

**ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI**

**UNESCO CHAIR**

on Education for Human Rights,

Democracy and Peace

**UNESCO/UNITWIN Award 2002**



**WRITING THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE ANEW: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND  
RECONCILIATION THROUGH CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE**

**MASTER THESIS BY CATERINA SIRNA**

**SUPERVISED BY PROFESSOR DIMITRIOS E. AKRIVOULIS**

**2012-2013**



*European Master's Degree  
in Human Rights and Democratisation*



*European Inter - University Centre  
for Human Rights and Democratisation*

## **ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI**



**UNESCO CHAIR**  
on Education for Human Rights,  
Democracy and Peace



**UNESCO/UNITWIN Award 2002**

## **WRITING THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE ANEW: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION THROUGH CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE**

**MASTER THESIS BY CATERINA SIRNA**

**SUPERVISED BY PROFESSOR DIMITRIOS E. AKRIVOULIS**

**2012-2013**

*“With my heart in my throat  
tonight I'll sing:  
the story of her hands  
which were sea sparrows.  
I'll sing her eyes as charming waves  
gliding on the edge of the evenings.  
I'll sing until you'll break down,  
and you'll give me her back.  
But after having won the sky  
and beaten the hell  
I'll look back at her  
and I'll leave her at the night  
and at the winter.  
I'll turn because  
I saw the frost  
taking her life.  
And myself now  
no anyone else  
will say it's over.  
Dreaming girls are  
waiting for me to make  
my heart dancing again  
because not everything you cry  
is always love.”*

( “Euridice”  
Vecchioni R.)

*Relief by  
Arno Breker, Orpheus and Euridyce  
(1944, Breker-Museum).*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*I would like to thank:*

*Professor Dimitrios E. Akrivoulis for sharing his precious expertise, for his benevolent smile and for the motivation he gave to me. I could not expect any better collaboration developed in a friendly and professional setting.*

*Professor Emeritus Dimitra Papadopoulou for her professionalism and emotional support in every circumstance.*

*The UNESCO chair staff: Stella, Aris and Foteini, who personify the wonderful sense of Greek welcoming, friendship and reliability.*

*Dr. Christina M. Akrivopoulou for her good advice, commitment and for her smiling on my “s” problems.*

*My Parents, Antonello, Deny, Angela and Alessandro for believing always on my choices and for their unique way to seduce me to life, no matter what.*

*Special thanks to the city of Thessaloniki, whose history, citizens warmth, human charity, pride and bravery in these hard times taught me to hope for better times and helped me not feel so lonely.*

*Ida, Polona, Maya, Damien, Buqe, for all the skype conferences, laughs and support. If it were not for you guys.*

*To my little Lorenzo*

*So that you can play with your little cars as long as possible.*

## **Abstract**

This research attempts to explore the possibilities of rethinking the mechanism of transitional justice within a new framework stemming from psychological and social science. Rather than focusing on the debate whether it is better to punish or to forgive past wrongdoings, it points out the necessity of fully respecting the memory of suffering in order to create a healing narrative. As victims of mass atrocities or totalitarian regimes are told to be unique and qualitative different from victims of ordinary crimes, my research has attempted to shed a light to those mechanisms within transitional justice, which better respond to the need of victims. Supported by new researches in the field of psychology and social science, my thesis states that neither the court nor a non-judicial system can offer a complete sense of justice after mass atrocities. However, this does not mean that a post-conflict society does not need legal intervention in terms of accountability. It implies instead another important assumption: peace and stability can be obtained when truth has been fully disclosed and historicized. In this sense, the government of a society in transition has the duty to adopt any instrument that would allow the construction of a shared narrative and memory, which has a healing effect in the long run. Within this new paradigm, reconciliation aimed by transitional justice becomes a concrete amount of emotions, attitudes and behavior, which can be measured. Reconciliation is thus seen as equal neither to forgetting, nor to forgiving, nor even to a diminished sense of vengeance. It is seen instead as a *making-sense* process of one's own story through the story of another. The narratives of children becomes precious and equally important to the adult's own in this process. In this respect, the work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission child-friendly version in Sierra Leone is notable in this effort to create a new narrative of war, where understanding the past and promoting hope for a better future will allow to *never again* commit the same mistakes of the past.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1: Transitional Justice looking backward to address the future</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>1.1. What is Transitional Justice?</b>	7
<b>1.2. How deal with the past: Transitional Justice and tools for building truth And common memory</b>	9
<b>1.2.1. Retributive justice why is not enough?</b>	10
<b>1.2.2. The Memory of Nazism: The Nights of Nuremberg</b>	12
<b>1.2.3. Restorative Justice: why is not enough?</b>	15
<b>1.2.4. The Memory of Apartheid: Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa</b>	18
<b>1.3. Through a Transformative Justice Model of TJ: four key elements</b>	21
<b>1.3.1. Truth or psychosocial Justice</b>	22
<b>1.3.2. Accountability</b>	23
<b>1.3.3. Reparation or socio-economic Justice</b>	23
<b>1.3.4. Political Justice</b>	25
<b>1.4. The role of Transitional Justice in healing individuals, communities and nations</b>	25
<b>1.5. Conclusion</b>	28
<b>Chapter 2: Rethinking Transitional Justice</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	31
<b>2.1. Reconciliation as a measurable meaning: the amount of emotions, attitudes and behaviors</b>	32
<b>2.1.1. Reconciliation is not psychological healing: the case of Rwanda</b>	35
<b>2.1.2. Reconciliation is not diminishing desire of revenge: the case of ICTY</b>	37
<b>2.1.3. Reconciliation is not forgiveness</b>	39
<b>2.1.4. Reconciliation is a meaning-making process</b>	40
<b>2.2. Memory</b>	42
<b>2.3. Narrative as the only path to overcome mnesikakia: one or many?</b>	48
<b>2.4. Conclusion</b>	51
<b>Chapter 3: Direct construction of narrative and memory of war: children and Transitional Justice</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	52
<b>3.1. The Human Rights-based approach in Truth Commissions for children</b>	54
<b>3.2. Children and Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone</b>	58
<b>3.2.1. Child-friendly version of TRC</b>	59
<b>3.2.2. Statement-taking</b>	60
<b>3.2.3. Children's hearings</b>	62
<b>3.2.2. Child-friendly report</b>	64
<b>3.3. Case Study: children and reconciliation in post-conflict Sierra Leone</b>	66

<b>3.3.1.</b> Research questions	66
<b>3.3.2.</b> Methodology	67
<b>3.3.3.</b> Sample	67
<b>3.3.4.</b> Research findings	69
<b>3.4. Meaningful narrative and memory of children affected by war: psychological perspective</b>	
<b>3.5. Conclusion</b>	74
<b>Conclusions</b>	78
<b>Bibliography</b>	81