



## Madness Visible

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The Balkan crises of the 1990's with its "ethnic cleansings," have become ancient history or worse. In the aftermath of 9/11 the sin of historical amnesia has blotted out the travails of the Bosnians, the Serbs, the Croats, and the Kosovars who killed and died, perhaps 200,000 of them, during the last decade of the twentieth century. In *Madness Visible: A Memoir of War*, Janine di Giovanni, a journalist for *The Times of London* and the author of other books on the Balkans, relates in horrific detail her reportorial experiences.

Di Giovanni writes mainly of the several weeks in early 1999 when the province of Kosovo was the site of conflict. Mostly Muslim and Albanian speaking, the Kosovars were the victims of the last attempt by Serbian nationalists to maintain control over Kosovo, a place sacred to Serbs ever since the fourteenth century. During those weeks, NATO was engaged in a bombing campaign to force the Serbs and their president, Slobodan Milosevic, to end their decade-long aggression. Di Giovanni admits her sympathies lay with the Kosovars, although she is not unsympathetic to the plight of the Serbs and Croats. From her personal experiences, she also incorporates other vignettes from the early 1990's to 2002, including reflections upon the fall of Milosevic and his subsequent trial in The Hague. Particularly appalling is the story of Serbian middle-class academics caught up in the passions of ethno-religious nationalism and who readily abandoned their rationalism and their humanity, devoting themselves to the brutal destruction of former colleagues and neighbors. *Madness Visible* is a difficult book to read because of the detailed portrayal of such inhumanity but it is an important book, a reminder that terror and genocide fueled by religious convictions and historical memories are not restricted to today's Middle East.

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