

Music as a weapon of ethno-political violence and conflict: processes of ethnic separation during and after the break-up of Yugoslavia¹

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Abstract: Using illustrations from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and their aftermath, this paper argues that understanding popular music and public discourses about it can help to understand the dynamics of ethno-political conflict. Studies of war and conflict have approached music as political communication, as an object of securitization, as a means of violence, and as a symbol of ethnic difference, while international law in the context of another case of collective violence, Rwanda, has even begun to question whether performing or broadcasting certain music could constitute incitement to genocide. Drawing on post-structuralist perspectives on the media and ethnicization in conflicts, this paper explores and interrogates the discourse of popular music as a weapon of war that was in use during and after the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. Music during the Yugoslav wars was used as a tool of humiliation and violence in prison camps, was used to provoke fear of the ethnic Other in line with a strategy of ethnic cleansing and was conceptualized as a morale asset for the troops of one's own side. A discourse of music as a weapon of war was also in use and persisted after the war, when its referent was shifted to associate music-as-a-weapon not to the brave and defiant in-group so much as the aggressive Other. This was then turned against a wider range of signifiers than those who had directly supported the Other's troops and had the effect of perpetuating ethnic separation and obstructing the re-formation of a (post-)Yugoslav cultural space. Despite evidence that music did serve as an instrument of violence in the Yugoslav wars and the precedent of the Bikindi indictment, the paper concludes that music should be integrated into understandings of ethno-political conflict not through a framework of incitement and complicity but with respect for the significance of music in the everyday.

Keywords: popular music, ethno-political conflict, war, discourse, violence, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Music and nationalism are intimately connected. In the hands of nationalist movements and governments, music has been a powerful means of representing the cultural identities of nations to co-nationals and others, from the folk revival movements of the nineteenth century through to the ‘nation-branding’ strategies of today. The practice of attaching a national anthem to the nation, and to its state where it has one, ties music to the nation on a worldwide scale. Music is also significant in mobilising social groups to take action in the name of the nation, such as in the efforts made by musicians, scholars and publishers to collect folk songs into national rather than just regional repertoires and to demonstrate that ethnic collectivity exists regardless of political borders. The uses of music are of course not only textual but also participatory, as it accompanies many types of occasion where nationhood is constituted by the nation’s members on the level of everyday practice.²

When considering conflicts that have been framed in nationalist or ethnopolitical terms, however, an understanding of music must go beyond these observations about music and nationalism to take in the idea that music can also be used as a tool of conflict in its own right – in short, that music can operate as a weapon. While this potential has not been studied to the same extent as the link between music and nationalism in general, several authors including Martin Cloonan, Bruce Johnson and Suzanne Cusick have explored it in the past decade, through examples including the use of music as a torture method in US detention facilities during the War on Terror.³ Notably, the prosecution at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda also attempted to introduce this principle into international criminal justice by indicting the Rwandan musician Simon Bikindi on the grounds that his songs about the history of inter-ethnic relations in Rwanda had amounted to incitement to genocide when re-used during the violence in April–July 1994.⁴ There are thus increasing moves both inside and outside the academy to take music seriously not just as a representation of violent conflict but also as a direct instrument through which that violence may take place.

This paper seeks to explore the question of music as a weapon of nationalist and ethnopolitical conflict further through the case study of the post-Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Cloonan and Johnson’s study of popular music and violence incorporates some references to the use of music in the abuse of prisoners during the war in Croatia which have been drawn from the ethnomusicological research of Svanibor Pettan: it is now possible to extend these observations through sources that have become more recently available, such as prisoner testimonies from the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia.⁵ Beyond the direct use of music while inflicting physical pain that is evident in cases such as these, however, there is a further sense in which music can also be considered an instrument of violence and that should also be discussed: if, as post-structuralist approaches to ethnopolitical conflict claim, the goal of ethnopolitical conflict is to fix and harden ethnic separation so that one side’s territorial objectives can be permanently achieved, then the full range of techniques used to achieve this separation should also be thought of as tools of conflict. This paper will show how music could be said to have had this function during the post-Yugoslav wars, but also approaches the discourse of music as a weapon of war critically: in the aftermath of the wars themselves, there is evidence that this discourse itself became an instrument of prolonging ethnic separation, when applied to the music of the opponent rather

² See Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC–CLIO 2004); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage 1995).

³ Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Farnham: Ashgate 2009); Suzanne E Cusick, “‘You are in a place that is out of this world’: music in the detention camps of the ‘Global War on Terror’”, *Journal of the Society for American Musicology*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2008, 1–26.

⁴ Robert H. Snyder, “‘Disillusioned words like bullets bark’: incitement to genocide, music, and the trial of Simon Bikindi”, *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, vol. 35, 2006–7, 645–74 (674).

⁵ Svanibor Pettan (ed.), *Music, Politics and War: Views from Croatia* (Zagreb: IEF 1998), 18, cited in Johnson and Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune*, 154–55.

than the music of one's own group and used against musicians who had not been personally implicated in violence. The paper therefore concludes with a note of caution as regards over-extending the concept of music as a tool of ethno-political conflict. First, however, it is necessary to review how the dynamics of ethno-political conflict should be understood, including the process of 'ethnicization', and how this manifested in the post-Yugoslav wars.

Ethno-political conflict and the Yugoslav wars

Ethno-political movements in conflict seek to secure and control territory in order to exercising power within its boundaries. This principle of 'territoriality' applies to all states and aspiring states;⁶ what ethno-political movements seek to do with their territory is to apply the principle of nationalism, a belief 'that the political and the national unit should be congruent'.⁷ Yet disputed territories and populations are far more ambiguous than this ideal. Making them match requires the revision of international borders, human settlement patterns or both so that nation-states are inhabited by their ethnic majorities, with minorities minimized. Behind this notion must lie a deeper belief that the majority and minorities can be differentiated: a precondition for ethno-political movements, let alone conflict, is the constitution of each group as identifiable and essentially different from its neighbours.⁸

Post-structuralists argue that this constitution is contingent and dependent on a range of processes, including calling 'groupness' into being through speech that evokes the existence and character of speakers' own groups and Others.⁹ The 'ethnicization' of social life or conflict then appears as a matter of framing and 'social struggles to label, interpret or explain' events, including violence.¹⁰ To achieve this framing, ethno-political actors must therefore be able: to depict and construct a fixed ethnic group; to present an opposing Other for this group to be defined against; and, as a means of raising stakes, to promote a belief that group members will be in danger from the Other unless they cast their lot with their own group. Ethno-politics is thus inherently a politics of fear and threat.

Although ethnic cleansing – forcibly removing people from territory to ethnically homogenize territory claimed by an ethno-political movement – acquired its English-language name during the post-Yugoslav wars, its use in nation-state formation arguably has a longer history.¹¹ In ethnic cleansing, direct violence in one location is intended to have a wider ripple effect: perpetrators hope that, over a broader radius, other members of the target group / others *who must first be made to regard themselves as* members of the target group will leave their own homes in fear of suffering the same brutality if they stay. Ethno-political conflict thus depends on instilling and maintaining fear of the Other, representing its identity as alien and its violence as barbaric, and forcing a radical and violent revision of everyday relations.¹²

From this perspective, the post-Yugoslav wars may be viewed as a political project in which elites competing for control over the collapsing Yugoslav socialist state's resources

⁶ Peter J. Taylor, 'The state as container: territoriality in the modern world-system', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1994, 151–62 (151).

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2008), 1.

⁸ Daniele Conversi, 'Nationalism, boundaries and violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1999, 553–84 (564).

⁹ Rogers Brubaker, 'Ethnicity without groups', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2002, 163–89 (166–7).

¹⁰ Brubaker, 'Ethnicity', 173–4.

¹¹ Jennifer Jackson Preece, 'Ethnic cleansing as an instrument of nation-state creation: changing state practices and evolving legal norms', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 20, 1998, 817–42 (818).

¹² See Ivana Maček, *Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2009).

invoked nationalism as the source of legitimacy and sovereignty for the successor states they intended to create by (para-)military means.¹³ These actors, claiming to represent peoples, took advantage of a wave of historical revisionism that had followed Tito's death in 1980 in order to mobilize their own populations around collective identities based on war memory, ethnic nationalism and fear of the enemy Other.¹⁴ The logic of deriving sovereignty from bounded ethnically-homogenous territories led to the practice of committing collective murder, robbery and rape to terrify wider populations of undesired minorities into fleeing the spaces identified as ethnic homelands. However, this was only one strand of the project to forcibly break up Yugoslavia; the motivators of war also needed to have unravelled the everyday ambiguity of Yugoslav life in order for that ethnic logic to make sense. Behind the front lines, and even on them, this reordering of the community around homogenous, unambiguous ethnic belonging was played out through news and also entertainment media, including popular music. The linked conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo had the intention and effect of destroying pre-war Yugoslavia as a meaningful political and sociocultural framework.

Ethnomusicologists studying this period have already identified the significance of music as a symbol of ethnic difference during and after Yugoslavia's disintegration. This position rests on a constructivist theory of ethnicity that views ethnic identities as defined not by a list of ethnic characteristics but through symbols that mark people and collectivities as ethnically similar or different, i.e. that establish ethnic boundaries.¹⁵ Musical genres, texts and practices may act as such 'boundary markers', all the more powerfully for being grounded in everyday life. Naila Ceribašić was among the first ethnomusicologists to argue that popular music became a means of differentiation between discourses and states in former Yugoslavia, including contrasts between certain musical instruments that were used to symbolize the Serbs and Croats as distinct ethnocultural groups; Ivan Čolović's influential text on the construction of ethnic Others during the wars also discusses music.¹⁶ Mirjana Laušević shows labelling and categorization at work in the construction of distinct 'Serb', 'Croat' and 'Muslim'/'Bosniak' song styles during the Bosnian conflict, highlighting this ethnic labelling's contingent, processual nature.¹⁷ Understanding the symbolic and social construction of ethnicity makes it clear that popular music in this ethno-political conflict situation was deliberately used as a means of constituting and reifying the ethnic groups that were imagined to be collective actors, perpetrators and victims in the Yugoslav wars.

Music and the outbreak of conflict

¹³ E.g. V. P. Gagnon, Jr., *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2004); Dubravka Žarkov, *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity and Gender in the Break-Up of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2007).

¹⁴ Each ethno-political 'group' in conflict consisted of multiple actors and forces who also competed internally. The conflicts between entities aiming to establish or maintain state control over territory were: Slovenia vs. Yugoslav Army (1991); Croatia vs. Croatian Serb forces and Yugoslav Army (1990/1–5); Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH) vs. Bosnian Serb forces (VRS) and Yugoslav Army (1992–5); ABiH vs. Bosnian Croat forces (HVO) (1993–4); Serbian forces vs. Kosovo Liberation Army (1998–9).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Joanna Nagel, 'Constructing ethnicity: creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture', *Social Problems*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1994, 152–76 (154–5).

¹⁶ Naila Ceribašić, 'Gender roles during the war: representations in Croatian and Serbian popular music 1991–1992', *Collegium Antropologicum*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1995, 91–101 (94); Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia* (London: Hurst 2002).

¹⁷ Mirjana Laušević, 'Some aspects of music and politics in Bosnia', in Joel M Halpern and David A Kideckel (ed.), *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture and History* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 2000), 289–302 (293).

Popular music in Yugoslavia had formed part of the state commemorative calendar and become one layer in a rich Yugoslav cultural space that would arguably even outlive the Yugoslav state.¹⁸ However, the Yugoslav regime had also treated music as a security threat where it expressed substate nationalism, emphasized ethnonational historical narratives that did not fit within Yugoslavia's official narrative, promoted religious devotion, or, of course, related to one of the nationally-defined groups that had opposed Tito's Partisans during the Second World War,¹⁹ the Serb royalist Četniks and the Croat ultranationalist/Fascist Ustaše.²⁰ The Yugoslav authorities preferred musicians and editors to exercise self-censorship but, if this failed, would take action themselves. The emblematic case was the Croatian singer Vice Vukov who, during a period of political liberalization, had associated himself with the Croatian mass movement of 1968–71 through his patriotic song 'Tvoja zemlja' ('Your land'). Being abroad, he avoided arrest when the movement was shut down, but could not work as a musician in Yugoslavia again until 1989.²¹ Some other Croatian musicians claimed similar but less extreme treatment.²² In everyday life, each Yugoslav republic's criminal code contained provisions that could be used for criminalizing substate-nationalist songs. These were directed against obvious provocation as well as political conviction: in 1987, the funk singer Dino Dvornik had been told not to mention Croatia on stage and so mischievously improvised a couplet 'Op la la, ja sam mali ustaša' ('Op la la, I'm a little Ustaša'). He received a 90-day prison service that he avoided by activating personal connections.²³ By the time Yugoslavia broke up, however, the musicians involved in the first wave of Croatian nationalist/patriotic music-making in 1989–90 did not seriously fear imprisonment or employment bans, even though Croatia's state-owned record company took some more months to become comfortable with it.

This background is important for understanding the use of music by the actors in the post-Yugoslav ethno-political conflict. On one hand, broadcasters and politicians were already accustomed to using popular music for collectivist ends; on another, secessionists used Yugoslavia's suppression of Croatian nationalist music as evidence that the Yugoslav system had been designed by Croats' ancient enemies, the Serbs, to prevent Croats exercising self-determination. Nationalist/patriotic music-making could thus be presented as an expression of freedom and democracy in line with developments elsewhere in Central Europe in 1989–91, creating a discourse of music as an instrument of liberation.

This discourse was carried into the armed conflict phase itself and was combined with the Croatian state's official communications strategy of presenting itself as a modern European democracy appealing for peace. Early wartime hits directly appealed to the European Community to stop the Yugoslav Army's brutal aggression. For domestic consumption, this aggressor was represented in more detail as a tripartite Other, Yugoslav and Communist and Serb; under the discursive parameters of the Croatian president and the heads of state broadcasting, the Croat ethno-nation could not contain signifiers of any of these. Although

¹⁸ Zala Volčič, 'Scenes from the last Yugoslav generation: the long march from Yugo-utopia to nationalisms', *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2007, 67–89 (75).

¹⁹ Svanibor Pettan, 'Music, politics and war in Croatia in the 1990s: an introduction', in Svanibor Pettan (ed.), *Music, Politics and War: Views from Croatia* (Zagreb: IEF 1998), 9–28 (11).

²⁰ The words 'Četniks' and 'Ustaše' persisted as offensive terms for Serbs or Croats.

²¹ Dean Vuletić, 'The silent republic: popular music and nationalism in socialist Croatia', Max Weber Programme Working Paper MWP 2011/20 (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute 2011), 10–13.

²² E.g. Tomislav Ivčić claimed that performing a song with religious connotations at a televised festival in 1979 had affected his career: Sanja Pribić, 'Tirzni bum glazbenog rodoljublja: hrvatske budnice iz druge ruke', *TV Best*, 13 June 1991.

²³ Mark Cigoj, 'Najveća mi je želja da kupim stan u Vrapču pokraj umobolnice, samo tamo žive normalni ljudi!', *Globus*, 26 September 1997.

one would overlook the pluralism and voluntarism of the many musicians who responded in song to the attacks on Croatia if one regarded them as no more than state functionaries, the state broadcaster still exercised powerful control over what music would be most widely disseminated and therefore had a filtering effect.

The wartime Croatian state's representational strategy for popular music, however, clashed with music's historic military function as a source of troop and civilian morale. Music-making, including frequent performances by Croatian stars at the front line, was also supposed to exemplify and promote national defiance.²⁴ A state television music editor explained that his programming policy, responding to events in the war, selected songs based on their lyrics plus some musicians' regional connections to sites under attack.²⁵ Partly incorporated into the rolling news framework that dominated Croatian broadcasting in late 1991, music editors had to operate within the broadcaster's macro-guidelines for depicting the conflict (controversially, journalists were prevented from showing weeping or wounded bodies although many desired to do so²⁶) and also silenced songs they considered too aggressive. Over-aggressive songs circulated instead through cassettes, market-stalls and local radio, but the boundary for over-aggressiveness was not fixed. Sometimes songs were playlisted then dropped, or different branches of the state media viewed a song differently. The editor above had included the song 'Hrvatine' ('hyper-Croats') in his morale-boosting repertoire, but it would later be de-playlisted because it called the enemy 'beasts of evil' ('zvijeri zle') and because two other phrases echoed Ustaša slogans.

The 'Hrvatine' controversy illustrates the contestedness of 'aggression'. Silencing any Croatian aggressiveness in combat (or behind the lines), 'aggression' was shifted entirely on to the enemy ethnic Other. 'The Serb aggressor', in Croat and Bosniak nationalist discourses, is emphasized as the one responsible for violence and for forcing 'us' to fight despite 'our' peaceful natures. 'Our' soldiers, who could never be aggressive, were 'defenders'.²⁷ The requirement to silence aggression yet represent a defiant defence created a curious lacuna in public representations of the war: how else would troops be defending *if not* through violence? In Croatia, the tension between sanitization and mobilization in war representations appeared to have been overcome when a soldier and amateur musician, Marko Perković Thompson, became famous in early 1992 through a song pledging vengeance against the Serbs and 'Četniks' who had attacked his home village (under the 1991 news guidelines, the term 'Četniks' was not even to be used). Yet media use of his output was still subject to negotiation – the Croatian broadcaster refused to make a video for another song with an 'over-aggressive' script that Thompson proposed in 1994.²⁸ It is perhaps significant that Thompson's celebration in state media only began after Croatia had been internationally recognized as a state and depictions of its soldiers' violence could cause less harm to its legitimacy.

Music as an instrument of violence

²⁴ See, e.g. Miroslava Hadžihusejnović-Valašek, 'The Osijek war-time music scene', in Svanibor Pettan (ed.), *Music, Politics and War: Views from Croatia* (Zagreb: IEF 1998), 166–73.

²⁵ Anči Fabijanović, 'Prijateljstva šaptom pala', *Večernji list*, 4 October 1991. A wartime editor at a local, non-state TV station (Opuzen TV) applied the same policy: Dona Kolar-Panov, 'Ethnic cleansing, plastic bags and throw-away people', *Continuum*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1994, <http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/8.2/Kolar.html> (accessed 28 February 2012).

²⁶ Branimir Donat, 'Na granici ludila', *Globus*, 6 September 1991.

²⁷ Since early 1992, the Croatian word for 'defender' ('branitelj') has been the standard word in public discourse for a Croatian veteran of the 1990s war. Bosniak and former-ABiH discourse often speaks of the 'defenders' ('branioci') of Sarajevo, Tuzla and other cities besieged by the VRS.

²⁸ Željko Rogošić, 'Zbog Anice i bokala vina zapalit ću Krajinu do Knina!', *Globus*, 14 October 1994.

A discourse of music as a weapon was widespread during the post-Yugoslav wars. Carol Lilly and Jill Irvine quote the headline ('My rifle [is] my song') of an interview with one female vocalist, Severina, as evidence of how Croatian women were expected to complement the masculine military contribution to the war through equal yet separate contributions.²⁹ However, the song-as-weapon construction could also be applied to male musicians, perhaps as a device for retaining masculinity though not serving in combat: 'My bullet is my song', stated Duka Čaić, the composer/performer of 'Hrvatine', 'and it wounds the Četniks more than the calibre of a long gun [kalibra duge desetke]'.³⁰ Beyond this, music also functioned more directly as a tool of conflict. As in many torture situations, forced singing of nationalist songs was used in prison camps during the post-Yugoslav wars to humiliate 'enemy' prisoners, as has been described in a number of prisoner testimonies at the ICTY. The significance of these testimonies as evidence is that the prosecutors and witness found it relevant to present forced singing to the tribunal as a means of torture, and judges in some cases have themselves stated that evidence of forced singing was salient in reaching their verdict. Among the transcripts' limitations, however, is the fact that the transcripts tend not to specify which songs were sung, since only the songs' genre needed to be stated in order to support the allegation of persecution on an ethnic basis.

At the ICTY trial of four Serb defendants accused by the ICTY of ethnic cleansing in the Bosnian town of Bosanski Šamac in 1992, for instance, one Bosniak held prisoner testified that Serb guards had forced them to sing Četnik songs while his brother was being beaten:

The rest of the prisoners were standing in the room and singing the Chetnik songs they were ordered to sing. [...] While I was singing those songs, when I saw my brother's hand, which was swelling rapidly, I gestured to the other detainees who were there with us, asking them to sing louder, and I took my brother's hand and pulled his fingers, crying all the time. (Muhamed Bičić)³¹

The judges found 'that the forced singing of Serbian songs based on discriminatory grounds was an act of humiliation' against non-Serb prisoners, and that its sound outside the prison building were one reason a co-defendant, Blagoje Šimić, must have been aware of the abuses inside.³²

Forced singing was also reported as a torture method in other trials. The trials of Dario Kordić/Marko Čerkez and Mladen Naletilić/Vinko Martinović, two sets of Bosnian Croat commanders, heard that Bosnian Croat guards under their eventual command had forced Bosniak prisoners to sing Ustaša songs during the HVO/ABiH conflict in 1993. An anonymous witness from Mostar testified that the HVO had arrested men with Bosniak names and taken them to a camp outside town where they were often woken at night and forced to run a gauntlet of guards while singing 'the Croatian [national] anthem, [and] some Ustasa songs dating back to World War II'.³³ Sometimes the humiliation consisted of prisoners being forced to sing songs corresponding to their own ethnicity instead, as in the testimony of Vil Karlović, a Croatian volunteer who had been captured by Serb soldiers from the hospital in Vukovar in November 1991:

²⁹ Carol S. Lilly and Jill A. Irvine, 'Negotiating interests: women and nationalism in Serbia and Croatia, 1990–1997', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2002, 109–44 (119).

³⁰ Boris Homovec, 'Hrvat sam u povijesnim granicama', *Globus*, 13 December 1991.

³¹ ICTY transcript, case IT-95-9-T, 26 October 2001, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/simic/trans/en/011026ED.htm>, 2954 (accessed 15 May 2013).

³² ICTY judgement, case IT-95-9-T, 17 October 2003, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/simic/tjug/en/sim-tj031017e.pdf>, 216, 284 (accessed 15 May 2013).

³³ ICTY transcript, case IT-98-34, 6 December 2001, http://www.icty.org/x/cases/naletilic_martinovic/trans/en/011206ED.htm, 7115 (accessed 15 May 2013).

The man who was biggest built, Belgija, he held me and forced me to sing Croatian songs and took me from [the temporary prison camp at] Velepomet along a road which was near the railway line, and some 100 metres on a vehicle arrived and we all got into it.³⁴

Events in Vukovar presented many examples of music being used and understood as a direct form of aggression by both sides. Most infamous was a song improvised by Četnik paramilitaries during the fall of Vukovar and recorded by foreign reporters: ‘Slobodane, šalji nam salate / biće mesa, biće mesa, klačemo Hrvate’ (‘Slobodan [Milošević], send us salad / there’s going to be meat, we’re going to kill the Croats’). Emil Cakalić, also captured from the Vukovar hospital, spoke of this song’s psychological effect during the trial of the Serb Radical Party leader Vojislav Šešelj:

I know this first thing, ‘Slobo, Slobo, send us,’ et cetera, et cetera, but they were fairly brutal. They were very unpleasant. And as soon as people heard them coming, they would run and hide, go off the streets. And the people were very much afraid generally, both Croats and the Serbs, because the Serbs wouldn't have been spared either had this unruly crowd started doing what it intended to do. [...] [T]he song resounded throughout Vukovar, especially by the volunteers who were singing it.³⁵

Serb forces in Vukovar went on to use music in a more organised way. During the occupation, musicians from Serbia including Nada Topčagić visited Vukovar for a concert at the Vuteks factory where they performed nationalist songs to Serb soldiers and civilians.³⁶ Serbian television footage of the concert, uploaded to YouTube in 2012, shows Topčagić entering the factory hall and performing the Serb patriotic song ‘Marširala kralja Petra garda’ (‘King Petar’s guard was marching’), which refers to a parade in Belgrade during the reign of King Petar II of Yugoslavia (1934–45).³⁷

Yet music had also been used in Vukovar to accomplish Croat, as well as Serb, ethnonational purposes. An anonymous witness at the Vukovar Hospital trial who had lived in Vukovar until July 1991 testified that hearing Croat nationalist songs describing violence against Serbs had increased the fear felt by himself and his family. Importantly, singing had been concurrent with other acts he believed preparatory to direct violence:

You can hear some shooting at night, especially after the 2nd of May [1991] when that attack on Borovo Selo happened. You could hear Croatian soldiers singing some national songs about the killings of Serbs, and – they were all close by to us, and we didn’t feel safe anymore. My mom was called so many times. My stepdad was called so many times to leave Vukovar because he lives with a Chetnik. They barged one day into our house, and they took all the weapons that he had. He used to be a hunter.³⁸

³⁴ ICTY transcript, case IT-03-67, 11 March 2008, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/trans/en/080311ED.htm>, 4742–3 (accessed 15 May 2013).

³⁵ ICTY transcript, case IT-03-67, 18 March 2008, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/trans/en/080318ED.htm>, 4954 (accessed 15 May 2013).

³⁶ Žarka Radoja, ‘Narodnjačko prelo za “oslobodiće”’, *E-Novine*, 19 November 2009, <http://www.e-novine.com/feljton/32359-Narodnjako-prelo-oslobodiće.html> (accessed 16 February 2012).

³⁷ ‘Nada Topcagic i Era Ojdanic pjevaju u Vukovaru’, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8fHaVZFGFM> (accessed 15 May 2013).

³⁸ ICTY transcript, case IT-95-13/1, 15 March 2006, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/mrksic/trans/en/060315ED.htm>, 6072–3 (accessed 15 May 2013).

Music, Johnson and Cloonan argue, may affect the mind and body differently from other communicative forms: for instance, setting words to music makes them more memorable.³⁹ Mirjana Laušević reported a Bosniak refugee from Mostar had been ‘so haunted by’ one HVO song that ‘she found herself humming it, even though that same Croatian Military Defense [Council] had imprisoned her husband, stolen her livestock, and destroyed her house’.⁴⁰ Since ethnic cleansing itself is supposed to have a lasting, indirect effect, music would certainly appeal as a tool if it stayed with the hearer longer than the spoken word. Directed against one’s own population, music could also be a tool to *disengage* an opposition: Eric Gordy thus argues that the Milošević regime’s promotion of pop-folk or ‘turbo-folk’ music in the mid-1990s was designed to hinder rock bands performing and being heard as part of an attack on the spaces of sociability used by Serbia’s ‘alternative’ opposition.⁴¹

The Vuteks factory concert, and the presentation of Croatian musicians in Croatia’s wartime media, both show that musicians were conceptualized as morale assets during the Yugoslav conflict. ‘Deploying’ musicians as morale-workers is of course a widespread military practice: armed forces have traditionally operated their own bands but also hired civilian entertainers to provide recreation for troops. During the Croatian wave of patriotic volunteerism in autumn 1991, many entertainers were organized into ensembles who performed for front-line units and were regularly photographed in uniform: though some male musicians (and reportedly one woman) spent weeks or months in combat, the state clearly used musicians as a category as figures rather than as troops. Musicians associated with other ethnopolitical groups participated in similar ways. In 1994, Lepa Brena (one of pre-war Yugoslavia’s most famous celebrities) visited Bosnian Serb troops in her hometown, Brčko, wearing a camouflage-patterned outfit including a cap with the Bosnian Serb flag. In 2009–10, Brena gave her first post-war performances in BiH and Zagreb, but groups of Croatian Army and ABiH veterans described her as not fit to perform because in 1994 she had worn Bosnian Serb uniform.⁴² This reaction equated the complicity of an enemy civilian musician with that of an enemy soldier. The practice of militarizing musicians into ‘artistic units’ (as Croatian forces had in autumn 1991) would have taken this complicity a step further: temporarily-enlisted civilian musicians would of course have been legally considered combatants during their service, affecting how the laws of war applied to them.

The potential for musicians on active service to be targeted as musicians may have been a reason for limiting their presence on front lines. The punk musician Satan Panonski volunteered for the Croatian Army when fighting broke out near his hometown, and was killed in January 1992. A number of musicians who remained civilians were also directly affected by fighting, including Tereza Kesovija, a singer from Konavle near Dubrovnik, who frequently claimed her home had been singled out for looting because of her celebrity status. Musicians who remained in besieged Sarajevo were caught up, like other residents, in the siege, though could have greater access to routes out of the city if they served a publicity purpose for the Sarajevo government (including attending the Eurovision Song Contest). There are remarkably few instances of opposing forces singling out the highest-profile musicians as musicians in the way that, for instance, the Chilean or Syrian dictatorships targeted opposition singers (Victor Jara; Ibrahim Kashoush) during political repression. One Croatian singer, Mišo Kovač, used to claim that his teenage son, an army volunteer (who was

³⁹ Johnson and Cloonan, *Dark Side*.

⁴⁰ Laušević, ‘Some aspects’, 290.

⁴¹ Eric D. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 1999).

⁴² Ana Hofman, ‘Lepa Brena: Repolitization of musical memories on Yugoslavia’, *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU*, vol. 60, no. 1 (2012), 21–37.

shot in Zagreb in 1992), had been murdered by his own side. There is a lack of evidence, however, concerning musicians who were less protected by fame, such as amateur local singers who might have been targeted in ethnic cleansing operations that were intended to eliminate the prominent figures in a community.

The weapon-of-war discourse after conflict

For Croatia, the armed phase of ethno-political conflict ended with the Storm (Oluja) operation in August 1995; under the terms of the post-war settlement, it was January 1998 before former Serb-occupied territories in Eastern Slavonia were fully reintegrated into the Croatian state. In the post-war period, a broadcasting policy aimed at reinforcing popular music's ethnic-boundary-marking function by excluding symbols of Serbian/Balkan identity continued to be applied as it had been since 1993: producers experimented with various ways to apply it, and less desirable music was excluded as 'too Serbian' or 'too eastern'. After an initial phase during the acceleration of the Croat/Serb conflict in 1991 when broadcasters removed Serbian music from their audio libraries, the exclusion of Serbianness/easterness was more a performative process than a material act, and was achieved through repeated interaction between journalists and musicians/composers staged in the showbusiness press. Interviewees in these features might criticise the 'easterness' of a competing style of music on the Croatian entertainment market, or might be asked about allegations of 'eastern rhythms/elements' in their own music so that they could reject them.⁴³

Alongside the use of music to define the Other symbolically, the discourse of music as a weapon of war continued to be visible in post-war debates about whether popular music from elsewhere in former Yugoslavia should have any presence in sovereign Croatia. The target of the discourse, however, was very different from the my-song-is-my-weapon discourse that had characterized Croatian public representations of music and conflict during the war years. After 1995, its focus was reversed: what now mattered most was the idea that *the Other had used music as a weapon of war*, and therefore that the music of the Other was not appropriate for performance or hearing within the nation-state. The idea that music could be a weapon was still accepted, but the weapon was now imagined as having been held by the other side.

After the war, establishing that the Other had used music as a weapon and that the Other's aggression had been barbaric carried one of two implications: either that 'we' had not used music that way, or that, when 'we' had done it, it had not been aggression. With ample evidence of music being used to support Croatian military objectives through morale visits, fundraising concerts and loudspeaker harassment of enemy troops, music had instead to be constructed as not-aggression by appealing to Croatia's collective narrative of justified defence. Simultaneously, claiming that the Other had used music aggressively served as a justification for excluding it and its performers from sovereign Croatia, through two recurrent discursive strategies: a) the discourse that hearing Serbian music would 'offend' those (Croats) who had suffered in the war,⁴⁴ and b) the discourse that Serb musicians must accept that Serbia had been the aggressor before they could be suitable to perform in Croatia again. For instance, the director of Croatia Records, Miroslav Lilić, had stated in 1996 that Đorđe Balašević (an anti-Milošević singer-songwriter) was the most suitable Serbian musician to perform in Croatia but that he 'must recognize and accept that Serbia was the aggressor and

⁴³ See Catherine Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991* (Farnham: Ashgate 2010), 60–69.

⁴⁴ Compare the language of the pre-war Croatian criminal code, where Ustaša songs were punishable for 'belittling the socialist, patriotic and national feelings of citizens' (Vuletić 2011: 13).

that we were defending our homes' before he could do so⁴⁵ – in other words, that he could not be part of Croatian musical life until he accepted the dominant Croatian public narrative of the conflict.

The purpose of these discursive strategies becomes clear when one observes that the music they targeted was not the same music that had been most directly involved in violence. The Serbian songs cited in prisoner testimonies of forced singing came from the Serbian patriotic repertoire: the royalist national anthem, World War II Četnik songs, and songs celebrating or derived from the Serbian military experience of World War I and the 1912–13 Balkan Wars. These had become so intimately connected with violence against Croatia and against non-Serbs that their absence from Croatian public life was commonsensical. The discourse of the Other's music as a weapon of war was instead deployed against Serbian popular music from before and after the war (including music by musicians such as Balašević who had resisted the war) and against 'eastern'-sounding folk music in general, whether or not it was actually Serbian. This net swept up even musicians such as Balašević who had resisted the war. His songs during the war had included 'Čovek sa mesecom u očima' ('The man with the moon in his eyes'), which depicted the guilt of a Serbian soldier involved in the capture of Vukovar, and 'Krivi smo mi' ('We are guilty'), a message of despair that the Serb public to which Balašević belonged had not done more to prevent the rise of Milošević: written in 1993, these would surely have fulfilled the test that Lilić was still stating Balašević had not yet met in 1996. The over-extension of the discourse of music as a Serbian weapon of war appeared to aim to consolidate the Croatian state's gains in the ethnopolitical conflict by preventing any new shared cultural space from coalescing. Cultural policy therefore supported and confirmed Croatia's strategic policy and, if successful, would have the long-term effect of preventing any future claim by Serbia to the same territory.

The leading proponent of this discourse in the aftermath of the war was the head of the Croatian Musicians' Union (HGU), Paolo Sfeci. Sfeci had played in new-wave rock bands during the 1980s before moving into music administration. Under his leadership, HGU was known for preventing Serbian musicians performing in Croatia and impeding Croatian musicians from collaborating with Serbian colleagues or transferring their music into Croatia. While economic protectionism is in the nature of musicians' unions,⁴⁶ Sfeci's public statements were structured by and operated to support presidential/ethnopolitical discourse in four ways: a) the essentialist and collectivizing implication that anything or anyone Serb was implicated in the violence; b) the argument that Serb music and culture had been forcibly imposed on Croatia under Yugoslavia and should therefore be rejected now; c) the criterion that wartime victimhood morally outweighed any other claim to judge the situation; d) the attempt to represent these viewpoints as commonsensical. Sfeci famously prevented Croatian rock bands from performing in Slovenia alongside one of Serbia's most famous bands, Partibrejkers, and sanctioned another Croatian band for playing songs by another Serbian band, Ekatarina Velika, at a book-launch in Zagreb. Partibrejkers and Ekatarina Velika had both participated in anti-war demonstrations in Belgrade in 1992 and recorded the well-known protest song 'Mir, brate, mir' ('Peace, brother, peace') together, yet this did not suffice: Sfeci was mocked by Croatia's alternative press for years after stating in 1995 that 'we're still in a state of war and nobody can guarantee that some of those musicians [in Partibrejkers] weren't mobilized and might not have been shooting Vukovar up'.⁴⁷ His comments on the book-launch incident likewise implied that anti-war activism was not

⁴⁵ Mark Cigoj, 'Vlasnicima "Croatia Recordsa" biznismenima Dragutina Biondića i Anti Gliboti jasno sam dao do znanja', *Globus*, 11 October 1996.

⁴⁶ See Michael Roberts, 'A working-class hero is something to be: the American Musicians' Union's attempt to ban the Beatles, 1964', *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2010, 1–16.

⁴⁷ Milivoj Dilas, 'Računajte na nas', *Feral tribune*, 17 April 1995.

enough to exonerate Serbs from culpability: ‘I personally think that at a time when there are thousands of displaced persons walking around Zagreb whose houses the Serbs burned down, we can’t behave like that. Being against Milošević, and perhaps for Drašković [a nationalist politician opposed to Milošević] – isn’t really a [good] argument’.⁴⁸

After another incident in 1996 when some concert-goers in Zagreb had attacked a Bosnian, partly-Zagreb-based band (Zabranjeno Pušenje) for playing a Macedonian folk tune, Sfeci made clear that his ascription of Otherness went beyond Serbian nationality to take in a wider definition of eastern-and-therefore-Serbian culture. Sfeci appeared to support the attackers rather than the musicians in stating that the audience had ‘shown there was no place for the eastern melos [i.e. sound] in Croatia’.⁴⁹ Further comments confirmed that he represented the type of music as the source of threat and any consequent audience violence as an understandable reaction: ‘Just imagine what a hand grenade [thrown] into a full auditorium could do’.⁵⁰ HGU’s powers to advise the Interior Ministry on issuing work-permits to foreign musicians gave the union structural as well as discursive power. Sfeci had not exercised them in 1996 against Zabranjeno Pušenje, though stated that he could have done.⁵¹ He did exercise them against a much more symbolic star, Lepa Brena (who visited Zagreb privately in 1998 and was invited on stage by the house band during a restaurant meal), by reporting her to the work and welfare ministry for performing illegally on a tourist visa.⁵²

Instances of this discourse noticeably declined after Tudman’s death and the fall of his government in 2000. It persisted as a means of objecting to pop-folk nightclubs and performances by foreign musicians constructed as Serbian, as in the 2009–10 protests against Brena’s concerts.⁵³ A veterans’ representative on a 2007 Croatian talk-show objecting to a proposed pop-folk concert in Zagreb made the point that Serb soldiers had played the same genre of music on loudspeakers when entering Vukovar, and he singled out Nada Topčagić (who had not been advertised as performing in Zagreb). The concert was cancelled the next day. In general, however, reception studies from the mid-2000s suggest that the music-of-the-Other-as-weapon discourse may have had a limited long-term effect even in the case of a musician who was closely connected to violence, the Serbian pop-folk vocalist Ceca Ražnatović. Ražnatović married Željko Ražnatović-Arkan, the commander of the Tigers paramilitary unit, in 1995 and has largely been represented in Croatian media as ‘the widow of the war criminal Arkan’ rather than as a showbusiness figure.

After Arkan’s death, Ceca inherited the business interests he had built up as the leader of a paramilitary–criminal group that had committed ethnic cleansing in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Besides her participation in activities designed to raise military and civilian morale and her frequent praise for Arkan as ‘the greatest Serbian war commander’ after his death in 2000, she could thus personally have been seen to profit from wealth accumulated during the conflict. A study of young Slovenian and Croatian women’s responses to Ceca nonetheless showed that these listeners and viewers at least considered her ‘an object of admiring identification and a powerful role model’ of strategies for achieving

⁴⁸ Dilas, ‘Računajte’.

⁴⁹ Ivana Ivančić, ‘Razjarena publika koja je pretukla članove grupe “Zabranjeno pušenje” samo je pokazila da istočnjačka melosu u Hrvatskog nema mjesta!’, *Globus*, 26 April 1996.

⁵⁰ Paolo Sfeci, ‘Tko zabranjuje Pušenje? (2)’, *Feral tribune*, 6 May 1996.

⁵¹ Sfeci, ‘Tko’.

⁵² Berislav Jelinić, ‘Hrvatska glazbena unija prijavila Fahretu Živojinović’, *Arena*, 18 June 1998.

⁵³ ‘Pop-folk’ refers to songs with lyrics, rhythms and/or vocals inspired by folk music practices but performed using instruments such as electric guitars, drum kits, synthesizers or samplers as well as or instead of traditional instruments. It is widespread, with small regional variations, throughout south-east Europe, though is performed in a different language in each linguistic area. See Donna A. Buchanan (ed.), *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press 2007).

their consumer and romantic objectives in a context of regional socioeconomic crisis.⁵⁴ The otherness she represented was one of a Balkan ‘joyful life, authenticity, emotionalism, passion, enjoyment, and craziness’ rather than the *enemy* otherness assigned to her by Croatian/Slovenian media.⁵⁵ Volčič and Erjavec argue that these identifications with Ražnatović’s celebrity depend on ‘a disavowal of Ceca’s nationalistic discourse and her connections to politics’ that exemplifies ‘politicization fatigue’ in the post-socialist Western Balkans.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, it is also clear that constant media representations of Ceca as an enemy representative have not prevented these respondents – who, importantly, did not include any who identified ethnically as Serbs – from experiencing a kind of commonality with her. These identifications with Ceca may be problematic from the viewpoint of cultural studies but still expose the limits of the attempt to separate Croatia from its ethnic Others: if members of this generation have not been convinced to see Ceca’s people and Ceca herself as utterly Other, the goals of 1990s ethnic cleansing have not been fully achieved.

Conclusion

Music in the post-Yugoslav conflict was clearly used as a tool of ethno-political conflict in three ways: accompaniment to violence, morale-raising, and conceptual separation. The forced singing of ethnonationally marked songs has been recorded as a torture technique in many prisoner testimonies, and music playing was also used to harass enemy troops in breaks from combat. States, armed forces, entertainment industries and performers believed or stated that stars’ performances on the front line improved troop morale, implying they constituted a military asset. Exercising legal, economic and discursive power to break apart the common entertainment industry of the former state contributed to persuading the publics of the new nation-states that coexistence with their ‘former neighbours’ was no longer possible. All these methods contributed to the aims of ethno-political conflict by acting on morale and by fixing and hardening group boundaries. The discursive use of music to achieve ethno-political aims could even be described as a delayed-action weapon in that it continued to operate after the armed phase of conflict had ended, to the extent that it lengthened the ethnic differentiation process and thus reconfirmed the goals of ethnonationalist actors. In this sense, however, the instrument of violence was not the music itself so much as discourses *about* it.

The post-war discourse that the Other had used music as a weapon of war and that the Other’s musicians were personally implicated in aggression had to draw its force from the implicit corollary that ‘our own’ use of music must have been within the bounds of the ‘normal’. In the eyes of the Bosniak war veterans protesting against Lepa Brena’s concert, Brena’s visit to VRS troops represented complicity in aggression whereas equivalent activities by musicians who had supported their own force were normal and praiseworthy. The moral criterion was, of course, the different justifications for violence and armed group formation that these veterans’ organizations perceived, associating the VRS with Serb expansionist aggression and ABiH with heroic communal defence. This clash of narratives is one of numerous examples where ‘three broad competing versions of truth’ (one per main ethnonational identity) exist in Bosnia-Herzegovina and where ‘[e]ach group seeks to portray itself as the main victim and to minimize, to deny, or to rationalize the suffering it inflicted on others’;⁵⁷ these discourses feed off and sometimes into events and representations in the

⁵⁴ Zala Volčič and Karmen Erjavec, ‘The paradox of Ceca and the turbo folk audience’, *Popular Communication*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2010, 103–19 (116).

⁵⁵ Volčič and Erjavec, ‘Paradox’, 114.

⁵⁶ Volčič and Erjavec, ‘Paradox’, 115–6.

⁵⁷ Janine Natalya Clark, ‘From negative to positive peace: the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina’, *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2009, 360–84 (361).

kin states. Does there therefore exist a problematic refusal to acknowledge the complicity of one's 'own' musicians, which societies and entertainment industries must confront in order to achieve lasting peace? The framework of 'denial' often used for understanding post-conflict societies overlooks the fact that, as strategies, rationalization and relativization of violence have different functions for different contexts and speakers. Qualitative interview research in Serbia suggests that private individuals' reframing of evidence of violence represents a 'necessary mediation' in understanding events they cannot integrate into their existing beliefs, rather than an overt political act.⁵⁸ This distinction and the processual nature of ethnic identity construction affects how popular music ought to be viewed in the aftermath of ethnopolitical conflict.

Musicians' complicity in ethnopolitical conflict in former Yugoslavia, unlike in Rwanda, has not been framed as a *legal* issue. Even in Rwanda, the musician charged with incitement to genocide (Simon Bikindi) did not end up being held responsible for his *songs*;⁵⁹ jurists have nonetheless raised the question of whether songs by a future Bikindi should be punishable if the criteria of intent and causality could be proved. Robert H. Snyder, for instance, has argued that, where songs with potentially genocidal messages were performed and broadcast in juxtaposition with other genocidal speech and that the performer/composer had the power to prevent this, a guilty verdict would be possible.⁶⁰ This emphasis on wider context is interestingly paralleled in cultural studies by Richard Dyer's theory of the star persona: for Dyer, the meanings of stars lie not just in the texts they produce or appear in but also in a wider set of texts about them, including publicity and their off-stage behaviour.⁶¹ This parallel suggests that cultural studies approaches may permit innovative approaches to media in human rights.

Several sets of extended criteria for proving incitement have been offered in the wake of the Bikindi verdict: whether the speaker used dehumanizing rhetoric during or soon after violence against the target group; where the speech satisfies certain prerequisites drawn from communications research that makes it more likely to be influential; more consideration of the channels of communication used, the temporal proximity of the song to violence, and how responsible the performer was for its dissemination at that time.⁶² This legal dimension is not part of the debate over media and mass violence in the post-Yugoslav conflict, despite widespread agreement that media played a significant role in disseminating ethnonationalist discourses and that popular music was implicated in this framework.⁶³ Music only appears in the ICTY records when wielded as a weapon by non-musicians in situations that would likely have breached international law whether singing had been involved or not.

Examples from the Yugoslav wars thus support the evidence from Rwanda that popular music must be taken seriously in understanding ethnopolitical conflict. Yet in what way should it be integrated into this understanding? Extensive literature on the Western Balkans has exposed nationalism in popular music but has not gone down the route of assigning responsibility for ethnic cleansing to musicians, and the ICTY, unlike the Rwanda tribunal,

⁵⁸ Jelena Obradović-Wochnik, 'Knowledge, acknowledgement and denial in Serbia's responses to the Srebrenica massacre', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2009, 61–74 (70).

⁵⁹ John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity 2012), 3.

⁶⁰ Snyder, "'Disillusioned words like bullets bark'", 674.

⁶¹ Richard Dyer, *Stars*, 2nd ed. (London: BFI 1998).

⁶² Susan Benesch, 'Vile crime or inalienable right: defining incitement to genocide', *Virginia Journal of International Law*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2008, 485–528; Carol Pauli, 'Killing the microphone: when broadcast freedom should yield to genocide prevention', *Alabama Law Review*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2010, 665–700; Gregory S. Gordon, 'Music and genocide: harmonizing coherence, freedom and nonviolence in incitement law', *Santa Clara Law Review*, vol. 50, 2010, 607–46.

⁶³ E.g. Ceribašić, 'Gender'; Gordy, *Culture*; Čolović, *Politics*; Lilly and Irvine, 'Negotiating'; Gagnon, *Myth*; Žarkov, *Body*.

did not put media executives on trial. Observing the post-war securitization of the Other's music in former Yugoslavia suggests that indicting media or music workers would have been counter-productive to conflict resolution. Even as things were, the discourse of musicians as collectively complicit presented an obstacle to the re-emergence of a post-Yugoslav space containing inter-ethnically shared cultural references. For some years after 1995, musicians constructed as Serb who wanted to perform in Croatia were the targets of ethnically-loaded media representations, likewise Croatian musicians performing in Serbia; all depended on sympathetic venue owners in order to be able to play.⁶⁴ Their activity would have been much more difficult if they had also been subject to potential legal consequences, such as fear of indictment or arrest on entering the territory of a former enemy state. The potential to use incitement to genocide charges against musicians might well have been used after the conflict to target a wider range of ethnically Other musicians, impede the re-establishment of cultural connections and thus accentuate the gains of ethnic cleansing.

Music is evidently significant in ethnopolitical conflict; there are, however, three major drawbacks to viewing it through purely a legal lens. It is clear that, during the post-Yugoslav wars, musicians as a professional group were incorporated into state media systems and participated in patriotic initiatives, singing songs that to greater or lesser extents expressed the dominant and ethnocentric collective narrative of the conflict. However, accusing all musicians of professional complicity removes their agency and loses sense of the contests for discursive power that took place on different sides of the conflict. Though the early wartime discourses of pluralistically defending Croatia or Bosnia became overpowered by ethnonationalism, they were still meaningful to many volunteers, including musicians, who lent their civilian or military support to an ethnonationalist armed force. A second drawback, pointed out for Rwanda, is that 'benevolent censorship' of ethnocentric music – such as that exercised over news by NATO in Bosnia in 1997 – 'run[s] the risk of concretizing an uneven global standard for who may control "free speech", as well as *how* and *when*' is equally important here.⁶⁵ A third objection can also be made relating to the specific goals of ethnopolitical conflict and ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing aims to produce homogenous ethnic populations that are territorially separated and – when this strategy is viewed from a post-structuralist perspective – have been and are being fixed in their identities as groups. To avoid reconfirming the gains of ethnic cleansing, conflict resolution therefore needs to encourage 'interethnic contact rather than separation' and resist the frames that perpetrators of ethnic cleansing have imposed.⁶⁶ Ascribing musicians a collective complicity in ethnopolitical conflict would have detrimental effects on the survival and transformation of the shared cultural and everyday connections that popular music had facilitated before the conflict. If the concept of music as a weapon of war has damaging implications in ethnopolitical conflict, the discourse that the Other has used music as a weapon is also damaging. As seen in the post-Yugoslav example, it produces separation and interferes with the re-coalescence of a common (though fragmented) cultural space. Instead, what is required is a perspective on music in ethnopolitical conflict that recognizes the significance of music in the everyday, appreciates that a goal of ethnopolitical conflict is the fundamental revision

⁶⁴ Many concert venues in former Yugoslavia are municipally owned and local authorities can thus veto their hire. In Croatia, performers from Serbia were first (1998–2000) able to perform in municipal venues in Istria where local government was dominated by regionalist or non-nationalist parties. The opening of a privately-owned concert venue in Zagreb in 2000 made it easier for Serbian rock musicians to perform in the capital because it bypassed potential confrontations with municipal authorities.

⁶⁵ Dylan Craig and Nomalanga Mkhize, 'Vocal killers, silent killers: popular music, genocide, and the call for benevolent censorship in Rwanda', in Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan (ed.), *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006), 39–52 (40). See also Vanessa Pupavac, *Language Rights: From Free Speech to Linguistic Governance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2012).

⁶⁶ Clark, 'Peace', 377.

of social relations, and is grounded in an understanding of ethnicity and identity as processual, contingent and contested.