (de Lame 251/397). Here, the hoe not only symbolizes a bond with earth, but also renounces traditional, bovine imagery associated with *ubuhake*. MRND discourse attributed more metaphorical value to women’s agricultural activities
as the divide between women wage earners and peasants continued growing and references to ubuhake became increasingly metaleptical.

3.3.4. Sexualizing the Inyenzi Metaphor and Sublimating Ubuhake after 1987

Militant PARMEHUTU discourse did not appropriate the inyenzi metaphor until the FPR became an imminent threat to the Second Republic (after the 1987 coup in Burundi).36 When the FPR invaded Rwanda from Uganda on 30 September 1990, the October War further radicalized Hutu extremism, as political discourse associated all FPR actions with all Tutsi. Suddenly, all Tutsi were inyenzi.

The metaphor, now disconnected from its origins in Tutsi military activity, became central to the pro-Hutu discourse of otherness that once relied explicitly on ubuhake metaphors. Mujawayo recalls the proliferation of the inyenzi metaphor in Autumn 1990:

La radio parle de plus en plus de cancrelats. C’est le mot qu’on prononce pour parler d’un Tutsi : cancrelat, cafard. Je mets longtemps, en fait, à sentir la force de cette insulte. Un cafard, même quand tu l’écrases, si tu veux t’en débarrasser il faut procéder à un récurage total. Je ne sais de quoi je parle parce que j’ai eu une fois des cancrelats à la maison, et tu as vraiment à les éliminer. À un certain moment, j’ai eu le déclic, j’ai compris la comparaison. Là, c’est vraiment terrible. Te sentir associé à un insecte aussi dégoutant…et réaliser que, toi, Tutsi, c’est ce que tu représente aux yeux de l’autre, ah… (147-8)

The radio spoke more and more of cockroaches. That’s the word one uses to speak of a Tutsi: cockroach, roach. It took me a long time, in fact, to feel the force of this insult. A roach, even if you crush it, if you want to get rid of it, you must proceed to a complete scouring. I only know what I’m talking about because I once had cockroaches in the house, and you really must eliminate them. At a certain moment, it clicked, I understood the comparison. That, it’s really terrible.

36 In response to the 1987 violence in Burundi, some 50,000 Hutu refugees fled to Rwanda in 1988. Recall that from 1959-1994, Rwandan refugees repeatedly arrived from and left for Uganda, Congo, Tanzania, and Burundi (see Malkki Purity).
To feel associated with such a disgusting insect… and realize that, you, Tutsi, this is what you represent in the eyes of the other, ah….

Mujawayo describes the shift from denotative to connotative meanings of the *inyenzi* metaphor. Genocidal discourse metaphoricized *inyenzi*, claiming that Tutsi really are comparable to cockroaches. Yet, even as MRND discourse no longer recognized Tutsi humanity, they acknowledged it by gendering *inyenzi* with human sexual characteristics, labor practices, and marriage rights.

Media spread this usage of *inyenzi*, as publication began in 1990 of over a dozen Kinyarwanda newspapers that systematically exploited “ethnic hatred” (Chrétien 45-7). *Kangura (Wake Up)*, for example, encouraged the *interahamwe* to commit the massacres of Bigogwe in January 1991, Kzanzenze in October 1991, and Murambi in November 1991. *Kangura*’s founder, Hasan Ngeze (1962-), published “The Ten Commandments of the Hutu” on December 10, 1990. “The Ten Commandments” emphasizes that Tutsi women, despite lacking access to the same modes of power as men, are significant impediments to Hutu political, economic, and cultural objectives.

Indeed, four of the ten “commandments” address Hutu relationships with Tutsi and/or Hutu women (qtd. in Berry 113-5; Nowrojee 16-8):

1. Every Muhutu should know that a Mututsi woman … works for the interest of her Tutsi ethnic group.

2. Every Muhutu must know that our Bahutukazi daughters are more worthy and more aware of their roles as women, spouses, and mothers. Are they not prettier, good secretaries, and more honest?

---

37 For example, there were no women appointees to the executive branch of the Rwandan government until 1990. Furthermore, there were no female burgomasters before the genocide, and only 3.2 percent of sub-prefects were women (Nowrojee 21-2).
3. Bahutu women, be vigilant and bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason.

7. No member of the military [Rwandan Armed Forces] shall marry a Tutsi. These condemnations cast female Tutsi as arrogant enemies of the Hutu state. Implicit in this essentializing rhetoric, however, is the scapegoating of women in general. Hutu women become responsible for men’s “unreasonable” interest in “Tutsi women.”

Interruption is prohibited for FAR members, but strongly discouraged for everyone else; Hutu-Hutu marriages are presented as the ideal. Ngeze implies that intermarriage is forbidden because Tutsi women are domestic spies: foreign “cockroaches” who have infiltrated the country. Contrary to the preexisting Hamitic-inflected discourse on Tutsi beauty, Ngeze claims that Hutu women make better wives. Accordingly, he implores Hutu wives to “bring their men to reason” by teaching them to be disgusted by Tutsi women. In short, this propaganda, not unlike like Naigiziki’s L’optimiste, frames gendered practices, such as labor and marriage, as central to Hutu power.

*Kangura* and RTLM rhetoric no doubt contributed to widespread practices of gendered violence during the Rwandan Genocide, as per the ICTR’s 2003 ruling—in what was popularly known as the “Media Case” (99-52-T)—against Ferdinand Nahimana (of RTLM), Jean Bosco Barayagwiza (of RTLM), and Hasan Ngeze (of Kangura). This case treated discourse as an instrument of genocidal violence, and informed the international community about the consequences of *RTLM*’s and Kangura’s *inyenzi* metaphor. Factual findings in the case included, for example, that a question on the cover

---

38 This preoccupation derived in part from the legal rarity of the case. MacKinnon attests that “this adjudication is the first since the Streicher and Fritzsche cases at Nuremberg to confront the responsibility of the media under international criminal justice principles” (“Nahimana” 328).
of Kangura No. 26—“What weapons shall we use to conquer the Inyenzi once and for all?” was answered by the juxtaposed image of a machete (MacKinnon, “Nahimana” 329). Certainly, the “Media Case” established the inyenzi metaphor in the contemporary political imaginary, informing multiple representations of the Rwandan Genocide.

Although the “Media Case” recognized that the inyenzi metaphor targeted women in particular ways, characterizing Tutsi women as “seductive enemy agents,” its findings by and large subordinated gender to “ethnicity” (99-52-T, para. 963). As Kangura’s Ngeze vilified Tutsi women for their manipulative and condescending use of supposedly characteristic beauty, he actually emphasized their forbidden desirability—and gender. A Tutsi survivor interviewed by Nowrojee explains:

No military man could marry Tutsi women, or they would have to leave the military. Tutsi women were considered more beautiful, which bred hate against them. The Kinyarwanda word used was Ibizungerezi about Tutsi women (which means beautiful and sexy). It led to jealousy, to a hate that I can’t describe… . I was told that I couldn’t work in certain places because as a Tutsi woman I would poison the others. (16)

This testimony demonstrates the inextricability of the inyenzi metaphor from gender, even as Nowrojee emphasizes the interviewee’s “Tutsiness” over and above “femaleness.” As Ngwarsungu Chiwengo puts it, Nowrojee’s and “Human Rights Watch’s Shattered Lives … painstakingly identifies the Tutsi female as the primary target of … barbaric actions because of her ethnicity” (87). In fact, however, through the metaleptic relationship between ubuhake and inyenzi, genocidal discourse foregrounds gender even as it emphasizes “race.” Genocidal discourse sexualizes Tutsi women as inaccessible but ikizungerezi (beautiful, sexy) traitors and spies.
Although Ngeze’s commandments discourage intermarriage, many “forced marriages” occurred in 1994, when génocidaires held Tutsi women captive as “women of the ceiling” (see Nowrojee 56). Whereas Naigiziki hoped in the early 1950s that Hutu-Tutsi intermarriage would de-emphasize class distinctions by reconfiguring ubuhake, Ngeze argues that intermarriage in fact maintains ubuhake’s oppressive political and socioeconomic relevance through sexual relationships with women who, ostensibly, were awarded certain privileges in pre-revolutionary Rwanda.

That intermarriage, for Ngeze, brings women inyenzi into the metaphorical Hutu house, speaks to the potentially transformative—and, therefore, threatening—aspects of women’s dependence on male members of the household. Although Article 16 of the 1991 Rwandan Constitution guaranteed gender equality, women have long been subjected to a wide array of limitations and restrictions, especially in the countryside. Accordingly, Kangura argues that dependence renders Tutsi women potential weapons. On July 19, 1991, Kangura warned “[t]he Inkotanyi will not hesitate to transform their sisters, wives and mothers into pistols” (Nowrojee 17). Their household position and their supposed characteristic beauty are “bullets” according to this vitriol.

With this gendered conception of the inyenzi metaphor, women became even more “dangerous” after May 1992, when the Family Code (of October 27, 1988) began being enforced, allowing girls to inherit property for the first time in post-colonial Rwanda. In reality, this Code maintained sexual disparities by aiming simultaneously at the status of elite wives and daughters—the ones posing with hoes—and at the destitution of unwed mothers and kids in countryside (de Lame 245/386). According to Kangura in
1992, however, Tutsi women were monopolizing employment; hiring their Tutsi sisters on the basis of stereotypical, physical characteristics; and contributing to the unemployment rate of Hutu women (Nowrojee 18). Later RTLM broadcasts likewise distinguished between among male and female “cockroaches”—with “des vergetures sur les cuisses, près des fesses” (Mukagasana 45-6; stretch marks on the thighs, near the buttocks)—encouraging the “inspection” and rape of Tutsi women to “see how Tutsikazi are on the inside” (qtd. in Nowrojee 63). For example, one génocidaire stated: “you Tutsi are inyenzis ... with long tails. We must kill Tutsi women, we must rip them apart” (qtd. in Nowrojee 49). In other words, genocidal discourse bestializes women as insects, at the same time that it sexualizes female features as “Tutsi.”

Diverse ICTR transcripts, human rights publications (such as Nowrojee’s and Rakiya Omaar’s), and survivors’ testimonio show that gendered violence was pervasive during the 1994 genocide. Testimony also records that a few women, including Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, then Minister for Women’s Affairs, encouraged Hutu men to rape Tutsi women (see ICTR-97-21-I). But, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, news media, legal discourse, and human rights publications such as Nowrojee’s often reproduce genocidal discourse by representing rapes as perpetrated against what often was described as an “ethnic” group.

Chiwengo articulates precisely the resulting problems of such representations focalized by the inyenzi metaphor:

The rape of non-Tutsi women was incidental, but that of Tutsi females was the

---

39 Extrapolating from National Population Office estimates that there are some 2,000 to 5,000 children of war-time rape, Nowrojee guesses that between 250,000 and 500,000 rapes occurred in 1994 (24).
result of a desire for their “beauty,” and it was their inaccessibility to Hutu men that made them objects of desire; class, ethnicity, and gender mark the Tutsi female body, so her bodily pain is projected, in Elaine Scarry’s words, as “the facticity of another power.” The rapes of other non-Tutsi women are absent in the [current Rwandan] national narrative and made present only to substantiate the truthfulness of the projected pain and the subjectivity of the dehumanized Tutsi females (called inyenzi, or cockroaches), the “future of Rwanda,” whose lives have been “shattered” and who have incurred “unimaginable suffering.” (87)

Chiwengo suggests that the discourse of Tutsi women’s “inaccessibility” aroused Hutu men’s desire by prohibiting access to women whom genocidal discourse categorized as already inaccessible. Tutsi women’s “inaccessibility” came to symbolize Hutu oppression, as encoded in ubuhake metaphors. The construction of female Tutsi “inaccessibility” suggests the investment of the male patron’s power onto female Tutsi bodies, which are objectified as artifacts of the uneven Hutu-Tutsi relations that ubuhake now symbolizes. When emphasizing the “Tutsiness” of female survivors, NGO documents (like Nowrojee’s Shattered Lives) further objectify women’s bodies as artifacts of “ethnic violence” and targets of the cockroach metaphor.

3.4. Inyenzi and Ubuhake Metaphors in International Literature on the Rwandan Genocide

International cultural discourses on the Rwandan Genocide often foreground the inyenzi metaphor. “Cockroach” is a common trope for omnivorous “pests;” its usage presumes the existence of exterminators, positioning annihilation as teleological imperative. Yet, this bestializing metaphor—often included in Anglophone and Francophone texts as inyenzi—is presented as uniquely Rwandan (even though many

40 Since the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, popular discourses use the cockroach metaphor to describe what will remain if humanity destroys itself in nuclear war.
genocidal discourses characterize human groups as “vermin”). That the dehumanizing epithets of the Bosnian War and the Chechen Wars did not circulate in international cultural discourses like inyenzi raises important questions about how this metaphor shapes (and genders) knowledge production of the Rwandan Genocide.

Not only circulating in the “Western” or “Northern” imagination, the cockroach and/or ubuhake metaphors have appeared in Francophone African literatures. As Nocky Djedanoum muses: “le Rwanda peut être le point de départ pour rêver d’une autre Afrique” (qtd. in Harrow 44 fn; Rwanda can be the point of departure for dreaming of another Africa). This statement, made in reference to Fest’Africa’s 1998 project Écrire pour devoir la mémoire41—for which Burkinabé, Chadian, Djibouti, Guinean, Ivorian, Kenyan, and Senegalese writers traveled to Rwanda—speaks to the power of transnational knowledge production on and of the Rwandan Genocide. The metaphors that shape literature of the itsembabatutsi can perpetuate or invent any imagining of Rwanda (and of Africa in general).

At worst, the cockroach metaphor is appropriated and employed as emotional shorthand for “unimaginable hatred.” To this end, Terry George’s well-known 2004 film, Hotel Rwanda, begins with a black screen and a voiceover by Hakeem Kae-Kazim (as George Rutaganda, a broadcaster at RTLM):

The Tutsi were collaborators for the Belgian colonists, they stole our Hutu

---

41 Eight literary works were produced in affiliation with Écrire pour devoir la mémoire: Monique Ilboudo’s Murekatete, Nocky Djedanoum’s Nyamirambo!, Koulsy Lamko’s La Phalène des collines (The Butterfly of the Hills), Abdourahman Ali Waberi’s Moisson de crânes (Harvest of the Skulls), Tierno Monénembo’s L’Aïné des orphelins (The Eldest Orphan), Véronique Tadjo’s L’Ombre d’Imana, Meja Mwangi’s Great Sadness, and Boubacar Boris Diop’s Murambi, le livre des ossements (Murambi, the Book of Bones).
land, they whipped us. Now they have come back, these Tutsi rebels. *They are cockroaches.* They are murderers. Rwanda is our Hutu land. We are the majority. They are a minority of traitors and invaders. *We will squash the infestation* (my emphasis).

This juxtaposition, after the ICTR “Media Case,” identifies the consequences of the RTLM transmissions. However, the black screen momentarily decontextualizes Rutaganda’s vitriol as outside of time and space before cutting to a shot of a busy Kigali marketplace. While condemning genocide, the *inyenzi* metaphor thereby becomes unmoored from the decades of real (and gendered) experiences that preceded the Rwandan Genocide.

Lesser known than *Hotel Rwanda*, Sonja Linden’s play *I Have Before Me a Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Lady from Rwanda* (which was first performed in 2002) also begins with the decontextualized cockroach metaphor.

Survivor Juliette delivers the opening prologue from offstage:

> They came to our house in the morning. Some of them were our neighbors. The president had been killed in the night. There was a curfew. On the radio they said nobody can go out or they will be shot. My father was very worried. We all stayed together the whole night. And in the morning there was a knock at the door. We saw it was our neighbors and my father thought this is maybe good, they will help us hide. Then we saw the others, eight or nine of them, with machetes. “What’s going on?” he said. Our next door neighbour, he said, “Now is the time for all the Tutsi cockroaches to die.” (18)

By first articulating the cockroach metaphor “behind the scenes,” Linden’s play critically locates the Rwandan genocide as a “distant conflict” out of sight not only for many of the audience members, but also for the “international community” in general.

In order to consider how the cockroach metaphor makes Rwandans (in)visible in cultural discourses, particularly in *loci* of uneven power relations, such as the United
States and Canada, I will now focus my discussion on Derrick Burleson’s “Beasts,” Gil Courtemanche’s *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali* (A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali), and Julien Pierce’s *Speak, Rwanda*. By foregrounding figurative language with ironic naïveté, “Beasts” considers how metaphor shaped the Rwandan Genocide and its representations.

In contrast, Gil Courtemanche’s *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali* (A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali) positions the 1994 Rwandan genocide as stemming from “ethnic conflict” within the African continent. And, Julien Pierce’s *Speak, Rwanda* vivifies international news media coverage and NGO testimonies. These three metaphoric transmutations—along with many others, of course—gender knowledge of the Rwandan Genocide.

### 3.4.1. Derrick Burleson’s “Beasts”

Derrick Burleson’s *Ejo*, which means both “yesterday” and “tomorrow” in Kinyarwanda, situates past histories and future memories in relation to the Rwandan Genocide. Burleson’s poetry foregrounds the centrality of figurative language to the Rwandan Genocide in particular and violence in general. Metaphor emerges as the primary subject of the cycle “Beasts,” which includes five poems in free verse about creatures indigenous to Rwanda: a cockroach, a worm, a chiggo, a chameleon, and a gorilla. By describing these animals literally, “Beasts” urges the reader to theorize how the *inyenzi* metaphor’s interactional workings produce material violence.

---

42 Meaning “the day next to today,” *ejô* refers to both yesterday and tomorrow in relation to the present. The adverb *ejôbuîndì*, signifying “before yesterday/after tomorrow” and “recently/soon,” conveys the same concept of temporality.

3.4.1.1. A Giant Cockroach

Whereas genocidal discourse applied the inyenzi metaphor to Tutsi, Burleson applies ethnicizing metaphors to a “Giant Cockroach” in the twenty-five-line poem by the same name. In the first stanza, he ethnicizes the insect just as the inyenzi metaphor essentializes the Tutsi as a race: “Having had enough of their tribe, I snatched/the yellow can labeled Hatari from the very back/of the kitchen cupboard. Hatari means danger” (28). By using the word “tribe,” Burleson emphasizes both “racial purity” and foreignness—two themes that re-occur throughout the poem and the cycle. As the cockroaches invade Burleson’s kitchen, they foreground “invasion” as a connotative aspect of the inyenzi metaphor in genocidal discourse. In other words, although the poem details an actual cockroach infestation, the reader, in thinking through Derrick’s language, confronts genocidal discourse.
Additionally, Africanist discourse enters into the poem through the use of the word “tribe.” As Peter Skalník wrote in the late 1980s:

“Tribe” has been largely supplanted, in recent years, by the notion of “ethnic group.” The latter term preserves some of the earlier meanings of “tribe,” of course, but it has acquired several new meanings consonant with the changing political environment of the second half of the twentieth century. “Tribes” are no longer thought to be of any great political significance, so that when the term is used in the public media, it is generally in the context of labeling African cultural curiosities. (69)

Through this semantic trajectory, and its entanglement with representations of the Rwandan Genocide as an “ethnic conflict,” the cockroaches in Derrick’s kitchen are invested with “tribal animosities ... based on ‘natural’ divisions [that] ... surface in times of tension” and are ultimately “not open to amelioration” (68, 69). By using genocidal metaphors literally, Derrick portrays linguistic violence as an instrument of genocide.

When Derrick matter-of-factly grabs a can of poison, it shows how violently the inyenzi metaphor dehumanizes. Derrick knows there is poison in the can labeled “hatari,” but he doesn’t know its ingredients, indications, or half-life. By using this Kiswahili word, Burleson imbues the poem with the international language of marketplaces and commercial exchanges in East Africa. In a roundabout way, Burleson connects the inyenzi metaphor to economic concerns and international interventions. The real “hatari,” or danger, is not in pesticide can; it is in the discourse of otherness that Derrick returns to literal usage, by applying its dominant metaphor to the insects it literally references.

The phrase “one too many”—first used to describe holes produced in bags of sugar—recurs: “Oh, they’d watched me watch them one too many/times, insolently cleaning their faces” (28). Similarly, repetition of “hear them” emphasizes the obsessive
quality of prejudice:

They’d built empires somehow inside our bedroom’s concrete walls, and at night we could hear them there, hear them in the ceiling tiles.
While we slept, their six-hinged scabblings crept into our dreams. How many generations? (28)

The image of the cockroaches building “empires” again corresponds to myths of the Tutsi as foreign rulers. That Burleson likens the roach’s mandibles to “Swiss Army knife scissors” emphasizes the mythical origin of Tutsi, wherein they are “Hamitic” and the Hutu are Bantu.

Hatred for the cockroaches even consumes Derrick in his sleep, encroaching not only on his kitchen and bedroom, but also on his dreams. Beyond merely sharing the territory of an apartment, the insects come to inhabit the symbolic universe of the unconscious. A plethora of fricatives create a hissing sound throughout the poem, reaching its climax in the alliterative sibilants “six-hinged scabblings”—the moment of the most intense hatred (28).

After this paranoid ebullition, the poem militarizes its discussion of the inyenzi. No longer merely a civilian “tribe,” they are now militants:

Denizens of the corner, armored as tanks, shiny carapace, trembling antennae. Stomp them hard enough, they pop. You have to love their ability to survive. I’d avoided that Hatari can for months, scared of what it might contain. (28)

Burleson’s use of ‘denizen’ evokes multiple definitions: 1) an inhabitant, 2) one that frequents a place, 3) an animal or plant naturalized in a region. Derrick describes the insects with a strange combination of animosity and wonderment. Their carapaces are
“shiny,” their antennae “trembling.” His juxtaposition of “You have to love their ability to survive” with “I’ve avoided that Hatari can for months” emphasizes his recognition that whatever will kill the cockroaches is horribly potent (28).

Ultimately, it is the cockroaches’ interference with Texan Derrick’s access to American commodities that seals their fate:

But when I drank a roach drowned in my Coke
in the middle of the night, I sprayed my enemies
with all the danger there was, more casualties
than I cared to count helpless on their backs,
frantically treading six new trenches
in the poison air—then stumbled back to bed,
sick of belly, dizzy of head, glad at heart. (28)

The /k/ of “drank,” “Coke,” “casualties,” “cared,” “count,” “backs,” “frantically,” “back,” and “sick” evokes the cockroaches’ choking for air. The cockroaches’ scattering and the poem’s hissing /s/—of sprayed, enemies, was, casualties, helpless, backs, six, trenches, poison, stumbled—ends abruptly with the word “sick.” The aspirate /h/ in head and heart ends Derrick’s struggle to rid his home of the inyenzi.

For the reader, however, hatari (danger) is always immediate, lingering throughout the five-poem cycle. “Beasts” forces the reader to consider the Rwandan Genocide as the present moment of Burleson’s Ejo (yesterday/tomorrow). As a result, “A Giant Cockroach” involves the reader in theorizing how the inyenzi metaphor assigns connotative value and produces violence.

3.4.1.2. A Giant Earthworm

The cycle’s twenty-four line second poem, “Giant Earthworm,” like “A Giant
Cockroach” before it, defamiliarizes the creature being described: “Everything’s large/here, too large” (29). With “here” meaning the Nyungwe Forest (in southwestern Rwanda, south of Lake Kivu, near the Burundi border), Derrick reproduces neo-colonial narratives of safari, wherein the perceived exoticism of local wildlife distinguishes the continent, effectively de-peopling it. Rather than assessing relationships among indigenous creatures and local inhabitants, the individual on “safari” measures the environment against Derrick’s own bodily experience, which he invites the reader to imagine as her own: the worm is “bigger around than your thumb, longer/than your forearm” (29).

Fear of the worm—and misrecognition—slow Derrick’s hike through the Nyungwe Forest:

I thought at first Snake! and Adam’s apple fluttered my throat. The worm’s tunnel leads down through liana stems, through the root filaments of giant ferns, down into the other rainforest beneath our feet. (29)

Burleson fearfully invokes biblical originary myths, implicitly referencing the Hamitic myth conjured by “Giant Cockroach.” The worm evokes narratives of indigeneity as it tunnels through liana and ferns into the soil. Enjambement between lines 8 and 9, as well as lines 9 and 10, characterizes the worm’s earthward movements as autochthonic. The worm navigates local rhythms of life and death, gliding along “breathing leaves, layers/of fallen leaves, black loam and rot” (29). Here, repetition of the consonant /l/ forces the reader to press her tongue against the alveolar ridge, curling it like the worm.

Self-contained and self-regenerating, the worm is at once “moistening” and
“tumescent” as it slinks

along the forest floor, each concentric ring
contracting to move it toward its mate who even now
sings a Siren song in the silent language
of worms. One end is male, the other female. (29)

The worm represents no one in particular; it is a kingdom unto itself. Derrick concludes that “this royalty of worms” will endure long after his departure from the forest (29). Nonetheless, he is unable to resist interfering: “I pick it up to prove I can, then let it go” (29). His interference calls to mind colonial meddling in Rwabugiri’s kingdom. What might be the consequences of Derrick’s heeding “the siren song”? Does external interference foretell the ‘Hatari’—Kiswahili for ‘Danger’—of the first poem?

3.4.1.3. Chiggo

Building upon the tension already established in “Giant Worm” and “Giant Cockroach,” the thirty-line “Chiggo”43 is the first poem in the cycle to draw blood. “Chiggo” takes place sometime after Derrick’s hike, when he realizes that the creature has burrowed into his toe and laid eggs. Strangely, although the chiggo’s occupation is more intimate than the cockroach’s (in the first poem), Derrick describes it with less urgency.

A knife cuts the chiggo from Derrick’s foot: “my angelic wife digs a hole/in my big toe, carving buhoro, buhoro” (30). The aggressive repetition of “digging” and “carving” contrasts with “buhoro, buhoro,” which means “slowly, slowly” in

43 The chiggo—also known as a chigger or jigger—is a parasitic mite that feasts on human flesh.
Kinyarwanda. Although Burleson doesn’t liken the chiggo to any identificatory group, 
his description of its occupation and expulsion echoes genocidal discourse on the “inyenzi 
infestation” in Rwanda. Furthermore, the pairing of intimacy (the carving by his wife) 
with infestation parallels the sexualizing focus on Tutsi women in genocidal discourse. 

Derrick’s sexual intimations parody John Donne’s sixteenth-century poem 
“The Flea,” transforming lyrics of sexual chastity into representational questions about 
the essentialist preoccupations of nineteenth-century race science: miscegenation and 
sexual transgression. The body and blood—his body and blood—become a site of 
imaginary “mixing” as Derrick exclaims: “Mark but this chiggo!” (30). Every human 
body has this “transgressive” potential, as emphasized by the poem’s one rhyme: 

Sure, there’s blood involved, 
but unlike Donne’s flea, 
our blood’s not in the chiggo, 
the chiggo’s in me. (my emphasis, 30) 

Rather than Derrick’s and Anita’s blood being co-mingled in the chiggo, as Donne’s 
and the maiden’s in the flea, the parasite is in Derrick. As Derrick describes a literal 
parasite, his language recalls the mid-century PARMEHUTU preoccupation with 
marriage and sexual intercourse as means of negotiating the categories of Hutu and 
Tutsi. 

The chiggo threatens the “purity” and “integrity” of his body, just as genocidal 
discourse imagined Tutsi women threatening the male Hutu body. Anita extracts the 
chiggo, “purpling her fingernail” with blood: 

ah, the white explosion when she 
squeezes my big toe with love enough
This violent, sexualized release evokes discourses on “the orgy of killing” in sites of “New Barbarism.” Though Derrick describes an actual chiggo, the reader—engaging Rwanda through knowledge of the genocide—easily can imagine parallels between this “explosion” and RTLM’s hate-mongering “radio politics.”

Derrick’s portrayal of the chiggo as an “unwelcome guest / a second cousin come to drink all the beer” (30) approximates the PARMEHUTU/MRND discourse in which Tutsi “patrons” are uninvited foreigners who deplete local resources. After masculinizing the chiggo as a beer-drinking guest, Derrick foregrounds the female insect’s reproductive capacity: “chiggo burrows in / and lays her eggs so her darlings / can hatch and feed, feed and grow” (30). As the “chiggo spawn” proliferates in a “white explosion,” Derrick’s description of the female chiggo’s reproductive capacity recalls how the Manifeste vilified Tutsi women—and the “hatari” of the first poem.

### 3.4.1.4. Chameleon

The twenty-four line fourth poem, “Chameleon,” also projects back towards the first poem by recalling early twentieth-century contemplation of the rigidity or fluidity of Hutu and Tutsi categories. That Derrick is present at a naming ceremony emphasizes this connection because the event emphasizes patrilineage (and, therefore, the father’s category, whatever that may be). The men, who transmit their categories according to the laws of patrilineal descent, are the poem’s focus: “our chairs and our beers out front / all us men, while the women / tidy up inside. We’re chatting” (31). The repetition of “our”
together with “all us men” and “we’re chatting” emphasizes the exclusivity of the social situation. A shared, binary conception of gender unites the men.

When “a chameleon crossing the hard-packed/compound” interrupts their conversation, it redirects the men’s focus. The chameleon’s gaze evokes the title of Burleson’s volume, *Ejo*—one eye looks forward, another looks behind. The chameleon is an “old door,” swinging between yesterday and tomorrow: “He’s all loose hinges, old door./and slow, slow except for his tongue,/which he can flick like a bullwhip” (31). The simile’s comparison of the chameleon’s tongue to a bullwhip indirectly evokes the *ubuhake* metaphor. Like the chameleon, the metaphor changes according to the environment. Burleson’s neighbor issues a warning about human transformation: “*Witonde sha!* If he bites you,/you’ll become a woman” (31). (*Kwitonda* means “to be careful” in Kinyarwanda.)

### 3.4.1.5. Mountain Gorilla

Gender remains a point of intervention into labor practices and social categories in the last poem, “Mountain Gorilla,” which is the longest in the cycle at thirty-six lines. It focuses on what was, before the genocide, generally known of Rwanda in North America and Europe: the misty and hilly gorilla habitat documented by Diane Fossey. Derrick describes trudging through the forest with tourists who came specifically to hike through “this Tarzan movie” of their own racist imaginations (32). Their guide caters to this “movie,” flicking “his shiny machete” as they pursue a silverback gorilla (32). This imaginary Rwanda is one peopled by gorillas and colonized by rich foreigners seeking an “authentic” experience. Perhaps it is this symbolic forest—intervened in by foreigners
and Rwandans who seek to profit from their presence—that the worm of the second poem obstructed.

The silverbacks regard him and the other tourists as “smelly/hairless cousins,” just as Derrick perceived the chiggo as a “second cousin” depleting his resources (32). Rather than goods, these tourist-cousins demand *performance*. Resignedly retreating into the brush, the gorilla is more pensive than the voyeurs as he “strikes the pose of Rodin’s Thinker/and rests his massive chin on a fist/ vast as a linebacker’s helmeted head” (32). The tourists see in the silverback’s performance what they have already seen in books or on TV at home—Rodin’s thinker, a linebacker.

Derrick, focalizing the poem according to the gorilla’s perspective (as he imagines it), toys with the idea of who among them is more humane, more compassionate: beast or person. The crowd follows the cue of the gorilla’s youngest son hanging from one hand and

beating his chest hard with the other.
Our guide smiles at us and beats his chest.
The dangling child drums his some more, then
all of us beat our chests in unison. (32)

The sound of clicking cameras precedes this cumulative drumming. Before the crowd imitates the male gorilla, it photographs the silverback’s pregnant “wife” sunning her belly. They document the moment to possess it, and take it home: “Clickety-click/our cameras chorus, click, click, click” (32). Burleson asks the reader to wonder why the world’s attention is rapt by a gorilla safari but not concerned by genocide. As Kenneth Harrow writes about the “international community’s” responses to the Rwandan
genocide: “if Western reporters got into the act, the gorillas came into the picture, with our sympathies for the animals often taking precedence over the human misery” (35).

3.4.2. Gil Courtemanche’s A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali

Gil Courtemanche’s Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali (A Sunday by the Pool in Kigali) presents the protagonist, Québécois journalist Bernard Valcourt, as the author’s fictional counterpart.44 As Robin Philpot observes in Ça ne s’est pas passé comme ça Kigali (Rwanda 1994: Colonialism Dies Hard),

Pour décrire son séjour au Rwanda, Gil Courtemanche a préféré le roman à l’essai. Mais son roman est aussi, selon lui, un reportage de journaliste. L’astuce est brillante: il est libre de lancer des accusations d’une gravité inouïe contre des personnages vivant … pour ensuite se cacher derrière le titre de romancier des qu’un lui oppose un fait contredisant ses allégations. Brillante aussi parce qu’il peut donner libre cours à son imagination et à ses fantasmes — ou sont-ce des vantardises? — sur l’Afrique et les Africains qu’il prétend connaître. (125)

To make his case on Rwanda and extrapolate on his own experience in that country, Gil Courtemanche chose to write a novel. His novel is also, in his own words, “an eye-witness report”, even though he was not in Rwanda when the events take place. His manœuvre is clever since he can accuse real people of heinous crimes … He then hides behind his license as novelist as soon as someone presents a fact contradicting his allegations. It is also clever because he can drop all inhibitions to his imagination and fantasies -it could also be described as bragging -about Africa, the Africans and especially the African women45 he claims to know.

According to this narrative sleight, Courtemanche dedicates the fictional narrative to his (invented) “Rwandan friends,” and, in particular, Gentille: “qui me servit/ des œufs ou de la bière/ et dont je ne sais si elle est morte ou vivante” (7; “who served me eggs and beer/

44 Incidentally, Bernard Valcourt is also the name of a New Brunswick politician who served in the Brian Mulrooney cabinet but resigned after a drunk–driving accident.
45 Only the English edition emphasizes Courtemanche’s/Valcourt’s imaginary “African women.”
and could be dead or alive, if only [he] knew,” i). This dedication introduces Gentille as a waitress at the Hôtel des Mille-Collines—the same hotel depicted in Hotel Rwanda and Mujawayo’s and Mukagasana’s testimonies. Courtemanche declares to this “real” Gentille: “J’ai voulu parler en votre nom./J’espère ne pas vous avoir trahis” (7; “I have tried to speak for you./I hope I have not failed you,” i). He speaks “for”—that is to say, not “with”—Gentille through his narration of their “love story.”

Courtemanche acknowledges that, in emphasizing Gentille’s (and other characters’) symbolism, he deviates from the factual. He explains in the preface:

Ce roman est un roman. Mais c’est aussi une chronique et un reportage. Les personnages ont tous existé et dans presque tous les cas j’ai utilisé leur véritable nom. Le romancier leur a prêté une vie, des gestes et des paroles qui résument ou symbolisent ce que le journaliste a constaté en les fréquentant. (7)

This novel is fiction. But it is also a chronicle and eyewitness report. The characters all existed in reality, and in almost every case I have used their real names. The novelist has given them lives, acts and words that summarize or symbolize what the journalist observed while in their company. (ii)

In other words, Courtemanche argues that his story offers emotional “truth” rather than historical facts. He projects this “truth” onto the invented testimony of the fictional journalist Valcourt, who—according to the novel’s plot—was in Rwanda, at the Hôtel des Mille-Collines, during the genocide.

46 Robert Favreau directed a 2006 film adaptation of Courtemanche’s novel, Un dimanche à Kigali (A Sunday in Kigali). Favreau states in an interview with CBC’s Katrina Onstad: “In Rwanda, women are very beautiful, very poor, and being seduced or seducing a 40- or 50-year-old man who comes from Germany or France or Belgium or the U.S. and marrying him to make a better life— that’s the real deal; that happens. So you can understand that a lot of Rwandans are very aggressive and angry about losing their women, their future, to foreigners. It’s a real issue and people in Rwanda told me I had to include that aspect of the story: a 40-year-old white man seducing a young Rwandan woman.”
Hôtel des Mille-Collines, as a *locus* of international involvement and complicity during the genocide, recalls Frau Lisa Erdman’s lakeside “white hotel” in D.M Thomas’ eponymous novel. In Courtemanche’s fictional Kigali, the hotel pool becomes a site of neocolonial pillage and rape perpetrated by the various agents who gather to intervene in the name of “development”: “clientèle de coopérants, d’experts internationaux, de bourgeois rwandais, d’expatriés retors ou tristes et de prostituées” (11; “clientele of international experts and aid-workers, middle-class Rwandans, screwed-up or melancholy expatriates of various origins, and prostitutes,” 1). Valcourt counts himself as a participant in this “pièce de théâtre vaguement surréaliste” (24; “vaguely surrealist play,” 14). In this libidinal landscape, every encounter is hyper-sexual and explicitly gendered.

Writing in his notebook poolside, Valcourt imagines his life to have begun again there in Rwanda. Philpot responds to the worldview that shapes Valcourt’s narrative: “De la part de quelqu’un qui se vante d’être ‘homme de gauche et humaniste éclair,’ le plus choquant, et sans doute le plus surprenant, est la gouffre qu’il creuse entre son monde occidental et l’Afrique” (126; “What shocks and astonishes most is how such ‘an enlightened humanist’ can make his own Western world seem so far apart from and superior to Africa”). He considers two beginnings for Gentille, his lover and eventual wife: her birth and her family’s *kwihutura*. Having learned both stories from Gentille, Valcourt retells them in his own narrative about *his* relationship to her.

Situating his lover’s inheritance in colonial Ruanda-Urundi, Valcourt makes her fate—and by extension, Rwanda’s—seem preordained. A day after Mutara III’s 1931 baptism, Kawa, Gentille’s grandfather, asked the priest to baptize his son as Célestin after
his commune’s Belgian burgomaster. The narrator contextualizes the significance of this new identification:

Célestin était hutu, et seul l’empressement de son père à le faire baptiser lui avait ouvert les portes de la grande école, cette conversion et aussi deux vaches que Kawa, éleveur prospère, avait promis de donner chaque année à la mission pour la remercier de son générosité. (31)

Célestin was Hutu, and only the haste of his father to have him baptized had opened the doors of the university to him—this conversion plus the two cows that Kawa, a prosperous farmer, had promised to give the mission every year in thanks for its generosity. (21)

Rather than framing this conversion as a response to the new historical circumstances of post-Mortehan law Rwanda, the narrator describes it as “sorte de demi-mensonge pratiqué depuis toujours par les hommes des collines” (31; “a kind of half-lie practiced by men of the hills since life began,” 21). Locating this concealment in time immemorial falsely suggests that Rwandan social categories were always already divisive. The narrator mythologizes the Rwandan subject as a mystic, incomprehensible to early Belgian colonialists and contemporary aid workers alike.

Kawa interacts with the very European historical texts that first constructed Banyarwanda as “mysterious” people in the “heart of Africa.” He reads Le Ruanda-Urundi, étrange royaume féodal au cœur d’Afrique (Ruanda-Urundi, A Foreign Feudal Kingdom in the Heart of Africa) by Jules Sassereth, “un médecin belge spécialiste des cultures indigènes” (32; “a Belgian doctor who was a specialist in indigenous cultures,” 23). Once again, the narrator imbues language with mystical properties, observing that Sassereth’s book “bouleversa toute sa vie, celle de sa famille, de ses enfants et de ses petits-enfants” (33; “disrupted his entire life and the lives of his family,
his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren,” 23). This comment not only strips Rwandans of agency by positioning colonialism as the sole contributing factor to local violence, but also privileges the written over the oral. Valcourt emphasizes that European historiography effected massive transformations, but does not consider adequately Rwandan interactions: in speech, in metaphor, or in action.

The narrator recognizes the effects of the Hamitic myth, but does not explore how Rwandan agency shaped them. Courtemanche paraphrases Sassereth’s description of Hutu and Tutsi origins:

[L]es Hutus habitaient la région des Grands Lacs depuis des temps immémoriaux … [I]ls descendaient probablement des Bantous, de sauvages guerriers royaumes. […]

Les Tutsis, qui régnaient sur le Ruanda-Urundi depuis des siècles, venaient du Nord, d’Égypte ou d’Éthiopie. Peuple hamite, ils n’étaient pas de vrais nègres, mais probablement des Blancs que des siècles de soleil avaient assombris. (33)

The Hutus had inhabited the region of the Great Lakes since time immemorial … [T]hey probably descended from the Bantus, of savage warrior kingdoms. […]

The Tutsis, who had reigned over Ruanda-Urundi for centuries, had come from the North, from Egypt or Ethiopia. A Hamitic people, they were not true negroes, but probably Whites darkened by centuries of sun. (23)

Kawa encounters the Hamitic myth directly through Sassereth’s text—instead of indirectly through the policies of his hill’s burgomaster (as would have been more likely for a wealthy Hutu farmer in the period). This authorial choice overemphasizes the impact of colonialism, while dismissing Kawa’s own agency.

In reading Sassereth’s text, Kawa also encounters the metaphors of colonial physiognomy that invest the ubuhake metaphor with connotative value:
Le Hutu, paysan pauvre, est court et trapu et il a le nez caractéristique des races négroïdes. Bon enfant, mais naïf, il est rustre et peu intelligent. Le Hutu est dissimulateur et paresseux, et son caractère est ombrageux. C’est un nègre typique.

Le Tutsi, éleveur nomade, est grand et élancé. Sa peau est d’un brun clair qui s’explique par ses origines nordiques. Il est intelligent, raffiné et habile au commerce. Il a l’esprit pétillant et le caractère agréable. L’administrateur colonial au Ruanda-Urundi fera bien de s’associer leur concours pour les tâches qu’il jugera bon de confier sans danger à des indigènes. (33-4)

The Hutu, a poor farmer, is short and squat and has a nose characteristic of the negro race. He is good-natured but naive, coarse and unintelligent. The Hutu is deceitful and lazy, and quick to take offense. He is a typical negro.

The Tutsi, a nomadic cattle grazer, is tall and slender. His skin is light brown. He is intelligent and skillful at trade. He has a sparkling wit and disposition. Colonial administrators in Ruanda-Urundi would do well to obtain the assistance of Tutsis for tasks which in their judgment they may entrust without danger to natives. (23)

By identifying the Muhutu as “a poor farmer” and the Mututsi as “a nomadic cattle grazer,” Sassereth contributed to the historical use of ubuhake metaphors from the 1950s on. In Un dimanche, however, the effects of Sassereth’s mythology are more immediate. Courtemanche posits a causal relationship between Sassereth’s text and Kawa’s unquestioning reaction.

Kawa consults his cousin, an umupfumu (diviner), who accepts the idea of Hutu and Tutsi as essential categories designating indigeneity and foreignness, agriculture and cattle-keeping. At the same time, the umupfumu emphasizes the volatility of these categories:

Tes enfants et les enfants de tes enfants, tant qu’ils vivront au pays des collines, devront changer de peau comme les serpents et de couleur comme les caméléons. Ils devront toujours voler dans le sens du vent et nager avec le fleuve. Ils seront ce qu’ils ne sont pas, sinon ils souffriront d’être ce qu’ils sont. (37)

Your children and the children of your children, as long as they live in the land of the hills, must change their skins like snakes and their color like chameleons.
They must always fly in the direction of the wind and swim with the river. They will be what they are not, otherwise they will suffer from being what they are. (27)

The umupfumu’s prediction brings the reader to Gentille: a child of one of Kawa’s children. Expressing the mutability of social categories through similes located in skin, the umupfumu racializes Hutu and Tutsi. Similarly, his metaphors for going the easy way—flying in the direction of the wind and swimming with the river—engage the Hamitic myth’s interpretation during the Second Republic and the itsembabatutsi. Wind, or muyaga, is a commonplace metaphor for the 1973 massacre. And, numerous accounts document that génocidaires threw the corpses of murdered Tutsis into rivers so that they would, metaphorically, swim back to their mythical place of origin. These metaphorical associations make the umupfumu’s closing remark resonate as a theory of racializing discourse.

Marriage, as in Naigiziki’s L’optimiste, emerges in the diviner’s narrative as intervening in negotiations between “what one is not” and “what one is.” More specifically, institutions regulated by gender intervene in institutions regulated by race. Since patrilineal descent determines a child’s social category, the narrator explains: “Ses filles n’auraient qu’à épouser des Tutsis pour que leurs enfants fassent partie de la race choisie par les dieux et adulée par les Blancs” (38; “Kawa’s daughters would only need to marry Tutsis for their children to be part of the race chosen by the gods and admired by Whites,” 27). Valcourt believes that Kawa wants his daughters to have the privileges afforded to Tutsi by the Belgian colonial administration.

Valcourt asserts that Kawa, who encouraged his children to be “chameleons,” “a
fondé le Rwanda d’aujourd’hui” (217; “invented the Rwanda of today,” 198). Valcourt, whose history of the world grows from his love for Gentille, perceives Kawa as a metonym for the changing Rwandan relationship to social categories: “l’horrible résumé” (218; “the horrible summation,” 198). Valcourt imagines that he receives this undesired inheritance when he marries Gentille. This bequest positions Valcourt, like Sassereth before him, as a writer of Rwandan historiography. He becomes “responsible” for knowing and telling the story of Kawa’s hill. This discourse of responsibility, while cloaked in human rights rhetoric, reproduces Belgian self-justifications for colonial occupation in Rwanda.

Uncritically, Valcourt accepts this “responsibility,” staying on in Rwanda after the genocide to work for an NGO. Although Valcourt understands the genocide to have been much more than a “tribal feud,” he naturalizes Rwandan social categories and AIDS as furthering an “accidental holocaust” written in blood. He recognizes the racism of a Belgian philosophy professor who says of Banyarwanda: “Régulièrement, il faut qu’ils s’entretuent. C’est comme le cycle menstruel, de grandes coulées de sang, puis tout revient à la normale” (215; “They have to kill each other at regular intervals. It’s like the menstrual cycle: a lot of blood flows, then everything returns to normal,” 195). However, Valcourt does not connect the colonial ‘logic’ of the above statement—which essentializes violence—to his conflating the AIDS epidemic with genocidal violence into one “holocaust.” From his deathbed in the hotel, a character named Méthode testifies for Valcourt’s film: “Je meurs du sida, mais je meurs par accident. [...] Je suis né tutsi, c’est écrit sur ma carte d’identité, mais je le suis par accident” (70; “I’m dying of AIDS, but I’m dying by accident. [...] I was born a Tutsi, it’s written on my identity card, but I’m a
Tutsi by accident,” 59). Valcourt fails to distinguish between these two “accidents” of history. For Valcourt, AIDS metaphorizes the ills not of post-colonial development discourses, but of Africa.

Méthode’s predictions—which are really Valcourt’s, framed in his documentary film—further imply that Rwanda is an aberration, an “accident” outside European and African historiographies:

Nous allons plonger dans une horreur unique dans l’histoire, nous allons violer, égorger, couper, charcuter. Nous allons éventrer les femmes devant leur mari, puis mutiler le mari avant que sa femme ne meure au bout de son sang, pour être certains qu’ils se verront mourir. Et pendant qu’ils agoniseront, qu’ils en seront à leur dernier soufflé, nous violerons leurs filles, pas une fois, mais dix fois, vingt fois. [...] Ici, nous allons tuer dans un grand excès de folie, de bière, de mari, dans un déferlement de haine et de mépris qui dépasse ta capacité de comprendre, et la mienne aussi. (73-4)

We’re going to plunge into a horror never seen before in history. We’re going to rape, cut throats, chop, butcher. We’re going to cut open women’s bellies before the eyes of their husbands, then mutilate the husbands before the wives die of loss of blood, to make sure they see each other die. And while they’re dying, coming to their last breath, we’ll rape their daughters, not just once, but ten times, twenty times. [...] Here, we’re going to kill in a great, wild excess of madness, beer and pot, in an unleashing of hate and distrust that’ll be beyond your capacity to understand, and mine as well. (62-3)

This ebullition of “new barbarism” represents Rwanda as an aberration, and distances the gendered violence of 1994 from Valcourt’s own (neo)colonial libido. Valcourt conflates Méthode’s foreboding with Justin’s intentionally infecting white women with HIV to “avenge” his being in their eyes “un simple objet de convoitise sexuelle” (146; “a mere lust object,” 130). Justin self-justifies: “Ce pays était condamné. [...] Que ce soit la machette ou la queue infectée qui fasse le travail, quelle différence?” (107; “This country was doomed. [...] What was the difference if a machete or an infected cock did the job?,”
93). This argument, which seems to articulate Valcourt’s own racism and misogyny, resurfaces in genocidal discourse when *interahamwe* write *inyenzi* on Georgina’s house and force her husband, Cyprien, to have sex with her. Cyprien reconstitutes Justin’s argument: “Femme, mieux vaut mourir de plaisir que de torture” (10910; “Wife, better to die of pleasure than of torture,” 96). Valcourt suggests that each Rwandan man’s penis is an instrument of violence like a “machete.”

Though Georgina doesn’t live to tell her story, Valcourt—along with the fictionalized counterpart of Rakiya Omaar, the director of African Rights—interviews women—both Tutsi and Hutu—who do. Valcourt focuses on the processes by which these survivors narrate their experiences of gendered violence:

Seules quelques femmes acceptaient de parler, à voix basse, les yeux plantés dans le sol et qui y restaient longtemps après qu’elles avaient terminé la description, Presque clinique (car elles ne possédaient que des mots concrets), de l’assassinat de leur mari, de leur fils. Les viols, ces femmes tellement prudes et timide, elles décrivaient avec un luxe de détails qui donnaient le frisson, comme si elles rédigeaient le rapport de leur propre autopsie. Elles évoquaient les pires mutilations et les plus perverses agressions avec un calme, une distance qui les rendaient encore plus atroces. (254)

Only a few women would speak, in hushed voices, their eyes fixed on the ground, where they kept them long after they had finished their almost clinical descriptions (for they had only concrete words) of the murders of their husbands and sons. The rapes these shy, prudish women described with a wealth of blood-curdling detail, as if they were dictating the reports of their own autopsies. They spoke of the worst mutilations and most perverse assaults with a composure and detachment that made these acts even more heinous. (231)

Valcourt once again introduces the idea that, because Rwandan women by and large do not utter certain sexual words, they are shy and prudish. His interest, as a writer, is in the women’s language: clinical descriptions, concrete words, blood-curdling detail. At the same time that these women’s experiences engaged multiple systems of metaphor, there
was nothing metaphoric about them at the level of experience.

Ultimately, Valcourt’s own metaphors organize his understanding of how Gentille experiences the *isembabatutsi*. Before April, Gentille asks Valcourt to arm her with the words he finds most powerful: “Je veux que tu m’enseignes l’amour des Blancs” (83; “I want you to teach me the White people’s love,” 72). Valcourt seems to imagine that, for Gentille, his words are imbued with the written history of European courtly love: Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, and so on. Valcourt insists that his love is his own, but answers with poems by Paul Éluard.

Rather than opening a space in the lovers’ dialogue for Gentille’s thoughts, these poems belie Valcourt’s sexual fetishization of Gentille’s body. Courtemanche has Gentille give voice to Valcourt’s desire, requesting: “Faits-moi encore jouir avec des mots” (114; “Make me come again with words,” 99). As Philpot puts it:

L’intérêt de Courtemanche pour les corps africains, omniprésent dans le roman, sert surtout à mettre en valeur, par contraste, ‘l’œuvre de l’esprit de l’Européen. Valcourt, homme d’esprit et de lettres, apprendra à Gentille ‘jouir avec les mots,’ ce que, semble-t-il, aucun Africain ne saurait faire. Gentille, qui est ‘comme le fruit de la terre rouge de cette colline, un mystérieux mélange qui réunit toutes les semences et toutes les sueurs de ce pays’ ou les femmes ‘ne possédaient que des mots concrets,’ n’apprendra la pensée abstraite et le pouvoir de l’esprit que grâce au bons offices du poète et humaniste Valcourt et son écrivain fétiiche, Paul Éluard. (132)

Courtemanche’s obsession with African bodies is a backdrop that gives relief to the work of the European mind. Valcourt is a man of letters and of intellect who is able to teach his lover Gentille “to come with words”, which it seems no African could do. Gentille, who is “like the fruit of the red earth of this hill, a mysterious mix of all the seeds and all the toll of this country” in which the women “had only concrete words”, only learns abstract thought and the beauty of poetry thanks to the good efforts of the poet and humanist Bernard Valcourt, and to his favourite writer, Paul Éluard.
For Valcourt, Gentille embodies what Éluard’s poetry terms “le dur désir de durer” (“the enduring desire to endure”). After her surrealist paroxysm, she incorporates these “European” words into her own language.

Gentille’s assimilation of Éluard’s poems frames her experience of the genocide for Valcourt, who eventually reads Gentille’s account of being held captive and raped. In this composition book, Valcourt focuses on a section entitled “Histoire de Gentille après son mariage” (“The Story of Gentille After Her Wedding”). Here, Gentille transcribes her own “dur désir de durer” through Éluard’s eponymous poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je suis fille d’un lac} & \quad \text{I am the daughter of a lake} \\
\text{Qui ne s’est pas terni} & \quad \text{Which has not dimmed} \\
\text{...Je ris des viol absurdes} & \quad \text{...At absurd rapes I laugh} \\
\text{Je suis toujours en fleur. (266)} & \quad \text{I am still in flower. (242)}
\end{align*}
\]

Éluard’s lines are made to reference the gendered violence of the genocide, but—problematically—the “absurd rapes” at which Gentille “laughs” are real. As Courtemanche writes trauma through surrealist language, he locates the Rwandan Genocide—and its metaphors—outside any comprehensible history other than Valcourt’s relationship to Gentille.

Gentille survives the genocide, but considers herself one of the living dead: “[Je ne suis plus une femme. [...] Je ne suis plus femme. Comprends-tu ce qu’ils m’ont fait? Je ne suis plus humaine” (282; “I’m not a woman anymore. (...) I’m not a woman anymore.

---

47 Courtemanche’s specifying that the document is a composition book, full of copied poems, all of which are italicized, seems to further infantilize Gentille as Valcourt’s “pupil.”
Do you understand what they’ve done me to me? I’m not a human any more,” 257). Valcourt’s decision to accept this ‘death’, as imposed on and expressed by Gentille, contrasts with Mujawayo’s response to trauma. Mujawayo declares: “Celui que me voulait exterminée, il ne me verra pas finie. […] Je sais seulement qu’être vivante-vivante, plutôt que survivante, est une façon de les punir. C’est ma seule vengeance possible” (5; He who wanted me exterminated, he will not see me finished. […] I know only that to be alive-alive, rather than surviving, is a way of punishing them. It is my only possible revenge). By Mujawayo’s definition, Gentille is surviving, not living-living.

Courtemanche’s final (and problematic) Éluardian “moral lesson,” exploring the ways in which good and evil overlap, manifests itself through Valcourt’s leaving Gentille for “living-dead,” as she requests. He does not, however, leave Rwanda, where he takes the inheritance of Kawa’s hill seriously, attending the gacaca “découvrir ceux qui avaient ordonné que Gentille et des milliers d’autres femmes soient reléguées dans le purgatoire des morts vivants” (283; “to learn who had ordained that Gentille and thousands of other women should be consigned to the purgatory of the living dead,” 258). Valcourt accepts his mythico-historical inheritance as an obligation to “speak for” (rather than to “speak with”). Rather than mitigating the power of genocidal metaphors through “romance,” Valcourt introduces new bestializing and sexualizing metaphors that interact with inyenzi and ubuhake metaphors to produce new narratives of dehumanization.

---

48 By Philpot’s count, Courtemanche explicitly dehumanizes Rwandans fourteen times. The novel’s English translation excludes this example: “Valcourt fut horrifiée par la pensée que rien dans cet homme ne lui avait paru humain...” (118; “Valcourt was appalled at the thought that nothing in this man appeared to him to be human…”).
3.4.3. Julien Pierce’s *Speak, Rwanda*

Whereas Valcourt’s voice dominates Courtemanche’s novel, ten fictional Rwandan characters narrate the 37 chapters of Julien Pierce’s *Speak, Rwanda*. Pierce, like Courtemanche, was not in Rwanda during the genocide. As Pierce’s title suggests, the novel implores the Rwanda of international news media to speak its stories through his own fictional characters. Recognizing the impossibility of this project, of animating a newspaper into a novel, Pierce does not conceal his dependency on journalistic reports as Courtemanche does. This formal difference sheds light on each writer’s choice of metaphors; where Courtemanche’s figurative language presents Valcourt and the author as testimonial voices, Pierce’s refraction of *inyenzi*’s metaleptic reference to *ubuhake* illuminates his own dependence on second-hand information.

As much as Pierce implores his Rwandan characters to speak for themselves, they remain steeped in the metaphors of genocidal discourse and constructivist historiography. Above all, their language, personal obsessions, and engagement with both *inyenzi* and *ubuhake* metaphors echo media coverage of the genocide in Rwanda. Although the characters share a common engagement with figurative language, each one has a different relationship to the *inyenzi* and *ubuhake* metaphors. Whereas Courtemanche’s Rwandan characters are archetypal because they don’t speak for themselves, Pierce’s are archetypal because they do. On the basis of their self-identification as Hutu or Tutsi, Pierce’s characters share categorical relationships to the metaphors of PARMEHUTU/ MRND discourse. The character-narrators include five “Hutu” and five “Tutsi:”
Although *Speak, Rwanda* attempts to balance the above Tutsi and Hutu voices—providing different perspectives on the same events, the same metaphors, and the same mythico-history—it presupposes the existence of “Tutsiness” and “Hutuness” as ethnic (rather than political or socio-economic) categories.

To tell the story of *itsembabatutsi*, the novel begins and ends with chapters focalized by Tutsi characters. Immaculée introduces the narrative, saying: “I envy Hutu women one thing. They can eat meat” (3). Pacifique’s reunion with his father, dressed in the costume of a traditional *intore* dancer, concludes it. The introduction and conclusion both employ *ubuhake* metaphors from what purports to be a “Tutsi perspective”—suggesting that this institution, rather than its metaphoricization in political discourses, catalyzed the genocide.

Immaculée muses that in her “grandmother’s day a Tutsi woman like [herself] would never find anything to envy in a Hutu” (4). To her grandparents she traces the modern transformations in Rwanda, as Valcourt does from Gentille back to Kawa. Her point of access to early colonial history dates to her grandmother, while her husband’s dates to Rwabugiri’s court. Although his knowledge of the Abasinga dynasty stems from a mythico-history of his own, he talks about the court as if he had been there. He constantly mumbles about “the old days,” bragging about “the *kalinga* drum kept by the
old Tutsi kings” (29). He identifies as metonyms of Tutsi political power those same symbols which the *Manifeste* indicated as revealing Tutsi “cultural monopoly.”

If Immaculée’s nostalgia can be understood as a longing for comfort and security, her husband’s is more like the will to power. Glorifying *ubuhake*, he rants about his own father’s power, which stemmed from his role as *shebuja*:

> If a Hutu client missed one payment … my father would end their contract and the Hutu would have no milk to drink or fertilizer for his fields, and no other Tutsi cattleman would enter into a contract with him and his Hutu neighbors would turn away from him for fear my father would see to it their contracts ended too. (29)

For the very reason the *Manifeste* condemns *ubuhake*, Immaculée’s husband embraces it, describing the institution’s power relationship as do PARMEHUTU and MRND. Immaculée’s husband literalizes and internalizes the vocabulary of *ubuhake* metaphors employed from the 1959 revolution onwards.

By contrast, Silas engages *ubuhake* metaphors only metaleptically through the *inyenzi* metaphor. Silas rants about keeping “the *inyenzi*, those greedy cockroaches, in their place” (15). He believes that “cockroaches … crawl around and poison the land” (37). Drawing upon the agrarian metaphors of the First and Second Republics, Silas fervently maintains that all Tutsi “must be rooted out of the land like poisonous weeds from a garden” (36). In the rhetoric of *uburetwalakazi*, Silas emphasizes the relationship between *inyenzi* and his own capacity to do agricultural work. He feverishly anticipates that “some of the land will become empty” after Tutsi have been murdered. Silas brags that he is prepared to plant the land “with people of [his] own choosing who [he] know[s] are loyal majority people” (36). This assertion has as much to do with seizing land as it
does with ubuhake *metaphors*. The land of Rwanda, according to Silas, will go to the farming people: the stereotypically Hutu agriculturalists.

As steadfastly as Silas embraces the Hutu mythico-history of *ubuhake*, Emmanuel Rubagunga evinces the Tutsi one. Emphasizing the historiographical connections among Tutsi pastoralism, monarchy, and *ubuhake*, he boasts that he is proud to be from the Abasinga clan (like Rwabugiri). He notes: “Abasingas believe in honoring contracts, especially the most sacred of contracts: *buhake*” (100). Rubagunga conceptualizes his obligations as Captain Mazimpaka’s bodyguard as a kind of *ubuhake*. When he is upset, he thinks “of cattle, because thoughts of them are soothing. Few things are more beautiful than a herd of Inyambo going out to pasture” (100). In contrast, Prosper, a Hutu farmer maintains that “remembering 1959 is more pleasant” than recent events (191). Both men are attached equally to the labor roles assigned to their social categories by originary myths and ethnicizing discourse. Because Pierce’s characters self-define according to *ubuhake*, it is always present—metaleptically—in the inyenzi metaphor, as we shall see.

Augustin, a young FAR member and Agathe’s brother, uses the inyenzi metaphor to convince himself that the genocide is *pleasant*. He embraces his identity as a soldier by delineating FAR’s use of symbolism and metaphor: “I got what I wanted, yeah, I’m a soldier in the Forces Armées Rwandaises, and I wear a beret with a button of the dead president’s face on it, and on roadblock duty I’ve already killed my share of Tutsi cockroaches and Hutu traitors” (90). Occasionally, moments of pain slip through his militant posturing. He admits: “I don’t like doing the babies, but it has to be done, because they’re cockroaches and if we don’t get rid of them now they’ll infest the land. The burgomaster says so. RTLMC says so” (54). He communicates his absolute
deference by forcibly uttering “inyenzi” in situations where he has already revealed (to himself) an awareness of the metaphor’s effects on its human referents. Describing the “[h]undreds, thousands, many thousands” of corpses in the Kagera River “that goes all the way north to Lake Victoria,” Augustin observes: “This is the way Tutsi really are—white, mealy things a lot like insects dead on the surface of a river” (98). His transition from metaphor (cockroaches) to simile (like insects) is poignant, emphasizing his own recognition that people are not insects, as he condones and commits violence.

Though he doesn’t draw his identity from violence like Augustin, Silas is also proud to be among the interahamwe. After the genocide, when a journalist asks him if he feels remorse, he returns to the literal meaning of the word ‘cockroach,’ distancing the metaphor from its real referent: “I smiled at him and said nothing. Why should I feel bad? Do you feel bad when you squash a mosquito, a fly, a cockroach? When he repeated the question, I told him I was not interested in answering the ignorant questions of foreigners” (272). Similarly, when he is being tried in Arusha for what he understands as “genocide, murder, crimes against humanity, and that sort of thing” (274), he explicitly calls into question the idea of a metaphor’s reference:

Silas: “I’m saying I protected my people.”
Prosecutor: “Did you tell your people to kill cockroaches?”
Silas: “Of course. Don’t you kill cockroaches when they infest your house?”
Prosecutor: “But you meant Tutsi.”
Silas: “I meant cockroaches. You decide for yourself what a cockroach is.” (276)

Silas exploits the connection between denotative and connotative definitions by insisting that the prosecutor assess the metaphor’s metaphoricity and meaning. Because metaphor always requires interpretation and the attribution of meaning, it is itself metamorphic and transformative on the level of event not only for Silas, but also for the Prosecutor.
The usage of *inyenzi* emphasized gender even as it denied it. Tutsi men were routinely executed, while Tutsi women were almost always individually raped, gang-raped, raped with objects, held in sexual slavery, or sexually mutilated (Nowrojee 1). Silas, given his own tastes (and his interpretation of “The Hutu Ten Commandments”) finds Agnès most attractive. Righteous Agnès, who hides Innocent in her house from men like Silas, muses about the *interahamwe*’s motivation by considering their preferred metaphor, *inyenzi*:

Through many generations they have learned to think of Tutsi as they think of animals. They see the gorilla, the antelope, the jackal. They are killing animals when they kill Tutsi. They believe this is true, I can see that. They are living a dream that they all share. But if they wake from it, what will they think? (64-5)

Cockroach, gorilla, antelope, and jackal are all dehumanizing metaphors that other their referents. *Inyenzi* is no different from the other metaphors in its bestializing power; it is only significant because of its metaleptic relationship to *ubuhake*. And, that metaleptic relationship can be transferred throughout a broad system of metaphors (as Burleson’s “Beasts” suggests).

Pierce’s portrayal of gendered violence includes two sexual encounters that each survivor narrates as consensual, while describing what, according to international legal statues, is rape. When Silas comes to Agnès’ house, looking for “cockroaches hidden by the *ibyitso*” (68), she has intercourse with him—even though he “terrifies and disgusts” her—to protect Innocent. Agnès contends that, more than killing “cockroaches,” Silas is interested in exerting his power sexually: “He doesn’t care about [harbored “inyenzi”], he only cares about having me. He could rape me, but as an important man he’d rather not. He wants me to give in. He wants me to want him for what he stands for in these hills”
(68). Agnès perceives Silas as desiring recognition for his position in the CDR, which determines his relationship to the inyenzi metaphor. Silas wants to be a metonym for interahamwe violence. “What he stands for” is the metaphor’s violent enactment, its literalization in militant discourse.

As the metaphor’s referent and Silas’ target, Innocent also is raped after being forced to leave Agnès’ house. Pretending to be Hutu when he reaches a roadblock, he enters into a contract as the umugaragu of a Hutu militant. Innocent only learns what this “buhake” signifies after the militant takes him “into the woods and use[s him]” (111). Innocent’s rapist enacts the ubuhake metaphor as employed by the Hutu Manifesto; he is the oppressive shebuja, while Innocent is the abused umugaragu.

Rather than protection for ingabane, Innocent receives “food and tent and safety” (111). In the place of cattle, the ‘shebuja’ claims Innocent’s body. Relieved by this tenuous safety, Innocent doesn’t “like what [the shebuja does] … but close[s] his eyes and let[s] him” (111). Soon, the militant begins raping Innocent daily. Having previously thought that, as a Tutsi, he was chosen, Innocent laments: “From the first time that my shebuja used me after I prayed for Imana to stop him, I knew that I was not [Imana’s] favorite. I was guiding myself and nobody was protecting me” (113). In the “shebuja’s” genocidal discourse, the inyenzi metaphor allows for this “contractual” re-interpretation of ubuhake.

3.5. Survivors’ Testimonio: Esther Mujawayo and Yolande Mukagasana

Both Esther Mujawayo and Yolande Mukagasana offer insight into Rwandan women’s experiences by telling their own stories as testimonio (testimonial narratives).
While *testimonio* and autobiography both “affirm ... the speaking subject,” *testimonio* “affirm[s] ... the individual self in a collective mode” (Beverly 96-7). Mujawayo and Mukagasana both define their “selves” in relation to a centerless collective. They problematize—as Belhaddad writes of Mujawayo’s narrative—“la désespérante universalité d’un génocide” (10; the desiring universality of genocide). Mujawayo and Mukagasana both situate their own stories among a multitude of gendered narratives that are each experientially unique but share common metaphors.

Mujawayo situates her narrative in relation to other testimonies of other genocides, repeatedly linking the Rwandan genocide to the Shoah. Even before the 1994 *itsembabatutsi*, she says she often identified herself with the biblical Esther, and Tutsi with biblical Jews (15).49 Additionally, Mujawayo named her eldest daughter Anna after reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*. She explains her identification with the *Diary*: “on retrouvait les mêmes injustices et discriminations que nous vivions nous-mêmes, on a prénommé notre ainée Anna” (128; one finds the same injustices and discriminations that we ourselves lived through; we named our oldest Anna). This identification is personal, but, in the context of Mujawayo’s Paris-published narrative, it situates her trauma in relation to narratives of the Shoah—which, as Kay Schaeffer and Sidonie Smith note, constitute “the dominant paradigm for understanding the processes of victimization,

49 As Josias Semujanga remarks of a similar intertext (in his discussion of Abdourahman Waberi’s *Moisson de crânes*): “il évoque la Shoah – métaphore de la violence absolue – en tant que modalité formelle de la répétition du discours d’autrui et joue le rôle de témoignage ou de preuve permettant au génocide rwandais d’être reconnu comme un autre génocide” (“Le génocide” 114; it evokes the Shoah – a metaphor for extreme violence – as a formal method of repetition of discourses of otherness and serves as testimony or proof for the Rwandan genocide to be recognized as an *other* genocide).
remembering, witnessing, and recovery” in “[t]he literature of trauma in the West” (9). But, it should emphasized, Mujawayo aligns herself with Primo Levi first and foremost as another survivor.  

Mujawayo self-identifies as a réscapé(e), referring to Levi’s *I sommersi e i salvati* (*The Drowned and the Saved*, or in French, *Les naufragés et les rescapés*). She employs an epigraph from Levi’s narrative: “Il n’est ni facile ni agréable de sonder cet abîme de noirceur; et je pense cependant qu’on doit le faire car ce qu’il a été possible de commettre hier pourra très tenté à nouveau demain” (qtd. 6; “It is neither easy nor agreeable to fathom this abyss of viciousness, and yet I think it must be done, because what could be perpetrated yesterday could be attempted again tomorrow,” Levi 53). Mujawayo pointedly notes that Levi’s text was published eight years before the Rwandan genocide.

Like Levi, Mujawayo explores the ways in which reality can be distorted even as it is taking place. Yet, neither Levi, Mujawayo, nor Mukagasana set out to provide “evidence.” As Catherine Coquio writes:

le témoin tente de réinscrire sa vie dans un sens à partir du non-sens anéantissant. En ceci, le témoignage excède toujours son encadrement juridique et son exploitation historiographique, qui, par une violence particulière, le réduisent au statut de preuve et de document. (125)

The witness attempts to reinscribe his/her life in a sense removed from annihilating nonsense. In this, the testimony always exceeds its legal framework and its historiographic exploitation which, by a particular violence, reduces it to status of *proof* and *document*.

---

50 Schaeffer and Smith observe that “Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi were two of the more widely circulated witnesses from the 1960s and 1970s, contributing their testimony to public Holocaust remembrance” (22 fn).
Their testimonies make some sense of metaphoric interactions by identifying their dehumanizing uses in genocidal discourse and violence.

Mujawayo analyzes genocidal discourse and its metaphors in detail, unveiling their metaleptic associations. Her own speech is, as her collaborator Souâd Belhaddad observes, “brutale, insistante, lourde” (brutal, insistent, heavy) and full of “tremblements” (tremors) and “hésitations” (hesitations) (10). In undertaking to write her story, Mujawayo contributes to and engages with the multiple narratives of AVEGA (Association des veuves du génocide d’avril, Association of Widows of the April Genocide),51 where she works as a therapist. Mujawayo, like AVEGA, seeks “[l]es mots pour le dire” (195; the words to say it). Her trauma emerges in the text as an unlocatable psychic wound.

Living trauma always in the present tense, Mujawayo “bouscul[e] toute convention des concordances de temps” (11; jostles all conventions of temporal agreement). Belhaddad is attentive to the fact that Mujawayo speaks in a “temps suspendu” (suspended time), observing: “[p]resque chaque fois que la période du génocide est évoquée, Esther passe inconsciemment de l’imparfait en début de phrase puis, sous la force du souvenir et surtout celle du traumatisme, au présent” (12; almost every time that the period of the genocide is evoked, Esther passes unconsciously from the imperfect at the beginning of the sentence, under the force of remembering and above all trauma, to the present). Belhaddad’s dialogic presence in the text also situates listening in

51 Mujawayo describes Agajozo, AVEGA’s Kinyarwanda name, as “une parole de consolation ou d’un poème qu’on chante pour sécher les larmes d’un enfant qui pleure” (75; a conciliatory word or a poem that one sings to dry the tears of a child who is crying).
the present. As Alexandre Dauge-Roth notes, her textual participation “performatively asserts a willingness to listen that represents in the survivor’s eyes the promise of being culturally audible and socially acknowledged” (1689). Belhaddad’s own “empathetic unsettlement”—to use Dominick La Capra’s idiom for attempting to understanding the traumatic (78)—thereby enters into Mujawayo’s witnessing.

As Belhaddad is present in Mujawayo’s testimony, so too is Patrick May in Mukagasana’s. May transfers Mujawayo’s spoken words into written ones, producing new metaphors: a co-operative translatio, the Latin rhetorical term for metaphor (meaning literally “translation”). As La Capra observes,

writing trauma is a metaphor in that writing indicates some distance from trauma (even when the experience of writing is itself intimately bound up with trauma), and there is no such thing as writing trauma itself if only because trauma, while at times related to particular events, cannot be localized in terms of a discrete, dated experience. (186)

Mukagasana prefaces her testimony, by saying: “Je ne vis pas dans l’écrit. Je vis dans la parole” (14; I don’t live in the written word. I live in speech). The spoken word is Mukagasana’s habitation—which May approximates (but cannot inhabit) through her testimony as “a metaphor.”

For both Mukagasana and Mujawayo, language is the primary instrument of all distortion coexisting with the moment of lived experience. They both evince what Shoshana Felman identifies as testimony’s historical “translation”: “the need to testify to history as Holocaust [or, here, the itsembabatutsi] repeatedly comes up against the impossibility of witnessing the original events” (160). Mujawayo’s and Mukagasana’s acknowledgement and translation of this impossibility engages genocidal metaphors—
including *inyenzi*—so as to bear witness to their violent interactions in discourses and in the events of April 1994.

As a therapist with AVEGA, Mujawayo creates a community of survivors that not only emphasizes the telling of stories, but also explores the imprecision of vocabulary, euphemisms, and metaphor. Their collective reworking of rhetorical tropes is intentional, resulting from their re-configuring the concept of *inzu* (clan) to accommodate their network. Together, Mujawayo says, the women of AVEGA form a new clan and invent a new discourse.

The task of rebuilding Rwanda falls heavily on AVEGA members’ and other women, as does the need to expand the Kinyarwanda lexicon. Mujawayo notes Kinyarwanda had no word for rape or trauma: “On a dé les inventer depuis. Depuis le génocide de 1994” (195; One had to invent them since. Since the 1994 genocide). As part of this process, Mujawayo explores the discursive normalization of metaphors and metonyms that we have already seen: *événements* (events), a euphemism for massacres during the First and Second Republics; *muyaga* (wind), a metaphor for the 1973 massacre; *khubohoza* (to liberate), a metaphor for rape; and *gukora* (to work), a metaphor for to kill. The metaphors of *ubuhake* and *inyenzi* organize all of these aforementioned tropes into one mythico-history—one system of ordering metaphorical concepts.

Yolande Mukagasana, too, explores metaphor’s impact on her personal experiences and on Rwandan social categories. She argues: “Toutes les intolérances se sont toujours appuyées sur la métaphore, et le kinyarwanda est une langue où celle-ci règne en maître” (52; All prejudices are always endorsed by metaphor, and Kinyarwanda
is a language where [metaphor] reigns supreme). Both Mujawayo and Mukagasana
discuss the ubuhake metaphor indirectly, and the inyenzi metaphor directly. I will discuss
their accounts together, so as to present them in dialogue.52

Hearing the RTLM broadcast a list of condemned Tutsi inyenzi, Mujawayo
describes the reductive effect of the metaphor: “[J]usqu’à cette minute, j’étais Esther avec
un parcours, une historie, une vie, j’étais sociologue, épouse du préfet des études et
professeur estimé, et tout à coup, je ne suis personne, je n’ai droit à rien, je suis
seulement Tutsi, un cancrelat comme dit la radio” (154; Until this minute, I was Esther
with a journey, a story, a life, I was a sociologist, wife of the prefect of education and
esteemed professor, and all at once I am no one, I have no right to anything, I was only
Tutsi, a cockroach like the radio said). Comparing her to inyenzi, discourse denies her
personal identity by refusing to acknowledge any deviation from Tutsi, the category to
which the metaphor refers. For Mujawayo, the inyenzi metaphor exists most poignantly at
the moment in which she feels its figurative meaning challenge her real self-definition.
For militant Hutus, the figure of inyenzi no longer existed because they enacted the
inyenzi metaphor literally — ‘exterminating the cockroaches.’

Mujawayo comes to envision the metaphor’s meaning by its simultaneous
development and restriction of deviation from Rwandan social categories. Metaphor makes
Mujawayo embody the virulence of RTLM discourse by forcing her to see how inyenzi
represents an ongoing, active challenge to her gendered self-definition. Mujawayo

52 Other testimonios include: Scholastique Mukasonga’s 2006 Inyenzi, ou les cafards
(Inyenzi, or the Cockroaches), Marie-Aimable Umurerwa’s 2000 Comme la langue entre
les dents (Like the Tongue between the Teeth), and Marie Béatrice Umutesi’s 2000 Fuir
ou mourir au Zaïre (Surviving the Slaughter).
experiences the cockroach metaphor as a racist epithet. In this, inyenzi represents an ongoing, violent process that denies her subjectivity, her genderedness, and—most of all—her humanity.

Just as Mujawayo recalls being stunned by how ‘inyenzi’ both reduces and produces meaning, Mukagasana describes being shocked by her own habituation to the metaphor’s effects. The omnipresence of the inyenzi metaphor intervenes in her thoughts, contrary her will and against to her convictions:

Un cancrelat se débat avant la noyade, vient-il des restes de ma tignasse ou s’était-il logé entre mes cuisses? Je parle au cancrelat, je lui demande s’il se sent lui aussi victime du génocide.
Tu es un cancrelat, lui dis-je! Tu dois mourir, comme tous les Tutsi! Je jouis un instant de ma cruauté.
Pour toute réponse, le cancrelat disparaît dans la crapaudine, noyé. Je ris de ma bêtise. Muganga qui parle aux insectes! (156-7)

A cockroach struggles before drowning, will he stay out of my hair or has he lodged himself between my thighs? I speak to the cockroach; I ask him if he also considers himself a victim of genocide.
You are a cockroach, I say to him! You must die, like all the Tutsi! I enjoy my cruelty for an instant.
By way of responding, the cockroach disappeared in the grating, drowned. I laughed at my stupidity. Muganga [Doctor] who speaks to insects!

Mukagasana’s inyenzi metaphor works in the opposite direction of genocidal discourse, moving from insect to social category to individual (her)—instead of from individual to social category to insect. Her re-working of the metaphor is counter-discursive, refuting militant Hutu discourse by mimicking it.

Mukagasana’s experiences the habitualization of the inyenzi metaphor in Rwandan life. In other words, what once was clearly identifiable as metaphor begins to act like the literal meaning, distilling figure and referent into one rhetorical term. Even
without ever accepting the metaphor’s meaning, Mukagasana became habituated to its presence in militant Hutu discourse. Through this process of conceptual acclimation, Mukagasana metaphorized as Mututsi the original material source of the *inyenzi* metaphor: an insect.

Mujawayo and Mukagasana speak less directly about *ubuhake*, but acknowledge its metaphorization in post 1950’s Rwandan politics, as well as pointing to the cow’s centrality to Rwandan national culture. Mujawayo addresses the importance of the cow in Rwanda, recalling a compliment for a beautiful girl: “elle a les yeux d’un veau” (31; she has the eyes of a calf). At the center of such idioms is an organizing Rwandan belief that “[l]es veaux sont beaux” (31; calves are beautiful). Numerous tributes (*maaso y’iinyana*), legends (*amazina w’inka*, or herder’s oral poetry), rituals (marriage ceremonies, in which the groom traditionally spat milk onto the bride’s face as he uttered “Nakurongoye,” or “I marry you” [de Lame 259/410]), and social/political/economic institutions (such as *ubuhake*) reveal the centrality of the cow. Additionally, many Kinyarwanda expressions, such as the term for dusk, *kiber’inka*, which literally recalls cows returning slowly to the enclosure at dusk (de Lame 230/362), derive from pastoral practices. To the extent that each language comprises its own built-in ontology, cow-related words contribute to gendered meaning-making in Kinyarwanda—and inflect the *ubuhake* metaphors that genocidal discourse metaleptically references.

The processes by which post-1950’s PARMEHUTU and MRND discourse first metaphorized *ubuhake* and then veiled its figurative usage, referring to *ubuhake* metaleptically through the *inyenzi* metaphor, work towards reconstituting this built-in
Kinyarwanda ontology. Genocidal violence against Tutsi was a material effect not only of the cockroach metaphor, but also of the ubuhake metaphor implicitly referenced by the ‘inyenzi.’ When génocidaires killed their own shebuja, Mujawayo says it was—in addition to being a crime against humanity—“un acte vraiment tabou” (56-7; a truly taboo act) because it violated not only the code of ubuhake, but also a way of seeing the world and ordering human experience. At the same time that this “taboo” violates an indigenous ontology, it expresses a discourse obsessed with indigeneity, wherein Hutu are autochthonous and Tutsi are alien.

Although gendered violence veiled its figurative references to ubuhake during the itsembabatutsi, it duplicated the gendered violence of earlier massacres that explicitly linked inyenzi and ubuhake metaphors. The ‘suspended time’ of genocidal violence brings Mujawayo to the memory of her father’s comments about the 1974 événements:

Les vaches m’ont toujours fait mal parce qu’on les tuait vraiment comme on tuait les Tutsi, on leur coupait les pattes comme un coupait les pieds des gens. […] Pendant les événements, c’est toujours l’image que je garde: tu as le feu partout et les vaches qui bêlent, qui bêlent, tu as toujours les vaches qui bêlent dans la brousse, qui ont perdu leur maître. (64)

Cattle always pained me because one really kills them like one kills the Tutsi, one hacks off their hooves like one cuts people’s feet. […] During ‘the events’, that was always the image that I kept: you have fire everywhere and cows who bellow, who bellow, you always have the cows who bellow in the bush, who have lost their master.

Traditionally, “to bellow” [“kwiivuga”] metaphorically signifies “to recite one’s praise-poem” (Kimyeni). In this account, Mujawayo’s father anthropomorphizes the cows in a novel way in response to the imposition of PARMETHUTU/ MRND’s
ubuhake metaphor. Here, the bulls’ bellowing stands in for their murdered owner’s screaming, as they too are hunted like ‘inyenzi.’

There are two interesting rhetorical transformations occurring in Mujawayo’s retelling of the above story. First, her father inverted the inyenzi metaphor by applying a human social category (Tutsi) to an animal—rather than applying animalistic qualities to Tutsi. Second, Mujawayo’s connecting this story— which directly evokes the ubuhake metaphor for Hutu-Tutsi socio-economic and political relations— to the murdering of a shebuja in 1994, effectually traces the backwards historical projection structuring the metaleptical relationship among ubuhake and inyenzi metaphors during the genocide. Still, as Cathy Caruth puts it: “Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature … returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). Mujawayo’s use of the ubuhake metaphor’s diachronicity seems to conjure what Caruth describes as the unassimilated, belated nature of trauma.

Like Mujawayo, Mukagasana recalls a story from post-revolutionary Rwanda, emphasizing the diachronic aspects of the ubuhake metaphor. Her story dates from 1959, when some PARMEHUTU militants broke a milk jug. In the present tense of the genocide, her “doigts caressent machinalement la petite cicatrice” (35; fingers mechanically caress the little scar) from the broken jug. Her scar evokes the continuity among the present genocide and past massacres—the very continuity that the inyenzi metaphor refutes by veiling its relationship to ubuhake.

Touching her scar, Mujawayo recalls her mother saying at the time: “il ne reste
Milk—associated in militant Hutu discourse with Tutsi because of its conflating Tutsi power with *ubuhake*—symbolically links multiple, dislocated historical events. For Mukagasana, it connects the massacres of the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s with the 1994 genocide. In the genocidal discourse she describes, it posits a cause (*ubuhake*) for the violent effects of the *inyenzi* metaphor. In other words, metalepsis positions the *inyenzi* metaphor as negotiating the perceived inequity of *ubuhake*.

Mukagasana, like her mother before her, tells her children the story of *Benegihanga* and the milk he gave to Gahutu, Gatutsi, and Gatwa. After her son steals warm milk from a Hutu house for his starving sister, Mukagasana tells him: “c’est à cause de ces légendes que les Hutu nous détestent” (56; it’s because of these legends that the Hutu detest us). Both Mukagasana and Mujawayo assert the ongoing relationship among *ubuhake* and *inyenzi* metaphors. In so doing, they also assert the genderedness of the *inyenzi* metaphor, which militants identified as un-gendered after its transformation into a (discursively) ‘literal’ identification.

Mujawayo relates her discussion of gendered violence to AVEGA, Person-Centered Therapy, and language. Her *SurVivantes*, as the written adaptation of conversations between Mujawayo and Belhaddad, hinges on “l’impossibilité de la parole des rescapés” (Belhaddad 10; the impossibility of survivor’s speech). Throughout her testimony, Mujawayo emphasizes the importance of speaking, of insisting on gendering and deconstructing metaphors. Working with AVEGA, she came to know the particular
silence of survivors: “des blessures intérieures et souvent invisibles” (54; internal and often invisible wounds). As LaCapra observes, “[t]rauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence” (41). But, together, these women are modifying language, and reinventing a family: Chantal, Espérance, Annonciata, Paulina, Sylvia, and Esther (76-7). Mujawayo declares: “nos histories semblent toujours les mêmes à celui qui les écoute” (82; our histories always seem the same to the ones who hear them). She re-tells Espérance’s story by way of Rwandan women ‘finding the words’ to speak their trauma.

Espérance recalls being ‘humiliated’ by the interahamwe who “inspected” her sexual features, telling her that “ils voulaient voir le prototype d’une Tutsi” (81; they wanted to see the prototype of a Tutsi). This incident of gendered violence—which shares commonalities with numerous atrocities documented by, for example, Rakiya Omaar of African Rights and Binaifer Nowrojee of Human Rights Watch—reveals an idiosyncrasy in discursive uses of the inyenzi metaphor.

In genocidal discourse, the cockroach metaphor denies its own metaphoricity by claiming “literally” to identify Tutsi “cockroaches,” even as sexual violence foregrounds the metaphoricity of the interahamwe’s rhetoric. While dehumanizing all Tutsi, the metaphor selects Tutsi women as gendered targets of sexual violence. Mujawayo notes that genocidal discourse sometimes focused its violence on particular features that were constructed as characteristic of “Tutsi women.” For example, Mujawayo notes that only after AVEGA-member Bibi met another survivor with hips like her daughter Claire’s was she able to speak about her daughter Claire’s death. Upon seeing Espérance’s hips, Bibi
screamed and demanded to be hidden. Only after this visual encounter could Bibi speak of Claire “et des hanches trop larges qu’on avait coupées” (92; and of her overly large hips that he [a génocidaire] cut off). For Bibi, Claire’s death was written in the shape of Espérance’s womanly hips, which in genocidal discourse marked her as a feminine “Tutsi” and metaleptically evoked ubuhake metaphors.

Mukagasana also recounts how genocidal discourse marked Tutsi women’s bodies through violent sexual projections and metaphoric investments. Engaging the metaphors of gendered violence (and the sexualizing reference of inyenzi), Mukagasana passes a checkpoint dressed as an old woman who “n’enfantera plus de Tutsi” (145; bear no more Tutsi). She acknowledges that, even as the inyenzi metaphor denies her gendered subjectivity, it also constructs her capacity for child-bearing as a point of categorical negotiation between Hutu and Tutsi. By adopting an image of sterility, Mukagasana attempts to discourages the discursive metaphoricization of her body as a symbol of Tutsi lineage.

At another point in her traumatic experience, Mukagasana finds it more useful to emphasize her sexuality than to position herself as ‘sexless.’ While being hidden in a house where she was visited daily by a Hutu colonel, Mukagasana found another way of resisting. Anticipating that the Hutu colonel would rape her on his next visit, she asked the woman of the house for makeup. Mukagasana used the makeup, like her disguise as an old woman, to intervene in the way the inyenzi metaphor produces ‘meaning’ in militant discourse:

[J]e suis redevenue une femme. Une femme à part entière. Une femme qui aime séduire (221). […] Je laisse venir sa bouche à la mienne, je laisse ses mains
entreprendre mon corps, je passe même un bras autour de son cou. De l’autre main je déboutonne sa braguette, je plonge la main, et je me mets à caresser son sexe. L’excitation le prend aussitôt. (226)

I was becoming a woman again. A whole woman. A woman who loves to seduce. […] I let his mouth come to mine, I let his hands wrap around my body, and I reached a hand around his neck. With the other hand, I unbutton his fly, I plunge my hand in, and I begin to caress his sex. Excitement took him over immediately.

By applying lipstick, feigning sexual desire, and actively engaging with the colonel, Mukagasana consciously enacts the stereotype of the Tutsi woman as attractive, promiscuous, and dangerous. This revelation embarrassed the Hutu Colonel, since, according to the “Hutu Ten Commandments,” he shouldn’t have been attracted to her. Revealing the colonel’s desire exposed his perception of her as a woman (and not, according to genocidal discourse, as a “cockroach”). By initiating and orchestrating this sexual exchange, Mukagasana asserts her femaleness and refutes the dehumanizing inyenzi metaphor. In so doing, she also unveils the system of metaphors related to cows and ubuhake—the system of metaphors that ‘inyenzi’ denies through metalepsis.

When cultural discourses appropriate the inyenzi metaphor in order to condemn genocidal discourse, they often reproduce its ethnicizing focus. This discursive reproduction conveys the difficulties of embodied and gendered witnessing, but it also constructs a generalizing “African” alterity that emphasizes “race.” Unveiling the metaleptic processes of the inyenzi metaphor shows some ways in which Rwandan women are delegated to positions of otherness in both genocidal discourse and its objectifying representations.
Chapter 4

The Chechen Wars, Gendered Prisoners, and “Black Widows”: Staging Captives in Literature and Life

4.1. Introduction

On June 6, 2009, Ramzan Kadyrov marked the 210th anniversary of Aleksandr Pushkin’s birth by reading “Kavkaz” (“The Caucasus”) in front of Groznyi’s new mosque. The Chechen president recalled his siblings reciting Pushkin’s poems as he himself performed for journalists. Conjuring images of an idyllic, peaceful Caucasus, Kadyrov declaimed:

Пушкин правдиво писал Кавказе, и именно благодаря ему Россия узнала об этом великолепном крае. […] Только человек, который искренне любил этот край, мог написать такие строки о нем, он приехал на Кавказ не воевать, а узнать дух этого края. (RIA Novosti)

Pushkin wrote truthfully about the Caucasus, and it is thanks to him that Russia learned of this beautiful province. (…) Only a man who truly loved this land, could write such lines about it. Pushkin came to the Caucasus not to wage war, but to know the spirit of this land.

In less euphemistic words, Pushkin discovered the Caucasus while seeking beauty in exile, not while serving the tsar’s army. Kadyrov conveys his political agenda by de-emphasizing—if elliptically—the Russian imperial investment in Pushkin’s work. By

---

1 This Turkish-built mosque, which opened in 2008, is modeled after Istanbul’s Sultanahmet Camii (Blue Mosque). Holding up to 10,000 people, the Akhmed Kadyrov Mosque articulates Chechnya’s—that is, Ramzan Kadyrov’s Chechnya’s—self-conscious identification with “chisty i islam” (pure Islam).
pointedly lauding Pushkin’s interest in the Caucasian “dukh” (“spirit”), Kadyrov reiterates Belinskii’s 1845 assertion that Pushkin “discovered the Caucasus” (qtd. Layton 15).

Pushkin’s 1822 publication of “Kavkazskii plennik” (“Prisoner of the Caucasus”), certainly familiarized Russian readers with the Caucasus. Although Russian contact in the region predated Pushkin, “Prisoner” situated the Caucasus as “a major literary theme” (Barrett 79)—an exoticized site of concurrent freedom and imprisonment, where Russian men are held captive by Caucasian men yet captivated by Caucasian women (who, in turn, are imagined to be captives of Caucasian men).

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the prisoner metaphor continues to include in its reference Pushkin’s poetry and nineteenth-century historical events. As Barrett puts it, “nineteenth-century dramas [...] provide a foundation [for popular conceptions of empire]—enough so that the literature, culture, and events of the original conquest of the Caucasus contribute to contemporary discourse” (87). Pushkin’s

---

2 Focusing on the prisoner as a themic feature of Romantic captivity narratives, numerous monographs have explored Pushkin’s literary Caucasus as a seminal topos in Russian cultural production. Contemporary scholars writing in English on this topic include Paul Austin, Thomas Barrett, Susan Layton, and Bruce Grant. Austin, focusing exclusively on the Russian Romantic period (c.1810-40), examines Pushkin’s popularization of the “exotic” through the prisoner figure. Barrett considers the diffusion of Pushkin’s literary Caucasus in nineteenth-century popular culture. Reframing as cultural production what Belinskii termed “discovery,” Layton considers the nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century literary prisoner’s interrelation with empire building in the Caucasus. Grant, too, considers the prisoner as Russia’s “gift of empire,” exploring the “captive myth as the ‘art of emplacement,’ generating a powerful symbolic economy of belonging” across imperial expansion and local responses to it (16). Whereas Austin, Barrett, and Layton focus on the nineteenth-century prisoner as a theme, and Grant does so as a myth, this chapter will concentrate on the twentieth-and twenty-first-century prisoner as a gendered metaphor.
The prisoner metaphor connects representations of literary and historical prisoners, revealing continuities among multiple discourses on and of the Caucasus without projecting a causal relationship between nineteenth-century conflicts and the twentieth-century Chechen Wars. As the prisoner metaphor continues to be remembered, evoked, and enacted in cultural production on and of today’s Caucasus, it incorporates multiple historical contexts—now emphasizing connections among events, and now denying them, but always, I will argue, gendering them.

Pushkin’s prisoner figure, influenced by Byron’s Childe Harold and by European philosophy that often conceptualized human bondage through a universalizing masculine subject, genders captivity in conflict. While Pushkin explicitly writes of a plennik (male captive), he implicitly engages two other contemporaneous literary preoccupations: the uznik (male prisoner) and harems. In nineteenth-century cultural production, Caucasian women in harems were likened to captives and prisoners, incarcerated by what Russian cultural production imagined as local “tradition” (Austin 77). According to these romantic conventions, “tradition” entraps Pushkin’s Caucasian maiden, who frees the Russian captive from his Caucasian, male captors. In other words, by exoticizing the female captor-liberator as a prisoner of her own culture, Pushkin’s prisoner genders political events in the Caucasus and in Russia (see Layton and Austin).

This nineteenth-century conception of Caucasian women as prisoners persisted through the Russian Revolutions of 1917, the 1918-21 Civil War, and the 1922
establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, when Lenin designated Tsarist Russia a *tiur’ma narodov* (prison-house of nations). Policies of *natsionalizatsiia* (nationalization) emphasized nation-building, asserting that all Russian subject nations, once prisoners, had been freed. Bolshevik policies after 1924 promoted such liberation through *korenizatsiia* (indigenization): the advancement of *korrenoi narod* (indigenous people) so as to make Soviet power seem “native” and popular (see Martin). As indigenous cultures in the Caucasus and Central Asia were promoted, the hijab was attacked as imprisoning women. Building upon Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor and nineteenth-century orientalizing discourses on “Eastern” women as captives of harems and victims of bride-kidnapping, legislation sought to liberate Caucasian women from the “prison” of oppressive customs, ‘*ādat* (customary law).

Contrary to this official discourse of figurative liberation, Stalin forcibly exiled Chechens (and many others) to Kazakhstan or Siberia between 1941 and 1944. Chechen poetry referring to this *aardakh* (“exile,” lit. “lead out”) describes Kazakhstan as a prison, Chechens as prisoners, and the Caucasus Mountains as *marsho*, meaning “freedom” and “peace.” Even after Khrushchev “rehabilitated” the Chechens in 1957, Chechen poetry used mountain imagery to reference obliquely freedom despite captivity within the Soviet Union.

After 1991, when Chechnya declared independence, Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor indirectly shaped nationalist discourse, as it recuperated collective memories of the *aardakh* and imperial oppression. Throughout the First Chechen War (1994-6), news media and international human rights organizations depicted all Chechen civilians as
prisoners of violence, but often focused on women’s experiences. Renowned journalist Anna Politkovskaia also described Russian mothers and their forcibly conscripted sons as prisoners of the Russian army. These aforementioned figurative uses of the “prisoner” metaphor interacted with real kidnappings, detentions, arbitrary arrests, “disappearings,” and internment in “filtration camps” in the North Caucasus.

Throughout both Chechen wars, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Human Rights Watch (HRW) has documented the kidnapping, torture, and “disappearings” of numerous Chechen men and women (“Dirty”). Additionally, Chechen citizens have been subject to indiscriminate arrests and held illegally in Russian “filtration camps,” such as Chernokozovo (see HRW, “Welcome”). Journalists, including Andrei Babitsky, have also been detained at filtration camps by Russians and kidnapped for ransom by Chechen combatants and profiteers.

In this violent context of literal imprisonment, detention, kidnapping, and counter-kidnapping, media representations often characterize women who chose to become combatants, suicide-bombers, or hostage-takers as prisoners of Chechen culture, and more explicitly, Chechen men. This reinterpretation of the prisoner metaphor circulated widely after the Moscow Dubrovka theatre siege of October 23-6, 2002, when 18 Chechen women held the Nord-Ost audience captive for 57 hours—until Russian forces killed them and some of their hostages with an unidentified chemical agent. Characterizing these female Chechen captors as “prisoners” of grief and or religion, media described them in gendered terms applied to other suicide bombers acting in the Second Chechen War (1999-), such as chernaia vdoxa (black widow) and nevesty
Allakha (brides of Allah). These appellations deny agency to female combatants and suicide-bombers by positioning them as virtual “prisoners” who were duped into perpetuating political violence— as Groskop writes, “pawns in a man’s game” (33). This adaptation of Pushkin’s metaphor problematizes how figurative language genders conflict in news media, cultural production, and—even—real life.

4.2. Women Journalists and Gendered Prisoners in the Chechen Wars:

Civilians, “Criminal Mothers,” and Three Boevichki

The Chechen Wars are “dirty wars,” or, once again, what Kaldor calls “new wars,” wherein state militaries and non-state groups target civilians in ways that are explicitly gendered. Whereas the nineteenth-century prisoner of the Caucasus was exclusively male (plennik), today’s captive often is a woman (plennitsa)—or women who have been collectivized as a group of victims. Despite the fact that war is widely perceived as masculine, women often are at the epicenters of political violence in the Chechen Wars.

Evoking in discourse the concept of “collateral damage,” “dirty wars” lump civilians into a “mass” of casualties to obfuscate the process of selection inherent in choosing individual human targets. Within this diffuse framework, local patterns of targeting reveal, as Carolyn Nordstrom suggests, who is perceived as a “threat:”

Which women are selected for kidnapping, forced labor, rape, torture, murder? Are they more likely to be the landed, the urban, the educated, or the poor, the peasants, and the disenfranchised? Are they more likely to be political, or just the opposite, to be alienated from politics, and thus from the means to armed revenge? (73-4)
Journalists and human rights workers have been executed for their opposition to Russian and Chechen regimes. For example, Natalia Estemirova was murdered in 2009 for her human rights work in Chechnya and Anna Politkovskaia was shot in Moscow in 2006 for her reporting on the Caucasus (Harding). The selection of these individual targets conveys an interest in controlling information about human rights abuses in Chechnya.

Interestingly, female journalists often provide one of few resources for detailed information about civilian women’s experiences in Chechnya—perhaps due to the targeting of men at checkpoints and/or to gendered distinctions between private and public life in Islam. Anna Politkovskaia, herself a famous journalist, noted that many of the most well-known reporters in Chechnya have been women, including: Nadezhda Chaikova, Galina Kovalskaya, Yelena Masyuk, Anne Nivat, Petra Procházková, and Sanobar Shermatova. These and other journalists have incorporated variations of the prisoner metaphor into their reporting, describing civilians, mothers, and voluntary female combatants—who self-identify as boevichki—as “captives” of the Chechen Wars.  

4.2.1. Civilians

Because dirty war tactics treat all civilians as targets, many cultural discourses position Chechen civilians as prisoners of violence in the North Caucasus. Describing circa 1996 Groznyi in her memoir, Milana Terloeva writes: “Il n’y avait plus de ligne, 

\[3\] To illustrate the continued pervasiveness of the prisoner metaphor, Grant states that a June 2007 search of the Universal Database of Russian Newspapers yielded 5,486 articles with “kavkazskii plennik” (male prisoner of the Caucasus) and 22,447 with “kavkazskaia plennitsa” (female prisoner of the Caucasus) (161).
plus de front. Tous, civils, soldats, boeviki, étaient mêlés les uns aux autres” (53; There is no longer a line, no longer a front. Everyone—civilians, soldiers, boeviki [combatants]—are mixed together). Civilian women are targeted as if they were fighters. And, while international law affords these civilians a customary right to safety, the Chechen Wars have targeted women involved in peace-building—or simply trying to live.

Many Western journalists, including Petra Procházková and Anne Nivat, have emphasized how the wars transformed gendered practices in Chechnya. In an interview with Procházková, (civilian) Elza Dugouievova elaborates on what she perceives as traditional Chechen gender roles:

La guerre a tout mis sens dessus dessous. Avant, la tradition disait que l’homme qui ne peut pas nourrir sa famille n’est pas un homme. C’est pour cela que de nombreuses femmes n’avaient pas de métier. L’homme ne le permettait pas. C’était une honte pour lui. (44)

The war has turned everything upside down. Before, tradition said that the man who cannot feed his family is not a man. That is why many women had no employment. The husband did not allow it. It was shameful to him.

War, Dugouievova says, transformed women into families’ primary earners. During the First Chechen War, women could pass more easily through Russian checkpoints than men. Taking advantage of this “invisibility,” women created an informal market economy in Chechnya.

Dugouievova’s husband is now a virtual prisoner in his own home, as are many other Chechen male civilians:

La plupart des hommes restent à la maison. Moi aussi, j’ai peur de laisser mon mari sortir seul dans la rue. Quand on ne peut pas faire autrement, je préfère aller avec lui. C’est moi qui le protège, pas le contraire. Mon mari est grand, c’est un bel homme, et c’est ce genre d’hommes qui court le plus de risques de la part des Russes. Ils peuvent l’arrêter à tout instant sans raison et je ne le reverrai plus ou il me reviendra estropié. Mieux vaut qu’il reste à la maison. (43)
Most men remain at home. I, too, am scared to let my husband go out alone in the street. When it cannot be avoided, I prefer to go with him. It is I who protect him, not the opposite. My husband is great; he is a handsome man—and that’s the kind of man who is most at risk with the Russians. They can stop him at any time without reason and I never see him again or he will come back to me crippled. Better that he stays at home.

Dugouievova emphasizes that changes in their gender roles, compelled by war rather than instituted by choice, signify far greater oppression than what Procházková frames as a culturally specific investment in gendered inequality.

Another female civilian interviewed by Procházková, Kalimat, also denounces transfigurations in gender relations and roles. The broader impact of these changes, Kalimat asserts, is an increase in violence towards women:

La guerre a transformé les rapports entre l’homme et la femme. Surtout parce qu’aujourd’hui c’est nous, le sexe faible, qui avons plus peur pour le sexe fort qu’il n’a peur pour nous. Avant, […] [l]a femme, c’était quelque chose de sacré. Maintenant, après six années de guerre, nombre de bons usages se perdent. (80)

The war changed the relationship between men and women. Especially because, today, we, the weak sex, are more afraid for the strong sex who does not fear for us. Before, […] [t]he woman was something sacred. Now, after six years of war, many good practices have been lost.

Ultimately, both Dugouievova and Kalimat describe wartime changes in gendered practice as imprisoning both men and women—contrary to what appear to be the expectations of the Czech journalist who interviews them.

4.2.2 “Criminal Mothers”

Anna Politkovskaia’s writings enumerate how the Chechen Wars effectively imprison Chechen and Russian civilians through calculated impoverishment, kidnapping, injury, trauma, loss, and murder. Beginning in 1999, just after Putin’s renouncing of Yeltsin’s and Maskhadov’s peace treaty, Za chto (A Dirty War) conveys the violence of
metaphor by offering literal readings of figurative language in political discourse, “at times reappl[ying] metaphors in ways that ma[k]e visible their true meaning” through unannounced irony (Gould 18). Gould clarifies: “Politkovskaia’s narrative persona writes as a naïve believer in language’s surface meaning, as though words were the building blocks of reality rather than tools manipulated by political leaders” (19).

Politkovskaia employs this strategy when she terms the mothers of Russian defectors vorovki (little thieves). With this epithet, she acknowledges that the mothers are stealing their sons, only to suggest ironically that the mothers are stealing their sons back from more menacing thieves—that is, the Russian army. As Politkovskaia puts it in Putinskaia Rossiia (Putin’s Russia):

Армия у нас – это совершенно закрытая зона. Все равно, что тюрьма. Собственно, это и есть тюрьма, просто названа другим словом. И в армию, и в тюрьму не может вступить нога ни одного человека, которого не “захотело” военное (тюремное) начальство. Отсюда сложилась традиция, что жизнь любого в армии – это путь раба. (1)

The Army in Russia is a closed system no different from a prison. Nobody gets into the Army or into prison unless the authorities want them there. Once you are in, you live the life of a slave. (1)

Through literal and metaphoric usage of “thieves” and “stealing,” Politkovskaia conveys that the Russian soldiers are captives not of the Caucasus—as in Pushkin’s poem—but of the Russian state.

4 Gould makes this observation with regards to Politkovskaia’s counter-discursive use of a particular metaphor—Putin’s promise “mochit’ v sortire” (“to flush in the outhouse”) all Chechens—to describe how Russian troops killed a Chechen refugee’s fourteen-year-old son. Politkovskaia writes: “14-летнего сына ‘замочили в сортире.’ Натурально так ‘замочили,’ без всяких иносказаний—приямым попаданием снаряда в деревенскую ‘дырку’, когда парень отправился по нужде” (Vtoraia 154; “her fourteen-year-old son was ‘flushed down the toilet.’ Just plain ‘flushed’, in the literal sense, by the direct hit of a shell into a village outhouse when the kid was doing his business,” Small 131).
Politkovskaia characterizes soldiers’ deployment to Chechnya as based on trickery, effectively rendering the young conscripts captives of the Russian army: “солдат поили и ‘бездыханными’, пока не очухаются, отправляли на войну” (Za chto 23; “the soldiers were encouraged to drink and then, before they came to their senses, were sent off to the war,” Dirty 44). Some mothers succeed in intervening before their sons’ deployment by simply requesting to feed them off base. Thusly engaging neo-traditional gender roles to their advantage, these mothers liberate/steal their sons without seeming politically threatening (at first). Each mother “превращая их в дезертеров, а себя—в пособников преступления” (Za chto 23; “transforming them into deserters and themselves into accessories to the crime,” Dirty 45). The intentional thief, Politkovskaia implies, is the Russian army who forcibly conscripted the young men in the first place.

Yet, to ironic effect, Nadezhda Ivanovna confesses her ‘crime’ after ‘stealing’ her son Sergei: “Да, я его обманом выкрала. Да, отобрала все документы. Да, заперла. Доказывала. Настояла на своем. И уверна, что поступила абсолютно правильно. Нам, матерем тех, кто сейчас отказался в армии деваться некуда” (Za chto 24; “It’s true, I tricked him into coming with me. I took away all his documents. I locked him in the apartment. I argued and insisted. And I’m sure I was right. We mothers, whose children are now serving in the army, have no choice,” Dirty 45). Emphasizing Nadezhda Ivanovna’s lack of choices, Politkovskaia positions her, like all materi-vorovki (criminal mothers), as “воровками поневоле” (Za chto 24; “kidnappers against their will,” Dirty 45). If their “thievery” represents not a choice but a compulsion, then they, too, are prisoners of the Russian army and state.
Russian soldiers are the state’s captives, whose imprisonment extends beyond captivity to include *dedovshchina*, the torture of junior conscripts. While Sergei’s mother “kidnapped” him before his deployment, others must travel to Dagestan and Ingushetia for their sons. Still others hope to intercept their sons’ release from Caucasian captors to Russian officers. In all cases, the *Soviets Komitetov Soldatskih Materei Rossii* (SKSM, “Union of the Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia”) advises these “criminal mothers” to steal their sons back—a counter-kidnapping. Russian and Chechen mothers maintain an informal communication network to aid in finding their sons. Masha Gessen writes that, through these mothers, “the warring sides share a monstrous kind of postal system” (20).

This network can be seen in Khassan Baiev’s description of the three young Russian conscripts- *cum*-deserters from Krasnoyarsk—Seriozha, Kostya, and Ivan—whom he protected:

Organizing the escape of Russian deserters fell to the women, who during the war carried a heavy burden as important as that of any fighter. We contacted Markha, a woman who lived in Alkhan Kala and who maintained contact with the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers in Moscow. After collecting the [Russian families’] names and addresses ... she took a taxi to neighboring Ingushetia, a two-hour drive [...]. One by one, the Russian mothers started arriving. (139-40)

In addition to providing testimony of this women’s network, Baiev identifies the women themselves as reluctant participants. Throughout the Chechen Wars, sons’ letters have summoned mothers to the North Caucasus, where they search for their children in a conflict zone.

Of course, Chechen mothers continue to search for their sons, too, as many
Chechen men have been detained in Russian “filtration camps” and—more recently—by Kadyrov’s militants. Every Chechen male is at constant risk of extrajudicial arrest and detention—that is, being kidnapped and “disappeared.” Russian soldiers sometimes jokingly tell kidnapped Chechen men that they are being taken “to the police station” (Healing 46). Accordingly, Politkovskaia applies the prisoner metaphor to criminal mothers and their conscripted sons, as well as to Chechen mothers and their “disappeared” sons. Even as they remain civilians, these mothers travel to—and cross—the front lines of combat.5

4.2.3. Boevichki: Larissa, Sazhi, and Rosa

Journalistic accounts suggest that a limited number of women were involved in the first Chechen war as combatants. When women elect to become combatants, their potential or actual status as mothers often precludes external recognition of their political participation as fighters. Brigitte Nacos enumerates six common frames for depicting female combatants in international news media: 1) physical appearances, 2) family connections, 3) terrorism for the sake of love, 4) feminism, 5) masculinized toughness, and 6) naïveté (220-9). Anne Nivat employs all of these journalistic frames in her portrayal of Larissa, a self-defined boevichka (combatant) by choice.

4.2.3.1. Anne Nivat’s Larissa

In Chienne de la guerre, Nivat begins her profile of Larissa with a physical

---

5 Notably, Aleksandr Sokurov’s 2007 film Aleksandra depicts a grandmother’s visit to a Russian military outpost near the Chechen front lines. To the dismay of the Russian conscripts, she leaves the base and befriends a Chechen woman named Malika.
description: “La nez est finement retroussé, les lèvres éclatent d’un rouge vermillon, les yeux sont clairs. La silhouette est féminine, malgré l’uniforme militaire” (263; “She has a small turned-up nose, clear eyes, and vermilion-colored lips, which give her a feminine appearance despite her bulky uniform,” 199). By contrasting between uniform and femininity, Nivat confronts and reproduces the cultural expectation that women do not fight.

This twenty-one-year-old Chechen from Groznyi self-identifies as a boevichka, a “female combatant.” Nivat first presents Larissa as having consciously embraced this role as a vehicle for her liberation, saying she wanted to make the gazovat [holy war] since she was a girl. Then, Nivat questions Larissa’s capacity to choose by foregrounding her lack of formal education: “Six ans qu’elle ne va plus à l’école: depuis le commencement de la précédente guerre russo-tchétchène, en décembre 1994” (263; “Larissa hasn’t been to school in six years, since the beginning of the present Russo-Chechen war, but she doesn’t regret it,” 199). By implying that interrupted schooling distorts Larissa’s perspective, Nivat juxtaposes her projected feminism with perceived naïveté.

When Larissa claims that her group of combatants has now decided to eat their Russian enemies, instead of “just” beheading them, Nivat describes her as “sans pitié” (264; “without pity,” 200). At the same time, she suggests that Larissa reproduces someone else’s discourse of violence “mécaniquement comme si on lui avait fourré cette phrase dans la tête” (264; “mechanically, as if someone had stuffed the phrase into her head,” 200). Speculation about indoctrination undermines Larissa’s toughness, and depicts her as imprisoned by her own naïveté. This juxtaposition exemplifies how news
media often posit female combatants’ involvement as coerced—rendering women fighters the “prisoners” of the male soldiers, violence, and trauma.

Nivat engages the prisoner metaphor still more explicitly in her discussion of the two kidnappings that preceded Larissa’s decision to become a boevichka. Marrying a fighter was the only way Larissa could circumvent her family’s interdiction against her becoming a combatant. After Larissa describes her engagement to a Wahhabi as captivating, Nivat distinguishes Larissa’s agenda from her former fiancé’s: “Pour rien au monde elle ne troquerait aujourd’hui son treillis contre un foulard” (266; “Nothing in the world would convince her to exchange her uniform for a headscarf,” 201). By diminishing the former fiancé’s religious influence, Nivat momentarily problematizes the “terrorism for the sake of love frame.”

Nivat reintroduces this same frame by questioning whether Larissa continues to fight because she was kidnapped as a bride by a boevik, a male combatant. In language not unlike in Leonid Gaidai’s film, as we shall see later in this chapter, Nivat describes bride-kidnapping as common local practice. Nivat’s editorial diverges, however, in its acknowledgement that some women are initially taken against their will. Noting that some women nonetheless take a “certaine fierté” (265; “certain pride,” 200) in their being kidnapped, Nivat problematizes the idea that Larissa is a kavkazkaia plennitsa (female prisoner of the Caucasus), but reintroduces questions about her motivations and her capacity to choose.
4.2.3.2. Barry Renfrew’s Sazhi and Olivia Ward’s Rosa

Other journalists, such as Barry Renfrew and Olivia Ward, question the choices of female Chechen combatants more directly. In a 1995 article, Renfrew writes that Sazhi Aslanova “is among a handful of young women who have cast aside their traditional role”—which he describes as “stay[ing] home, raising families and living under the strict control of their husbands and fathers”—to become combatants. In a similar tone, Ward describes Rosa as “a small red-haired Chechen woman in her twenties [who] has learned to live as a fighter, moving side by side with men who would normally expect to see her only in the kitchen.” According to Renfrew’s and Ward’s articles, Aslanova and Rosa deviate from their prescribed gender roles by fighting.

Ward, also writing in 1995, explores this frame more than Renfrew, describing Rosa’s “transformation” into a fighter as a voyage from timidity to self-assurance: from being “so embarrassed” that she wore a skirt instead of her uniform, to not “worry[ing] about conventions” and pulling a skirt over her combat fatigues. Now, Ward writes, “she holds a gun as easily as her friends carry their babies.” Through this simile, Ward describes the combat unit as both challenging and replicating familial gender roles. While gender roles are often more fluid in situations of crisis, Ward emphasizes Rosa’s choices as *exceptional* even as she depicts her as imprisoned by tradition.

Renfrew counts family among “imprisoning” traditions. Using the “family frame,” he asserts that Aslanova joined in imitation of her three brothers’ decisions to fight. He imagines that “[h]er life mirrors the divisions that have torn apart Chechnya and its people,” making her an archetypal figure of national loss. Even though she chose to
leave her husband because “he is a fervent supporter of the pro-Russian opposition,”
Renfrew suggests that national loss precipitated this personal one. He positions her as a
vindictive ‘feminist’ seeking equality in religious terms: “My husband will get his
punishment in the afterlife.” By implying that she seeks individual equality through a
collective struggle, Renfrew depoliticizes her actions.

Ward similarly depoliticizes Rosa’s actions by intimating that “[l]iving in such
deadly danger” with men could facilitate “romantic attachments.” She conveys Rosa’s
dismissal of this idea as if it is more indicative of gender relations in Chechnya than the
immediate dangers of war. Ultimately, Ward implies that Rosa is transformed against her
will:

the slaughter of hundreds of civilians at the village of Samashki last month
changed her mind [about quitting combat]. She has linked up with another
fighting unit in the mountains, packing away her spring dresses like faded
flowers, and donning the worn battle fatigues that are now second nature to her.

Rosa becomes a prisoner of the war, a captive of combat whose “spring dresses” are
relics of another, more peaceful time; Russian zachistki (“cleansings”)—such as the one
in Samashki— deprive her of any choice. Ward, Renfrew, and Nivat use the prisoner
metaphor to undermine each profiled female combatant’s agency to project a deviation
from and return to culturally-prescribed gender roles and, in the end, de-politicize her
actions.

4.2.4. Khava Baraeva, the First “Black Widow”

Khava Baraeva carried out the first “suicide attack” of the Chechen Wars in June
2000, driving an explosive-filled truck into a building housing Russian Special Forces in Alkhan Yurt. Writing after the 2002 Dubrovka theatre siege, journalists Kline and Franchetti described Nord-Ost as “crown[ing] a string of incidents involving Chechen women” beginning with Khava Baraeva. Many journalists employed the “terrorist for family frame” to explain Khava’s actions, citing her relation to Arbi Baraev.

More than this family connection, however, media coverage of Baraeva’s 2000 attack focused on her status as a widow. International news media also emphasized her engagement with jihadist rhetoric. Her last words are reported to have been: “I know what I am doing, paradise has a price, and I hope this will be the price for Paradise” (Skaine 101). Without referring to her gender, Baraeva’s declaration seems to have anticipated disbelief that a woman could do violence by choice. Her final statement purposefully situates her actions in Islam, suggesting an awareness that her attack might be perceived as blurring gender roles and deviating from Islamic values. Since Baraeva’s 2000 attack, Chechen “terrorism” frequently extrapolates religious symbolism and terminology (see Cunningham 84). Fundamentalist religious authorities, however, position Islam as the defining element, naming Baraeva a *shahtidat*, female martyr. In response, an unsigned *fatwā* — presumed to be a statement by Chechen militants — sanctioned the use of female suicide bombers:

[Khava Baraeva] is one of the few women whose name will be recorded in history. Undoubtedly she has set the most marvelous example by her sacrifice. The Russians may well await death from every quarter now, and their hearts may appropriately be filled with terror on account of women like her. Let every jealous one perish in his rage! Let every sluggish individual bury his head in the dirt! She has done what few men have done. (qtd. Ness 20)

According to Cook, the above “Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Martyrdom
Operations: Did [Khava Baraeva] Commit Suicide or Achieve Martyrdom?” has since become a chief document used in arguing that female ‘martyrdom operations’ are in accord with Muslim law (43). By paving the way for women’s participation in the public sphere, Baraeva’s attack radicalized the Chechen independence movement(s).

Baraeva’s final actions and words, like the above fatwā, also rhetorically “disgrace men into action” by characterizing them as “passive” (Ness 19). Any efficacy this shaming might wield derives from the cross-cultural perception of violence as a male arena. In addition to whatever terror a female combatant may instill in society through violence, she activates fears that female aggression represents a move from the feminine to the masculine (Ness 3). Despite this widespread concern, violence is not inherently “masculine.”

The female martyr “embraces culturally accepted gender norms at the same time that she steps outside of them—she is modest, chaste, and a purveyor of family honor in her personal life, whereas she is fierce, courageous, and the equal of men in the name of the cause” (Ness 22). In other words, female terrorists operate within the normative gender roles of the dominant social structure. Women combatants often override common mores “without ultimately changing a society’s fundamental values regarding gender relations” (Ness 15). Even if women combatants are equal to men in a political struggle, gender inequality persists in the society at large.

Reflecting (and reinforcing) this inequality, media descriptions of female terrorists often normalize women’s involvement in political violence by positing a binary:
the ‘romantic dupe’ and the ‘liberated’ feminist actor. Deceived by male lovers and relatives or embracing violence to achieve respect in a sexist society, the female terrorists are either manipulated or manipulating (Ness 3). In either model, the female terrorist’s intentions are central. Positing archetypal intentions, news media often focuses on women’s coercion, dishonor, humiliation, and loss—rather than widespread poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and diminished social status.

Within this context of gender inequality, social groups that sanction female violence must self-explain by historicizing their actions as a new expression of an old gender value—rather than a deviation (see Schalk 159 and Ness 12). According to Helie-Lucas, “defending the domain of masculinity” is as much part of the agenda as “maintain[ing] the border of the nation-state and its attending ethnic identification[s]” (qtd. in Ness18). Women’s public participation as terrorists seeks self-justification in cultural discourses that provide sustenance in the form of symbols that transcend time (see Ness 12). I would argue that the prisoner metaphor is among these symbols that discursively remove terrorism from what Schalk calls the “contingency of the projected aim.”

4.2.5. “Black Widows”

As public violence by Chechen women increased after Baraeva’s death, the attribution of the prisoner metaphor to female terrorists became commonplace along with the false epithet “black widows.” Francine Banner reviews the effect of this nickname in several articles:
A particularly chilling article observed that there were “brigades of women swarm[ing] Russia spreading death and destruction.” Another noted that female rebels were “so warped by hate, they [would] kill anyone to take revenge against Russia.” In the end, Chechen women were considered the “most ruthless in the world,” “a striking cult of vengeance” that set a new standard for would be heroines of jihad. (81)

The term “black widows” dehumanizes women as cannibalistic spiders who consume the male after courtship. It also re-feminizes the female terrorists by attributing emotionality (grief), making them “pawns in a man’s game” (Groskop 33). “Black widows” as a term associates women’s wearing black hijabs with their having lost husbands, sons and brothers.  

Taken together, the aforementioned connotations project a common motivation for female Chechen suicide bombers. Accordingly, numerous journalists have argued that Zarema Muzhakoeva’s choice not to detonate the bomb—with which she was “supposed to” commit suicide at a Moscow restaurant on July 9, 2003—reveals the collective motivation of all “black widows.” Irina Lagunina, for example, writes that her “failed attack” offers “the greatest insight into the mind of the black widow.” Groskop also emphasizes Muzhakoeva’s “widow-ness,” describing her as atypical “only in that she is still alive” (33). While Muzhakoeva is serving twenty years at the Mozhaisk women’s penal colony (in the Moscow oblast’), her symbolic imprisonment as a “black widow” is perceived as more significant than her actual incarceration. Made to speak for all “black widows,” Muzhakoeva becomes a representative prisoner of Chechen women’s personal

---

6 In a 2006 study, Speckhard and Akhmedova estimate that women have conducted 79 percent – that is, 22 of 28—Chechen “suicide attacks” from 2000 until 2006 (100).

7 Speckhard and Akhmedova, in the aforementioned 2006 study, estimate that only 23 percent of female Chechen suicide bombers were widows. Many were married and had children (106-7).
Muzhakoeva is one of the few female Chechen terrorists routinely referred to by name in news media. Reports on mass-hostage events infrequently mention “the names, occupations, or level of religiosity of individual women who participated,” referring instead to the “black widows” as a “collective—a ‘swarm,’ a ‘brigade’” (Banner 81). Even when they act as captors, the “black widows” become prisoners of their own grief. Like Pushkin’s Circassian maiden, they are perceived as constrained by their own “слезы и стенанья” (“tears and groans”). Unlike the Russian male prisoner, who is captive to external circumstances, the “black widow” is imprisoned by what is culturally constructed as inherent to female bodies: emotionality.

The “black widows” become doubly imprisoned, widely perceived as trapped behind the veil and within feminized grief—drawing attention to suffering in Chechnya through the prisoner metaphor. Accordingly, Chechen women’s participation in two of the largest mass hostage-taking events ever associated with suicide terrorism—the 2002 siege of the Moscow Dubrovka Theater (*Nord-Ost*) and the 2004 takeover of a school in Beslan, North Ossetia—represented not only a tactical decision (increasing media exposure and psychological impact [see Zedalis 50]), but also a symbolic one. Becoming “black widows”—whether by choice or compulsion, through intention or projection—the female hostage-takers of *Nord-Ost* located the Chechen struggle(s) in relation to the prisoner metaphor. As re-invented in discourses on women’s participation in the Chechen Wars—and especially in representations of “black widows”—the prisoner metaphor

---

8 Even Muzhakoeva’s lawyer, Natalia Evlapova, depicts her as having been “a slave all
continues to recall the historical contexts and gendered nineteenth-century tropes of Pushkin’s “The Prisoner of the Caucasus.”

4.3. Pushkin’s “Prisoner,” Shamil’s Golden Cage, and a Circassian Maiden’s Unveiling, 1822-1859

4.3.1. Real-life Captivity Narratives

The metaphoric frame of Pushkin’s prisoner—while referring most directly to nineteenth-century Russian conflicts in the Caucasus (and, by extension, with Persia and Ottoman Turkey)—also incorporated the early history of Tsarist conquest. From the 1550s on, Paul Austin observes, empire building “put more and more non-Europeans under Moscow’s domain,” actualizing Russian co-existence with Caucasian peoples perceived as “Asians” (26). As the Russian empire rapidly expanded, captivity increasingly became a “normal” part of interaction in territories bordering Southern Russia. Pushkin popularized “the twin themes of captivity and contacts with non-Europeans” as “matters of immediate consequence” to the Russian readership (Austin 29). As real kidnappings, internments, and “disappearances” now inform the prisoner metaphor’s meanings in representations of the Chechen Wars, historical captivity narratives of the Caucasus shaped Pushkin’s “Prisoner” and its cultural reception.

Captivity narratives first garnered national attention in Russia in the late-
eighteenth century. Early captives of note include Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin [1744-74], who was captured in 1773 and held for ransom in Dagestan. Catherine the Great negotiated for his release, making “the very theft of the Russian body [w]hat … ratifie[d] the centrality of Russia abroad” (Grant 101). The concurrent war against Pugachev complicated negotiations, and Gmelin died in captivity (see Austin 45). Pugachev himself then was taken captive and executed in Moscow in 1775. In this context, the male body of the Russian prisoner acquired political significance.

As accounts of captivity proliferated in the 1810s—that is, the decade before Pushkin’s “Prisoner”—the Russian male body became “a new currency of exchange value” in the Caucasus (Grant 96). Perhaps the most famous kidnapping in the 1810s was that of Major Pavel Shvetsov, a Russian officer captured on his way to visit his mother. Although Pushkin never mentioned Shvetsov, Barrett maintains that he was certainly aware of the public campaign for the major’s release. Through Shvetsov’s narrative, Barrett argues that captivity was linked to the theme of the Caucasus, and a procession of both Russian and exotic prisoners marched through the literature of Russian Romanticism and the various genres of popular culture, sometimes used to explore the psychological implications of the struggle between civilization and wild freedom and sometimes simply as a splash of ethnographic color and national pride. (82)

Real-life kidnappings infused Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor with historical significance

10 The first article on Shvetsov’s kidnapping appeared in the Russian press on June 25, 1816, referring to the captors as khishchanye [“beastly,” lit. “carnivorous”] Chechens who prevented the Major’s “joyful reunion with his family” by holding him “in the most savage slavery” (Barrett 79-80). This emphasis on Shvetsov’s family is significant since Tolstoi’s and Bodrov’s adaptations of the “Prisoner” foreground the soldier’s mother. 11 A letter in the journal Syn” otechestva [Son of the Fatherland] pleaded for ransom money to free Shvetsov.
determined by contemporary perceptions of the Caucasus War, which was ongoing when “Prisoner” was published.

4.3.2. Imam Shamil as Captive, Captor, and Liberator

In 1818, four years prior to the publication of Pushkin’s “Prisoner,” General Alexei Ermolov (1777-1861) began targeting the northeastern Caucasus with his ‘pacification’ program, focusing on Chechnya and Dagestan. Ermolov—who founded Groznyi (meaning “Terrible”) in 1818 as a colonial fortress—perceived Chechens in particular as “a dangerous people,” as “villains” (Gammer, Resistance 30). In a letter to the Emperor, Ermolov declared his intention to “lock the Chechen beasts in their wilderness until they starve and come to beg for [Russian] order and civilization” (Derlugian 243). By vowing to constrain Chechens in the mountains, Ermolov undertook to render them prisoners of the Caucasus, captives of their own homeland.

The more Ermolov and his successors insisted that Chechens—not Russians—were prisoners of the Caucasus, the more kidnappings were made into political theatre. Some historians argue that the Caucasus war ended in 1859 with Imam Shamil’s capture. While Imam Shamil’s capture occurred thirty-seven years after the publication of the story of Pushkin’s prisoner, his struggle against Ermolov’s successors was contemporaneous with Pushkin’s literary career. As Ermolov became an icon of Russian conquest, Imam Shamil became a metonym for Chechen resistance.

By the time of Imam Shamil’s capture, Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor had already been naturalized in Russian culture, making the imam “the central character in a new
captivity narrative” (Barrett 84). After he was taken prisoner in August 1859, Imam Shamil was honored by the tsar and paraded in front of St. Petersburg and Moscow crowds. Imam Shamil’s capture was the greatest “Caucasian” public event in Russia since the Shvetsov captivity (Barrett 84). High society fêted him; photographers and painters captured his likeness; and writers celebrated him—all engaging with Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor (84). Alexander II gave Imam Shamil a house in Kaluga (about 150 kilometers south-west of Moscow), where he lived with his family in a “golden cage” for several years (Gammer, Resistance 294). This euphemism for “luxurious” captivity recalls the kafes, or cage, of Topkapı Palace, where deposed sultans lived in seclusion during the Ottoman Empire. Through such cultural intertexts and romanticization, Shamil’s gilded captivity expressed Russian claims in the Caucasus. Barrett writes:

> By glorifying Shamil, Russia celebrated the end of the war in Chechnya and Dagestan, but even more, the expansion of the empire and the ‘civilizing’ mission that was at hand. […] Shamil became … a symbol of the Caucasian peoples who Russians hoped would now desert their homelands and become Russified. (84)

Romanticizing Imam Shamil’s power after he was in captivity served to emphasize the Russian empire’s power over the Caucasus.

Even as Russians celebrated the captive Shamil, Caucasians—especially Chechens, Dagestanis, and Circassians—glorified him as a freedom fighter (Gammer, Resistance 294). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several nationalist movements considered Imam Shamil a model guerilla fighter. During the Chechen Wars, for example, Shamil Basaev famously cited Che Guevara and Imam Shamil as his heroes.

Throughout the Chechen Wars, the prisoner metaphor has included among its references Ermolov’s and Imam Shamil’s conflicts as the mytho-poetic origin of
Russo-Chechen relations. In overly simplistic local and global discourses on the Chechen Wars, Ermolov’s campaign symbolizes “Russian oppression,” and Imam Shamil’s organized resistance serves to historicize “the Chechen struggle for freedom.” Imam Shamil remains inseparable from the prisoner metaphor today not only because of his own captivity’s relation to nineteenth-century Russian cultural production, but also because of his role in catalyzing anti-imperial Chechen and Dagestani identifications in the Caucasus, assisting in their self-determination as two separate entities (Gammer, Resistance 294-5).

Gammer asserts that Imam Shamil envisaged himself not as a ruler, but as a guide to the various rulers and communities. Nonetheless, many contemporary claims to sovereignty often situate Imam Shamil’s nascent state structure as a historical precedent to the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Additionally, Imam Shamil’s legacy continues to influence the tawā‘if (Sufi orders) in Chechnya and in Dagestan. Contemporary Salafis still cite Imam Shamil’s interpretation of the sharī‘a to indigenize fundamentalist Islam in Chechen history.

More than religion, however, collective trauma— in particular the aardakh— shaped post-perestroika Chechen identifications. After 1991, nationalist discourses extended the prisoner metaphor from the individual to the collective, positioning all

---

12 By the mid-1840s, Imam Shamil ruled with all the symbols and attributes of a Muslim sovereign except the minting of coins in his name (236). By the mid 1850s, Imam Shamil was a sovereign ruling through complex state machinery that included a diwān (privy council), nā‘ibs (deputies of specific territories), and mudīrs (supervisors for the nā‘ibs and commanders in battle) (Gammer, Resistance 225-6).

13 Imam Shamil enforced sharī‘a aimed to uproot ‘ādat and bid‘as (bad innovations) resulting from Russian contact (see Gammer).
nokhchi, or ‘Caucasian peoples’ in Chechen, as captives of a three-hundred-year-long war (see Gammer, “Rewriting” 121).\(^\text{14}\) Regardless of whether one perceives nineteenth-century wars as contributing to currently ongoing conflicts in the North Caucasus, Imam Shamil’s policies regarding Russian captives influenced then contemporaneous interpretations of Pushkin’s work and current adaptations of the prisoner metaphor.

Imam Shamil offered freedom to the Russian captives and deserters who entered his service, integrating them into their new society without forcing Islam upon them (Gammer, *Resistance* 253). Russian defectors aided in interrogating captives, keeping Shamil informed of persecuted groups within imperial Russia (Gammer, *Resistance* 255). Imam Shamil’s policy towards Russian captives made him sympathetic towards oppressed national groups, such as the Poles; religious groups, such as the Old Believers; and political groups, such as the Decembrists (Gammer, *Resistance* 255).

The Decembrist revolt—occurring in 1825, three years after the publication of Pushkin’s prisoner—led to the execution of five key Russian figures, and the exile of many more. Although few descriptions of Decembrists’ imprisonment in St. Petersburg’s Peter and Paul Fortress were published, the contiguity of these events later connected Pushkin’s “Prisoner” to Tsar Nicholas I’s political prisoners. At the same time, narratives of imprisonment in Chechnya and Dagestan abounded.\(^\text{15}\) After Pushkin fixed the prisoner

\(^{14}\) From this viewpoint, Imam Shamil’s “Great Gazavat [Holy War]” of 1829-59 was one part of an ongoing conflict, preceded by “The First Gazavat” (1785-92) and the Revolt of 1825-7—and followed by the Uprising of 1863, the “Lesser Gazavat” (1877-8), the “Last Gazavat” (1918-21), the Revolt of 1929-30, the Israilov Revolt (1940-2), and, finally, the current conflict (1991-) (Gammer, “Rewriting” 121-2).

\(^{15}\) In Chechnya and Dagestan, imprisonment was widely used as a punishment: “The prisoner was placed in a small pit under a hut, compared by both the imam and those who
metaphor in the Russian imagination, readers extended its frame of reference to the tsar’s campaign against Imam Shamil along with Pavel Pestel’s against serfdom.

Ahead of serfdom being abolished in Russia in 1861, Shamil liberated select groups of serfs. For example, he denounced the status of serfs for Russian prisoners who converted to Islam (Gammer, Resistance 246). He also protected serfs from Russian territory who ran way into his domains and refused to return them to their masters (246). Such egalitarian aspects of Imam Shamil’s state shaped Russian populism through nineteenth-century articulations of Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor.

4.3.3. Populating the Literary Caucasus with Captors

Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor assigned—especially for later readers—mythopoetic significance to nineteenth-century Russo-Chechen/Dagestani conflicts. These projections often highlighted societal transformations within Russia. Although Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor refers directly to Circassian (Cherkess) captors, by addressing the Caucasus Mountains, Pushkin addresses a broader geopolitical region when referring to Ermolov’s campaign: “Поникни снежною главой/Смирись, Кавказ: идет Ермолов!” (103; Bend your snowy head/Be calm, Caucasus: Ermolov is coming!). Even as the anthropomorphized mountain symbolizes multiple states and peoples, reference to Ermolov specifically conjures the theater of his battles: Chechnya and Dagestan.

The Caucasus’ submission, imagined through the mountain’s bowed “snowy head,” conflates Ermolov’s conquering territory with Russia’s acquiring subjects. Experienced it to a grave” (Gammer, Resistance 234). This method of imprisonment appears in Tolstoi’s and Bodrov’s adaptations of “Kavkazskii plennik.”
Colloquially, Grant observes, the Caucasus War “signals one thing—struggles with [gortsy, or “highlanders”] in a fierce battle for mountain strongholds” (25). All Circassians, Chechens and Dagestanis became, through reference by and to the prisoner metaphor, highlanders—regardless of whether or not they lived in a mountain village. During the First Chechen War, the adjective gorny (mountain) came to signify political support for Dudaev. Russian cultural discourses’ distinguishing between a gorny and ploskostnyi (plains) Chechen dates to Pushkin’s era, when Ermolov forced his opponents into the mountains.

As the prisoner metaphor became more entrenched in Russian political identifications, “prisoner” applied to a generalized Russian “South,” an imaginary and uniformly mountainous “Kavkaz” (“Caucasus”). In Russia today, the term “Kavkazets” (“Caucasian”) or “litso kavkazskoi natsional'nosti” (lit. “person of Caucasian nationality”) commonly signifies “Chechen” (Grant 161). The name Chechnya itself stems from such generalization. Derlugian notes that it derives from a border village, Chechen-Aul16 (37). The extension of this toponym from aul to territory coincides with the application of Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor to the Russian campaign in Chechnya and Dagestan.

Naming, together with the prisoner metaphor, facilitated and catalyzed redrawings of Pushkin’s imaginary geography according to changes in the Russian/Soviet/Post-Soviet socio-political contexts. In romanticizing, generalizing, and Islamicizing Caucasian geography, Pushkin’s metaphor exoticized Caucasian peoples. On

---

16 “Aul” means “mountain village” in Chechen.
the transhistorical effects of naming, Baiev writes:

The Russian government always hung labels on us. In the nineteenth century, during the twenty-five-year-long Russian-Caucasian wars, the czars called us ‘savages’ and ‘cutthroats.’ In 1944, when the whole Chechen population was deported to Kazakhstan, the Soviets called us ‘traitors’ and ‘Nazi sympathizers.’ Fifty years later, in 1994, when the first Russian-Chechen war broke out, the Russian government referred to us as ‘bandits.’ After the terrible tragedy in New York on September 11, 2001, the Russians told the world that we were ‘international terrorists.’ (xiii-xiv)

These appellations, though linked to specific historical contexts, are all co-extensive with the Russian prisoner metaphor, revealing variations and contiguities in its usage. Each negative characterization portrays the “highlanders” as unindividuated, Romantic male figures.

4.3.4. The Caucasus and its Captives as Vehicles for Self-Identifications

By engaging European traditions of writing about the Alps as a site of personal and religious inquiry, Pushkin enacted a “poetics of space,” projecting onto the Caucasus “powerful affective meanings generated by rhetoric, tropes, patterns of symbolism and the free violation of actual topographic relations” (Layton 51). A romantic lexicon establishes the reader’s knowledge of the Caucasus through the prisoner’s own emotional link to nature.¹⁷ Nineteenth-century colonial discourses—coupled with processes of industrialization and urbanization—territorialized freedom in Pushkin’s poem, rendering the Caucasus a new Parnassus, home to muses and all arts.

¹⁷ Prepositional phrases situate the prisoner in relation to the Caucasian landscape, such as: “а дали ... угруюмой” [“in the gloomy distance”], “за мрачной горой” [“beyond the dark mountain”], “меж угруюмых скал” [“amid the gloomy cliffs”], and “на дикний берег” [“to the wild shore”] (Austin 68).
This “Caucasian Alps” served to disassociate Pushkin’s “sentimental traveler from imperialism’s plundering designs” (Layton 70). The mountains served to Europeanize Russia, while orientalizing the Caucasus and its inhabitants. Under the influence of European discourse, Russian cultural production associated Pushkin’s “exotic topos” of the Caucasus with “The East” (Austin 75). For Pushkin’s unnamed Russian soldier, the mountains’ beauty encapsulates Russia’s “kul'turnaia missiia” (“cultural mission”) in the Caucasus. The prisoner metaphor’s seemingly contradictory Europeanizing of the mountains (as the Alps) and its Orientalizing of them (as Asia) suggest, in Layton’s words, “a consciousness of the ‘orient’ as an organic part of Russia” (88). Through “Prisoner,” Pushkin’s blurry dichotomy of Russia (as self) and Caucasus (as other) reflects his own internalized awareness of Russia’s ‘otherness’ to Western Europe—a perspective which evolved in view of his own orientalizing effort.

Entangled in this simultaneous alignment with and distancing from Europe is the historical reality of captivity in Pushkin’s Russia. Pushkin both acknowledges and transgresses the prisoner’s “primarily symbolic value as a spiritual metaphor” in European belles lettres (Austin 29). Pushkin conjoined Russian and European traditions—each “with its particular understanding of … the prisoner”—along with “his own feelings of self-awareness and freedom” (Austin 9). This engagement with European romanticism involves Pushkin’s own self-positioning as author. Pushkin himself was the

---

18 This consciousness became more prominent in the later nineteenth century. For example, Dostoevskii muses about Russian identifications in his 1881 Dnevnik pisatelia (Diary of a Writer): “В Европе мы были приживальщики и рабы, а в Азию явимся господами. В Европе мы были татарами, а в Азии и мы европейцы” (“In Europe, we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we are masters. In Europe, we were Tartars, where as in Asia we, too, are Europeans”).
great-grandson of Abram Gannibal [1696-1781], who was taken captive as a young boy and brought from East Africa\(^\text{19}\) to Constantinople and then to St. Petersburg during the reign of Peter the Great. Pushkin challenged cultural perceptions regarding his great-grandfather’s experience in Russia—and the meaning of captivity—in his later poem, “Моя родословная” (“My Genealogy”). Knapp articulates Pushkin’s central argument about Gannibal’s liberty: “although Gannibal ostensibly was ‘purchased,’ he is not for sale” (284). Pushkin emphasizes that his ancestor was an “arap but not a slave,” these words rhyming in Russian: “ара́п а не ра́б” (see Knapp 284). Pushkin sketches this same argument in the prisoner’s relationship to his Circassian captor.

Along with his irrevocable “freedom” as a human being—even in the “captivity” of his externally imposed exile—Gannibal’s French schooling also influenced “Prisoner.” Both Gannibal’s and Pushkin’s educations included the canonical authors of the French Enlightenment, who contemplated liberty’s essence: Montesquieu, Diderot, and Voltaire. Pushkin’s self-identification with Gannibal locates freedom in poetry, positing what Ram terms an “alienated identification” between the Russian writer and the “bon sauvage”—in this case, the Circassian captor (8). As the Caucasus becomes liberty’s patria, Pushkin’s imagined “African homeland hearkens back to an ideal state that antedates enslavement and which, although no longer accessible literally, becomes the destination of metaphysical poetic flight” (Hasty 232). Pushkin’s figurative Africa underscores Russia’s otherness from Europe, particularly France and England, while his literary Caucasus aligns Russia with Europe as a colonial force. As Ram observes of all nineteenth-century

---

\(^{19}\) Historians disagree about the exact location from which Gannibal was taken.
Russian writers, Pushkin’s literary *ethos* “figures as an ambiguous third element” in the “familiar binary opposition of colonizer and colonized” (3). Pushkin explored the significance of his lineage in the broader cultural, social, and political milieu of the early-nineteenth century—when the British Empire was at its height, slavery persisted in the United States, and French philosophy defined liberty.

During the 1820s and 1830s—when “Prisoner” spawned a distinctive genre of Russian captivity narratives and “негр в неволе” (“the ‘Negro’ in captivity”) was a popular theme in the press—Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor yoked together the themes of slavery and captivity: “The Russian image of the American slave … derived primarily … from French sources that bore the distinct mark of Rousseau’s ideas about the ‘noble savage’” (Hasty 228). Pushkin’s prisoner approximates the prototypical *bon sauvage* as ‘natural’ liberty replaces social freedom in the Caucasus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Затмилась перед ним природа.} & \quad \text{The nature around him grows dim.} \\
\text{Прости, священная свобода!} & \quad \text{Forgive, holy freedom!} \\
\text{Он раб (82).} & \quad \text{He is a slave.}
\end{align*}
\]

The rhyme between the second and third syllables of природа (nature) and свобода (freedom) reinforces the connection between the Caucasus and captivity, suggesting that “holy freedom” should pardon the Caucasus for imprisoning the Russian. The pared down simplicity of the line “Он раб” (“He is a slave”) ratifies the immediacy of the Russian’s condition, and blurs distinctions—in the Caucasian context—among “captive” and “slave.” The Russian prisoner’s self-designation as a “slave” reflects the politicized image of African slaves among “liberal” Europeans, as well as Pushkin’s early
nineteenth-century readers’ limited knowledge of the Caucasus. The prisoner metaphor—in conjunction with concepts of American slavery transposed to the Caucasus—offered a vehicle for voicing opinions about Russian serfdom.

The nineteenth-century emphasis on racializing scientific inquiry and categorization coalesced in pseudo-journalistic readings of Pushkin’s “Prisoner” after the 1850s. Through its use of footnotes, Pushkin’s poem “boldly crossed the boundary into contemporary science” (Layton 29). Not unlike other colonial “sciences,” Pushkin’s ethnography silences its subjects. Describing the ethnographic legacy of Pushkin’s _Prisoner_ in nineteenth-century Russia, Austin postulates: “It is perhaps as if Conrad’s _Heart of Darkness_ were seen primarily as a study of African tribalism which had then initiated a trend of literature involving Europeans and Africans with much presentation of African customs, geography, and history” (75). Just as Conrad’s text reveals more about European colonial discourses than about Congolese ones, Pushkin’s poem unveils more about Russia than about the Caucasus.

Pushkin’s ethnography was influenced, in part, by Montesquieu’s 1748 _L’esprit des lois_ (The Spirit of the Laws), which condemned American slavery while considering the impact of material factors upon individual temperament and societal organization. Montesquieu posited corollaries among environment, disposition, and law. He suggested that Middle Europe is ideal, while cold climates foster “chilly” peoples and hot climates “hot-tempered” ones. In this rubric, he also suggested that mountain peoples are more bellicose.

---

20 Notably, although the Caucasus had been a source of slaves in the Middle Ages, slavery was not an indigenous Caucasian institution (Austin 15).
21 From the late eighteenth century, writes Paul Gilroy, “deference toward science, scientists, and scientific discourses around ‘race’ began to create new possibilities and orchestrate new varieties of knowledge and power centered on the body, what Foucault identifies as ‘political anatomy’” (31).
keeping with Montesquieu’s *théorie des climats* (climate theory), Pushkin’s “Prisoner” identifies the inhabitants of the mountainous Caucasus as bellicose. Instruments of war convey the only identity afforded to the Russian’s captors: weapons symbolize Caucasian strength, and horses freedom.

Without articulating any anti-tsarist sentiment, Pushkin’s captivity tale expresses the populist “yearning for liberty” that shaped the Decembrist movement after 1816 (Layton 103). In addition to involving questions of slavery and race, Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor incorporates the issue of serfdom into the concept of captivity. Indeed, all human bondage overlaps in Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor. According to Hasty, “American slavery provid[ed] a convenient vehicle for [criticizing] serfdom” in nineteenth-century Russia (228). Serfdom was not abolished until 1861, when “some fifty-two million peasants” were freed under Alexander II’s reign (Riasanovsky 372-3). The 1861 liberation of Russian serfs was almost simultaneous with the 1865 emancipation of four million slaves in the United States. While there is no causal relation between these two events, their approximate co-occurrence underscores the saliency of the prisoner metaphor to diverse nineteenth-century discourses against human bondage. As Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor became increasingly popular and politically relevant in Russia, its usage in literature often blurred connotative distinctions between *temnitsa* (dungeon) and *tiur’ma* (prison); *plennik* (captive) and *uznik* (prisoner); and *rab* (slave) and *krest’ianin* (serf).

---

4.3.5. Pushkin’s Captivating Maiden

Although nineteenth-century Russian conflicts in the Caucasus lead to the frequent capture of male soldiers, negotiated exchanges of men, and bartering for their freedom, Pushkin’s plennik cannot believe his imprisonment. Grant describes Pushkin’s prisoner tale as “a chronicle not of activity but of passivity, not of aggression but of humility, not of gloried sovereignty but of storied submission” (Grant 95). The Russian perceives his imprisonment as mysterious and foreign, even uncanny: “Воспомнил юноша свой плен./Как сна ужасного тревоги” (“The young man remembered his captivity./like a horrifying nightmare,” 82). Only the physical markers of a chain around his legs allows the prisoner to conceptualize his condition: “Всё, всё сказал ужасный звук” (“The dreadful sound told him everything, everything,” 82). The staccato repetition of всё (everything) encapsulates the ontological significance of the prisoner metaphor. The revealing zvuk (sound)—the clanking of chains—is like a familiar phoneme in an unknown foreign language; in fact a less common meaning for zvuk is “syllable.”

Although Pushkin’s Caucasian maiden’s language is less comprehensible to the prisoner than the sound of his chains, her appeal to him and her love for him are naturalized. This unexplained eros intensifies the tie between Russian Romantic sensibility and Circassian “primitive” culture (see Layton 100). Pushkin’s description of the Circassian maiden’s feminine longing reflects his desire. To describe the maiden’s longing, the Russian prisoner employs typical romantic phrases, including: “взор умильный” (“touching gaze”), “печальна и бледна” (“sad and pale”), and “сгоря негой и желаньем” (“burning with languor and desire”) (see Austin 72). Desire
expresses itself plainly on the maiden’s body—through her gaze, her expression, and her breath. Her own emotions both silence and reveal her to the Russian captive.

While the prisoner describes Circassian men as secretive, mysterious, and unknowable, he perceives the maiden as utterly transparent and imminently available. She is the incarnation of naturalized femininity, and a prisoner of her own emotions. The maiden embodies the colonial myth of “cultural harmony through romance” (Hulme, qtd. in Layton 98). According to the Russian kul'turnaia missiia (cultural mission), like the French mission civilisatrice, the maiden’s desire for the prisoner signifies her nation’s submission to the empire (see Layton).

The mountain’s feminine “voices” also shape the prisoner’s longing for freedom. Like rusalki, the feminine water spirits of Slavic folklore, Circassian maidens captivate the Russian prisoner’s thoughts, directing his attention beyond the riverbank, towards freedom. The prisoner’s dreams transcend what Joanna Hubbs, in her discussion of the feminine myth in Russian culture, calls the “dark domain of forest and water, where nature overrules the social order” (36). The mountain maidens’ voices intensify the prisoner’s longing for freedom by locating its possibility in a feminized landscape:

Так пели девы. Сев на бреге,   So sang the maidens. On the northern shore,
Мечтает русский о побеге;   The Russian dreams of escape;
Но цепь невольника тяжка,   But the chain of slavery is heavy,
Быстра глубокая река... (97).   The fast-flowing river is deep... .

The maidens’ voices also identify potential impediments to the prisoner’s freedom, repeating in the last line of each stanza of the “Черкесская песня” (“The Circassian Song”): “Чеченец ходит за рекой” (“A Chechen crosses the stream”) (97). By investing
the prisoner’s freedom with the very real threat of Chechen captivity (signified by the Chechen crossing the stream), the women’s song elliptically references Ermolov’s then-ongoing campaign.

If, for Ermolov and the Russian empire, conquering Chechen subjects is consistent with “knowing” them through the mountainous beauty of the Caucasus, the prisoner’s liberation coincides with the Circassian maiden’s unveiling. Before nature suddenly unveils the maiden with a “Ветер шумный” (“A noisy gust of wind”) (98), she begins slowly revealing herself to the Russian captive:

Мелькнуло девы покрывало,  The virgin’s veil glimmered,
И вот — печальна бледна  And—sad and pale
К нему приближалась она  She approached him.

(98, Pushkin’s emphasis).

In the service of his liberty, she becomes a warrior. As she brandishes her “weapons,” she prostrates herself before him as if going “На тайный бой” (98; to secret combat). She enters into “secret combat” by making a gift of herself, “like many a ‘savage’ maiden in European literature” (Layton 98). Not only does the maiden’s restorative care for the prisoner gender the relationship between her and the Russian, but also it suggests a single arena of political engagement for women: nurturing to the point of self-sacrifice.

The maiden’s “battle” for the Russian’s freedom transpires in the river of which she sang. When he swims to shore, she drowns herself. All that remains of the maiden-liberator is a disappearing, rippling circle in the moonlight. The captive is alive and free, but “Всё мертв...” (100; Everything is dead...). According to Slavic folklore, girls can be compelled into the service of Rusalki (water spirits) by drowning to avoid
marriage (Hubbs 36). Implicit in Pushkin’s text is the idea that the maiden drowned, in part, to avoid the “prison” of ‘ādat, an arranged marriage or bride-kidnapping in her community.

From this tragic romantic exchange, “Prisoner” moves to a general proclamation regarding the Caucasus: “И смолкнул ярый крик войны:/Всё русскому мечу подвластно (103; And the furious shouts of war are hushed:/All is subjected to the Russian sword). Even at the cost of the maiden’s life, or perhaps because of her self-sacrifice, the captive’s liberation heralds Russian victory over his captor, the Caucasus. The Caucasus that once imprisoned the Russian in ‘her’ mountains has freed him by allowing safe passage of the river. Once the prisoner is free, Pushkin meditates on what he frames as the characteristic Caucasian relationship to liberty:

Но не спасла вас наша кровь,  But our blood did not save you,
Ни очарованные брони,    Neither charmed armor,
Ни горы, ни лихие кони,    Nor mountains, nor spirited horses,
Ни дикой вольности любовь!  Nor untamed love of liberty!

Describing this “love of liberty” as powerless to save the Caucasus from assimilation, Pushkin locates it outside the territorial boundaries of Russian power. As a “natural condition,” liberty becomes “indistinguishable from anarchy, and the freedom fighter from the criminal” (Ram 4). While celebrating freedom in accordance with the objectives of empire, Pushkin locates “natural” freedom outside Russian society.

Pushkin suggests that the legislated freedom of Russian society will spread to the Caucasus, replacing natural freedom and local customs. The maiden’s self-sacrifice seems to forecast Russification:
A change in what is perceived as the Caucasian bellicose character becomes synonymous with Russian victory. Accordingly, the Circassian maiden’s “conversations with the prisoner … are a ‘false dialogue,’ a single discourse about love distributed between the two speakers” (Layton 99). As the maiden’s romantic dedication to the Russian represents Chechen customs as a prison, so to does the violence of “black widows” during the Second Chechen War.

4.4. Tolstoi’s “Prisoner,” Wooden Dolls, and a “Tartar” Girl named Dina, circa 1872

Lev Tolstoi’s 1872 “Kavkazskii plennik” (“Prisoner of the Caucasus”) sought to de-romanticize and de-eroticize this nineteenth-century prisoner metaphor. Alluding to Pushkin’s seminal 1822 poem (rather than Lermontov’s 1859 re-writing), Tolstoi sublimes eros into agape. Published just over a decade after the emancipation of Russian serfs, Tolstoi’s “Prisoner” considers freedom less abstractly, but no less metaphorically, in simple language.

Rather than an unnamed, lovesick maiden, the Russian’s female liberator is an inquisitive “татарка молоденькая” (“young Tartar girl”) named Dina. Tolstoi’s describing Dina as “Tartar” identifies her and her father by religion more than nationality,

---

24 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Bats, or Batsba nah, lived in Tushetia, mountainous Northwest Georgia. Tushetia was annexed to Russia in 1801. In the mid-nineteenth century, Tushetia was a site of battle against Shamil (see “The Bats”).
as nineteenth-century usage of the term included all Muslims in the Russian empire. By using a term more generalizing than Pushkin’s “gortsy”—which included Circassian captors, Chechen combatants, and all of Ermolov’s opponents in the Caucasus—Tolstoi’s “Prisoner” reflects a territorial view of the Russian empire (see Layton 79). Unconcerned with losing his Russianness, Tolstoi’s captive, Zhilin, doesn’t seek self-knowledge in the Caucasus, but an understanding of his relationship to the Caucasus.

As Pushkin’s “Prisoner” espoused ethnographic and journalistic knowledge of the Caucasus, Tolstoi’s conveys a moral truth about Russian presence in the Caucasus. Tolstoi presents his prisoner tale as “odna istoriia” (a history/story). Tolstoi was more familiar than Pushkin with the Caucasus, as he served in military regiments there for three years. And, of course, Tolstoi’s entire opus—but especially his “Prisoner”—featured prominently in twentieth-century Russian and Soviet education.

In late 1994, at the beginning of the First Chechen War, when *Argumenty i fakty* (*Arguments and Facts*) questioned Russian urbanites about the sources of their opinions, Tolstoi figured prominently in the survey. Georgi Derlugian recounts: “Nearly forty percent relied on television and the newspapers, and just as many named … Lermontov and Tolstoi” (338). Tolstoi’s prominence in the national imagination dates to his including “Prisoner” in his *Azbuka* (*Primer*), which sold over two million copies from its release to Tolstoi’s death (Grant 113). Since the majority of adult Chechens received the same schooling, they are also very “keenly aware of the literary image” of the Caucasus.

---

(Derlugian 338). Even if Soviet schooling in Checheno-Ingushetia incorporated Pushkin’s and Tolstoi’s texts in ways consistent with other Soviet republics, the prisoner—as an ontological metaphor—intrinsically conveys multiple identifications.

Whereas Pushkin’s prisoner is an unnamed philosophical subject, Tolstoi’s has a name, Zhilin, which evokes the verb *zhit’* (to live) and the fairy-tale temporality of *zhili-byli* (once upon a time). Introduced to the reader as a certain gentleman, Zhilin, Tolstoi suggests, could be any Russian officer. A letter from Zhilin’s aging mother frames the officer’s tale as a parable:

Стара я уж стала, и хочется перед смертью повидать любимого сына. Приезжарай со мной проститься, похорони, а там и с богом поезжай опять на службу. А я тебе иневесту принискала: и умная, и хорошая, и именье есть.

I have grown old, and should like to see my beloved son before I die. Come and bid adieu to me, bury me, then return to your service, and may God be with you. I have found a bride for you who is both clever and pretty, and landed too. (102)

The officer’s mother emerges as an intervening force in this version, later becoming a convention associated with the prisoner metaphor after Tolstoi. Three women—the captive’s mother, the potential bride at home, and the captor’s daughter—contend for the Russian’s attention. His captivity becomes almost synonymous with the circulation of women among men.

From the very beginning of the story, Zhilin anticipates his own capture: “На Кавказе тогда война была. По дорогам ни днем, ни ночью не было проезда. Чуть кто из русских отъедет или отойдет от крепости, татары или убьют, или уведут в горы” (“At that time there was a war on in the Caucasus and the roads were too dangerous to travel either by day or night. If any of the Russians left the fortress he was in peril of being killed or taken off into the mountains by the Tartars,” 102). The “war in the Caucasus” is not named specifically, nor are the parties fighting the Russians. In hopes of
eluding the “Tartars,” Zhilin travels in a convoy with another soldier. Kostylin, whose name evokes kost’ (bone), is Zhilin’s foil; Kostylin returns home barely alive because he does not acknowledge the “Tartars” humanity.

Whereas Kostylin flees to the fortress, Zhilin can imagine captivity: “знаю вас, чертей: если живого возьмут, посадят в яму, будут плетью пороть” (“I know what you devils are like: if you take me alive you’ll put me in a hole in the ground and thrash me with whips”) (104). Shackled, Zhilin continues referring to his captors as Tartars, differentiating between the two individual captors on the basis of their hair. Zhilin perceives each “воночий татар” (“stinking Tartar”) in the animalistic terms applied to Shakespeare’s Caliban and other literary “savages.”

Zhilin’s derogatory images further blur distinctions between Kazi-Muhamed, the “Красный татарин” (“red-bearded Tartar”), and Abdul-Murat, the “Черный” (“dark-haired one”), who is his new “master.” Kazi-Muhamed howls “как волк” (“like a wolf”) while fingering his knife (107). Abdul-Murat is “быстрый, живой, так весна пружинах” [“lively and nimble, as though walking on springs”] (107). When Abdul-Murat approaches Zhilin, he gets down on his “haunches” (“корточки”) (107). In the face of Abdul-Murat’s kindness, Zhilin remains obstinate: “Не боялся, да ине буду бояться вас, собак” (“I’m not afraid of you dogs and I never shall be”) (110). He continues seeing the Circassian men as the dangerous creatures he expects them to be.

In contrast, he compares Abdul-Murat’s daughter, Dina, to playful and

---

26 The term “Tartars” now refers generically and pejoratively to a “non-Russian;” in the nineteenth century, it referred more specifically to inhabitants of the North Caucasus and to Muslims.
unthreatening animals: “как коза дикая” (“like a wild goat”) (108). In the starlight, her eyes gleam “как у кошки” (“like a cat’s”) (127). Zhilin conveys his increasing familiarity with and affection for Dina through such similes. Whereas Zhilin does not imagine how his captors envision him, he believes Dina stares at him “как на зверя какого” (“as if he were a wild animal”) (108). Zhilin comes to share a symbolic vocabulary with Dina—if only through his own projection.

Zhilin’s observations of Dina recall the tropes of Pushkin’s Romantic poetry, such as “глаза черные, светлые” (“shining, black eyes”) (108). Tolstoi describes the thirteen-year-old’s appearance in detail, recalling the ethnographic quality of Pushkin’s poem:

Одета в рубаху длинную, синюю, с широкими рукавами и без пояса. На полах, на груди и на рукавах оторочено красным. На ногах штаны и башмачки, а на башмачках другие, с высокими каблуками, на шее монисто, все из русских полтинников. Голова непокрытая, коса черная, и в косе лента, а на ленте привешены бляхи и рубль серебряный.

She wore a long blue shirt with wide sleeves and no belt, trimmed with red along the hem, neck and sleeves. Below this she wore trousers and slippers, and over the slippers high-heeled shoes. Around her neck was necklace made of Russian fifty-kopeck pieces. She was bare-headed and wore her black hair in a plait tied with a ribbon, on which were hung various pendants and a silver ruble. (108)

When Dina helps him escape, Zhilin perceives not only her actions, but also her body as part of the natural environment. As much as Tolstoi’s story undermines Pushkin’s Romanticism, her femininity remains essentialized—and desired.

Perhaps encouraging this femininity, Zhilin gives Dina a doll he has made “с носом, с руками, с ножамии в татарской рубахе” (“with a nose, arms and legs, wearing a Tartar shirt”) (112). This gift, in addition to representing an attempt at kindness and cultural sensitivity, asserts Zhilin’s presence in Dina’s life. Perhaps Zhilin’s gift invites
Dina’s participation in the act of empire-building: “А куклу уж лоскутками красными убрала икачает, как ребенка, сама по-своему прибаюкивает” (“She had now dressed it up in scraps of red material and was cradling it in her arms like a child, singing a Tartar lullaby,” 113). Dina independently dresses the doll in red scraps, the color of Russian empire. Symbolically, Zhilin makes a “mother” of Dina by giving her a doll to play-nurture. As she secretly mothers her doll, she covertly brings Zhilin milk.

While Dina’s caring for Zhilin remains secret, the village becomes involved in Zhilin’s doll production. Abdul-Murat gives him a knife with which he makes a wheel and spindle. Village girls bring him rags to clothe the dolls: “одна — мужик, другая — баба” (“one as a man, the other as a woman,” 114). After attaching the dolls to the wheel, he places the wheel in a stream. The flow of the water makes the wheel turn, and the dolls dance. That the men participate in the spectacle underscores its impact on the village. After securing this reputation as a master craftsman, Zhilin begins plotting his escape. Surveying his environs from a hilltop, he likens the local women to his own creations: “как куклы маленькие” (“like tiny dolls,” 117). Only Dina humanizes Zhilin, throwing him a loaf of bread.

Anticipating Dina’s visits, Zhilin begins using clay from the pit to model figures of people, horses, and dogs. A rustling sound foretells her arrival, like that of an animal in the woods. Calling her by the affectionate and diminutive “Динушка,” he implores her to take the toys, but she refuses. He asks her: “Кто тебе без меня кукол делать будет?” (“Who will make you dolls when I’m gone?,” 127). This question evinces the ‘logic’ of the Russian ‘cultural mission.’ While Zhilin expresses concern for her fate, he articulates
it in terms of his own imagined purpose.

Zhilin self-associates with culture, while aligning Dina with nature. As she attempts to unchain him, he perceives her hands as “как прутики” (“like little twigs,” 127). He strokes her head before she scurries up the hill like a “козочка” (“young goat,” 127). Once free, Zhilin realizes that he will remain in service in the Caucasus: “Вот и домой съездил, женился! Нет, уж видно не судьба моя” (“So much for going home and getting married! No, it’s obviously not my destiny!,” 129). His relationship to Dina tethers him to the territory, holding him captive, even after being separated from her.

4.5. “Mountain Women,” Bride-Kidnapping, and the Prisoner Metaphor after 1922

4.5.1. How Tolstoi’s Dina became Gaidai’s Nina in 1966

After the 1922 creation of the USSR, official state discourse defined freedom as class equality and imprisonment as capitalism, reformulating the prisoner metaphor in new terms. Stalin’s pre-revolutionary Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros (Marxism and the Nationalities Question) characterized Chechnya as among the “small nations” of the Caucasus that must cast off its closed skorlupa (shell). In Lenin’s formulation, all men and women had been captives of Tsarist Russian nobility, whose autocratic rule oppressed peasants and created a tiur'ma narodov (“prison-house of nations”) full of “subject peoples.” When Stalin reformulated the prisoner metaphor again by recasting the

27 Stalin maintained: “Национальный вопрос на Кавказе может быть разрешен лишь в духе вовлечения запоздальных наций народностей в общее русло высшей культуры” (258; The National Question in the Caucasus can be solved only by drawing the belated nations and nationalities in the common direction of a higher culture).
Caucasus War as “the liberation of peoples oppressed by colonial rule” (Grant 59), Checheno-Ingushetia gained its “freedom” as an autonomous oblast’ (province) in 1934 and as an autonomous republic in 1936.

While official policies after 1924 promoted Caucasian “nations” (among others), legislation sought to liberate Chechen women from ‘ādat (customary law), perceived as the “prison” or “national mask” of pre-Soviet customs (see Martin). Paragraph 197 of an April 1928 decree forbids compulsory marriage: “If a woman is forced against her will to marry or to continue cohabitation with a man, or is captured with a view to marriage, such compulsion is punishable with imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years” (Halle 129). The same decree also prohibited marriage by purchase, polygamy, and vendettas, identifying them as bytovoe prestuplenie (crimes of daily life). This Council of Nationalities’ attack on “crimes representing a relic of the tribal order,” was not uniform, however, allowing harsher punishments in Central Asia where such “offenses” were considered more pervasive (Halle 129). Despite such legislative differences, Leninist and Stalinist discourses consistently framed gender inequality as a byproduct of class inequality (rather than a constructed social difference).

Even as legislation sought to undermine cultural practices, such as bride-kidnapping, perceived as contributing to gender inequity official discourse never recognized that it was intervening in the social construction of gender. Engels’ “woman question,” as articulated in his 1884 The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, identified inequality in the family structure: “The first division of labor is that between man and woman for the propagation of children. [...] The modern family
contains in germ not only slavery (servitus) but also serfdom, since from its beginning it is related to agricultural services. It contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state” (51, Engels’ emphasis). Both Engel’s archetypal woman-mother-wife and Pushkin’s maiden thereby embody nineteenth-century remnants of pre-Soviet slavery and serfdom. Socialism was perceived as the solution to these systemic problems.

As women were brought into the workplace, however, some social differences among men and women continued to be understood as natural. As a result, the Soviet response to gender inequity “challenged the sex hierarchy, not the gender hierarchy” (Johnson 27). Such gender socialization in effect held Muslim women responsible—throughout the Soviet Union—for what Russian cultural and political discourses framed as their own “captivity” in wearing the veil, being kidnapped as a bride, or accepting a polygamous marriage. Bride-kidnapping, in particular, became a prominent referent of the prisoner metaphor in the Caucasian context, epitomizing the orientalizing perception of Caucasian women as prisoners of their own culture. As Massell notes in his discussion of how Central Asian women were made into surrogate proletariats, early Soviet emphasis on bride-kidnapping “called for the exposition in careful detail of every possible reason why a native woman could be considered, and should consider herself, ‘the lowest of the low,’ ‘the most oppressed of the oppressed,’ ‘the most enslaved of the enslaved’ in her society [to] justify and make possible an approach to her as a potentially subversive and revolutionizing force in her milieu” (93). In other words, molding Caucasian women into potential Soviet revolutionaries required first positioning them as “prisoners” of local custom.
Whereas the Russian imperial administration tacitly allowed bride-kidnapping—deeming the practice as pre-Islamic ‘ādat, which was considered less threatening than Shamil’s šarī‘a (see Grant 81)—penalties for bride-kidnapping became more severe in the early Soviet period. Meanwhile, Soviet scholars argued the material determinations for marriage by dowry, marriage by bride price, and marriage by capture as a means of class leveling (see Grant 79). For the Soviet critic Iussoff, for example, Pushkin’s maiden’s suicide signals her escaping the possibility of a future nonconsensual marriage. Romanticizing her “escape”—that is, her suicide—Iussoff attributed her death to an awareness that she couldn’t evade her kinsman’s wrath, the restrictions of tradition, or the “prison” of ‘ādat (see Austin 75). In this reading, Pushkin’s maiden and Tolstoi’s Dina are prisoners of the Caucasus, too.

The romance that ended these mountain women’s captivity, according to Chechen poet Raisa Akhmatova in a 1961 interview, is communism—not Pushkin’s eros or Tolstoi’s agape:

The October Revolution opened up a world of infinite possibilities to the mountain women. […] What for other women were merely pages in a history book, for the mountain women were chapters in their own lives. “Oh, women of the mountains! Where did you find the strength to reach the very heights…”. It was Soviet power that gave them that strength. And today there is no sphere of life in which the talents and energies of the mountain women do not manifest themselves. (116-7)

Pushkin’s and Tolstoi’s male Russian prisoners once stood for Tsarist Russia; here, the Soviet state replaces individual Romantic interests, freeing Caucasian women through

---

28 Grant enumerates the official fines for bride-kidnapping. If a bride effectively eloped, then the groom paid a fine of thirty rubles—plus seven kettles to every judge’s deputy in the okrug, or region. The fine increased by twenty rubles if the abduction was without the bride’s consent (81).
labor. In accord with Soviet dogma, Akhmatova suggests that bride-kidnapping is outdated, and that gender inequality has been rendered obsolete.

Building on this official Soviet stance that gender inequality is archaic, if not disappeared, Leonid Gaidai’s 1967 film *Kavkazskaia Plennitsa, ili Novye prikliucheniiia Shurika* (*The Female Prisoner of the Caucasus, or Shurik’s New Adventures*) spoofs bride-kidnapping in a generic mountain setting in the Caucasus. This cult comedy, Grant argues, was an essential part of the experience of Soviet childhood throughout the USSR—and including the Caucasus (129). Topping the box office upon its release and frequently televised, it is as much of a cultural touchstone as Pushkin’s and Tolstoi’s classic texts.²⁹

*Kavkazskaia Plennitsa*, while carefully avoiding nationally specific content, references Pushkin’s and Tolstoi’s literary Caucasus through its usage of the prisoner metaphor. Gaidai parodies the early Soviet Romanticization of ethnic identifications and the continued application of the prisoner metaphor to women’s social positions in the Caucasus even after the 1956-64 “thaw,” during which Khrushchev repudiated Stalin and rescinded his 1944 order forcibly exiling all Chechens. Like Pushkin’s and Tolstoi’s texts, Gaidai’s film plays with the convention of being a true story: “Может быть, это лишь легенда, но по словом Шурика, она действительно произошла в одном из горных районов” (“Perhaps, this story is also a legend, but Shurik insists that it really

²⁹ A Moscow restaurant (est. 1998), decorated with props from Gaidai’s film, testifies to *Kavkazskaia plennitsa*’s continued relevance and popularity (see Grant)—the expression of which now incorporates multiple layers of nostalgia for the USSR and for the projected “simplicity” of the nineteenth century. This kitschy “restoran-nostalg‘iia” “nostalgia restaurant,” as it is termed on the official website, evokes the film’s generalized Caucasian setting, despite serving specifically Georgian cuisine.
did occur in one of the mountainous regions.”) The film’s “truth,” like that of its literary antecedents, depends on vagueness. The generalized location reveals the true captive of the Caucasus to be the Russian anthropologist, Shurik, whose quest for “authenticity” leads to his kidnapping of Nina, ironically (and deliberately) played by a Russian actor.

Shurik’s original interest in the Caucasus is anthropological; he considers himself on a “этнографическая экспедиция” (“ethnographic expedition”), studying toasting rituals in a “mountainous region.” An omniscient narrator at the film’s beginning reports: “Он не сказал, в каком именно, чтобы не быть несправедливым к другим районов, где могла произойти точно такая же история” (“He didn’t specify which region it was because he wanted to avoid offending all the other regions where such a story might have happened”). Shurik’s deference to local “tradition” imprisons him in the Caucasus. After decades of Soviet rule, Shurik expects Caucasian customs not only to cohere with those of Pushkin’s nineteenth-century literary topos, but also to imprison local women according to “pre-Soviet” customs like bride-kidnapping and veiling.

Gaidai’s adaptation of the prisoner metaphor relies on his reversal of the captor’s and captive’s genders. While this switch’s humor depends on the assumption that gender inequality is obsolete, it effectively reiterates “traditional” gender roles. Nina’s desirability animates the film’s events from the moment she appears on screen, walking down a mountain road where a donkey, anthropologist Shurik’s anachronistic transport, and a truck, belonging to a local ambulance driver named Edik, are stalled. When Nina

---

30 Shurik’s donkey represents the anthropologist’s quixotic search for rural Caucasian life and evokes el rucio, Sancho Panza’s faithful ass. Furthermore, since the Russian word for donkey, ishak, also means “serf,” Shurik’s steed humorously introduces additional associations with the prisoner metaphor.
passes between the men, their “rides” spring to life, following her down the road. Her beauty, more than that of the Caucasus itself, captivates in Gaidai’s film.

Taken with Nina upon first sight, Comrade Saakhov, a corrupt, local party official, immediately asks: “Вы как относитесь к бракосочетанию?” (“How does marriage strike you?”). Giggling, Nina responds diplomatically: “Вообще-то положительно” (“Generally positive”). Although Nina is clearly uninterested, marriage becomes a central theme because Saakhov is interested. Saakhov involves Nina in the ceremonial inauguration of the town’s new Wedding Palace, citing her accomplishments and beauty as representing the best of what her generation offers future husbands. In what seems like a clumsy expression of Saakhov’s desire for Nina, he quotes Soviet satirist Arkady Raikin (1911-1987): “Женщина—друг человека” (Woman is man’s friend). By evoking the expression “Собака—друг человека” (“Dog is man’s best friend”), this Stalin-era joke asserts that “woman” is not only other than “man,” but also less than human. Despite the self-conscious Sovietness of this Wedding Palace inauguration, Shurik perceives Saakhov’s speech as rife with local detail relevant to his anthropological fieldwork.

Never a neutral observer in his field, Shurik interrupts the ceremony by drunkenly demanding that everyone speak more slowly to facilitate his note-taking (“Минуточку! Будьте добры, помедленнее! Я записываю”). Amused by Shurik’s projection of folk culture onto a Soviet event, Saakhov informs Shurik that he is mistaken to seek ancient customs in the town. Nobody remembers the past, except “может, где-нибудь высоко в горах” (“maybe somewhere high in the mountains”). On this advice, Shurik decides to
visit the mountains, and begins his journey with Nina, who is traveling to a youth
campsite.

Shurik is so intent on “discovering” an archetypal Caucasian experience that he is
oblivious to how foreign his expectations are to Nina, who—as is repeated throughout the
film—is “студентка, комсомолка, спортсменка ... просто красавица!” (“a student,
Communist Youth League member, athlete—just a beauty!”). Whereas Nina descends the
mountain with strength and confidence, Shurik—in a cartoonish sleeping-bag-race
mishap—ends up hanging upside down from a branch on the side of a cliff, dangling over
a river. Nina yells: “Сейчас я вас вытяну!” (“I'll save you!” [Literally, “I’ll pull you
up”]). Whereas Pushkin’s maiden drowns in the river that the Russian prisoner easily
crosses, Nina rescues Shurik after he plummets into the water, still immobilized by the
sleeping bag. And, in contrast to Pushkin’s Russian prisoner abandoning the maiden,
Nina tentatively leaves Shurik, asking tenderly: “Незаблудитесь?” (“You won't lose
your way?”). Shurik shakes his head no, but, without Nina, he is lost—a prisoner of the
“traditional” Caucasus of his imagination.

Immersing himself quickly in this literary-anthropological “mountain region,”
Shurik eagerly accepts an offer from Nina’s uncle, Zhabrail, to participate in a local
custom. When Shurik asks what kind, Zhabrail says sinisterly: “Похищение невесты!”
(“Bride-kidnapping!”). Shurik gasps, in politically correct horror, appalled until the uncle
explains that the local girls like the custom. What Shurik does not know is that Zhabrail
has already negotiated a bride price for Nina: twenty sheep and a refrigerator.

Zhabrail’s bargaining with Saakhov prompts the film’s only allusion to Stalinist
cruelty, albeit not to the aardakh specifically. When Zhabrail asks for a “бесплатная путёвка” (“free pass”) to sweeten the negotiations, Saakhov replies: “В Сибирь!” (To Siberia!). Although Gaidai’s film avoids direct reference to the 1944 deportation, it uses humor—such as Raikin’s aforementioned joke, recycled in Saakhov’s speech—to evoke the “forgotten” prisons of the Stalinist past. By satirizing the “pre-Soviet” tradition of bride-kidnapping, the film also elliptically pokes fun at the Soviet discourse that considers such customs obsolete.

This layering of multiple historiographies about Caucasian customs adds to the physical comedy of Shurik’s kidnapping of Nina. When Shurik finds Nina sleeping in the same orange sleeping bag that previously held him captive, the hood frames her face like a scarf. About to embark on what he believes is a local tradition, it seems that Shurik “veils” Nina by enacting his own “old ideas.” As he kidnaps Nina, he zips the sleeping bag hood shut, covering her face completely as he drags her to the stooge-like trio responsible for her delivery to Saakhov: Georgy Vitsin, the Coward; Yuri Nikulin, the Fool; and Yevgeni Morgunov, the Experienced.

When the trio drive away with Nina, the camera zooms in on a road sign: “Орлиное гнездо -57” (“Aerie -57”). Saakhov, Zhabrail, and the troika hold Nina captive in a house at this mountain nest, the name of which recalls the swallow nests of Pushkin’s poem. In this mytho-poetic prison, folkloric artifacts adorn the walls. Four identical statuettes, each of a man wearing a sarık (turban), guard the corners of the bed on which Nina sits as the trio sings about being a Sultan: “Сколько жен в самый раз, три или одна?” (“How many wives would I have at once, three or one?”). As the stooges imagine
their own harems according to eroticized, nineteenth-century metaphors of female
captivity, Nina ducks under the purple scarf they incorporated into their dance routine.
The implication of this escape, it seems, is that she will not be veiled. Even Saakhov soon
realizes that she is no one’s captive, declaring: “или я ее веду в загс... Либо она меня к
прокурору!” (“Either I marry her, or she sends me to prison!”).

When Nina’s aunt informs Shurik that he was duped, he responds: “Я ее украл, я
ее и верну” (“I kidnapped her; I'll get her back!”). The archetype of a strong, Soviet
young woman, Nina rescues herself from the aerie. When Shurik unties her, she lashes
out, calling him a “Bandit,” a popular derogatory label for Chechen men and a political
term in the communist context. Only once Nina is “liberated” does Shurik understand his
ethnographic pursuit as a Romantic misadventure. The young Russian student stops being
a captive of the Caucasus when he stops imagining Nina as one.

Once Nina is “liberated,” Saakhov becomes the primary captive of the Caucasus,
a prisoner of “old ways.” To prove this point, Shurik, Edik, and Nina stage a vendetta,
performed according to ‘ādat. Nina appears in Saakhov’s living
room, covered in a white scarf (see figure 6), staring blankly into
the distance: the epitome of the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman
depicted in the Soviet anti-veiling propaganda of the 1920s (see
Massell and Northrop). When a male voice booms from the
darkness, Saakhov cowers against the wall, under the looming
shadow of a hooded executioner armed with a rifle. The two men become black
silhouettes in the bluish light of darkness, becoming archetypes of “pre-Soviet custom”
within Pushkin’s literary Caucasus. Shurik and Edik each act as an *abrek*, changing their identities as they seek blood revenge.

Shurik, acting as executioner, proclaims: “Мы пришли, чтобы судить тебя по законам гор за то, что ты хотел опозорить наш род!” (“We are here to judge you by the law of the mountain because you have sought to dishonor us!”). When Saakhov protests, Shurik responds: “За твою поганую шкуру я буду отвечать только перед своей совестью джигита честью сестры и памятью предков” (“I shall answer for what I do to you to my conscience as a *dzhigit* [Caucasian warrior and equestrian], and to my sister’s honor and the wisdom of my ancestors”). A close-up of Nina’s face reveals a tiny smile as Saakhov implores her to save him: “Это же средневековая дикость!” (“This is medieval savagery!”). Even when Saakhov accepts responsibility for his actions, Nina insists he pay with blood. In response to Saakhov’s protest that murder is not in accordance with Soviet law, the voice inquires: “Или по советским законам ты ее воровал?” (“Was it according to Soviet law that you stole her?”). Soviet law is the hero at the end of the film, trying Zhabrail, Saakhov, and the trio for their retro “crime of daily life.”

---

31 Rebecca Gould defines the *abrek*—after the mid-nineteenth century—as embodying what she terms “transgressive sanctity,” “religiosity ... constituted through its violation of the secular codes of colonialism” (272). Describing earlier manifestations of this social practice, she writes: “The institution of the abrek ... is linked ... to *amnatsstvo*, in which a member of one clan was found guilty of a crime demanding blood revenge and sought refuge with another clan, changing his identity in some ways in the process. In addition to changing places and therefore identity, as the *amanant* did, the abrek took on the task of providing for the community through the practice of raiding” (271-2).
4.5.2. The Caucasus Mountains as Seen from Kazakhstan, 1944-57

Although in Gaidai’s film, and in early-Soviet jurisprudence on bride-kidnapping, the USSR liberates the “mountaineers”—and especially mountain women—Stalin forcibly exiled the Chechens, for their alleged Nazi collaboration, in the 1944 *aardakh*, which Stalin code-named “Operatsiia Chechevitsa” (Operation Lentil).32 Approximately one-third of the 244,000 deported died. Despite having, in effect, kidnapped its own citizens, the USSR continued to pass legislation relevant to the *cause célèbre* of bride-kidnapping. For example, in 1949, the USSR ratified the *United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation and the Prostitution of Others*, adding the proviso that the social conditions for prostitution—like those for bride-kidnapping—had been removed (see Tiuriukanova, qtd. in Johnson 24). As Chechens continued to endure exile in Kazakhstan, Yakutia, and Kyrgyzstan, the early-Soviet problem of bride-kidnapping resurfaced—in post-WWII human rights discourse—as one of human trafficking.

In 1949, the same year the USSR signed the aforementioned United Nations convention, the Soviet government erected in a Groznyi emptied of Chechens an Ermolov statue with the inscription: “There is no people under the sun more vile and deceitful than this one.” The act of the installation of this monument, especially in the Chechens’ absence, makes Ermolov’s nineteenth-century struggle ironically analogous to twentieth-century Chechen suffering, nineteenth-century

32 Presumably, the codename derives from the shared first syllable of *chechevitsa* (lentil) and *chechenets* (Chechen). Many English-language sources mistakenly translate this codename as “Operation Mountaineer.”
captivity to twentieth-century exile. I do not mean to suggest an actual causal relationship between these events—merely that the statue’s chronotopic placement implied such a relationship through its elliptical invocation of Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor, wherein the Caucasus is a prison.

Not surprisingly, Chechen cultural production about the aardakh often inverts Stalin’s revision of the prisoner metaphor, describing the Caucasus Mountains as freedom incarnate. The Caucasus’ representation of Chechen national freedom recalls and yet also challenges the nineteenth-century Russian perception of the Caucasus as a site of personal liberty. This link, established through variations of the prisoner metaphor, also underscores the historical relationship between the Caucasus War and the 1944 deportation. The obviousness of this metaphor varied according to the changing Soviet climate. Chechen attitudes toward Stalin’s deportation can be divided into two distinct periods: before and after the liberalization of the 1980s (see Tishkov 80/25).

Kheda Abdullaeva, one of Valerii Tishkov’s interviewees, recalls her mother’s mentioning the aardakh in her stories:

О депортации говорили мало и в каком-то отвлечённом виде: это было до “ардаар” (что на чеченском языке буквально “вывели из дома”). Когда мама что-нибудь рассказывала то она часто говорила вот когда нас “ардаале”... У меня в голове все никак не укладывалось: куда вывели и куда привели? (80)

The deportation was hardly ever mentioned, only as an abstract point of reference: this or that happened before or after the ardaar (which in Chechen means literally “taken out of the house”). Mother often used it in her stories, saying that’s when we “ardaaale”... I never understood: where was this? (26)

This example shows the abstract terms in which the aardakh was often discussed. Rather than refer to the aardakh directly, exilic dirges metaphorized the mountains left behind.
The Caucasus Mountains came to represent freedom from exile, and the mountain *aul* home.

Even Raisa Akhmatova, who lauded Soviet innovations of the 1960s (at least in official publications), described herself as “a representative of the women of [her] native Checheno-Ingushetia [who] felt the solid mountain road beneath [her] feet” (118). The mountains came to represent what in Pushkin’s “Prisoner” was called freedom’s ghost. As Pushkin’s prisoner celebrated freedom in captivity, the Chechens glorified the mountains in exile.

A long history of the mountains in Chechen poetry—including Magomet Mamakaev’s 1928 epic *Ts’ij xydina laemnash* (The Bloody Mountains [or, in Russian, *Krovavye gory*])—further bolstered this metaphor’s affective power. Kheda Abdullaeva recalls her cousin reciting another Mamakaev poem by heart:

Старушки с нашей улицы у них всегда собирались, и она им читала поэму Мамакаева “В горах.” [...] Эта девочка была маленького роста, ей ставили стул, она на него вставала и начинала читать. А они сидели и плакали. Я на них смотрела и думала, что ничего не понимаю в этой жизни. Честное слово, она каждый день читала им одну и ту же поэму, и они все плакали. (131)

All the old women in our street came to hear her. She would stand on a stool and recite them as they sat around and wept. They always made her repeat “In the Mountains” by Mamakaev. I wondered at them—what, weep over the same poem night after night? (47)

What Kheda did not understand in her youth is that Mamakaev’s poems about the Caucasus Mountains provided a politically acceptable vehicle for the collective expression of grief. In Chechnya, as in Balkaria and the Baltic Republics, deportation became a collective grievance because virtually every family lost someone during the exile of 1944-57 (Derlugian 209). Furthermore, after returning to Chechnya in 1957,
many Chechen families were prevented from returning to their mountain *aul*, and were resettled elsewhere to support various industries. This policy introduced still more poetic longing for the mountain *aul* as a site of national longing.

In the mid-1970s, the party committee of the Checheno-Ingushetian University conveyed to the KGB their concern over the “sentiments” of the student poetry club ‘Prometheus,’ whose writing praised the Caucasus Mountains. Derlugian records that the source of indignation lay in the poets’ failure to submit their works for assessment by the local union of Soviet Writers (116). In addition, perhaps, the students’ praising the mountains could be understood as celebrating Chechen *marsho* (freedom/peace), signposting Chechen self-identifications with more explicit remembering of the *aardakh*.

Throughout the liberalization of the 1980s, Chechen cultural production increasingly framed the *aardakh* as genocide. Tishkov notes that many young Chechens were influenced by pop songs whose theme was the 1944 deportation. “Chernye dni” (“Dark Days”), for example, incorporated Musa Geshaev’s lyrics about the *aardakh*:

О черных днях поведали мне горы,  
Чернее повести для горцев в жизни нет,  
[...]  
Какое время бед мы пережили  
В разлуке от родных Кавказских гор! (Tishkov 91)

Of our dark days the mountains told me,  
A darker story no highlander ever heard,  
[...]  
What woeful time we had to live through,  
Torn from our dear mountains of the Caucasus! (Tishkov 53)

Not only do the mountains situate the idea of return, but also they function as a repository of experience: the dark days. As such, the mountain metaphor—with its connection to the
prisoner metaphor—takes on a new form after the Chechen national revolution in 1991.

4.5.3. Old Memorials and New Memories after 1989

The Caucasian mountains came to symbolize multiple, competing claims to Chechen sovereignty after 1991. First, this metaphor conjures three precedents for Chechen independence: Imam Shamil’s rebel state of 1834-59; the short-lived Mountain Republic of 1918; and the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, a post-Soviet political alliance. Second, the mountain metaphor delineates political loyalties. For example, the word “mountain” includes Abkhazes, but excludes Georgians—even as, of course, several Georgian minorities live in the mountains, and most Kabardins and Chechens live in the more fertile valleys” (Derlugian 237). And, third, the mountain reference—for militant ethno-nationalists like Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, Shamil Basaev, and Movladi Udugov—encodes territorial aspirations of uniting Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan.

When Dzhokhar Dudaev became the first president of the Chechen Republic after declaring its independence from the USSR in July 1991, he renamed both the capital city and the country. By renaming Groznyi “Dzhokhar-kala,” Dudaev countered Ermolov’s legacy—not only the general’s initial derogatory christening of Groznyi, but also Russian imperialism in general. Simultaneously, Dudaev also transformed Chechnya into the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI). This change also references Ermolov’s campaign, during which Ichkeria denoted a mountainous southeastern region of Chechnya. Whereas Groznyi’s becoming Dzhokhar-kala rejects imperial policies, Chechnya’s becoming ChRI anachronistically assimilates the imperialist cultural
tradition, as represented by Pushkin and Lermontov.

The name “Ichkeria” survived mainly in Lermontov’s verse, “acquir[ing] a poetic flavor” since the nineteenth century (Derlugian 37). Dudaev, no doubt, was aware of this legacy, as he admired Lermontov’s verse. He dismissed as “pedantry” all objections to Lermontov’s having been a European Romantic “who regarded the Chechen warriors as magnificent untamed beasts” (Derlugian 38). Accordingly, Dudaev’s nominal changes renounced the legacy of nineteenth-century imperialism, but incorporated its literary traditions—or, at least, Lermontov’s part in it.

Despite Dudaev’s publicly “rehabilitating” Lermontov, Groznyi’s Lermontov statue was destroyed in 1991 along with Ermolov’s (Ziolkowski 30). These acts, like Dudaev’s re-namings, seem to be attempts at intervening in how history is remembered. The removal of Ermolov’s statue, while rejecting Russian imperial influence, also removes an unintentional Soviet reminder of Stalin’s cruelty (since the statue was erected in 1949 while all Chechens were in forced exile). In post-1991 Chechnya, the work of forging national identifications utilized the cultural legacy of Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor to articulate claims of marsho, or freedom.

As Pushkin extolled freedom or its ghost, Dudaev glorified marsho, advocating personal and national liberation. Some of Dudaev’s public persona as a seeker of liberty extends from his growing up in exile, like so many others in his generation. Born in 1944, a few weeks before the aardakh, he lived in Kazakhstan for thirteen years. The political newspaper Dzoxaran Neq (Dzhokhar’s Path) uses an epigraph from Dudaev’s musings on freedom: “Раб, не стремящийся выйти из рабства, заслуживает двойного
рабства!” (Tishkov 269; “A slave who does not try to shake off his fetters deserves double slavery!,” 86). Such statements evoke Dudaev’s sympathy for and involvement in other national struggles.33

After the USSR collapsed, the Baltic states gained independence, and the First Chechen War began, terms from the Russo-Afghan war, including dukhy (“ghosts”), resurfaced to malign Chechen combatants (some of whom, like Dudaev, had fought alongside Russians in Afghanistan). Russian soldiers’ names for Chechens reveal not only the continued legacy of nineteenth-century vilification and Romanticization, but also shared Soviet experience. As dukhy references the Soviet-Afghan War; bandity (“bandits”) recalls the nineteenth-century Caucasus Wars; boeviki (“fighters”) conjures other post-Soviet ethnic conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and Tajikistan (Tishkov 274/90); and terroristy (“terrorists”) likens Russian militarism to American foreign policy after 9/11. None of these terms is politically neutral.

All of the aforementioned names, however, recall the history of active Russian involvements in the Caucasus. As Derlugian, puts its, the literary traditions of Pushkin and Tolstoi “have re-emerged with a vengeance in Caucasian nationalist discourses, in artistic works [...] and particularly in the Western media’s coverage of the Chechen Wars” (Derlugian 33). The prisoner metaphor, not unlike the above names for soldiers, offers an abbreviated way of invoking broad cross-sections of historical events, cultural production, and lived experience.

33 After fighting as a Soviet soldier in Afghanistan, Dudaev was sent to Estonia, where he became sympathetic to Baltic nationalist movements. Dudaev’s popularity in Estonia later contributed to stories of “belye kolgotki” (“White Stockings”), mythic Baltic or Ukrainian female snipers fighting against Russian imperialism in the Chechen Wars.
4.6. The First and Second Chechen Wars, 1994-?

Baiev recalls in his memoir, *Grief of My Heart*, how a 1992 Moscow news broadcast invoked nineteenth-century cultural discourses—and the prisoner metaphor—to contextualize a segment about Chechens accumulating wealth through corruption and theft. He remembers seeing “*Chechen Billions*” flash across the screen, accompanied by a voice-over from Lermontov’s 1840 “Казачья колыбельная песня” (“Cossack Lullaby”):

Po kamniyam struytsya Terek, O’er the stones the Terek bubbles,
Plesyet mutnyy val; Muddy ripples jump to life;
Eloy Chechen polzetna berег, The evil Chechen crawls onto the riverbank,
Tochit svoi kinejal. Carefully sharpening his dagger. (82)

Lermontov’s “Lullaby,” itself an adaptation of Pushkin’s “Circassian Song” from “The Prisoner of the Caucasus,” served to contextualize the Chechens “shadowy” character in this segment on corruption in the Caucasus. By engaging with the prisoner metaphor, footage of a sting operation against a crime ring suggested that impoverished Russians were “prisoners” of Chechen Mafiosi—not new Russian businessmen.

From the early 1990s, the prisoner metaphor has featured prominently in news about the North Caucasus—and in the brochures of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs. One brochure entitled “Kriminal'nyi rezhim v Chechne” (“The Criminal Régime in Chechnya”), Harsha Ram observes, “follows the bare essentials of Pushkin’s story, from captivity to liberation” (15). During the First Chechen War, as reports of real-life captivity narratives circulated in Russian and international news media, the prisoner metaphor increasingly became associated in cultural production with the masculine
bodies of Russian captives in Chechnya.

4.6.1. Hostages for Ransom and Captives of (Counter-)Terrorism

The prisoner metaphor—applied to POWs, captives, and hostages alike—contributed to blurring distinctions between political hostage-taking and kidnapping for ransom. All Russian young men became potential—if not actual—prisoners in this usage of the metaphor. Large ransoms paid for Russian or foreign hostages helped finance Chechen combatants’ causes—while diverting media attention from Russian kidnappings of Chechen men. Reports on hostages in Chechnya most often focused on foreigner’s violent executions rather than, for example, Russian conscripts’ detention as prisoners of war. These conscripts sometimes were billeted with Chechen families and treated as guests: eating, sleeping, and doing chores with the families (see Baiev 136). However, media accounts often described Chechen hostage-takers, refuge-providers, and hosts indistinguishably, even as each group differentiated among Russian conscripts and contractors. Conscripts sometimes were released to their mothers, while contractors frequently were executed.

By the end of the First Chechen War, hostage-taking was one of few gainful “jobs” available to men. On this basis, Nedkov concludes in his Nord-Ost memoir, 57 Hours: “For secular Chechen bandits, for hardcore separatist guerillas, for Chechen nationalists and freedom fighters, hostages were a commodity” (64). Whether hostages were commodities or not, kidnapping became a significant feature of Chechen economic activity. In Ursus-Martan and Groznyi, hostage markets accepted orders for captives of particular specifications: businessman, officer, or civil servant (Tishkov 406/115). While
Russian and international news media applied the prisoner metaphor to this hostage-trade, they often overlooked Russian complicity in the kidnapping.

News media devoted much attention to Arbi Baraev, whom Nedkov describes as “one of the most barbaric and notorious practitioners of the black art of hostage taking for profit” (180). Baraev reportedly kidnapped hundreds of people for ransoms of up to one million dollars. Numerous sources allege that Baraev organized the kidnapping and beheading of foreigners in Chechnya. In international and Russian news media, Baraev embodies the perceived Chechen criminality, representing what Ram calls “the transformation of the Chechen from pre-national ‘savage’ to post-national ‘criminal’” (18). Media coverage of Baraev, as an iconic kidnapper, redefined the prisoner metaphor in criminal terms.

Recalling that the crime of kidnapping “reached epidemic proportions” between 1996-9 (242), Baiev implicates Russian vested interest in Baraev’s enactments of Pushkin’s metaphor. He testifies:

Gangsters like [Arbi] Baraev, in partnership with Russian security services, made millions from ransoms and selling the corpses of the people they had murdered back to their relatives. When the kontraktmiki signed up to fight in Chechnya, the Russian military promised bonuses. But the army was broke. By all accounts, military commanders gave the mercenaries freedom to loot and kidnap. The outside world heard about the kidnapping of journalists like Andrei [Babitskii]... but never the Chechens who were victimized about 80 percent of the time. (242)

Perhaps swayed by these events’ relation to the narratives of Pushkin and Tolstoi, media accounts often considered hostage-taking in isolation, focusing on the body of the Russian (or, at least, non-Chechen) prisoner.

Mukomolov asserts that abductions perpetrated for ransoms must be
contextualized by Russian seizures of Chechen combatants and civilians. He writes:

Хотя похищение людей на Кавказе известно еще с времен Толстого, но именно война породила массовые похищения. Ведь на фильтрах делалось тоже самое: приходили родственники, платили деньги и забирали своих. (qtd. in Tishkov 406)

Though abducting people has been known in the Caucasus since Tolstoi’s time, it’s the recent war that generated kidnappings on a mass scale. In the filtration camps, [Russians] did the same thing: relatives of missing Chechen people came, paid the money demanded, and took their men away. (qtd. in Tishkov 115)

The prisoner metaphor framed many news media accounts of financially-and politically motivated kidnappings by Chechen individuals. Sergei Bodrov, Sr. made this connection explicit by adapting Tolstoi’s story—and Pushkin’s metaphor—to the First Chechen War.

4.6.1.1. Bodrov’s Prisoner of the Caucasus

Bodrov’s 1996 film Kavkazskii plennik (Prisoner of the Caucasus, released in the US as Prisoner of the Mountains) modernizes the historical context of Tolstoi’s short story, but not the customs of the archetypal nineteenth-century aul. This incongruity makes the Chechen war appear as a repetition of the Caucasus War for little seems to have changed during the Soviet period. One key difference, from Tolstoi’s story, is that this Abdul Murad hopes not for ransom money, but for his son’s return (in exchange for Russian captives). Whereas Bodrov’s crew was taken captive and released during filming, Russian captors shoot Abdul Murad’s son after his escape attempt, precluding any exchange.

Prior to this disaster, Bodrov’s Vania (Zhilin), writes his mother seeking rescue—unlike Tolstoi’s Zhilin, who only pretends to write a ransom note. Reading Vania’s plea, Ms. Zhilinova slumps in despair against a blackboard in her empty classroom. This
existential moment contrasts with an earlier scene in which the camera pans across pupil’s drawings of national symbols—such as the Kremlin—as their teacher reads aloud an upbeat missive from her son. Whereas this first letter is consistent with narratives of Russian military success, the second one isolates Ms. Zhilinova from her students and nationalist rhetoric. Once her son’s news becomes inconsistent with narratives of Russian military strength, she finds herself without state support. As long as her son is a prisoner of the Caucasus, she is a prisoner of Russia.

In her quest to free her son, Ms. Zhilinova encounters more moments of understanding with Chechens civilians than with Russian officers: a woman selling vegetables, a cobbler, a boy who leads her to the tea house where she meets with Abdul Murad. Whereas these Chechen civilians provide directions and assistance (up to a limit), the Russian commander lies, telling her that he arranged a trade for her son but that the “bandits” never showed up. Both Abdul Murad and Ms. Zhilinova are captives of the corrupt Russian military, but of their sons, only Vania survives—the Russian military kills Abdul Murad’s son, Dzharakhmat.

While waiting for his mother to arrive, Vania, a conscript, grows to understand the other Russian captive to whom he is chained, a contractor named Sania (Kostylin). He also nurtures a tender friendship with Abdul Murad’s daughter, Dina, re-romanticizing the prisoner metaphor through his interest in the girl. Bodrov’s film, like Tolstoi’s story and Pushkin’s poem, focuses on how ethnographic details engender Vania/ Zhilin’s perception of Dina and invite the viewer’s gaze. For example, in one scene, after Dina tells Vania that she will soon marry, she boasts to Vania that her dowry includes an heirloom silver necklace decorated with wolf faces and apples. His simple response—
“You’re very pretty”—invites consideration of her as a bride. This framing of Dina’s character according to mytho-poetic “ancient traditions” is reinforced by her later promise to put her dowry necklace into his grave as a wedding gift so that he may find a bride in heaven.

Through such detailed attention to and exoticization of “traditional” customs, Bodrov approximates the problematic usage of slavery as an ontological category in nineteenth-century European discourses on freedom, wherein all human bondage was blurred when representing “imprisonment.” For Sania and Vania, music foregrounds the prisoner metaphor’s references—dating from Pushkin’s invention—to slavery. In a poignant scene, Louis Armstrong sings “Go Down Moses” on a radio that Vania (Zhilin) just fixed: “Go down, Moses./Way down in Egypt’s Land./Tell ol’ Pharoah,/Let my people go.” The lyrics’ references to Exodus—as well as the song’s connection to spirituals—positions captivity in a broader, more allegorical context than the current Chechen War: a trans-historical pursuit of liberty. Animated by the music, Sania and Vania enact their liberation through dance. They begin moving on their hands and knees in the hay, still chained together. This discursive and performative use of captivity shows how ontological metaphors can collapse the particularities of human experiences into representative typologies.

Finally released beyond the limits of the village and in the mountains, Vania is transformed from an individual’s captive to a collective’s. Surrounded by the range bordering Dina’s village, Vania is powerless—a captive of the mountains. Ram describes him as “the Russian national body”—“no longer [Abdul Murad’s] captive, but not yet
identified and rescued by ‘his’ army” (28). Seemingly anticipating a Russian bombardment of Dina’s village, he yells at the helicopters passing overhead: “Стойте! Не надо!” (“Stop! It’s not necessary!”). Vania’s echoing cries are dwarfed by the magnificence of the mountains—and their relation to the prisoner metaphor in Russian cultural discourses.

Once home, and no longer a prisoner of the Caucasus, Vania cannot imagine Abdul Murad or Dina: “Я не могу забыть людей, которых успел полюбить. И хочу увидеть их во сне… Но они почему-то не снятся” (I want to see them in my dreams. Those people I grew to love and will never meet again. But they just won’t come to me”). Vania’s inability to conjure his friends might be seen as his incapacity to imagine them without the prisoner metaphor; they no longer fit into the metaphor’s conceptual framework. He struggles to re-define captivity as a kind of mutual responsibility, humanizing the mountains as a real place rather than a literary space of invention.

4.6.1.2. Makanin’s “The Captured of the Caucasus”

The lingering Russian preoccupation with the mountains re-emerges in V. S. Makanin’s 1995 short story “Kavkazskii plennyi” (“The Captured of the Caucasus”):

“What’s so special here anyway? The mountains?…” he said aloud. (…) Grey mossy gorges. The poor and dirty huts of the mountaineers, hanging up there like birds’ nests. But still—the mountains?! Here and there their peaks yellowish from the sun. Mountains. Mountains. Mountains. For years now his heart had
quickened by their magnificence, their silent solemnity—but what was it, properly speaking, that this beauty wanted to tell him? Why was it beckoning him?

Using phrases from Pushkin’s verse, such as “птичьи гнезда” (“birds’ nests”), Makanin’s elder soldier, Rubakhin, extols the mountains’ natural beauty, while questioning the fetishistic value attributed to them since the nineteenth century. Whereas Pushkin’s Russian captive professes confidence in Ermolov’s objectives, neither Makanin’s Rubakhin nor Bodrov’s Vania understand their presence in the Caucasus—even as its beauty captivates them. Citing Dostoevskii’s *Idiot*, Makanin philosophizes that “[с]олдаты ... не знали про то, что красота спасет мир” (“the soldiers did not know that beauty saves the world.”) For Rubakhin and Vania, the mountains’ beauty facilitates the expression of individual desires without offering insight into the contemporary, post-Soviet agenda in Chechnya.

Whereas Pushkin, Tolstoi, and Bodrov express colonial desires in heterosexual terms—describing the transference of a maiden’s allegiance from ‘her people’ to the Russian captive—Makanin’s “The Captured” foregrounds the prisoner metaphor’s inherent homosocial connotations (see Grant 95). Rubakhin characterizes “his” male Chechen captive in the same romantic language Pushkin applied to the unnamed Circassian maiden. While only Makanin explicitly identifies the homosocial aspect of the prisoner metaphor, Pushkin, Tolstoi, and Bodrov also engender war as a masculine engagement. While the Circassian maiden and both Dinas make decisions, their agency is limited to negotiating among male captors and captives. Like Tolstoi’s and Bodrov’s soldiers’ mothers, the girls are merely intervening figures in a masculinized conflict wherein the prisoner is represented by an idealized Russian male body.
4.6.2. Mass Hostages in State Institutions

4.6.2.1. “Prisoners” in Hospitals

In contrast to this individuated male body, representations of female captives often portray groups of women. Reports on female captives in mass-hostage incidents insist on the women’s sameness: their adherence to normative gender roles. Among the female civilian hostages in the Budennovsk hospital siege, for example, some of the most iconic were the mothers who had just delivered their babies before being taken hostage. A widely circulated photograph shows these mothers rushing away from the “liberated” hospital, cradling their infants in their arms. The application of the prisoner metaphor to these female hostages offers insight into the application of the prisoner metaphor to female combatants.

Similarly, if kidnappings by Chechens must be considered in conjunction with Russian filtration camps—sites where arbitrarily detained Chechens are held captive—then seizure of hospitals by Chechen combatants must be considered in conjunction with Russian zachistki (mop-ups) targeting unarmed civilians. In one of the worst zachistka of the First Chechen War, Russian soldiers killed some 250 civilians in Samashki (Achkhoi-Martan District) from April 7-8, 1995. United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International each report that OMON (Otriad militsii osobogo naznacheniiia, or Special Purpose Police Unit) shot unarmed residents, torched houses, and threw grenades into basements where civilians were hiding. At least a few Russian soldiers understood the massacre in relation to the Caucasus War. In his memoir, Baiev recalls seeing a Russian armored personnel carrier with a human skull mounted on the front:
SAMASHKI painted on one side and GENERAL ERMOLOV on the other. The juxtaposition of these words with the murderous ‘souvenir’ constitutes, for Baiev, “a reminder of the cruelty that this nineteenth-century Russian general visited upon the Caucasus” (131). Intentionally or not, this ‘personalized’ vehicle invokes Pushkin’s metaphor, implicitly justifying—and even celebrating—violence through the Russian soldiers’ self-identifications as prisoners of the Caucasus.

Several months after these atrocities in Samashki, Chechen combatants seized the Budennovsk hospital (in Stavroprol Krai). In what became one of the most publicized captivity incidents in the First Chechen War, over 1,000 people were held hostage from June 14-19, 1995. Televised news footage showed Russian special forces killing both captives and captors: “Hostages were hiding under mattresses, scrambling into the central corridors to escape the incoming fire. [...] Then suddenly some of the hostages braved the bullets, flinging white sheets out of the smashed window and screamed at the Russian troops: ‘Don’t shoot, don’t shoot’” (Gall 269). As many hostages described Russians as the real captors in the Caucasus, the prisoner metaphor referred not to an individual male body, but to a civilian “mass.”

Budennovsk complicates the prisoner metaphor’s historical references, in part, because of the difficulty of defining the event’s captors and captives. Ram observes that Basaev, like Pushkin’s nineteenth-century Circassian captor, might be seen as “embod[ying] the Noble Savage: [...] an outlaw, but one sympathetically viewed by many of the hostages themselves, who seemed more dismayed by ‘their’ government’s response than by the action of the captors” (24). Through this dismay, Basaev and the
other Chechen combatants become captives of Putin’s violence—just like the Russian hostages. Television footage reinforces the hostages’ identifications with Chechen ‘victimhood,’ showing the mass-hostages “stumbling up the dusty road like war refugees” (Gall 273). Budennovsk added to the prisoner metaphor an iconic, visual vocabulary of hostages as captives.

Perhaps in part because of the amount of media attention afforded to the Budennovsk siege, mass captivity incidents thereafter became a staple of the Russo-Chechen conflict. For example, another unit of Chechen combatants held thousands of civilians hostage in a Kizliar hospital (in Dagestan) from January 9-18, 1996. In the interim between Budennovsk and Kizliar, on November 1, 1995, Russian forces occupied the Zakan Yurt Psychiatric Hospital in the town of Samashki, which already had been decimated in the April zachistka. Opening fire on the medical staff, the Russian troops prevented them from returning to care for their patients for several days. This incident, in part, inspired Konchalovskii’s House of Fools, a film about “prisoners” in a psychiatric hospital during the First Chechen War.

4.6.2.2. Romance in House of Fools

In the tradition of Tolstoi’s odna istoriia (a story/history), Andrei Konchalovskii’s 2002 Dom durakov (House of Fools) introduces itself:

Поводом для этого фильма послужила реальная история. Во время первой Чеченской войны в 1996 году пограничный район республики Ингушетии оказался под угрозой вторжения чеченских подразделений. Недалеко от границы находился психо-неврологический интернат. Обитатели интерната жили своей жизнью и не подозревали о надвигающихся событиях.
A real story inspired this film. In 1996, during the first Chechen war, the bordering region of Ingushetia was threatened with invasion by Chechen detachments. A psychiatric hospital was located near this border. The inmates lived their lives unaware of the coming events.

In fact, however, the film amalgamates several real-life sieges of psychiatric hospitals. The filmic hospital’s location along the train tracks approximates the geographic location of Samashki, but dialogue specifically references Shali. Commenting on the film’s connection to Shali, British journalist Mark Franchetti identifies the psychiatric hospital as a symbol of war’s “inhumanity.” He describes the patients’ captivity:

They had no light or heating and the most severe cases were left padlocked in cages, where many died. Patients were often too ill to understand the war which raged around the building. As shells fell on the horizon they would gather by the side of the road, dazed and bewildered. On one occasion the hospital was attacked and looted by soldiers and drug addicts, who took away the last of its medicines and syringes.

The trapped patients are captives of the Chechen combatants who took up positions in the abandoned hospital, as well as of Russian bombing. Furthermore, the disintegration of the hospital, as a representative of state power—from a Soviet institution housing 200 patients to an abandoned facility with 24 patients in February 1995 (Smith 178)—suggests that all former citizens of the USSR became prisoners of the State’s dissolution.

Unlike in the film, where all of the patients live and the doctor returns, only six patients survived the battle for Shali—and they remained abandoned. Referencing this historical example, House of Fools allegorizes Soviet state power through the psychiatric hospital. Even when the hospital is abandoned, the crumbling infrastructure and suffering patients remain. The ongoing Soviet legacy of controlling family life also persists in the state institution(s).

Many of the patients seem to be imprisoned not for “illness,” but for failing to
meet normative expectations of sexual orientation—like flamboyant and queer Goga—or political views—like anti-authoritarian Vika. The film’s central protagonist, Zhanna Timofeeva, also deviates from normative expectations by cultivating a fantasy-life as Canadian pop singer Bryan Adam’s fiancée. Zhanna’s fantasies are asexual, focused on the romance of sharing a common destiny. In contrast, her roommate, Lucia, has recurring dreams of “хуи с крыльями, как ангелы” (“cocks with wings like angels”). Together, these two roommates seem to represent the feminized dichotomy of virgin and whore. While the film does not mention the women’s sexual histories, it emphasizes their deviance from child-bearing and motherhood. Lucia pumps her clenched fist in moments where she struggles to express herself, whereas Zhanna begins playing a polka on her accordion, fantasizing accord and merriment.

Zhanna’s fantastical gaze focalizes the viewer’s understanding of what is happening beyond the hospital window, where the patients gather to watch the approaching trains. Not only do the trains barreling through the darkness foreshadow approaching combat, but also they recall the cattle cars of the aardakh. Summoned by Zhanna’s imagination shortly before the doctor abandons the hospital, Canadian pop singer Bryan Adams serenades women inside a passenger car.

When fighting erupts, Zhanna imagines Bryan Adams singing “Have you ever really loved a woman?” Focusing explicitly on a man’s heterosexual relationship with a woman, the song highlights women’s position as, in Massell’s words, “surrogate proletariats” of the Soviet state. Adams’ rhetorical queries about a lover’s commitment to a shared destiny allegorize the Soviet state’s romantic self-positioning as Caucasian women’s romantic savior. What Zhanna seems to desire is the promise of an agreed-upon
future—an assurance broken with the Soviet Union’s dissolution. Adams’ refrain, sung in the context of Zhanna’s imprisonment in the abandoned hospital, questions the veracity of Soviet commitment to its former citizens’ future: “Just tell me have you ever really/really, really, ever loved a woman?”

As the Chechen War recalibrates Zhanna’s ideas of romance, Soviet dissolution appears as the end of a collective fantasy, a kind of national “break-up” parallel to Zhanna’s with Adams. Zhanna’s consciously anti-fantastical decision to marry Akhmed, one of Chechen combatants who occupies the hospital, inverts the myth of “cultural harmony through romance” embedded in the prisoner metaphor since Pushkin. Zhanna becomes the Russian prisoner who chooses allegiance to a male Chechen captor/liberator, knowing that Russia has abandoned her to the Caucasus.

One of Zhanna’s first interactions with the Chechen soldiers revolves around a female Lithuanian sniper tending to a wound. The combatants sheepishly tell their commander that they couldn’t stop her from fighting. Fiercer than her comrades, she embodies what Nacos defines as the “tough-as-males” frame sometimes employed by the news media. Zhanna explicitly voices the question hidden behind this journalistic frame: is the female combatant a real woman? Akhmed, a Chechen soldier, replies that she is Lithuanian, invoking the myth of the belye kolgotki (White Stockings) to explain her toughness.34 She remains stoic until her death, rarely speaking and usually alone. In contrast to this archetypal, mythic female combatant, Akhmed is a reluctant fighter, becoming himself a patient like Zhanna at the film’s end.

---

34 The Kremlin sometimes referenced this myth in explanations for Chechen resistance during the First War (Healing 44).
Before circumstance forces Akhmed to articulate his “illness” to the doctor, he perceives Zhanna as unwell—and wholly unlike him. He mockingly proposes to her after she plays her accordion and dances for the Chechen unit occupying the hospital. Zhanna accepts and prepares for nuptials in earnest, not realizing that she is a tragic-comedic bride. She dresses with the assistance of the other patients, donning patent leather shoes, a white dress, and a white straw hat. Through the juxtaposition of this traditional ensemble with clown-like make-up, Zhanna unwittingly performs contradictory roles.

She is at once the icon of the glowing bride, bedecked in white symbols of virginity, and the image of a fool, whose drawn-on face makes a political farce of her earnest intentions. When Zhanna sits in her bridal attire next to Akhmed, his combat uniform seems like a costume, too.

As Zhanna’s wardrobe visually reveals performative similarities between her (in a white hat) and Akhmed (in a black hat), it emphasizes the falsehood of the captive/captor binary (see figure 7).

Similarly, Vika’s celebrates Zhanna’s betrothal as a political choice to fight against Russian imperial policy and to embrace the ‘other’: “Это дистинктный поступок. [...] Это акт международного значения!” (“It’s a distinct symbol. [...] It’s an act of international significance!”). Zhanna’s accepting the proposal comes as a surprise to the Chechen soldiers, whom she joins under an outdated poster celebrating sixty years of the USSR. In the context of this failed Soviet “romance,” only Zhanna thinks that
Akhmed has promised a relationship that—to quote her favorite Adams’ tune—is “gonna last forever.”

After Akhmed abandons Zhanna to go fight in Shali, she returns to her hospital room, holding a picture of him in her hand and stabbing it with a piece of broken mirror. In attempting to injure Akhmed’s likeness, she only hurts herself—further establishing her romance’s allegorical representation of Russo-Chechen relations, which often create a false binary between self and other. She looks down at her bloody hand and then over at the Chechen’s Lithuanian female sniper, lying in a pool of blood. Zhanna’s failed romance—in conjunction with the sniper’s death—propels her back into fantasies of Adams.

Drugs, rather than fantasy, enable a traumatized Russian soldier to continue fighting after seeking treatment from Zhanna’s doctor. This Russian officer paraphrases Tolstoi’s Kazaki (Cossacks) before, ironically, returning to combat: “Человек убил другого, и счастлив, доволен, как будто сделал самое прекрасно дело” (“A man kills another and is happy and satisfied with himself as if he had done something excellent”). Through this Russian officer’s “disease,” Konchalovskii allegorizes the ways in which state institutions—such as the depicted Sanatorii “Solntse” (Sun Sanatorium)—project violence onto gendered bodies and into individual lives. In this fantasy about the state’s responsibilities to its citizens, power appears falsely monolithic and unidirectional.

Konchalovskii makes no attempt at explaining the Chechen War, just as he provides no background about Zhanna or any of the other patients. The patients’ relationship to the Russian state, as represented by the hospital, seems no less of a fantasy
than Zhanna’s relationship to Adams. Since Zhanna now shares a common future with (self-committed) Akhmed in the hospital, Konchalovskii’s gendered transposition of the prisoner metaphor suggests that Russia’s and Chechnya’s freedoms are interdependent.

4.6.3. Remembering Nord-Ost through Metaphor

*Nord-Ost* is one of the most “documented” mass-hostage events to date. From October 23-6, 2002, various media recorded the ongoing siege from its beginning, including: cell phone conversations; emergency transcripts; an NTV interview with Movsar Baraev; and assorted video filmed by the FSB, hostages, and terrorists. Vesselin Nedkov’s memoir, *57 Hours*, combines personal recollections with information garnered from other survivors and from monographs on the Chechen Wars. Similarly, Eduard Topol’’s semi-fictional *Roman o liubvi i terrore, ili dvoe v “Nord-Ost (A Novel about Love and Terror, or A Couple in Nord-Ost)* interweaves Russian and international news media, first-person testimonies, and love-emails between Sandy Booker, an American who died during the siege, and Svetlana Gubareva, his Kazakh fiancée. Topol' frames this postmodern romance with a speculative email exchange between Svetlana and Vera, Movsar Baraev’s Russian mistress. Albeit more transparently, Nedkov also incorporates speculation into his text, imagining the female hostage-takers’ journeys to Moscow. Both texts use the prisoner metaphor to blur boundaries between fiction and event, depicting a “play” inside the musical, Aleksei Ivaschenko’s and Georgii Vasil'ev’s *Nord-Ost.*

4.6.3.1. Prisoners as Actors

*Nord-Ost* is a musical adaptation of V.A. Kaverin’s *Dva kapitana (Two
Captains), which won the 1946 Stalin Prize. Frequently billed as the first Western-style musical of “New Russia,” Nord-Ost tracks Grigorev’s childhood explorations in Tsarist Russia to his Arctic adventures before World War II.\textsuperscript{35} Nord-Ost adopted verse from Tennyson’s Ulysses as its promotional tagline: “To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.” This intertext, also cited by Kaverin’s Two Captains, resonates with the prisoner metaphor’s Romantic devotion to freedom even in captivity.

On October 23, 2002, when the seizure of Dubrovka theater transformed Nord-Ost’s audience from willing spectators to unwilling “actors” in a political show, Chechen terrorists and Russian officials alike declared no intention of yielding. Talking to the terrorists over the 57-hour siege, Nedkov recalls the hostages “becoming [their] own negotiators” (141). Meanwhile, official statements issued by the Kremlin and by Baraev positioned each group as captors rather than captives.

One female Chechen terrorist declared: “We have to live every day with this war … while you are here, laughing and having a good time” (44). Nord-Ost’s co-creator Vasil’ev speculates that “Nord-Ost—with its bomber, its dancing pilots, its Russian music and Russian plot—might have subconsciously irritated and wounded the Chechens” (“Moscow Musical”), especially since it avoids any reference to the 1944 aardakh. Vasil’ev maintains that the terrorists selected Nord-Ost to maximize the number of Russian (as opposed to foreign) captives. Whether the selection of Nord-Ost was purely tactical or intentionally symbolic, the terrorists’ presence highlighted connections among

\textsuperscript{35} Like the literary Caucasus of the nineteenth century, Kaverin’s literary “North” offers a site for Russian personal discovery. Colonialist in theme, the plot juxtaposes Grigorev’s Arctic expeditions—where he finds the remains of the explorer, Tatarinov—with his romantic desire for the old captain’s daughter.
the 1944 *aardakh* and the Chechen Wars. Interactions among the prisoner metaphor and symbols of violence suggested contiguity between the fictional soldiers and the real-life terrorists.  

For a moment, the armed and masked Chechen men who seized the theater appeared to be part of the innovative second act. Even the assistant director of *Nord-Ost* briefly questioned his knowledge of the play’s staging:

Я стоял за кулисами, а на сцене восемь артистов, одетых в военно-летную форму образца 1940-х годов — были чечетку и пели песню о летчиках. [...] Потом думаю: “А может, это новая задумка режиссера? Ну, типа перекликаются Отечественная война и современность — на сцене летчики, из зала идут спецназовцы…” (Topol' 16)

I stood backstage and on stage eight performers dressed in old-style military uniforms from the 1940s — tap-dancing and singing a song about pilots. […] Then I thought: “Maybe the director had a new idea to overlap the Patriotic War and the present? On the stage are pilots, and in the audience are special soldiers…”

A young boy articulates the audience’s uncertainty: “Вы настоящие?” “Are you real?” (Topol' 17). Though the 22 men and the 18 women who occupied the theatre were all very real—with individual particularities and a multitude of identifications—many of them remain unnamed. They chose to typecast themselves after Pushkin’s literary Circassians.

Interestingly, what made the terrorists real to Nedkov, a hostage, was “[t]he jarring and terrifying presence of [Chechen] women” (24). Vasil’ev describes the female

---

36 Numerous cultural artifacts have explored this concept of theatricality, including Natalia Pelewine’s musical *In Your Hands*. Like Topol’’s book, Pelewine’s musical dramatizes *Nord-Ost* through the loves of two women: a journalist-hostage named Natasha, and a “black widow” named Seda, whose brother was Natasha’s first love.
terrorists similarly as “цепь[я] людей в черном” (Торол’ 67; a chain of people in black). Each “black widow” becomes a link in the hostages’ “chains.” The women’s attire made them “more shocking,” according to Nedkov, because their faces were “hidden behind black shawls wrapped around their heads so that only their eyes showed” (24). The veiled women strapped with bombs seemed to him more imminently real than the men armed with pistols and rifles. Nedkov recalls that it was “these black-veiled women who made [him] feel … doomed” (131). Implicit in this perspective, is the idea that for women—and especially veiled women—to take part in political action, the situation must be dire. More explicit is the fear of the feminine other’s obscured face, “hidden” from the male hostage’s gaze.

This orientalizing gaze artificially stabilizes the female terrorist’s identity—omitting each woman’s biological singularity, symbolic intentions and capabilities, and multitude of identifications. Journalist Anne Nivat declares: “most shocking of all was the fact that some of the attackers were women. Devout Muslim women, always thought of as subservient and anonymous in their long, flowing chadors, were wearing explosive belts tied with detonator cord. It was a sight that had never been seen or even imagined” (“Widows” 122). Shocking women, rebellious Muslims, and unimaginable terrorists, these women in black deviate from expectations in all three identifying categories: gender, religion, and conflict.

For Aslambek Aslakhanov, then the Chechen Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the women’s involvement is also unprecedented. While expressing outrage at the situation in general, Aslakhanov focused
in particular on Movsar Baraev’s involvement of Russian women in the hostage-taking:

Что вы делаете? Вы что - приехали с женщинами, с детьми вов играть? Это против всех чеченских законов! Вы весь народ позорите! Немедленно отпустите детей женщин! (Topol’ 67)

Where are you doing? What are you that you came to fight with women and children? It’s contrary to all Chechen law! You are a disgrace to our nation! Immediately release all children and women!

While Baraev perceived the women-terrorists as shahidki, Aslakhanov and others positioned the female terrorists as hostages, too. In Aslakhanov’s understanding, the women’s “imprisonment” makes Baraev a hostage of Salafi ideology. Topol' suggests that everyone is a prisoner— captives, captors; Russians, Chechens— because terror is

blind, naive, reckless and inhuman. Terrorism is just death, without reason or justification. Love is stronger than death, and good triumphs over evil, in fairy tales, ‘chick lit’ and Hollywood movies. But real life belongs to a pitiless storyteller.

What makes Topol’’s novel a “чистая правда” (true story), then, is not that it relays testimony, but the fact that it “не утверждает победу любви над смертью” (Topol' 366; does not claim a victory of love over death). Topol's concern with this “truth” indirectly attributes authorship of Nord-Ost to Vera, Baraev’s Russian mistress. Vera, meaning “truth” in Russian, is the real author because her love for Baraev did not prevent the Dubrovka theater siege. In Topol’’s telling, she is as responsible for the hostage-taking as the “black widows.”
4.6.3.2. Widows in Transit

Nedkov’s memoir offers a speculative account of the “black widows” as they journey from Groznyi to Moscow. Consistent with many journalistic characterizations, Nedkov’s speculative history posits the black widows’ motivations. Without naming the female terrorists or identifying any individual qualities, Nedkov’s memoir instructs the reader to “[i]magine a journey,” contemplating the intentions of the “black widows” as they travel from Groznyi to Moscow in October 2002 (8). The journey that Nedkov traces reveals far more about stations along his own quest to understand his captors than about their trip to Moscow. That Nedkov’s speculative account mostly focuses on the women’s waiting for a bus in Groznyi highlights his focus on the women’s perceived motivations.

There is no parallel account of the male terrorist’s journeys because “it was not hard to imagine how men were drawn to a cause like theirs” (143). For Nedkov, “the Chechen women [are] more interesting than the men” because they challenge his expectations about gender norms. Nedkov concludes that the women are somehow deviant, since “[they] were not raised to be suicide bombers” (143). He implies that traditional gender roles in Chechnya oppressed the “black widows” who “were expected to be at home, to have lots of children, and to look after their husbands” (143). At the same time, Nedkov asserts that “anger about their plight as women” did not motivate the women to become terrorists (143). Instead, Nedkov locates the women’s motivations in grief and loss.

Grief and loss provide the backdrop to the “black widows” awaiting a bus to begin their journey to Moscow. Describing, beyond the bus stop, the informal market
economy in Groznyi’s Minutka Square, Nedkov writes of the female merchants’ loss: “Many of the women live alone, for the men have vanished, some simply made to disappear during the *zachistki*” (9). Surrounded by this desperation, “six or seven” women wait for the bus, “wear[ing] black headscarves in the Muslim style, long skirts, winter jackets, and muddy running shoes” (9). A man accompanies them, implying their dependence in accordance with the common media perspective that the eighteen “black widows” did not detonate their bombs because a man did not give the order (see, for example, Speckhard and Akhmedova 106). For Nedkov, all of the “black widows” are equally disenfranchised, regardless of their educations, experiences, or former careers.

Speculating that one woman could be a history professor, another an actor, and a third an athlete, Nedkov determines that what the women do is neither as certain nor significant as what he believes they *feel*: “each has lost a brother, or a father, or a husband, or a child” (10). This collective grief renders this fictional trio “simply three more Muslim women from Chechnya, come to trade in Moscow, come to visit family, come to escape the war” (12). In Nedkov’s imagination, war renders the women indistinguishable from each other, as Russian *zachistki* hold the women hostages of terror.

He invites his reader to imagine a potential widow’s routine: “In the morning, [she] begins a frantic search for her husband, … visit[ing] makeshift detention centers, grimy police stations, crowded prisons, holiday camps, and mosques” (107-8). Nedkov describes this search as a daily practice of women’s captivity in Chechnya. Loss, grief, and trauma captivate “thousands of mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters [who] are
searching for sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers” (108). Writing loss onto these women’s bodies through clothing, Nedkov describes the hijab as an outward manifestation of private grief. He suggests that “black widows” wear loss, underneath their “dark shawls,” in the form of “sweaters that had belonged to their dead husbands and sons” (131). Terrorists for the sake of love and family, the “black widows” are “ready to die because what, really, did they have left to live for?” (131). By projecting their grief along with his own fear, Nedkov perceives the women’s motivation as collective hopelessness.

After projecting the women’s motivations for involvement in the siege, Nedkov reconsiders his initial reaction to their “enigmatic appearance” and “aura of mystery” (145). For Nedkov, the women’s eyes demystify their purpose. In their “hard and vacant” eyes (101), he locates their collective intent—“com[ing] to Moscow to die” (12). Nedkov’s projecting this intention renders it all but accomplished in his perspective. Inferring from their gaze “they were already dead” (145), Nedkov perceives the female terrorist’s eyes as revealing their imprisonment.

4.6.3.3. Youzik’s “Masked Ball”

Russian journalist Julia Youzik’s Nevesty Allakha (Brides of Allah) also looks into the eyes of the “black widows” for their motivations in joining the “bal masqué mortel” (mortal masked ball)—that is, Nord-Ost (139). She aims to unveil not only their intentions, but also their faces. She explains her decision to collate her interviews and articles in a book: “Je veux que vous connaissiez le visage de chacune d’elles, que vous sachiez comment et pourquoi elles meurent” (24; I want you to know each of their faces
so that you will learn how and why they died). Youzik equates seeing the women “behind the veil” with knowing them.

Writing from this scopophilic stance, she expects her readers to ask the same question of the “black widows” as Zhanna did of the Lithuanian sniper: “Est-ce que ces femmes, elles?” (24; Are they really women?). Proving the women’s femininity constitutes a significant part of Youzik’s project—even as she blurs her own categories by using parallel descriptions in each section. Her portraits of femininity recall Pushkin’s prisoner seeking meaning in the maiden’s physical features: “Глаза исполнины тоской” (98; Her eyes were full of pain). Youzik similarly focuses on the women’s eyes, evoking through metaphor the nuts and teas of an exoticized pazar (Turkish market).

In this orientalizing portrait of the women’s eyes, Youzik foregrounds her own gaze. Raiman Kourbanova is “une belle Tchétchène aux grands yeux expressifs … en amande” (63; a beautiful Chechen with grand, expressive, almond-shaped eyes). An “unidentified black widow” has “superbes yeux noirs en amande” (superb, black, almond-shaped eyes). And, Marina Bisoultanova has “superbes yeux noisette” (superb hazelnut eyes), “des yeux merveilleux, couleur thé” (113; marvelous eyes the color of tea). From Marina’s eyes, Youzik determines that she is afraid of the “costume terrible qu’elle devra endosser” (124; terrible costume that she must wear). Furthermore, Youzik

37 Youzik divides her section on Nord-Ost into four categories: “celles qui savaient” (the ones who knew), including eight of the female hostage-takers; “celles qui ont été contraintes ou dupées” (the ones who were constrained or duped), including six of the female hostage-takers; “après l’assaut” (after the assault), including four of the female hostage-takers; and “le chef” (the chief), profiling Shamil Basaev.
infers that this costume determines the “rôle qu’elle devra jouer” (124; role that she must play). Youzik sees all of the “black widows” as having the same role.

The *inconnue* with black, almond-shaped eyes, however, has a primary role in NTV’s interview with Movsar Baraev. Youzik asserts that it is because of her “beauté orientale” (oriental beauty) that she features prominently at Baraev’s side (147). Describing her inclusion as purposeful, Youzik argues she was chosen because her eyes “attirait l’attention et captivait les regards” (147; attracted attention and captivated glances). Youzik imagines her world-wide television audience remarking on the eyes of this “black widow.” In fact, other sources—including Aset Chadayeva—claim to identify her by her eyes.

4.6.3.4. In Whose Eyes?

Kline and Franchetti write about one of Baraev’s “black widows”—Youzik’s *inconnue*—as viewed on television by Chechen-American Aset Chadayeva, who watched the *Nord-Ost* siege unfold from her New York apartment. The televised footage “lingered on one of the women in particular. She was tall, slender and, despite the hooded mask that covered half her face, clearly a striking figure—a beautiful woman with the piercing eyes and olive skin of a Byzantine icon. Transfixed, Chadayeva burst into tears. She recognized the face behind the mask. [...] It was her [friend’s] eyes.” Even as the article ostensibly adopts Chadayeva’s viewpoint, it focalizes the woman’s appearance through an objectifying and orientalizing male gaze that sees “a Byzantine icon” rather than Kaira, a childhood friend. This gaze transforms Kaira’s niqab into a “mask,” and her hijab into a “hood.”
The article conflates the hijab and niqab with the balaclava (both were worn by female terrorists during Nord-Ost), positioning them as emblems of violence. Kline and Franchetti do not accept that the hijab can function as an “outward sign of having taken on a new [political] identity” (Speckhard and Akhmedova 106-7). While mentioning Aset’s belief that Kaira’s burqa articulates her political intent, the journalists undermine her interpretation by suggesting that it “covers” Kaira’s “true” identity. In contrast, the mini-skirts Kaira once wore reveal her identity as a “vivacious, intelligent girl.” Before the Second Chechen War, she “stood out, tall like a model, the most elegant of the fashion-conscious group, fond of wearing expensive European-style clothes, especially the short skirts she adored and looked good in.” Clothing becomes the female terrorist’s prison, hiding who she is—from everyone except Aset and others who know “her eyes.”

The “severity of the uniform” signifies not only “Kaira’s transformation into an Islamic radical,” but also her mourning. Her “transformation” has less to do with her agency than with “the shadow of death squads, rape, torture and permanent fear.” Concluding that, for female suicide-bombers and combatants, “the decisive factor is always ... the loss of one or several loved ones,” the article narrates Kaira’s own story of love and loss: the death of her brother, the destruction of her family’s house, and the disappearance of her family. Kline and Franchetti’s article suggests that this suffering is visible in Kaira’s eyes, which belie her motivations “behind the mask.”

4.6.3.5. Icons of Terror

Dan Reed’s 2003 TV documentary, Terror in Moscow, also attempts to “unmask”
the “black widows.” Combining footage from both captors and captives to establish the viewer’s sympathy for the hostages, Reed uses an omniscient narrator to give a decontextualized but chronological account of the siege. First-person interviews with survivors, along with terrorists’ and hostages’ footage from inside the theater, news footage from outside Dubrovka, and audio recordings of hostages’ phone calls all converge in their gaze into the female Chechens’ eyes as a source of symbolism and a declaration of intent. Reed incorporates the same NTV interview footage in which Aset Chadayeva recognized her childhood friend, Kaira, by her eyes (see figure 8). Reed’s documentary uses its narrator to introduce Kaira as the NTV footage focuses on her; its male voice describes her as “a 24-year-old university student from a Westernized Chechen family.”

Presenting her as not dissimilar to the presumed Western audience, Reed positions Kaira as a hostage of the Chechen Wars in which she lost her husband, brother, and cousin. This perspective transforms her statement from a tactical, political declaration to a desperate, emotive plea: “Our women, children, and old folk are dying. No one pities us. Even if we all die here, this will not end. Many more will take our place” (Reed). Portrayed as victims not unlike the hostages, Reed’s documentary depicts all of the “black widows” as emotional prisoners.

Kristina Korpitian, a hostage, empathizes with the “black widows,” asking: “who is going to shed more tears, them or us?” (Reed). As Struckman notes, this emotionality
attributed to the “veiled women” was denied to the “masked men” in Nord-Ost. The women were not unlike the ‘captives’ according to Korpitian: “They were afraid to die, just like everyone else” (Reed). This fear forces the “black widows” to regress to acceptable gender norms, disciplining them through their supposed inability to detonate their bombs (Struckman 351). Reed’s documentary further canonizes now iconic images not only of Kaira, but also of “black widows” slouched over theater seats after being executed. In their deaths, especially, media attention rendered the “black widows” icons, themselves hostages of terror and embodiments of the prisoner metaphor.

British artist John Keane’s series, Fifty-seven Hours in the House of Culture, does material violence to these icons sourced from Terror in Moscow, suggesting that everyone—not just the “black widows”—is a prisoner of terror. The series further distorts with layers of paint and terse captions the already pixilated stills from terrorist, FSB, and documentary footage. Kvasok describes the apparition of the “black widows” in Keane’s work:

Разрывы, смещения, подтеки — и вот кто-то из персонажей оказывается “здесь,” а кто-то — уже “там,” а сквозь неровности холста и щели на досках проступает изломанная и истерта икона смерти. Точнее, ее мучительного, наркотического ожидания.

Characters appear here and there through gaps, displacement, and smudges. Then a worn-out icon of death—or, more precisely, the agonizing narcotic expectation of death—emerges through the uneven textures of canvas or board.

The gaze of the “black widows”—for they are all given the same one—is frozen somewhere in the distance: beyond the canvas, outside of the Dubrovka theater.

Unlocatable, this imaginary projection becomes a primary focus of Keane’s
paintings. Epitomizing this imaginary projection, Keane’s 2004 “Our women, children and old folk are dying” incorporates the eponymous translated quotation as a caption to its iconic portrait of Kaira. Sourced from the NTV footage transposed in Terror in Moscow, Kaira is made to look past the viewer into another time and place—according to Reed’s narrative, into her loss and grief in Chechnya (see figure 9). Her eyes become the focal point for the viewer’s inquiry as Kaira’s hijab and niqab—having lost the distinctive folds, tucks, and sheen of fabric—surround her in solid black. Overlaid pink paint mitigates this blackness and suggests the presence of the artist’s hand, scraping across the canvas with a dry brush. The resulting strokes divide the work into painterly pixels, irregularly shaped squares of varying opacity. This pink, smeared across the

Figure 9
caption, colors Kaira’s “dying” a bubblegum hue. In the right lower quadrant, near this word, a few droplets of red paint splatter over the rosy pixilation.

In Keane’s series—as in Reed’s film, where all of the “black widows” form a collective entity—Kaira’s stare becomes a “before” to the “after-images” of the women’s executions by Russian soldiers. Contorted by anesthetization and execution, their faces become shadowy death masks demanding and directing the viewer’s gaze: “Символ продолжает жить и действовать, проникая далеко за зону художественного или кураторского контроля” (Kvasok; “The symbol continues to live and act, penetrating far beyond the zone of the artist’s or curator’s control”). Objectified as “black widows,” Kaira and the other female hostage-takers of Nord-Ost persist as phantasmagoric adaptations of Pushkin’s prisoner metaphor.

From attributions of erotic desire to Pushkin’s Circassian maiden, to objectifications of Chechen “black widows,” the prisoner metaphor dislocates women’s experiences from the corporeal. Diverse Russian and international cultural discourses imagine these female “prisoners” as objects of various gazes, rendering them non-subjects through emotional unveilings. Multiple symbolic investments hold female civilians and combatants “captive” in discourses on and of the Chechen Wars.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1. “New Wars” and Metaphors

As three paradigmatic “new wars,” the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars all were marked by genocidal violence, international involvement, and (unequal) representation in global news media. In each armed conflict, local and global actors self-consciously engaged metaphors with cultural histories of political significance in the Balkans, Central Africa, and the Caucasus: respectively, the bridge, the cockroach, and the prisoner. These metaphors, whether directly or metaleptically, functioned in both regional and transnational contexts as sites of complex imaginary exchange and politically-charged semantic investment. As such, these metaphors shaped iterations, representations, and knowledge production of gendered violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Chechnya.

Although the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner are commonplace metaphors in many languages, international journalism and transnational cultural production appropriated these metaphors as metonymic and locally-specific points of access to “distant conflicts.” All three metaphors express what Paul Ricœur terms “ontological vehemence,” enacting world-making and world-determining processes. However, they are neither ideologically equivalent nor consistently gendered. When appropriated in
global representations of “new wars,” these metaphors posit three distinct objects, each mandating “compassionate intervention” in the name of human rights.

Producing a cultural geography of varied international involvement, the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors characterize the Balkans, Central Africa, and the Caucasus as “bad neighborhoods” in the post-Soviet global political economy. These metaphors differentiate among the aforementioned regions while also locating them in the strangely named “global south,” where “new wars” become sites for the articulation of international development, security policies, and regimes of humanitarian intervention. Although these “bad neighborhoods” are imagined contiguously, they are not treated identically. To the contrary, when global news media and transnational cultural discourses employ the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors to represent these wars, they often engage Balkanist, Africanist, and Orientalist imaginations.

In conjunction with this imaginary exchange, these metaphors also reproduce in human-rights-inflected discourses the ethnicizing focus of the very genocidal rhetoric being condemned. The bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors thusly enact complex power relations in a global context where human rights are jus cogens and a discourse “compassionate interventionism” frames international involvement in “new wars.” Featuring prominently in representations of these three conflicts, these metaphors often have been portrayed as signifying particular human rights violations—and, by extension, the universalized (and masculinized) experience which human rights norms seek to protect.
The gendering of the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors must be considered with awareness that only in the early 1990s were women’s rights proclaimed as human rights. After all, it was in response to gendered violence in the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the First Chechen War that international human rights law first attempted to address women’s experiences in “new wars.” The moment of historical overlap shared by the three wars—April 1994—is significant, therefore, because of its impact on legal discourses of “women’s rights as human rights.”

Although all three conflicts shaped the post-cold-war concept of “violence against women,” the Bosnian War and the Rwandan Genocide in particular catalyzed the inclusion of women’s rights within the rubric of human rights. The ICTY and the ICTR first defined rape as a “crime against humanity” and classified forced impregnation as an act of genocide. These legal transformations, while important moves towards including women’s rights in international law, ultimately subordinate gender to “ethnicity.” Even as transnational cultural discourses foreground the prevalence of rape and forced impregnation in “new wars,” they use the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors to construct the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen Wars as “ethnic” conflicts.

5.2. The Bridge

In the Balkanist imagination, Bosnia-Herzegovina has long been a bridge. Since the sixteenth-century construction of Mostar’s Old Bridge and Višegrad’s Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge, bridges have actually come to signify Bosnia-Herzegovina. As metaphors for connection (and division), these bridges have linked East and West, heaven
and earth, as well as Yugoslav “brothers.” The bridge metaphor’s tensional truth—which, according to Ricœur, arises from the intersection of multiple speculative discourses—is no less than a philosophy of a (gendered) Other.

After Mostar’s Stari most (Old Bridge) was destroyed on November 9, 1993, the bridge metaphor codified diverse identifications of selves and others. Integrating Andrić’s metaphors of Višegrad’s čuprija, local usage of the metaphor reflects the bridge’s capacity to invent the “other” and to recall Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina. Accordingly, the bridge metaphor was put to work in conjuring the universalized (and masculinized) Human protected by international human rights—and theorized as Man in Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s work. The bridge, as what Jacques Derrida calls a “philosopheme,” is inseparable from gendered human experience and philosophical language.

5.3. The Cockroach

Ubuhake metaphors, to which the cockroach metaphor metaleptically refers, have been increasingly significant in cultural discourses on and of Rwanda since King Rwabugiri’s court (c. 1860-96). Employed by Belgian colonialists and power-seeking Rwandans, the institution of ubuhake and its metaphors have been used to delineate connotative categories of “Hutu” and “Tutsi;” to (re-)write the historiography of social inequity in Rwanda; and to assign women economic value as objects of real or imaginary exchange among men. Yet, after the Rwandan Genocide, the ICTR, literature, and film seized upon the cockroach metaphor as a key to understanding the April 1994 violence.
Since dehumanizing metaphors are by no means unique to the Rwandan Genocide, it is significant that “inyenzi” was appropriated by the global news media and transnational cultural discourses as a point of access. Whereas the bridge metaphor foregrounds a betrayed possibility of connection, the cockroach metaphor emphasizes hatred—and only hatred. Both metaphors, however, emphasize “ethnicity” over gender. The cockroach metaphor, when coupled with an Africanist understanding of the Rwandan Genocide as “ethnic” rather than political, characterizes Hutu/Tutsi animosity as “primordial” and/or “tribal.” Transmutations and omissions of inyenzi’s metaleptic reference to ubuhake often exclude questions of class and gender from representations of the Rwandan Genocide.

5.4. The Prisoner

In Russia and Chechnya, the prisoner metaphor recalls the early Caucasus Wars and Pushkin’s “Prisoner of the Caucasus.” When Pushkin published this seminal poem, the real and literary political prisoners of the Caucasus were men—while women, like Pushkin’s maiden, were imagined as cultural prisoners of oppressive Caucasian or Islamic customs. This gendered difference inflected the prisoner metaphor in Soviet cultural discourses; it also informs contemporary representations of Russian state violence against civilians, and characterizations of Chechen women who elect to become combatants. Like many “new wars,” the Chechen War targeted civilians, who were rendered virtual if not actual prisoners of the Russian forces.

Unlike the bridge and cockroach, the prisoner metaphor explicitly refers to the experience of a gendered and embodied subject—whether real or imagined. During the
Second Chechen War, suicide-bombings, mass hostage incidents, and post-9/11 rhetoric about terrorism feminized the prisoner metaphor. “Black Widows,” that its women hostage-takers and suicide bombers, routinely were described as “prisoners” of Chechen patriarchy.

5.5. Imaginary Intervention

As dynamic sites of interaction, the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors shape both local and global discourses of otherness. Transnational appropriations of these metaphors further essentialize not only categories of Bosniak/Croat/Serb, Hutu/Tutsi, and Chechen/Russian, but also those of the global “North” and “South,” of “good” and “bad neighborhoods.” These metaphors thereby work to distance the international community from the global diffusions of genocidal violence, displacements of refugees, and networks of illegal trade. The appropriation of “local” metaphors by global actors structures the imagination that maintains the political and economic order of international human rights. It is this diffusion of the bridge, cockroach, and prisoner metaphors that also genders knowledge production of “new wars.” Much is clearly at stake in recognizing the power of metaphor.
**Cases, Conventions, and Declarations Cited**


Works Cited


Antunović, Ljupko. “Volio bih da stari most ne izgubi dušu (fragment).” Cigić and Mišković 132.


Baiev, Khassan, Ruth Daniloff, and Nicholas Daniloff. Grief of My Heart: Memoirs of a


Berry, John A. and Carol Pott Berry, ed. Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory.


Bogdanović, Bogdan. “Može li grad bez svog mosta, može li most bez svog grada (fragment).” *Čigić and Mišković* 84.


———. *Une colline entre mille ou le calme avant la tempête: transformations et blocages du Rwanda rural*. Tervuren: Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, 1996.


Franchetti, Mark. “Bryan Adams Rocks Way into Kremlin with Film Role.” Sunday


Hasanbegović, Rabija. “Jedinstveni Stari most (fragment).” Cigić and Mišković 44.

Hasty, Olga P. “The Pushkin of *Opportunity* in the Harlem Renaissance.”

*Nepomnyashchyi, Svobodny, and Trigos 226-47.*


———. *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia.* Budapest:


Jusufbegović, Vedran. “Intervju (fragment).” Cigić and Mišković104.


Karahasan, Dževad. Sarajevo: Exodus of a City. Trans. Slobodan Drakulić. New York:


*Kavkazskii plennik.* Dir. Sergei Bodrov, Sr. MGM, 1996.


Lovrenović, Ivan. “Svijet bez mosta (fragment).” Cigić and Mišković 82.


Miller, Christopher L. *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*. Chicago: U


<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3919047.stm>.


Paljetak, Luko. “Poniženje ljepote.” Cigić and Mišković 84.


Prelović, Rade. “Stari most (fragment).” Cigić and Mišković 60.


Radovanović, Ljiljana. “Visiting places where crime was committed in my name.”


*Terror in Moscow*. Dir. Dan Reed. HBO, 2003.


Ujević, Tin. “Mostovi su najopasniji.” Cigić and Mišković 90.


Zubac, Pero “Povrtak Mostaru (21).” Cigić and Mišković 187.