



PROJECT MUSE®

Domesticating NATO's War in Kosovo/a: (In)Visible Bodies and
the Dilemma of Photojournalism

Wendy Kozol

Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism, Volume 4, Number 2,
2004, pp. 1-38 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mer.2004.0027>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/168463>

WENDY KOZOL

Domesticating NATO's War in Kosovo/a

(In)Visible Bodies and the Dilemma of Photojournalism

In April 1999, American news media extensively reported on the NATO bombings in Serbia and Kosovo/a,¹ a 78-day military effort led by the United States to force the regime of Slobodan Milosevic to end the persecution of the Albanians in the formerly autonomous region of Kosovo/a. Throughout the 1990s, news media reported on genocide and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, including stories of rape, torture, concentration camps, and mass killings by Serbian forces primarily against Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims, but also against Croats, Slovenians, and others. In Kosovo/a, a campaign by Serbian and Yugoslav military, paramilitary, and government forces against ethnic Albanians (who made up 90 percent of the population in the province) began in 1998 and intensified through 1999. Human Rights Watch (2001) estimates as many as 850,000 were expelled during this period while several hundred thousand more were internally displaced. After the war, estimates ranged from two thousand to four thousand deaths. While reported rapes were low compared to Bosnia, most observers presume the actual number to be much higher. Statistics, even today, are hard to establish, in part because of exaggerated claims by NATO and NATO governments during the war, and in part because of Serbian and Yugoslav efforts to hide these crimes (Human Rights Watch 2001).

[Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism 2004, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 1–38]
©2004 by Smith College. All rights reserved.

Since most acts of torture and repression remained hidden from Western news cameras, photojournalists visualized the mounting crisis through pictures of fleeing refugees and crowded refugee camps. Prominent in this portrait of victimization were pictures of women with small children. For instance, the April 12 cover of *Time* shows a young woman in the foreground, close to the picture plane, walking toward the camera while staring blankly ahead of her (fig. 1). She wears a white headscarf that draws attention to her face. Her heavy coat emphasizes the cold weather made visible by the snow on the ground. The woman's light skin and contemporary clothing encourage a reading of her within a Western racial logic of whiteness. She looks tired and worried as she holds a baby nursing at her partially visible breast. Slightly out of focus, a line of refugees behind her contextualize her situation, but little is seen of the landscape and nothing else distracts the viewer's gaze from the woman. The photograph thus narrows the perspective on war to a racialized gender ideal of maternal suffering familiar to U.S. audiences. The headline on *Time*'s April 12 cover, "Are Ground Troops the Answer?" assumes that the question is how, not whether, to rescue this "white" woman, the nursing baby, and, by extension, the other innocent victims of this war.

It is perhaps axiomatic to state that in the twentieth century visual reportage has played a crucial role in mediating audiences' knowledge about military conflicts. Critics of the 1991 Gulf War, for instance, argue that American news organizations readily accepted military censorship and willingly promoted the war.² Photographs of U.S. military technology dominated the visual coverage, with few depictions of either Iraqi or American casualties, making this look like a "clean" war (Hallin 1994, 56). Likewise, news coverage of the NATO air strikes depended heavily on photo-reportage. Unlike the Gulf War, however, these pictures featured human casualties of war, including Kosovar refugee women holding small children and babies. Notably, media representations of Albanian Muslims, elsewhere categorized as non-Western people of color, are here (mis)represented as white victims to be rescued. This manipulation of racial categories in the American media, in turn, supported the U.S. government's militaristic foreign policies designed to aggressively maintain economic and political global dominance. When critically examining news coverage of war, we need to confront the often compelling arguments made about the political imperative of visibility. Photojournalists have long claimed that their photographs publicize conflicts that

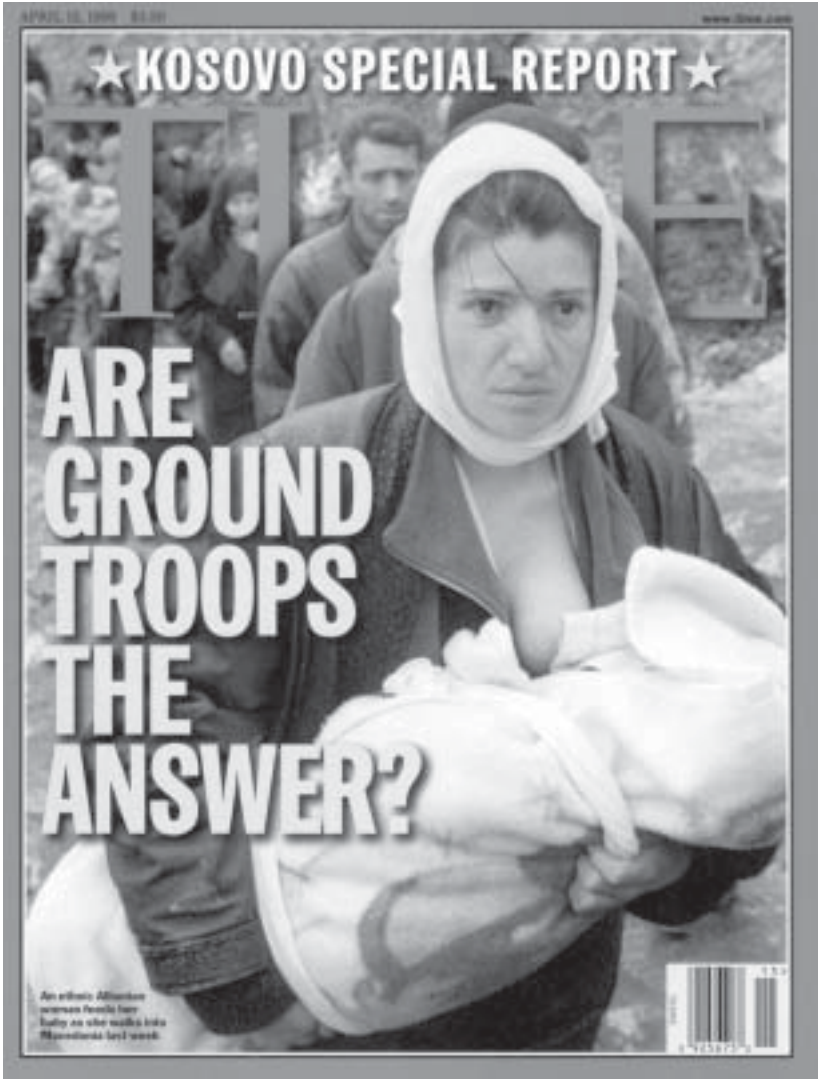


Fig. 1. Photograph by Damir Sagolj/Getty Images

would otherwise remain invisible to Western audiences.³ Moral justifications derive from almost a century of using the camera as a tool through which to bear witness to violence and war. To visualize violence such as that experienced by Albanian Kosovars, news photographs seem to say, is to speak out against it.

In American culture, photojournalism maintains the cultural authority to depict war and its consequences through claims of authenticity, transparency, and veracity. Belief in objectivity in news reporting, and faith in the mechanical qualities of the camera have long supported assertions about photojournalism's ability to witness. In the 1930s, the popularity of documentary photography, news reels, and the new picture magazines like *Life* and *Look* demonstrated to news organizations the value of using photography for social agendas (Kozol 1994; Zelizer 1999). Photojournalism gained authoritative power with coverage of the Spanish Civil War when European and American newspapers and magazines publicized this conflict through photographs of fleeing refugees, including mothers and children (Brothers 1997). At the end of World War II, photographers responded to General Eisenhower's command to the press to "let the world see" the horrors of the Holocaust. Zelizer argues that this mandate to bear witness "imposed a moral obligation on those recording the camps' liberation that went beyond the professional mores surrounding either journalism or photography" (1999, 102). Generalized photographs of extermination camp survivors took precedence over factual specificity about particular places or people. This level of generality privileged a universalized representation of victimization over the historical and political contexts that helped constitute these conditions.

News coverage of the conflicts in the Balkans, especially reports on ethnic cleansing, continues this tradition of bearing witness to war by turning the camera's gaze to its victims. Liss, however, warns about the potential hollowness of documentary and photojournalistic claims to witness genocidal acts like the Holocaust, pointing out that "the demand to never forget is not directed at survivors, who can never forget, but at those who never experienced the events" (1998, viii).⁴ My objective here is not to evaluate the accuracy of a given news photograph but rather to interrogate the selective nature of the photographs that are published, circulated, and ultimately shape historical memory. For American audiences unfamiliar with the Balkans, the seeming transparency of photographic technologies legitimizes claims of the "real" in ways that ignore

how racial and gender categories are encoded within these visual perspectives. Distance increases most Americans' dependence on news media for information about military conflicts. It matters how American news media represented the NATO bombings, because as Sturken argues, "the way a nation remembers a war and constructs its history is directly related to how that nation further propagates war" (1997, 122).

In this study, I examine news coverage of the first two weeks of the NATO air strikes by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, the three highest circulating American newsmagazines.⁵ This analysis reveals the crucial paradox faced by photojournalists in capturing the traumatic impact of violence in the Balkans. The value in documenting ethnic violence is compellingly made through pictures of Albanian Kosovars fleeing in mountainous landscapes or in refugee camps. Yet, such documentation is compromised by a representational framework that simplifies or deflects attention from the historical causes of this war, including the integral role of American and European economic and political interests in the persistent instabilities in this region (Chomsky 1999; Zizek 2000). More than elision, though, is at stake in representing war and trauma. Photographs of Kosovar refugees fall easily into generic conventions that for much of the twentieth century have mobilized support for one side in a conflict by using images of mothers and children as metonyms for the innocent victims (Taylor 1991; Kozol 1994; Brothers 1997). This representation of innocence relies on heteronormative ideals expressed through the mother-child dyad. Central to this domestic ideal is the logic of whiteness that erases the religious, ethnic, and racial identifications of these subjects. Photojournalism, then, is a crucial site that advances U.S. foreign policies by mapping the world through binary divisions. Analyzing news coverage of the war in Kosovo/a through the analytical lenses of race, gender, and sexuality will help us to rethink how American audiences come to understand ethnic/political conflict outside of the United States. I will argue that news reports mobilized racialized and sexual ideals of domesticity and nation in these photographs to visualize a narrative of victims, aggressors, and rescuers. This narrative, in turn, perpetuated a Western gaze at a region historically imagined as a site of pre-modern and inexplicable ethnic conflict (Zizek 2000, 3–5). The issue, then, is not about the truthfulness or degree of manipulation of an individual image but about how representation draws on ideals of gender, sexuality, race, and nation to justify military intervention.

Beyond criticism of photojournalistic conventions, though, we need to explore alternative representational strategies, especially given the political urgency of publicizing atrocities. How can photographers negotiate the problematics of photojournalism without losing the social and political efficacy of visual documentation? How, in other words, can they visualize trauma without replicating a predominately Western gaze that bears witness through a narrative of the subordinate gendered victim? How, too, can photographers represent ethnic/political conflict without either exoticizing or eliding the racial and ethnic identities of those involved in these conflicts?

Contemporary photographers concerned with news coverage of war have critiqued the media for creating ever-greater desires for spectacles of violence and suffering.⁶ One photographer, Melanie Friend, renegotiates the lens of domesticity by refusing the embodied spectacle of conventional photojournalism in her photo-testimonial project, *Homes and Gardens/ Documenting the Invisible: Photographs from Kosovo*. In this project, she presents oral testimonies about violent acts committed against Albanians by Serbian forces in the 1990s. Men and women tell of early morning raids on houses, brutal attacks of family members, and men taken away and often killed. The gendered nature of Serbian brutality is apparent in these accounts of torture located in domestic spaces that terrorized family members as well as their communities. Juxtaposed to the oral register of torture are photographs of tranquil domestic scenes largely absent of people. The photographs certainly could be read as romanticizing the domestic by associating the private sphere with prewar tranquility. While the audiotape reinforces an association between women and children and the home, at the same time the testimonials disrupt conventional ideals about the private sphere as a place of security. Thus, we must consider whether the contrast between visual images of clean, orderly, domestic spaces and the verbal register of testimonies of torture sharpens or undermines the temporal division before and after the violence. This contrast raises critical questions for viewers of photojournalism about how we access the trauma of warfare through ideological lenses, political paradigms, and the conventions of genre.

Analyzing *Homes and Gardens* together with photojournalism provides an opportunity to explore the challenges of visualizing the trauma of ethnic cleansing within a context in which information is urgently needed to

mobilize political action but in which the dilemma of representation consistently reinscribes a Western gaze at the victimized ethnic body. Moving between the visual presence and absence of victimized bodies enables us to think about the role of visibility in contemporary national and international discourses about war, violence, and trauma. *Homes and Gardens* denies the spectacle of injury and victimization prevalent in photojournalism, but what are the consequences of not representing traumatized bodies?

Media Coverage of NATO Bombings

Throughout the 1990s, the American news media represented the Balkans as a violent region rocked by ethnic cleansing following the collapse of communist regimes at the end of the Cold War. Reports on concentration camps, torture, mass murder, and expulsion of thousands from their homes reinforced a narrative about the failure of democracies rather than the failure of market economies to emerge. Moreover, by mid-decade, reporters began to discuss the extraordinarily high levels of sexual violence by Serbian and Yugoslav forces in this region, especially in Bosnia. Feminist analyses foreground the associations between Serbian nationalism, rape warfare, and ethnic cleansing in order to understand rape as a military and political tool (Milic 1993; B. Allen 1996; Rejali 1998). Lynda Boose, for instance, argues that the sexual sadism of Serbian brutality was crucial to this “orgy of nationalism” (2002, 74). Statistics vary widely but conservative estimates of women raped in Bosnia range from twenty thousand to fifty thousand. (Boose 2002) U.S. media attention turned to Kosovo/a in the late 1990s as violence escalated against Albanian Muslim populations. The moment of most intense interest in the region came during the NATO bombings when the United States was directly involved in the conflict through its military presence. NATO operations never achieved the popular support of the Gulf War, coming as they did shortly after the impeachment hearings of President Clinton. Instead, the bombings provoked intense debates about appropriate methods of humanitarian intervention as well as exposed the problematic nature of NATO’s very existence after 1991.

Television, newspapers, and the major newsmagazines all provided extensive coverage of the war. Even with the pervasiveness of television,

Time, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News* continue to influence a wide variety of Americans because “nearly every high school, public and academic library” purchases them (*Ulrich’s Periodical Directory* 2003). Major media conglomerates that own *Time* (Time-Warner) and *Newsweek* (Washington Post, Inc.)—*U.S. News* is independently published—are part of the powerful network of American and European news media that control “what much of the world reads, watches, and hears in its foreign news . . .” (Shulman 1994, 108). Crucially, these newsmagazines frame global economic, political, and social conflicts through racial and gender categories that in turn justify the U.S. government’s encroaching and imperialist notions of globalization.

The first two weeks of the bombings in April 1999 were a crucial period during which the news magazines established narrative conventions for reporting the bombings. The first week’s coverage featured lengthy discussions of U.S. military and political strategies, as well as articles on Milosevic as the locus of nationalist violence and reports on ethnic cleansing. Photographs show U.S. military and political leaders, Milosevic, maps of the region that depict US/NATO strategies for attack, and some pictures of refugees. Coverage in the second week focused more extensively on the refugees with numerous photographs of people walking along roads or railroad tracks and in the camps, photographs of military and political leaders, as well as more maps and pictures of U.S. soldiers. Articles continued to focus primarily on U.S. and NATO policies and military strategies, although reporters included more discussion of Albanian Kosovars’ experiences of Serbian brutality.

Visual culture scholars are increasingly exploring the power of the visual to shape and mediate knowledge beyond simplistic models of propaganda or image manipulation (Liss 1998, xviii). Frequently reproduced and revered photographs of war, like Robert Capa’s “Death of a Loyalist Soldier” (1936) or Nick Ut’s “Terror of War” (the 1973 photograph of a young Vietnamese girl running naked from a Napalm attack) are not those with the most detail but those with the greatest symbolic value (Griffin 1999). As Liss writes, “At stake are the ways in which photographs are set in motion, how they are employed to stand in for wrenching, almost unrepresentable events” (1998, xii). This study provides detailed visual analyses of news photographs in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* to examine which photographs “stand in” or represent the NATO

bombing campaign. Because of publishing deadlines, weekly news-magazines function like a “news digest” that recapitulates television and newspaper reports on events of the previous week, using photographs as visual “highlights” (Griffin and Lee 1995, 814). These visual highlights are less important as factual reportage than they are for their symbolic function. I will analyze the similarities in topics of coverage, narrative strategies, and visual conventions, including some repetition of specific photographs.⁷ This article, however, does not address the interpretive audiences of these news reports, whose readings, of course, will always be plural.⁸

All three magazines promoted a narrative of American rescue of victims in a dangerous and unstable region.⁹ An April 12 photograph from *US News*, for instance, shows a white American soldier in full combat gear in the extreme foreground. He frames the picture so that the viewer looks with him into the background at several cars on a desolate road. The viewer thus “sees” what the soldier is there to protect (presumably these are civilian refugees although the people in the cars remain unidentified). Above the photograph, the headline “Can the Cavalry Ride to the Rescue?” aligns a racial ideal of hegemonic masculinity with U.S. military efforts in this visual rescue narrative. Although the question mark suggests ambiguity in the situation, the exclusive focus in the article on the relative merits of different military strategies raises questions about policy rather than social or ethical concerns. This tag line, moreover, invokes American narratives of the frontier, referencing the imperialist imaginary of the U.S. cavalry protecting white settlers from dangerous Indians. Here, the picture and the tag line connect whiteness and masculinity to the rescue narrative through a mythic temporality in which social actors enact historically defined roles (Fabian 1983).

The three newsmagazines reported on U.S. military and political leaders, military technology and strategies, and the political debates over the utility of air strikes. Other NATO political leaders were rarely discussed, with only occasional references to the military capabilities of the allied countries.¹⁰ Reporters paid little attention to the reasons for the conflict, except to blame the violence on the nationalist ambitions of Milosevic, whom one U.S. official referred to as the “tinhorn dictator of Serbia” (*Time* April 5, 40). Like discussions of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War (Shohat 1994), the U.S. news media focused almost exclusively

on the national leader, turning this conflict into a personalized fight against the excessive evils of nationalism. News reports described him as a dictator, a thug, a communist party hack, and a man of no political convictions except to stay in power. Feminist scholars have challenged representations of the Balkan conflicts that focus solely on individual leaders through documentation of the collective and localized dimensions of ethnic/political violence. Mertus (1999a) and Boose (2002), for instance, offer analyses of how the gender and sexual rhetorics of Serbian nationalism played into and exacerbated local ethnic tensions and conflicts.

Instead of more complex historical analyses, news narratives typically provide American viewers with an easily identified enemy, a narrative of us/ them frequently structured on racial logics. This news strategy is apparent once again in George W. Bush's "war on terrorism," which initially focused almost exclusively on Osama bin Laden as the leader of Al Qaeda. When the U.S. military failed to capture him, the Bush administration then turned to Saddam Hussein. Milosevic's European and white identities precluded the racial logic that characterize representations of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Rather, the media demonized the Serbian leader through references to World War II, associating ethnic cleansing with the Holocaust and Milosevic with Hitler.¹¹ Drawing these parallels provides the symbolic connection to a historical genocide that in turn locates the Serbian leader, and by extension Serbia itself, as outside of civilized nationhood. Individualizing this violence, furthermore, dehistoricizes the complexities of the situation (including European and U.S. historical involvement in this conflict). As Fabian (1983) argues, this symbolic association positions the other, in this case Milosevic, in a past distinct from the temporal space of the viewer. In the second week, for instance, all three magazines published the same photograph of a long train filled to overflowing with refugees, many of whom are hanging out of the windows. Extending across the entire frame of the composition from the left foreground into the right background, the train effectively blocks any view of the city behind. This keeps the gaze in the foreground where hundreds of people stand on the train platform.

Pictures like this one accentuate the cultural and geographical distance from the United States to Kosovo/a. As other analysts of American news practices have noted, the media typically represent distant places, especially outside of the West, as a "world of trouble" where disasters, wars,

and the breakdown of the social order occur (Morley 2000, 183). The train photograph explicitly historicizes the scene through the visual allusion to the trains used by the Nazis to bring the Jews to the death camps. Such references (and there are many in these reports) render the scene familiar, and presumably sympathetic, to Americans who have at least a popular understanding of the Holocaust. Written texts further link ethnic cleansing to a historical narrative of fascism and ethnic hatred through references to Neville Chamberlain and Czechoslovakia. Using the historical specter of appeasement as a plea for intervention, reporters quoted political leaders who spoke of the possibility of violence spreading to the rest of Europe. Western commentators supportive of the NATO air strikes often warned of the dangers of appeasement as part of a larger appeal on behalf of human rights. The problem, however, is that “this purely humanitarian-ethical legitimization . . . depoliticizes the military intervention” (Zizek 2000, 57).¹² Specifically, the narrative of “humanitarian” military intervention depoliticizes the racial selectivity that determines such intervention. A racialized narrative is evident in the photographs in which Albanian Muslims look white, like the presumed reader, if a little backward. Critical commentators at the time identified NATO’s racial selectivity in contrast to the lack of international military campaigns to stop the genocide in Rwanda, or other sites of ethnic/political conflict such as Sierra Leone and Palestine (Chomsky 1999; Haynes 1999).

Throughout the 1990s, American news media extensively reported on genocidal acts of ethnic cleansing and other forms of oppression by Serbian nationalists against ethnic populations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Beginning in 1998, Serbian and Yugoslav forces began an increasingly escalated campaign against Albanians in Kosovo. According to some critics, however, mass expulsions and killings associated with ethnic cleansing did not occur until after the bombings started on March 24. In the words of NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark, it was “entirely predictable” that Serbian violence would escalate once the bombings started (Chomsky 1999, 37). Critics have charged that NATO and the United States did not wait to exhaust diplomatic and economic options, but instead retrospectively used evidence of ethnic cleansing to justify the bombings (Chomsky 1999; Haynes 1999). While humanitarian issues were of concern to many, NATO prestige was also on the line. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has had

to reconfigure its legitimacy as an international institution. Interventions in the Balkans were part of a larger effort by NATO to extend its reach to a wider geopolitical arena than the original purpose of the European Alliance. As British Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain explained, “To walk away now would destroy NATO’s credibility” (Chomsky 1999, 40).

Arguments about humanitarian intervention also ignore the substantial material interests at stake for NATO and the United States. These interests include investments by arms manufactures and Western businesses, oil companies’ efforts to secure pipelines across the Balkans, and the role of the IMF-World Bank in the region. In the late 1980s and 1990s, for instance, IMF-World Bank policies that demanded austerity programs to secure debt repayment increased the economic instabilities of the region. Moreover, as the former Yugoslavia broke up, recognition or non-recognition of states by Western countries had a significant and unequal impact on their political economies. Pressure on the Clinton administration also came from expatriate groups in the United States as well as businesses advocating international policies that increased their access to global markets (Haynes 1999).

Penezic argues that Western news depictions of nationalist conflict in post-communist states reproduce a Cold War paradigm that blames ethnic violence and the rise of economic disasters on the former communist regimes and on nationalist overreactions. “Whether or not this was true for the Eastern Bloc, Yugoslavia’s situation was not quite that simple. The country has been decentered and federal, with multilingual education, publishing, press, television, and so forth. While this regulated and strictly controlled ethnic tolerance might not have been enough to assuage nationalist hungers, reducing the causes of war to nationalism only is, in my opinion, overly simplistic” (Penezic 1995, 63). None of the news coverage of the NATO bombings discussed the unstable economic and political conditions in the post-communist period, especially the region’s relationship to the West and to global economic forces. Instead, all three magazines displayed a U.S.-centered analysis that reproduced a familiar narrative of Western rescue of victims in a dangerously unstable region. As Koshy points out, the American media “still remains primarily oriented to a national context and is thus unable to generate a transnational framework of understanding adequate to the complex problems of globalization” (1999, 20).

Rescue narratives emphasized the vulnerability of Kosovars and the

humanitarianism of military intervention. Crucially, the newsmagazines characterized the Balkans as an agricultural area that still relies on primitive farming techniques and a place of historic ethnic rivalries. Pictures show people fleeing in primitive modes of transportation, walking in single file on railroad tracks to avoid land mines or walking in desolate landscapes. In *Newsweek*, for instance, an April 12 photograph shows a man in the foreground pushing a wheelbarrow in which sits an elderly woman wrapped in a headscarf, winter coat, and blanket. Behind them another man also pushes an elderly person in a wheelbarrow and two others walk along the road. This primitive mode of transportation underscores the refugees' vulnerable status while the desolate landscape offers no clues to specific geographical, temporal, or cultural locations. Old helpless women, cared for by men, all of whom appear white, with limited resources (wheelbarrows) create a sympathetic portrait. It also renders men solely within a subordinate masculinity that depends on the protection of outside forces while women are visualized as vulnerable and needy because of their age, race, and gender. The exclusive gaze at peasants in a pre-modern setting, of course, also erases the range of material resources and cultural experiences of the Albanian Kosovars.¹³

Physically locating the conflict in this nightmarish space, pictures like this one and the one of the train station participate in creating what Zizek refers to as the “imagined cartography” of the Balkans that depicts this region as a “terrain of ethnic horrors” still fighting centuries-old battles presumably in contrast to the advanced democratic status of the West (Zizek 2000, 4–5). While this perhaps raises the question of what is the West, it also resecures a cultural map that defines Europe as the countries of Western Europe while the Balkans remain somewhere on the fringes of civilization. These images also play into Cold War narratives that visualize socialism as a failure of modernity. Such narratives deny how transnational dependencies and determinations shape the region's economy. Hyperinflation, austerity measures, and other economic constraints since the collapse of communist regimes in the region have intensified social and political unrest. Escalating debt increasingly weakened the region's economies, led to worker protests, and fostered the prestige of nationalist solutions by Milosevic and his supporters (Haynes 1999). Yet, news media ignored or minimized local, regional, and transnational factors that have shaped ethnic conflict in the Balkans in favor of representations of NATO heroics.

The lack of references to Albanian politics ignores the complicated and hybrid nature of Albanian identities and political activism. Moreover, it promotes American national interests at the expense of local and regional factors. The only coverage of Albanian responses to Serbian violence was reports on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a small militant group. None of the magazines, for instance, discussed the nonviolent agenda of the Albanian intellectual and political leader Ibrahim Rugova (Chomsky 1999; Mertus 1999a, 6). Photographs instead featured male soldiers of the KLA in combat uniforms, yet there are no signs of actual combat.¹⁴ Compared with detailed discussions of American military equipment, strategy, and personnel, reports on the KLA emphasized the lack of equipment, training, and even incompetence of these fighters. This contrast further eliminates political alternatives to the spectacle of victimization. Žižek argues that NATO intervened to protect Kosovar victims while making sure they would remain victims; that is, no international support backed the Albanians to become full political agents, or to sustain an armed resistance. He describes this as the “paradox of victimization: the Other to be protected is good in *so far as it remains a victim*” (2000, 59, 60). News coverage of victims waiting to be rescued erases U.S. and European nations’ complicity in the economic and political instabilities in the region. Petras further argues that innocent victimization also ignores the violence perpetrated by the KLA. He writes that the “triumphal returns and euphoric rhetoric of the NATO leaders covers up the brutal reality of massive ethnic cleansing, systematic assassinations, pillage and destruction of churches, houses, farms, and businesses by NATO-backed Albanian KLA terrorists and their paramilitary supporters” (1999, 13).

As important as it is to publicize the horrors of war and ethnic cleansing, these photographs elide any representations of the subjectivity and agency of the Albanians. Cameras do not depict the diversity of experiences and cultures in Kosovo/a (Mertus 1999a). No pictures show people working in an urban setting or creating a makeshift home or treating the injured.¹⁵ Nor do readers encounter photographs of Albanian doctors, social workers, community leaders, etc. Instead, photographs depict fearful and/or exhausted refugees.¹⁶ In a half-page picture featured in *U.S. News* on April 12, for instance, the photographer used a high angle shot of a group of refugees. The high angle makes the crowd appear very large as people spread out to the very edges of the background. In the center foreground, a woman holds out her hands in a supplicant pose with the

caption, "Pleading. A woman from Kosovo asks Macedonian police officers to let her cross the border. Thousands waited without food or water." As the focal point of the composition, the female supplicant stands as the representative of the "waiting" group. Women such as the supplicant become, in Žižek's words, the "ideal subject-victim in aid" (2000, 57–58) who do not struggle for their own survival or fight back but remain the feminized object of the Western gaze.

These pictures provide the visual alibi for U.S. and NATO intervention by establishing a national narrative about U.S. power and political good in contrast to Milosevic and his Serbian forces. The racial logic is here reinforced because few signs recognizable to Western viewers would identify the refugees as Muslim. Racial and religious differences are elided in this portrayal of Albanians as allies. Instead, gender is foregrounded through prominently featured photographs of mothers with small children, namely on two magazine covers and as the opening two-page spread in all three magazines the second week. Collapsing the body with experience and identity, photojournalism relies on the bodies of mothers and babies to function as metonyms for the Kosovo/a crisis. Recent feminist scholarship on embodiment has explored with great insight how identity, especially sexual, gender, and racial identities are produced and reproduced through visible bodies.¹⁷ In the news coverage of the NATO bombings, the visual embodiment of white motherhood, however, does not so much produce knowledge or understanding of trauma as it turns subjects into spectacles of suffering.

As metonyms for victimization, photographs of women and children collapse motherhood with the home (Morley 2000, 65) and in so doing become the visible symbol of what is being threatened and what needs to be saved. For instance, a tightly framed photograph in *U.S. News* from April 12 shows a group of refugees enclosed in a space that appears to be surrounded by barbed wire (the caption explains that the wire is part of the back of a truck) (fig. 2). In the center of the composition, a woman throws her head back in anguish while a child next to her stares soberly at the camera. This highly emotional expression of innocence and vulnerability establishes the face of suffering for the viewer. In such pictures, subjectivities are elided as visible bodies rearticulate racialized gender ideals of domesticity familiar to American audiences (Williams 1994). Despite late twentieth-century social developments that include post-communism, globalization, and new technologies, idealized domesticity continues to



Fig. 2. Photograph by Santiago Lyon. Courtesy of AP/Wide World Photos.

have enormous ideological resonance (Morley 2000, 56). Since the Cold War period, the American media have aligned an ideal of the white middle class family with national interests and desires (Kozol 1994). These pictures of refugees from Kosovo/a reveal the powerful place that the racialized mother-child ideal continues to hold in the U.S. cognitive grid. Whiteness, furthermore, contains the otherness of Albanian Kosovars who, like this anguished Albanian mother, lack racial, ethnic or religious markers of difference. If class, racial, gender, and heteronormative ideals shape the cultural alignment of family and nation, what happens when domesticity, that powerful sign of stability and tradition, is figured as the sign of social disorder or breakdown?

Media portrayals of the ideal family typically establish boundaries of identity that exclude all those who do not fit these racial, sexual, and class categorizations. Morley, however, compellingly argues that not all repre-

sentations of domesticity are so intentionally exclusive. Instead, he writes, “it is not the presence of otherness per se which is problematic but only that of undomesticated otherness,” pointing out examples of the incorporation of Others, or what he calls, “domesticating alterity” (2000, 223). In other words, the logics of racialization are often dependent upon incorporating otherness within “the relation of domination” (Taguieff 2001, 121). News photographs of Kosovar refugees foreground racialized gender ideals of domesticity in this moment of profound crisis and social disorder. Narratives about conflicts in the Balkans have historically been mapped onto ethnic rivalries and hostilities that stereotype populations as violent and backward. During the Cold War, for instance, the American media typically collapsed ethnicity and communism in characterizations of Albania as one of the most repressive communist regimes. In contrast, news coverage of refugees in 1999 turned the camera’s gaze to mothers and children to figure Albanians as the innocent victims of Serbian aggression. Ideals of domesticity that feature attractive, white looking, mothers elide differences to establish instead the moral position of the refugees.

The cover photograph in *U.S. News* for April 12 exemplifies the process of domesticating alterity. Above the headline, “Balkan Hell,” three figures in the center of the composition look out at the camera. With a somber but calm gaze, a young attractive woman holds a small child while an older son leans against her. Although the caption does not identify her religious affiliation, the coverage repeatedly characterized the violence in Kosovo/a as an ethnic conflict between Serbian Christians and Albanian Muslims. That this woman is not specifically identified as a Muslim reinforces the process of incorporation within an American ideal of domesticity. Even more than other mother and child images, this photograph evokes the Western Christian art historical tradition of the Madonna and child flanked by one or more saints. In the extreme foreground a woman with her head covered in a white cloth moves toward the picture plane. Her forward posture suggests movement outside of the camera’s frame and into the viewer’s space. The triangular position of the main figure group creates a stability that counterbalances the dynamic movement of this foreground figure. The compositional and iconographic stability signified by this Madonna and children, as Morley suggests, domesticates the refugees’ alterity. This process occurs through foregrounding heteronormativity, albeit normativity at risk. During the Balkans wars, reporters often told of

Serbian detention and killings of fathers and husbands. To see the family without the male figure underscores the social crisis and reinforces the call to rescue the mothers and children. Even as this woman is incorporated within an American cognitive ideal of domesticity, however, she remains other in her (unlabeled) ethnicity and in her state of crisis. She is thus both like and unlike the viewer. Looking at how photographs mobilize domesticity reveals the ways in which narratives of war incorporate alterity as part of justifications for military intervention.

In the newsmagazines, scenes of destroyed houses, rather than pictures of military battles, further configure the Albanians visually within the private sphere. In American hegemonic culture, the private sphere signifies the privileges of privacy, intimacy, and protection from the external world. On April 5, both *Time* and *Newsweek* featured a photograph of a Serbian army tank in front of a destroyed house with signs of still smoldering fires. A Serbian soldier holding a rifle, caught mid-stride in profile, looks defiantly at the camera. Masculinity and militarism foreground the threat to private life and to the vulnerable bodies of the Albanians. The accompanying report discusses the invasion of private homes by paramilitary forces where people were either tortured or removed from families and then tortured. Domesticity, as the sign of what is at risk, and hence as the justification for intervention, locates the Albanians within terms recognizable to American audiences.

In a region such as Kosovo/a, many reasons compel photojournalists to report on the violence that persists there despite juridical and humanitarian interventions by international agencies like the UN or military interventions like the NATO air strikes. In domesticating alterity, however, American news coverage of Kosovo/a relied on conventions of photojournalism, in particular the figure of vulnerable white maternity, to depict the human casualties of violence in the Balkans. News coverage that represents Albanians only as victims ignores their struggles and experiences while promoting narratives of Western benevolent support for needy and innocent refugees. Representations of crises outside the United States, as in this case, are typically mediated through the lens of national concerns, such as security or economic interests. As Koshy writes, "On human rights issues, in particular, the statist perspective obscures and distorts the perception of the problem and the construction of the solution . . ." (1999, 21). Thus, what is at stake in media coverage is the relationship between

how social crises are represented and how they are managed within a transnational context.

Given this critique of photojournalism, how can photographers maintain the moral imperative of political visibility? The challenge of reportage in this case is made particular acute by the problematics of representing trauma. How can photographers visualize trauma without inevitably turning people into spectacles? If photographers attempt to avoid the spectacle of embodied suffering, what happens if we do not have an embodied victim to pity?

Homes and Gardens: Trauma, Domesticity, and (In)visible Bodies

Shadows dancing on a walkway lined with purple flowers lead the eye to a well-maintained house surrounded by carefully tended trees in the yard (fig. 3). The calm orderliness of this domestic scene recurs throughout the photographs in Melanie Friend's exhibition, *Homes and Gardens*, a photo-testimonial project about Albanian Kosovars persecuted by the Serbian government in the 1990s.¹⁸ Melanie Friend is a photojournalist who has published in major news magazines and newspapers including the *New York Times* and *The Guardian*. She traveled to the Balkans from 1989 to 1995 during which time she interviewed and photographed Albanian Kosovars (Friend 1996). She returned in 1999–2000 to reinterview Albanian refugees in the camps (Friend 2001). In *Homes and Gardens*, Friend moves away from and critically engages with the problematics of voyeurism in standard photojournalistic practices. Like the title, nothing in the photograph speaks of horror, torture, violation, or death. Other pictures show tranquil scenes of bedrooms, living rooms, and fenced-in yards. In one backyard, neatly stacked white plastic garden chairs look like ones that can be purchased at the discount stores that populate suburban American landscapes. Reminders of the ordinariness of domestic life include scenes of living rooms in which houseplants hang from the ceiling, flowers sit on a coffee table, and family photographs rest on the walls. Saturated colors, so different from the century-long tradition of black and white documentary and photojournalism, highlight the ordinariness of these scenes. The brightness of a blue sky contrasts with the richness of the green paint on a fence, or the red brick tiles on a rooftop, while the pinkness of the flowers



Fig. 3. “No foreign journalists come here so the police feel free to do what they want. In the small towns in Kosova they do what they want.” Melanie Friend, *No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo*. Courtesy of Midnight Editions.

on a coffee table stands out against the dark interior. Rather than create a distance from the Albanian victims of ethnic cleansing, *Homes and Gardens* lessens the divide between viewer and victim through the plastic garden chairs or blue sofa covers that speak to daily domestic concerns. Popular consumer goods like plastic lawn chairs locate this presumably local conflict within a global consumer economy. In contrast to newsmagazines’

focus on scenes of peasants or destroyed villages, *Homes and Gardens* challenges the imagined cartography of the Balkans. Refusing the ideological distance promoted in many news reports about Third World conflicts, familiarity here brings the viewer culturally, if not geographically, within proximity of these homes and gardens. Houses that appear comfortable if not prosperous by Western economic standards provide an alternative to exoticized depictions of the Third World. On the other hand, by fostering identification through domestic prosperity, this visual strategy does little to undermine the dominant visual logic that links racial and class privilege to the First World and racialized poverty to the Third World.

Because witness testimonies can be discredited, visual documentation has historically retained great authority as juridical evidence.¹⁹ Initially, victims of Serbian persecution welcomed media attention, expecting publicity to persuade the international community to intervene. Soon, however, many began to realize that the voyeuristic nature of the news media exposed Bosnians and Albanians to “an unwanted parody of genuine witnessing” (Weine 1999, 183). Torturers, moreover, easily learn techniques of abuse that do not leave marks, and as in other cases of state-sponsored violence, without visual evidence Serbian officials readily deny their involvement in human rights abuses. One challenge, then, for photographers like Friend is to represent traumas hidden from the camera, enacted in spaces and times that avoid the news media’s gaze.

In confronting the challenge of representing trauma in *Homes and Gardens*, Friend rejects the photojournalistic convention that visualizes violence through embodied victimization. Notably, she resists the temptation to use the camera to record, to witness, but also to establish the voyeuristic gaze. Rather, these photographs register their temporality as “after the fact” depictions in ways that refuse to gaze at the body. But, the bright colors and the calm order of domestic scenes makes one question that temporality. Are we gazing at what precedes the trauma but doing so after the violation? In a fascinating representational impossibility, do these images then represent a space prior to violation as well as contain the trauma of violation within their ordinariness? Rather than pictures of an innocent past, I would argue, the absence of the traumatized body in *Homes and Gardens* functions metonymically to configure trauma’s belatedness. Not yet present, the trauma that has not yet returned lurks and haunts the photographs like a phantom.

The absence of the body speaks directly to what scholars in trauma studies explore as the question of representation. Friend refuses to let us gaze at the trauma; indeed the subtitle of the exhibition, “Documenting the Invisible,” captures the inaccessibility of trauma to conventional means of representation. In contrast to those who insist on the radical unrepresentability of trauma,²⁰ however, Friend speaks to both the need for and the problematics of documentation. The dialogic interchange between the oral testimonies and the pictures transforms these ordinary scenes into something more disturbing and powerful, even if the specific details of the trauma remain unvisualized. This project employs what Liss calls opaque mimesis: “In the desire to stage what can and can never be fully represented, a strategy of opaque mimesis constitutes a relation to others that refuses to claim knowledge over their experience and seeks to retain some of the event’s incomprehensibility” (1998, 132).

In the only picture that features a person, a woman sits on the side of a bed looking at the camera (fig. 4). Elsewhere Friend resists the spectacle, and even the claim of authenticity, that accompanies the bodies of victims. This photograph, thus, remains provocative as the sole image with a person. The sunlight shines on her face, casting a shadow on the wardrobe behind her. Half in shadow, half in light, she sits off center in the composition, competing for attention with a painted portrait of a man hung just above the pillows. Other contemporary and ancestral portraits on the wall connect her to an unidentified family history. Photographs like this one do not stand for, or represent, the traumatic events that occurred in Kosovo/a in the 1990s. As Friend writes, “Without bandages, clearly defined wounds, traumatized faces or crying women, the pictures could not be instantly ‘read’ or interpreted. The people couldn’t be neatly categorized as victims . . . they looked too ordinary” (1996, n.p.). The clarity and detail of the room and figure illuminate how opaque mimesis foregrounds the incomprehensibility of the trauma.

Juxtaposed to compositions of quiet, sunlit interiors and garden settings, oral testimonies describe Albanians’ experiences of terror and violence in their homes at the hands of Serbian police forces.²¹ The verbal register narrates traumas that remain unvisualized. This structure in *Homes and Gardens* risks privileging the voice as the authentic embodied expression of trauma in contrast to the pictures that could be read as less reliable. But, the ordinariness of the pictures pulls the viewer back towards questions about temporality. Not knowing if we are looking before or after the



Fig. 4. "I hardly sleep at night as I know that they may come at any moment . . . Even that bit of sleep I get is a complete nightmare full of frightening scenes with the police." Melanie Friend, *No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo*. Courtesy of Midnight Editions.

trauma unsettles the relationship between the verbal and visual registers and reminds the viewer of the belatedness and persistence of trauma in the spaces of daily life. Furthermore, while the verbal narrative is privileged as the site that conveys the memory of trauma, individuals remain unidentified by name. Scholars of *testimonios* distinguish this genre from autobiography because speakers typically articulate collective experiences of trauma

(Hanlon and Shankar 2000; Sanchez Casual 2001). Similarly in *Homes and Gardens*, people speak of both their own experiences of violence and the experiences of others, whether or not they witnessed these events. The oral register of anonymous men and women's voices together narrates collective memories about suffering and trauma.

Dialogic interactions between these two registers, moreover, confront the possibilities and limitations of representing state policies of genocide. The testimonial linked to the picture of the woman states: "I hardly sleep at night as I know that they may come at any moment . . . Even that bit of sleep I get is a complete nightmare full of frightening scenes with the police" (Friend 1996, n.p.). In connecting nightmares and the unconscious with the material body, Friend here foregrounds both the belatedness of trauma and directs our attention to the political and material elements of the unconscious. This work highlights how state violence intrudes into the domestic and the seemingly private space of the unconscious.²² As Friend notes, "Domesticity could offer neither security nor privacy against a state intent on undermining it" (1996, n.p.), thus reminding the viewer of both the vulnerability of domesticity, and conversely, of the ordinariness of torture and violence. Rape and other acts of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans were deliberate attempts by Serbian forces to destabilize communities by violating bodies and the domestic spaces that contain them (Allen 1996; Rejali 1998). *Homes and Gardens* describes beatings and killings that took place in homes and schools, often early in the morning or late at night. If the domestic signals a private space, these acts of torture violently destroy that illusion.

Homes and Gardens preserves the domestic space with full awareness of the transgressions and violations of such spaces. Photographs of gates and fences evoke the conventional boundaries of domestic space and with it the promises of privacy. In one picture, a solid metal gate painted bright green imposes a formidable barrier; except for a cloudless blue sky, nothing is visible behind the gate. A woman's testimony complicates the ordinariness of the image by discussing the invasive terror created from hearing about "terrible new happenings." She talks about her children's frightened responses when the bell rings and their anxiety that the police have "come to take Daddy away." The tension between the imposing barrier of the green gate and the vulnerability expressed in the testimony speaks to how trauma violates the boundaries of the domestic, of the familial, and of the body.

Friend's representations of domesticity work against the news media's "ideal subject—victim in aid," by refusing the conventional icons of victimization. Photographs resist a heroic narrative in favor of scenes that emphasize the persistence of everyday life such as pictures of backyards with laundry ready to be put on the line, or carefully tended garden plots (Liss 1998, 43). Along with the ordinariness of trauma, these pictures foreground the resilience and agency of this victimized community. One picture of a schoolroom features roughhewn planks resting on chair frames painted green (fig. 5). The rows of benches face toward a single small table in the front corner that is probably the teacher's desk. There is no other evidence such as chalkboards or books to suggest that this is a school. The rough conditions of this classroom signify not only deprivation but also resistance in the face of intense persecution. The testimonial reinforces this reading of how the seemingly "ordinary" turns into the "extraordinary" in the context of war and persecution. "We carry on coming to school because we know that the school is the most important thing and we have to study and not be assimilated . . ." (Friend 1996, n.p.). Images like the schoolroom create an assonance between trauma and ordinariness. In this way, they contrast powerfully with news photographs that feature refugees in desolate landscapes as symbols of a destroyed domesticity.

Homes and Gardens also differs profoundly from idealized images of domesticity as the site of national pride and the justification of state militarism that have been so prevalent in the Balkans. Serbian policies instituted during the 1980s ranged from the outlawing of abortion and demands that women sacrifice their sons and husbands, to the symbolic use of women as sexual objects to signify the nation at risk, to state-sanctioned rape justified as a form of revenge against men of enemy states (Milic 1993; Allen 1996; Boose 2002). As a number of scholars have pointed out, motherhood has been a key ideological site in Serbian nationalism. Notably Serbian efforts to increase its own population also attempted to limit the Albanian population. For instance, laws passed in the 1980s provided incentives to Serbian families to have more children while cutting benefits to Albanians (Drakulic 1993). Propaganda likewise contrasted Serbian mothers with Albanian women who were described "as baby makers, calling their offspring 'biological bombs,' labeling Albanian family life primitive and backward" (Mertus 1999b, 178). Nationalist



Fig. 5. “We have a lot of problems on our way to school. We are frightened of being stopped by the police and anytime we see them we are afraid. But we carry on coming to school because we know that the school is the most important thing and we have to study and not be assimilated . . .” Melanie Friend, *No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo*. Courtesy of Midnight Editions.

propaganda also invoked dangers to the family as justification for violence against ethnic groups. Milic (1993), for instance, describes a photograph popular in Serbia in the early 1990s. The picture shows a woman holding a child in one arm and a gun in the other as she patrols an empty village road. This image uses the figures of the mother and child both to invoke the nation in jeopardy and to display the willingness of citizens to defend themselves. Picturing a woman toting both a child and a gun can also be read as a shaming demand for masculine protection through the displacement of this woman from the normative sphere of mothering into the sphere of national security.²³ Photographs like this one connected gendered citizenship to the nationalist cause in order to mobilize Serbian support for ethnic conflict and “to create the resolve to settle this situation in favor of Serbians” (Milic 1993, 115). Women’s bodies are often deployed to sustain symbolic claims of nation-states. Despite their symbolic importance, however, women, especially minority and immigrant women, continue in many places to have a tenuous hold on citizenship (Yuval-Davis 1997). Feminists throughout the former Yugoslavia, including Serbian Women in Black who protested against the Milosevic regime, were all too aware of this tenuous citizenship built on selective notions of the gendered body (Enloe 2000, 142–51).

Serbian representations of gendered citizenship, not surprisingly, are also similar to Albanian Kosovars’ nationalist agendas. As Berry states, “representations of the body—especially the female body – and the larger cultural meanings it assumes, are particularly striking sites for witnessing the performance of complex national dramas of crisis and change” (1995, 2). Albanian narratives that emphasized victimization within a hostile Yugoslav state drew upon the image of woman as victim, reproducing narratives of femininity to “bolster the larger Kosovar Albanian identity, that of the suffering people. . . . All problems lead in one direction, to the oppressive Serbian state.” (Mertus 1999b, 173). Similar also to American news coverage, Albanian nationalist rhetoric elided women’s political agency and experiences as it employed the symbolic ideal of heteronormative domesticity.

In contrast, Friend’s representations of the domestic that refuse to “see” the victims disrupt nationalist discourses in which the family stands metonymically for the state. Instead, she visualizes what is at stake in warfare by refiguring the domestic without families. Serbian forces

deliberately and obsessively intruded about private spaces to humiliate people and degrade their sense of safety. Torture, that included beating men's genitals and raping women in front of their families, as well as destroying property and removing family members, intimately connected violence to the domestic sphere (Mertus 1999b; Boose 2002). Rather than gaze at the victim, however, Friend challenges us to consider absence as a sign of what is, or can be, lost.

The peaceful domestic scenes in *Homes and Gardens* force the viewer to ask who has been injured or violated, and yet, injury is not visualized on or through particular bodies. Without individual faces and with only unidentified testimonies, scenes of domesticity work metonymically to show what is at risk, rather than to show the violations themselves. Thus, trauma and the figure of the injured body continue to haunt the photographs as we peer at them for signs we can never find. This occurs quite powerfully in the photograph of the woman whose body does not figure "trauma" per se. As Friend asks, "are we then forced to look upon them as 'victims' once the image is contextualised by a caption?" (1996, n.p.). This jolt of recognition of trauma rendered invisible is fundamental to Friend's images.

Homes and Gardens refuses to visualize the spectacle of trauma but does that make it easier to turn away? One could argue that nowhere do the photographs or testimonies in *Homes and Gardens* imagine any actions toward retributive justice or redress of human rights violations. This concern, though, relies on the assumption that speaking the truth and showing the pictures will elicit outrage and demands for justice, a fundamental assumption in human rights discourse as well as in photojournalism. Testimonies have been a crucial recourse for victims of human rights abuses, especially for women who often have little or no access to juridical processes or hegemonic cultural discourses. Truth speaking discourses, especially in the 1990s and after, have become an important mechanism of resistance for indigenous and Third World women, ranging from Bosnia to Guatemala, who have used these genres to articulate their experiences of oppression and torture (Hanlon and Shankar 2000; Agosin 2001). Feminists who rely on experience to challenge hegemonic power often turn to women's voices and testimonies as key sites for counter narratives. It is important, however, to avoid the temptation to seek "experience" or "truth" outside of discourse, a claim found in much feminist literature, including women's rights as human rights scholarship.²⁴ Agosin, for instance, urges feminist scholars and activists to recognize the "integrity

of the voice” in listening to women’s stories of human rights abuses, stories that avoid “succumbing to silence—using one’s voice to resist oppression, to reconcile history’s wrongs . . . Having witnessed that which is beyond language’s power to represent, women continue to search for the meaning of hope. Their resistance to silence bespeaks the desire to remain whole and human” (2001, 11). Such testimonies have great political and social power but we need to engage with them, not as transparent or authentic, but as cultural narratives that articulate historical processes of oppression, resistance, collective action, etc.²⁵ It is, therefore, significant that *Homes and Gardens* use testimonials while resisting the authenticating power of the body. This move challenges the conventional authority of the body as the site of identity while retaining the historical need for survivor testimonies. Friend’s one image of a woman may appear to contradict that claim as the viewer gazes at a presumed victim. And, yet even here, she is surrounded by and competes for visual attention with the family photographs on the wall. Thus, scripting her gendered associations with domesticity insistently locates her within a broader familial and generational identity, so that trauma remains a collective experience. Likewise, unidentified voices speak separately but are never isolated; as each voice invokes memories that cannot be visualized they combine to form a collective historical memory.

Finally, we must ask about the costs of not visualizing the traumatized body. Without the body, how do we witness? In losing the spectacle, we lose the voyeuristic privilege of the gaze but do we also lose knowledge of the trauma itself? I would argue that in turning away from a visual embodiment of suffering, Melanie Friend does more than just resist the spectacle so frequently created by the news media. Trauma in *Homes and Gardens* is ever present even if invisible. The absence of the body in *Homes and Gardens* does not make us forget the trauma but rather reminds the viewer of the limits of representation. Friend calls attention to the inability of the visual to preserve trauma on the surface of the skin. Without visibility, and without spectacle, however, how is the invisible body gendered and raced? Is trauma itself gendered and raced? For American viewers familiar with news stories like those that appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*, the invisible body in *Homes and Gardens*, like the one visible woman, is probably figured as female and Muslim and white. Because Friend relies on a narrative frame of domesticity that mobilizes gender and race-based concepts of home and prosperity, this project reiterates

dominant visual rhetorics even as she resists “showing” the trauma. As Homi Bhabha (1994) has pointed out, reliance on mimicry, or the use of recognizable frameworks to contest or transform them, can nevertheless trap those strategies within the basic premises one is attempting to unpack. Challenging the spectacle of photojournalism, *Homes and Gardens* itself struggles with the dilemma in which the urgent need to publicize violence remains too frequently dependent upon visual conventions of race, gender, and domesticity.

Conclusion

Homes and Gardens offers a compelling and provocative critique of the spectacle of ethnic/political conflict found in many photojournalistic practices. In some ways, however, Friend’s work is tautologically dependent on the genre to make itself comprehensible. It is only because we are so familiar with pictures of victims that we can read her critique. This raises the question of whether a challenge to the conventions of news reportage, such as this one, is possible only outside photojournalism? In addition, does such a critique hold up artistic visions as a superior approach to photographing war?

Perhaps, but alternative ways of seeing can also have an impact on photojournalism. While it may be unreasonable in the current climate to expect that *Time*, *Newsweek* or *U.S. News* would publish *Homes and Gardens*, there are alternative spaces that expand the possibilities of documentation. *Mother Jones*, for instance, published a photo-essay by Paula Allen of a Kosovar woman who saved other women in her village from Serbian attackers by driving them in a tractor across a river (Jan/Feb 2001). The photo-essay depicts the women’s return to the village and their efforts to reclaim their land and livelihood after all the men had been massacred. The main photograph depicts one of the women from the village who lost her father and two brothers. She stands in the foreground with her back to the camera looking over cultivated agricultural fields. Allen pushes against conventional narratives of victimization by visually relocating these gendered victims within specific geographical and temporal locations. Looking past the woman whose back is to the camera, the photographer denies the viewer the ability to gaze at a victim. Moreover, the woman’s stance, so close to the picture plane, signifies an empowerment that complicates conventional narratives of suffering. A smaller picture shows

women driving tractors in a field. Allen's photographs capture a more complicated representation of Kosovar women's subjectivity by locating violence within a framework that also depicts women rebuilding the village. The absence of men further destabilizes heteronormative assumptions about gender and sexual roles. Finally, the photo-essay historicizes the narrative of war beyond the spectacle of suffering through this visual and written narrative of women who respond to trauma in local and collective ways. And, yet, here too the (mis)representation of Albanians as white does nothing to complicate the racial logics promoted by the United States and NATO and unqualifiedly accepted by the news media.

There is, moreover, the risk of American news media turning to another story if violence and suffering are not visualized. News media's short attention span, with an insatiable appetite for new pictures, means that reporters and photographers quickly turn to the latest events. Despite the risks of voyeurism and spectacle, we may want the cameras to keep their gaze on a crisis. Pictures of victims, especially of children, have been successful at bringing world attention to human rights abuses and the sufferings of victimized populations. The political effectiveness of depicting victims of state violence and brutality cannot be underestimated. Attention to the *intifada* in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, for instance, took on new urgency (at least for a time) in the United States on September 30, 2000, when the *New York Times* featured a photograph of a Palestinian father, Jamal Dura, and his son, Mohammed Dura, huddled against a wall. The caption explained that the boy was killed right after the photograph was taken. Certainly, viewers are asked for their sympathy within a framework that secures ideals of heteronormative domesticity. This ideal also mediates the racialized representations of Palestinian men as terrorists that typically appear in the U.S. media. Alone, the father could be figured as a terrorist. Even the boy could look threatening in another context. But, as father and son, within the narrative framework of traumatic loss, the Palestinian cause is momentarily (for this narrative is rarely seen) figured as innocent victims. Again, we can see the process of domesticating alterity whereby heteronormative ideals sympathetically frame the otherness of the Palestinians. International attention in response to this publicity demonstrated how effective visual images can be in political struggles. Hasso argues that the value in such photographs lies as much in their repetition as in their content. The web-based worldwide distribution of the video of this scene created its own visibility of the

conflict, and for a moment at least, provided a narrative counter to the dominant frameworks offered by the American media as well as U.S. and Israeli government officials.²⁶

Thus, I would not want to leave this essay with the implication that photographs of suffering have no value or are only exploitative. Yet, when suffering and violence are the only visual depictions of social conflict, the news media too easily move on to the next crisis or war, never envisioning the struggles to reconstruct social worlds in the aftermath of violence. Koshy has labeled this type of reportage as a “minimalist humanitarian perspective” where human rights issues are only ever represented through the spectacle of suffering victims “incapable of self-representation” (1999, 21). Such images are certainly powerful in effecting emotional responses that often result in support for international relief efforts and for raising donations. Photojournalist conventions that limit reporting to episodic images of violence and victimization, however, preclude reporting that explains the multiple factors producing conflict or possible solutions (Koshy 1999).

This essay offers a critical analysis of photographic practices in the hope that it furthers our understanding of the centrality of race, gender, and sexuality in media coverage of ethnic/political conflict. Rather than consider photographs of refugees or civilians caught in violent conflict as “human-interest elements,” analysis of the Kosovo/a coverage demonstrates how gender, sexuality, and race fundamentally structure narratives of enemies, allies, and victims in ways that advance U.S. foreign policies of globalization and military dominance. Returning to the dilemma I raised in the beginning of the paper, how can photojournalists use the camera to depict violent conflict without reproducing a hegemonic gaze that embodies victimization and turns people into spectacles of innocence or suffering? The question of representation became even more acute for me watching media coverage of the United States invasion of Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. American media routinely, even excessively, turned their cameras to pictures of Afghani women veiled in *burkas* while reporters described their oppression and hailed their liberation through American and allied military intervention. News media once again utilized tropes of primitivism and modernity on Afghani women’s bodies in ways that elide their subjectivities and their histories (Khan 2001). The racial logics of Islamic barbarism and gendered victimization here sustained the imperial-

ist agenda of U.S. military operations. Whether in Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan, or elsewhere, visual documentation has become a vital resource for journalists as well as human rights advocates attempting to alert international communities to conditions of violence and oppression. Yet documentarians need to confront the dilemmas of representation in which looking risks turning people into spectacles of suffering while not looking risks ignoring the traumas enacted daily on ethnic, racialized, gendered, and religious bodies.

NOTES

I would like to thank Jay Cook, Rita Chin, Edda Fields, and Isaac Miller for their thoughtful comments on an early draft. Many thanks also to Rachel Buff, Frances Hasso, Heather Hogan, Ann Sherif, and Steven Wojtal for their critical insights and support. Carol Jacobsen suggested that I look at Paula Allen's work. Audiences at the University of Michigan, the Ohio State University, Oberlin College, and Bowling Green State University provided welcome opportunities to present and refine my ideas. Insightful critiques by Myriam J.A. Chancy, Paola Bacchetta, Frances Hasso, and two anonymous reviewers enabled me to clarify key elements of this analysis. Finally, I gratefully acknowledge Wendy Hesford with whom I originally worked out these ideas and whose friendship enriched this project.

1. The province is known internationally as Kosovo while Albanians refer to it as Kosova. I use the slash to remind readers that even place names mark the contested spaces of global and local economies.
2. See Jeffords and Rabinovitz 1994, which contains a number of fine critiques of the media's role in the Gulf War. See also Griffin and Lee (1995).
3. For instance, photojournalist James Natchway states that he relies on the cooperation of his subjects who recognize the power of the media to attract international attention to their problems (*War Photographer* 2001). For a critique of this type of claim, see Schwartz 1999.
4. Liss 1998 explores how visual culture, including photography and museum exhibitions, reimagines and thus reconstitutes the Holocaust. See also Hirsch 1997 for a discussion of postmemory in contemporary representations of the Holocaust. Finkelstein (2000) offers a critical analysis of the "Holocaust Industry," which he argues developed in response to political events in both Israel and the United States from the 1960s to the present.
5. A review of Ulrich's *Periodical Directory* confirms that these three newsmagazines have substantially higher circulation statistics than any other American newsmagazines.
6. For instance, see Williams 1994 who discusses a number of artists who engage with and critique the tradition of war photoreportage. See Barbara Alper whose series *Gulf Channel* re-represents television coverage of the Gulf War to draw

attention to the voyeuristic experience of watching and hence consuming war on TV; Moira McIver who explores the relationship between gender and sexuality and militarism through close-up portraits of male soldiers in the photo-series, *Men in Uniform*; and, Anna Fox who uses the photo-essay format about weekend war games to examine desires for verisimilitude in war and in photography.

7. My findings are similar to Griffin and Lee's data on the three newsmagazines' coverage of the Gulf War, in which the relative uniformity "across the three newsmagazines suggests that photographers, photo agencies, and newsmagazine editors operated from the outset within parameters and expectations that conform to long-standing conventions of war illustration" (1995, 821). Ulrich's *Periodicals Directory*, an influential directory read by librarians, writes that "the choice between *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *US News & World Report* is largely one of personal preference. These three publications are similar in format and content (frequently all three have the same topic as the cover story)" (2003).
8. For discussion of audiences' interpretive strategies, see e.g. Ang 1996; and Hay, Grossberg, and Wartella 1996.
9. Some political distinctions are discernable between the three magazines. Notably, *U.S. News* displayed greater antipathy toward President Clinton than the other two magazines. On the other hand, discussions of military operations, and more importantly for this article, narrative and visual conventions for representing both the Kosovars and Serbs were consistent across the three magazines.
10. Griffin and Lee (1995) found a similar emphasis in media coverage of the Gulf War on the military and technological superiority of the United States, the absence of images of allies, and no pictures of actual combat.
11. Nobel-prize author Elie Wiesel wrote an editorial in *Newsweek* (April 12, 37) in which he advocated NATO intervention. He argued, however, that the analogy to the Holocaust was inappropriate because of the Nazis' intention to exterminate all of the Jews, an objective that Wiesel claims was absent in the current situation. Even here, though, the debate over the appropriateness of such comparisons renarrates a history of European liberal multiculturalism that is periodically threatened by nationalist movements.
12. Chomsky similarly argues that "the right of humanitarian intervention, if it exists, is premised on the 'good faith' of those intervening, and that assumption is based not on their rhetoric but on their record, in particular their record of adherence to the principles of international law, World Court decisions, and so on. . . . How should we assess the 'good faith' of the only country to have vetoed a Security Council resolution calling on all states to obey international law?" (1999, 41)
13. The erasure of modern subjectivities became acutely evident after an interview on British television with a middle-class Albanian woman refugee. Listeners

- called in to complain that she must be either a fake or an actress because she looked too wealthy to be a “real” refugee (Morley 2000, 264).
14. See Milic 1993 who argues that women fighters on both sides remained the most hidden phenomenon of women’s participation in the war.
 15. This representational focus reproduces photojournalistic conventions established in earlier wars. For example, see Griffin and Lee 1995; and Brothers 1997.
 16. In addition, the first two weeks of news reports showed no pictures of UN workers or other international humanitarian aid workers.
 17. For example, see Conboy Medina and Stanbury 1997; Price and Shildrick 1999; and Shohat 1998.
 18. *Homes and Gardens/Documenting the Invisible: Images from Kosovo* had its first exhibition at Innovative Camerawork Gallery in London in 1996. The show then had its U.S. premiere at the Houston Center for Photography in 1998. This work has been republished in the first section of *No Place Like Home* (Friend 2001).
 19. For example, see Tagg 1988 and Sekula 1989 for discussions of how photography gained authoritative status as evidence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
 20. See the *Yale Journal of Criticism* special issue on the Holocaust (April 2001), in which a number of scholars challenge the current opposition in trauma studies between those who argue for the radical unrepresentability of trauma and those who turn to realist documentation for authoritative evidence (MacKay and Wexler 2001, 3).
 21. An audiotape of the testimonies played during the exhibition. Excerpts from the sound transcripts appear on opposite pages to the photographs in the 1996 catalogue. All quotes come from the catalogue.
 22. I thank Wendy Hesford for this insight, and more generally, for her contributions to the analysis in this section.
 23. I appreciate this suggestion made by an anonymous reviewer.
 24. See Grewal 1998 for an important critique of women’s human rights discourse.
 25. Sanchez Casal argues that reliance on testimonial narratives as authentic truth runs the risk of “remystifying the woman-native other” and ignoring her complex subjectivities. As she writes, “no matter what significance one assigns to its political project (and I, for one, believe in the urgency and legitimacy of the testimonio’s political intentionality) can this genre somehow escape the semiotic mediations of language and interpretation?” (2001, 79).
 26. Frances Hasso, personal communication, January 2003.

WORKS CITED

- Agosin, Marjorie. 2001. “Introduction.” In *Women, Gender, and Human Rights: A Global Perspective*, ed. M. Agosin, 1–11. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

- Allen, Beverly. 1996. *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Allen, Paula. 2001. "After the Storm." *Mother Jones* (January/February): 72–73.
- Ang, Ien. 1996. *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. New York: Routledge.
- Barry, Ellen, E. 1995. "Introduction." In *Postcommunism and the Body Politic*, ed. Ellen E. Barry, 1–11. New York: New York University Press.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Boose, Linda E. 2002. "Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement, and Serb Cultural Memory." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, 1 (autumn): 71–94.
- Brothers, Caroline. 1997. *War and Photography: A Cultural History*. London: Routledge.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1999. "Crisis in the Balkans." *Z Magazine* (May): 37–46.
- Conboy, Katie, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. 1997. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Drakulic, Slavenka. 1993. "Women and the New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nannette Funk and Magda Mueller, 123–30. New York: Routledge.
- Enloe, Cynthia. 2000. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Finkelstein, Norman G. 2000. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. London: Verso.
- Friend, Melanie. 1996. *Homes and Gardens*. London: Camerawork.
- . 2001. *No Place Like Home: Echoes From Kosovo*. San Francisco: Midnight Editions.
- Griffin, Michael. 1999. "The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism." In *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, 121–57. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Griffin, Michael, and Jongsoo Lee. 1995. "Picturing the Gulf War: Constructing an Image of War in Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72, 4 (winter): 813–25.
- Grewal, Inderpal. 1998. "On the New Global Feminism and the Family of Nations: Dilemmas of Feminist Transnational Practice." In *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*, ed. Ella Shohat, 501–530. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hallin, Daniel C. 1994. "Images of the Vietnam and the Persian Gulf Wars in U.S. Television." In *Seeing Through the Media: The Persian Gulf War*, ed. Susan Jeffords and Lauren Rabinovitz, 45–58. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Hanlon, Catherine Nolin, and Finola Shankar. 2000. "Gendered Spaces of Terror

- and Assault: The Testimonio of REMHI and the Commission for Historical Clarification in Guatemala." *Gender, Place and Culture* 7 (3): 265–86.
- Hay, James, Lawrence Grossberg, and Ellen Wartella, eds. 1996. *The Audience and its Landscape*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Haynes, Mike. 1999. "Theses on the Balkan War." In *International Socialism Journal* 83. Retrieved April 20, 2002, from <http://www.lpi.org.uk/ijissue.htm>
- Hirsch, Marianne. 1997. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2001. *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*. Retrieved February 13, 2003, from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/Kosovo/undword-03.htm>.
- Khan, Shahnaz. 2001. "Between Here and There: Feminist Solidarity and Afghan Women." *Genders* 33. Retrieved September 20, 2002, from http://www.genders.org/g33/g33_kahn.html.
- Koshy, Susan. 1999. "From Cold War to Trade War: Neocolonialism and Human Rights." *Social Text* 58, 17, 1 (spring): 1–32.
- Kozol, Wendy. 1994. *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Jeffords, Susan, and Lauren Rabinovitz, eds. 1994. *Seeing Through the Media: The Persian Gulf War*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press,.
- Liss, Andrea. 1998. *Trespassing Through the Shadows: Memory, Photography, and the Holocaust*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- MacKay, John, and Wexler, Laura, eds. 2001. "Introduction." *Yale Journal of Criticism*. 14, 1 (April): 1–3.
- Mertus, Julie. 1999a. *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1999b. "Women in Kosovo: Contested Terrains. The Role of National Identity in Shaping and Challenging Gender Identity." In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet, 171–86. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Milic, Andjelka. 1993. "Women and Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nannette Funk and Magda Mueller, 109–22. New York: Routledge.
- Morley, David. 2000. *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Newton, Julianne H. 2001. *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Penezic, Vida. 1995. "Women in Yugoslavia." In *Postcommunism and the Body Politic*, ed. Ellen E. Berry, 57–77. New York: New York University Press.
- Petras, James. 1999. "Aftermath: NATO in Kosova." *Z Magazine*. (October): 13–14.
- Price, Janet, and Magrit Shildrick, eds. 1999. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Rejali, Darius M. 1998. "After Feminist Analyses of Bosnian Violence." In *The*

- Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, 26–32. New York: New York University Press.
- Sanchez Casal, Susan. 2001. “I Am [Not] Like You: Ideologies of Selfhood in I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala.” In *Haunting Violations: Feminist Criticism and the Crisis of the ‘Real,’* ed. Wendy Hesford and Wendy Kozol, 76–110. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Schwartz, Dona. 1999. “Objective Representation: Photographs as Facts.” In *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, 158–81. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Sekola, Alan. 1989. “The Body and the Archive.” In *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton, 342–88. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Shohat, Ella. 1994. “The Media’s War.” In *Seeing Through the Media: The Persian Gulf War*, ed. Susan Jeffords and Lauren Rabinovitz, 147–54. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- , ed. 1998. *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press.
- Shulman, Holly Cowan. 1994. “The International Media and the Persian Gulf War: The Importance of the Flow of News.” In *Seeing Through the Media: The Persian Gulf War*, ed. Susan Jeffords and Lauren Rabinovitz, 107–20. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Sturken, Marita. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tagg, John. 1988. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Taguieff, Pierre-Andre, 2001. *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and its Doubles*. Translated and edited by Hassan Melehy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Taylor, John. 1991. *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*. London: Routledge.
- Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory. 2003. Retrieved February 13, 2003, www.ulrichsweb.com/ulrichsweb.
- War Photographer*. 2001. Produced and directed by Christian Frei with James Natchway. Christian Frei Filmproductions.
- Weine, Stevan. 1999. *When History is a Nightmare: Lives and Memories of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Williams, Val. 1994. *Warworks: Women, Photography and the Iconography of War*. London: Virago.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender & Nation*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Zelizer, Barbie. 1999. “From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory: Holocaust Photography, Then and Now.” In *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, 98–121. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 2000. *The Fragile Absolute or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* London: Verso.