

“Neither Serbs, nor Turks, neither water nor wine, but odious renegades”: The Ethnic Cleansing of Slav Muslims and its Role in Serbian and Montenegrin Discourses since 1800¹

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Physical destruction of the Islamic communities of the Balkans is a process that has taken place over the last two hundred years or so. During the period from 1821 to 1922 alone, Justin McCarthy estimates that the ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims led to the death of over five million individuals and the expulsion of a similar number.³ Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were also killed, primarily on the grounds of ethnicity, during the Second World War and the Yugoslavian Wars of Dissolution. Ideological marginalization of Islamic communities accompanied the decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire, but as an ideology or a series of related ideas, it draws upon far older prejudices going back to the Middle Ages against the "Turk" and the religion of Islam in pan-European discourses, which have used as a justification to persecute Muslims alongside Jews.⁴ As the Ottoman Empire weakened and rival European powers encouraged the development of nationalist ideologies among the subject peoples, the Muslims in the Balkans sometimes became viewed as a kind of ethnic "fifth column,"⁵ left over from a

¹ Jovan Cvijić, *La péninsule balkanique: Géographie humaine* (Paris, 1918), 353, quoting a saying about what he refers to as "Islamicized Serbs" attributed to Orthodox Serbs.

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³ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile, The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 338.

⁴ Michael Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, 2nd ed.* (Berkeley, 1998), 119.

⁵ Milica Bakić Hayden refers to this negative view of Muslims as a "betrayal syndrome" in her article "Nesting Orientalisms: The case of the Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54 (1995), 927.

previous era, who could never be integrated successfully into the planned future national states.

In this article, I explore hostile attitudes towards Muslims, particularly Slav Muslims, and their role in Serbian and Montenegrin discourses. I argue that much of the hostility towards Muslims at the level of popular culture has been distilled and then used in the repertoire of extreme nationalists since the early nineteenth century to create an artificially extreme distrust of the Muslims who continued to live in the region, particularly in Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Ideas that reside on the fringes of societies during times of peace, which are generally of interest only to social misfits and degenerates, can take on tremendous significance during times of crisis, sometimes preparing the ground for war and acts of ethnic fury. Obviously as Noel Malcolm remarks, "between low level prejudices on the one hand and military conflict and mass murder on the other, there lies a very long road."⁶ Extreme nationalist ideas are especially pervasive because they are based on very crude notions of difference, which seem to lodge themselves in the subconscious and then emerge during crises. The attacks on the United States in September 2001 by Islamic extremists also gave a further boost to anti-Islamic discourses in the Balkans, with newspaper editorials in Serbia reminding their readers about links between Osama bin Laden and the Bosnian Muslim militants.⁷

Early Serbian nationalism and the production of a national idea depended very largely on the production of a small number of individuals in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as the Vuk Karadžić and the ruler of Montenegro, the *Vladika* (Bishop) Petar II Petrović Njegoš. Many of the early Serb intellectuals received their training and developed their ideas under the aegis of the Habsburg Monarchy, so their ideas can be very directly linked to the growth of Romantic nationalism in Central Europe with its emphasis on the national spirit and the authenticity of the common people. However, although the Romantic notion of the *srpski narod* (the Serb nation) should have included all South Slavs speaking the language which was referred to as Serbo-Croat from 1850s until 1990s by many

⁶ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London, 1998), xxviii.

⁷ See, for example Božidar Dikić, "Bin Laden na Baščaršiji" [Bin Laden in the Sarajevo bazaar], an article published by the Belgrade daily *Politika* on 4 October 2001, which claimed high levels of support for Islamic fundamentalists in Bosnia; http://www.politika.co.yu/2001/1004/01_12.htm on 4 June 2002.

commentators and linguists,⁸ nationalist ideas which developed in the nineteenth century tended to exclude Muslims from the nation, because by adopting Islam they were perceived to have become de facto Ottomans (and were sometimes referred to indiscriminately as "Turks").⁹ Like many of his contemporaries, Karadžić had historical, linguistic and racial views as to what constituted a nation.¹⁰ He stated that there were five million people who spoke the same language (the Serbian dialect favored by early Serbian nationalists and called Stokavian), but they were divided by religious confession. He added, "only the three million Orthodox consider themselves as Serbs...[Muslims] think that they are true Turks and call themselves that, despite the fact less than one in a hundred of them knows Turkish."¹¹ His view of Serbdom combined notions of primordial ethnicity with Herderian linguistic consciousness. To his mind all five million were Serbs whether they knew it or not and what had happened in the medieval Empire of Dušan was as important as the intervening centuries, although he specifically did want to take out Turkish loan words from the Serbian language.¹² He was, however, one of the first writers to use the word "cleanse" (*očistiti*), with all its Christian overtones of the redemptive powers of

⁸ On the development of Serbo-Croat, see, Cathie Carmichael, "A People exists and that People has its language": Language and Nationalism in the Balkans," in *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, ed. Stephen Barbour and Cathie Carmichael (Oxford, 2000), 221-239.

⁹ South Slav Muslims themselves were slow to adopt European nationalism, although there were some Islamic fascists in Bosnia during the Second World War; on this see Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims: Denial of a Nation* (Boulder, Col., 1996), 122-25. Many Slav Muslims migrated to Turkey after periods of significant political change such as the 1870s or 1910s. There was also never a significant Muslim South Slav diaspora agitating for a separate "Bošnjak" state, and even in 1992 the many Muslims in Bosnia saw their primary alliance with other Bosnians (Serbs and Croats) who accepted the legitimacy of the Izetbegović government. On Muslim identity, see Florian Bieber, "Muslim National Identity in the Balkans before the Establishment of Nation States," *Nationalities Papers* 28 (2000): 13-28.

¹⁰ Aleksandar Pavković, "The Serb National Idea: a Revival 1986-92," *Slavonic and East European Review* 72 (1994), 444.

¹¹ Vuk Karadžić, "Serbi sve i svuda," in *Etničko Čišćenje: Povijesni dokumenti o jednoj srpskoj ideologiji* [Ethnic Cleansing: Historical documents concerning a certain Serbian Ideology], ed. Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidara and Neven Simić (Zagreb, 1993), 29.

¹² Asim Peco, *Turčizmi u Vukovim Rječnicima* [Turkisms in Vuk's Dictionaries], (Belgrade, 1987).

baptism, to describe the killing of Muslims in Belgrade in 1806.¹³ The insurrection led by Karadjordje was accompanied by deliberately targeted acts of atrocities against Muslims in Serbia who were to be driven out in the wake of independence. The Serbs then began to (successfully) destroy all the architectural heritage of the Ottomans and now only the Barjakli Džamija mosque from this earlier period remains.¹⁴

Karadžić, who spent many years as a protégée of the Slovene linguist and Imperial librarian Jernej Kopitar in Vienna in the early nineteenth century, was one of the scholars responsible for codifying and thus elevating the scattered ballads of the guslars (players of a stringed instrument, the *gusle*) into a national literary canon.¹⁵ One of the themes of these epic poems was the struggle against Ottoman domination and many had ancient themes and motives, often from the Middle Ages. Interest in South Slav epic poetry, which was exceptionally well-preserved at the turn of the nineteenth century, was found all over Europe at the time.¹⁶ Walter Scott translated the ballad of *Hasanaginica* into English, and Jacob Grimm read and favorably reviewed Karadžić's work.¹⁷ The appeal of epic poetry was not just cultural. To some extent Serb anti-Ottoman sentiment and activity suited the geopolitical interests of both Habsburgs and the Romanovs at that time. As a cultural artifact it has left a long-lasting mark on Serb and Montenegrin national consciousness.

¹³ Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven and London, 1997), 75.

¹⁴ Andrei Simić, "Nationalism as Folk Ideology: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia," in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture and History*, ed. Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel (State College, Penn., 2000), 112.

¹⁵ Malcolm, 79-80.

¹⁶ Ivo Žanić, in his study *Prevarena povijest. Guslarska estrada, kult Hajduka i rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1990-1995: Godine* [The Falsification of History: The Elevation of the Guslar, the Cult of the Hajduk and War in Croatia, Bosnia, and Hercegovina] (Zagreb, 1998), has argued that the symbol of the gusle has remained vital in nationalist imagery and was revived in the 1990s. He reproduces a photograph of Radovan Karadžić' (p. 390) proudly holding a gusle at the birthplace of his forebear Vuk in 1992.

¹⁷ Celia Hawkesworth, "The Study of South Slav Oral Poetry: a Select Annotated Bibliography of Works in English (1800-1980)," in *The Uses of Tradition: A Comparative Enquiry into the Nature, Uses and Functions of Oral Poetry in the Balkans, the Baltic and Africa*, ed. Michael Branch and Celia Hawkesworth (London, 1994), 37-8 (School of Slavonic and East European Studies Occasional Paper, no. 6).

Another important text to encourage the idea of a historical betrayal by Slavs who had converted to Islam was the poem *Gorski Vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath) published in 1847 by Petar II Petrović Njegoš, who was the Prince-Bishop of Montenegro from 1830 until his early death in 1851. The main theme of the poem is the supposed dilemma faced by his predecessor *Vladika* Danilo (1696–1737) about what to do with Montenegrins who had become Muslim. The poem contains many references to smiting Slav Muslims, including the threat of Vojvoda Batrić that: “we will burn down Turkish homes so that no trace of the dwellings of our home-grown faithless devils could be known.”¹⁸ Vladeta Popović described Njegoš's poem as revealing the “essence and substance of a race that has had to go through many tribulations and fight against many difficulties,”¹⁹ thereby giving it the status of a genuine historical account rather than the poetic vision of an educated man who had read Ossian as well as Ivanhoe and the Greek classics.²⁰ *Gorski Vijenac* was read by subsequent generations of Montenegrins and other South Slavs, achieving canonical status very rapidly. It has been called a “true breviary of interethnic hatred.”²¹ It is probably the chief textual link between the discourse about Islam and everyday life for the people themselves. For Milica Bakić Hayden, Njegoš's “depictions of the converts as traitors whose weakness and opportunism deprived them of the religious and cultural identity bequeathed to them by their forefathers in Kosovo are reflected in popular--if tacit--perception of Muslims among Serbs and Montenegrins.”²² Although it is not entirely fair to isolate a single text from the context in which it was written (in this case, the context of a Montenegro, which was almost an island of non-Ottoman government in the Balkans), it is also fair to say that Montenegro's identity, particularly its quintessentially non-Islamic character was manipulated by its intellectuals and other nineteenth century writers of pan-Serbian sympathies.

¹⁸ Petar Petrović Njegoš, *Gorski Vijenac* [The Mountain Wreath] (Sarajevo, 1990), 155 (l. 2604-2606).

¹⁹ Vladeta Popović, “Introduction,” in *The Mountain Wreath of P. P. Njegosh, Prince Bishop of Montenegro, 1830-1851*, trans. James William Wyles (London, 1930), 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹ Grmek et al., eds., *Etničko Čišćenje*, 25.

²² Bakić Hayden, 927-8.

In invoking the influence of *Gorski Vijenac* or any folkloric text, it would be as well to be careful to avoid essentialization about the nature of Serb or Montenegrin culture. Folklore and the analysis of other texts from popular culture are very often used in the literature on the Balkans to make rather sweeping assertions about national character. Ivo Rendić-Miočević characterizes the Dinaric Serbs as suffering from "projection," "narcissism," and "paranoia," which he dubs the "Prince Marko syndrome"²³ with its obvious idea of the continuity of folk traditions from the epic songs of the *guslari* to the present day. Branimir Anzulović is also undeterred about making pronouncements about the link between popular culture and violence. "In Balkan highland culture, violence is often taken for granted, without any sense of guilt or sorrow for the victims.... A high level of violence and the condoning of the most vicious cruelty as just punishment can be observed in the Serbian folk song 'Grujo's Wife's Treachery.'"²⁴ If we were to try to create other personality types on this basis, we could state that the Americans had a morbid fascination with drowning because they sing "Clementine" or that the English had a fixation with decapitation because they sing "Oranges and Lemons." Recent critics of the political use of folklore in the 1990s have pointed to ways in which folklore has been misused by the Croatian and Serbian governments.²⁵ A realization of the part that governments, nationalist ideologues, and the media have played should deter scholars from making unguarded comments about popular culture.

The many foreign writers who have visited the Balkans since the early nineteenth century also helped to circulate and replicate the singular myth of Ottoman oppression versus Serb or Montenegrin heroism and were often moved by the idea of the perpetual struggle against the Turks, although many expressed their horror at brutal spectacles such as the dozens of severed and desiccated Turks' heads surrounding the *Vladika* residence in Cetinje.²⁶ In his poem "Montenegro," Tennyson sought to

²³ Ivo Rendić-Miočević, *Zlo velike jetre: povijest i nepovijest Crnogoraca, Hrvata, Muslimana i Srba* [The Evil of the Enlarged Spleen: History and Non-History of the Montenegrins, Croats, Muslims and Serbs], (Split, 1996), 126-7.

²⁴ Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London, 1999), 49.

²⁵ Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, "Ugledna etnologinja i antropologinja govori o instrumentalizaciji folkloru i teroru mitologijom" [A prominent anthropologist speaks out about the instrumentalization of folklore and the terror of mythology], *Feral Tribune*, 23 studenoga, 1998, 22-23.

²⁶ Xavier Marmier, *Lettres sur L'Adriatique et le Montenegro*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1853), 120.

encapsulate many of the contemporary European images of a perpetual and valorous struggle between Orthodox and Muslim communities:

They kept their faith, their freedom, on the height
Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'ed by day and night
Against the Turk...
O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne
Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years....²⁷

For many of these foreign writers, the Ottomans, their culture, and the lands that they ruled or had ruled for centuries were constructed within a literary trope, which has been described by Edward Said as "Orientalism," which was set up as opposite and inferior to the supposed values of Europe or the Occident. As part of a general rejection of the past, South Slav writers began to use the same tropes to describe the Ottomans as other European writers (although it is also fair to state that for many foreign writers Southeastern Europe still had many "oriental" characteristics or more particularly Balkan features, which set them apart from Europe²⁸).

The emphasis so often found in this nationalism on collective suffering under the Turks has often been seen by commentators as paranoid in psychoanalytical terms. As two Slovene writers commented in 1989: "Everything, from the assault by the Turks on Europe and the bombardment of Belgrade to Communist takeover of the government in the heart of Serbia all amount to a single conspiracy forged by the papists, Sultan Murat, Franz Josef and the Albanians against the [Serb] nation."²⁹ Of particular importance is the role played by the death of the medieval King Lazar at the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, which became an act of faith for nationalists. Michael Sells has argued that during the nineteenth century, "Serbian nationalist writers transformed Lazar into an explicit Christ figure, surrounded by a group of disciples ... and betrayed by a Judas.... In this story the Ottoman Turks play the role of the Christ killers. In the nationalist myth, (the betrayer)

²⁷ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poetical Works* (London, 1926), 533-4.

²⁸ This concept of Balkanism is explored at some length by Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, Oxford, 1997).

²⁹ Ervin Hladnik-Milharčič and Ivo Standeker, "Tako v nebesih kot na zemlji" [As it is in heaven, so on earth], *Mladina*, 7 June, 1989, 8.

Vuk Branković, represents the Slavs who converted to Islam under the Ottomans and any Serb who would live with them or tolerate them."³⁰ Some contemporary nationalists have presented Kosovo as a symbol for an almost Manichaean battle with the forces of contemporary Islam. On 28 June 1989, the poet Matija Becković announced that Kosovo Polje should be seen as "a Jerusalem in which the whole of Europe has its churches." Earlier that year he had stated: "Six hundred years after the battle of Kosovo it is necessary for us to declare: Kosovo is Serbian and that fact depends neither on Albanian natality or Serbian mortality. There is so much blood and holy relics there that it will be Serbian even when not one Serb remains there."³¹ More recently the Macedonian government (and particularly hardline minister Ljube Boškovski) has attempted to create a link between the Albanian militant NLA and Islamic fundamentalists, while at the same time presenting itself as a kind of Christian rampart against terrorism.³²

It would be unfair to state that all "memory" of Turkish persecution was paranoid in its character. As Vera Mutafchieva reminds us the "hegemonic" practices of the Ottomans in the Balkans were accompanied by many individual and collective cruelties, such as forced conversion to Islam, the Janissary system and discrimination in taxation³³. In Serbia, the revolt against the Ottomans had a specific cause linked to the misrule of the Dahis and other Balkan populations had similar grievances at this time. Had Ottoman rule been entirely acceptable to the Balkan populations, it is unlikely that traditions of banditry would have ever developed along the extensive border areas or that uprisings would have occurred in the way that they did.³⁴ However, it is also possible to deconstruct many of the main tenets of anti-Turkish mythologies: Božidar Jezernik has examined the case of the representations of eyes gauged out of holy murals or even Čele

³⁰ Sells, 31.

³¹ Both quotations from Becković are from Robert Thomas, *Serbia under Milošević: Politics in the 1990s* (London, 1999), 49.

³² Paul Anderson, 'Macedonia's Shaky Peace', at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1869000/1869822.stm, 12th March 2002.

³³ Vera Mutafchieva, "The Notion of the 'Other' in Bulgaria: The Turks. A Historical Study," *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 4, no. 2 (1995): 53-74.

³⁴ The role of the border and banditry in South Slavonic history is discussed by Xavier Bougarel, in "La 'revanche des campagnes', entre réalité sociologique et mythe nationaliste," *Balkanologie*, 2, no. 1 (1998): 17-36.

kula and argued that many of the claims of nationalists were fraudulent.³⁵ One could argue that there was a great deal of synthesis and peaceful cohabitation between Serb and Ottoman culture over many centuries. Use of aromatics and spices in cuisine, rituals surrounding the drinking of coffee and the recreational use of tobacco as well as the melodies of folk tunes and the wearing of amulets and talismans have all been linked to the Turkish legacy. Jovan Cvijić even argued that Dinaric fatalism was linked to Turkish notions of *ksmet* (destiny).³⁶ However, since anti-Islam is an ideology, any deconstruction of myth has the mere status of a historical opinion. Perhaps it also misses the main point, namely that historical myths represent one truth about the past, abandoning attempts to tell the whole truth, in the way that Picasso during his blue period abandoned attempts to convey the whole truth about color. Ivan Čolović employs a phrase taken from the work of the ethnographer Veselin Čajkanović, *klicanje predaka* (the cheer of ancestral voices) to illustrate how the dead are summoned up to serve the political purposes of the living.³⁷ Ottoman oppression was certainly one fact about the Serb and Montenegrin experience of the past, but not the only one and it was open to conscious or unconscious manipulation by nationalists. As a metaphor for oppression, it was often invoked and remained active within the repertoire of nationalist writers. When the Republic of Serbia's power was deemed to be threatened by the granting of autonomous region status to Kosovo and Vojvodina after 1974, Dobrica Ćosić stated: "The Republic of Serbia has been reduced to a pashalik of Belgrade, given up (inféodée) to the begs of Pristina and the archdukes (*voivodes*) of Novi Sad,"³⁸ invoking very emotive and highly inaccurate political terms from the past.

³⁵ Božidar Jezernik, *Dežela, kjer je vse narobe: Prispevki k etnologiji Balkana* [A Land where Everything is Topsy Turvy: Contributions to the Anthropology of the Balkans] (Ljubljana, 1998), 79-114, has argued that it was the Slav Christians themselves who scratched out the eyes of saints to make medicinal poultices. He has also cast doubt upon the validity of the tower of skulls (*Čele kula*) built in Niš after 1809 to celebrate a Turkish victory over the Serbs, that found its way into the repertoire of Serbian nationalist mythology (see *Ibid.*, 165-66).

³⁶ Cvijić, 351.

³⁷ Ivan Čolović, "Vreme i prostor u savremenoj politickoj mitologiji" [Time and place in contemporary political mythology], in *Kulture u tranziciji* [Culture in Transition], ed. Mirjana Prosić-Dvornić (Belgrade, 1994), 124.

³⁸ Dobritsa Tchossitch, *L'Effondrement de la Yougoslavie: Positions d'un Résistant* (Lausanne, 1994), 41, cited in Florian Bieber, *Serbischer Nationalismus vom Tod Titos*

Another "truth" about relations between Christians and Muslims is that they often had much closer and certainly more complex relations than nationalist myths might lead us to believe. The names of many well known Serbs and Montenegrins are etymologically partly Turkish (Karadžić, Asanović, etc). We cannot rule out other forms of interpersonal relations. As Mark Mazower remarks: in 1815, the rebel Miloš Obrenović "first conducted his Muslim blood-brother, Ashin Bey, to safety and then proclaimed the opening of a new 'war against the Turks.'" Messages were sent round the country that the inhabitants should kill anyone they encountered wearing green clothes--the sign of a Muslim."³⁹ Zorka Milich questioned a number of centegenarian women in Montenegro and uncovered a wide range of beliefs about and prejudices against Muslims. Some of them exhibited mistrust and dislike of "Turks," others only a mild awareness of difference. Jovana, aged 102, stated that "The Turks were evil. When they saw a good Serb, they did everything in their power to kill him." She remarked that the custom allowing a widow to marry her husbands brother was "disgusting" and the use of cosmetics by the women made them "stink." She also felt that the wearing of a veil was a "strange custom," prefacing this remark with "who knows why?"⁴⁰ Another informant, Ljubica aged 112, when asked her opinion of *poturice* (Christian converts to Islam), replied: "Most of the Turks round here are our people.... They should be ashamed of themselves. Their religion is not better than ours."⁴¹ Misha Glenny has argued that the very closeness between religious communities in Bosnia is an important factor in explaining pattern of ethnic violence: "the Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims have been adorned with many different cultural uniforms over the centuries, by which they identify one another as the enemy when the conflict breaks out. Despite this, underneath the dress they can see themselves reflected.... The only way that fighters can deal with this realisation is to exterminate the opposite community. How else does one explain the tradition of facial mutilation in this region?"⁴² John B. Allcock has argued,

zum Sturz Milosevics, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Vienna, March 2001), 206.

³⁹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans* (London, 2000), 80.

⁴⁰ Zorka Milich, *A Stranger's Supper: An Oral History of Centegenarian Women in Montenegro* (New York, London, 1995), 100-2.

⁴¹ Milich, 40.

furthermore, that “traditional codes of morality require that individuals be ready to kill their neighbours, with whom they might be 'in blood.'”⁴³

Visitors to Bosnia before the war were often struck by the ease with which the different religious groups socialized with each other. Stereotypes and jokes about *Bosanci* by other former Yugoslavs usually emphasized their laid-back attitude and the fact that they were happy to celebrate all the religious festivals in their republic, thus gaining far more days off work. All groups socialized together, but Andrei Simić has argued there was an “invisible psychological wall” between neighbors and a “superficial cordiality, more often than not masked a deep sense of alienation, suspicion, and fear.”⁴⁴

During times of peace interethnic tensions were difficult to discern. In Kosovo in 1999, a massacre of ethnic Albanians in the town of Suva Reka was apparently instigated by a local man, Zoran Petković, a “Serb who was friendly with the Albanians ...even as relations deteriorated between the two ethnic groups.”⁴⁵ A local policeman Islam Yashlari, when asked of his opinion of Petković after the massacre, replied: “I don't know what happened to him. He was just a guy who didn't like to work too much, then when the war started he changed. He wanted to be somebody.”⁴⁶ The survivors were able to recount their story because they were sheltered by a local Serb family. It is also probable that during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo that young Serb men were forced on pain of death to kill their neighbors in a cynical act of spreading guilt and responsibility for ethnic crimes by nationalist extremists, which has really nothing whatsoever to do with either traditional morality or consciousness of ethnicity.⁴⁷

⁴² Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, (Harmondsworth, 1992), 169.

⁴³ John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (London, 2000), 390.

⁴⁴ Simić, 115.

⁴⁵ Maggie O'Kane, "One family's story of the terror inside Kosovo: And of the friendly bus driver who turned into a mass murderer," *Guardian Weekly*, June 27, 1999, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷ The relationship between “local rivalries” and the “terrorizing tactics of outside extremists” is discussed briefly by Susan Woodward in her, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, (Washington, 1995), 242-3.

Serbian and/or Montenegrin popular culture is therefore not *per se* anti-Islamic although elements of mistrust between religious communities may have primordial characteristics. *Gorski Vijenac* is of its era and belongs more to modern discourses about nationalism rather than to popular culture, despite its quasi-epic format. Nevertheless, by 1878 and the Congress of Berlin, which recognized the sovereignty of Serbia and Montenegro, a putative hatred of "Turks," which by inference could also include Slav Muslims, was seen by nationalist writers as a defining Serb trait. The lack of chronological coherence to this myth can be seen by the comment attributed to a Serb bishop Duchitch (Dučić) by the American John Reed in 1915: "In Serbia, we do not trust too much to God. We prayed to God for five centuries to free us from the Turks and finally we took guns and did it ourselves."⁴⁸ Another aspect of the rejection of the "Turkish yoke" and Islam is the invocation of the idea of a "Turkish taint" (the shame of having cohabited with an "Oriental" culture for many centuries and its legacy in popular culture and mentalities). Marko Živković illustrates this idea with the example of a televised session of the Serbian parliament in 1994, when a member of the opposition group DEPOS played a tape-recording of Iranian pop music alongside turbofolk.⁴⁹ When he had proved that the melodies were very similar, he quoted Vladimir Dedijer: "We Serbs sometimes behave as if we were made [i.e. begotten] by drunken Turks."⁵⁰ Živković describes this as "deep self-recrimination ... couched in the idiom of self-Orientalization."⁵¹ It is as if the Turkishness that has been so forcefully repudiated can never really go away and continues to define the mentalities and culture of the Serbs, despite themselves. An example of the cynical use of self-Orientalization can be found in the conversation between Stojan Protić and Ante Trumbić of the Yugoslav Committee in 1917, reported by Ivan Mestrovic in his memoirs. Protić is quoted as saying that "When our army crosses the Drina, it will give the Turks twenty four or even forty eight hours to return to the faith of their ancestors. Those who are unwilling will be struck down [*posjeci*] as we have done on other occasions in Serbia."

⁴⁸ John Reed, *War in Eastern Europe: Travels through the Balkans in 1915* (London, 1999), 26.

⁴⁹ Turbofolk is a kitsch genre of popular music in Serbia which utilizes traditional "oriental" tunes and traditional gender imagery.

⁵⁰ Marko Živković, "Too much character, too little *Kultur*: Serbian Jeremiads 1994-95," *Balkanologie* 2 (1998), 77.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Trumbić was silent, but Mestrović could see that his hands were trembling. Then he asked Protić if he was serious, he replied: "Very serious, Mr Trumbić. In Bosnia with the Turks one cannot use European methods, but must use ours [*po naski*]." ⁵²

During the twentieth century anti-Islamism continued to be an essential *leitmotiv* within Serbian and Montenegrin nationalist discourse. To some it remained the unsolved problem of Yugoslavian politics. In 1933, the President of the Council of Ministers, Milan Srskić stated: "I cannot stand to see minarets in Bosnia; they must disappear."⁵³ The notorious lecture given by Vasa Čubrilović in 1937 to the Srpski Kulturni Klub (Serbian Cultural Club) about the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Kosovo⁵⁴ contains a distillation of his anti-Islamic prejudices and self-Orientalization. Drawing on the popular and highly influential ideas of the geographer Jovan Čvijić about the power-seeking and violent "Dinaric" personality,⁵⁵ Čubrilović thought that Montenegrins could be used to drive Albanians out of Kosovo⁵⁶ since they exhibited many of the necessary violent traits to do the job.⁵⁷ But there was another reason why the mountain people might be of some use in this case: according to Čvijić, "the Dinaric has an ardent desire to avenge Kosovo... and to resuscitate the Serbian Empire...even in circumstances where the

⁵² Grmek et al., eds., 82-3. Given the behavior of the Croatian military in Bosnia in 1993 in particular, the comment by Marcus Tanner *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*, (New Haven, 1997), 116, that this dialogue is "an ominous reminder of the difference between Croat and Serb political culture" is erroneous.

⁵³ Quoted in Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 18.

⁵⁴ Vasa Čubrilović, "Iseljavanje Arnauta" [The Expulsion of Albanians], in *Izvori velikosrpske agresije* [The Origins of Serbian Aggression], ed. Bože Čović (Zagreb, 1991), 106-24.

⁵⁵ This concept of a distinct personality type for the population of the mountainous Dinaric region is discussed by Marko Živković in his article "Violent Highlanders and Peaceful Lowlanders: Uses and Abuses of Ethno-Geography in the Balkans from Versailles to Dayton," *Replika* (1997): 107-120. The Influence of Cvijić and ethno-psychology is also discussed by Bojan Baskar in "Made in Trieste: Geopolitical Fears of an Istrianist Discourse on the Mediterranean," *Narodna Umjetnost* 36 (1999): 121-134.

⁵⁶ He was also instrumental in drafting a Yugoslavian-Turkish agreement in 1938 for the relocation of Muslims/Turks, which was never enforced because of the outbreak of war.

⁵⁷ Čubrilović, 112-3. On this see also, Bojan Baskar, "Anthropologists facing the collapse of Yugoslavia," *Diogenes* 47 (1999), 60.

less courageous or a man of pure reason would have despaired. Betrayed by circumstances and events, abandoned by all, he has never renounced his national and social ideal."⁵⁸

Kosovo and Bosnia were the sites of particularly vicious interethnic fighting from the period from 1941 until 1945. Elsewhere in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, Muslims were targeted on the grounds of their faith and ethnicity.⁵⁹ It is estimated that between 86,000 and 103,000 Slav Muslims were killed in Bosnia and Sandžak. Many perished at the hands of Serb nationalist Četnici. One extreme Četnik ideologue Stevan Moljević, who advocated "cleansing the land of all non-Serb elements," believed that the government-in-exile in London "should resolve the issue [of emigration] with Turkey,"⁶⁰ although with the Communist ascent to power and the defamation of the Četnik movement, the plan remained a theory, seemingly relegated to the past. However, Moljević's ideas didn't entirely disappear in the wake of relatively good interethnic relations after the Second World War. They were resurrected in 1991 by Vojislav Seselj, who had been jailed for his nationalist views in the mid-1980s, when he told the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, that Muslims were Islamicized Serbs, whom he would drive out of Bosnia to Anatolia, if they opposed any attempt to take away their status as a nation.⁶¹

In the postwar era, the Communist regime in Yugoslavia attempted a fine balancing act between the nationalities within its borders with various levels of success. In the 1980s, after the death of Tito, Yugoslavia's Muslims were again remarginalized by certain Serb nationalists such as Mirosljub Jevtić, who attempted to link the rise of Islamic "fundamentalism" in the wider world but particularly Iran to the Muslims in his own country.⁶² According to Norman Cigar, Serbian scholars specializing in Oriental Studies

⁵⁸ Čvijić, 282.

⁵⁹ On the ethnic cleansing of Muslims during the Second World War, see Vladimir Dedijer, *Genocid na muslimana 1941-45: Zbornik dokumenta ili svjedočenja* [Genocide against the Muslims from 1941-45: A Collection of Documents and Testimonies] (Sarajevo, 1990).

⁶⁰ Philip J. Cohen, *Serbia's Secret War: Propaganda and the Deceit of History* (College Station, 1996), 440.

⁶¹ Seselj, cited in Grmek et al. eds., 203.

⁶² Mirosljub Jevtić, *Savremeni džihad kao rat* [The Current Jihad as War], (Belgrade, 1989), 42ff.

(including Jevtić), “contributed considerably to making hostility towards the Muslim community intellectually respectable among the broad strata of the Serbian population.”⁶³ The Orthodox Church also played a significant role in this process of radicalization.⁶⁴ Elsewhere the denial of a Bosnian spirit of mutual respect between religious communities by Seselj,⁶⁵ who echoed with his characteristic lack of originality some of the negative sentiments about Islam and the cultural life of Bosnia's Muslims propagated by the writer Ivo Andrić,⁶⁶ was a flagrant manipulation of history and a genuine tradition of peaceful coexistence in that republic. It was also during this period that interethnic relations deteriorated considerably in Kosovo,⁶⁷ although the Albanians were not considered to be traitors to the Serbs in the way that Slavonic speaking Muslims were. The novelist Vuk Drasković, whose own political attitude towards the Muslims has been marked by inconsistency, also broke “the mould shaped by Tito”⁶⁸ with the publication of *Noz* (The Knife) in 1982,⁶⁹ which has notable anti-Islamic sentiments in its depiction of interethnic relations during the Second World War in Hercegovina.

The link between the propaganda of the 1980s and the fighting of the 1990s has been well documented. After the breakdown of Communist authority between 1987 and 1990, official media in Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Croatia became filled with “hate-filled panic-mongering rhetoric,”⁷⁰ which clearly prepared the populations of certain regions and republics for interethnic strife. In Belgrade in 1989, a journalist informed Sabrina Ramet that, “they [i.e. Bosnian and Kosovo Muslims] have big families in order to swamp Serbia and Yugoslavia with Muslims and turn

⁶³ Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, 27.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 30-2.

⁶⁵ Vojislav Šešelj, *Pravo na istinu* [Directly to the Truth], (Belgrade, 1988), 8.

⁶⁶ Bieber, “Serbischer Nationalismus,” 21.

⁶⁷ On interethnic and gender relations, Wendy Bracewell, “Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism” in *Nations and Nationalism*, 6 (2000): 563-90.

⁶⁸ Judah, 79.

⁶⁹ Allcock, 398, comments that “Yugoslavs have spontaneously talked about people being ‘put to the knife’ as a synonym for ethnic extermination.”

⁷⁰ Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (London, 1992), 130.

Yugoslavia into a Muslim republic. They want to see Khomeni in charge here."⁷¹ Prior to the Bosnian elections of 1992, the SDS (Serb Democratic Party) told voters that "if Bosnia became independent they would once again be subjected to the laws of the Muslim landlords, agas, begs and pashas, and that independence represented a rollback of everything Serbs had died for since 1804, if not 1389... [Serbs] were told that for hundreds of years they had been Bosnia's single largest community and that in the last twenty-five years the Muslims had suddenly 'outbred' them."⁷² In such rarified circumstances, it appears that certain numbers of people simply abandoned their experience and sense, becoming motivated by "instinct," however chimerical this might be in practice. In April 1992, a Serb soldier, Miloš, fighting in the siege of Sarajevo told journalist Ed Vulliamy: "Their [Muslim] women are bitches and whores. They breed like animals, more than ten per woman.... Down there they are fighting for a single land that will stretch from here to Tehran, where our women will wear shawls, where there is bigamy"⁷³

The practice of genocide does not organically erupt from within a society. It is a planned affair, announced in advance, its practice intimately linked to a small number of individuals who see it as either a desirable or unavoidable part of their wider political concerns. Hate texts feed into a low level awareness of difference, which exists at the level of popular culture, but would never come to widespread violence if individuals with power did not provoke it. In a sense the relationship between elements within popular culture and extreme, virulent nationalism is rather similar to that between class hatred and Marxist revolutionary ideas. That is not to say, however, that these ideas that exist within popular culture are superficial or ephemeral. Four hundred Serbs asked to characterize Muslims in a questionnaire in 1997, described them as "primitive," "mendacious," "hostile to other nations," "dirty," "uncultivated," "squabbling," "stupid," "cowardly," and "lazy."⁷⁴ Adopting a more "scientific" tone, psychiatrist and Krajina Serb activist Jovan Rasković told *Interju*

⁷¹ Sabrina P. Ramet, "Islam," in *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (Boulder, Col., 1996), 185.

⁷² Judah, 199.

⁷³ Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (London, 1994), 49.

⁷⁴ Dragan Popadić & Miklós Biró, "Autostereotipi i Heterostereotipi Srba u Srbiji" [Autostereotypes and Heterostereotypes of Serbs in Serbia], *Nova Srpska Politicka Misao*, Nr. 1-2 (1999), 98-99, cited in Bieber, "Serbischer Nationalismus," 493.

magazine in September 1989 that "Muslims [are] fixated in the anal phase of their psychosocial development and [are] therefore characterized by general aggressiveness and an obsession with precision and cleanliness."⁷⁵ To state that there is a link between academic and popular culture can in no way diminish the responsibility of the individual. Ideologies are like ajar doors, which any individual more or less chooses to walk through.

Certainly anti-Islamism was not confined to Serbs and Montenegrins: it was also commonplace in the popular culture of the other republics of Yugoslavia and was not a problem that the Communists ever dealt with despite a commitment to brotherhood and unity. A poem which glorifies the achievements of the anti-Ottoman rebels in Serbia at the beginning of the nineteenth century attributed to Filip Visnjić has been "taught in Serbian schools ever since."⁷⁶ *Gorski Vijećnik* was read as a school textbook in Communist Yugoslavia in every republic and available in Slovene and Macedonian translations as was *Smrt Smail-Age Cengijica* (The Death of Smail Age Cengijić) by the Croat poet Ivan Mazuranić, which explores the theme of Slavic Christian resistance to Turkish oppression. That is not to say that every person who read these texts was "contaminated" by their poetical content. Tim Judah discusses a conversation between Aleksa Djilas and his cousin: "How did the Muslims in your class react when they had to read *The Mountain Wreath* and learn parts of it by heart?" His cousin was dumbstruck: "It had never crossed his mind to ask his Muslim classmates such a question—even though some were his close friends. Clearly he did not connect them with the Muslims against whom Njegoš wrote."⁷⁷ Tolerance and multiculturalism were also a significant part of the culture of the former Yugoslavia, especially in cosmopolitan towns like Sarajevo and Belgrade. In Banja Luka, an American journalist recalls a conversation with a Serb, Spasoje Knezević, "In history, progress is only possible with the mixing of nationalities," Spasoje said as though speaking to a jury. "I'm not only mad and embarrassed about this stupid war, but disappointed. What is being done here is not in the favor of Serbs. We are losers too. Look at the number of Serbs who have died or been forced out of their homes. Look at

⁷⁵ Quoted in Ramet, 185.

⁷⁶ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London, 1999), 11.

⁷⁷ Judah, 78.

the destruction. We used to go to Italy for vacation. Now we can't afford gasoline to drive our cars across town. After this war is finished, it will be a shame for someone to be a Serb."⁷⁸

Mistrust of Muslims, both Slav Muslims and Kosovars, existed alongside tolerance at an unofficial level, but it needed to be awakened by nationalist intellectuals after 1974 to have a significant political impact. Moreover, the ineffective response of the Communist authorities to the national question, only belatedly allowing Muslims to define themselves "in the ethnic sense" and allowing them forms of ethnic individuation such as the wearing of traditional dress and the building of new mosques was too little too late to prevent the drift into rival extreme nationalisms. After the death of Tito, many lost their inhibitions about openly nationalist politics. During the mobilization of Serbian nationalism in the late 1980s by Slobodan Milošević, his supporters would turn up to rallies with placards with provocative anti-Islamic slogans: "Oh Muslims, you black crows, Tito is not around to protect you," or "I'll be the first, who will be the second to drink some Turkish blood?"⁷⁹

In general it is not really possible to have ethnic cleansing without ideologies of ethnic cleansing. The anti-Serbism of Croat nationalists has been as destructive as Serb anti-Islamism, especially during the Second World War. As an ideology it also appears to have weak roots in popular culture.⁸⁰ It is often stated that many of the perpetrators of ethnic crimes in Yugoslavia were very ordinary people before the war: it was the crisis made them into murderers. "Šakib Ahmić, a Muslim villager [from Bosnia] testified that he had watched the [Catholic] Kupreskić brothers 'grow up into decent people' until the fighting began in their village. They broke into his home and murdered his son Naser and daughter-in-law Zehrudina, as well as their children...."⁸¹ We are all familiar with instances of the torture and abuse of people on the grounds of religious difference, particularly Muslims

⁷⁸ Peter Maass, *Love thy Neighbor: A Story of War*. (New York, 1996), 106.

⁷⁹ Norman Cigar, "The Serbo-Croatian War," in *Genocide after Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War*, ed. Stjepan Meštrović (London, 1996), 57.

⁸⁰ Cigar, "The Serbo-Croatian War," 67, characterizes Serb nationalism in 1990-91 as being led by a "small nucleus [of] hard-core [activists]." Similarly he notes, p. 59, that the neo-fascist HSP in Croatia gained only 5 percent of public support in the 1990 elections.

⁸¹ Richard Norton-Taylor, "Croats jailed for Ethnic Slaughter," *Guardian Weekly*, January 20-26, 2000, 4.

during the recent wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. We also know that these abuses follow clear cultural patterns, which might allow us to begin to construct links between ideological manipulation and human behavior in extremis, a kind of "method in madness."⁸² In the way that the Ustaša were reputed to ask their potential victims to make the sign of the cross to establish whether they were Orthodox or Catholic, violence against Muslims during the war in Bosnia often emphasized very obvious differences such as the traditional Islamic aversion to eating pork⁸³. Peter Maass recorded the way in which Christian motives were perverted during the war in Bosnia: "a teenage girl explained to me how one of the Muslim men in her village had been nailed to the front door of the Mosque, so that he was like Christ on the cross, and he was still alive at the time."⁸⁴ Many other eyewitnesses recorded similar occurrences, which were committed by individuals whose main link with each other was shared hate texts--newspapers, literature as well as radio and television broadcasting. Muslims in Bosnia were raped⁸⁵ or made to urinate in the mosque and had crosses carved into their flesh.⁸⁶ It is well recorded that Serbian and Croatian nationalists targeted the material (i.e. symbolic) culture of the Muslims in Bosnia⁸⁷. These examples suggest that clear patterns of anti-Muslim behavior were played out during the Yugoslavian Wars of Dissolution between 1991 and 1999. They also suggest that a mental dehumanization of Muslims took place

⁸² The Hamlet metaphor is used by Vulliamy, 85.

⁸³ "We stumbled upon a gathering of some eighty opprobrious Chetniks camped down at Prijedor police station in September 1992 They had little enlightening to say, except to register that in the town of Kluj, 'The Turks' cannot eat pigs, but they run like pigs and squeal like pigs." Vulliamy, 54.

⁸⁴ Maass, 7.

⁸⁵ Violations of women have been interpreted as particularly humiliating to the traditional culture of Muslims. Similar patterns of behavior were also recorded in Bulgaria in 1878. In the village of Oklanli, Turkish women were raped over several days and then burnt alive. The atrocities were carried out by their Christian neighbors in communities that had lived in the same villages for centuries. See McCarthy, 72.

⁸⁶ Cornelia Sorabji, "A Very Modern War: Terror and Territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *War: A Cruel Necessity? The Bases of Institutionalized Violence*, ed. Robert A. Hinde and Helen E. Watson (London, 1995), 83.

⁸⁷ On the history and demise of the old Turkish bridge at Mostar, see Božidar Jezernik, "Qudret Kemeru: a bridge between barbarity and civilisation," *Slavonic and East European Review* 73 (1995): 470-484.

(quite apart from the actual physical destruction). Robert Hayden discusses the case of a Serb soldier forcing a fez on the head of a "distraught" Muslim prisoner in Banja Luka in 1994. He explains the episode thus: "the visible mark of Islamic culture ensured that 'Muslim' was more than simply a label of difference, but rather indicated a culture not only apart, but in the Orientalist rhetorical structure dominant in Europe, including the Balkans, also inferior to that of Europe."⁸⁸ Primarily, this process of constructing Muslims as inferior and different was acquired culturally and as such has a history and genealogy. The nationalities of the former Yugoslavia were not destined to play out "ancient hatreds," nor was the multinational character of the state a primary cause of its collapse.⁸⁹ The story of Yugoslavia could have had many different endings.

⁸⁸ Robert Hayden, "Muslims as 'Others' in Serbian and Croatian Politics," in *Neighbors at War*, ed. Halpern and Kideckel, 123.

⁸⁹ Ethnic complexity is often singled out as an explanatory cause of Yugoslavia's collapse. John D. Treadway states that "four years of warfare, accompanied by ethnic cleansing and flights of population, have 'simplified' the arrangement and composition of its population. The ethnic and religious crazy quilt that was the 'old' Yugoslavia is not quite as intricate or as confusing as in years past. But the current regional admixtures of peoples and confessions constitute a witch's brew – the stuff of which powder kegs were (and are) made." "Of Shatter Belts and Powder Kegs: A Brief Survey of Yugoslav History," in *Crises in the Balkans: Views from the Participants*, ed. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (Boulder, Col., 1997), 40-1.