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THE PROBLEM OF RESURRECTION OF KOSOVO MYTHOLOGY IN SERBIAN POPULAR CULTURE

The downfall of socialist Yugoslavia marked a new era on the political, social and cultural scene of the new-born ex-Yugoslav states. The increase of tensions between the ethnic groups culminated in a civil war in the 1990s. The military conflict was followed by politically charged polarization of cultural differences between the ethnicities in conflict. While the Croats stressed the connection of their cultural roots to the West and the Muslim political elites displayed a form of nostalgia for the long gone Ottoman Empire, the Serbian revival of what was popularly named the 'ethno' culture was most involved the resurrection and refashioning of the Kosovo mythology. This paper explores some aspects of the popular revival of Kosovo mythology and its role in contemporary Serbian popular culture.

The Kosovo myth has for a long time been a central theme in Serbian folklore as well as the Serbian literary tradition. The story in which medieval Serbia collides with the invading Ottoman Empire has been retold for over six centuries, mostly in the form of epic poetry. The poems, which celebrate the heroic deeds and the martyrdom of the Serbian knights, were narrated or sung by bards in a specific tradition of oral literature until finally being recorded in writing by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in the first 19th century collection of Serbian folk literature. In the epic tradition the bard sings his story in a repetitive rhythm in a strict ten-syllable meter while playing a traditional one-string instrument called *gusle*. The strict meter and the monotonous rhythm of the musical accompaniment made the poems function as a kind of chant, in which the rhythm acts as a mnemonic device and a pattern for memorizing lengthy epics. The form and the narrating tradition remained the same over the centuries and in their ancient rhythm continue to echo through the Serbian cultural narrative today. The traditional rhythm and the meter left very little room for alterations of the text, thus ensuring that the authenticity of the story passed from generation to generation.

The relationship between epic poetry and its historical reference has for a long time been and to an extent continues to be one of the chief discussions on the appropriation of the centuries old Kosovo mythology to social and political norms of the present. Authors, such as Ratko Peković, argue that we need to differentiate between the historical Kosovo and the Kosovo of mythology.¹ The Serbian film maker, Emir Kusturica, stated that he does not believe in Hollywood myths (like the mainstream Western society might), but in Kosovo myth, suggesting therefore that Kosovo should be taken as a valid parameter of identity, perhaps as a historical reference and a fundamental

1. Ratko Pekovic, *Kosovska bitka: mit, legenda i stvarnost*, (Beograd: KIZ Litera, 1987).

element of Serbian national identity.² A more recent study by Daniel Šuber of the University of Konstanz is an example of a cultural approach to the subject of the narrative of Kosovo mythology and history and the way they affect the domain of individual actions. Despite his very intuitive observations on the topic, Šuber, like many authors before him, overlooks the poetic discourse as an equally if not more significant agency in the preservation and propagation of the Kosovo mythology. Instead, he polarizes the Kosovo theme as “mythical narrative” versus history and politics.³XXXX Miodrag Popović, a renowned Serbian anthropologist and historian, gives a detailed analysis of mythisation of the Kosovo battle in Serbian cultural discourse. He differentiates between mythology and history in Serbian heroic ballads about Kosovo.⁴ In his book, *Vidovdan i časni krst [St Vitus Day and the Holly Cross]*, Popović provides an ontological account of epic poems about Kosovo and illuminates social and political motivations behind some of the poems. Popović focuses on the role of religion, the church and spiritual mythisation of the Kosovo legend. According to him, the highly pronounced Christian values in the poems of Kosovo mythology are the crucial elements which attracted the affinity of Serbian audiences. Thus Popović’s study launches the trauma theory as the origin of the national significance of Kosovo in Serbian culture. The trauma accompanying a tragic event - the 1389 Battle of Kosovo - is converted into a spiritual victory by subsequent mythologization. To the present, the Battle of Kosovo continues to represent an act of religious sacrifice in the struggle against the enemy of another faith. This attitude towards a historical event is for Popović and other authors the key explanation for the consistency of Serbian emotional links to Kosovo throughout the centuries and to the present day.

The trauma theory about the persistence of the Kosovo aura in Serbian culture is in part supported by a psychoanalytic reading of texts, but in part the trauma theory is subverted through such a reading.

Jacques Lacan discusses the function of a text, particularly a creative or poetic text, in the psychological apparatus of a cultural subject.⁵

The story of the great Battle of Kosovo, as understood in popular belief, is a story of one of the greatest Serbian national defeats. Yet it is also one of the most celebrated events in Serbian history, signifying the greatness of sacrifice and patriotism. This historical event became an instant sensation in the 15th century, when the local bards spread the news about the bravery of the Serbian knights, who fearlessly sacrificed their lives in defense of their land and their faith. The battle of Kosovo did not only mean the collision of two armies, but a conflict between the East and the West and hence a collision of Islam and Christianity. Serbian armies led by Knez (Prince) Lazar confronted a much stronger enemy. The Ottoman army was led by Sultan Murad I. The battle

2. Jasmina Tesanovic, “Serbia Diary: Mourning for Kosovo,” in *Aljazeera*, (2008).

3. Daniel Suber, “Myth, Collective Trauma and War in Serbia,” *Anthropology Matters*, 8, no. 1. (2006).

4. Miodrag Popovic, *Vidovdan i časni krst: ogled iz književne arheologije*, I. Colovic, ed., (Beograd: Biblioteka XX Vek, 2007), p.15.

⁵ Compare Gilbert D. Chaitin, *Rhetoric and Culture in Lacan*. Cambridge: Vambridge University Press, 1996), pp.22-23 for a summary of Lacan’s treatment of metaphor in Valéry’s poems.

occurred on Saint Vitus Day in 1389 at the Field of Kosovo, which was the site of the territory of the Serbian medieval kingdom. The combat lasted only one day, at the end of which the Serbian army was defeated. The casualties were enormous for both sides and the battle took the lives of the leaders of both armies: the Serbian Prince Lazar as well as the Turkish Sultan Murad I. Local Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin bards interpreted the battle of Kosovo as a final “downfall of the Serbian Kingdom” and the defeat as moral victory.

Such attitude towards the story of the great battle greatly influenced the attitude towards Kosovo as a place of worship and helped shape Serbian national identity with the Kosovo legacy at its core. The story of the Kosovo Battle developed into national mythology where the deeds of the Serbian knights served as examples of national moral values and a national ethos. Many motifs of this national mythology can be found in the contemporary Serbian nationalist discourse as well as contemporary Serbian popular culture, which more often than not go hand in hand. One particularly prominent mythological motif of the Kosovo legacy in contemporary discourses is the cult of Knez Lazar.

Lazar’s deeds are just as well known and celebrated as his supposed words, which are known to the public only through the Serbian epic poems. Lazar’s martyrdom is embellished by a set of moral values, often interpreted as examples of true “Serbiandom.” An example of moral obligation towards the Kosovo legacy is summoned in a commonly quoted passage from a poem of the Kosovo cycle, entitled *Musić Stevan*. The passage is a curse in which the protagonist, a Serbian nobleman called Stevan Musić, issues an admonition to all potential renegades who do not heed the call of Prince Lazar to come and fight against the Ottomans:

“Whoever is a Serb and of Serbian birth,
And of Serbian blood and heritage,
And comes not to fight at Kosovo,
May he never have the progeny his heart desires,
Neither son nor daughter!
May nothing grow that his hand sows,
Neither dark wine nor white wheat!
And let him be cursed from all ages to all ages!”⁶.

Musić Stevan explains what motivated his decision to go to battle. The loyalty to his prince might have been one reason, yet the obligation and responsibility to “Serbian blood and heritage” is an even more important reason which takes precedence over the loyalty of a vassal to his prince: this reason is patriotism – the love of country. This is the primary reason why every Serbian should answer the call. The obligation to “Serbiandom,” the nationalization of the responsibility for the call to the battle and the personalization of this responsibility (“may he never have progeny...” “may nothing grow that his hand sows”) come to play an important role in the propagation of patriotism throughout the centuries.

5. Helen Rootham and Maurice Baring, ed., *Kosovo: Heroic Songs of the Serbs*, H. Rootham, trans., (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1920), p.27.

Today, we do not assume that Lazar's Curse might befall those who do not answer the call to battle. A contemporary Serb, who might not choose to answer the call, does not fear for his/her progeny. Yet the quotations of Lazar's Curse are frequently appropriated by nationalist groups or individuals across Serbian cultural discourses today. This appropriation has even been turned into an installation on a historical marker in the Kosovo Field, built to commemorate the Battle of Kosovo. The monument on Gazimestan, the precise place where the battle occurred, consists of a replica of a medieval tower and two messages engraved on its walls. One message says: "15 June 1389 to the keepers of freedom and independence. People's Republic of Serbia 1953." The second message is a precise quotation of Lazar's Curse as we know it from epic poetry. One might wonder why the Serbs have decided to inscribe mythology on a 20th Century monument, which is supposed to serve as a historical marker. Why have contemporary Serbs, instead of an informative text about the battle, which took place in this location, decided to quote a poem? Inscribed on an official monument, Lazar's Curse has thus been displaced from its discourse of epic poetry and traditional literature and transformed into a new myth: the contemporary Serbian national myth.

While Lazar's Curse might sound like an obligatory invitation, it alone would not have been enough to create an aura of worship around the Battle of Kosovo. Lazar's Curse is perhaps the only direct call to all Serbs to act as patriots. Yet the Kosovo legacy created a cult of Knez Lazar on a completely different level, which goes beyond the moral obligation of the curse. Even more significant than the oath to defend Kosovo is the concept of Lazar's sacrifice, which can be seen as a key element in transforming national poetry into mythology and the key element in creating the cult of Knez Lazar. The story of Lazar's sacrifice, as it has been described, "transforms military defeat into moral victory".⁷ In epic poetry, Knez Lazar is portrayed as a martyr who makes a pact with God to lead his soldiers into the battle where their death will ensure Lazar and his soldiers a place in the eternal "heavenly Kingdom."

Lazar therefore sacrifices his life not only for Serbian freedom but in the name of something greater, in the name of God Himself. Through Lazar's death, the Serbs become a *heavenly people* (*nebeski narod*) and the Kosovo field a *holy Serbian land* (*sveta srpska zemlja*). Before we pass any judgment on the modern appropriation of Kosovo mythology and the cult of Knez Lazar, we need to closely examine the poems from which such motifs emanate.

The dominant motif in the epic poems is the presence of God and religion. The poems often begin by addressing God: "Dear God, what a wondrous marvel" ("The Death of the Mother Jugović). Often the poems are set around a religious event, such as the celebration of a family saint day ("Knez Lazar celebrates his Patron Saint" or "Slavu slavi srpski knez Lazare"), or the building of a church as an endowment ("Building Ravanica"). The poems which begin with calling upon God or which mention a "marvel" sound like proclamations, which claim a certain kind of authority through magnificence and dignity. They address God while the narrator remains uninvolved, like a messenger,

6. Branimir Anzulovic, *Heavenly Serbia: from Myth to Genocide*, (New York, London: New York Univ. Press, 1999), p. 9-11.

who does not address the audience directly. The only named recipient or audience in these poems is God and the poem therefore assumes the role of a confession. In Lacanian terms, we could say that the bard, like the analysand, addresses the Other, to whom the confessing subject feels accountable.

A poem entitled “The Fall of the Serbian Empire” also begins with the presence of divinity. This time the narrator does not call upon God as a witness, but tells us how God himself sends the message to the protagonist of the poem and therefore to the audience. Like Lacan’s big Other, the God in epic poems is not available as a visible image; God becomes a signifier that ‘speaks’ and this speech is the speech of the Other, who in turn is in the place of the subject. Therefore, like the psychoanalytic Other, God is a voice. He is not just any the voice, but the voice which the subject obeys because the Other is master of the subject’s desire.⁸ Obeying this voice does not mean receiving the orders from the discourse of the Other, but it rather means assuming the Other’s desire and therefore behaving in the way one thinks the Other requests. According to Lacan, the subject is constituted in the field of the Other where he/she depends on the interplay of the signifiers, or more precisely on the *lack* of meaning created at the intersection of the signifiers. This is the place where the meaning and being cross over in the process of signification. Lacan writes that “it is of the nature of this meaning, as it emerges in the field of the Other, to be in a large part of its field, eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier.”⁹ This relationship of the subject to the other Lacan calls *alienation*.¹⁰

To illustrate this notion of alienation as the grounding structure of the psychoanalytic subject, Lacan gives examples and diagrams of the dialectic of choice and the function of the *either/or*. A particular vector of this dialectic or *vel* (V shaped illustration of the circulation of meaning) posits a logical puzzle of *either – or* (I go *either* there *or* there), which is ultimately the *vel* of alienation.¹¹ The choice, which has marked the Kosovo mythology, is grounded in this kind of dialectic. The question posed to Lazar by God (Other) puts the protagonist and therefore the Serbian nation in front of a choice, “either heavenly or earthly kingdom.” Lazar, who decides on behalf of his people, chooses the heavenly kingdom and together with the entire Serbian nation becomes deprived of the earthly kingdom. This is why the poem has the title the “Downfall of Serbian Kingdom,” although historically it was not until 1459 that Serbia was finally annexed to the Ottoman Empire. Thus the poem is not historically truthful: it does not

7. According to Lacan “desire is the desire of the Other,” which means that the object of desire, the everpresent lack, belongs to the realm of the Real or the discourse of the Other. Compare Jacques Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire,” in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: the First Complete Edition in English*. J.A. Miller and B. Fink, ed., (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company 2006), p. 690.

⁹ Lacan, *ibid.*.

¹⁰ “The subject is grounded in [...] the operation that we call alienation.” Jacques Lacan, “The Subject and the Other: Alienation,” in Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, J.A. Miller, ed., A. Sheridan, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 210.

8. Jacques Lacan, “The Subject and the Other: Alienation,” in Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, J.A. Miller, ed., A. Sheridan, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 209-211.

retell a historical event in its real historical context, but displaces history onto a mythological plane.

Lacan also refers to the Other as the Law, which is the Law in the signifying chain which represents the law of the Father. This Law of the Father is synonymous with the Law of God, the moral law.¹² Therefore it is no wonder that the bard who tells such a sacred story calls upon God as a witness or explains the events as the will and sometimes an order from God. In the Lacanian dialectic, the subject takes such position in respect to the Other, who is the Law and who in mysterious ways instructs the actions of the subject.

In “The Fall of the Serbian Empire” (“Propast carstva srpskoga”) we find the reference to the word of God, which is manifested in the form of the “letter. This calls to mind the psychoanalytic explanation of the significance of the “letter” or logos in the unconscious and in the dialectic of desire. The instance in the poem where God communicates with Knez Lazar can be compared to the ‘voice’ of the Other. The Lacanian Other functions only as a supposed knowledge or the Law which reaches the subject through a signifier as assumed by the subject. Such a signifier is modeled by the Other and is uncanny and mysterious. In the poem, the voice of the Other is embodied in the form of “a swift grey bird, a falcon”, which brings the divine message:

From Jerusalem, the holy city,
Flying came a swift grey bird, a falcon,
And he carried in his beak a swallow.
But behold and see! 'Tis not a falcon,
'Tis the holy man of God, Elias,
And he does not bear with him a swallow,
But a letter from God's Holy Mother.
Lo, he bears the letter to Kosovo,
Drops it on the Tsar's knees from the heavens,
And thus speaks the letter to the monarch [...].¹³

This is one of the crucial moments in Serbian mythology of Kosovo for a number of reasons. Firstly, this moment is the moment of the ‘annunciation’, when Knez Lazar learns about the significance of the forthcoming battle. This moment announces the ultimate course of the Kosovo story in Serbian culture. It is with the arrival of the *letter* from God that the decisive choice has been “dropped from the heavens” on Lazar’s “knees” (“Lo, he bears the letter to Kosovo / Drops it on the Tsar’s knees from the heavens”).

The presence of the Other as a voice of the Law (God) can be traced through the entire epic opus of Serbian oral literature. Sometimes, the Other can be sensed in the reference to God, at other times the Other is simply a ‘seemingly’ neutral point of

9. Jacques Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire”, in J.S. Miller, ed., Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: the First Complete Edition in English*, J.S. Miller, ed., B. Fink and R. Grigg, trans. (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), pp. 693-694.

10. Helen Rootham and Maurice Baring, ed., *Kosovo: Heroic Songs of the Serbs*, H. Rootham, trans., (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1920), p. 25.

reference, invoked by the speech of the bard, who takes up the position of a witness rather than that of an author. The Lacanian speaking subject addresses the analyst through the account of the Other as some kind of a censor. When the subject speaks, he/she assumes the Other as the Law, which regulates the symbolic order in which the subject operates. Therefore the subject tries to satisfy the assumed demand from the Other and poses a latent question: “what does the Other want from me.”¹⁴ Similarly, in Serbian epic poetry, the bard addresses the audience through the account of God as a witness or by the means of (re)telling the story in the third person, whereby he/she takes on a responsibility towards the narrative and the audience. “What does Knez Lazar want from me?”, the receptive audience might ask. To answer this in Lacanian terms would lead to the inference that Lazar wants ‘your’ (the audience’s) desire or that Lazar wants the audience to want the same as he does. This is the dialectic of desire as it comes to expression in the national myth.

In this dialectic, the opposite is true to what is stated in the poem. Contrary to the words in his curse, in a contemporary context of Serbian culture, Lazar does not in fact want the Serbs to come to the Battle of Kosovo. Instead, we could say, Lazar establishes the order by which ‘you’ become a part of the symbolic chain of the Kosovo discourse and by the illusion of satisfying the desire of Lazar, you chase the shadow of your own unconscious. There is no Lazar of Kosovo in an external world to whom we should answer to today. There is only Lazar as the Other, as the Freudian Father, who escaped from the sphere of the Imaginary into the sphere of the Symbolic, the moment we became emotionally engaged with the poem.

If we take this model of interpretation further, we can also assume that the whole discourse of epic poetry belongs to the discourse of the Other, while the figure of the bard can be seen as the medium who communicates the desire of the Other (Kosovo, God, Lazar) to the audience, and from the supposed reader back to the supposed desire of the Other, closing the circuit of desire or placing desire in infinite circulation. In other words, the human sacrifice resulting from Kosovo is only valuable in as much it can be circulated, reinvented and sacrificed again.

In 2008, Serbia experienced another loss of Kosovo, yet this time in the political reality, not in a metaphoric experience. When in 2008 the Serbian Province of Kosovo, where the majority of the population, who is now of Albanian ethnic origin, proclaimed independence, the Serbian public reacted by organizing mass protests across Serbia and in the Serbian Diaspora. The protests and the reaction of politicians as well as a vast majority of the Serbian population testified to the strength of the national outrage. Thousands of protestors marched the streets of Belgrade and other major cities in Serbia, chanting slogans such as “Kosovo is the heart of Serbia” (“Kosovo je srce Srbije”) and similar. Amongst these slogans, one could notice frequent appearance of posters and banners simply with the year “1389” written on it, as well as various interpretations and depictions of scenes found in epic poems of the Kosovo cycle.

The resurrection of Kosovo mythology today is manifested in popular songs, film adaptations of the battle and popular reproductions of the motives of epic poetry.

11. Jacques Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire”, in J.S. Miller, ed., *Ecrits: the First Complete Edition in English*, B. Fink and R. Grigg, trans. (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), p. 690.

Revisiting national mythology is not unusual and cultures around the world cherish their tradition and cultural heritage. However, when mythology becomes an elementary part of national ideology it also becomes a very explicit tool in the discourse of political propaganda. Some nationalist groups in Serbia, such as *Obraz*, “Movement 1389” and other groups, united into sport team supporters, could be found exclaiming the calls to battle in the manner of the medieval poems. This is escalated into explicit calls for Serbian ‘avenging’ Kosovo, in which the new ‘bards’ fantasize about their death in an imaginary Kosovo battle.

The metaphoric notion of ‘avenging’ Kosovo is in the very concept an impossible task and therefore belongs to pure myth of the modern (contemporary) kind. Speaking in Lacanian terms, the ‘lack’ (that is the “lost” Kingdom of Kosovo) can never be reconciled unless the choice made by knez Lazar could somehow be reversed. Lacan argues that there is no Other of the Other and by this dialectic, there is no Kosovo of Kosovo. In other words, if a metaphor of Kosovo is a signifier lost in the field of the Other or by God’s ultimatum like the poem suggests, we cannot retrieve Kosovo by an act of revenge, because without this ‘loss’ Kosovo would not exist in the Serbian national imaginary. In fact, we can go as far as to suggest that Kosovo as a ‘lost object’ exists only as a loss, or as a lack, in whose place is *substituted* the myth of Kosovo. This myth needs to be revisited and recycled in order to be re-created and lost over and over again. Like Lacan’s Other, Kosovo too can be interpreted as a space where the meaning dies and emerges, but we never recognize the Other in anything but in a lack.¹⁵

This is why the young men and women gathered in mass protests rejoice in singing songs of worship to the Kosovo myth since, in recalling the tragedy of the Kosovo Battle, they trigger the (infantile in the sense of belonging to the pre-adolescent subject as enacted in Freud’s grandson’s game of Fort/Da) fantasy of their own symbolic ‘death’ or disappearance, thus re-enacting the death drive which grounds desire and *jouissance*. *Jouissance* belongs to the dialectic of desire and is embodied by the phallus. The phallus is not a synonym for the biological organ of the penis but a symbol – literally – of the Symbol(ic). “Thus the erectile organ comes to symbolize the place of *jouissance* not in itself, or even in the form of an image, but as a part lacking in the desired image...”¹⁶ Jonathan Scott Lee explicates the connection between the death drive, desire and language as Lacan developed it with reference to Freud’s discussion of the death drive in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920).¹⁷ According to Jonathan Scott Lee, Lacan first thought of desire as a positive value, but in his later work (in “The Subversion of the Subject...”) came to regard it as an “obstacle to *jouissance*.” This led Lacan to “promote the value of *jouissance* over that of the ‘perverted’ desire shaped by castration,” which raises the question of “the ultimate ethical value of desire.”¹⁸

12. *Ibid.*, p. 693.

¹⁶ Lacan quoted in Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 122.

¹⁷ Compare Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan*. (Amherst The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 92-97,

¹⁸ Compare Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 162.

A psychoanalytic interpretation of the ‘resurrection’ of the Kosovo mythology in contemporary Serbian popular culture fits neatly into this dialectic of desire and *jouissance*. The ‘lack’ which is re-enacted through the Kosovo mythology functions as a channel for the ‘collective’ unconscious desire for unity with the ‘object’ (or, as Freud would say, for identification with the Mother/Other). This is in fact a form of desire which Lacan calls ‘perverted’ and whose ethical value he questions. Identity formation emerging as nationalist self-consciousness springs not only from the ‘primitive’ (primal, unconscious) identification with visual images on the level of the ideal-ego, but from a sphere engraved more deeply in the unconscious, which is the sphere of the death drive. This sphere is connected with the mainspring of discourse - of language and poetry – but is in the region of the repressed. The ‘return of the repressed’¹⁹ is according to Freud a feature of the re-surfacing of instincts and desires formed in childhood and then forgotten. Freud transposes the repression of instincts in early childhood into what he calls “mass psychology” (*Massenpsychologie*), which he says was not an easy task. In this paper, an attempt was made to follow Freud’s method by transposing Lacan’s dialectic of desire into the psychology of reception of popular culture.

The inference to be drawn from this psychoanalytic reading is that the Serbian popular cultural imaginary – like the popular culture imaginary in the global village - maintains itself in a state analogous to the state of childhood or early childhood (pre-adolescent) development as a subject of language. In this state, the Serbian popular culture imaginary is prone to exploitation and manipulation by the apparatus of political propaganda, in particular the nationalist groups which appropriate the Kosovo mythology for purposes of rousing popular nationalist sentiment to fill the absence of a proper public debate on the issues of Kosovo in the contemporary global historical context. This inference finds a ‘historical’ echo in Janko Lavrin’s discovery of the “interesting fact that the entire political mentality even of the modern Serbian peasant has been formed not by political and social struggles, as in other European countries, but chiefly by folk-poetry.”²⁰ It is the poetry of the Kosovo myths which still dominates popular political movements in Serbia.

¹⁹ Compare Sigmund Freud’s essay on Moses and Monotheism, Sigmund Freud, “Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen (1939[1934-38]), in: Sigmund Freud, Studienausgabe Band IX, *Fragen der Gesellschaft, Ursprünge der Religion*. Alexander Mitscherlich, Herausg. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974, pp. 570-2 (“Die Wiederkehr des Verdrängten”). culture.

14. Janko Lavrin, “Historical Preface,” in Helen Rootham and Maurice Baring, ed., *Kosovo: Heroic Songs of the Serbs*, H. Rootham, trans., (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1920), p. 19.