

The Burdens of History: Problems Invoked by Occidental Travel Literature on the
Balkans

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ABSTRACT

Works on the Balkans currently face a crisis of representation--from Ivo Andric's fictionalized memory to Joe Sacco's humanitarian witnessing, the occidental reader. The goal of this study is threefold: to provide a firm historical grounding while observing the instruments of colonialism, to give an overview of Occidental travel writing on the Balkans with a particular focus on the formation and dissolution of Yugoslavia, and to suggest examples of travel texts that strive to read colonized worlds without losing sight of their own Occidental positioning or pretending that it does not exist.

When approaching a contested space that involves a multitude of competing discourses, a hefty responsibility is thrust on both the reader and writer of Balkan representations to retain an awareness of counter and hidden discourses while resisting the urge to define, or even pursue, the definitive "true story" of the Balkans. Thus, an occidental reader of East Europe must be able to contextualize various and often contradicting texts without naturalizing recorded experiences. He or she must also maintain a poignant awareness of how Western imperialism has constructed and reconstructed the region by journalism, memoir, artificial borders, ethnography, classification, historical absolutism, and financial exploitation. If this work simplifies or answers "What is Balkan?" then it has failed utterly. We can only hope to further complicate and challenge the dominant discourse of Balkanism to keep the reader's mind alive and questioning rather than dead and assured.

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Chapter One

Introduction

I am never sure of the reality of what I see, if I have seen it only once; I know that until it has firmly established its objective existence by impressing my senses and my memory, I am capable of conscripting it into the service of a private dream. In a panic I said, 'I must go back to Yugoslavia...'¹—Rebecca West

In arguably the most widely read example of occidental travel writing on the Balkan Peninsula, Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* suggests that the Western mind must empirically experience different worlds repeatedly before the latter become "objective realities." Thus, for those unable to travel, some may suggest that the best access to foreign cultures comes by way of a perceptive observer who can translate these experiences for mass consumption. Such positive assessments of travel writing are not shared by all, however, as Stephen Crane terms it the most worthless literature ever written. Clearly, the genre of travel writing continues to be an imperfect science that participates in the reification of regional stereotypes that form one of the central pillars of cultural imperialism.

The travel narrative remains an essential mode of discourse yet one where writers often impose static "objective" meanings upon polysemous realities. In other words, the collective body of travel literature on the Balkans constitutes a discourse community that codifies subjective representations into a larger framework of cultural colonization by a procession of descriptive statements. As a result, these writers authorize subjective representations of the region and participate in a symbolic process of cultural colonization, or "Balkanism," reducing the experience of numerous unique cultures into one narrowly perceived as violent and decaying.

¹ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 23.

Examining this process, however, also demonstrates how the genre may become a viable avenue for the betterment of cultural understanding in areas of contestation such as "The Balkans." Echoing the opening line of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the terminology surrounding Orientalism, Maria Todorova claims that "a specter is haunting Western culture--the specter of the Balkans."² In her major theoretical work, *Imagining the Balkans*, Todorova conceptualizes "Balkanism" as a discourse influenced by, but independent from, Said's Orientalism and comments how "Balkanization" denotes both the breakup of larger politically viable entities into smaller factions as well as "a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, [and] the barbarian."³ Even considering representations in contemporary American media, from the comical Festrunk Brothers to the mass-murdering Niko Bellic, the Central and Eastern European character is almost a universal social sign for the ultra violent, the sexually deviant, and the socially misguided.

Entering its fourth decade since publication, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, both admired and admonished by various scholarly circles, serves as an indispensable touchstone for anyone studying colonized cultures. In discussing the scope of Orientalism, Said rhetorically questions the possibility to divide human reality into differing cultural histories of "East" and "West" without inherently invoking hostility: "for such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends."⁴ Just as Said explores the scholarly codification of "Occident" and "Orient," Croatian writer and journalist Slavenka Drakulic explains to Robert Kaplan that the battle between capitalism and communism is yet another version "...of a struggle that pits Catholicism against Orthodoxy, Rome against Constantinople,

2 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 3.

3 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 3.

4 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978, Print 45

the legacy of the Habsburg Austria-Hungary against that of Ottoman Turkey--in other words West against East, the ultimate historical and cultural conflict."⁵ Similar to the Orient, the Balkans continue to be redefined in Western imagination; however, whereas the Orient is connected to a sensual and barbaric timelessness in occidental poetry and history, the Balkans are often dismissed as unworthy of representation all together.

Larry Wolff cites Edward Gibbon, author of the famed *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, who feels that the serious historical studies of the West "...would be unworthily bestowed on the swarms of savages...[descended from Scythia because]...their names are uncouth, their origins doubtful, their actions obscure, their superstition blind, the uniformity of their public and private lives...[being] neither softened by innocence nor refined by policy."⁶ The eighteenth century historian goes as far to observe and prophesize how "...the despicable remnant continues, and may long continue, to groan under the domination of a foreign tyrant."⁷ Even with the resurgence of Western scholarly interest since the Bosnian War and Kosovo Crisis, the Balkans do not have nearly as institutionalized an academy as the "Orientalist experts" Said challenges. In turn, this places far more importance/responsibility on the genre of journalism and travel writing, as they are the primary modes of Balkan representation to a Western Audience.

Nevertheless, within these genres, the Balkan states currently face a crisis of representation as even the designating nomenclature continues to be questioned. With the rapid expansion of the European Union in the region, the politically correct title may very well be, as Todorova sometimes terms, East and West Europe--effectively dropping the adjectival suffix -

5 Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 7.

6 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1994, Print, 301.

7 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1994, Print, 301.

ern. While seemingly a mere semantic difference, the politics of classification serve a large role in self-identification in addition to establishing *and* resisting colonial power. Since representations serve to create perceived realities that subsequently influence international policy, consciously shifting the terminology we use to talk about the Balkans may foster better cohesions between West and East without the nebulous distinction of "-ern" as a sign of otherness--something close to but "not quite" Europe. Eastern Europe may not even prove an adequate term, for it has historically been equated with the experience of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Bloc, that included Romania and Bulgaria, yet excluded Yugoslavia. As Larry Wolff observes, "[i]t was Eastern Europe's ambiguous location, within Europe but not fully European, that called for such notions as backwardness and development to mediate between the poles of civilization and barbarism."⁸ The potential Balkan "reader" and writer must therefore be able to recognize the peninsula's unique experience from Western Europe due to centuries of Ottoman rule and Tito's political distance from Stalin and the Eastern Bloc without subsequently casting the region as either a detestable Neolithic ancestor *or* degenerated caricature of Europe's "pure" civilization.

Despite the common division of world cultures into either Eastern or Western constructs, Bulgarian author Maria Todorova calls attention to the Balkans' unique perception as a bridge between the two seemingly discordant aesthetics of human experience. Indeed, the "bridge as a metaphor for the region has been so closely linked to the literary oeuvre of Ivo Andric, that one tends to forget that its use both in outside descriptions, as well as in each of the Balkan literatures and everyday speech, borders on the banal."⁹ Trite or not, "Balkanism" notably differs from Orientalism in its connection with a defined geographic location—even if the scope of that

⁸ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1994, Print, 9.

⁹ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 15-16.

region is constantly shifting. For example, geographically, the Balkan Peninsula includes modern day Greece, yet in the imagined "Balkans," Greece is often overlooked as if its association with Western democracy and civilization preclude it from the anarchic connotations of being "Balkan."

The East-West divide is not the only concern, however, as serious critical debate remains over discerning the proper genre for works on the Balkans as a theoretical space--is fictionalized expression necessary, or should it remain the exclusive domain of history? In this, the discourses concerning the Balkans mimic the debates over Holocaust literatures that question whether it is beneficial to both memory and the profession to derive aesthetic pleasure and meaning by consuming the documented pain of a dispossessed "other." As Theodore Adorno observes, "when even genocide becomes cultural property in committed literature, it becomes easier to continue complying with the culture that gave rise to the murder."¹⁰ While representations of historical tragedies can be yet another form of violence against victims and the "other," silence becomes more problematic for the travel writer due to the blending of the genre with descriptive journalism. Serious criticisms are certainly leveled against the politics of journalistic opportunism and sensationalized inaccuracies that reinforce dominant power structures, but representation still serves as the primary tool for humanitarian groups that actively speak for those without access to Western media. For the occidental writer, the pitfalls of ignorance and cultural imperialism continue to exist. Undoubtedly, to ignore the history of violence within contested regions by explicitly focusing on cultural tourism (the songs, museums, churches et al.) drastically limits a writer's focus and denies a state's historical reality yet to elevate and naturalize that violence as an essential aesthetic remains the greater folly.

¹⁰ Theodor W. Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, *Notes to Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, Print, 88.

The debate between fictionalized and historical representation may become polarizing as even the most hauntingly poetic imagery can still draw stern criticisms for animalistic descriptions of the subaltern. Proponents for fictionalized texts typically reference how they should be read as critiques against the institutions of colonialism and explorations of evil, while opponents regard the canonization of adventure texts as world classics to participate, and even vindicate, the continuation of cultural colonization. This paper interrogates the rhetorical spaces in between the East-West paradigm by recognizing the Balkans' unique geographic and cultural situation and explores different avenues between creative and historical representation. As the region remains a fiercely contested cultural and geographical space, competing national histories wrangle over the authenticity of legends, language, cultural influence and territorial boundaries. Therefore, a detailed historical grounding cannot be ignored since the primary texts available to Western readers concerning the Balkans (Andric, Kaplan, Sacco, West, et al.) all presuppose, misconstrue, or explicate a historical knowledge that must be contextualized within a framework of colonialism. This paper's emphasis on Serbian history, however, in no way intends to suggest that the state's centuries of existence serve as the essential or premier Balkan experience. Maria Todorova also bemoans this trend to reduce all Balkan history to that of Serbia: "so one reads that in June 1389 on the plain of Kosovo 'occurred the primal act of slaughter from which all Balkan history since has flowed.' It is insubstantial that, except for the Serbs, the battle of Kosovo does not mean much for the rest of the Balkan nations who have had their own quite different Kosovos."¹¹ She is correct in her assertion that the Balkan States possess complex histories--each deserving serious critical study; however, the focus on Serbian history here is designed specifically with an American audience in mind, as recognizing the steps leading up to World War I and the humanitarian interventionist policies during the Wars of

¹¹ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 186.

Yugoslav Succession and Kosovo's declaration of independence, becomes crucial to avoid the misconception of the region as naturally violent. This runs a serious risk, however, of setting a precedent that the peninsula only exists or “matters” in relation to its direct connection with the occidental, and we must actively resist the reductive notion that it is only in the echoes of Gavrilo's shots that the Balkans should be heard.

Considering that historical accounts are an amalgam of various texts, the Balkan reader must also consider the dominant ways the Balkan histories have also been “read.” Tony Judt accomplishes this rather succinctly in his *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, relating how during the Yugoslav Wars, the Western media presented “the Balkans as a hopeless case, a cauldron of mysterious squabbles and ancient hatreds. Yugoslavia was ‘doomed’.”¹²

Conversely, others maintain that all Balkan conflicts are the direct fault of Western interference and “if there was bad blood between the peoples of the region it should be traced to imperial ambition rather than to ethnic hostility.”¹³ Such sentiments are centuries old and can easily be seen today on the comments boards on any of the thousands of youtube videos proclaiming either "Kosovo is Serbia" or "Macedonia is Bulgaria" or "Macedonia is Macedonia" with statements either applauding or condemning Western intervention along with calls for renewed genocide or regrets that the West did not cleanse the regional eyesore with atomic fire.

The question of who is at historical fault is not the interest of this paper, and Judt adeptly voices moderation by acknowledging that these two primary discourses surrounding the Balkans always cast its inhabitants as completely devoid of any historical agency. He reminds us that “the breakup of Yugoslavia...was the work of men, not fate. And the overwhelming responsibility for Yugoslavia’s tragedy lay not in Bonn or any other foreign capital, but with the politicians in

12 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 665.

13 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 666.

Belgrade.”¹⁴ Just as understanding the repercussions of the Treaty of Versailles does not absolve the actions of the Hitler, Himmler or Mengele, neither does understanding how the Balkans were manipulated both internally and externally excuse the ethnic cleansing initiated by Milosevic, Karadzic, and Mladic. Nevertheless, comprehending the historical and literary climate of these events should elucidate how these men were able to seize power by evoking racial hatred, permitting the occidental scholar to become a better, but never perfect, reader.

Adopting Elizabeth's Bishop's poetics of honest description and perceptive imagination as a potential blueprint for occidental travel writing permits the evaluation of the primary Balkan representations available to the Western reader--from Ivo Andric's fictionalized memory to Joe Sacco's humanitarian witnessing. The goal of this study is threefold: to provide a firm historical grounding while observing the instruments of colonialism, to give an overview of occidental travel writing on the Balkans with a particular focus on the formation and dissolution of Yugoslavia, and to suggest examples of travel texts that strive to read colonized worlds without losing sight of their own occidental positioning or pretending that it does not exist.

Acknowledging that the formation of all linguistic signs is inherently a political act, it becomes easy to agree with Debbie Lisle's assertion that "representation is never a simple literary event: reading, writing, and interpretation are political acts that involve complex power relations between readers, writers and the social worlds they inhabit."¹⁵ Lisle further explains that, in contrast to conventional liberal humanist conceptions of the individual, Foucault realizes that the practice of self-identification remains entirely dependent on the recognition of difference;" in other words, the logic of identity/difference enables the modern subject to know itself and

14 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 666.

15 Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 11.

acquire a stable identity by locating others through visible signs of difference."¹⁶ If we recognize how the formation of identity and meaning requires an acknowledgement of difference, then the act of morally pretending there is none becomes counterproductive and asserts that the observer's perception conveys an essential reality rather than a subjective reality shaped by preexisting cultural influences--in this case a writer's occidental positioning.

When approaching a contested space that involves a multitude of competing discourses, a hefty responsibility is thrust on both the reader and writer of Balkan representations to retain an awareness of counter and hidden discourses while resisting the urge to define, or even pursue, the definitive "true story" of the Balkans. Thus, an occidental reader of East Europe must be able to contextualize various and often contradicting texts without naturalizing recorded experiences. He or she must also maintain a poignant awareness of how Western imperialism has constructed and reconstructed the region by journalism, memoir, artificial borders, ethnography, classification, historical absolutism, and financial exploitation. If this work simplifies or answers "What is Balkan?" then it has failed utterly. We can only hope to further complicate and challenge the dominant discourse of Balkanism to keep the reader's mind alive and questioning rather than dead and assured.

¹⁶ Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 71.

Chapter Two

Hidden in Plain Sight: Elizabeth Bishop's Descriptive Poetics as a Potential Blueprint for Occidental Travel Writing

Since much of her poetry has to deal with empirical description, Elizabeth Bishop has often been referred to as, somewhat dismissively, as a descriptive poet. What remains unique about Bishop's poetry, however, is her ability to push honest description to its breaking point; as the metaphors and similes begin to crumble, the poet is forced take imaginative leaps to reconstruct a possible, but never definitive, reality in order to approach an answer to her questions of travel. Focusing particularly on her book of poetry, *Brazil*, helps reveal the limits to direct observation as well as the inherent connection between representing and creating realities that must remain firmly grounded in the mind of the travel writer. While her poetry may be hastily misread as the dejected opinions of a colonial elitist, Bishop's honest critical lens makes the crucial poetic turn, too often neglected by travelers, to examine her own rhetorical and cultural positioning in relation to the various worlds she encounters. Comprehending how Bishop accomplishes this will allow us to analyze the strengths and shortcomings of Balkan travelers.

A detailed reading of Bishop's descriptive poetics and its potential applications for the Balkan reader, however, in turn benefits from an overview of Edward Said and Danilo Kis's explorations of descriptive power. Said observes the power of the travelogue in Thomas Lawrence's account of the Arab revolt in the latter's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: "like Conrad's Kurtz, Lawrence has cut himself loose from the earth so as to become identified with a new reality in order--he says later---that he might be responsible for 'hustling into form...the new Asia which time was inexorably bringing upon us."¹⁷ This conception of travel writing as simultaneously describing and creating realities is often linked to the sheer power of the

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978, Print, 243.

descriptive act, and the titular story from the Serbian Danilo Kis's *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, demonstrates the epitome of evocative history in a Balkan context. Grieving for her recently deceased father, the unnamed female narrator of the text discovers *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* written "by those who undertake the difficult and praiseworthy task of recording--in what is doubtless an objective and impartial manner--everything that can be recorded concerning those who have completed their earthly journey and set off on the eternal one...so that everyone will be able to find not only his fellow men but also--and more important--his own forgotten past."¹⁸ The definitive record of life's every minuteness and the evoking of every personal dream and demon to paper in a sense preserves that life for eternity, for "every period of life, every experience is recorded: every fish caught, every page read, the name of every plant the boy ever picked."¹⁹

The enormous scope of the encyclopedia notwithstanding, it remains impossibly concise, as the sum of the father's 50 years in Belgrade "some eighteen thousand days and nights (432,000 hours) is covered here, in this book of the dead, in a mere five or six pages."²⁰ If only travel writers could claim such ability--and yet, description can only go so far, and we soon realize that the story laid before us is only the fragmented memory of the narrator who dreamt the existence of the encyclopedia and created the story from details scribbled in her notebook. In the pursuit of "the truth" this is all that we truly have--lives as details, gestures, and descriptions--meaningless to most but when seen through different sets of eyes can bring new reality and life to the dead-past. There seems to be an overarching *Meaning* grounded in our mortality, but all we can keep in print are the jotted memories of fevered dreams that speak of the limits to description and memory that distinguish the living from the dead.

18 Danilo Kis, "The Encyclopedia of the Dead" in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989, Print, 43.

19 Danilo Kis, "The Encyclopedia of the Dead" in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989, Print, 46.

20 Danilo Kis, "The Encyclopedia of the Dead" in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989, Print, 48.

While not specifically connected to the Balkans, the travel poems of Elizabeth Bishop further demonstrate the limits to pure description in travel writing. At first glance, her works present themselves to a postcolonialist as yet another example of Western culture creating a naturalized, and ultimately fictitious, aesthetic. However, Bishop's ability to recognize her colonizing tendencies within her attempts to question the illusive simulacra of another culture generates a sense of honesty, as she neither ignores nor marginalizes the paradoxes within her descriptions. While Bishop cannot permanently escape the construction of language or the arbitrary nature of the sign, her mixture of description and imagined narrative permits her to reach for a new lyrical plateau of understanding—albeit a blurred and inconclusive one. We witness Bishop applying her poetics of description in the book of Poetry *Brazil*. Bishop announces her “Arrival at Santos” with a banal procession of observation and description: “Here is a coast; here is a harbor; / here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery.”²¹ The speaker's first impressions of the port are anything but positive, and each detail drips with the lexicon of colonization and personal disappointment, as she notes the sad, harsh, *impractically* shaped, and *self-pitying* mountains, *frivolous* greenery, the *little* church, warehouses painted a *feeble* pink or blue, and *uncertain* palms.²² Just before the reader chastises Bishop for a blatant display of imperialist discourse, she makes the crucial turn and shifts her critical and honest eye on herself: “Oh, tourist, / is this how this country is going to answer you / and your immodest demands for a different world, / and a better life, and complete comprehension of both at last, and immediately, after eighteen days of suspension?”²³ Her immodest demands for a different world are highly reminiscent to Yeats's own heartsick desires in “Sailing to Byzantium,” as he

21 Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos,” In *Poems, Prose, and Letters*. Bishop, Elizabeth, Robert Giroux, and Lloyd Schwartz. Library of America, 180, New York: Library of America, 2008, Print, 71.

22 Ibid, 71.

23 Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos,” In *Poems, Prose, and Letters*. Bishop, Elizabeth, Robert Giroux, and Lloyd Schwartz. Library of America, 180, New York: Library of America, 2008, Print, 71.

flees from the no country for old men and begs the ancient sages of Byzantium to “Consume my heart away; sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal / It knows not what it is; and gather me / Into the artifice of eternity.”²⁴ In her self-admonishment, Bishop makes the step that Yeats seems reluctant to take despite living in a post-colonial society himself.

Bishops' distinction between "traveler" and "tourist" becomes more complicated when we consider Lisle's placement of the terms within a contemporary postcolonial power binary of colonizer/colonized. With increased globalization and more affordable access to travel, the "average tourist" is now able to witness places formerly reserved for the "adventurous traveler," thus "the travel writer now secures his/her subject position by producing an other that is easy to hate: the tourist."²⁵ In the wake of postcolonial theory and growing awareness of how even representations can serve as part of cultural imperialism, this distinction enables travel writers to "affirm their subject positions by denouncing the mechanical and routine movements of tourists...[often represented as] pathetic creatures unable to manage foreign countries on their own--they must be led, pandered to and take care of like spoiled children."²⁶ In order to distinguish themselves from the pure engines of consumption, the traveler writer points to the tourist as if to say "there stands the corrupter of the world" while I, being suitably enlightened, experience the unfiltered "real."

Such impulses are symptomatic after decades of essays, articles, forums, films, and speeches that make an obvious mockery of those who feel that they understand yet "just don't get it." What can occur is a pitiful practice of self-depreciation, as travel writers frantically try to separate and disassociate themselves from their own experience and flee from fears of being influenced by their privileged positioning. Ironically, these attempts to remove subjective

24 William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium," In *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, Richard J. Finneran, 2nd Ed. New York: Scribner Paperback Poetry: 1996, Print, 193.

25 Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 77.

26 Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 78.

influences seems to suggest the existence of a true objectivity--the same assumption that fueled the scientific enterprise of colonialism. If the current criticisms of travel writing continue on the same scale, a writer cannot even record various smells without the fear of being led by their occidental nose. Bishop, however, avoids this hypocrisy by keeping her honest observations *and* self-criticisms. By stepping back and realizing that she views the world from a particular frame, she is able to reach for meaning without trying to ascribe eternal aesthetics "as journalist and travel writer Robert Kaplan [does when he] states, ' I wanted to map the future, perhaps the "deep future", [sic] by ignoring what was legally and officially there and, instead, touching, feeling, and smelling what was really *there*.'"²⁷

In his book, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, David Spurr proposes that "if the news establishes a consumer's relation to events, then travel writing may be said to establish a consumer's relation to entire cultures."²⁸ Aware of this, conscientiousness travel writers often attempt to resist the preconceptions of their occidental heritage with maddening earnestness, but the lingering nets of nationality, language, and religion are even more tenacious than Joyce's young Daedalus had anticipated; the more you resist, the quicker you become entangled. Citing James Clifford, Spurr argues that "Western institutions have developed a taxonomic 'machine for making authenticity' which assigns cultural and economic value to objects collected from non-Western cultures. This system distinguishes "authentic" artifacts of folklore, craft, and material culture from "inauthentic" tourist art, curios, and commodities."²⁹

27 Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 79.

28 David, Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, Post-contemporary Interventions*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, Print, 48.

29 David, Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, Post-contemporary Interventions*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, Print, 49.

This distinction, or rather the importance of this distinction, is not too difficult for an occidental student to comprehend. For example, one may question a colleague returning from a trip abroad about the origin of their souvenirs—why does it matter whether the oversized mask or icon was a gift from a tribesman or purchased in a kiosk? After all, these are consumable products appropriated for the sole purpose of defining and advertising our personal “enlightenment.” In other words, in occidental culture to possess inauthentic artifacts, or trinkets, unequivocally lessens your worth as a global individual, for you immediately become characterized as part of machine of colonialism—a mindless consumer at best—corruptor of culture at worst. The supreme and only half-hidden irony is that the judges of authenticity are not the indigenous cultures themselves but travel writers whose schizophrenic desire to perceive an “authentic” world that predates colonialism makes them all too quick to condemn anything they see as a deviation from an imagined aesthetic—inadvertently enforcing the very phenomenon they intend to critique.

Fanon explores this trend of colonial experts creating static images of colonized art in his chapter "On Natural Culture" from *The Wretched of the Earth*: "the metropolitan anthropologists and experts are quick to note these changes and denounce them all, referring rather to a codified artistic style and culture developing in tune with the colonial situation. The colonialist experts do not recognize these new forms and rush to the rescue of indigenous traditions. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of indigenous style."³⁰ Bishop, however, avoids this potentially deadly trap by keeping her paradoxical and troublesome cultural assumptions firmly grounded in the forefront.

According to Spurr, writers who try to ignore reality, either by holding onto a precept of colonial dogma, or by refusing to accept that they have been colored by colonial history

30 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, Print, 175.

themselves, will never be able to appreciate “post-colonial authenticity...which can only be appreciated by an aesthetic which accepts the interpretation of cultures as creating a new kind of beauty.”³¹ To describe this postcolonial beauty, Spurr references a selection of travel commentary by James Clifford in response to an unorthodox game of cricket played by Trobriand islanders:

On a chair sits the umpire, calmly influencing the game with magical spells. He is chewing betel nut, which he shares out from a stash held on his lap. It is a bright blue plastic Adidas bag. It is beautiful.³²

“The conventional travel writer would either suppress this brilliant detail [for embarrassment of consuming/reporting the unauthentic] or treat it ironically for its failure to conform to a traditional ideal.”³³

Reflecting on the disconnection between her expectations and reality, Bishop then considers her distance from home and wonders if it wouldn't have been better (as Yeats did) to “stay at home and thought of here?”³⁴ Perhaps if she remained in the West, the poet would be free to use her imagined Brazil to function as a sort of “delight in sensuousness, which might be refracting memories of a paradisaal state that had been more decisively lost in Western culture.”³⁵ This recognition of some ineffable quality both lost and gained at the realization of a dream prompts the speaker to inquire: “Oh, must we dream our dreams / and have them, too?”

Immediately after asking whether she should have stayed home the speaker questions herself

31 David, Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, Post-contemporary Interventions*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, Print, 50.

32 David, Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, Post-contemporary Interventions*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, Print, 50.

33 David, Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration, Post-contemporary Interventions*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, Print, 50.

34 Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos,” In *Poems, Prose, and Letters*. Bishop, Elizabeth, Robert Giroux, and Lloyd, Schwartz, Library of America, 180. New York: Library of America, 2008. Print. 74.

35 Emily, Haddad, *Orientalist Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth-Century English and French Poetry*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2001, Print, 84.

even further: “Is it right to be watching strangers in a play / in this strangest of theaters?”³⁶ The latter two lines demonstrate Bishop's self-awareness as an outsider who attempts to interpret cultural simulacra that defy her understanding due, in part, to the arbitrary nature of the sign whose signification, as Saussure explains, is entirely dependent on culture.

Bishop undoubtedly realizes the connection between these shallow diversions for the sake of leisure and the colonial machine (even ignoring Sir Bertram's business in Antigua). Travel literature, by its very nature, will always remain a colonial enterprise, as it requires two of the principle by-products of a market economy: leisure and surplus. In making this comparison, Bishop is able to better realize her own tenuous position as colonial outsider suggesting that she is becoming increasingly aware of her own “homelessness” and the possibility of existing neither “here” nor “there.”

*Is it lack of imagination that makes us come
to imagined places, not just stay at home?
Or could Pascal have been not entirely right
about just sitting quietly in one's room?*

*Continent, city, county, society:
the choice is never wide and never free.
And here, or there...No. Should we have stayed at home,
Wherever that may be?*³⁷

At the end of this lyrical moment, when she literally says “No.” to the question of home region, the poet has completely unhoused herself in that she is no longer able to determine which whether she inhabits the “here” or the “there”—the Occident or an imagined Brazil. While losing that intense connection with your home region can be frightening, Kim Fortuny, however, explains that “accepting centerlessness as the natural state of things thus becomes not only one

36 Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos,” In *Poems, Prose, and Letters*. Bishop, Elizabeth, Robert Giroux, and Lloyd, Schwartz. Library of America, 180, New York: Library of America, 2008, Print, 74.

37 Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos,” In *Poems, Prose, and Letters*. Bishop, Elizabeth, Robert Giroux, and Lloyd, Schwartz. Library of America, 180, New York: Library of America, 2008, Print, 75.

answer to the accidents of history but also perhaps the best imaginative response we can hope to muster to these questions of travel.”³⁸ Somewhat ironically, learning how to remember through forgetting and forgetting through remembrance solves these paradoxes and possibly points the way towards resolving the crisis between fictional and historical representation.

Certainly, military occupation, legal edict, and economic oppression helped established occidental colonialism as a superstructure, yet it was also fueled by the words of Western poets and writers. Although Bishop has inherited the legacy of colonial travel writers, her poetics that include honesty of impression, faithful description, as well as the lyrical act of un-housing oneself from the physical connection to a “home” and therefore a naturalized “other,” provides some cracks in the system as well as a blueprint of how to produce laudable travel writing.

³⁸ Kim Fortuny. *Elizabeth Bishop: The Art of Travel*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003, Print, 81.

Chapter Three

The Bridges of History: Ivo Andric and the Balkan Crossroads

Due to its international acclaim, the occidental reader of the Balkans is perhaps most familiar with the Ottoman period through Ivo Andric's *The Bridge on the Drina* which earned the Bosnian author the Nobel Prize in literature. Similar to Bishop, Andric meshes detailed observation and personal experience with fictionalized representation that illustrates the growing concerns of violence, nationalism, cultural identity and historical memory, invoked by Balkan travel writing. Appropriating the Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic Bridge and its silent observation of the citizens of Visegrad as a poetic representation of the Bosnian experience during Ottoman domination, the author is able to convey roughly 400 years of experiences without personifying the bridge or imbuing it with a voice to pass judgment on the passage of time. Like Kis's *Encyclopedia of the Dead*, the bridge's centuries of existence cause the reader to regard it as some type of compendium of meaning comparable to an imposing mountain or pyramid, yet if Andric gleans any essential truth from the bridge's presence during countless horrors and wonders, then he remains pointedly silent leaving us only to guess at external meaning through various narrative frames. The bridge enters the text as an evolving paradox that simultaneously serves as a physical connection between two worlds as well as a visible demarcation for separation and difference with the Muslim children born on the right side of the bank and the majority of the Christian children on the left.³⁹

Commissioned by the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha, a former Christian slave reportedly born near Skolovici, suggests that even the bridge's very creation embodies a dichotomy of unity and separation. Andric describes how the pain of separation caused by the Janissary's conscription of Christian boys and that the image of so many weeping Serbian mothers left

39 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 15.

stranded on the bank, for there was only a ferry across the river, weighed on the future Vizier's mind: "All of this was summed up in that physical discomfort that the boy felt on that November day and which never completely left him, though he changed his way of life, his faith, his name and his country."⁴⁰ The author supposes that the pain of being torn from his people was what permitted the Vizier to be the first to see "in a single moment behind closed eyelids...the firm graceful silhouette of the great stone bridge which was to be built there."⁴¹ In this sense, Mehmed's symbolic constructing of past pains into the seemingly eternal art of the bridge arguably mirrors Andric's own goal in crafting the novel. Despite the author's narrative skill, however, his work presupposes a degree of historical and cultural knowledge concerning the Balkans that most Western readers simply do not possess that requires an extended gloss.

According to Leften Stavrianos's expansive history, *The Balkans Since 1453*, the South Slavs, who firmly settled in the peninsula during the mid seventh century, eventually "divided into four subgroups:" the Slovenes, Croatians, Serbians and Bulgarians.⁴² Inhabiting the central portion of the Balkans, the medieval Serbian Kingdom rose to power in the wake of the Fourth Crusade after the Catholic armies sacked the Holy Orthodox city of Constantinople in 1204. The fledgling state was therefore forced to contend with the disputes between East and West since infancy. Stavrianos notes, however, that the Serbians were not necessarily passive victims, for in 1217 Stephan (Stefan) Nemanja II was able to exploit the situation "and played off the pope against the patriarch. From the one he obtained the title of king and from the other a Serbian archbishopric that made the Serbian church autonomous."⁴³ Displaying praiseworthy political

40 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 25.

41 Ibid, 26.

42 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 7-9.

43 Ibid, 27.

acumen, the first king of Serbia was able to shake off the direct control of the dying Byzantine Empire without becoming a new vassal to the Catholic West.⁴⁴

After a century of decline, the Serbian kingdom was again able to extend its influence under the banner of Stefan Uros IV Dusan and drove eastward into Bulgaria and civil war mired Byzantium. Dusan declared himself emperor of the Serbs and Greeks with intention of supplanting the Byzantine Empire; however, his death in 1355 resulted in the fragmentation of the decade old Serbian “Empire.” East European scholar, Dennis Hupchick regards Dusan's death as “a catastrophe for the Orthodox Balkans, since it removed the last force capable of withstanding the advance...”⁴⁵ of the Ottoman Turks. Slowly withering under the Turks' stiff demands for tribute and conscripts, the Serbians, along with Bosnian, and Bulgarian rebels, revolted and scored several victories against the Ottomans. Ottoman Sultan Murad I returned with all of his forces and crushed the Christian rebels along the Kosovo Plain on June 15, 1389. The Saint Vitus Day defeat of the Serbian coalition led by Prince Lazar marked the end of South Slav independence and inexorably linked Kosovo, or “Old Serbia,” with Serbian nationalism for centuries to come.⁴⁶ The journalist, Robert Kaplan, records how the legacy of this defeat has been adapted as part of Serbian self-identification: “In Serbian legend, the Nemajic kingdom sacrificed itself to the Turkish hordes in order to gain a new kingdom in heaven; meanwhile, here on earth, Serbia's sacrifice allowed Italy and Central Europe to stay alive and to continue to develop.”⁴⁷ One Orthodox nun passionately expressed to Kaplan that “the greatness of Italy and the other nations of Europe was constructed over our bones.”⁴⁸ Interestingly, similar arguments

44 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, “Map 17: Rise of Medieval Serbia, 13th-14th Centuries,” in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2.

45 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, “Map 17: Rise of Medieval Serbia, 13th-14th Centuries,” in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2.

46 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 44-45.

47 Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: Picador 2005, Print, 33.

48 Ibid, 33.

are also present in Russian discourses defending their perceived “backwardness” due to the “Mongol Yoke” and distance from the advancements of the Renaissance.

The concept of the "stolen legacy" permeates nearly every facet of Balkan national histories. Todorova observes that since “Balkan historiographies developed primarily as national historiographies accounts for their relative parochialism with little knowledge of the history of their neighbors in the same period...[along with their] conscious effort to belittle, ignore, distort, deride and even negate” rival histories.⁴⁹ Countering the common classification of these nationalist tendencies as inherently aggressive, Todorova claims that they are better characterized as defensive due to underlying uncertainties of national identity that helps explain the current fixation on ethnogenesis.⁵⁰ Despite the violent echoes of its institutional policies, the former Christian Byzantines did not meet the expansion of the Ottoman Empire with wholesale resistance. The disintegration of the Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serbian powers took its toll on the local populations and “when the Turks appeared, many of these Christian peasants accepted and even hailed them as deliverers from their unbearable lot. And contemporary evidence indicates that the peasants' lot did improve [at least economically].”⁵¹

During Ottoman rule, a large portion of the landowning nobles, notably in Bosnia, converted to Islam in order to retain their land and feudal positions. Overtime these lords, or Beys, became a privileged elite that vigorously defended itself when the peasants began to shift back to Orthodoxy during the 19th century when nationalist sentiments gave rise to religious fanaticism.⁵² This can often cause some confusion to a reader only beginning to investigate Balkan history as the term “Turk” also served as a religious distinction and is applied as freely in the literature and history to the Bosniaks, who are the Muslim (typically) decedents of the

49 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print 183.

50 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print 183.

51 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 37.

52 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 63.

original Bosnian converts, as it is to the Ottoman Turks. Wendy Hesford cites historian Linda E. Boose's observation that during the five centuries of Ottoman rule the Turk "remains an ever-internalized figure of occupation... [who] threatens to conquer, victimize, feminize and humiliate Serb national selfhood [which is] always a masculine construct."⁵³ In the nationalist imagination, both the Turk and the western travelers universally attempted to feminize Balkan masculinity while dehumanizing Balkan femininity.

Considering that the legal system of the Ottoman Empire was specifically designed for an Islamic state, it was not readably transferable to the non-Muslim populace that suddenly comprised nearly half of the Empire. In response, Mehmed "divided his subjects into *millet*s (nations) based solely on religious affiliation and administered by the highest religious authorities of each."⁵⁴ The Orthodox Christians, the largest and most politically viable faction, were originally grouped together under the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople, yet the Slavic speaking Serbian Patriarchate later regained a good deal of its political autonomy due to the advancement of Mehmed Pasha to Grand Vizier. By the beginning of the 19th century, the elite military Janissary corps, pride of the Ottoman armies and comprised of Christian conscripts/slaves forced to convert to Islam, had grown decadent and became a serious drain on Ottoman resources. Coupled with several key losses along the Black Sea to Peter the Great decades earlier and Hapsburg advancements in Hungary, the Ottoman military machine was in serious disrepair. This permitted the Bosnian Beys to ignore the mandate of the Ottoman law

53 Wendy S Hesford, "Documenting Violations: Rhetorical Witnessing and the Spectacle of Distant Suffering[1]," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 27.1 (2004): 104-144. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO, Web, 19 Feb. 2011, 111. <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?hid=11&sid=03997557-de9f-42da-b16c-2a2587977099%40sessionmgr15&vid=2>

54 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 22: Ottoman Millet Organization, Mid 16th-17th Centuries" in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2.

and create a Slav-Muslim ruling class in charge of both Catholic and Orthodox Christian peasants.⁵⁵

Returning to Andric's text, we are now able to see how the waters of history surround and converge upon the bridge and its kapia highlighting the interchange and collision of religion and culture. Apart from differing positions with respect to religion and the bridge, the children also have competing claims to the local folklore as revealed by their contrasting interpretation of natural phenomenon. Serbian children regarded the rounded hollows along the riverside as "the prints of the hooves of Sarac, the horse of Karajevic Marko" [the great Serbian Folk hero] yet the Turkish children knew equally as powerfully that they were proof of their own hero Djerzelez Alija.⁵⁶ While Andric records how children learned different myths from their parents, the Muslim, Jewish and Christian neighbors are still able to find solace and shelter together during a great flood of the Drina River:

Turks, Christians and Jews mingled together. The force of the elements and the weight of common misfortune brought all these men together and bridged, at least for this one evening, the gulf that divided one faith from the other and...a warm and close circle formed, like a new existence, created out of realities and yet itself unreal, which was not what it had been the day before nor what it would be the day after, but like a transient island in the flood of time.⁵⁷

Similar to the monks who craft the Encyclopedia of the Dead, the fact that the bridge observes this occurrence serves to preserve that moment for eternity, and momentarily relieves the fierce political opponents from the burdens of historical memory. Thus, the preservation of this fictionalized memory paradoxically depends on our capacity to forget: "generation after generation learnt not to mourn overmuch what the troubled waters had borne away. They entered there into the unconscious philosophy of the town; that life was an incomprehensible

⁵⁵ Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 236.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 17.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 77.

marvel, since it was incessantly wasted and spent, yet none the less it lasted and endured 'like the bridge on the Drina.'"⁵⁸ While undoubtedly a poetic sentiment, we must consider whether such removals from history are beneficial, as the poetic waters of Andric's Drina wash away the historical blood of the victims. After all, Andric's text stands as a sort of exercise in nostalgia and documents the history of an age that is in danger of being banished from memory, yet his narrator claims that "forgetfulness heals everything and song is the most beautiful manner of forgetting, for in song man feels only what he loves."⁵⁹ Comparable to Bishop's approach to questions of travel, Andric attempts to resolve these questions of memory by remembrance that refuses to accept a definitive history.

This scene of peacefulness and solidarity does not last for the citizens of Visegrad, however, as the slow death of the Ottoman Empire is met with growing intervention by the European great powers. With the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (the little fountain) at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war, "Catherine and her successors [gained] a standing pretext for diplomatic intervention...[and] military aggression."⁶⁰ Russia's imperialist maneuverings into the region were largely influenced by sentiments of pan-slavism and Catherine the Great's "Grand Plan" to restore the Byzantine Empire. These nationalist sentiments were furthered by Slavophile leaning members of the Russian intelligentsia such as Nikolai Danielvskii who predicted that a new Slav-Orthodox society: "with its capital at Constantinople, would synthesize the highest achievements of its predecessors in religion (Israel), culture (Greece), political order (Rome)...and would supplement them with the Slavic genius for community and social justice."⁶¹ While some Serbs were receptive to Russia's protective overtures, other envisioned a variant of Pan-Serbism as seen through the words of Teodor Pavlovic: "we feel that we can never accept

58 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 81.

59 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 81.

60 Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 191

61 Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001. Print, 313-14.

the term Illyrian [early conception of Slavism]... why these people are by descent, name, and language all true Serbs, who call themselves Bosnians, Montenegrins, Slovenians, Dalmatians, and so on, by their home regions."⁶² While the plausibility of the dreamed emancipation from Ottoman rule increased, so did the differing opinions on what form that dream should take.

As a Bosnian-Croat who later strongly identified with a Serb-centered Yugoslav identity, Andric continually emphasizes the bridge's role as the crucial link between Bosnia and Serbia, since Visegrad kept a "permanent touch with everything that took place in Serbia and grew with it 'like a nail and its finger.'"⁶³ When the Serbian Karageorge (Black George) began his uprising at the beginning of the 19th century, Andric records how the imagined sounds and fire of the insurrectionists' cannons caused the Serbs to pray "to God that these saving flames, like those which they had always carried in their hearts and carefully concealed, should spread to these mountains, while the Turks prayed to Allah to halt their progress and extinguish them..."⁶⁴ The threat of the Serbian revolt spilling across the bridge into Bosnia dramatically increases tensions amongst the town's inhabitants which soon gives way to violent demonstrations of state discipline. Andric describes the misfortune of one traveling Serbian Pilgrim, who is questioned by the Turkish guards. The old man explains to the soldiers how he spent his simple days in prayer and study and the "signs and letters on his staff...represented the times of Serbian freedom and greatness, past and future. For, said the old man, smiling gently and timidly, the day of resurrection was coming soon and, judging from what he had read in books...it was now quite near. The kingdom was reborn, redeemed by trials and founded on truth."⁶⁵ In a climate of

62 Jack David Eller, *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: an Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, Print, 266.

63 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 82.

64 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 83.

65 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 86.

political uncertainty, the frustrated Turkish guards seize the old man and another Serbian youth, mindlessly singing a popular insurrectionist song, and sentence them to decapitation.

Although the blockhouse becomes a routine place for violent executions during periods of revolt, Andric only mentions these two in detail. Ani Kokobobo, argues that by continually switching from the narrator's individual gaze to the communal, Andric is able to show how “in such times people quickly grow hardened and insensible. They soon became so accustomed to them [the decapitated Serbs] that they passed them by indifferently and paid no more heed to them, so that they did not at once notice when they ceased to be exhibited.”⁶⁶ Kokobobo further stresses that the community’s eventual disinterest in the heads demonstrates their disassociation and how “for the people, forgetfulness is the only means by coping with what they are forced to see.”⁶⁷ In this case, Andric’s use of violence as a narrative frame serves a dual function: firstly, by forming a distinction between the memory of the narrator/bridge and the forgetfulness of the community/time, Andric attempts to incorporate the subjective view of an insider and the objectivity of an outside observer. Secondly, this scene also reveals the awakening of nationalist sentiments amongst the Balkan vassal states of the Ottoman Empire.

While the localized Serbian insurrectionist movements of the early 19th century primarily sought to end the corruption of Ottoman system that degenerated to the point that it could no longer keep the local lords in line, they were soon transformed into full-fledged nationalist movements by Austrian and Russian influenced Serb emigrants.⁶⁸ After its telling defeat in the Crimean War, Russia once again tried to reassert its presence along the Black and Aegean Seas, and found the perfect opportunity during the highly publicized atrocities of the Turkish forces

66 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 92.

67 Ani Kokobobo, “To Grieve or Not to Grieve? The Unsteady Representation of Violence in Ivo Andric’s *The Bridge on the Drina*,” In *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 21(1): 69-86, 2007, Print, 80.

68 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, “Map 25: Emergence of Modern Balkan States, 1804-1862,” in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

during the April Rising in Bulgaria. Writing in 1946, the Soviet Journalist and travel writer Ilya Ehrenburg records his impression of the lingering psychological scars:

In the village of Batak stands a church whose walls are covered not with frescoes but with blood. During the rebellion of 1876, the Turkish janizaries herded all the peasants of Batak into this church and slaughtered them there. The bloodstains are still visible on the walls. In fact, the blood of martyrs and heroes cries out everywhere from Bulgarian soil, and this explains a great deal. It explains why the Bulgars, though so young and expansive a people, are so chary with words, why their mounts are inched so stubbornly, and why their eyes sometimes blaze with such fierce bitterness.⁶⁹

While Ehrenburg blames the Janissaries, the atrocities are historically attributed to the Ottoman irregulars, or bashi-bazouks recruited from local populations, who Stavrianos claims “were particularly savage because of the earlier killings of their fellow Muslim villagers.”⁷⁰ Regardless of who initiated the killings, British and American journalistic representations of the “Bulgarian Horrors” were enough to distance the minds of occidental readers in New York and London from the Sublime Porte. This permitted Russia to reassume her Balkan interests through the Kuchuk Kainarji Treaty, as well as morally isolating Turkey from the British/French coalition that previously checked Russia’s advance in the Crimea.

While many Serbs desired Russia’s support in uniting all the South Slavs under a Serbian controlled “Yugoslavia,” the two peoples remained divided over the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina—Serbian nationalists demanded the inclusion of the Bosnian Serbs, while Russian politicians presented Austria-Hungary with the right to annex the region in return for noninterference with Russia’s attack on the Ottoman Empire.⁷¹ The Russians subsequently backed the Orthodox Bulgarians and, after securing several victories, were poised to seize Istanbul. The threat of a renewed Russian Empire with accesses to British trade interests pointedly doused the flames of disgust at the “Bulgarian Horrors,” and the British fleet moved to

69 Ilya Ehrenburg, *European Crossroad: A Soviet Journalist in the Balkans*, Trans. Anya Markov, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947, Print, 27.

70 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 236.

71 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 406.

intervene if necessary. Sensing this change of public opinion, Russia hastily declared peace with *The Treaty of San Stefano* in March 1878 granting enormous territorial concessions to the new “Autonomous Bulgaria,” counting on Bulgarian gratitude to guarantee Russian access to the Aegean Sea by way of Kavala (part of modern day Greece).⁷²

For their part, the Serbians “protested to St. Petersburg, but were informed bluntly that Russia’s interests came first, Bulgaria’s second, and Serbia’s last.”⁷³ With Austria-Hungary and Britain united against Russia, the San-Stefano Treaty underwent major modifications resulting in the Berlin Treaty in July of the same year. Not to be confused with the Berlin Conference half a decade later that “was able to carve up a mutilated Africa among three or four European flags[,]”⁷⁴ this treaty was specifically designed to limit Russia’s strategic gains and divided “Greater Bulgaria” into fractions and cut off its access to the Aegean. Rising to and falling from such territorial heights in a span of only four months crushed Bulgarian aspirations and many vowed to reclaim their stolen lands. Additionally, with the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria, the Serbs “felt deeply betrayed by their longtime Russian allies, who had shown themselves willing to give away to Bulgarians Macedonian regions that were just as important to Serbian national aspirations as Bosnia...”⁷⁵ The Ottoman Empire was equally reminded of its subservient place during the negotiations as “Bismarck hastened to inform the Ottoman delegates... ‘if you think the Congress has met for Turkey, disabuse yourselves. San-Stefano would have remained unaltered, if it had not touched certain European interests.”⁷⁶ Commenting on perhaps the clearest example of artificial state building until the manipulations of Tito and

72 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, “Map 27: ‘The San Stefano’ Balkans, March 1878,” in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

73 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 406.

74 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, Print, 27.

75 Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, “Map 28: The ‘Berlin’ Balkans, July 1878,” in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

76 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 169.

Stalin, Todorova claims: “the Treaty of Berlin fatefully determined the political development of the Balkans in the centuries to follow.”⁷⁷

With such historical depth accompanying the Austrians' entrance into Andric's text does not signal a mere regime change but the culmination of centuries of thwarted ambitions. When they first begin to occupy the region in 1878, Bosnia-Herzegovina remains largely defined and divided by three faiths: Orthodoxy (43%), Islam (39%) and Catholicism (18%) further complicating the social hierarchies.⁷⁸ As Andric's Alihodja reads the proclamation of Austria-Hungary's annexation posted on the bridge, he felt that “this white paper...had cut it in half like a silent explosion and that there was now a great abyss; that individual piers still stood to right and to left of this break but that there was no way across...and every man had to remain on that side where he happened to be at this moment.”⁷⁹ The Austrians seek to modernize the region with the power of the industrial revolution, but the citizens of Visegrad initially find difficulty in adapting to the neat and quaint little cafes and even resent the new railway that renders the connective aspect of the bridge irrelevant: “In truth the peasants too found it hard to grow accustomed to the railway. They made use of it, but could not feel at ease with it and could not understand its ways and habits.”⁸⁰ Their reluctance to accept the railroad should not be misconstrued as mere peasant superstition of modern technology, for it also suggests a perceptive political awareness of what the railway signifies: namely, an irreversible departure from their known agrarian based economy and lifestyle. In Serbia, the Radicals feared the railroad "would only lead to the country's economic exploitation by stronger nations...while in the case of war it

77 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 169.

78 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 462.

79 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 123.

80 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 213

would facilitate invasion by both Austria and Ottoman Turkey."⁸¹ While the inhabitants eventually grow more accustomed to Austrian developments, "the bridge was no longer what it once had been: the link between East and West."⁸² Despite the bridge's diminished practical importance, Andric still retains his poetic remonstrations about the bridge's immortality as a narrative frame, essentially concluding each episodic age under the unchanging, and therefore unbiased, gaze of the bridge and its "...eternal youth of a perfect conception, one of the great and good works of man, which do not know what it means to change and grow old and which, or so it seemed, do not share the fate of the transient things of this world."⁸³

The Austrian administration drastically complicates the social and economic system of Bosnia-Herzegovina by establishing a dynamic market economy in a land that subsisted from a natural one, and by refusing to alter the Muslim ruling class despite the loss of its theological Ottoman backing.⁸⁴ The symbolic division of the bridge by the proclamation of annexation soon manifests itself in the hearts and minds of the Visegrad citizens. Andric relates how two of his characters overhear a pair of youths, one Serb (Galus) and one Bosniak (Bahtijarevic), with the former criticizing the latter's choice of oriental studies as a specialization.⁸⁵ Galus belligerently warns his friend:

...you Moslems, you begs' sons, often make a mistake. Disconcerted by the new times, you no longer know your exact and rightful place in the world. Your love for everything oriental is only a contemporary expression of your 'will to power'; for you the eastern way of life and thought is very closely bound up with a social and legal order which was the basis of your centuries of lordship.⁸⁶

Andric raises an interesting question with this interchange that bears noticeable resemblance to Said's study decades later, albeit from a rather different perspective. Certainly, Said has shown

81 Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths Towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans*, New York: Central European University Press 2009, Print, 93.

82 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 213

83 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 214.

82 Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 461-63.

85 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 242.

86 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 242.

us the dangers of an Orientalist academy that refuses to permit native voices to speak for themselves--a restriction Galus clearly supports when he continues “you are orientals but you are making a mistake when you think that you are thereby called upon to be orientalists. In general you have not got the calling or the true inclination for science.”⁸⁷ Yet it becomes impossible, and ultimately self-defeating, to establish a clear “moral hero/villain” when Galus first disapproves of his friend participating in an exclusionary imperialist discourse and then subsequently proposes a similarly polarizing Serb-nationalist identity. The Austrian occupation, facilitated and shaped by great power intervention, therefore not only witnesses the cultural colonization by the Habsburgs and the disruption of the economy, but also the swelling nationalist ambitions of the Serbs.

Nevertheless, Andric problematizes our preconception of establishing and resisting power structures in addition to the practice of exclusionary self-identification. In the loss of the theocratic legitimacy of their hold over the Orthodox peasantry, some Bosniaks fall into nostalgia over their Eastern/Ottoman heritage and, according to Galus, are drawn to orientalist studies as a means to recapture their cultural dominance. He claims that the 20th century Muslims of Bosnia are unable to define their role in the changing Balkan world and are doomed to fall by the wayside. With a seer's self-assurance, Galus tells Bahtijarevic: “The conditions which at one time made you what you were have changed long ago, but that does not mean that you can change with the same speed. This is not the first nor will it be the last, instance of a social caste losing its reason for existence and yet remaining the same.”⁸⁸ Once more, the companions focus their debate on the bridge itself when Bahtijarevic asks whether Mehmed Pasha could have created such works were it not for the Ottoman system. Galus's response

87 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 242-43

88 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 243.

reveals the equally problematic antithetical argument of burgeoning nationalism mired in conceptions of racial and national purity: "...it was not hard for Stambul [Istanbul] to put up such buildings when it took from us, and from so many other subjugated peoples, not only property and money, but also our best men and our purest blood. If you stop to think what we are and how much has been stolen from us through the centuries, then all these buildings are merely crumbs."⁸⁹

Here we see the continuance of the stolen legacy motif, and the nationalists' desire to form revolutionary movements that would sweep away both the vestiges of the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian newcomers. In Galus's overly romantic notion, this new national state would "rally all the Southern Slavs around Serbia as a sort of Piedmont on the basis of complete national unity, religious tolerance and civil equality."⁹⁰ Despite the optimistic overtures of liberation, the establishment of a nationalist movement largely centered on Serb identity inevitably ostracizes the former Bosnian ruling class, as evidenced by Bahtijarvic's silence which "seemed a thing apart, heavy and obstinate in the night. It seemed like an impassable wall in the darkness which by the very weight of its existence resolutely rejected all that the other had said, and expressed its dumb [muted], clear and unalterable opinion."⁹¹ The deepening division between the two friends mimics the growing unrest within the Bosnian state as well as the ideological battle for state identity. Both Galus's idealized nation and Bahtijarevic's implied nostalgia are methods for (re)asserting cultural power, yet neither construct is without its inaccuracies and cultural biases that are further complicated by the fact that each vision cannot suffer the presence of the other.

89 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 244.

90 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 245.

91 Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 246.

Although they are both South-Slavs, after centuries under the theocratic Ottoman millet system, the Slavic Muslims "held no ethnonational affiliation[;] they maintained an Islamic cultural self-identity alone"⁹² while Orthodoxy became an expression of Serb nationalism. Galus becomes a caricature of the Mlada Bosnia--an "amorphous nationalist movement" supported by a young, typically unemployed, intelligentsia whose inclination towards radical terrorism can be explained partly because "they had no vested interest in the *status quo* and partly because they knew at firsthand the plight of the masses."⁹³ The growth of this dispossessed class of student-peasants fosters the establishment of nationalist terrorist groups including the Black Hand--the group responsible for the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914. Interestingly, Andric's normal allusion to the bridge as silent observer to all of mankind's transient squabbles is notably subdued after this argument, suggesting that the rift between the townspeople can no longer simply be washed away with the continuous progression of time. Kokobobo notes how the antiquated spectacles of punishment and torture have given way to a more modern and "insidious form of violence—a type of violence that is directed at objects and buildings rather than people...[which] leaves a deeper mark on the novel."⁹⁴

When Austrian forces invade Serbia in response to the assassination, they are unexpectedly trounced by the Serbian defenders and must destroy sections of the bridge to prevent the risk of counter invasion. We experience the destruction of the bridge through the eyes of Alihodja, the last surviving member of the family entrusted to be the bridge's caretakers. Unable to fathom the destruction of seemingly eternal foundations of reality, the Hodja unbelievably despairs how humanity

⁹² Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 32: Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1908-1914," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

⁹³ Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 461-63.

⁹⁴ Ani Kokobobo, "To Grieve or Not to Grieve? The Unsteady Representation of Violence in Ivo Andric's *The Bridge on the Drina*," In *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 21(1): 69-86, 2007, Print, 84.

"had begun to attack even the strongest and most lasting of things, to take thing away even from God...Who Knows? Perhaps this impure infidel faith that puts everything in order, cleans everything, repairs and embellishes everything only in order suddenly and violently to demolish and destroy might spread through the whole world; it might make of all God's world an empty field for its senseless building and criminal destruction, a pasturage for its insatiable hunger and incomprehensible demands?"⁹⁵

Writing in Belgrade during WWII, Andric dually comments on both the coming storm of the First World War and the current horrors of the second. Importantly, while the coming conflict takes its steep toll of blood from the Balkan states, it also sees the destruction of the three primary players in Balkan politics: Imperial Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. None of these three "eternal empires" survive with the same form, yet the Balkan states endure--like waters under Andric's Drina.

⁹⁵ Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, Trans. Lovett F. Edwards, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1977, Print, 313-14.

Chapter Four

Let Our English Guests Judge: West, Kaplan and the Ancient Poem

In the prologue of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, Rebecca West claims that before her travels, violence was all she knew of the Balkans and the South Slavs informed, in part, by "the prejudices of the French, who use the word '*Balkan*' as a term of abuse, meaning a *rastaquouere* type of barbarian."⁹⁶ Indeed, before West's extensive memoir, the Western reader had virtually no positive representation of the peninsula and its people. In addition to the widespread critiques of their ancient cultural "backwardness," some accounts, while perhaps well intentioned, ultimately facilitate a patronizing tone that merely laments the loss of the simple Balkan peasant.

Writing in 1904, traveler Herbert Vivian deems the Serb peasant to be unprepared for democracy and predicts that "much painful experience will be necessary to prepare them," and, not wishing to witness the potential complications, he admits: "I prefer to remember them as I have known them--admirable survivors of the age of chivalry."⁹⁷ Todorova notes how "in Western balkanist discourse, the disdain for the Balkans did not originate in its medieval, undeveloped, primitive nature...what the West loathed to see was not its self-image from the dawn of humanity, but its image only a few generations ago."⁹⁸ Where other writers see lack and imitation, West sees depth and uniqueness; her unqualified love for the region propels the text forward and takes the tone of a perceptive and privileged insider drawing upon her knowledge and experience to "read" the Balkans to a Western audience. The work's combination of travelogue, cultural-historical critique, and personal confession, marks a noteworthy departure and improvement from previous accounts and offers an intriguing snapshot of the political

⁹⁶ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 23.

⁹⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 41.

⁹⁸ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 41.

climate just prior to the outset of World War II. Amateur cultural historians in their own right, West and her husband's combination of traveling observation and historical glosses allows the reader to continually contextualize and reinterpret their conclusions—as long as he or she possesses a firm enough understanding of the region's history not to simply take the Wests at their word. Conversely, Robert Kaplan's overreliance on poetical exhortations serves to mask the complexities of regional history and ascribes an essential aesthetic for each Balkan state he encounters. To gauge West and Kaplan's treatment of history demands at least a general conception of the political changes between the first and second World Wars.

After the era-shattering violence of the First World War, the great powers recognized the need for a union of the South Slav states, yet as with the imperialist designs of the preceding century, there was great confusion and contestation on just what form this new state should take. The elimination of the region's historical power brokers did little to simplify the conflict. The Axis aligned Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires disintegrated, and Imperial Russia was entirely preoccupied by its own ideological revolution and civil war. The Serbians sought to take advantage of this moment of social upheaval to quickly establish "a centralized Serbian nation-state under strong royal control by declaring prince Aleksandr Karadjordjeic king-regent."⁹⁹ Many of the more democratic and federalist supporting Croats, and Slovenes, however, greatly resented the movement towards a Serb-centered national identity "who in their minds were cultural inferiors, whose royal house stemmed from glorified, illiterate pig farmers [Karageorge] a century earlier."¹⁰⁰

By 1930, the Serbian forces under Aleksandr were able to establish a military dictatorship and outlawed any oppositional Croatian parties. Hupchick observes that "out of that

⁹⁹ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 36: Yugoslavia, 1929-1941," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

¹⁰⁰ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 36: Yugoslavia, 1929-1941," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2.

situation arose among the Croats an extremely radical, ultranationalist terrorist organization--the [Ustasha] which forged close relations with outside Hungarian and Italian fascist leaders and internal Bulgaro-Macedonian terrorists."¹⁰¹ Such circular political currents almost validate Andric's vision of history as continually passing underneath a fixed bridge, for we witness how the same sort of political discrimination and thwarted national aspirations that gave rise to the Serbian Black Hand also fuel the equally radical anti-Serb terrorists of the Ustasha. In similar fashion to the death of Franz Ferdinand, a Macedonian terrorist with Ustasha backing successfully assassinates the new King of Yugoslavia in 1934 while Aleksandr was visiting Marseilles on a diplomatic mission. Since the assassination was captured on film, its dramatization for both propaganda and entertainment purposes signals yet another chapter of Western journalism constructing the region as politically violent. Confronted with the death of their king and increasing pressure from Nazi Germany, the Yugoslav state grants the rights to an autonomous Croatia that was to be comprised of "27 per cent [sic] of the territory of Yugoslavia and 29 per cent of the population[.]"¹⁰² This agreement is signed two weeks prior to the invasion of Poland, essentially guaranteeing the impossibility of a stable Yugoslavian resistance front. Therefore, it is on the eve of another World War in 1937 that Rebecca West makes her famed six-week trip to Yugoslavia.

As a narrator, West refuses to spare punches--whether criticizing the ignorance of a maid or the sexual lives of the nobility, she always seems ready to reveal her keen mind. The author remains pointedly consistent in her criticisms of Western imperialism, claiming "it is certain that the Balkans lost more from contact with all modern empires than they ever gained..[the Balkans]

¹⁰¹ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 36: Yugoslavia, 1929-1941," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

¹⁰² Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 461-63.

belonged to the sphere of tragedy, and Empire cannot understand the tragic."¹⁰³ West, on the other hand, becomes deeply enamored with this nearly overwhelming sense of tragedy--the centuries of massacres and betrayed kings, the Skull Tower of Nis and the Kosovo Plain. West utilizes these cultural images to construct her largely symbolic and allegorical approach to Yugoslavian history that continues to inspire and irritate many contemporary Balkan scholars.

Far from rejecting her skills as a writer, the majority of criticisms seem to be directed at the text's preeminence amongst occidental readers and the assumption that to read the work is to unequivocally comprehend the Balkans. In her review of West's work, Cynthia Simmons observes that on account of it being a deeply personal and philosophic memoir, readers must realize that in addition to West being "singularly unqualified to write with any authority on Yugoslavia...[the work] is, in any case, more about Rebecca West than it is about the country."¹⁰⁴ Somewhat ironically, the poetic lure and perceptiveness of West's work actually becomes one of the greatest risks for the Western reader. If we too readily accept her observations as historical truth, we no longer retain the necessary rhetorical distance to regard the work in its proper context: an invaluable window into the mind of an occidental traveler of the Balkans and the cultural atmosphere of World War II, but one heavily influenced by the author's politically British-liberal positioning.

While the railway signals the beginning of the end of Andric's narrative, the train marks the genesis of West's second Balkan excursion. As her train makes its way into Zagreb, West prepares to meet her four guides: Constantine a Jewish-Serb poet who recognizes the need for a unified Balkan state, Valetta an anti-Yugoslavian Croat federalist, and Gregorievitch who deems Yugoslavia to be the kingdom of heaven on earth. Similar to the quarreling youths in Andric's

¹⁰³ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 1095.

¹⁰⁴ Cynthia, Simmons, "Baedeker Barbarism: Rebecca West's Black Lamb and Grey Falcon and Robert Kaplan's Balkan Ghosts," *Human Rights Review*, 2 1 (2000): 109. Print, 111.

tale, these four acquaintances are divided by their interpretations of both past and future: "They are standing in the rain, and they are all different and they are all the same. They greet us warmly, and in their hearts they cannot greet each other, and they dislike us a little because it is to meet us that they are standing beside their enemies in the rain."¹⁰⁵ Constantine, in particular, becomes the primary travel companion and interpreter for West and a large part of the narrative is shaped by her interactions with this "passionate poet" and his wife Gerda. The animosity between the guides occasionally overrides the conventions of hospitality, and when a disagreement arises between Valetta and Gregorievitch over the virtues of West meeting one "Mr. Y.," the latter grimly states "Let our English guests judge."

In a sense, this passing comment serves as a fitting title for the majority of travel literature on the Balkans. Faced with impassioned disputes exacerbated by the imperialist policies of the great powers, most Balkan travelers seek to slash through the Gordian knot and uncover the objective reality that they consider the subjective South Slavs to be too blinded by hatred to see. To her credit, West distances herself from this approach by constantly reminding the reader that her information is supplied through several different levels of interpretation. Her efforts in describing the character of Constantine in such depth stops the poet from serving the same narrative function of the stereotypical "native guide" typical of many travelogues whose critical authority is almost never questioned by the author. Of particular interest is West's method of propelling arguments by her observations of her fellow travelers. Recalling Lisle's traveler/tourist distinction, West constantly positions herself as a foil to her fellow Europeans. Once overhearing a German woman commenting of the terrible quality of Yugoslavian food, West's claims to the contrary fall on unconvinced ears: "They all sat, nodding and rocking, entranced by a vision of the warm goodness of German life, the warm goodness of German food

¹⁰⁵ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 45.

and of German superiority to all non-German barbarity."¹⁰⁶ The fact that West edited her text during the Nazi's Blitz on London undoubtedly colors her judgments, and she establishes Constantine's domineering wife, Gerda, as the epitome of all that is wrong with the right wing faction of European mentality.

The time devoted to her conflicts with, and general dislike of, Gerda would appear petty if the reader does not realize how West uses Constantine's relationship with his German wife as an allegory and critique of Balkan self-sacrifice. The slow progression of the free spirited Constantine's (Yugoslavia) paralyzing self-hatred from the shadow of Gerda's (Germany) love for fascist concrete parallels how the Slav may succumb to delusions of inferiority when compared to the European powers. Disapproving of Gerda's behavior during an excursion, West comments that when she and her husband showed any admiration for Serbian things "Gerda behaved as if we were letting her down and betraying some standards which we should have held in common: as an exceptionally stupid Englishman might behave in India to tourists who showed an interest in native art of philosophy."¹⁰⁷ While Gerda finds West's preoccupation with the Slavs degrading, the latter finds the former's appreciation of the German war memorial at Bitolj (Macedonia) equally repugnant: "It is the only war cemetery I have ever seen that is offensive; and it is doubly offensive, for it insults both the country where it stands and the unhappy soldiers who are crammed pell-mell inside it..."¹⁰⁸ In her characteristic wit, West's "doubly offensive" serves as a double pun, for the memorial is not only offensive to both nations but is also designed in the likeness of a fortified bastion of invasion, clearly showing the German sentiment towards the region.

¹⁰⁶ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 497.

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 762.

Claire Colquitt draws a similar conclusion in a study of West's ideological rivalry with Gerda, but furthers the argument by claiming that West's allegorical connection was not so much a method for awakening Yugoslavia from its plight, but to warn her English countrymen not to submit to a poetic slaughter. Colquitt recognizes the motif of the sleeping man, and by extension the sleeping nation, to be one of the central themes of the work, for "this image relates both to Yugoslavia's past--to the legend of Prince Lazar and his dream of the grey falcon--and to West's rhetorical purpose...to persuade her own people through Yugoslavia's example that they must strive to stave off the sleep of death which would both induce and follow Nazi conquest."¹⁰⁹ While West laments the emasculation of her friend and the pointless slaughter/sacrifice of the black lamb, she comments far more positively when Serbian suffering was born out of armed resistance: "There has been no fighting in our time that has had the romantic quality of the Balkan wars that broke out in 1912. The Serbians rode southwards radiant as lovers...[the negative judgments of the West] mattered nothing to these dedicated troops, wrapped in their rich and tragic dream."¹¹⁰ Again in World War One, West praises the Serbian armies "as the spear-head of the Allied forces" who drive the "Germans back to a land which was not land...which had lost all its characteristics, save that discontent which springs of conceiving poems too formless and violent ever to be written. The more poetic nation [Serbia] was in Belgrade thirteen days before the Armistice."¹¹¹

As a method for creating travel literature, Rebecca West combines detailed description and personal perception with a commendable dedication to historical explication. The poetic quality of her text also forms one of the major reasons for its continued praise from the literary community, yet overly aestheticized exhortations without a firm historical contextualization can

¹⁰⁹ Colquitt, Clare, "A Call to Arms: Rebecca West's Assault on the Limits of "Gerda's Empire" in "Black Lamb and Grey Falcon"," *South Atlantic Review* 51 2 (1986): 77-91, Print, 78.

¹¹⁰ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 576.

¹¹¹ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia*, New York: Penguin Books, 2007, Print, 587.

result in serious complications as evidenced by Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. A traveler and war correspondent, Robert Kaplan considered his work, published in 1993, to be a spiritual successor to West and terms *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as the greatest travel, book of the century.¹¹² Deserving or not, Kaplan's work will forever be tied with President Clinton's decision not to intervene in the Bosnian War after the president was alleged to have read the text—a fact which the author terms as "disconcerting."¹¹³

Cynthia Simmons argues that the problem largely stems from the common reader often confusing the work as written by a Balkan expert and it "would have caused less damage if the author had revealed that his position was not that of the serious journalist conveying a 'news report,' but that of the travel journalist, writing to express his opinions, and perhaps, to entertain."¹¹⁴ In his revised forward, Kaplan personally places the blame on the reader's own lack of context, as "books, travel books in particular, are not so much misread as misused...for example, Nietzsche is a dangerous philosopher in the hands of an autodidact or a crank, but in the hands of a well-read student of philosophy Nietzsche is beneficial."¹¹⁵ Undoubtedly, any reader investigating an unfamiliar topic should investigate a variety of voices and representations before forming a consensus, yet Kaplan's failure more pointedly lies within his tendency to prioritize poetic style over historical substance without clearly indicating this fact to his readers. Therefore, to properly contextualize Kaplan's travelogue requires at least a general historical understanding of the Axis occupation and formation of Tito's Yugoslavia.

After the assassination of Aleksandr I, the Axis powers invaded the Balkans and created an enlarged autonomous Croatian state that incorporated Bosnia-Herzegovina while axis agents

¹¹² Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 1.

¹¹³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, X.

¹¹⁴ Cynthia, Simmons, "Baedeker Barbarism: Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*," *Human Rights Review* 2 1 (2000): 109, Print, 115.

¹¹⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, XXX.

directly controlled the remaining sections of Yugoslavia. Led by Ante Pavelich, the Ustashi determined that there was no place for the Serbs in "New Croatia" and "accordingly set out to exterminate one portion of the Serbian population and to force the remainder to become Croatians"¹¹⁶ by forced conversion to Catholicism. Stavrianos observes how "the [Bosnian] Moslems joined in the massacres, so that Yugoslavia was rent by a virtual religious war with Catholics and Moslems allied against the Orthodox and the Jews."¹¹⁷ Serbian resistance movements were divided between the communist partisans commanded by Josip Broz Tito and Mihalovic's Serbian nationalist chetniks.¹¹⁸ The allies' economic and material support of Tito's partisans to fight the fascists inadvertently opened the door for Soviet occupation once Romania defected to the allies towards the end of the war.¹¹⁹ Like many cult-of-personality dictators, Tito enforced his vision of a united Yugoslavia with the dual hand of social engineering and a ruthless police state apparatus.

Despite their similarly frightening methods of maintaining state-control, the relationship between Tito and Stalin was anything but ideal. The ambitious Yugoslavs, sought to expand their current holdings to form a "Balkan Federation" that would absorb Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece. While the plan had its merits, it also provoked the growing conflict between the American and Soviet superpowers, and Judt observes that "Tito's combination of Yugoslav irredentism and partisan revolutionary fervour was thus a growing embarrassment to Stalin."¹²⁰ Isolated from the Soviets, Tito retained power in the ethnically and religiously diverse state largely by continually pitting the different groups against each other to ensure none grew powerful enough to threaten his personal control. His death in 1980, coupled with perestroika

¹¹⁶ Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 772.

¹¹⁷ Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, Print, 772.

¹¹⁸ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 44: The Axis-Dominated Balkans, 1941-1944," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

¹¹⁹ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 44: The Axis-Dominated Balkans, 1941-1944," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

¹²⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print, 142.

and the gradual thawing of the Eastern Bloc, meant that the factionalized nationalisms of the Yugoslav state once again sought to reassert themselves. Fueled in part by loosing restrictions on the intelligentsia who desired a return to the pre-war nationalism, public sentiment amongst the Balkan states opened the way for political thugs, such as Slobodan Milosevic, to fill the power vacuum by exacerbating ethnic tensions.¹²¹

Sharing a similar publication history with West's text, Kaplan's work was completed just prior to the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars, but was not published until 1993 when the conflict was well underway. Kaplan himself notices, and perhaps promotes, the connections between the works: [West] came to Yugoslavia to investigate the nature of the looming cataclysm, just as I came to investigate the nature of another looming cataclysm."¹²² With renewed interest in the region due to increased media coverage, Srebrenica and Karadzic became household names in the early 90s just as the revolutions of early 2011 did for Benghazi and Gaddafi. Thus, citizens and politicians alike who wished to find out "just what was going on" in these strangely named Balkan lands would find Kaplan's accessible, and admittedly enjoyable, book and develop mindsets that shaped American foreign policy.

While Rebecca West crafts her journey across the Balkans through allegory and observations of her fellow travelers, Kaplan is heavily influenced by Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*, specifically Canetti's notion of the "Crowd Symbol." The Bulgarian born Canetti, who spent most of his life in Britain, was fascinated by the psychological theory of nations, as Kaplan demonstrates: "Canetti said the crowd symbol for the English is the "sea...The Englishman's disasters have been experienced at sea...His life at home is complementary to his life at sea;

¹²¹ Dennis P. Hupchick, and Harold E. Cox, "Map 49: Wars of Yugoslav Succession, 1991-1995," in *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of The Balkans*. New York: Palgrave, 2001, Print, 1-2

¹²² Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 8.

security and monotony are its essential characteristics..."¹²³ In this schema every culture is reduced to its essential poetic symbol "for the Germans, the crowd symbol is the '*marching forest.*' For the French, it is '*their revolution.*' For the Jews, it is 'Exodus from Egypt...[,]"¹²⁴ and Kaplan laments the fact that Canetti never deemed to create a crowd symbol for the Balkans.

West's image of the slaughtered black lamb and the grey falcon as an allegory for Balkan/Christian self-sacrifice arguably serves as her crowd symbol for the Balkans, yet her method of reaching that image by a detailed examination of history and observations still requires the reader to make these connections in his or her own mind. Kaplan takes a mirrored approach, however, by making history the more subjective ingredient while clearly suggesting an essential aesthetic for each Balkan nation. For the Serbs, Kaplan observes "two pillars of fire that define their national attitude and historical predicament...the *medieval monasteries*, safe-boxes of art and magic, most powerfully symbolized by Grachanitsa, due to its proximity to the other (and taller) pillar: *Kosovo Polje*, the "Field of Black Birds..."¹²⁵ Both the defeat at Kosovo, and the legacy of Byzantine Orthodoxy remain an extremely critical part of Serbian identity, yet Kaplan's reductive certainty inexorably connects an entire people to a poetic cycle of self-destruction, hatred, and violence.

In his prologue, Kaplan expands this grim prognosis to encompass the entire peninsula. Writing to an occidental audience, fresh from the fall of the Soviet Union with little to no knowledge of the Balkan states, he stresses that the history of the 20th century stemmed from the Balkans. Importantly, Kaplan is not referring to the advancement of technology, or the collapse of socio-ideological borders, but he rather pinpoints the region as the origin of all the social evils of Western modernity: "Here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming

¹²³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 16.

¹²⁴ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 16.

¹²⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 35.

them to hate. Here politics has been reduced to a level of near anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed up the Danube in Central Europe."¹²⁶ (At last we have found the culprits!--the ancient Slavic hatreds that are so primal and complete that they sometimes infect the glories of the Western culture). The repetition of the "here" to describe the violence of the Balkans reaffirms in the reader's mind the existence of a "there"--namely the civilized West, but the author never questions, as Bishop does, the implications of this distinction

While trying to convey the importance of the Balkans to the global community, Kaplan at best unwittingly ascribes full blame to the Peninsula for all the ills of the previous century. In this interpretation, World War One no longer stands as a complex example of the competing imperial interests of Western empires, but another example of the world being dragged down the whirlpool of Balkan violence. Since Kaplan establishes this concept from the beginning, Todorova claims, "it is only one step from here to the flat assertion that even World War II can be blamed on the Balkans."¹²⁷ Indeed, he takes this leap--suggesting that "Nazism, for instance, can claim Balkan origins. Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously."¹²⁸ Kaplan's reliance on aestheticized crowd symbols serves as a clear warning sign to travel writers and introduces the complications inherent in creating representations without questioning the quagmire of authenticity and who should possess the authority to speak. On the one hand, Kaplan's project may be seen as an earnest example of the occidental middle class attempting to interpret the simulacra of other cultures with politically charged images, or crowd symbols, that are easier to comprehend. On the other, Lisle references the Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah, who criticizes Kaplan's comparable treatment of African violence in the latter's *The Ends of the*

¹²⁶ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, li.

¹²⁷ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Print, 119.

¹²⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, li.

Earth, stressing that the work's "mask of ideological neutrality must be exposed, and its influence on American foreign policy traced...Kaplan's work *must* be interrogated for its explicit ideological bias and its complicity in recent American foreign-policy decisions."¹²⁹

Due to a general deficiency of knowledge regarding Balkan history in the West, the travel writer not only constructs the region how he or she imagines it, but their imagination directly influences the perception of their audience until the representations become perverse forms of West's objective realities that are subsequently reified through international interventionist policies. The problem present in Kaplan's writing has less to do with the author's skills of perception than it does its illusion of objective certainty; in nearly every instance, Kaplan seems to solve the riddle presented by each warring state and reduce its experience to a singular image. Staring at the painted eyes of Bulgarian icons at the Aleksandar Nevski Memorial, for example, he notes how "every emotion was contained in them, but above all, they conveyed the sense of holding back, of guarding a secret. That was the Bulgarian crowd symbol...the Byzantine icon, a world of surging passion that contained a deep secret."¹³⁰

For strictly fictionalized and poeticized representations, the Balkan Peninsula stands as a deep and dark well where the civilized face of the occidental traveler can peer in to witness his or her own distorted and shadow laden visage. Its people are not moral agents, or repeated victims of imperial exploitation, but subaltern caricatures whose superstitious hatreds painfully remind us of our own propensity for wickedness. Lacking either Bishop's self-critical eye, or West's dedication to historical explication, Kaplan's style of travel writing continues to draw the ire of the scholarly community; however, due to its widespread proliferation in American media, the

¹²⁹ Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Print, 163.

¹³⁰ Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005, Print, 213.

text must be examined by any Balkan reader--if only to acquire a better sense of how the majority of Western readers/writers imagine and perpetuate areas of contestation.

Chapter Five

The Occidental Man's Burden: Joe Sacco and the Crisis of Humanitarian Witnessing

Recalling the sharp scholarly responses to *Balkan Ghosts* would cause most writers to seriously question their ability to comment on foreign regions without inadvertently participating in the codification of cultural stereotypes. When humanitarian concerns are involved, however, such as the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Bosniaks by the Serb Chetniks during the Bosnian War, silence is not always an option. In her article "Documenting Violations: Rhetorical Witnessing and the Spectacle of Distant Suffering," Wendy Hesford argues this "*crisis of witnessing...[refers] to the risks of representing trauma and violence, ruptures in identification, and the impossibility of empathetic merging between witness and testifier, listener, and speaker.*"¹³¹ Certainly, the preservation of testimonials regarding genocide, rape, and human tragedies must be preserved as evidence so that the perpetrators may be brought to justice, yet these inevitably "include the problem of the privileged speaking *for* rather than *with* the oppressed, thereby situating oneself as an authenticating presence, and the assumption that the subject can speak only for herself, a stance that ignores how rhetorical conventions and discursive systems shape the construction of subjectivity and agency."¹³²

Hesford also references the documentary *Calling the Ghosts*, which tells the story of two Bosniak women who were victims of the infamous Serbian detention centers that function as large-scale rape camps. One of the women notes how "journalists and TV crews would come, always with the same question: 'Are there any women here who were raped?' I mean, as if one could possibly divide women between those who were raped and those who weren't. As if they

¹³¹ Wendy S Hesford, "Documenting Violations: Rhetorical Witnessing and the Spectacle of Distant Suffering[1]," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 27.1 (2004): 104-144. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO, Web, 19 Feb. 2011, 107. <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?hid=11&sid=03997557-de9f-42da-b16c-2a2587977099%40sessionmgr15&vid=2>

¹³² *Ibid*, 107-08.

were in some sort of display."¹³³ Acknowledging that stories and images of tragic human suffering sell rather well makes the dividing tensions between humanitarian representation and voyeuristic fetishism thinner than most would realize.

Joe Sacco's intriguing journalistic travel narrative, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, written in the form of a graphic novel, latches on to this tension between representation and consumption and never lets go. From the outset, Sacco retains a critical eye on himself and his fellow reporters sent to cover the UN designated Safe Area of Gorazde. Overhearing one American correspondent wishing Gorazde "would go away," Sacco acknowledges the celebrity like treatment of the journalists by the citizens, as if only the presence of western media could validate the town's existence as a reality. Sadly, when speaking of Western imagination this is not far from the case, as Sacco realizes: "Gorazde which was getting CNNed! NPRed! BBCed! But its proverbial 15 minutes were ticking away! Pretty soon no one was gonna remember Gorazde! Gora-wuh? Hunh? We didn't have a moment to lose!"¹³⁴ Just as Rebecca West clearly designates Constantine as her guide and interpreter, Sacco finds his guide through the math teacher Edin who remains a persistent character throughout the narrative, but Sacco's text notably differs from either West's or Kaplan's travelogues in that it largely consists of the narratives of the town's local inhabitants rather than privileged insiders with connections to local government. Admittedly, Sacco's text almost exclusively records the stories of Bosniaks--the clearly portrayed victims in western media—framing his story to encompass primarily the experience of the Bosnian-Muslim. With his journalism, Sacco serves the same

¹³³ Wendy S Hesford, "Documenting Violations: Rhetorical Witnessing and the Spectacle of Distant Suffering[1]," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 27.1 (2004): 104-144. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO, Web, 19 Feb. 2011, 123. <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?hid=11&sid=03997557-de9f-42da-b16c-2a2587977099%40sessionmgr15&vid=2>

¹³⁴ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 6.

narrative function for the survivors of Gorazde as the monks who craft *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*: namely, preserving and celebrating the experiences of each survivor he encounters.

The perfect preservation of detailed horrors becomes problematic ethically, however, when Sacco is exposed to "Gorazde's own Most Horrifying Home Videos, amateur footage of shells coming in, animals split open, children sheared in two by anti-aircraft cannon, legs getting sawn off without anesthetic..."¹³⁵ Sacco sketches himself and his colleague as visibly disgusted at the display, however, they are unable to turn away while the video's owner emphatically declares "You must look! You Must Look! She was a Serb!...You Must see This!...Look! Look!..You Must Look!"¹³⁶ Realizing that she could use the tape for Turkish television, Sacco's colleague Serif offers to buy the video only for the man to demand a price "so outrageous that it seemed to disgust Serif as much as all those full-color images of the dismembered and the disemboweled."¹³⁷ The acquisition of these "home movies" and images for the sake of international consumption via news media is only part of the opportunistic displays of journalism that Sacco observes as most journalists in Gorazde "needed their journalism now, for the top of the hour, and a few weren't above inducing some quickie action themselves. Angry townsfolk told stories of photographers throwing candy at kids to capture the predicable mad scramble."¹³⁸

From an international standpoint, the Clinton administration required such shocking media representations of crying mothers and men starving in camps in order to muster enough public support to legitimize military intervention. After all, it was only after the massacre in the UN safe zone at Srebrenica of over 7,000 Muslim men and boys by Bosnian-Serb forces underneath the auspice a 400 man contingent of Dutch peacekeepers that president Clinton approved airstrikes to limit the Serbia's military capabilities and paved the way for the signing of

¹³⁵ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 120.

¹³⁶ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 120.

¹³⁷ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 120.

¹³⁸ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 131.

the Dayton Accords "in Paris on December 14th, 1995."¹³⁹ Memories of both the Bosnian War and the Rwandan Genocide casts serious doubts on the UN proclaimed role as international peacekeepers. Ostensibly, the United Nation's role in international conflicts continues to adopt the tone of "leveling the playing field" to prevent humanitarian catastrophes while preserving the right to national self-determination; in practice, this international refereeing often results in heavily armed and funded occidental observers witnessing the murder of helpless thousands a few hundred yards away. According to Judt, UN soldiers were historically "introduced into war-torn regions and countries to secure and keep a peace: but in Yugoslavia there was as yet no peace to keep, and there existed neither the will nor the means to bring it about on the ground."¹⁴⁰

Defending a people whose history they do not understand causes frustrations even amongst the UN commanders, as Sacco cites the British Lt. General Michael Rose telling the stationed British peacekeepers that the Bosnians "think that we should be fighting the war for them...How the hell did they let tanks down that route? One Bloke with a crowbar could have stopped that tank. I think they basically turned and ran, and left us to try and pick up the pieces for them."¹⁴¹ After experiencing the carnage of the bombardment that force him to amputate on children with kitchen knives and no anesthesia, the Bosnian Dr. Begovic disagrees with the generals assertion: "I can't understand why the rest of the world hasn't intervened more forcefully. The U.N. is always pointing out its neutrality, even now. Neutral in what? In a slaughter of lambs by the wolves?"¹⁴² Throughout the text, UN peacekeepers continually bemoan the Bosniaks inability to defend themselves, yet always ignoring the UN Security Council's mandated arms embargo to the former Yugoslavia that had little effect on the Serbian

¹³⁹ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 678.

¹⁴⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 676.

¹⁴¹ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 186-87.

¹⁴² Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 125.

forces but drastically hindered the ability of the Bosnian-Muslim forces to counter the Chetnik's offensives.

As an American journalist, Sacco realizes that his symbolic presence in Gorazde often far surpasses his physical self, yet also sardonically records how he himself participates in this conception: "Sometimes in Gorazde I basked in the certainty that I'd descended from a higher place where the streets were paced with orthodontic equipment and the dental floss flowed like wine."¹⁴³ Once drinking with Edin and some colleagues in a bar, Sacco is confronted by a Mister F. who demands to know in broken English why the journalist has come to Bosnia: "America man thinks Bosnia man primitive. Journal-ist...Why you come? Money? I think--Srebrenica. I become Angry. Very angry. Six thousand killed Srebrenica. What you think mister? Mister? You don't write for Srebrenica."¹⁴⁴ Underneath the barrage of the drunken man's questions, Sacco tries to melt in the corner of the bar, and admits in his text his own frustrations and annoyance with the constant unpleasantness: "I wanted Edin to intervene, Whit to notice...I wanted out, out of there...I wanted to put a hundred thousand miles between me and Bosnia, between men and these horrible disgusting people and their fucking wars and pathetic prospects..."¹⁴⁵ Here is the rub within the humanitarian witness, who comes conflicted regions with the best intentions and perception of being part of the solution. Immensely cynical of the apogee of empire, the politically conscious occidental writer desires to be loved and recognized by the subaltern as different from the consumers and practitioners of colonial empire, reiterating their need for the traveler/tourist distinction.

With the realization that such national complexities cannot be solved by merely being "a very pleasant fellow[.]" even the most liberal occidental dispositions reveal their own

¹⁴³ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 190.

¹⁴⁴ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 192.

¹⁴⁵ Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95*, Fantagraphics Books, 2000, Print, 192.

frustrations at not being properly appreciated as “the good guys.” Sacco’s inclusion of this moment does not diminish his credibility as a reader of the Balkans; on the contrary, his honest self-admission of his own cultural biases forces the western reader to confront his or her own preconceptions about the Balkans and remain conscious of the linger colonial conceptions that continue to influence our representations. In response to Becky Bradway’s interview regarding his work *Palestine*, Sacco explains that his “drawn character in the panels reminds the reader that this is one person’s perspective on the issue. It is the drawn equivalent of the pronoun “I.” My work isn’t objective, and that’s the visual tip-off.”¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, Sacco’s spectacled character never directly reveals his eyes—they are always hidden beneath the opaque circular rims of his glasses. This further advertises his own otherness within Gorazde, as a character that becomes deeply involved with, but never full belonging to, the worlds he observes.

¹⁴⁶ Becky Bradway and Douge Hesse, *Creating Nonfiction: A Guide and Anthology*, New York: Bedford/St. Marin’s, 2009, 665.

Conclusion

Judt comments that the horrors of the Yugoslav Wars were committed by “Serb men, mostly young, aroused to paroxysms of casual hatred and indifference to suffering by propaganda and leadership from local chieftains whose ultimate direction and power came from Belgrade.”¹⁴⁷ In their attempts to fill the power vacuum left by Tito’s death, Slobodan Milosevic and others incited and exacerbated racial hatred to acquire political power. The journalistic representations of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia by knife and cudgel continue to paint the perception the peninsula as inherently, and irredeemably violent. This preconception, however, ignores the political processes of history and how the imperialist policies of the great powers often nurtured and fed these hostilities for their own gain.

While the Western world continues to follow the political developments of the Middle East, we cannot allow ourselves to once again ignore the Balkans. With German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s recent declaration of the failure of “multikulti”¹⁴⁸ and increasing tensions amongst EU nations and immigrant workers, it remains to be seen just how “Europe proper” shall receive its “South Eastern” cousins. The EU’s primary function as a stabilizing and peacekeeping institution will face immediate challenges with the smoldering territorial disputes within Kosovo and Macedonia that already seems to be pushing Serbia back within the political orbit of Russia.

The Peninsula’s influence on international politics will only continue to grow in the coming decade, and as increased interaction between East and West Europe presents its own dangers and rewards, occidental observers must develop a historically trained analytical eye. In doing so, they can hopefully resist the pseudo-historical and cultural constructions that convey

¹⁴⁷ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: Penguin Press, 2005, Print 685.

¹⁴⁸ “Merkel Says German Multicultural Society has Failed,” *BBC Online*, Web, 10 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11559451>

unjustly negative representations of the Balkan states without reductively ascribing a “definitive” and static meaning. By learning from the successes and mistakes of previous travel writers from West to Sacco, we can approach an understanding the complex and rich culture of a vital world region without participating in the same practices of cultural colonialism that aggravated the social, ethnic and religious divisions of the modern day Balkan states.

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