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## Cloth and Iron Dresses: Reading Symbolic Reparation from Postwar Artworks That Address Gender Violence

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### **Abstract:**

*In this article, I investigate the methods and strategies that make postwar artworks of gender violence reparative by comparing two postwar artworks: "Thinking of You" created after the Kosovo conflict and the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. I argue that while both artworks address the systematic gender violence suffered by female victims in an armed conflict, the effect that the artworks have had on the audience and the victims are vastly different due to gendered factors. To illustrate the way in which these gendered factors impact the artists' portrayal and the means through which they are manifested in the artworks, I use Rubio-Marín's "Gender of Reparations" theory in considering how artwork's portrayal of female victims succeeds or fails in providing reparation to the female victims of gender violence.*

**Keywords:** Gender violence, symbolic reparations, restorative justice, art initiatives

### **1. Introduction**

Female victims of gender violence tend to be neglected in the reparation process during postwar reconstruction, hindering the full rehabilitation of society and constituting a serious form of gender injustice. Postwar artwork is an essential means of symbolic reparation with the potential to repair the memories and social structures of a society that has suffered from systemic violence. Unfortunately, not all artworks that address female victims of gender violence are reparative. While some artworks heal victims from past trauma, others exploit stereotypical images of female trauma to fulfill other patriarchal agendas such as nation-building. This increases the stigma of the female victims, making it harder for them to reintegrate into society and obtain closure.

In this article, I investigate the methods and strategies that make postwar artworks of gender violence reparative by comparing two postwar artworks: "Thinking of You," created after the Kosovo conflict and the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. I argue that while both artworks address the systematic gender violence suffered by female victims in an armed conflict, the effects that the artworks have had on the audience and the victims are vastly different due to gendered factors. To illustrate the way in which these gendered factors impact the artists' portrayal and the means through which they are manifested in the artworks, I use Rubio-Marín's "Gender of Reparations" theory in considering how artwork's portrayal of female victims succeeds or fails in providing reparation to the female victims of gender violence.

The main body of this paper is divided into three sections. The first section functions as the literature review. In this section, I explain how gender violence in conflict can be analyzed as collective trauma, classify different forms of reparations, outline the four-dimensional framework used by the International Center of Transitional Justice (ICTJ), assess the different ways art may be used for reparative justice, and present Ruth Rubio-Marín's "Gender of Reparations" theory on how gender impacts reparation programs (Ramírez-Barat, 2011; Rubio-Marín, 2009). I then identify a key gap in the existing literature: they fail to consider cultural and ideological factors specific to family structure and nation-building in the East Asian context. In the second section, I present two case studies of postwar artwork that address victims of gender violence – the "Thinking of You" art installation created after the Kosovo conflict and the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. I use ICTJ's four-dimensional framework as the criterion to measure the extent to which each artwork is reparative while using Ruth Rubio-Marín's "Gender of Reparations" theory to assess the ways in which these reparation programs successfully overcome gender barriers to deliver reparation to the victims. In the third section, I provide a summary and comparison of the two artworks, justify my findings through survey results, and analyze the ideologies that impact the artworks' level of reparation to the victims. The last section is the conclusion. I restate the components that make postwar artworks reparative to the victims of gender violence.

A few words on my positionality: As a female Chinese student studying at a private school in Beijing, I have no personal or social connection to Kosovo War in any way but consider the Nanjing Massacre of emotional significance. However, as a student researcher, in this paper, I will try my best to be objective and analyze the two artworks using the frameworks mentioned above.

## 2. Gender Violence in Conflict and Gender of Reparation

### 2.1. A General Definition of Gender Violence in Conflict as a Collective Trauma

ICTY defines gender violence as violence against victims based on their sex. It is the range of war crimes and crimes against humanity that includes rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex trafficking (ICTY 2017). The suffering of gender violence for anyone is indeed traumatic. Why should wartime gender violence be healed at a societal level? Despite the belief that gender violence is a form of trauma that impacts individuals, systematic gender violence affects the whole society and, therefore, is a collective trauma and needs reparation at the societal level. I will explain gender violence in conflict as a collective trauma in the following parts of this section.

According to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), gender violence is considered 'systematic' when gender violence has a political objective to destroy a community and when it is perpetrated on a very large scale against a group of civilians (International Court of Justice 2000).

Patricia Sellers, the former prosecution expert on gender crimes of the International Criminal Court, explains that gender violence is a weapon that destroys the personal integrity of a victim because "it goes to the psyche of the person, it goes to a physical sense of the person, and it goes to a social sense of the person" (ICTY 2011, 0:01:57 to 0:02:03). Additionally, the atrocity of gender violence not only traumatizes the victims but also traumatizes the whole society. The private experience of gender violence may become collective when the victim interacts with other people (Pain, 2021). To start with, survivors of gender violence will be stigmatized and marginalized by society. Additionally, survivors might also develop androphobia due to their traumatic experiences. This will cause them to experience difficulties in communicating with men, even in the context of the postwar period, which also negatively impacts the social networks of the victim and other members of society (Di Lellio, 2022). Therefore, the reparation of victims from war trauma, such as gender violence, is fundamental to the recovery of society in the post-conflict period.

### 2.2. Classification of Reparations and Its Significance from a Gendered Lens

In the context of postwar reconstruction, reparations are objects given or actions taken as an attempt to deal with the consequences of political violence (Hamber & Palmery, 2009). There are two classifications of reparation programs: holistic vs. legalistic reparation and symbolic vs. material reparation (Jeffery, 2020; Rubio-Marín, 2009). Legalistic reparation includes the application of judicial or administrative sanctions for perpetrators (Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Sierra Leone 2007), and holistic reparations account for the institutional reform of the society. Material reparation is focused on measurable compensations to the victims, while symbolic reparations account for 'moral reparations,' such as museums, commemorations, and art dedicated to the victims (Hamber & Palmery, 2009; Roht-Arriaza, 2004, 4). Though one classification focuses on the differences in the type of reparations and the other focuses on the differences in the process of reparations, both reflect the fact that some reparations are external and include measurable criteria, such as financial compensation, while other reparations are internal and focus on deeper personal and social dimensions of reparations.

What are the limitations of purely finite, material, and legalistic reparations? They may understate the nature and extent of the damage suffered by the victims because traumatic experiences cannot be solely measured by concrete monetary amounts or specific duration of jail time. Therefore, a purely material and legalistic reparation runs the risk of allowing perpetrators to move on after fulfilling these reparations, leaving victims with a sense of injustice.

From a gendered lens, holistic reparations for female victims of gender violence are essential for how they challenge the stereotypes of women produced during and after armed conflicts. A successful holistic reparation should represent women in ways that recognize their agency. It should also show society women's complex role during the war. On the other hand, these reparations can only be achieved symbolically because, unlike resource-intensive reparations that can only target a small group of people, symbolic reparations can easily be implemented across an entire society (Hamber & Palmery, 2009). Additionally, given the fact that the loss the victims suffered is intangible and not easily quantifiable, symbolic reparations give the victims the satisfaction that more meaningful and deeper actions were done to amend their grief and that, in a psychological state, a resolution concerning past trauma is reached. This is because, unlike material reparations, such as financial compensation, symbolic reparations are also immeasurable (Hamber & Palmery, 2009).

Therefore, from a gendered lens, we can reasonably conclude that holistic reparations programs are most effective for female victims of gender violence when they are implemented in symbolic ways.

### 2.3. Art and Reparation

Of the various tools of symbolic reparation, the use of art to promote "the move from legalistic to holistic approaches" of reparation has become increasingly popular (Jeffery, 2020, 3).

What, however, are the specific mechanisms through which art can foster holistic reparation? The International Center for Transitional Justice's four-dimensional framework for using art in reparative programs outlines four different ways in which art can foster reparation:

- Dissemination of information,
- Establishment of dialogue,
- Promotion of consultation,
- Encouragement of participation (Ramírez-Barat, 2011).

As the art historian Jill Bennett writes, "Visual Art ... does not offer us a privileged view of the inner subject; rather, by giving trauma extension in space or lived place, it invites an awareness of different modes of inhabitation" (Bennett, 2005, 12). When practicing reparations for victims of gender violence, art is the tool of reparation that most effectively achieves these objectives because it provides the audience with more open-minded and multi-dimensional representations and interpretations of traumatic pasts (Hirsch, 2017).

Next, each of these components in the communication process will be explained with relevance to the reparation of gender violence, using the framework given by the International Center for Transitional Justice in their *Guidelines on Designing and Implementing Outreach Programs for Transitional Justice*.

The dissemination of information refers to the public's access to the information needed to understand the goals and rationale of reparation. By providing both adequate reception and comprehension of the institution and its objectives, outreach programs are then able to empower the public to participate in the process and cooperate with the institution (Ramírez-Barat, 2011). The concept of dissemination of information is also important in the context of the reparation of gender violence because, due to various factors, the historical truth of gender violence may be unknown to many people in society, especially when it is under the influence of political forces. In such a situation, it is essential for art activism to inform the public about the historical context of the occurrence of gender violence so the public can better grasp the need for reparation.

The dissemination of information is an important objective for artists to focus their efforts on when the public is ignorant of the systematic gender violence that happened during conflicts. However, there are other situations in which society is aware of gender violence but keeps silent and avoids discussions so the trauma can never be repaired. In such cases, establishing dialogue becomes crucial for the implementation of reparation. For outreach programs, this dialogue refers to both the communication between the population and public officials and the broader public discussion of the institution's work (Ramírez-Barat, 2011). For the reparation process of gender violence, the establishment of dialogue through art is more about breaking through public secrecy and opening the discussion of false stereotypes and stigmas attached to the victims.

While the dissemination of information and establishment of dialogue is about raising awareness, consultation and participation are in solidarity with past or contemporary victims of violence (Hirsch, 2017). The objectives for consultation and participation are very similar in outreach programs and reparation through art. Consultation is about giving the victims a voice during the creation process of outreach programs or reparation, thus giving them agency and ownership of the experience. Participation is about constructing public ownership of the process and thus encouraging the public to take the essence of the program and continue building legacies from it (Ramírez-Barat, 2011).

#### *2.4. Impact of Gender on Reparations*

While these new tools from social theory and policy provide powerful new ways to use art for holistic and symbolic reparations, they tend to ignore how the reparation process for victims of gender violence is impacted specifically by gender, especially in the case of highly gendered phenomena such as gender-based violence. Rubio-Marín addresses this problem explicitly with his Gender of Reparations theory. It recognizes that women and girls have been addressed inadequately in the peace building process and considers how the gender aspect impacts the reparation program (Rubio-Marín, 2009). It is a lens that interrogates the lack of acknowledgment of women's advocacy during and after an armed conflict. War and gender violence have not only traumatized individuals mentally and physically but also destroyed their social relationships; thus, the Gender of Reparations addresses the problems relating to how gender biases overly simplify and stigmatize the gender violence women experience during the war, considering how the biases would impede the victims from reconnecting with the society after the war. Rubio-Marín offers several reasons why women are not sufficiently represented or supported in reparative programs.

##### 2.4.1. Women Are Considered Not Involved in War

Though many women are tortured because of armed conflict – for example, assault and electric shocks on pregnant women, inadequate medical care leading to miscarriages, rape, etc. (Goldblatt, 2006), the types of harm typically faced by men in these situations – such as deaths in combat situations – are more recognized as violations of human rights. This is because, in armed conflicts, the main mobilization for men to enlist is to protect their women and children from the enemy (Gullick, 1915). When the war ends, with the emphasis on the heroic acts done by men on the battlefields, people come with a presumption that women were well protected back home. Thus, the suffering of women during the war is largely downplayed (Brandon & Palmary, 2009).

##### 2.4.2. Subordinate Position of Women in Society

Rubio-Marín argues that women's role in society was constrained to domestic life and is highly simplified to 'wives' and 'mothers,' which are two very gendered roles. It is believed that women are passive outside of their domestic circle and they are 'agentless' and require protection from men (Rubio-Marín, 2009, 336). Therefore, when it comes to gender violence, the notion of women as passive victims incapable of recovering by themselves is reinforced, which makes it harder for victims to recover from the trauma.

In many societies, the victims of gender violence are isolated, ostracized, and ashamed because they are perceived as being stained. This negative perception about women is based on the patriarchal system of the society that believes in the gender stereotype that women must stay pure and dedicate themselves to their husbands. Therefore, in the postwar

period, victims of gender violence not only need to recover from the traumatic experience but also face condemnation from the whole of society (Hamber & Palmery, 2009).

### *2.5. Research Significance*

In the foregoing subsections, we have looked at different types of reparation. The ICTJ's four-dimensional framework shows the mechanisms through which artwork plays a reparative role in postwar societies, and Rubio-Marin's two-factor analysis shows why these reparative processes might be hindered by gender factors. Although the frameworks mentioned above provide good context for the research, there are still foreseeable improvements. Firstly, the holistic vs. legalistic, symbolic vs. material reparations literature fails to pay attention to how gender affects reparations, especially in the context of wartime gender violence. While there are some theorists who put forward sophisticated frameworks on how gender affects reparations, they draw their examples largely from Europe, Africa, or Middle Eastern contexts and neglect to pay attention to the ways in which gender reparations play out in the highly patriarchal and Confucian East Asian societies. Therefore, this paper attempts to solve these challenges by choosing one case study of artwork from Southeast Europe and another from East Asia, examining their work through a gendered analysis that takes into account the regional-specific cultural and ideological factors.

## **3. Case Study 1: Kosovo Conflict and 'Thinking of You'**

### *3.1. Gender Violence during the Kosovo Conflict*

Gender violence was perpetrated systematically during the Kosovo war. The Kosovo War refers to the conflict between Serbs and Albanians over Kosovo and can be dated back to the formation of their states in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when they were both states built on the remains of the Ottoman Empire. During this time, the Serbs recognized Kosovo as the cradle of their nation because they believed in an ethno-nationalist myth of their nation being born of a glorious fight against the Ottomans at the 1389 Battle of Kosovo (Di Lellio & Kraja, 2020). In 1912, the Kingdom of Serbia annexed Kosovo and they found out that the land was populated with Albanians. The Serbians claimed Albanians were hostile and should be either eradicated, assimilated, or exterminated (Banac, 2015).

With the establishment of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia in 1945, the ethnic conflict was controlled. However, in the mid-1980s, an economic recession struck the Yugoslav Federation. The Serbian nationalists started to control the public discourse and revive the myth of the Battle of Kosovo. They claimed their need to dominate Kosovo and emphasized the threat of the Muslim Albanians with their large demographic. The Serbs also condemned the Albanians for ethnically charged rape, though there was no evidence confirmed about it. In the press, Serbs from Kosovo publicly threatened, "Let them rape; we can rape too." This gendered propaganda that overtones systematic rape was frequently used in the mobilization for the Kosovo War (Žarkov, 2007).

The Kosovo War began in 1998 when Serbian President Slobodan Milošević started a brutal counterinsurgency effort toward not just the separatist guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) but also the civilians, causing the displacement of about half a million Albanians by the end of 1998 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 1999). The war ended on June 13, 1999, due to the intervention of NATO on March 24, 1999.

After the war, it was estimated that 23,000 to 45,600 rapes were committed in Kosovo, with a total estimated population of 1,700,000 (Bracewell, 2000). Anna Di Lellio and Garentina Kraja found out that Albanian women were targeted because of their identity as part of the Albanian community, and systematic gender violence was used to instill fear into the Albanian community as part of the Serbian strategy to alter the ethnic composition in Kosovo. Transitional human rights organizations thus concluded that the rapes committed by the Serbian army on Albanian women were systematic (Di Lellio & Kraja, 2020).

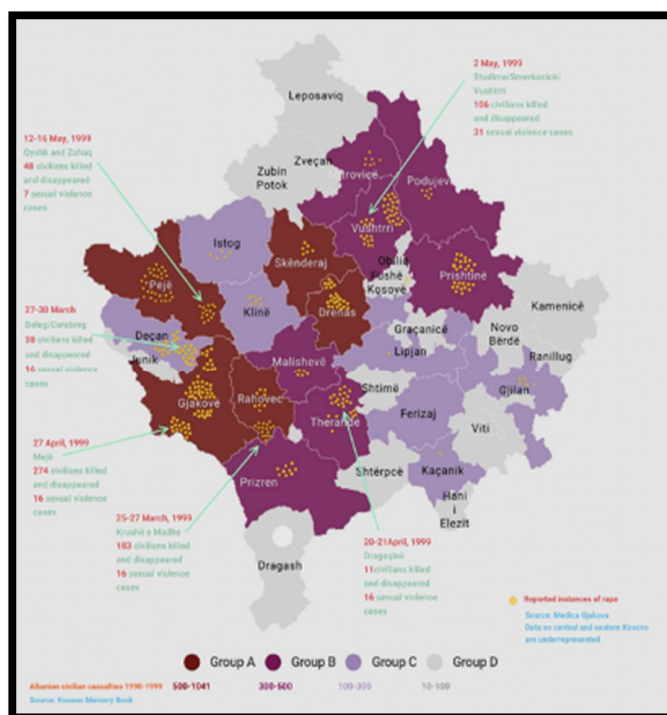


Figure 1: Map of Gender Violence and Massacres, Kosovo 1999 (Di Lellio & Kraja, 2020)  
Context of the Artwork Thinking of You

The art installation "Thinking of You" was created to advocate for the rights of the female victims of gender violence in Kosovo.

The installation was created in 2015, which is 17 years after the Kosovo war. During the postwar period, gender violence that happened to women was considered a national secret and was never publicly discussed. In other words, there are no symbolic reparations for the victims of this war crime. Additionally, victims faced discrimination and ostracization from society. For example, the local media condemned the first children who were born out of gender violence as "children of shame" (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1547), and when the identities of the survivors who agreed to testify to ICTY in indictments for gender violence were leaked to the public, they were forced to move to another country and never return to Kosovo because of the scolds they received from the society (Di Lellio et al., 2019).

The creators of the artwork are Alketa Xhafa Mripa, a Kosovo-born artist based in London, who dedicated her creative work to the promotion of women's liberation and independence (Mripa n.d.), and Anna Di Lellio, a sociologist and policy analyst passionate for human life and human rights (Di Lellio, 2022). They created the artwork to fight against the stigma associated with gender violence and empowered the victims to advocate for their rights (Di Lellio et al., 2019).

### 3.2. Content of the Artwork



Figure 2: Image of the Art Installation "Thinking of You"  
Photo Credits: Jetmir Idrizi (Di Lellio et al., 2019)

The art installation was a display of 5,000 dresses situated in the Pristina football stadium of the capital of Kosovo on the anniversary of Pristina's liberation by NATO forces after a three-month bombing campaign by the Serbs. The art installation was a one-day exhibition on June 12, 2015 (Marí, 2015).

### 3.2.1. Establishing Dialogue

One way that the artwork was able to implement reparation was by breaking the public secrecy about gender violence that happened during the war. Because gender violence was considered a shameful secret, the artists used various strategies to increase the visibility of the artwork and raise a wide range of discussions on the issue. In analyzing the art installation, I am following the observations made by Anna Di Lellio et al. (2019) and Marianne Hirsch in "Touching Memory: From Art to Action" (2017.)

First, the artists invited celebrities and politicians to support the art installation to increase public attention and stimulate discussions. Among the donors of the 5000 dresses there were local celebrities such as Rita Ora, an internationally renowned pop singer, and politicians, such as the former President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga. The art project was also supported by national icons such as Rifat Jashari, who told the artist in an interview: "I support them, and I support you" (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1549). Voices from prominent figures in the country were key to breaking the silence taboo in Kosovo. For example, the interview between Rifat Jashari and the artist went viral when it was posted on Facebook, inspiring the population to break the public secrecy of the issue using hashtags #MendojPerTy and #ThinkingOfYou and other means of sharing the history of gender violence in the war on their home page (Di Lellio et al., 2019).

Secondly, the artists incorporated multi-media to promote their project, creating open dialogue and allowing a wider range of audiences to recognize the violence against women in the Kosovo War. For example, the artists created a documentary featuring the exhibition, which helps to overcome the limitation on the exposure of the art installation due to its short display time (only one day). The artists also used the broadcasting system to reach a wider audience. For one month, the message that tells the survivors, "You are not alone in this," was broadcast on local television and through social media, further breaking the silence on this topic (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1549).

Due to the artists' efforts to establish dialogues, raise discussions, and recognize, it is no longer possible for people in Kosovo to pretend that the violence did not happen to the women during the conflict (Di Lellio et al., 2019).

### 3.3. Consultation

In the design of the artwork, the creators deliberately sought to emphasize the agency of female victims in the following ways.

Firstly, by using dresses to imply the victims, the artists gave the audiences "the opportunity to symbolically touch and see survivors in the disembodied dresses." However, at the same time, the audiences were not constrained into believing that the victims were women with particular features (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1555).

Secondly, the collaborative nature of this art installation gave the victims the advocacy to salvage themselves from the trauma by donating a dress. By donating a dress, victims are encouraged to step up to a public setting to share their private stories of trauma. By whispering, "I am one of them" and "Now I know I am not alone" to the artist, the victims were thus able to share the burden that they had been carrying alone for so long and reconcile with their pasts (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1551). There are also victims who choose to publicize their message. Among the donations of the dresses, two skirts include a few sentences from their previous owner. "This skirt has been hiding a story since the spring of 1998," says one. "I have a hidden experience," reads another (Di Lellio et al., 2019, 1552). These sentences on the dresses show the victim's initiative in accepting their experience and empowering other victims to unpack their private burdens.

By involving the victims as part of the art creation process, the artists were able to demonstrate that instead of being passive victims, female victims have the agency to recover from the trauma by themselves.

### 3.3.1. Participation



*Figure 3: Dresses Were Donated by Women and Girls, as well as Men and Boys from All around the Country  
Photo Credits: Jetmir Idrizi (Mripa N.D.)*

The artists did not only involve the victims of gender violence but also successfully embodied the audience as part of the art creation process. The dresses on the clotheslines were all donated by the survivors and other women across Kosovo. With the involvement of the public before the opening of the installation, the artwork was able to gain a lot of public attention to acknowledge the gender violence that happened during the Kosovo War.

As mentioned previously, this direct engagement with the public helped to unveil the public secret for "open discussion." More importantly, this created a network of women in different fields: artists, intellectuals, activists, politicians, celebrities, and women in other professions to show support for each other. People came forward to donate dresses that had special meanings for them, such as their favorite dresses or dresses that could have been worn when they were attacked during other gender crimes. Thus, the dresses also carry parts of the donors' identity, and by donating them to the art installation, the donors were able to show their ownership and dedication in the process of reconciling with the victims. In some cases, mothers and daughters came together to donate, embodying the transmission of the legacies from this artwork (Hirsch, 2017).

As Marianne Hirsch mentioned in her work, "The moments of embodied exchange of clothing and stories, the networks created, all worked to combat silence even more effectively than the installation itself" (Hirsch, 2017, 17). In such an environment, the constraints on women's role in society based on gender stereotypes are more likely to be shattered. The performative gesture of this collection campaign mobilizes individuals to take actual actions to show their support. The installation visualized the support from people from all different fields and thus amplified the sense of acceptance and empathy from the society to the survivors, helping them to recover from their trauma.

### 3.3.2. Applying Theory

'Thinking of You' creates gender reparation because it establishes dialogue among the public about gender violence, promotes consultation, and encourages participation during the creation process.

Using the Gender of Reparations framework developed by Ruth Rubio-Marín, it is clear how the art installation managed to combat two prejudices about women: Women are considered not involved in wars, and women are considered subordinate in society (Rubio-Marín, 2009).

To start with, the art installation strengthens the statement that the women are direct victims of the war via the establishment of dialogue. Because of the art installation and its promotion, society was able to face the fact that the suffering of the women is not a private trauma that they need to deal with themselves but a collective trauma that requires discussions and reparations on a societal level. The establishment of dialogue is a method of symbolic reparations. However, it also prompts the government to create material reparation for the victims by reinforcing the fact that women are also affected by the war. By the end of 2017, due to the mobilization created by the art installation, the law 04/L-172 was implemented to provide a pension to survivors as civilian victims of the war (Di Lellio et al., 2019).

Secondly, through the promotion of consultation and the encouragement of participation, the art installation rejects the claim that women are subordinate in society. By creating a network of solidarity between women with different identities in society, the art installation shows women have complex roles in society other than the roles of 'mothers' and 'wives' (Rubio-Marín, 2009, 336). For example, by including interviews of female supporters in the documentary featuring the exhibition and holding dress collections in public spaces, the installation allows women to openly announce their support, which demonstrates their roles as 'advocators' and 'protectors' in the society. The installation also shows that the collective power of women is significant, so their voices should not be subordinate to men. Additionally, by mobilizing public support, the art installation creates a safe space for the victims to unpack their private traumas, where the experiences of gender violence are not considered a stigma (Hamber & Palmery, 2009).

In conclusion, the art installation 'Thinking of You' is reparative to the victims of gender violence.

## **4. Case Study 2: Nanjing Massacre and the Sculpture Group In Front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall**

### *4.1. Gender Violence during the Nanjing Massacre*

Systematic gender violence also happened during the Nanjing Massacre. The Nanjing Massacre happened from December 1937 – January 1938, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, which resulted from Japan's decades-long imperialistic policy to dominate China militarily and politically to secure its raw material reserves and other resources (New World Encyclopedia n.d.).

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Nanjing was the capital of China. Therefore, Japanese General Matsui Iwane ordered the Japanese army to destroy Nanjing to break the spirit of Chinese resistance (History.com Editors, 2010). The Nanjing Massacre is known for its brutality against Chinese women. In fact, it is called the 'Rape of Nanking,' as between 20,000 and 80,000 women were sexually assaulted (History.com Editors, 2010).

### *4.2. Context of the Sculpture Group in Front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall*

The artwork was created in 2007, 69 years after the Nanjing Massacre. The creation of the artwork is not aimed at providing reparations for the female victims but looks to use this historical experience to bolster Chinese national identity.

The Second Sino-Japanese War ended in 1945, and immediately the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) resumed their Civil War. In 1949, the Civil War ended, and China entered the postwar period and had the time to reestablish social order. During these 58 years, the national memorialization of the Second Sino-Japanese War changed drastically.



Before Maoist China, the people of China had just been through 40 years of turmoil, starting from the conflicts between Northern Warlords, and needed a 'victor narrative' to establish national pride and stabilize the new regime. Thus, during Maoist China, the dominant narrative was on resistance rather than victimization. Between 1946 and 1982, there were only fifteen articles in Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) that included 'Nanjing Massacre' as a key phrase, and the massacre itself was not the focus of any story; school textbooks have no mention of the event at all until 1979 (Coble, 2015).

Mao's narrative of a heroic and resurgent New China dominated national discourse about the war from the 1950s to the 1970s. Starting from 1980, with China's economic boom, the wealth gap widened, and the China government feared that it would create class hatred. With the need to construct new nationalist rhetoric that holds citizens of different classes together, discourse about the war in China shifted to a 'victim narrative' to invoke collective pain (Coble, 2015). "China was a victim of Japanese aggression and today's China must not forget!" became the theme for the new remembering of the war (Coble, 2015, 404). The atrocities committed by the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War suddenly became an essential component of China's new national identity.

Many commemoration projects began then. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was established in 1985. December 13 was established as Commemoration Day for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall is tied to an explicitly political agenda – the signs outside of the site proclaim with pride and honesty that "Sites are for the encouragement of patriotic education," which shows that the narrative is monolithic rather than nuanced (Coble, 2015, 166).

Artist Weishan Wu is the Director of the National Art Museum of China and Vice Chairman of the China Art Association. In 2005, he was commissioned by the government of Jiangsu Province and Nanjing city to create a sculpture group for the expansion of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (Wu & Wang, 2015). Weishan Wu explained his artistic intention as "Through the language of art, I want to bring these unjustly dead souls back to life and tell the world about the distress our nation has suffered and the struggles and cries of ordinary people in the face of disaster ....." (People.com.cn, 2018).

#### 4.3. Content of the Artwork



Figure 4: Image of the Sculpture Group in Front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (People.com.Cn, 2018)

The sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall includes four main themes:

- 'Disintegration of Families,'
- 'Flee from Calamity,'
- 'Ghosts Cry' and
- 'Wall of Victory.'

'Disintegration of Families' contains one sculpture depicting a mother holding a son, crying to heaven. 'Flee from Calamity' contains ten sculptures depicting a total of 21 victims of the massacre suffering in pain or trying to escape from the atrocity. 'Ghosts Cry' contains one triangular sculpture lying in front of the audience, forming a door. The structure is split in the middle, allowing the audience to walk through. The sculpture depicts a group of victims with distorted gestures, trying to escape from the tragedy. 'Wall of Victory' is a relief wall with a depiction of the ultimate victory of China. Since this research paper focuses on the reparations to female victims of gender violence, I will focus on the depiction of females in this sculpture group, including two sculptures, one from 'Disintegration of Families' depicting a desperate mother, and one from 'Flee from Calamity' depicting a young woman committing suicide. The sculpture group is a permanent exhibition in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall.

#### 4.4. Dissemination of Information

The sculptures, as visual representations, are successful in disseminating information about the gender violence that took place during the Nanjing Massacre. In fact, the goal is to make these atrocities hyper-visible. As mentioned in the historical context of the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, due to the government's emphasis on the "victor narrative" after the Sino-Japanese war, the truth about the rape that happened in Nanjing was unknown to the public from the 1950s to 1970s. This is different from the case study in Kosovo. The discourses were silent about the gender violence that happened during the Nanjing Massacre, not because of the stigma associated with rape but because



access to the information was blocked by the previous government (Mao). The artist in one news journal explained that his goal is to solidify history and forge a new national spirit (Wu, 2014). The artist recalled in the journal that when a group of celebrities visited the Nanjing Massacre Victims Memorial Hall, they were laughing and drinking while looking at the names of the victims, showing no respect or sorrow for what had happened (Wu, 2014). This is because Mao's heroic narrative dominated the discourse from the 1950s to the 1970s; therefore, when the government decided in the 1980s to shift the narrative from 'victor' to 'victim,' the audience was not able to make a change in their point of view on Nanjing massacre based on the information they were taught.

To create a new national memorialization, the first step the artist needed to take was to use sculptures to disseminate the truth about what happened during the Nanjing Massacre. To achieve this goal, the artist used a realistic portrayal of the victims' suffering to communicate to the audience the history and emphasize the pain the civilians endured. Every character was engraved in great detail, especially their gestures and facial expressions as the artist said in his interview, "Physical display is the best evidence for history" (Wu, 2014). Using sculptures as a revivification of history, the artist was able to disseminate his 'victim narration' of the history of the Nanjing Massacre, including the gender violence Nanjing women have suffered, effectively to the audience (Wu, 2014).

## 5. Consultation

Several pieces of evidence show that the female survivors of gender violence in the Nanjing Massacre were not involved in the creation process.

Firstly, the portrayal of the female victims is based on stereotypical gender roles that women only serve as 'mothers' and 'wives' in society. Looking at the only sculpture in section 1- 'Disintegration of Families,' we can see that the artist portrayed a mother with ripped clothes, holding a dying baby, and looking desperately at the sky. In his use of a fatherless and childless home as the ultimate symbol of a broken home, the artist implicitly elevates the importance of the husband over the wife, the male over the female, and the child over the mother. When discussing the artwork that shows how a destroyed family is one without a father and then without a son, even in a memorial about gender violence against women, it betrays a patriarchal Confucian mentality that leads to the female victim's experience being completely erased. He goes on to explain that he is using this mother figure to symbolize the "motherland, which is full of holes, patches, and scars" (People.com.cn, 2018). This shows that his motive for portraying this female victim is not to show the trauma of gender violence but to use her to refer to the suffering of the whole nation. Not only is that aim political rather than humanistic, but the artist also objectifies women as 'land,' which shows his stereotypical view of women as passive victims of gender violence.



Figure 5: Image of 'Disintegration of Families' (People.com.cn, 2018)

Second, the techniques and style the artist used to create the sculptures emphasized the permanence of the trauma the victim suffered but neglected the consideration of the survivor and dismissed their hope to recover from the trauma. The sculptural techniques include knifing, bludgeoning, beating, and hand-sculpting, and the traces created by these techniques were aimed at manifesting the psychological wounds the victims experienced during the violence (Wu, 2014). By physically embedding the wound into the iron sculptures, the artist conveyed the permanency of the trauma. Just like the traces on the iron sculptures cannot be redone, he implies that the psychological trauma the victims experienced in gender violence can never be resolved. The artist expressed his belief that women who experienced gender violence are forever stained more explicitly in the sculpture of a young woman attempting suicide after being raped.

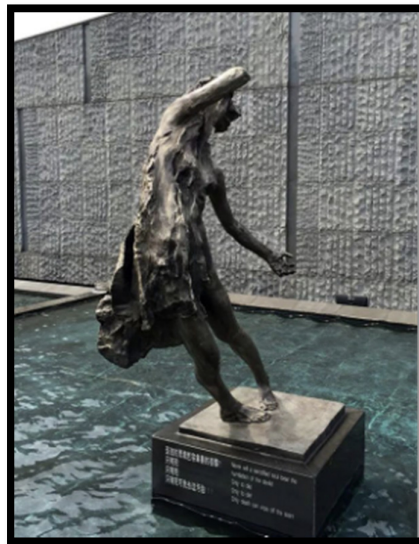


Figure 6: Image of One of the Sculptures in 'Flee from Calamity' (People.com.cn, 2018)

On the base of the sculpture, the artist wrote a poem to illustrate his work, which read like this:

*"Never will a sacramental soul bear the  
The humiliation of the devil  
Only to die!  
Only to die!  
Only death can wipe all the stain"*

(People.com.cn, 2018)

In the poem, 'sacramental' refers to the gendered stereotype that women should always be pure physically and mentally, and the word 'humiliation' shows that the damage the perpetrator has done to the victims is more mental than physical. The repetition of 'only to die' shows that to the artist, the stain of being sexually assaulted is so unbearable that the victim does not even deserve to live. This message is gendered, and it certainly does not express the voice of the survivors who try hard to live with marginalization and wrongful judgment by people in society who hold the same opinion as the artist.

### 5.1. Participation

How the sculpture group in the memorial attempts to elicit engagement and marginalizes the experiences and perspectives of women can be shown in two ways:

- First, the engagement between the audience and the artwork does not allow the audience to interact directly with the art pieces. Unlike the exhibition in the art installation 'Thinking of You,' the only way for the public to engage in the artwork is to visit the sculptures, meaning that the audience could not contribute to the artwork in any way.
- Secondly, by using a third person's view to portray the victims, the artist objectifies the victim, making the audience see the scene not from the victims' perspective but as an observer, which estranges the audience from the victim and decreases the public ownership in healing the survivors.

The result of the lack of participation is that the public is not able to take full ownership of their responsibility of healing victims of gender violence and accepting them into their social circle.

### 5.2. Applying Theory

The sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall implemented reparation through the dissemination of information but failed to promote consultation and participation. Therefore, from a gendered perspective, it did not succeed in creating reparation for the female victims it addresses in its work. This can be justified using the Gender of Reparations framework developed by Ruth Rubio-Marín that the art installation failed to combat one of the two prejudices against women: Women are considered not involved in wars, and women are considered subordinate in society (Rubio-Marín, 2009).

Admittedly, the art installation strengthens the statement that women are direct victims of the war through the dissemination of information. Before the artwork, people undermined the suffering of the civilians in the Nanjing Massacre and were disrespectful in memorial halls because they were educated by the 'victor narrative' for decades. However, after a compelling visualization of the trauma was created, the audiences are more likely to be emotionally influenced and take in the narration where citizens (men and women) are direct victims of the war.

On the other hand, a keyway in which the sculpture failed to be reparative lies in the fact that it reinforces the passivity of women, which is due to the artist's biased opinion and the lack of consultation and participation. Recall that according to my earlier account of Ruth Rubio-Marín Gender of Reparations theory, the second way in which gendered factors stop reparations for women is considered subordinate in societies. In the sculpture 'Disintegration of Families,' the

artist shows that the most desperate situation for a woman is to lose her husband and child. Though it is admittable that losing two significant family members is brutal to anyone, the artist decides that losing a child and a partner is more depressing for a woman because he believes that this loss also diminishes the two main functions women have in society, which is 'mothers' and 'wives' (Rubio-Marín, 2009, 336). Additionally, as mentioned in the analysis, by portraying a young woman attempting suicide after being raped, the artist further stigmatizes the experience of gender violence for female survivors. This portrayal is influenced by the patriarchal system of the society that believes in the gender stereotype that women must stay pure and dedicate themselves to their husbands (Hamber & Palmery, 2009). As mentioned in the literature review, Brandon Hamber and Ingrid Palmery argued that for reparations to be truly holistic, they need to represent women in ways that recognize their agency and their complex role in the war (Hamber & Palmery, 2009). In the exhibition, Nanjing women are portrayed solely as victims of rape, ignoring their complex role in the Second Sino-Japanese War as nurses, guerilla fighters, etc. Due to the lack of consultation with the female survivors and the absence of participation, the female victims shown in the sculptures are portrayed with unitary representation and with bias.

In conclusion, the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall is anti-reparative to the victims of gender violence.

## 6. Analysis

Using the four-dimensional framework used by the International Centre of Transitional Justice (ICTJ) to assess the different ways art may be used for reparations, we see that both artworks successfully increased the public discourse on the topic of gender violence during wartime through the dissemination of information and the establishment of dialogue. However, each depicts female victims of gender violence in vastly different ways. This creates different interactions between the artwork and the public due to their differences in the promotion of consultation and encouragement of participation. In terms of the depiction of the victims, the artists of 'Thinking of You' abstractly implied the presence of the victims through hanging dresses, while the artist of the Sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall portrayed the victims in great detail and realistically. The artists of 'Thinking of You' created a first-person narrative of the history by giving the survivors of gender violence a chance to express themselves in the creation process, while the artist of the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall created a third-person narrative by freezing the scene of the victims in agony and allowing the audience to observe them from a bystander view. In terms of interactivity, the artists of 'Thinking of You' actively engaged the audience by inviting them as part of the creation process, while the Sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall made the audience passive viewers of his 'victim narration' of the history.

	<b>Thinking of You</b>	<b>Sculpture Group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall</b>
Style of Depiction	Abstract/Implicit	Realistic
Point of View	1 <sup>st</sup> Person	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person
Interactivity	Active	Passive

*Table 1: Differences in Style of Depiction, Point of View and Interactivity in the Two Artworks*

Using Ruth Rubio-Marín's 'Gender of Reparations' theory to assess how these reparation programs successfully overcome gender barriers to deliver reparation to the victims, we are able to conclude that the artwork 'Thinking of You' has overcome the gender barrier, while the sculptures in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall has not. This is because 'Thinking of You' not only healed the victims of gender violence but also passed on hope to the audience who participated in creating the artwork, therefore serving its function of rehabilitating the whole society from this collective trauma. On the other hand, the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall further stigmatized and shamed the victims, and it mainly transmitted fear, shame, and hatred to the audience to enhance nationalism, which did not help with rehabilitating the society from this collective trauma.

	<b>Thinking of You</b>	<b>Sculpture Group in front of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall</b>
Victim Response	Hope, Redemption, Catharsis	Shame, Stigma, Trauma
Audience Response	Hope	Emotive (Fear, Shame, Nationalism, Hatred)
Reparative	Yes	No

*Table 2: Expected Differences in Audience Response, Victim Response and Reparative in the Two Artworks Factors Impacting the Level of Reparation*

Looking at culturally and nation-specific patriarchal ideologies that impact the extent to which two prejudices on women identified by Rubio-Marín were combated, we are able to see that because 'Thinking of You' is created by a group of women's rights advocates, and there was a strong emphasis on gender and thriving for equity between men and women. Nowhere in Kosovo is artwork of national greatness or rejuvenation mentioned. In the Chinese case, in contrast, the focus is not simply on rehabilitation but on rejuvenating a nation to historic greatness. Therefore, the gender aspect of gender violence was neglected.

## 7. Conclusion

The title of this paper alludes to the difference in art mediums used in 'Thinking of You' and the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall sculpture group. The dresses in 'Thinking of You' are made of cloth, and the dress worn by the suicidal young woman in the Nanjing exhibit is made of iron. However, after a thorough analysis of the two artworks using a gendered lens, we can see that 'cloth' and 'iron' can be read metaphorically for their reparative qualities for victims of gender violence.

Cloth is adjustable; it symbolizes the art installation 'Thinking of You,' which is an artwork that helps women become more adapted to their suffering. The cloth is washable, meaning that it can be cleaned, purified, and worn again. This symbolizes the message 'Thinking of You' is expressing to the public, that is, the trauma of gender violence can be resolved. Additionally, allowing the public to donate their dresses results in a colorful compilation of 5000 unique and personalized dresses and shows the complex role women played during wartime.

On the other hand, iron is stiff; it symbolizes the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Memorial Hall, which is an artwork that freezes the moment of trauma into permanence. The inflexible feature of the iron shows how the artist confined women's role in the war to only 'wives' and 'mothers,' and the rigidity of the iron symbolizes the message the sculpture group in front of the Nanjing Memorial Hall is expressing to the public, that is, the trauma of gender violence is a permanent stigma.

Admittedly, the loss of the victims cannot be fully healed by any kind of reparations. It is also true that reparations cannot ensure a warless future. However, reparations are still significant because they reflect how the newly established society treats past trauma. Trauma can be remembered in different ways. The pain can be memorized as stiff iron, which always haunts people's hearts as they look back. At the same time, the experience can be remembered as soft cloth, which serves as a protection for people, bringing solidarity and reminding them of the importance of working together to achieve a greater future.

It is always important for the historical narration to remember the pain. However, more importantly, historical narration, such as postwar artworks, should emphasize reparation and the establishment of new social orders. As the former President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, mentioned in her speech at the opening of the exhibition 'Thinking of You,' "There is a lot of hope in this society, which embraces everyone. This is only the first step. There is much more work to do together." (Shala 2015, 0:40:37 to 0:40:48). Narrating the history in a reparative way is not just for victims to reconcile with their past, but also for them to reconnect with society and together rebuild a brighter future.

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