

international instruments have been gaining political traction at the same time the economic crisis is likely to erode, if not reverse, the most promising of these efforts.

Montoya's book will be of great interest to those wishing to better grasp why the reach of global rhetoric has fallen short in confronting the harsh realities experienced by particular groups of abused women throughout the EU's member states and candidate countries.

R. Amy Elman is the William Weber Chair of Social Science and a Professor of Political Science at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI: amy.elman@kzoo.edu

Sex and International Tribunals: The Erasure of Gender from the War Narrative. By Chiseche Salome Mibenge. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 248 pp. \$55.

doi:10.1017/S1743923X14000166

Rosemary Grey
University of New South Wales

International tribunals produce simplistic narratives of gender-based violence, argues Chiseche Salome Mibenge in this insightful book, *Sex and International Tribunals: The Erasure of Gender from the War Narrative*. The book focuses on three institutions in sub-Saharan Africa: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). By critiquing the stories these institutions tell about gender-based violence, and by highlighting stories they leave out, Mibenge stitches together a messier, more fragmented, but ultimately more sophisticated narrative of gender-based violence than these tribunals are offering.

The book draws on other feminist critiques of international criminal law while questioning some developments most feminist scholars support, such as the reframing of rape as an attack on the individual rather than the collective (Mibenge argues it can be both things at once), and the creation of a new crime of "sexual slavery" alongside the older crime of "enslavement." Mibenge uses a narrative approach to analyze

international tribunals: an approach pioneered by scholars such as Doris Buss, whose analysis of the ICTR is discussed in this book (75, 76). Comparisons can also be made with scholars outside the feminist literature such as Mark Drumbl (2012), whose critique of the narrative of child soldiers in international law raises similar issues to those raised in this book.¹ Read together, these works suggest that the “narrative turn” in international relations scholarship has been paralleled, to some extent, in the scholarship on international law.

Mibenge demonstrates the utility of this narrative approach through her three case studies. The first examines the ICTR, a criminal tribunal established by the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 1994 in response to the Rwandan genocide. She focuses on the representation of sexual violence in the tribunal’s case law and argues that the case law overemphasizes the ethnic dimensions of this violence, while deemphasizing other intersecting factors, such as gender, class, and age. To illustrate this important point, Mibenge highlights stories of sexual violence during the genocide that disrupt the tribunal’s “ethnocentric” narrative (82).

The second case study analyzes the Sierra Leonean TRC, not a criminal tribunal, but a transitional justice mechanism established by the Sierra Leonean government with input from international actors in the wake of the 1991–2002 civil war. The TRC’s final report, Mibenge argues, promotes “an essentializing image of Sierra Leonean women and girls as perpetual victims not only of war but also of patriarchy in peacetime” (89). This critique is directed primarily at the report’s discussion of forced marriage, a practice in which rebel soldiers abducted women and girls, forced them into “marriages,” and used them for sex and domestic labor. The report highlights the parallels between this practice and the customary practice of early marriage in Sierra Leone, in which families arrange marriages for children (usually female children) as young as twelve or thirteen years old. While Mibenge acknowledges some similarities between these two practices, she argues that the report “goes too far” by suggesting that the practice of early marriage enabled or legitimized the practice of forced marriage during the war. This suggestion, Mibenge argues, “unduly stigmatizes” customary marriage practices and fails to recognize the particular harms of forced marriage (103).

1. *Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press).

In her final case study, Mibenge stays in Sierra Leone. However her gaze shifts to the SCSL, a tribunal established by Sierra Leone and the UN in 2002 to prosecute crimes under domestic and international law during the civil war. Her analysis focuses on the SCSL Prosecutor's use of the crime of "sexual slavery" to prosecute violence that should, in Mibenge's view, be characterized as "enslavement." This argument segues to a broader critique of the new crime of "sexual slavery," which Mibenge thinks defeats a nuanced gender analysis of "enslavement," and supports a simplistic narrative in which "female slaves are sex slaves while their male counterparts are 'just' slaves" (144). Importantly, Mibenge does not deny that female slaves are often sexually exploited. Rather, she supports a comprehensive gender analysis of the crime of "enslavement" that considers sexual abuse *and* other forms of gender violence against enslaved men and women. This is a thought-provoking argument, which potentially applies to the International Criminal Court (an institution this book does not consider in depth), where the Prosecutor has brought charges of "sexual slavery" in several cases rather than addressing this conduct through the crime of "enslavement" as Mibenge suggests.

Through these three case studies Mibenge offers a skillful critique of official narratives of violence and makes an important contribution to the feminist literature on international criminal law. Given the limited number of case studies and their specificity, it is not clear whether the arguments presented in this book are generalizable to other transitional justice mechanisms. However, the book offers a useful approach for future research of such bodies. There is also scope for further comparative analysis between the three institutions considered in this book. For example, it would be interesting to compare the Sierra Leonean TRC's discussion of the similarities between forced marriage and early marriage with the SCSL's narrative, which highlights and arguably *overemphasizes* the distinctions between these two practices.²

At times, readers may feel overwhelmed by the book's tendency to complicate rather than simplify ideas, and its detailed analysis of multiple legal regimes, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. However, it is a rewarding read for those seeking a more complex narrative of gender-based violence than the tribunals in question are

2. For example, *Prosecutor v Brima et al.* (SCSL-2004-16-A), Appeal Judgment, 22 February 2008 [194], citing Judge Sebutinde's Separate Concurring Opinion at [10]–[12], and Judge Doherty's Partly Dissenting Opinion at [36].

offering. It is also a fine example of feminist research methods in practice: Mibenge is attentive to gaps and silences, makes no secret of her own subjectivity, and weaves her own experiences into her analysis. In doing so, she gives readers a sense of the way her identity as an African, a woman, and a scholar informs her worldview and demonstrates the value of seeking out alternative perspectives on gender-based violence and its representation in official narratives.

Rosemary Grey is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales, Kensington, Australia: r.grey@unsw.edu.au