



Vesna Goldsworthy

Invention and in(ter)vention: The rhetoric of Balkanization

Vesna Goldsworthy looks at how Western commentators romanticize the Balkans' history of alleged bloodshed, feudal hatreds and perpetual war. How can these myths be debunked?

"Nothing is simple in the Balkans."
David Owen¹

Whose Fault Lines?: Wars and Explanations

"Take a look at this map," President Clinton urged the American public on the eve of March 24, 1999, as NATO pilots prepared for the first bombing raids against Yugoslavia. "Kosovo is a small place, but it sits on a major fault line between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, at the meeting place of Islam and both the Western and Orthodox branches of Christianity," he continued. "To the south are our allies, Greece and Turkey; to the north, our new democratic allies in Central Europe. And all around Kosovo there are other small countries..."² Inviting his compatriots to examine the map of Southeastern Europe, an area that – he so obviously assumed – they were not overly familiar with, the American president chose some well known tropes of Balkan representation. In a seismological metaphor, he described the peninsula as a fracture zone, a clash–point of religions and civilizations. Kosovo and its surrounding "small countries" are – according to this presidential mini–lecture in Balkan political geography – uneasily sandwiched between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, while at the same time separating America's old NATO allies from her new Central European friends.

As is often the case, the Balkans are thus defined not by identity traits of their own but by their position on the fault line, their fate predetermined by their explosive "in–betweenness." Underpinned by an essentialist vision of the world as a set of colliding cultural and religious tectonic blocks, the Manichean imagery used in this speech implies that the Balkan peninsula is singularly destined to be the epicenter of major tremors and a source of instability. The "clash of civilizations," an idea popularized in the 1990s by right–wing thinkers such as Samuel Huntington,³ might have seemed out of place in a broadcast in which a Democratic president of the United States (the multicultural and multireligious state par excellence) sought to justify military intervention in the Balkans, were it not for the persistence of such metaphors in relation to the peninsula. A mechanistic and timeless notion of perpetual fault lines tends to go hand in hand with the recourse to equally timeless ancient hatreds" as the preferred explanation for every Balkan conflict. Because of their "ancient hatreds," the Balkan peoples, irreconcilably divided by different

religious and cultural affiliations, are forever fated to be at each other's throats "like cats and dogs."⁴

The precise relationships between Balkan nations are – in this context – insufficiently important to merit much attention. The commentators who are unsure who exactly hates whom can always improvise. A month before the NATO intervention against Serbia, an Associated Press journalist explained the Balkan situation on the agency web–site in the following way: "What has consumed the Balkans over the course of generations is the hatred of Serbs for Croats. Croats for Slovenes. Slovenes for Montenegrins. Montenegrins for Muslims. Muslims for Macedonians. Macedonians for Albanians. All these ethnic groups (who look identical to the outside world) share one thing in common: the Balkan peninsula. Finding anything else in common is a challenge."⁵ Describing how he smuggled out and later adopted a girl from Sarajevo in his book *Natasha's Story*, the British TV journalist Michael Nicholson defined Balkan animosities in an even more extreme fashion:

The ferocity of the Balkan peoples has at times been so primitive that anthropologists have likened them to the Amazon's Yanamamo, one of the world's most savage and primitive tribes. Up until the turn of the present century, when the rest of Europe was concerned as much with social etiquette as with social reform, there were still reports from the Balkans of decapitated enemy heads presented as trophies on silver plates at victory dinners. Nor was it unknown for the winners to eat the loser's heart and liver... The history books show it as a land of murder and revenge before the Turks arrived and long after they departed.⁶

Writing about fault lines and "ancient hatreds" in his recent and tellingly titled book, *The Fracture Zone: A Return to the Balkans*, the British journalist Simon Winchester asks:

But once again there arose the question that seemed so eternally asked and so perpetually appropriate here. just why? Just why is there this dire inevitability about the Balkans being so fractious and unsettled a corner of the world, an inevitability that always seemed to exist? Just what was it that had marked out this particular peninsula, this particular gyre of mountains and plains, caves and streams, and made it a byword, quite literally, for hostility and hate?⁷

What forces were really at work here? I didn't mean by that the obvious ones.... I meant – or thought I meant – what basal forces, what innate characteristics, what elements of competing Balkan histories and cultures and ethnicities could ever have led to such a situation as this?

For there was nothing new here.... What was actually happening here at Blace's swampcamp, and all the tales we were hearing from the refugees of what had been happening up in Kosovo, was merely as if the word *merely* could really be used in so awful a context – a manifestation of what had been going on in the Balkans for a thousand years or more.⁸

As he tries to unlock "the savage mysteries of this wretched peninsula,"⁹

Winchester opens his book with a lengthy epigraph on Balkan geology and continues to resort to geological parallels between the land and the people who inhabit it: "The two chains [i.e., the Balkan Mountains and the Dinaric Alps] smashed into one another to create a geological fracture zone that became a template for the fractured behavior of those who would later live upon it."¹⁰ Just as the peninsula "these strange and feral Balkans"¹¹ – is outlandish and unlike the rest of Europe, its inhabitants, "the wild and refractory peoples of the Balkans,"¹² are seen almost as a different species: "One might say that anyone who inhabited such a place for a long period would probably evolve into something that varied substantially, for good or for ill, from whatever is the human norm."¹³

American journalist Robert Kaplan proposes similarly exotic explanations of Balkan hostilities in an account of Balkan "ancient hatreds" that is said to have had a particular influence on President Clinton.¹⁴ The Balkan peoples are so deeply immersed in their bloody history, Kaplan argues in *Balkan Ghosts*, that their world is barely comprehensible to an outsider: "This was a time-capsule world: a dim stage upon which people raged, spilled blood, experienced visions and ecstasies. Yet their expressions remained fixed and distant, like dusty statuary."¹⁵ The British army colonel Bob Stewart puts it more simply in his account of his time in Bosnia Herzegovina in the 1990s, *Broken Lives. A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict*: "Historically, relations between Serbs, Croats and Muslims had been appalling for centuries.... The place has always been considered a powder keg."¹⁶

While the vision of the Balkans as a permanent, or "natural," source of instability in Europe – the continent's powder-keg – predates the First World War,¹⁷ it gained new currency in the wars of the Yugoslav succession in the 1990s. Particularly when invoked alongside the "ancient hatreds," the metaphoric notion of the peninsula as a powder-keg proved useful in exonerating outsiders of culpability for the crises in the Balkans. It represented the peninsula as a source of instability, a threat to the outside world rather than a victim. The paradox of how the Balkan peoples could be so obvious in their cat-and-dog-like passions, while at the same time igniting the more sober parts of the world (i.e., acting as a powder-keg) is rarely examined.

Whatever merits such metaphors might have as a shorthand for particular aspects of Balkan history, their uncritical repetition has ensured that conflicts of very different origins and outcomes could blur into a generic "Balkan" war, the intermittent letting of blood which releases the pressure of "ancient hatreds." Some of the more recent studies of the Balkans – including Misha Glenny's *The Balkans 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and Great Powers*¹⁸ – have attempted to redress the balance against such repeated simplifications by focusing on the frequently divisive role of the Great Powers or the "international community" in the peninsula. Nonetheless, relatively simple images such as fault lines, ancient hatreds, and powder kegs continue to offer the advantage of beguiling simplicity to those confronted with Balkan history, which is, as Richard Holbrooke pointed out, "too complicated (or trivial) for outsiders to master."¹⁹

Romancing the "Balkan" Wars

"To the outside observer, the Balkans appear to be a puzzle of confusing complexity. A geographic region inhabited by seven major nationalities [sic!], speaking different languages, it has usually impinged on the Western consciousness only when it has become the scene of war or acts of violence,"

the American historian Barbara Jelavich wrote in 1983.²⁰ As if to confirm her words, the Balkan wars of the 1990s produced a tide of books: new histories of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia–Herzegovina, and Kosovo;²¹ countless memoirs by politicians, diplomats, and soldiers engaged in the region; accounts by foreign correspondents and relief workers; the testimonies of victims, survivors and camp inmates; diaries kept during the siege of Sarajevo; anthologies of poetry and prose; reissues of long out of print titles;²² and a variety of academic explorations of the Balkan peninsula, including the present volume.²³

An interest in the Balkans that lasts only as long as war – or the rumor of war persists might well help create the impression that the Balkan peoples, like metaphorical Rip Van Winkle of Europe,²⁴ sleepwalk their way through brief interludes of peace only to come to life in a series of bloody ethnic struggles. An intermittent focus on the peninsula has meant that perceptions that originated in the decades of turbulence during the gradual withdrawal of the Ottoman empire from most of the peninsula in the nineteenth and early twentieth century could persist both in the periods of Balkan peace and the times when the Balkans were swept by conflicts of (West) European provenance such as the Second World War. The defamiliarizing of accounts of Balkan conflicts in the Western media – describing ethnic wars as unthinkable elsewhere in Europe while supplying gory details of singularly "Balkan" butchery to an eager audience – contribute to the perception of the peninsula's ambiguous, "not–yet" or "never–quite," Europeaness. They also, however, reveal an ambiguous attitude toward war itself. Editorials profess horror at bloodspilling and yet an enormous, and frequently voyeuristic, media output (newspapers, TV, publishing, and film industries have all developed their own "Balkan" production–lines during the 1990s) offers daily testimony to a fascination with war and killing about which we have as many taboos as the Victorians did pornography. We claim to abhor war, and yet we romanticize the professionals – foreign correspondents, cameramen – who enable us to partake in the experience. Pictures for which photo–journalists risk their lives, and video footage taken by "smart bombs" as they hit their target have a large, enthusiastic audience in the West. Some of the dullest backwaters in the former Yugoslavia have acquired a dubious romantic resonance over the past ten years while reporters searched for the Balkan heart of darkness, in order to return with tales of "unspeakable" horror. The relative anonymity of those parts of the Balkans outside the (currently) war–torn areas – in comparison with the overwhelming exposure of the former Yugoslavia – is another indication of this particular fascination.

Recent books, such as Joanna Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing* and Niall Ferguson's *The Pity of War*²⁵ which attempted to break some of the taboos related to the First World War by suggesting that many of the participants actually enjoyed the experience of fighting, have been the subject of a great deal of controversy. The ambiguous Western attitude toward Balkan wars is an even more difficult subject to tackle as it reflects the values and preoccupations of our generation. Western "horror" at what is going on in the Balkans contains, like Gothic horror, a frisson of pleasure that is difficult to own up to – an opportunity to re–enact the imperialist fantasy of drawing frontiers and "sorting the troublesome natives out" without being accused of racism (because all the people involved are white), a supply of raw material for the expanding industries of conscience (manifest in a plethora of multinational NGOs and pressure groups), a chance to pass the "tests of history" on what the British Prime Minister Tony Blair described as the "doorstep of Europe," or – for a few – simply a possibility to experience war at close quarters. In a situation in which our Balkan war heroes are blue–helmeted peacemakers,

tough–talking negotiators, or indignant correspondents, it might seem awkward to suggest that individual Westerners are drawn to Balkan wars by anything beyond the call of duty or humanitarian instinct. Yet as the British journalist Paul Harris admitted in *Somebody Else's War: Reports from the Balkan Frontline*, "there is the awe–ful[sic] realisation that you can actually enjoy, physically and mentally, the heat of battle, the taste of fear and the actuality of survival. And, as a writer you realise that the extremes of emotion, to which you are so brutally and suddenly exposed, release the ability to string together the words in a way you hitherto hardly dreamt possible."²⁶

A century ago, British writers were prepared to be more forthcoming about this particular attraction of the Balkans. In "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," a short story written during the Balkan wars of 1912–1913, H. H. Munro (Saki) – who was the correspondent of the *Morning Post* from Macedonia in the early years of the twentieth century – remarked:

The Balkans have long been the last surviving shred of happy hunting–ground for the adventurous, a playground for passions that are fast becoming atrophied for want of exercise. In old bygone days we had the wars in Low Countries always at our doors, as it were. There was no need to go far afield into malaria stricken wilds if one wanted a life of boot and saddle and licence to kill and be killed. Those who wished to see life had a decent opportunity for seeing death at the same time.²⁷

Saki's fictional characters frequently complain about "an intrusion of civilised monotony" into the Balkans: "after every important war in South–Eastern Europe in recent times there has been a shrinking of the area of chronically disturbed territory, a stiffening of frontier lines."²⁸ Byronic spleen before the dullness of the "non Balkan" Europe crops up again and again in his writing. As he enlisted to join the army in 1914, Saki actually admitted to a friend that he had "always looked forward to a romance of the European war."²⁹ The novelist Joyce Cary was similarly open about wanting "the experience of war" when he volunteered to join the Montenegrins in the war against Turkey in October 1912: "I thought there would be no more wars. And I had a certain romantic enthusiasm for the cause of the Montenegrins; in short I was young and eager for any sort of adventure."³⁰

The idea that war lends not only a sense of adventure, but a greater sense of reality to lives in the Balkans, can be encountered in writings from the peninsula itself. In this context, the experience of war is described as providing a privileged viewpoint, a position of deeper insight. In his account of a tour on the "European Literary Express 2000," when he traveled from Lisbon to St. Petersburg with 99 other European writers, the Sarajevo author Nenad Velickovic describes the vacuousness of much of West European prosperity. At a chateau near Bordeaux, to which the hundred writers are taken for a wine–tasting session, Velickovic comments: "You need to survive a war, or come here from a *small European colony*, to have the thought that there is more spirit at one single table on the pavement in front of the Rafaelo Inn in Sarajevo than in all this wine which will turn into poetry on poets' lips."³¹ Later on, he observes English football supporters in Brussels on their way to the European championship. He comments that they try to compensate for the lack of war experience through hooliganism and street violence:

Weekend, Saturday afternoon, a cloudless sky, the time and the terrain ideal for war. Thousands of Englishmen born a hundred

years too late, without a real chance of losing an eye, an arm or a life for the homeland, like proud lions fed on Soya steaks, stretch their nostrils at the smell of blood. Tonight, someone will pay the price of all their humiliations and injustice, of a boring life through which they pass without a medal on their chest or a wooden leg below the knee. Tomorrow, tame – like after an epileptic fit – they will sit on the floor of the railway station³²

The notion that experiencing a war offers a deeper, more meaningful perspective on life might be an understandable response from a writer who has experienced the siege of Sarajevo. A suggestion, however, that war might be a covetable experience (that, in Saki's words, "nearly every red-blooded human boy has had war, in some shape or form, for his first love,"³³ or – in Nora Ephron's – "for correspondents, war is not hell. It is fun")³⁴ reveals the kind of romanticization of the battleground which seems to make the Balkans interesting for as long as the fighting lasts.

Like Jonathan Harker, the English solicitor hero of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897), who goes to the Balkans to conclude a property deal but ends up locked in a life-and-after-death struggle with the vampire count, many Westerners of our generation – whatever their notional reasons for getting involved with the problems of the peninsula in the first place – have set out to "solve the problems of the Balkans" and ended up espousing particular causes with a passion and partisanship which are normally ascribed to Balkan peoples. Indeed, the issues related to the conflicts of the 1990s have produced a degree of viciousness, name-calling, and mutual character assassinations among the champions of different sides in the West that demonstrates that there is nothing peculiarly "Balkan" about the Balkan wars. Moreover, while the description of the wars of Yugoslav succession as "Balkan" has highlighted the continuum of ethnic strife in the peninsula, it has obscured the particularly Yugoslav context of these wars. Many of the Western historians and political commentators who have accused Balkan peoples of being in thrall to ancient history have shown the same preference for the exciting narrative of "ancient hatreds" rather than analyzing the more mundane but just as devastating failure of Yugoslavia's economic and constitutional experiments after 1945.

Globalizing Balkanization

The fact that the wars of Yugoslav succession are so often referred to as "Balkan" rather than "Yugoslav," over the protests of Yugoslavia's neighbors in the peninsula, is to a significant degree a reflection of the resonance of the Balkans as a name. Now the attention of the world media has turned to a series of new Balkan states and territories – all those "small places" and "small countries" of President Clinton's speech – the notion of Balkanization, endless division into competing and mutually hostile fragments, has been dusted down and is used with renewed frequency. One Internet search engine offered nearly eight thousand results when I sought examples of the term's usage: from the Balkanization of the world wide web, to the Chinese legal system, the territories of Nigeria and Columbia, to the U.S. electricity grid, the transit system in San Francisco, and, particularly in the eyes of right-wing politicians, even the United States itself (Pat Buchanan blames heavy immigration for the Balkanization of America, and a book about "an America without Americans" by Brent A. Nelson is titled, threateningly, *America Balkanized*).³⁵ Everything and everywhere seems to be in danger of becoming "Balkanized," with only a tiny proportion of these cases taking place in the Balkans themselves.

If Balkanization means a particular kind of fragmentation where the fragments are mutually hostile and in competition with each other, then it is by no means clear that fragmentation and globalization are really opposites as the subtitle of this volume implies. Globalization may in fact enable and promote Balkanization. Although Fredric Jameson has argued that contemporary societies face a choice between nationalism and global American postmodern culture,³⁶ it is also possible to see nationalism as having evolved in response to increasing globalization. While embracing some aspects of global culture, it has offered a sense of safety by promoting a particular identity against the new anxieties of creeping homogeneity. On the simplest level, where particular Balkan identities might once have been defined against each other, they now incorporate a sense of difference from Americans, Western Europeans or Asians. (A nationalist from a Balkan country can thus continue to say that "we" are more civilized than the Serbs or braver than the Croats, while adding that "we" are leaner and fitter than the Americans, are more individualistic than the Japanese, or have stronger family structures than the British.) Globalization has also, for the first time, divorced the nationalist from the particular territory by offering preconditions for "virtual" nationalism. The network of global communications has enabled expatriate communities throughout the developed world to maintain closer links with their countries of origin and to influence the political scene at "home" in a variety of new ways. Some of the most radical Balkan nationalists are thus to be found among American tax-payers and American voters. The world-wide web, while being the ultimate expression of globalization, has also enabled the dissemination of nationalist material to an unprecedented degree and encouraged a variety of Balkanizing processes. Globalization might have undermined particular types of national identity—in federalist, unionist, or "melting pot" societies such as the former Yugoslavia, Canada, urban Britain, and, paradoxically, the United States (the world might be becoming more American, but a right – wing politician such as Pat Buchanan clearly worries that the United States is becoming less so) – but it might well, at least in the short term, have encouraged ethnic nationalism and Balkanization.

The B-Word: Escape from the Balkans

In Western popular fiction and film, the Balkans have often provided a threatening space—the mysterious and unhomelike (*unheimlich*) Eastern location for the unfolding of Western adventure.³⁷ That space frequently remained blank: there was no need to evoke much local color if the sheer resonance of Balkan toponyms could suffice. Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) is a typical example. In lieu of any precise description of time and location, the white windows of a snowbound luxury train, onto which the reader is expected to project his or her own images of horror, can evoke the "wild Balkans" outside. The train is delayed by snow near the small Croatian town of Vinkovci, a railway junction in the middle of the Slavonian plain – hardly the Gothic stuff of which the "Wild East" is made. Ironically, while the plot of Christie's novel hinges on the idea of being stuck in a threatening Balkan space, "the murderer" is a group of Westerners (conveniently sharing the guilt). Sharing their Balkan deed in a similar way, a "troika" of Western men (an Englishman, an American and a Dutchman) destroys the Transylvanian count in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in order to save England (Europe) from the Balkan undead. In a rare reversal of this kind of imagery, the idea of Europe as a vampire, the old world sapped of all energy which sucks the (young) lifeblood of the Balkans, appears as a mirror image in Balkan writing. Writes Velickovic: "France represents the smile of Europe – a smile affected and dangerous, as kind as strictly useful, as wide as strictly

necessary. When she laughs, her laws and her vampire teeth click. A wrinkled face of a frightened miserly old lady hides behind the expensive make-up." ³⁸

The kind of symbolic geography which opposes Europe and the Balkans seems to have become more pervasive in the 1990s. After 1989, which was assumed by some to mark 'the end of history', came a kind of 'rebirth of geography', Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis remarked in their "Southeastern Europe: History Concepts, Boundaries," as they attempted to find "a way out of the spiralling vacuum of metaphors" that affected much of the thinking about Southeastern Europe over the past decade.³⁹ That this "born-again" geography is primarily symbolic is all too evident in President Clinton's speech on the eve of the Kosovo campaign. While he stood in front of an actual map, he described the Balkans in the language of images and metaphors – fault lines and collisions of civilization – rather than "real," physical geography.⁴⁰ If the Balkan peoples are frequently accused of being trapped in their own history, many of the outsiders dealing with the region have also shown an unwillingness to think beyond a symbolic, formulaic representation, to the point where – to paraphrase this book's title – the Balkans have become nothing but a metaphor for conflict, incivility, and violence.

Unsurprisingly, few wish to remain in the peninsula whose very name – "the B-word"⁴¹ – became unmentionable for fear of bad luck, "toil and trouble," like "the Scottish play."⁴² While Yugoslavia fell apart, the peninsula around it gradually emptied as (formerly) Balkan countries sought to demonstrate that their true allegiance lay elsewhere (in Central or even Western Europe), in what the Romanian politician Elena Zamfirescu described as "Flight from the Balkans."⁴³ Zamfirescu argues that Romania belongs to Central Europe. Croatian president Franjo Tudjman made his 1997 campaign slogan "Tudjman, not the Balkans."⁴⁴ Similarly, in a speech (at a Balkan conference, the Bulgarian president Petar Stoyanov reminded his audience that the Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic is "not dividing Europe from the Balkans but Europe from Europe."⁴⁵

In academic debates, the "politically correct" term Southeastern Europe has more or less replaced the Balkans, because it has become impossible to define a country as "Balkan" without having to explain oneself. Indeed, Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic seems to be the last country in the peninsula that is regularly described as Balkan, with obvious symbolic connotations. It is telling that, at the reopening of one of the bridges on the Danube destroyed in NATO's bombing raids, Milosevic himself proclaimed Serbia the most European of European countries. Attending the reopening alongside hundreds of Serbs bussed in for the ceremony, Predrag Matvejevic mused over the paradox of Europe being both the enemy and the measure of Serbia's "success."⁴⁶

What Milosevic's speech demonstrates is that any set of values can be inscribed in the metaphorical taxonomy, but that the superiority of Europe in opposition to the Balkans tends to remain a constant. This is equally true whether the heart of Europe is placed in Brussels or in Belgrade, whether the Balkans shrink to a single country (as in current perceptions of Serbia) or expand northward to the edge of the English Channel (as is the case in the pronouncements of some British "Eurosceptics" who see the whole of Europe as the Balkanized other). This kind of symbolic hierarchy and its practical political consequences have been the subject of increasing scrutiny since 1989.

Out of the Balkans: New Directions

A number of new strategies developed over the past decade and inspired by movements in postcolonial and subaltern studies, most notably Edward Said's *Orientalism*, have been used to explore perceptions of the Balkans. John Allcock's 1991 examination of Balkan "multiple marginality"⁴⁷ in "Constructing the Balkans" was followed by numerous studies of "the way West looks East"⁴⁸ throughout the 1990s. Milica Bakic-Hayden's "nesting orientalisms" and Maria Todorova's notion of *Balkanism* were particularly influential. I attempted to encapsulate the ever changing oppositions between the Balkans and (the rest of) Europe using the metaphor of Ruritania, an imaginary country which is always either "not yet European" or "what Europe has already been."⁴⁹ While I was primarily interested in the imperialism through which imagination comes to occupy the map, I was aware that the map itself would require a different type of examination if Balkan studies were to avoid the pitfalls of Orientalist enquiry.

In his influential book *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*,⁵⁰ the Indian Marxist Ailaz Ahmad, one of Edward Said's most vocal critics, has accused *Orientalism* of an obsession with Western knowledge. Ahmad pointed out that *Orientalism* was primarily developed by West-oriented Third World scholars working within Western universities and Western scholars who emulated them. Might the examination of the Balkans similarly have become too wrapped up in the way "the West looks East" if its most influential directions are being defined in Western universities by scholars of Balkan origin – such as many of us contributing to this book? Here, globalization has proved to be the hero rather than the villain of the piece. Because of the Internet and a host of other channels of academic exchange that have developed since 1989, scholars resident in the Balkans are taking part in the debate, in spite of often difficult circumstances, much more meaningfully than in the late seventies and the early eighties when Orientalist studies were being defined. With a new generation of Western historians of the Balkans debunking the "myths" that Balkan peoples may have about themselves, and Balkan scholars pulling the rug from beneath some complacent Western certainties about the Balkans, there is now, for the first time since the Second World War, an ongoing dialogue and an unprecedented exchange of ideas. Should a new set of definitions of the Balkans emerge out of this debate, they might, perhaps for the first time, be a shared creation of East and West – provided, that is, that once the wars of former Yugoslavia have run their bloody course, the peninsula is not forgotten, as it so often has been in the past.

¹ David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995).

² President Clinton's televised address to the nation from the Oval Office. March 24, 1999. 8:01 PM EST.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 23–49.

⁴ Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1905), 20.

⁵ Jason Fields, "Historical Perspective: Yugoslavia, a Legacy of Ethnic Hatred," Associated Press web-site, wire.ap.org/Apnews/center-package.html?Packageid=flashpointyugo (19 February 1999).

⁶ Michael Nicholson, *Natasha's Story* (London: Pan, 1994), 16. (First published 1993. Nicholson's book inspired a popular film version titled *Welcome to Sarajevo* directed by Michael Winterbottom in 1997.) I am grateful to Simon Goldsworthy for bringing this to my attention.

⁷ Simon Winchester, *The Fracture Zone: A Return to the Balkans* (London: Viking, 1999), 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

- 10 Ibid., 60.
- 11 Ibid., 21.
- 12 Ibid., 3.
- 13 Ibid., 61.
- 14 Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), 22.
- 15 Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts. A journey through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), xxi.
- 16 Colonel Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives. A Personal View of the Bosnian Conflict* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), 6.
- 17 See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 119–20 for the background to this type of imagery.
- 18 Misha Glenny's recent book has challenged this by drawing attention to the Great Power's involvement in the area. See Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804–1999. Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999).
- 19 Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 22.
- 20 Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ix.
- 21 Examples include. Tim Judah, *The Serbs. History, Myths and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven. Yale University Press, 1997); Tim Judah, *Kosovo. War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1997); Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- 22 Among these are some of the following: memoirs by politicians, such as David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (London: Victor Gollariz, 1995); Holbrooke, *To End a War*; Carl Bildt, *Peace journey. The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1998); soldiers: General Sir Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace. Bosnia 1994* (London: Harvill, 1998); Colonel Bob Stewart, *Broken Lives* (London: Harper Collins, 1994); relief workers: Larry Hollingworth, *Merry Christmas, Mr Larry* (London: Heinemann, 1996); journalists: Anthony Loyd, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So* (London: Doubleday, 1999); Eve Ann Prentice, *One Woman's War: Life and Death on Deadline* (London: Duckworth, 2000); Michael Nicholson, *Natasha's Story* (London: Pan, 1993), Fergal Keane, *Letters Home* (London: Penguin, 1999); Janine di Giovanni, *The Quick and the Dead: Under Siege in Sarajevo* (London: Phoenix House, 1994); John Simpson, *Strange Places, Questionable People* (London: Pan, 1999); Ed Vuillamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (London: Simon& Schuster, 1994); survivors: Zlata Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* (London: Penguin, 1995); Rezak Kuhanovic, *The Tenth Circle of Hell*, London: Abacus, 1993); Elma Softic, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1992).
- 23 Including Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans 1804–1945* (London: Longman, 1999); and my own *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 24 I borrow this image from Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1905), 14.
- 25 Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta Books, 1999). Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998).
- 26 Paul Harris, *Somebody Else's War. Frontline Reports from the Balkan Wars* (Stevenage: Spa Books, 1992), 44.
- 27 H. H. Munro, "The Cupboard of the Yesterdays," in *The Penguin Complete Saki* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 528–529.
- 28 Ibid., 529.
- 29 Quoted in A. J. Langguth, *Saki: A Life of Hector Hugh Munro. With Six Short Stories Never Before Collected* (London: Harnish Hamilton, 1981), 251.
- 30 Joyce Cary, *Memoir of the Bobotes* (Austin. University of Texas Press, 1960), ix.
- 31 Nenad Velickovic, "Vik duha ima za jednim stolom sarajevske birtije Rafaelo . Dnevnik sa putovanja (3), *Slobodna Bosna*, 22 June 2000, 54. (My translation and my italics).
- 32 Ibid., 55.
- 33 Langguth, *Saki*, 258.
- 34 Harris, *Somebody Else's War*, 45.
- 35 Brent A. Nelson, *America Balkanized: Immigration's Challenge to Government* (American Immigration Control Foundation: Monterey, Va., 1994).

- 36 See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
- 37 In *Inventing Ruritania* I examine literary images of the Balkans over the past two hundred years.
- 38 Velickovic, "Vise duha ima za jednim stolom sarajevske birtije Rafaelo . . ." 54.
- 39 Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, "South-Eastern Europe: History, Concepts, Boundaries," in *Balkanologie* 3, no. 2 (December 1999): 48.
- 40 At around the time President Clinton was making this speech, in a joke that was making the rounds in Belgrade, the Serbs complained that they were about to be bombed by a country that has no history. To that the American president replied: "Soon, you'll have no geography."
- 41 Bracewell and Drace-Francis, "South-Eastern Europe," 58.
- 42 Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.
- 43 Elena Zamfirescu, "The Flight from the Balkans," in *Südosteuropa* 44, no. 1 (1995): 51–62.
- 44 See Maple Razsa, "Balkan Is Beautiful," in *Arkzin*, no. 87. Available on www.arkzin.com/actuallbalkan.html 20 July 2000.
- 45 Petar Stoyanov, keynote address, Crisis or Stability in the Balkans Conference, Washington, United States Institute of Peace, 23 April 1999. www.usip.org/oc/B1B99/stoyanov-keynote.html 20 July 2000.
- 46 Predrag Matvejevic, "S puta po Srbiji (I): S druge strane evropske civilizacije," *Dani*, no. 160, 23 June 2000, 23–27.
- 47 John B. Allcock and Antonia Young, eds., *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons. Women Travellers in the Balkans* (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1991), 170–191.
- 48 See Bracewell and Drace-Francis, "South-Eastern Europe," for a useful overview of these studies.
- 49 Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 202–212.
- 50 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso: 1992).

Published 2003–05–08

Original in English

Contribution by Belgrade Circle Journal

First published in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dusan I. Bjelic; Obrad Savic (MIT Press 2002)

© Vesna Goldsworthy; MIT Press

© Eurozine