The Ghost of the Balkans:

Defining and Deconstructing “Balkanism”

by

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BA (Honours), Simon Fraser University, 2019

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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Abstract

Whenever the Balkans becomes a topic of conversation or of serious political and intellectual discussion, the narrative always moves towards the apocalyptic and genocidal collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Out of the bloody fighting, and through incessant reporting on the destruction and civilian tragedy, emerged a particular image which came to pervade all understandings of the region. This is the image of the Balkans as a land of irrational violent passions, through which romantic nationalism and "ancient ethnic hatreds" trumps all other modes of explanation, and within which no true semblance of Western civilization or modern democratic structures can flourish. In 1997 Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* identified this understanding as the concept of Balkanism, but the phenomenon reaches far before the 1990s and persists to this day. What this thesis attempts to do is undertake a proper analysis of the ways in which Balkanism permeates how the Balkan region is thought about and studied. It will also seek to reinscribe agency to Balkan scholars who across the 20th century have dealt with the depictions and study of the Balkans, and who might provide an answer to the quagmire of Balkanism. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to situate the malignant and colonial role of the West in constructing and reinforcing stereotypical and essentialist understandings of the Balkans. By establishing and calling to attention the role of the West in this way, it becomes possible to dismantle and shatter Balkanism as a pernicious force. Furthermore it becomes possible to exorcize the Balkans of the ghosts which, through popular narratives and works like Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*, have come to embody and haunt the Balkan region as a whole.

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Acknowledgements

When I set out to research my initial MA thesis my focus was decidedly narrower. Being raised as a Canadian Serb, my family valued multiculturalism and the social harmony of Yugoslavia, even if they detested its communism and the bloodshed which brought the whole system down. Fleeing the war in Bosnia, my mother's family looked back nostalgically but they never let the war define them. To this day we have relatives and strong family friends across the diaspora from every Yugoslav ethnicity and religious affiliation. My father left the old country when he was a teenager, and made the long dangerous trek alone across the Slovenian border into Austria back in the mid-1960s—back before the borders had relaxed somewhat and when he could have been shot for doing so. His exodus was part protest to what he saw as the corruption of the communist apparatus and part hope of a better future for himself and his family, if he ever saw them again. Suffice it to say that my home was a space of spirited debate about the good, the bad, and the ugly of what it meant to be Balkan. The understanding that the Balkans had been misunderstood by the West was engrained in me early on—as was the realization that Balkan history was far richer and more complex than it is commonly given credit for. These two twin factors would drive my initial approach towards my MA project, but I could have never imagined what it would turn into.

I had wanted to work on the rise and crystallization of nationalism in the Balkans around the turn of the 20 century. It had felt safer than touching the 1990s which was my real concern. As a Western raised Serb I was keenly aware of the potential ire I would raise from all sides as soon as I began to broach the subject of war crimes. As such I initially had my gaze fixed on the 1914 assassination which acted as the catalyst both for a world war, but also for an understanding of the Balkan region as perennially uncivilized. It seemed the safer option, removed from living memory as it was. However, the more I dove into depictions of the region, the more I became unsettled by how the Western gaze stereotyped the Balkans, and how the Balkans in turn reciprocated by internalizing those stereotypes. I remembered a book excerpt of Maria Todorova's 1997 *Imagining the Balkans* which Dr. James Horncastle at Simon Fraser University had assigned in an undergraduate class during the third year of my bachelor's degree. It was that course which planted the seeds of what this current project would grow into, although the earth had already been prepared by my upbringing. James would become my first mentor on the road towards pursuing an MA, and without his patience and guidance I would have never applied for graduate studies in the first place—nor would I have been able to conceive of academics as my life-long calling. For that, and for his continued friendship, I am grateful.

During the early period of my graduate studies at Uvic, while I was still struggling with where to focus my attention, I had the pleasure of interacting and working with several colleagues and professors who challenged me in diverse ways and helped me to center my project. I owe special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Vibert at Uvic for teaching me how to do historiography. I also owe a

great deal of thanks to Dr. Perry Biddiscombe, not only for being my second reader and helping with this thesis, but for offering an incredible course on nationalism at Uvic. Through that course, and the several long conversations we've had, I came to understand both the complexities of nationalism, but also the ways in which it intertwines with the phenomenon of Balkanism. It was armed with that realization that I made the pivot towards Balkanism as my focus, since without dealing with that conceptual elephant in the room there was little hope of producing a more specific project I could be satisfied with. The many discussions I've had with various professors and fellow students at Uvic have similarly enriched my project, and as such I thank them all heartily.

I would of course be remiss to leave out my supervisor, Dr. Serhy Yekelchyk. Serhy has been the second major academic mentor to have a profound impact on me and the way I do history. Through working with him on this thesis and various other projects, and by listening to him lecture about profoundly sensitive topics such as genocide, I came to be awed by not only his passion and sense of humour, but also the gravity and professionalism with which he practices his craft. No idea of mine, no matter how outlandish or unfeasible was dismissed or written off. When I was struggling to reorient my project he helped me reconceptualise what it was I needed to do. He looked over all of my proposals, ideas, and drafts with near-clinical precision and helped me produce a project I could be proud of. Even with everything that happened and is still happening in Ukraine, he found time to help me. I am eternally grateful to Serhy for everything he has done, and I look forward to working with him again in the near future.

The final acknowledgement I want to make is to my wife. Her patience and love, despite all of my late nights and long research and writing sessions, has been a source of much needed stability and an indescribable boon to me. I apologize to her in advance for the long slog that my future PhD dissertation promises to be.

To all those who I have not mentioned by name, you know who you are. I would never have been able to come this far without you.

Dedication

To my parents for raising me to appreciate all sides

To my wife for putting up with my shenanigans

And to my family and friends across the diaspora

Who always told fascinating stories about what it meant to be Balkan

Introduction
Assessing the *Ghost* in the Balkans

"Thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mothers' eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson. These are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history."[1]

When one thinks of the Balkans today, the apocalyptic and genocidal collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s dominates the discussion. The Bosnian War in particular has developed a reputation for exceptional barbarity given the mixed fraternal nature of the population, and especially with the use of rape as a frequently employed weapon. Srebrenica, the single largest mass killing of civilians during the Yugoslav Wars (with over 8,000 Bosniaks murdered in 10 days), and the horrific four-year-long Siege of Sarajevo are merely two events in a war that according to the UN claimed over 100,000 causalities, many civilian.[2] What happened at Srebrenica is undoubtedly a part of one of humanity's darkest chapters, and the response to it by UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) judge Fouad Riad is the quote this introduction began with.

Yet buried within discussions of barbarity and the balkanization of a region so close to Western Europe, is a pernicious spectre which colours all interpretations of the region. It is behind the ways in which the Western gaze penetrates into the Balkan Peninsula, and through which entire populations and histories are prematurely judged. This spectre is none other than Balkanism, the concept pioneered by Maria Todorova in her 1997 *Imagining the Balkans*. In the

[1] International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic accused of genocide following the take-over of Srebrenica," ICTY, November 16, 1995. https://www.icty.org/en/press/radovan-karadzic-and-ratko-mladic-accused-genocide-following-take-over-srebrenica Retrieved April 14, 2021.
[2] International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "ICTY: The Conflicts," ICTY. https://www.icty.org/sid/322 Retrieved April 14, 2021.

decades since modern Balkanism was coined by Todorova and received its initial academic definitions and contours a significant amount of work has been done on how exactly scholars are supposed to tackle the Balkans. In identifying Balkanism as a pernicious phenomenon which pervades all aspects of academic and popular cultural production, Todorova paid a debt to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, but nevertheless strove to distinguish Balkanism from it. Definitions over what does and does not constitute the Balkans persist, but for Todorova the geographic realities of the Balkan Peninsula make the Balkans far more real as a concept than Said's fictional Orient.

That the Balkans is real, yet nevertheless is subjected to a Westernizing gaze full of counter-productive stereotypes, is the problem. For modern studies of the Balkans, across disciplines and across the Western and non-Western world, easy explanations of "ancient ethnic hatreds" and "semi-European" natures are serious pitfalls. Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* is perhaps the most malicious example of Balkanism in action, but there are others. Throughout various points in history the Balkans has been seen as a "land of terror, fire, and sword."[3] From the regional violence that characterized travelogues and newspapers during the nineteenth century, to ethnic cleansing during the Balkan Wars (1912–13), the assassination that led to the Great War, and genocide during the World War II, the region has only added to its collection of spirits which haunt it. This is of course to say nothing of the horrors which categorized the 1990s, and which this introduction gave a small sample of.

That this introduction calls Balkanism a spectre, when Kaplan's own conceptualization refers to the region as plagued by ghosts is intentional. The job of the academic, having been made aware of Balkanism, is to assess and exorcize as many of these ghosts as possible. Doing

[3] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 117.

so however requires a deep understanding of the Balkanist framework, and especially of the role of the West within it. It is of course worth noting that utilizing terminology such as "the West" risks the exact sort of essentialization which Balkanism trades in and which even Said's *Orientalism* is accused of. This current project uses "the West" as one side of a binary and as a starting place from which to analyze stereotypes of the Balkans, but it also recognizes the dangers and pitfalls of this approach if done too uncritically. As such it remains the task of future projects and scholarship to break "the West" down in more nuanced ways to minimize this problem. For now the goal of this thesis is to provide a potential direction for the way out of the quagmire that is Balkanism, both for the scholar but also for public discourse. In pursuit of this goal this work will be separated into three broad chapters.

Chapter 1 will begin by fully introducing and defining Balkanism using Todorova's original definitions. Doing so will provide a solid foundation from which to understand how the Balkans has come to be seen in modern history, and how Balkanism has had a role to play in negative and pernicious stereotypes of the region. Within Chapter 1 the tenets of Balkanism will also be challenged and reinterpreted, often by local Balkan or Balkan-born scholars in order to refine its utility in modern discourse–especially where the question of EU integration is concerned. Chapter 2 will then explore the thoughts and contributions of prominent regional Balkan scholars from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Jovan Cvijić, Ivan Shishmanov, Boyan Penev, and Nicolae Iorga. This exercise will allow us to not only see the many ways in which the Balkans existed at the forefront of its own academic production and study, but how through significant innovation they influenced many of their Western contemporaries and might just be able to provide modern scholars with a clue on how to surpass Balkanism and the Balkanist binary. Chapter 2 will also entertain how these early scholarly ideas

interacted with developing constructions of nationalism within the region, using Serbia and Bosnia as a case study, and how this contributed to the modern understandings of Balkanism as they exist today. Part of this contemporary conceptualization of Balkanism will also require a further exploration in Chapter 2 of modern Balkanism as it is understood by Balkan scholars trying to make sense of the region today.

Finally Chapter 3 will seek to not only problematize and unravel Balkanism and the Balkanist binary, but to shatter it completely. This will require an exploration of what exactly constitutes the Balkanist binary today, and how postmodernism has served both as a deconstruction tool but also as a colonizing force to reinforce the Western gaze and ethos as the de facto orientation to strive towards. Postcolonial interpretations of the role and presence of the Western gaze will be explored in order to dismantle it for the malignant and uncritical force it is. In so doing Balkanism as it exists as an external force or pressure from the West will have its traditional self-assuredness stripped from it, allowing postmodernist understandings to apply equally to the West's colonial role in the Balkans as it has in the traditional postcolonial regions of Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia.

What will follow this final chapter is a conclusion bringing the issue of Balkanism into sharp relief with modern questions over European, and to larger extent Western, understandings of self. In a postmodern world where the Western ethos is meant to be challenged while simultaneously still existing as the purportedly best bastion of freedom and democracy which the world possess, Central and Eastern Europe refuses to play nice. Hungary and Poland have strongly resisted globalization and European (Western) integration, while Serbia remains outside of the EU. Russia's war in Ukraine is also still raging, and the question of civilizational divisions, between East and West, has never felt more pressing. What is hoped is that this work

allows for the Balkans, and specifically the battle with the concept of Balkanism itself, to also serve as a useful case study for how we can dismantle similar stereotypes and essentializing rhetoric aimed at other non-Western nations. However in the meantime all we can do is continue to exorcise the ghosts we hunt.

Chapter One
From Balkanism to Beyond: A Historiography of Modern Balkanist Discourse

Introduction

Balkanism as a term has had many colloquial and political uses throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Most recent definitions have to do with ideas of the cannibalistic fragmentation of states, better known as balkanization. As a term describing the phenomenon of how the Balkans is *perceived*, it owes its origins to Maria Todorova's 1997 *Imagining the Balkans*.[4] In that monumental work Todorova seeks to develop more concrete definitions of what the Balkans is and how it is understood and studied. She takes inspiration from Said's idea of Orientalism to argue that a unique and independent construction of similar magnitude has come to blanket the Balkans as a region.

The two terms, "balkanization" and "Balkanism" are connected. As Todorova argues, balkanization has become not just a defining feature of the catastrophic failure of political states, but also a byword for all things tribal, backwards, and primitive.[5] It has, in essence, become removed from the region itself, and totally decontextualized. In many ways the Balkans itself has become emptied of context as well, serving more as a pliable bogeyman for the "civilized world." This aspect of the pliability and decontextualization of the Balkans has been analyzed by literary and political scholars, including Hywel Dix and Dušan Bjelić.[6] Deeper discussions of that will follow later in this paper. For now unpacking and defining Todorova's ideas takes precedence, as do the developments and challenges provided by scholars at the time and since.

[4] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[5] Ibid., 3.
[6] Hywel Dix, "On Balkanism and Orientalism: undifferentiated patterns of perception in literary and critical representations of Eastern Europe," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 5 (2015): 973-991; Dušan Bjelić, "The Balkans: Radical Conservatism and Desire," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (2009): 285-304.

Unpacking Todorova and *Imagining the Balkans*

Todorova's conceptualization rests on the understanding that the self-proclaimed "civilized world" looks at the Balkans as something uniquely alien and borderline incomprehensible. She charts the origins of this attitude going back to the nineteenth century when much of the Balkans belonged to the Ottoman Empire, but reinforces the idea that the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 were the real catalyst for Balkanism as it exists today.[7] These wars were considered fratricidal and excessively brutal by the "civilized" standards of warfare in early-twentieth-century Europe and the various atrocities received daily newspaper coverage in Western newspapers.[8] Public outcry was such that The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace launched a fact-finding mission, which published its results in 1914, shortly before the famous assassination of Franz Ferdinand in a Balkan city sparked a new conflagration – this time global.[9] The 1914 Carnegie Report painted a picture of the region and the wars as full of violence and problematic developments, such as the frequent and normalized use of ethnic cleansing by the various Balkan nations as a viable and desirable political and demographic strategy.[10] As Todorova notes the authors and compilers of the report made attempts at siding with the Balkan peoples themselves, and made overtures to the public not to condemn the region , but the genie was largely out of the bottle.[11]

What is perhaps most interesting about the 1914 Carnegie Report is that it was uncritically reprinted in 1993, right in the middle of the Yugoslav and Bosnian Wars. The

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[7] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans,* 3-4.
[8] For a study of daily reporting during the 1912-13 Balkan Wars, see Florian Keisinger, "Uncivilized wars in Civilized Europe? The perception of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 in English, German and Irish newspapers and journals" in *The Wars Before the Great War: Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War*, ed. Geppert et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015) 343-358.
[9] *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars.*(Washington DC: The Carnegie Endowment, 1914).
[10] *The Carnegie Report,* 50-51, 169.
[11] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 4.

foreword and new introduction attempted to set-up the relevance of the almost-80-year-old report for modern readers, but for Todorova it also did something else. It displayed an understanding, by political and scholarly experts, that the lessons of the past could be meaningfully applied to current and ongoing crises.[12] Todorova puts extra stress on analyzing the wording used in the new introduction of the Carnegie Report, and the explanations provided for how the two periods should be connected. It uses phrases like "the same Balkan world", which betrays the idea of temporal stagnation, and it lays the blame for the 1912-13 wars at the feet of Balkan-specific unchecked nationalism, just as it does for the 1990s wars the update was printed for.[13] What is arguably the worst sin of the 1993 update is the ways in which it thinks the past 80 years of history can be condensed into a few short pages. The complexities of the European world order as it existed in the first quarter of the twentieth century are glossed over, and the long period of interwar, WWII, and Cold War history is equally contextually empty.[14] What the update sought was an easy anchoring point for the violence occurring in the 1990s, and not a comprehensive reanalysis of the region the West thought they knew. What the update did demonstrate was the inherent Balkanism of George F. Kennan, a renowned diplomat and historian in his own right, as he penned the new foreword. For him the ancient history of the Balkans "had the effect of thrusting into the southeastern reaches of the European continent a salient of non-European civilization which has continued to the present day to preserve many of its non-European characteristics."[15] In a book review of *Imagining the Balkans,* Robert Hudson actually groups Kennan alongside with Robert Kaplan, Samuel Huntington, and Rebecca West as all being prone

[12] Ibid., 4-5.
[13] Ibid., 5-6.
[14] Ibid.,
[15] Ibid., 6.

to "reductionist and hegemonic Western interpretations."[16] This is part and parcel of what Balkanism is for Todorova, and why she argues that it should be fought against. It allows academics and political commentators who should know better, to erase time and space in order to create simplified and easy-to-digest understandings of a troubled non-Western region. It allows Kennan, and those who echo him, to ascribe an extra dimension of barbarism to the Balkans that goes beyond anything found in the West. It allows western observers to display shock that the people in the Balkans "were killing over something that happened 500 years ago" (referring to the Ottoman conquest), a feat which would be "unthinkable in the Western world."[17]

As Todorova notes, however, the ease with which this sort of sentiment glides over the Holocaust is staggering, and betrays a sense of collective amnesia which buries the sins of the "civilized world" when convenient.[18] There is certainly no shortage of historical events over the 80 year gap between 1914 and 1993 for this hypocrisy to be called into question. America's entire Cold War policy could be (and has been) picked apart. Todorova compares the death toll of anywhere from 25,000-250,000 Bosniaks during the Bosnian Genocide to Vietnam, which saw 3 million dead Vietnamese, to argue that the Balkans does not hold a "monopoly over barbarity."[19]

The key point isn't that the West isn't slowly getting its fair share of scrutiny, because it is. What makes Balkanism so nefarious is that it provides a temporary shield that the Western world can hide behind. What is equally critical for understanding Todorova's conceptualization of Balkanism is the inherent *pervasiveness* of the issue itself. Indeed as Nicholas Miller notes, in

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[16] Robert C. Hudson, review of *Imagining the Balkans*, by Maria Todorova, *European Business Review* 14, no. 4 (2002): 307.
[17] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 6.
[18] Ibid., 6-7.
[19] Ibid., 7.

order to fully appreciate Todorova's approach the reader needs to accept that Balkanism "is both pejorative and omnipresent in modern political discourse."[20] Proving such a forceful initial claim requires a careful consideration of the evidence, which for Todorova consists of a large corpus of literary cultural production over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both academic and non-academic. For Todorova the stereotypical type of Balkanist discourse which exists blankets the entire region in an almost universalist fashion.[21] It is in every facet of Western cultural production, from journalism to film, music, art, the news, and non-scholarly literature.[22]

For Todorova, the origins of Balkanism have a complicated three-step process. The first of them she calls "innocent inaccuracies stemming from imperfect geographical knowledge" which is then passed down uncritically.[23] The second step is the eventual "saturation of the geographical appellation with political, social, cultural, and ideological overtones." These are, in essence, ideas and understandings that get painted onto this imperfectly understood geography, and likewise passed on uncritically, including how the term "Balkan" came to be a pejorative around the time of World War I. The final step is the total dissociation of the designation "Balkans" from itself, allowing it to be ascribed with "ideologically loaded" understandings instead, especially after the Cold War.[24] One example provided by Todorova, and analyzed by Keith Hitchins, has to do with the Cold War realities of the Greek example. As Hitchins notes, the status of Greece within NATO created a selective sense of European membership for Greece. So long as the Cold War continued, Greece's membership "to the West, and her contributions to

[20] Nicholas J. Miller, review of *Imagining the Balkans*, by Maria Todorova, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 1 (1998): 128.
[21] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.
[22] Ibid.,
[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Ibid.,

Western civilization were remembered."[25] The utility of specifying Greece's "Western-ness" collapsed alongside the Soviet Union, allowing Greece to "fall back into the Balkans" once again.[26]

Todorova holds out hope that modern scholars will be unlikely to openly fall into the trap of Balkanism in their professional work, but still insists that internal or personal notions of Balkanism are difficult for even the best scholars to parse out.[27] It is thus worth reiterating that Kennan and his contemporaries operated primarily in the Cold War era of the 1950s – 1980s, where scholarship is concerned, with the added caveat of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* being in 1996. Nevertheless, when Western scholars speak of the Balkans in such thoughtless and uncritical ways as Kennan did, they reinforce simplistic understandings which look for easy answers to complicated questions. The reality is that there are no easy answers for why Yugoslavia collapsed, or why the Balkans *appears* to have suffered more than its fair share of barbarism and ethnic violence. As noted by Hudson the Balkans has not only become marginalized outside of the European mainstream, but has also been "collectively transmogrified into Europe's 'Other'." Within this otherness Yugoslavia in particular stands out due to two centuries of "reductivist media" and literature which has essentialized and oversimplified the region and its realities.[28] As I will explore later in Chapter 3, postcolonial theory offers a potential avenue for how to escape the pitfalls of Balkanism and reinscribe agency to the region without exceptionalism. For now it is enough to suggest that Euro-centrism, with a specifically pro-Western bias, likely plays a strong role for why the stereotypes that underpin the discourse of

[25] Keith Hitchins, review of *Imagining the Balkans*, by Maria Todorova, *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 2 (1998): 344.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19-20.
[28] Hudson, review of *Imagining the Balkans*, 305.

modern Balkanism continue to persist. That said, the internalization of Balkanist discourse by the Balkans themselves also cannot be discounted.

A key distinction of Balkanism for Todorova is that it is not the same as Orientalism. This is largely because Todorova has doubts that Orientalist representations can be held to any significant amount of methodological rigour and sense of concreteness.[29] In essence, she questions the ability of Orientalism to withstand all of the criticism levelled against it, including accusations that Said is essentializing both the West and the "East", and conflating a wide range of non-Western experiences. In Todorova's formulation the Balkans exists as a concrete, geographical reality, whereas the "Orient" is actually a categorical fiction with borders that are too poorly defined and stretched too thinly and widely to be of real analytical use. Todorova does not deny the academic value of the conversations Said sparked, but feels that this sense of concreteness which the Balkans has makes the region, and by default Balkanism, a more promising avenue to conceptualize, define, and explore.[30] This concreteness is extrapolated as having origins in the development of the East-West divide. Todorova makes good use of scholars like Larry Wolff to argue that this division was a later Enlightenment-era invention.[31] She also argues for a significant period of time when Byzantium was the unrivalled civilizational capital of the European world, the West was considered backwards and barbaric. The fall of Byzantium, coupled with the economic growth of the West (due to colonialism, the Enlightenment, and industrialization) created a new understanding which conflated geography with development and even time.[32] The West became industrially powerful, wealthy, and seen as civilizationally advanced, while the East became the inverse. Since these developments were temporally

[29] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 8-11.
[30] Ibid., 9-11.
[31] Ibid., 11-12.
[32] Ibid.,

explained under the umbrella of progress, a lack of progress implied a sense of stasis – and thus a lack of evolution. The East became frozen in time, and the continuing civilizational disparity between itself and the West, as determined by the West, became a self-reinforcing form of internalization. These sorts of historically geographic groundings lay behind Todorova's arguments that Balkanism as a concept is robust enough to stand on its own, as less nebulous than Orientalism.

In terms of the issue of cultural boundaries, however, Keith Hitchins notes quite clearly that Todorova's designation of Balkan peoples does not include the Slovenes. The reasons for this are somewhat muddy. Todorova focuses on a post-Byzantine Ottoman legacy, which has within it "a symbiosis of Turkish, Islamic, and Byzantine/Balkan traditions."[33] Thus Slovenia is discounted on account of having neither an Ottoman nor Byzantine heritage. Yet what is particularly interesting for Hitchins is that Hungary is also absent from this definition, despite significant parts of it falling to Ottoman rule for around 158 years. A result of this seems to prove, at least for Hitchins, that an insistence on a "Byzantine-Orthodox heritage" might actually hold more weight in defining the "cultural boundaries of the Balkans."[34] Yet also partly because of this recognition, Todorova's inclusion of Romania within the Balkans is also questionable, given Romania's early modern orientation towards Hungary, the Habsburgs, and increasingly the Catholic Church, as well as their relative freedom from direct Ottoman control via the tributary status of the Romanian and Moldavian principalities. As a result, for scholars like Hitchins the role of Romania within Todorova's list of Balkan peoples might require further explanation, as both Balkanism and Orientalism seem rather imperfect matches for discussing Romanian realities.

[33] Hitchins, review of *Imagining the Balkans*, 343.
[34] Ibid.,

Another point of comparison between Balkanism and Orientalism has to do with romance. Todorova strongly argues that the concreteness of the Balkans make it a less frequent (though not entirely so) location for exotic fantasies of adventure and romance in the imaginations of Westerners.[35] The Orient, with its hazy borders and cultural ambiguities to a Western audience could be all things to all people, but not the Balkans. The Balkans was on the door step of civilized Europe, attempted to adhere to European modernization and the societal practices of 19th century bourgeois culture, and was far too removed from the glory of Byzantium or Ancient Greece to be anything more than crude, rude, dishevelled and impoverished.

What's more is that within Balkanism the Balkans is offered transitory status, unlike the Orient which is treated as a complete world onto itself which will invariably exist apart from the West.[36] This transitory status combines with our earlier discussion of concreteness and the importance of developmental progress for how the Balkans is viewed. The region is frequently discussed as either a crossroads or a bridge. This is true in the literary work of Ivo Andrić[37], but also by scholars and in every-day discussion. Todorova comments on this to qualify why the Balkans arrived at its quasi-oriental reputation. She reminds us that the transitory nature of this image can also refer to "a bridge between stages of growth" which itself "invokes labels such as semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilized, semioriental."[38] Through a cornucopia of primary source examples from the turn of the 20th century, Todorova enforces this understanding that most Westerners saw the Balkans not as oriental, but as something in-between. This in-between-ness is also a crucial aspect of Balkanism argued as continuing to this day. The region is

[35] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 14-15.
[36] Ibid., 15. See also Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
[37] See his 1945 novel, *The Bridge on the Drina* – arguably his best and most well-known work.
[38] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 16.

geographically part of Europe, and often seeks the status of European, but just as often resists classification or integration into a wider "European" identity. The Balkans, for all intents and purposes, also internalizes the stereotypes of Balkanism, both as a way to resist and critique the West, but also prominently in order to define themselves as less Balkan than their neighbours. Having thus outlined Todorova's own original definitions and understandings of Balkanism, this thesis will turn towards an analysis of developments since.

The Further Development of Balkanism and the Critique of Balkanist Discourse

In 2002 Dušan Bjelić put together an edited volume containing 14 chapters from who were then and still are some of the most prominent Balkan scholars. Indeed *Balkan as Metaphor* included contributions from the likes of Vesna Goldsworthy, Tomislav Longinović, Milica Bakić-Hayden, Stathis Gourgouris, Ugo Vlaisavljević, and Rastko Močnik.[39] By and large the majority of articles in that volume subscribe to Todorova's conception of Balkanism as an autonomous phenomenon, inspired by yet yet distinct from Said's Orientalism. The motivation for the book, according to Bjelić was to further develop the discursive tools that Balkan scholars, and Balkan scholarship more broadly, could utilize to mount a resistance to the Balkanizing *gaze* of the West.[40] The overall goal of understanding globalization through Balkanism is also to dismantle the binary that suggests the only two options for the Balkans are to submit to being overpowered by globalism, or to resist the process at the risk of sliding further away from "Europe". Bjelić, and the Balkan scholars in his camp, believe that it is possible for a new kind

[39] Dušan Bjelić, *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
[40] Dušan Bjelić, "Introduction: Blowing up the 'Bridge'," in *Balkan as Metaphor*: *Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 19.

of Balkan identity to form which can look past that binary and engage with globalization on its own terms.[41]

It's interesting to note that not every scholar who recognizes the existence of Balkanism shares the same ideas of how it should be understood or used. One of the most innovative essays in this regard is found within *Balkan as Metaphor*, and comes from Močnik. He challenged Todorova's approach not for its overall framing, but for misplacing the origins of Balkanism as it is understood in the present day.[42] For him, focusing predominantly on the Ottoman legacy was the wrong way to go about it, since the modern socioeconomic pressures and rhetoric around globalization and conflict with the EU is potentially more fruitful for discussions of the post-1990s intensification of Balkanist discourse.[43]

Močnik isn't the only scholar who sought to tweak or play with Todorova's initial framework. In a 2003 article evaluating the current study of Balkanist discourse, Patrick Hyder Patterson accepted that the term "Balkan" had the power to shape mentalities and perspectives, but he also critiqued the way Balkanism as a theory is constructed, and its insistence on almost universally entrenched pervasiveness.[44] He focuses on the question of Slovenia, which he noted Todorova' excludes from her categorization of the Balkans, in order to test how widespread, entrenched, or powerful Balkanist discourse actually is.[45] Patterson argues that Austria readily supported Slovenia's "non-Balkan" self-categorization, and welcomed them into Central Europe

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[41] Ibid.,
[42] Rastko, Močnik, "The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms," in *Balkan as Metaphor*: *Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 79-116.
[43] Ibid., 96.
[44] Patrick Hyder Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason: The Boundaries of Balkanism in Slovenian, Austrian, and Italian Discourse," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 110.
[45] Ibid., 111.

with minimal Balkanist discourse or stereotyping.[46] Indeed he makes the contention that it was primarily Slovenia who felt they needed self-assurance as to who they were, as Austrian public opinion largely took it as a given that Slovenia was European in nature, culture, and geography.[47] The question of Italy was murkier. Italy swung from barely registering Slovenia or the necessity of marking the cultural and geographic distinction, to begrudgingly supporting Slovenia's "Europeanness", but with qualifiers.[48] The example of Slovenia also shows Milica Bakić-Hayden's idea of "Nesting Orientalisms in action. Working with the framework of Orientalism in 1992 and 1995, Bakić-Hayden highlighted how relationships within the Balkans, and between their neighbours, operated through an ordered scale of Orientalism.[49] Each nation felt itself more Western and less Oriental or Balkan than the ones to its East or South, creating a chain of orientalised dominoes. Through this ordering Slovenia is the least Oriental of the countries in the region, whereas Bulgaria might be thought of as the most. Yet a key part of Nesting Orientalisms is that this scale continues. Bulgaria looks down on Turkey, and Turkey in turn does the same to its Eastern and Southern neighbours, and so on. Indeed in keeping with this idea present in Nesting Orientalisms, Patterson demonstrates that Italian qualifiers for Slovenia were sometimes based on a comparison with less European neighbours, like Serbia, but that this sometimes backfired, especially when Italian commentators found Slovenia's obsession with these designations comedic and over the top.[50] Indeed it was often the great lengths Slovenia went to in order to prove itself that for its neighbours betrayed how far away they might still be.

[46] Ibid., 121-122.
[47] Ibid., 122.
[48] Ibid., 129-131.
[49] Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert M. Hayden, "Orientalist Variations on the Theme "Balkans": Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (1992): 1-15. ; Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917-931.
[50] Ibid., 131-132.

What is key to Patterson's critique is that the presence of Balkanist tropes, and the reactions or legacies of them, are not universal. Austria more or less supported Slovenia's desire to be European, but Italian opinion was a mixture of arrogance, ambivalence, and reluctant acceptance. Through Patterson's own examples the range of Italian responses display plenty of Balkanist tropes, but what's important is that they aren't the only ones. What emerges from Patterson's critique is the notion that the study of Balkanist discourse must incorporate its own qualifiers to stop the theory from claiming an untenable universalism.[51] In Patterson's own words, when done properly "the critique of Balkanist discourse is a compelling demand to acknowledge variety, local specificity, and the potential for change."[52] Subsequent scholars have taken up this idea of exploring the flexibility of Balkanist discourse, especially by the Balkan peoples themselves.

The Rising (mis)Use(fullness) of Balkanism for Case Studies

A number of case studies specific to the Balkans has approached Balkanism in order to shed light on local realities and how the nations most affected by this Balkanist discourse deal with it. Maple Razsa and Nicole Lindstrom applied the framework to a 2004 case study of Tuđman's Croatia to demonstrate how the Balkanist assumptions in the West helped deny Croatia's European aspirations, largely filtered through Western journalists and public opinion.[53] That said, there was another side to this process. The case study shows that Balkanist discourse was not only being employed against Croatia, but was also coopted by the country in the creation of its own post-Yugoslav national identity. A focus on local Croatian cultural production, including newspapers and political cartoons, as well as official government rhetoric, demonstrates that

[51] Ibid., 140-141
[52] Ibid., 141.
[53] Maple Raza and Nicole Lindstrom, "Balkan Is Beautiful: Balkanism in the Political Discourse of Tudman's Croatia," *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures* 18, no. 4 (2004): 628-650.

Croatia sought to trade in the same sorts of Balkan stereotypes used against them in order to deflect accusations of backwardness and stagnation towards their Eastern and Southern Balkan neighbours.[54] Far from being viewed merely as a tool of political pragmatism, Razsa and Lindstrom go as far as to suggest that Croatia's engagement with Balkanism should be treated as a starting point for future discussion.[55] The unique liminal situation of Croatia, (both during the 1990s but also somewhat today) stuck between its Balkan and Yugoslav past and its desperate desire to avoid those categorizations, could allow Croatia to find a way out of the Balkanism binary by accepting their role as mediator between East and West, and thus as a true European nation holding a wider European identity together.[56] The constraints of Balkanism could, according to Razsa and Lindstrom, make it possible for nations like Croatia to construct a sense of resistance which can take back the conversations around Balkanism in order to "reappropriate them, make them one's own, give them new meaning, and thereby redirect them as a forms of political engagement and critique".[57] Ultimately, there is the hope that Croatians (and theoretically by extension other Balkan residents) could "one day declare that 'Balkan is beautiful.'"

The specific case of Croatia has sparked a wave of additional scholarship, including by Barlett in 2003, Arnaud in 2015 and Bellamy in 2018.[58] Many of these are summarized in a 2022 article by Claudia Melis, Nicholas Wise, and Jelena Đurkin Badurina which uses Todorova's

[54] Ibid., 630.
[55] Ibid., 646 – 650.
[56] Ibid., 648-649.
[57] Ibid., 649-650.
[58] See William Bartlett, *Croatia: Between Europe and the Balkans* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003). ; Fanny Arnaud, "Memory of War in Croatia: Between Tourism and Nationalism," in *Balkan Heritages: Negotiating History and Culture*, eds. M. Couroucil, & T. Marinov (Ashgate, 2015), 163-188. ; Alex J. Bellamy, *The Formation of Croatian National Identity: A Centuries-old Dream*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

framework of Balkanism to likewise analyze Croatia.[59] The focus on Croatia is because of its relatively unique position near the Western edge of the Balkans, and the potential for it to serve as a bridge capable of overcoming Balkanism. Melis et al. analyzes the narratives around Croatia's UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage discourse. Like Razsa and Lindstrom, they show how Croatia, in trying to differentiate themselves from their Balkan past, actually played with Balkanist tropes to achieve a cultural image closer to the West. One of the primary ways Croatia did this was through positioning Serbia as the specific Balkanic "other," and stressing how different Croatia was culturally and historically.[60] This sort of discourse extended to Croatian tourism efforts, and caused Croatia to downplay or ignore any heritage similarities with Serbia.[61] What is interesting in Melis et al. is that Croatia's understanding of Balkanism, where UNESCO is concerned, seems to make exceptions for Bosniaks and Muslims as easier to reconcile with than Serbians. Melis et al. proposes that Croatia might intentionally be positioning itself "as a crossroads between West and East in terms of ICH."[62] Already a member of the EU by this time, Croatia wants to see itself as part of the West, and to demonstrate that it can take a positive role in bridging the gap with its Balkan neighbours. Yet the examples provided by Melis et al. also reinforces that while this outstretched hand can be proffered to Balkan Catholics and Muslims, the Orthodox have to remain the "other" in order for Croatia to escape the Balkan curse.[63] The use of the Balkanism framework here does well to portray Croatia's liminality in its more recent attempts to balance the nation's Balkan past with its desire to escape it, and of the potential for a post-Balkanist reality. Yet as things stand this potential for subverting the

[59] Claudia Melis, Nicholas Wise, and Jelena Đurkin Badurina, "Geo-political Complexities of Governmentality and Balkanism: Deconstructing UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage Discourse," *Political Geography* 95 (May 2022): 1-10.
[60] Ibid., 4.
[61] Ibid., 4, 7.
[62] Ibid., 8.
[63] Ibid., 8.

Balkanist binary is still a work in progress, which in Croatia is still tied to narratives that privilege mutual cooperation, but in ways that reproduce "a civilizational discourse" that treats Europe and the Balkans as fundamentally opposite.[64]

Interested in the potential complicity of Balkan nations in the construction, internalization, resistance and utilization of Balkanist discourse, Andrew Sawyer embarked on a project in 2013 to look at National Museums in the Balkans.[65] He examined the ways Balkan states sought to both use the rhetoric of Balkanism to push their own national agendas, while also trying to disavow the Balkan label, and all its connotations, in its entirety.[66] His findings suggest that the majority of national museum displays in the Balkans seek to contradict Balkanist understandings. They focus on ancient and medieval history to demonstrate a "genuine shared European past" rather than exceptionalism, and when they do exhibit atrocities the contexts are always recent.[67] The 1990s or WW2 are not linked with nationalist rhetoric over the medieval Battle of Kosovo, Ottoman subjugation, or "ancient ethnic hatreds".[68] There are notable silences depending on the nation in question, but what is displayed is usually contextualized within local and domestic histories, rather than deflected against neighbours.[69] It is worth noting that one could easily read more into those "silences" than Sawyer does here, especially given the persistence of a Balkanist binary which divides the region into European and non-European camps, and which provides an incentive for the mythical Balkans to be contextualized and presented in whichever orientation (Western or non) makes the most geopolitical sense. That said Sawyer's use of Balkanism is aimed at showing the folly of Balkanist views which uses ancient historical events as connecting

[64] Ibid.,
[65] Andrew Sawyer, "National Museums in Southeast Europe: (En)countering Balkanism?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 27, (2014): 115-127.
[66] Ibid., 116.
[67] Ibid., 125.
[68] Ibid.,
[69] Ibid.,

rods to explain recent events such as the 1990s. By examining the museums he not only shows that ways in which these explanatory connections are inadequate, but that even the nation states themselves hesitate to abide by them, aware as they are of the negative connotations Balkanism brings. Through a close study of the practical utilization of Balkanism, Sawyer also believes that it becomes possible to analyze recent motivations and realities in the region as they are, without relying on the inaccuracies of Balkanist understandings.[70] This in itself can serve as an important bridge for both respecting the diversity of sociocultural experiences in the region, as well as grappling with the discourse of Balkanism in way which could produce fruitful results.

Bosnia has also been the site of case studies for the efficacy of Balkanism with regards to the potential for subversion of local alternatives. One of the most exciting came in a 2020 article by Federica Tarabusi, which applied the framework of Balkanism to a case study in Bosnia in which she explored interactions between "internationals" and "locals" in the post-socialist period.[71] What she was most interested in was analyzing the different understandings of Balkanism in practice, such as the understandings of Bosnian locals forced to interact with Westernized Europeans, as well as the inverse.[72] Many Western visitors, both expatriates and foreign workers in the country for humanitarian, political, or business purposes, carried with them stereotypes and understandings of the war traumatized country, many of which betray Balkanism. The facet of Tarabusi's study that is particularly exciting is her focus on the "social experience of post-socialist BiH residents" who live within this nebulous influx of Western foreigners.[73] A number of local stereotypes develop towards the Westerners, such as their almost touristic temporality in

[70] Ibid., 125-126.
[71] Federica Tarabusi, "Development, Balkanism, and New (im)moralities in Postsocialist Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Focaal* 2020, no. 87, (June, 2020): 75-88.
[72] Ibid., 75-76.
[73] Ibid., 76.

the country, and thus lack of long-term commitment.[74] On top of that they are treated like "a foreign elite who drive recognizable cars and frequent international restaurants" and act as sources for high paying jobs for lucky Bosniaks.[75]

Present in Tarabusi's study is the existence of a binary which puts local against international, and implies ideas of stagnation vs. progress in a perfect illustration of neo-colonialism. In her article many locals look at the foreigners as emblematic of the sort or progress that Bosnia dreams of having and hopes to utilize to bridge that gap.[76] In so doing locals sometimes praise the presence of foreigners while also pointing out the almost insurmountable local corruption. For the foreigners, however, they fixate on the self-deprecating admissions and the sometimes dark humour to reinforce a Balkanist understanding.[77]For the Western individuals living in Bosnia, there is an inherent connecting line between the West and the Balkans as opposites. Thus when a Bosnian taxi driver praises Western progress in the presence of foreign workers, he must by the same token be intrinsically putting his own people down.[78]

Tarabusi meaningfully applies a discussion of the internalization of Balkanism into her work. She points out that Bosnia serves as the site of unequal relationships of social and physical mobility.[79] Europeans can almost freely go to Bosnia to work, study, and help develop the country, but the inverse is not true. The gate to ascension to the European Union, and thus meaningful free mobility across the rest of the continent, is locked behind socioeconomic and political requirements set by Western Europeans. For Bosnia to engage in this exchange of

[74] Ibid., 76.
[75] Ibid.,
[76] Ibid.,
[77] Ibid., 75-76.
[78] Ibid., 75.
[79] Ibid., 77.

peoples and economic opportunity as equals, and not just as workers for international institutions in Bosnia, they must first learn to "Europeanize, and thus de-Balkanize, themselves."[80]

The response to these realities is an internalized pessimism in which many Bosnians—especially those working closely with foreign development agencies—strongly oppose the hypocrisy of their corrupt local politicians, while still being aware of the dangers of foreign dependency.[81] These educated Bosnians are aware of how the region is perceived, but can do little more than express their frustrations through a black humour that borders on nihilistic. Phrases such as "politika je kurva" (politics is a whore) are widespread, as is calling politicians and those who abuse clientelistic connections "lopovi" (thieves).[82] The local understandings of identity and what is moral or unjust is also nebulous, and seems to apply negative associations to local realities and foreign institutions alike. The sense of helpless stagnation, which is part and parcel of Balkanism and is reinforced in Bosnia by corruption and foreign dependency, is also echoed by local Bosnian residents. Tarabusi shows that it's still common for neighbours living in the same region to ask each other "but what is the situation down there like now?"[83] The implication of such questions, as espoused by a frustrated Bosnian, is that even 20 years after the war people, both foreign and local, still hold an image of a war-torn Bosnia in ruins which has made no visible progress. This Balkanism, which is both internalized as well as applied from outside, acts to form an understanding of the social realities within Bosnia. If analysis strips away all the theory, and reduces Balkanism to a set of pernicious stereotypes present in daily culture, then in many ways the Balkans has managed to integrate them and make them their own.

[80] Ibid.,
[81] Ibid., 81.
[82] Ibid., 82.
[83] Ibid.,

A Taste of Balkanism within Literary and Political Thought

A significant amount of work has also been done on the literary front. In 2009 Bjelić utilized the concept of Balkanism to analyze and critique two major Balkan-born intellectuals, Slavoj Žižek and Julia Kristeva.[84] His contention was that both figures are profoundly affected by a sense of "disidentification" and "self-Orientalization" in reference to their Balkan origins.[85] They are, in a sense, haunted by their own past identities. According to Bjelić's arguments, this need to distance themselves from their local histories through an attachment to empty and ill-defined cosmopolitanism and universalism actually reinforces a Balkanist discourse which mystifies and abstracts how their work is perceived, rather than grounding and defining it.[86] Indeed as fascinating and prolific of a writer as Žižek in particular is, the ocean of over-intellectualizing he often produces is posited by Bjelic as potentially stemming from this sense of restlessness which pulls him in many different and shifting discursive and intellectual directions and traditions all at once.[87] For these two famous intellectuals, Balkanism—or perhaps rather the resistance to and/or overcompensation for Balkanism—is an inherent and internalized feature which creeps into their work, giving it a specific flavour worth analyzing by future scholarship.

The literary scholar Hywel Dix likewise dove into an analysis of Balkanism in 2015. He compared Todorova's construction of Balkanism alongside Vesna Goldworthy's *Inventing Ruritania* to explore the notion of the Balkans as a land simultaneously familiar yet mysterious.[88] Through his analysis the Balkans can be seen as close enough to the West to be of mundane geopolitical interest, but just far enough to allow the Western public imagination to run wild.

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[84] Dušan Bjelić, "The Balkans: Radical Conservatism and Desire," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (2009): 285-304.
[85] Ibid., 302.
[86] Ibid., 287, 302.
[87] Ibid., 300.
[88] Hywel Dix, "On Balkanism and Orientalism: undifferentiated patterns of perception in literary and critical representations of Eastern Europe," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 5 (2015): 973-991.

Focusing in particular on a British case study Dix shows how the British literary imagination, through an estranged relationship with the Balkans that cared little for factuality, was able to colonize depictions of the Balkans to fit within recognizable themes for a British audience.[89] Dix also picked up on Todorova's delineation between Balkanism and Orientalism, as well as the unique "transitionary status" which the Balkans held in the Western imaginary.[90] He also dives deeply into the iconic imagery of bridges and crossroads as metaphors for the region, and how it symbolizes ideas of European progress as well as Balkan ambiguity and liminality within a wider collective consciousness.[91]

The Balkans in this way becomes like a blank canvas, upon which "precise details of Balkan history and geography are less important than the imaginary or near-imaginary landscapes of the British concepts of the Balkans."[92] The Balkans is thus not conceptualized for its own sake, but for the Western reader and consumer. This is the impetus which gives rise to fantastical exaggerations of the region in the travelogues of the Romantic period, and during the popularity of the Grand Tour. It also sits behind late 19th century works like *Dracula* and *Prisoner of Zenda,* which fictionalize an Eastern European setting rather than contend with realistic depictions.[93] As Dix makes clear throughout his approach this idea of an inherent Western/Eurocentric Balkanism, which treats the region as an imaginative blank slate, still persists in literary depictions of the Balkans throughout the Cold War and beyond.[94] He goes as far as to suggest that the collapse of the Iron Curtain, rather than allowing for re-interpretations

[89] Ibid., 974.
[90] Ibid., 975.
[91] Ibid.,
[92] Ibid., 974.
[93] Ibid.,
[94] Ibid., 981.

of Eastern Europe, was met with a remarkable degree of continuity.[95] Western writers continued to fantasize the region as if nothing had happened - as if the Cold War's absence of accessible history and regional realities was still an ongoing issue.

Beyond Balkanism: The Call for an Inward Scholarly Turn

With the establishment of Balkanism as a theory and discourse capable of withstanding academic rigour, two relatively recent developments came to the fore of the discussion. Two books, both in 2018, by Maria Todorova and Diana Mishkova attempted to both update and challenge the discourse respectively. Todorova's *Scaling the Balkans* is a collection of some of her essays over roughly a 20-30 year span, dealing with topics such as backwardness, modernity, and the "heuristic value of approaching 'regions,' 'regional identities,' and 'culture' through the concept of "historical legacy."[96] She also dives into discussions of Postcolonialism and Orientalism, and how they intersect with Balkanism in fruitful and potentially fruitful ways, as well as including essays on the role of nationalism, identity, and alterity.[97] What her 2018 collection attempts to do, is establish a conversation about the value of different scales when studying the Balkans or topics that intersect with it. For her this is different from scalability, as scalability implies the ability to reduce or lengthen the Balkans into a universal framework. Rather she makes an impassioned appeal for scholarship to admire the value of operating within a range of specific and narratively complex frames of scale which have the potential to elucidate without over-essentializing, even if such scales are imperfect or heuristic at best.[98] As this appeal comes from the introduction to *Scaling the Balkans*, it would almost seem as if Todorova took the earlier criticisms of Balkanism's overwhelming pervasiveness (a la Patterson) to heart, in

[95] Ibid., 985.
[96] Maria N. Todorova, *Scaling the Balkans: Essays on Eastern European Entanglements* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2018), 4.
[97] Ibid., 5.
[98] Ibid., 2-4.

order to open the door to more flexibility and specificity. A useful additional framing is also provided by Todorova in *Scaling the Balkans* with the help of an article written by her in 2010. When explaining Balkanism across chapters, Balkanist discourse now rests on the intellectual image of the Balkans placed within "a cognitive straightjacket," which could be of both Western and internalized Balkanite making.[99] This internalization is a critical factor that has been much explored by other scholars in this paper, and the further development of which will only strengthen the field of Balkan studies as a whole.

Diana Mishkova's *Beyond Balkanism*: *The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* is the last major work this section will analyze. Her book dives into the question of what she calls "academic Balkanism", in order to pick up on an area of study which Todorova admitted would be fascinating but beyond the current scope of her magnum opus.[100] In a sense academic Balkanism is the idea that the stereotypical discursive language and frameworks which underpin Balkanism can be found not only in the public sphere, but in the academe. If scholars take at face value that the definitions, categories, and terminology of the Balkans is actually an arbitrary construction, largely provided by a Western scholarly tradition, then a new question emerges. This is the question of "whether the region can be a useful category of analysis" at all "given the 'invented' quality of the concept and its political uses."[101] Mishkova's answer is an inward turn, towards conceptualizations and definitions of identity and region making that are local to the Balkans. She explores the work of local Balkan scholars, including Jovan Cvijic[102], who have been overshadowed by the cornucopia of Western-based scholarship on the topic. Her overall

[99] Ibid., 94-95. See also Chapter 21 (435-455), Chapter 25 (510-534). And Chapter 26 (537-557) for deeper discussions on the dynamics of internalization and memory.
[100] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (London: Routledge, 2018): 4; Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.
[101] Ibid., 215.
[102] Ibid., 50. Also see the entirety of Chapter 2 of *Beyond Balkanism*.

goal is to highlight the unique and innovative work of Balkan academics, as well as their responses to Balkanism, to give them the attention they deserve. In so doing she seeks to break the prevailing assumption that Balkanism is something always constructed and imposed on the region from outside. Rather, local elites and regional scholars were more than capable of formulating, recording, and internalizing their own corpus of Balkanist, Byzantine, and folkloric work to create a body of study not dissimilar to that which the Western Orientalists had.[103] The result is an attempt at mapping a literature of both Western and Eastern Balkanisms.[104] This is a work I will return to in the next two chapters of this thesis.

Conclusion

In the process of their crystallization and subsequent development, Balkanism and Balkanistic discourse underwent significant adaptation to improve its flexibility and versatility. When Todorova first put the theory together in *Imagining the Balkans* she tried to establish Balkanism's concreteness to avoid the sorts of criticism that were initially levelled at Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The majority of challenges to her work largely recognized the value of recognizing and contending with the Balkanist discursive framework, and as such mostly worked on how to guide it away from accusations of essentializing or universalizing the experiences of the West and the Balkans. These included figures such as Patterson and later Mishkova, among others. Some scholars, like Razsa and Lindstrom, Sawyer, Tarabusi, and Melis et al. sought to apply Balkanism to specific case studies and use cases. Močnik wanted to update the impetus of the modern Balkanist discourse to developments directly around the 1990s and post-war EU integration. The heightened importance which the 1990s came to hold over Balkanist discourse is also highlighted by Mishkova, who dedicates an entire chapter of *Beyond Balkanism* to exploring

[103] Ibid., 2- 3.
[104] Ibid., 3.

it. Even the fields of literary scholarship and sociology found intersections with Balkanism to analyze aspects of popular culture and intellectual production, including Dix and Bjelić. The sum total of these developments is the longstanding persistence and tenacity of Balkanism as a concept, and its discourse as a framework worth using to study and problematize our study of the Balkans. The next fundamental step for this thesis will be to do a deep dive into local Yugoslav responses to Balkanism, both scholarly and in the public sphere to expand the approach Mishkova started.

Chapter Two
Balkanism As Seen By the Balkanist:
Re-inscribing Scholarly Agency across the Twentieth Century

Introduction

Having introduced Balkanism as a coherent theory, it is worth exploring more regionalist and nativist responses and engagement to it and the concepts that make it up. The previous chapter touched on brief examples of how Balkanism has informed case studies in Croatia and Bosnia, but this section will go deeper. Chapter 2 will be broken up into three main sections. The first will reintroduce Mishkova, paying particular interest to her study (and revival) of earlier Balkan scholarship that has largely been forgotten. Through this it is possible to not only come to understand how the region understood of and studied itself throughout the earlier parts of the twentieth century, but also break up stereotypes that position the Balkans as merely following in the footsteps of Western or "European" scholarship. Crucially, as this analysis moves forward it will become understood that definitions of what constitutes Balkanism were not fixed in stone and underwent transformations on the way to the post-1990s version which exists today.

The second section of this chapter will discuss in more detail the internalized aspects of Balkanism. It will rely heavily on understandings from section 1 of what characterized Balkanism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, stressing the heterogeneity of the region as an acceptable and even somewhat desirable conceptualization. This section will also analyze Edin Hajdarpasic's 2015 book *Whose Bosnia?: Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840−1914* in order to underscore the many ways in which the heterogeneity of early Balkanism came to be challenged by and re-imagined by nationalists through the necessity of violent action and national division over an initial framework of universal unity. This is the transformation which would eventually lead to Balkanism as it is currently understood.

The final section will dive deeper into several recent articles by local Balkan and regionalist scholars who tackle what modern discourse over Balkanism means for the region and

how it is understood today. A reoccurring theme across these articles will be the place of the European Union, and of the West at large, within the Balkan imaginary and how the region sees itself via internal and external pressures. In line with the case studies from Chapter 1, the Balkans will be explored here as a region with local autonomy and agency, capable of making its own decisions around issues of Balkanism, including identity and geopolitical and social orientation.

Unearthing the Balkanist of the Late 19th and Early 20th centuries

One of the things that Mishkova does well is remind us of the great corpus of Southeast European scholarship that existed around the turn of the twentieth century. A good number of those academics, including Jovan Cvijić (1865−1927), Ivan Shishmanov (1862−1928), Ioan Bogdan (1864−1919), Boyan Penev (1882−1927), Nicolae Iorga (1871−1940), Niko Županić (1876−1961), and Jovan Skerlić (1877−1914) are explored thoroughly in Chapter 2 of Mishkova's *Beyond Balkanism*.[105] According to Mishkova, in most of the West from the late 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th, there was a strong drive in the humanities towards national specificity and an aversion to generalizations. This is a trend that the Balkans themselves sought to buck, as many early Balkan scholars instead turned openly to cross-cultural and supranational frameworks instead.[106] They saw in the cultural heterogeneous reality of the Balkans, not a reason for vehement national distinction, but for cooperation and unity. The first Balkanists to seriously approach regional studies through a lens of "historical commonality" were "linguists, literary scholars, and ethnographers."[107] Surprisingly these are the same fields that in the closing

[105] Diana Mishkova, "The emergence of the Balkans as a cultural-historical space," in *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (London: Routledge, 2018): 41−69.
[106] Ibid., 41.
[107] Ibid., 42.

decades of the 19th century contributed so much to the solidification of "national peculiarities" in other regions, particularly in terms of folklore.[108]

In the Balkans however, a different conceptualization emerged. As Mishkova outlines, "Balkanism" and "balkanization" initially had very different meanings for early Balkan linguists. Rather than modern connotations of difference or fragmentation, these terms referred to commonality and positive construction across the region—particularly in terms of language features.[109] Thus for early linguists "Balkanism" referred to a shared set of language features, while "balkanization" was the process by which these features spread or developed.[110] This spread of language could occur through a variety of historical or lexical developments, but a prominent possibility is via multi-lingual cross-contact and cultural borrowings, as suggested by the Slovenian philologist, Franz Miklosich (1813-1891).[111]

Folklorists and ethnographers of the period pursued similar approaches. Mishkova starts by singling out the Bulgarian ethnographic and literary scholar Ivan Shishmanov—who working in the late nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth, critically pushed scholarship beyond nation-specific folklore and romanticism. Instead Shishmanov argued for an idea of continuous international cultural exchange, reasoning that every national story or myth actually borrowed from those around it and preceding it.[112] In essence this means that if scholars traced each story or element of folklore far back enough, none of them could claim any meaningful degree of originality or historicity. The various cultures of the Balkans then, like other parts of

[108] Ibid.,
[109] Ibid., 43.
[110] Ibid.,
[111] Ibid.,
[112] Ibid., 45– 46.

the world, are always porous and open to influences from all sides and from within. Yet this openness and sense of interconnectedness is not posited as being a bad or undesirable thing.

Through a positivist methodology Shishmanov wanted to reconcile ethnography's typical focus on "national revival" with the new scientific discourse of positivism which stressed empirical truth over Romanticism. In the case of Bulgaria he argued that the Bulgarian people sat in a liminal position between an "old folkloric" culture and a much newer "European" one.[113] He posited that the movement and transformation towards gradual European culture was an unstoppable one-way journey and that the various peoples and nations of the Balkan region can be thus conceptualized as merely occupying a different "respective position on the evolutionary ladder" as each other.[114] What is key for Shishmanov's positivism is that he believed that you could include a select number of traditional traits, including those which were culturally-borrowed, into an incorporated form of modernity. In so arguing he found a compromise between the national specificity and mythologizing of Romanticism, and what he saw as the definite and empirically observable truth of the Balkans as a culturally diverse land nevertheless bound to its gradual evolution towards a higher form of civilization.

Furthermore Shishmanov, in a line of reasoning strikingly similar to Otto Bauer, argued that nationalism, (though Shishmanov used the framework of civilization) was an artificial construction which required every group of people (i.e. nation) to nurture and use its genius for the betterment of all human kind, and not just themselves.[115] In a somewhat rare example for the

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[113] Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, Michal Kopeček, "The Political Implications of Positivism," in *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 340.
[114] Ibid.,
[115] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 49. It is worth pointing that Shishmanov wrote his "Nasheto visshe uchilishte" [Our Higher School, a reference to Sofia University] in 1892, whereas Bauer wrote his *Social*

period, Niko Županić, a Slovenian anthropologist, argued for a cultural understanding of Balkanism and the region based on racial pseudoscience. He argued that the major nations in the region, for him the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgarians, actually belong to an interconnected supranational and supra-ethnic identity linked to a hyper-specific conceptualization of pan-Slavism.[116] Indeed in his particular formulation of a pan-Balkan identity only the Balkan Southern Slavs count. Because of this, Županić considers the Yugoslavs, with the addition of Bulgaria, as superior to the Greeks, Albanians, and Turks, and he goes so far as to contend that the South Slavs overall are actually more "Aryan" than most of Europe. It is worth noting that he left no room for the Romanians in his supranational and supra-ethnic identity, preferring instead to use pan-Yugoslavism as a base. In essence Županić believed that the South Slavs were destined to rise up and improve European civilization through its cultural production.[117] Thus, regardless of how problematic such theories are, even Županić conceptualized the region as having something beneficial to share with the rest of Europe, betraying an underlying necessity of unity which undercuts any hyper-nationalist claims of superiority.

The Bulgarian literary historian Boyan Penev, and Romanian philologist and historian Ioan Bogdan both agreed with Shishmanov's framing of cultural borrowing, but went a step further. They understood the study of the connectedness of all national cultures as necessary for understanding national authenticities and peculiarities[118] Penev in particular argued that an author of a work could not lose their authenticity no matter how much they borrowed, since

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Democracy and the Nationalities Question in 1907, yet again showing that Balkan scholars weren't just following Central and Western European counterparts.

[116] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 42.

[117] Ibid.,

[118] Ibid., 47-49.

although a sense of authenticity could be added to, it could never be fully erased.[119] Thus for ethnographic and cultural studies in the early-twentieth-century Balkans, even the focus on what made a national experience unique needed to be filtered first through commonality before any potential nugget of originality could be debated.

Jovan Cvijić, the geographer and ethnographer famous for drafting the borders of Yugoslavia in connection with the Treaty of Versailles, was a founder of Balkan human geography and strongly preferred "the Balkan Peninsula" as a frame of reference over "the Balkans."[120] He also based his ethnopsychological studies of what constituted the Balkan peoples and culture predominantly on the South Slavs, ignoring the Turks, Albanians, Greeks, and Vlachs.[121] A critical framework for Cvijić was that the phenomenon of Balkanism – i.e. the linguistic, cultural, and geographic realities that early Balkanists viewed through a lens of connectedness – actually owes its origins to the Byzantines instead of the Ottomans.[122] Indeed, writing in 1918 Cvijić's arguments went along similar lines to Penev, Bogdan, and Shishmanov. He understood that what he called the "Turco-oriental influences" was real and measurable, but he roots his interpretation of authenticity on a conceptualised idea of an "Old Balkan" civilization, and of ties to ancient Byzantine culture instead."[123] He believed that if you could strip away the Ottoman influence, you would be left with the "material civilization and the moral conceptions" taken from "ancient Byzantine civilization."[124] Cvijić essentially treats Byzantine civilization as the prominent precursor or origin for the interconnected reality that came to be

[119] Ibid., 48.
[120] Ibid., 51.
[121] Ibid., 51. Vlachs for ethnographers like Cvijić encapsulated Romanians as well as all other miscellaneous speakers of an Eastern Romance language in the Balkans. This included Wallachians and Moldavians, as well as diasporic groups across the peninsula whose linguistic origins could tie them most strongly to Romania.
[122] Jovan Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula," *Geographical Review* 5, no. 6 (1918): 471-472.
[123] Ibid.,
[124] Ibid.,

understood as Balkanism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This is in stark contrast to the reliance on Ottoman legacies that much latter scholars would express, such as those observed in *Balkan as Metaphor*, and others which will be explored later in this chapter[125]

As Mishkova notes, Cvijić also butted heads with most of his contemporaries over both his insistence on Byzantinism, but also in how he conceived of the origin of the cultural differences between the West and the East (meaning Byzantine Europe). Rather than a split of East and West, Cvijić saw it as a split between "the patriarchal regime and the Byzantine civilization" itself.[126] What Cvijić meant by a patriarchal regime was a conceptualization of the old communal and clan structures which underpinned family and village life when the South Slavs first migrated into the Balkans, which he calls "Zadruga" (literally cooperative or collective).[127] These patriarchal structures, analogous to a clan system, predated both the Byzantines and independent Balkan polities, and after the Slavic migration quickly became embroiled in a civilizational battle with Byzantine administrative structures. Other Yugoslav scholars, particularly literary and ethnographic, argued that at some point there was an ancient and primordial cultural and linguistic separation between a "Roman" or Latin West and a "Byzantine East." This is not that dissimilar from the well-established Russian discursive strategy of establishing the value of non-Western civilization by claiming the Byzantine legacy over the Roman one. Indeed Cvijić downplays the significance of Western Roman influences on the peninsula, isolating this to the Adriatic littoral and arguing that the newer contest of patriarchal regimes vs. Byzantine civilization impacted the development of the Balkan Peninsula

[125] It's worth reiterating that Močnik is somewhat of an exception in *Balkan as Metaphor*, as he rejected Ottomanism in favour of modern EU pressures and the legacies of civil wars and post-socialist reconstruction in the 1990s. See Rastko, Močnik, "The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms," in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation,* eds. Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 79–116.
[126] Mishkova, Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 52.
[127] Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization," 479–481.

and its unique civilization much more significantly.[128] In particular Cvijić doesn't position either system, patriarchal or Byzantine, as inherently superior to the other. This has the effect of implying that the resultant amalgamated civilization has the ability of standing tall on its own.

For Cvijić the civilizational split was internal to the Balkans, focusing on the breakdown of, and sometimes successful resistance in defence of, forms of patriarchal civilization. An example of an early scholar who argued for a primordial Western vs. Eastern split instead is singled out by Mishkova with the example of Miloje Vasić, an archaeologist whose thesis argued that the civilizational split went all the way back to the Neolithic period.[129] Cvijić disagreed with this assessment. He did not see the development of the Balkan Peninsula as occurring through a specific separation which allowed two separate camps of Western and Eastern civilizations to develop in unique directions. Rather he argues that a series of assimilations and disruptions between different cultures is what shaped the region.[130] Constant shifting migrations of peoples, such as when the Slavs first settled in the peninsula and brought with them their patriarchal communal systems, constantly interrupted the development of a consistent and continuous civilization. What distinguished the West was not due to an ancient split of peoples, but instead the fact that the Eastern game board kept having to be reset or adjusted around. The West in contrast was better able to homogenize and guard against unpredictable new influences on a mass scale.[131]

The potential (in)accuracy of Cvijić's ideas is not the point of his contribution. Rather like the other scholars analysed, he serves as a clear break from many of his contemporaries in

[128] Ibid., 477.
[129] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 52.,
[130] Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization," 481.
[131] Ibid., 470-471.

the West and East, and an example of a Balkan scholar whose innovative ideas on how to study and understand the region had been lost to the sea of time. His ideas, including the usefulness of "folk psychology" as a legitimate field within cultural studies and human geography significantly influenced such Western scholars as Gerhard Gesemann and Fernand Braudel in their own regional studies.[132] Yet despite this his ideas are little remembered by many of today's non-Balkan scholars.

According to Mishkova, Cvijić was not interested in creating or proving the existence of a single Balkan archetype. Instead he only wanted to highlight and celebrate the region's interconnected diversity.[133] Yet despite never directly tackling the question of whether there was any single commonality strong enough to create "the Balkans" as an "analytical whole", Cvijić nevertheless left bread crumbs in his writings that suggested as much.[134] He coined the term "metanastasic movements," which refers to the gradual "mobility and migration" of peoples in a region.[135] According to Mishkova, metanastasic movements typically "stood out as a powerful vehicle of intraregional 'penetration and connection.'"[136] The implication of Cvijić's emphasis on metanastasic movements is that this constant movement of peoples and the "zones of culture" that they bring with them *become* the "prevailing civilization and ethnodemographic profile of the region."[137] The primary thing that holds the region together, and stops it from fragmenting or becoming totally absorbed by particular cultures, is the very demographic and cultural turmoil of movement which is constantly creating the region in the first place.

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[132] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 53, 62.
[133] Ibid., 53.
[134] Ibid.,
[135] Ibid., 54.
[136] Ibid.,
[137] Ibid., 54.

The Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga is a another Balkan scholar from the first half of the 20th century who falls into a similar camp as Shishmanov and Cvijić. In Mishkova's estimation, he went farther than his contemporaries in pushing for the existence of a Balkan commonality.[138] Indeed, although Iorga recognized the importance of the nation as a primary frame of historical reference, he also contested that it was the duty of every scholar to see beyond the prejudices of limited commonality or national specificity, and to instead "consider this whole [of regional study] in its totality."[139] This meant recognizing and highlighting the aspects that actually might be unique, without losing sight of the threads that binds the Balkan nations together.

In his attempts to understand how the region can both share so much and yet be conceived of so differently by some, he strongly pushed against the categories of "the Balkans" or the Balkan Peninsula as an ethnographic frame of reference. In an effort to distance categorizations the region from the negative pejorative definitions of "Balkan" created specifically by the Balkan Wars, Iorga preferred the term Southeastern Europe.[140] His rational was that each region often orientated itself in directions that were unique to their own experiences. The Romanians were simultaneously Carpathian, Danubian, and belonging to the right bank of the Danube, while the Greeks were Mediterranean, and the Yugoslavs were pulled in too many different directions.[141] For Iorga, the only ones that could truly look to "Balkan" as an identifying term were the Bulgarians, but here too they had competing orientations such as to the Black Sea.[142] It is also important point out that the Romanians, while largely Eastern

[138] Ibid., 56.
[139] Ibid.,
[140] Alex Drace-Francis, "The Prehistory of a Neologism: « South-Eastern Europe»," *Balkanologie* 3, no. 2 (1999): 1.
[141] Mishkova, "Balkan as a cultural-historical space," 57.
[142] Ibid.,

Orthodox, were not Slavic, and that elites like Iorga would have felt more cultural unity with other Romance-language nations, such as France and Italy. As such the much larger category of Southeastern Europe would be loose enough for Iorga to incorporate the region's many nations and peoples while still remaining separate from Eastern Europe, and while still finding room for the Romanians.

Much like his contemporaries, Iorga was obsessed with finding the original authentic precursor to the peoples of Southeastern Europe. He pinned all of his hopes on the idea of prehistoric "Thracian" peoples, from which all current nations in the region are descended.[143] The Roman influence transformed the surviving elements of Thracian culture, and this continued under the umbrella of Byzantium with one major caveat. The Byzantines, like the Ottomans who would follow, gave the Southeastern Europeans a significant amount of autonomy – and this allowed them to start diverging again.[144] This divergence led to what many scholars like Iorga would understand as the most shared characteristic of the Balkans. This is that their unity, across national borders and peoples, came from the fact that they all shared the same history of difference. This idea of "unity in diversity", as Mishkova puts it, sits at the heart of Cvijić's idea of metanastasic movements as the single most unifying aspect of the Balkan Peninsula.[145] Through this understanding, Iorga also makes an impassioned argument for the rehabilitation of Ottoman history in his time. In so far as the Balkans were able to retain its Byzantine legacies of cultural autonomy and freedom, this was only possible because the Ottomans functioned as a continuation of Byzantine policies and not as a disruptive conqueror in the region.[146]

[143] Ibid., 58.
[144] Ibid.,
[145] Ibid., 54, 58.
[146] Ibid., 58.

In line with his insistence on an unbroken ethnic origin going back to the prehistoric Thracians, Iorga also condemned the idea of Southeastern Europe as Oriental in any capacity. For him Eastern Orthodoxy, one of the most prominent contributors of Balkan cultural distinctiveness in the region, had more historical ties to the Byzantines than the Ottomans, despite the millet system serving to preserve Orthodoxy in the region.[147] As Raul Cârstocea notes, Iorga in a sense pushed for the "re-discovery of Byzantium as both a civilizational claim for the region, preserving Christianity after its collapse in 'the West' as well as ensuring a continuity" between "antiquity and modern Europe."[148] The Ottomans, for all intents and purposes, might have contributed *something* to the region's cultural and linguistic makeup, but in general they served more as caretakers of the Byzantine and thus Thracian influences, and very likely borrowed more than they gave from the region.

What sets Iorga apart from those like Shishmanov and Cvijić is that he went further than any of them to posit a primordial explanation for why the entire Southeastern European region shares the same ancient proto-culture and current interconnected realities. As Mishkova eloquently puts it, if Shishmanov's arguments of a regional culture rested on mutual borrowings while Cvijić focused on migrations, for Iorga "the Balkan nations came to be endowed with a common heritage distinguished by specific historical evolution, life forms, and culture."[149] For Iorga, the origins of Balkan unity in diversity goes back to the Thracians, Illyrians, and Romans, becomes fully embodied by Byzantium, is continued by the Ottomans, and has since come to represent the historical and cultural realities of every nation that currently makes up Southeastern Europe. Iorga did not see discontinuity from one conquering influence to the next as Cvijić did,

[147] Ibid.,
[148] Raul Cârstocea, "Synchronous nationalisms – reading the history of nationalism in South-Eastern Europe between and beyond the binaries," *National Identities*, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2021.2007367 (2021): 16.
[149] Mishkova, "Balkan as cultural-historical space," 59.

but instead he saw "in essence the same thing: the same peace, the same liberties with respect to the small groups, the same routes created for great commerce."[150] Iorga saw an overwhelming synthesis of historical and cultural realities in the region, and because of this he argued that "everything binds us together, whether we want it to or not."[151]

Like with our discussion of Cvijić, the goal is not to assess the accuracy of Iorga's claims. Rather it is to establish that a strong corpus of Balkan and Southeastern European scholars seriously tackled the questions of what it meant to be (or not be) Balkan. What Iorga and his contemporaries also demonstrate is a strong penchant, by some of the most respected scholars of their time and region, towards an understanding of Balkanism and the Balkan peoples as more culturally interconnected than divided. It also shows an attempt to show the region as more civilizationally dynamic, rather than stagnant. In particular, Iorga wanted to enshrine the place of the nation within "a universal setting" which could allow Southeastern Europe to exist as an example of the successful integration of both ideas. Furthermore, he believed in the idea that Southeastern Europe has a "universal vocation" to achieve and demonstrate the success of this integration, so that they could serve as "a universal civilization bridging 'the East' and 'the West'" while actually being neither.[152] Iorga didn't see this liminality as being a problem – rather he thought of it as a strength capable of contributing to global civilization effectively. As Mishkova makes clear, the Balkan region (if Iorga would permit the term) produced scholars of significant magnitude who managed to accomplish two things. Firstly they contributed a significant amount of innovative ideas and work to the study of the Balkans. More importantly, perhaps, they inspired generations of Western scholars, proving as Mishkova says, that the

[150] Diana Mishkova, "The Balkans as an Idée-Force," *Civilisations* 60, no.2 (2012): 53.
[151] Alex Drace-Francis, "The Prehistory of a Neologism," 6.
[152] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 61.

"movement of concepts and ideas" could break the "mono-dimensional west-to-east pattern" and go in the opposite direction instead.[153]

The Development and Transformation of Internalized Balkanism

Having established the inclination of early Balkanists towards definitions of Balkanism that were based in an understanding of unity through disunity, the time has come to move forward. Edin Hajdarpasic's 2015 book, *Whose Bosnia?: Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914* analyzes questions of how unity and identity were constructed in the Balkans, in so far as Bosnia and its immediate neighbours were concerned. Through a thorough exploration of nationalist and cultural thought throughout its period of study, I argue the book shows the internalization of Balkanism by those living within the region at the time. It is important, however, to make a distinction here. The Balkanism present in the region during the pre-1914 period is not the same pernicious sort of framing which predominates the post-1990s landscape. The forms of Balkanism which Hajdarpasic's work shows have much more in common with the early Balkanists like Cvijić, Shishmanov, and Iorga. Yet it is worth remembering the ulterior motives of many of those early writers in pursuing specific national visions, such as Pan-Yugoslavism (Cvijić) or Romania's Latin-based cultural superiority (Iorga). Thus Hajdarpasic's focus on nationalist thought should not be seen as a break from the framing of the national within the universal. Early 20th century interpretations of Balkanism were able to pursue specific national goals while simultaneously positing the interconnectedness of the region and its many cultures as foundational in those endeavours. This was not a contradiction in terms for early Balkanists, and it should not be viewed as such in Hajdarpasic.

[153] Ibid., 62.

What Hajdarpasic does in his 2015 book is explore how romantic Balkan nationalism is constructed and internalized from 1840 to 1914. He shows the connection that Serbian and (to a lesser extent) Croatian national consciousness had with a history that rejected the Ottoman and the Oriental character of the region, positing it as the "other" from which escape was necessary.[154] Unlike Iorga's plea for an approach that rehabilitated the Ottoman legacy and its role in facilitating the region's unique characteristics, Hajdarpasic shows how nationalist thinkers within the three major nation groups (Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian) constructed their unity by stressing the disunity which the Ottomans brought to the region. A shared identity, specifically from the Serbian point of view, required orienting oneself in connection to "unliberated lands" still under Ottoman suzerainty, such as Kosovo or Bosnia.[155] So strong was this framing that the switch from the oriental Ottomans to the oppressive Austrians as the common enemy suppressing Bosnian civilization was easy to make. This is because of what Hajdarpasic thinks of as a foundational aspect of culture and history which is inscribed on the region, and especially on Bosnia: suffering.

The relationship with Bosnia, as unity rather than disunity, is particularly complex. In the eyes of a nationalist it becomes many things to many people. This includes, primarily, a status as an "unawakened land" in need of protection, and a land where suffering was "a foundational – and continually renewable – sentiment of national consciousness."[156] The focus on "continually renewable" is particularly poignant. It is reminiscent of the potentialities present in Cvijić's never-ending disruptive mobility, but also of Shishmanov's emphasis on cultural borrowings.[157]

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[154] Edin Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2015): 1.
[155] Ibid.,
[156] Ibid., 10.
[157] Mishkova, "Balkans as a cultural-historical space," 54, 45-46.

Key also to the understandings of Bosnia as interpreted by Hajdarpasic is a line of thinking very similar to Boyan Penev's argument that no amount of cultural borrowing could fully replace or erase the authenticity of a region's experience or its peoples.[158]

Thus what is most authentic about Bosnia's experience and cultural reality is, for nationalists and folklorists at least, its shared history of suffering at the hands of oppressors. Serbian nationalists felt the boots of the Ottomans and Habsburgs quite acutely upon their necks, and in the post-independence period constructed a shared idea of primordial suffering, victimization, and martyrdom to tie them to their Bosnian neighbours more strongly.[159] It can therefore be argued that the utility of unity through shared disunity (via colonial interruptions) has potent political currency beyond early Balkan scholars . Hajdarpasic explores these connections by leaning on understandings of folkloric tradition as tools of national-self-fashioning meant to create selective unity through stressing disunity. The result was the creation of a trans-border nationalism that was based in a sense of shared suffering and defiance, as well as romantic and tragic heroic sacrifice.[160] Through the nationalist paradigm we thus get the crystallization of a sort of internalized Balkanism which seeks to inscribe exceptionalism to the region and its constituent peoples. It does this primarily through the consolidation of a martyrdom-based victim-complex based on historical resistance to external forces, rather than a focus on the sort of wide pan-regional interconnectedness which the earlier scholars argued for. It can thus also be argued that the competitiveness of nationalism began to triumph over the initial universal framework that had previously begun to define local Balkan studies. This

[158] Ibid., 48.
[159] Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia?*, 20.
[160] Ibid., 32.

development is particularly noticeable around the time of the Balkan Wars, and the events leading to the start of World War I.

It is the triumph of this nationalism that orientated Serbia, and many Habsburg Slavs, towards increasingly violent actions during the early 20th century in the pursuit of freedom, which included political assassination. Gavrilo Princip's assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914 is only the most famous example, with figures like Bogdan Žerajić and Luka Jukić targeting Austrian officials in 1910 and 1912 respectively.[161] What is important to note is that the construction of these national identities became tied to eternal ideas of sacrifice, heroism, victimization, martyrdom, and duty – all of which are supposedly built on a perceived bedrock of primordial folk-culture waiting to be rediscovered. This aspect of "rediscovery" should be familiar, as it follows a similar line of reasoning to Cvijić and Penev's ideas that it is possible to strip away the cultural influences and borrowings in order to arrive at a more authentic idea of regional or national identity which would always have an immortal character.

The rise of such ideas, which privileged narratives of difference over unity, were thus not able to fully disentangle themselves from the interconnectedness of ideas and experiences which tried to find common ground. In many cases, the scale or frame of reference for connectivity shifted, but it never abandoned the belief that *some* level of South Slavic or Southeastern unity was necessary. In order to explore such an awkward change of reference, it is worth looking at a quote by Borivoje Jevtić, the former roommate of Gavrilo Princip. He argued that cultural awakening, understood as a gradual process that could eventually lead to freedom and open democracy, was:

[161] Paul Jackson, „"Union or Death!": Gavrilo Princip, Young Bosnia and the Role of „Sacred Time" in the Dynamics of Nationalist Terrorism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 1 (2006): 54-56.

> "Good for the northern country and its inhabitants at a much higher level of civilization, [but] was not applicable to Bosnia, which had no corresponding culture and which for its awakening needed the smell of blood…"[162]

Through this example there exists a conceptualization of regional identity which is divided by a difference in perceived culture. In some areas, here Bosnia, the forces of unity have proved no match for those of disunity and disruption. Whereas the northern country, a likely reference to Habsburg Slav and Czech lands, had all the cultural trappings necessary to flourish as a free civilization, lands like Bosnia did not. Thus the universal unity of the Balkan Peninsula or of Southeastern Europe is imperilled. Only through violent and persistent action can the issue be forced, and the gap closed.

It would be premature to suggest that the framework of unity through disunity had been totally overpowered in the lead up to the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and the First World War. However the potency of nationalist rhetoric, from across the Balkan Peninsula, placed ever increasing focus on blood and sacrifice as characteristic qualities of the Balkans. Ideas of gradual cultural borrowing, or a shared authentic identity common to all were losing ground. With regards to how Serbia viewed itself and its relationship with neighbouring lands like Bosnia, the connection for Hajdarpasic was quite clear. The connection between an identity of self-sacrifice and primordial suffering was fully wedded to the use of violence and murder as a nationalistic and culture making political tool.[163] In this way the rampant ideology of nationalism could be seen as another disruptive force to mirror the constant migration of people and cultures of Cvijić, or of the imperial conquests and orders of the Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, Austrians, fellow

[162] Ibid., 52.
[163] Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia?*, 157-158.

Balkanites, and the Old Thracians as suggested by some of his contemporaries like Iorga or Shishmanov.

What is at stake through the analysis in this section is the transformation of Balkanism from its late 19th and early 20th century understandings of universal interconnectivity, into the barbaric, violent, and irrationally nationalistic dimensions it would eventually come to hold in memories of the region over the 20th century. Of particular interest are events around the Balkan Wars, World War One, World War Two, and the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s – all of which worsened the reputation of the region as a "land of terror, fire, and sword"[164]. In both sets of definitions and understandings, Balkanism is internalized by the various peoples of the Balkans (and Southeastern Europe) themselves. This internalization is what allowed for innovative and ground breaking work by many of the early scholars this thesis has mentioned.[165] Unfortunately this internalization also allowed for a transformation of frameworks through which the national frame of reference eventually came to win out. The uglier sides of nationalism are what put the Balkans on what seems in hindsight like a collision course with the Yugoslav Wars and Bosnian Genocide. That historical realities are much more complicated than that hardly needs to be stated, but respecting this transformational moment during the early 20th century is crucial. In so much as modern Balkanism is internalized as a resistance to both the West and the Balkans itself, there exists the struggle of these two internalized ideas. The existence of Bakić-Hayden's Nesting Orientalisms, even in the examples of neighbourly discrimination in Chapter 1's case studies, is extremely telling.

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[164] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117.

[165] Although this section has given overwhelming attention to Shishmanov, Cvijić, and Iorga, the full range of Balkan and Southeast European scholars of that period who had an impact on Balkan (and even Western) studies is much larger, but due to considerations of space, economical choices needed to be made.

It is also worth underscoring that the Balkans currently exists in a liminal state where its frame of reference has again shifted due to a new force: that of the EU. As demonstrated particularly in Chapter 1's case studies of Croatia and Slovenia, entering Europe is both the escape from Balkanism, but also an acknowledgement of its existence since the need for distinction exists. By the same token Serbia must occupy the position of the "other", to replace the previous Ottoman, Austrian, or Communist oppressors. This chain of dominos continues, with each nation denigrating its eastern, and thus more "Balkan" neighbours. On the surface this appears to affirm the completion of disunity's victory over unity, yet there is a catch.

It is not that the dream of Balkan unity has totally died, but rather that the frame of reference has simply gone from an internal Southeastern European one, to a wider pan-European alternative. In one way or another, the nations of the Balkans today work towards EU-integration and stress their interconnectedness to a pan-European history and civilization. A brief look at this was seen in Raza and Lindstrom's case study of Tuđman's Croatia, Patterson's examination of the same discourse in Slovenia, and Melis et al's exploration of Croatia's role as a civilization bridge to Europe.[166] This thesis also demonstrated how narratives of a shared European history might look like through Sawyer's study of national museums in Southeastern Europe.[167] That the nations furthest away from EU membership might hold the highest levels of resistance to EU integration is a sign of internal struggle in the region, but the general orientation still generally points West.

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[166] Maple Raza and Nicole Lindstrom, "Balkan Is Beautiful: Balkanism in the Political Discourse of Tudman's Croatia," *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures* 18, no. 4 (2004): 628-650.; Patrick Hyder Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason: The Boundaries of Balkanism in Slovenian, Austrian, and Italian Discourse," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 110:141.; Claudia Melis, Nicholas Wise, and Jelena Đurkin Badurina, "Geo-political Complexities of Governmentality and Balkanism: Deconstructing UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage Discourse," *Political Geography* 95 (May 2022): 1-10.

[167] Andrew Sawyer, "National Museums in Southeast Europe: (En)countering Balkanism?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 27, (2014): 115-127.

The Theoretical Place of Balkanism in More Recent Scholarship

Having charted the early 20th century understandings of Balkanism, as well as how these were challenged by nationalist interpretations, this thesis then discussed the duality of Balkanism's internalization – both as a framework for unity, but also as one that underscored violent struggle. The final thing this chapter will consider is Balkanism as it is more recently considered by local scholars.

In a book review of Tanja Zimmermann and Aleksandar Jakir's 2015 *Europe and the Balkans: Decades of 'Europeanization'?,* Branislav Radeljić unpacks some of the very issues the previous section ended on. The introduction to the book begins with a discussion of "Titostalgia" and "Balkanophobia" as representative of anti-European and pro-European sentiments within the Balkan Peninsula respectively.[168] As Radeljić points out, the orientation of Balkan nations towards the EU is sometimes often confusing, for both sides, as there is uncertainty over what the EU actually is.[169] To be a part of the EU is, on the surface, a ticket out of the quagmire of Balkanism and into the gilded halls of European civilization. However as the discussion of Croatia's ongoing struggles in Chapter 1 of this thesis demonstrates, EU membership is far from a guarantee of belonging.

What is also interesting about *Europe and the Balkans* is the attention paid to the concept of self-Balkanism, similar to our concept of internalized Balkanism. Both Balkanism and self-Balkanism are "a two-fold process happening in the [sphere of] Europe-Balkan interconnectedness."[170] Even today, there is always a "Balkanic Other" which has internalized Balkanism and inflicts it upon itself, but there is also "a Western subject" who finds ways to

[168] Branislav Radeljić, "Identities in the Balkans: assessing the politics of nationalization and Europeanization," *European Politics and Society* 18, no. 4 (2017): 557.
[169] Ibid., 558.
[170] Ibid.,

identify and connect with that Balkanic Other." Needless to say, the Western subject is as capable of misinterpretation as it is of successful identification with that "other'. Nevertheless as Radeljić states, this process of external and self-Balkanism is not meant to serve as a process of disqualification, but predominantly of identification.[171] For the Balkanic self-self-Balkanism is a process of identity discovery and negotiation: of figuring out the right balance between Westernization and regional authenticity. In contrast for the Western-self, Balkanism is a frame of mind and of being worth discarding in order to belong more properly to a unified Europe.

In Chapter 2 of Nikolina Bobic's *Balkanism and Balkanization: Fragmentation, Grouping and Excess*, a deeper examination which problematizes modern Balkanism and balkanization, and how it affected the region's development takes place.[172] Bobic argues that while the reality of the homogenous nation state was allowed to develop more gradually in the West, the homogenizing process was imposed over the disparate populations of the Balkans by local elites during, and at the expense of, the Ottoman withdrawal from Europe. The region, historically known "as having the greatest ethnic heterogeneity of cultures, languages and ethnicities in Europe" would now have to deal with certain civil unrest as it tried to untangle its vast diversity in order to fit into established Western models.[173] For Bobic the process of this disentanglement, and the violence it entailed, earned the Balkans its barbaric and uncivilized reputation during the Balkan Wars, and the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s only worsened things. Indeed placing the origins of this reputation, or at least it's most prominent early crystallization, within the Balkan Wars is exactly what Todorova does as well.[174] For Bobic The horrors of the

[171] Ibid.,
[172] Nikolina Bobic, "Balkanism and Balkanization: Fragmentation, Grouping and Excess," in *Balkanism and Global Politics: Remaking Cities and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2019), 23-54.
[173] Ibid., 25.
[174] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 118.

1990s "cemented the image of the Balkans as a rogue region and a chaotic frontier" where "racial and ethnic disagreements have always been deep-seated and thus predestined for eternal conflict, since 'civilized ways' are not possible there."[175]

Bobic also carefully links the conceptualization of balkanization with Balkanism. Balkanization, as a political process of fragmentation, had problematic and inaccurate connotations around social, economic, political, and civilizational backwardness. That the Balkans was chosen as the reference, even by scholars like Eric Hobsbawm, is telling.[176] Indeed the narrative around what it meant to have a potentially "Balkanized Europe" was imbued with ideas of "introversion, lack of dialogue and willingness to collaborate" and the inability to grow or live up to the "meaning of Western civilization and democracy."[177] As Bobic notes many of these ideas of inadequacy and failure were linked to the newness of modern nation-state experiments in the post-1918 Balkans, but the problem with this was that many of the states had already existed for several decades by then – and often with no small amount of success.[178] What is particularly pernicious about balkanization as understood in this context is its overwhelming reliance on the West, both as saviour but also as judge. It is here that Bobic explains how "balkanization is thus implicated in the Balkanist imaginary where Europe is seen as civilized, reasonable and tolerant while the Balkans are portrayed as a place of wilderness, irrationality and unending conflict."[179]

What is of particular importance for Bobic, is to push the question beyond Todorova's initial concerns about how to reverse the narratives of primitive backwardness to highlight

[175] Bobic, "Balkanism and Balkanization," 25.
[176] Ibid.,
[177] Ibid.,
[178] Ibid., 25-26.
[179] Ibid., 26.

Balkan development. Indeed what she notices is that Balkanism actually has two additional agendas that need unpacking. It is thus worth reproducing her entire quote:

> "The first is that this one part of the world has historically never been developed and civil, and that it needs to be 'trained' to become so. Second, it is held that the need for this training is limitless since history purportedly shows that violence persistently erupts in the region despite – oddly – the historic intervention of 'tried and tested' democratic policies that have made the West and enduring beacon of civility and peace."[180]

The ideas presented here are worth thinking about. Not only does modern Balkanism contain a cornucopia of stereotypes as well as incomplete and inaccurate presumptions about the region, but it also has built into it a Western escape hatch. Through the lens of Balkanism the West never has to take responsibility for its own ignorance or role in perpetuating insecurities and/or disruptions in the region that might hold the Balkans back. As the region was never developed in the first place, there was nothing to accidently destroy by intervening. Since the Balkans kept failing, they must still need help. Never is it suggested to one mired in Balkanism that a prominent contributing factor of that failure might in fact be Western meddling itself.

One final contribution from Bobic worth mentioning is how the 1990s Yugoslav conflicts created a five stage process of balkanization. The first four refers to the various conflicts and periods of violence, starting with the brief war in Slovenia in 1991, then moving on to Croatia, Bosnia, and NATO's 1999 intervention over Kosovo. The fifth stage is the most interesting one, as it related to developments of the post-conflict Balkans, and the ways in which they've continued balkanizing, i.e. fragmenting in the Western but also local imaginary. For Bobic, one way this takes place is through a political redrawing of the region to create a "Western Balkans", in which all the so-called problem children of the former-Yugoslavia are placed, with the

[180] Ibid.,

addition of Albania due to practical geographic considerations.[181] According to Pål Kolstø the EU is playing a double game with this wording. "Western Balkans" implies both the inclusionary possibility of entering the EU, and thus the "West", but also the exclusionary status of "Balkan" which is to be left outside the gate.[182] By entering into the EU the designation of "Balkan" is supposed to be dropped, but by reinforcing the idea of "Western Balkans" the EU is merely reinforcing a Balkanist understanding of the region's liminality. They are, for Kolstø, "simultaneously of Europe and outside Europe."[183] What is especially noticeable is that the EU and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development periodically leave Croatia out of its definitions of the "Western Balkans", while Slovenia sits outside of it as a matter of course.[184] This creates and underscores an understanding that accession to the EU could remove one from this new politically charged categorisation of "Western Balkans", as it seems to have done for Croatia. Yet for the time being, those still in the "Western Balkans" are kept waiting. According to Bobic's understanding, this is because "these unruly Western Balkans areas still carry the Balkanist slur of an imaginary 'ghetto enclave' of violence."[185] This is why one of the fundamental linchpins for prospective Western Balkan accession into the EU is the acknowledgment of war crimes and genocide by those nations still waiting. Yet as Bobic persuasively argues, this requirement is peculiarly selective. Croatia was allowed to brush over and erase its genocidal WWII past, and was seemingly given a pass by the EU for the ethnic cleansing of around 200,000 Serbs in 1995.[186] As Bobic points out, this isn't to diminish the crimes committed by Serbs and Bosnians during the 1990s, but mainly to shed light on how

[181] Ibid., 35.
[182] Pål Kolstø, " 'Western Balkans' as the New Balkans:Regional Names as Tools for Stigmatisation and Exclusion," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 7 (2016): 1246-1247.
[183] Ibid., 1247.
[184] Bobic, "Balkanism and Balkanization," 35, 37.
[185] Ibid., 35.
[186] Ibid., 38.

some histories of violence are allowed to be forgiven and sanitized more easily than others, and how this difference is still deciding the issue of EU membership today.[187] What is most important is that it is the West, here seen through the EU, which decides the criterion and draws the political boundaries around how the Balkan states are to be treated vis-à-vis their relationship to Western Europe. It is also the EU that holds a powerful key for how Balkanist or Western each nation is within the larger European imaginary.

A 2022 article by Martina Plantak and Edina Paleviq further explores the hypothesis that narratives of regional identity are still much more present in the Yugoslav nations which have not yet entered the European Union.[188] They argue not only for the existence of Balkanism within internal media of the region, but for its utilization as an everyday tool. Because of Balkanism, terms such as "Balkanac" (or Balkanite) carries with it implicit negative connotations which are felt within the region. Plantak and Paleviq point out the problematic implications of this, as it means the regional identity of the Balkans is partially built upon a self-recognized negative self-image.[189]

As mentioned by works and case studies discussed earlier, Croatia and Slovenia are still the most vehemently anti-Balkan, seeking instead as much distance from the associated terminology as possible to advance their inherent European-ness.[190] In discussing the contributions of other scholars, such as Ljiljana Šarić, Plantak and Paleviq also note that the usage of the term "Balkans" for the purposes of self-identification in ex-Yugoslavia "was extremely rare, if not non-existent", and thus the media's obsession with the terminology is a more recent post-war

[187] Ibid.,
[188] Martina Plantak and Edina Paleviq, "Banal Balkanism?" – Rethinking Banal Nationalism and Regional Identity in the Post-Yugoslav Media Space," *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 21, no. 1 (2022): 1-22.
[189] Ibid., 4.
[190] Ibid., 5.

phenomenon.[191] By examining the language and terminology of 56 media portals in the different Post-Yugoslav countries, Plantak and Paleviq seem to demonstrate that an affinity for a "Balkan" related identifier, despite its potentialities for negative connotations, is still strongest in those countries furthest away from EU membership, with the notable exception of Kosovo which has a strong reliance on Western relationships.[192]

The final article this chapter will look at is Derek Bryce and Senija Čaušević's 2019 "Orientalism, Balkanism and Europe's Ottoman Heritage." It seeks to understand the role of modern Balkanism within the tourism industry of the Balkans, using a case study of Bosnia, North Macedonia, and Albania. The authors chart how each nation predicts and works with the expectations of Western tourists to accommodate Balkanist understanding and to meet the Western demand for unique exoticism that straddles the line between the West and the East.[193] In so doing, they demonstrate that the West, as seen through Europe, has what they call a natural "disinclination to accept the Ottoman cultural and heritage legacy" in Europe as capable of contributing to any meaningful construction or discourse towards the development of the West. In fact, they stress that "such an erasure" of any cross-cultural exchanges "was and is necessary to Europe/the West's subsequent emergence in universalist guise."[194] In essence, much like with many internal Balkanist orientations, the West also needs to bury the Orient and any debts to it if it is to stake a claim for its existence as the de-facto culture and civilization for the rest of the world to aspire towards. Yet contextualizing that "Orient" is necessary for any Western understanding of why the Balkans exists as it does – a question which gets to the unspoken root

[191] Ibid.,
[192] Ibid., 16-17.
[193] Derek Bryce and Senija Čaušević, "Orientalism, Balkanism and Europe's Ottoman Heritage," *Annals of Tourism Research* 77 (2019): 92.
[194] Ibid., 93.

of what most Western tourists visiting the Balkans would like to know. Balkanism is posited by Bryce and Čaušević as a potentially more useful framework than Orientalism for analysing the tourism sector within the region.[195]

The issue of interpretations of the Balkans by Western Europe is that any attempt meant to arrive at a conclusive definition of what it means to be European, will necessarily involve a debate over what should and should not be included. The Balkans as a land full of heterogeneity has stood out in a myriad of ways under the Western gaze for most of its history, and as such is sure to cause conceptual problems as the borders of the EU eventually expand to incorporate them. Bryce and Čaušević explore the arguments of several scholars in this regard, especially Julia Kristeva's *Crisis of the European Subject*.[196] For Kristeva, it's of vital importance that what she calls "the cultural memory" underpinning European identity should include the combined legacies of Orthodoxy, as well as Latin and Protestant Christianity.[197] With several Balkan nations already in the EU, including Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Croatia, this approach is argued as having some immediate practical utility.[198] Yet what is crucially missing from Kirsteva's formulation is the Ottoman culture. For Kristeva the Ottomans, and by extension Islam, serves not as an avenue for inclusion into Europe, but rather as the "other" which the Balkans needed to successfully vanquish using "the spiritual power of Orthodoxy" and modern nationalism in order to finally be able to "return" to Europe.[199] As Bryce and Čaušević note, relying somewhat on Ian Almond, there is no real inclusive place in Kristeva's conceptualizations for a non-Judaeo-Christian legacy when it comes to any idea of "European

[195] Ibid.
[196] See Julia Kristeva's *Crisis of the European Subject*, trans. Susan Fairfield (New York: Other Press, 2000).
[197] Bryce and Čaušević, "Orientalism, Balkanism and Europe's Ottoman Heritage," 94.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.

subjectivity." Thus all "cultural memory" is necessarily contingent on constructed frames of selectivity, which can be as inclusionary or exclusionary as required. [200]

In the estimation of Bryce and Čaušević, Balkanism allows for a position that is not the Balkans *against* the West, which is how it's Ottoman/Oriental legacy is often perceived. Instead if the Orient is the West's opposite, the Balkans can be the West's internalized other.[201] By meeting the West halfway, Balkanism at least allows for an open corridor of cultural exchange and study, which renders the region as less likely to be written off wholesale whenever discussions of its contributions to the rest of Europe surface. This issue of how the region might be meant to move forward, in the face of such internal and external pressures and conceptualizations, will occupy Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the local intellectual legacy of Balkanism and how it was understood by early Balkan scholars in the late 19th and early 20th century. It has similarly explored the transformative process via nationalism of a vision of the Balkans that has gone from a focus on commonality to a focus on increasing distinction and difference. Through this journey the innovative thoughts of several Balkan scholarly titans including Cvijić, Shishmanov and Iorga to name only a few were explored. The ground work was also laid for how each set of ideas could in some ways still be incorporated by nationalist thought to justify state-building exercises.

What this chapter has tried to do is place local Balkan scholars back on the center stage, and to powerfully argue that they had a strong hand in the formation of their own region's

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

identity. They did not eerily follow in the footsteps of Western scholars, but pioneered the field. A sampling of modern scholars from the past few years, have used the theme of Balkanism to explore questions of identity, Integration and geopolitical orientation today. Those scholars, existing in an interconnected world of academic association, nevertheless owe a debt to the works of those Balkanists who have come before them. By shedding more light on the contributions of local Balkan scholars throughout history, and tracing their ideas in time, it becomes possible to reinscribe agency to the Balkan region for its own region making. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this is one of them most fundamental steps for challenging and taking control over the narrative of Balkanism once and for all.

Chapter Three
Moving Beyond Balkanism:
How Dismantling the Western Gaze Can Shatter the Balkanist Binary

Introduction

This final Chapter will seek to further problematize and unravel the Balkanist binary. In so doing I will lean on a postmodern conceptualization of the Western gaze as both participating in Balkanism while also being saturated by it. The way in which the West conceives of the Balkans for all intents and purposes "creates" the Balkans as modern Balkanism understands it, albeit not without agency and input from the Balkans themselves. Once the first section of this chapter has gone through how scholars might unravel the Balkanist binary, the next section will further explore the dark potentialities of postmodernism, particularly by linking it to how Western media transformed itself into passive and uncritical "watchers" of the war and chaos within Yugoslavia in the 1990s. This will involve introducing Meštrović's 1996 theory of Postemotionalism. The third section will make a serious effort at dismantling Western subjectivities in order to "break" Balkanism in ways that will hopefully allow us to move past it. Finally a conclusion will reiterate some of the most important contributions and what is at stake for this project as a whole, while also linking our discussions of perception of Balkanism and the 1990s to the modern political climate in Europe and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Unraveling the Balkanist Binary

In a 2016 essay, Chaslav Koprivitsa argues that "Balkan" as an identity is a construction which does not conform to organic regional realities, but is imposed and internalized through a long history of European involvement and interference.[202] Moreover Koprivitsa argues that despite organic efforts to construct self-identities from within, the various Balkan nations are beholden to the acceptance and thus de facto permission of Western European models and constructs. Put simply, each nation's identity as uniquely European or un-Balkan is often

[202] Chaslav D. Koprivitsa, "'Balkanism' as Discourse(s) of Power(lessness). Towards the Questionability of Narrativism," *European Quarterly on Political Attitudes and Mentalities* 5, no. 3 (2016): 56-69.

predicated on whether the Western world will believe those arguments of belonging. This lack of narrative power, beholden as Balkan identity construction is to Europe, betrays both the existence and longevity of Balkanism. Furthermore, it underscores the existence of a Balkanist binary. Each nation in the region must be either European or "Balkanic". There is little room or tolerance for "in-between-ness", as such liminality is incongruous with the Western ethos.

This thesis discussed the strategies and efforts of several regional nations in escaping the "Balkanic" designation. Recalling Patterson's study of Slovenia, there is the reminder of how one-sided the conversation can look. For all of the cultural and historical ammunition it had, Slovenia still felt the need to look for Western approval in proving its "non-Balkan-ness", and thus its strong "European-ness." Croatia has moved in a similar fashion in constructing its post-Yugoslav identity in opposition to a Balkan "other". For the most part Bosnia, as shown by Federica Tarabusi, seems much more stuck in its liminality, and thus is more at the mercy of the Balkan binary.[203] Serbia for its part more readily adopts its Balkanic identity, often resisting westernization and allying itself more strongly with Russia, who is always in the picture where the Balkans is concerned and which strongly defines itself in opposition to the West and the EU. In framing this issue of identity through the question of narrative, it is also worth keeping the contributions of Hywel Dix from Chapter 1 in mind. In particular it may be worth revisiting the idea that narratives of the Balkans were, and often still are, typically contextualized for the Western audience first.

It might help our discussion to consider a particular author whose works have often played with the question of audience and Western-ness vs. Balkan-ness. One of the most famous

[203] Federica Tarabusi, "Development, Balkanism, and New (im)moralities in Postsocialist Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Focaal* 2020, no. 87, (June, 2020): 75-88.

Serbian writers of the past century was Momo Kapor (1937–2010). He produced numerous essays, news articles, novels, and even paintings, and in almost every work he observed his fellow (post)Yugoslavs and wrote as closely (and humorously) as he could about what constituted their "soul." A running theme throughout his observations often had to do with unpacking just what makes the Balkan peoples so unique, yet nevertheless part of Europe. In the final years of his life, before throat cancer claimed him in 2010, he collected many of his articles touching on this question of "soul" and put them into two books: *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality*, and *The Magic of Belgrade*. [204] Both works are part satire and part social commentary, and both of them are aimed at helping European outsiders understand what the people of (in this case) Serbia are really like. *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality* is particularly interesting for the ways in which Kapor romanticizes what makes the country different. He explores the intricacies and nuances of Serbian cuisine, including drinking and Café culture, as well as literature, lifestyle, and hospitality. In almost every essay of the book there is a reference to the gaze of Western Europe and the response to it. Indeed, from the very first essay, titled "To Travel, to Travel", Kapor makes the following observation:

> "Ours is a small country, but our desire for what lies beyond our borders is just as great as that of larger countries – and even continents. The outside world has always come to us more often than we have ventured into the world… For my generation, the first encounter with the outside world occurred in Italy … the first place one arrived after crossing the border of what was then Yugoslavia. In lovely Italy, no one snoozed… on deserted rail station platforms… No one ran from the train to fill his empty bottle at the stations' fountain – there was only a dark-complexioned man in an impeccable white jacket and black bowtie who pushed his cart filled with western assortments."[205]

For Kapor the West was always an orientation, a direction to look towards in curiosity, wonder, and even desire. Yet the West is not always a universal source of knowledge or superior

[204] Momo Kapor, *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality*, 7th ed. (Belgrade: Dereta, 2014); and *The Magic of Belgrade* (Belgrade: Knjiga Komerc, 2008). *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality* was originally published in 2006.
[205] Kapor, *A Guide*, 8.

civilization, as the clean and efficient Italian train station might imply. In a latter chapter titled "The Writer's Club", Kapor admonishes the modern Western writer for his solitary lifestyle, and basks in nostalgia for a time when the Belgrade Writer's Club was the center of European cultural, artistic, and literary life, where laureates from across the continent would eat, discuss, argue, and even fist-fight together in smoky rooms, before washing it all down with some brandy.[206] The question of nostalgia features heavily in many of Kapor's writings, and is mainly a tool used to defend the region from detractors, both internal and external. Yet present in his exploration of the past and present is equal parts criticism and light-hearted appreciation. For Kapor, the Balkans is the way it is, and although he can explore the nuances and attempt to translate them for an outsider, the unique "soul" of the region – what might be called its Balkanism – is like the Writer's Club: something you just had to live through to understand.[207] Thus even when the narratives come from a Balkan perspective, the West will just have to make do with the expectations of liminality and semi-exoticness which writers like Kapor know they have come to expect.

That Kapor titles the first book *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality* betrays the semi-seriousness with which he took his task of bridging the gap. Indeed to go back to the first essay in the collection, he understood that: "because we live between the East and the West, we believe that truth and human measure are somewhere in the middle. We have come to know both sides of the world."[208] Yet there is also humour here since he also quotes Tin Ujević, who he refers to as a

[206] Ibid., 83-87.
[207] Another book worth mentioning is Momo Kapor's *Poslednji let za Sarajevo* [The Last Flight To Sarajevo] (Belgrade: Knjiga komerc, 2004). First published in 1995. It's main character is a parody of a Balkan man who embodies all the traits traditionally associated with European refinement, but who nevertheless is haunted and tortured by his past in Sarajevo prior to and during the war. The contradiction in his character could be interpreted as a warning that you can never fully escape your cultural past, no matter how hard you try to "change" to enter Europe.
[208] Kapor, *A Guide*, 10.

wise old drunkard. He writes: "Neither East nor West exist at all in a geographical sense, because the Earth is round…" thus they are actually "two colossal fictions and phantasmagorias, and the impenetrable gap of the future that will, so we believe, belong to all of us…"[209] Thus despite Kapor's belief that there might be something untranslatable about the Balkans, the region is nevertheless positioned as being in the right place to actually live up to its role as the crossroads or bridge of Europe.

Let us again briefly return to Koprivitsa's stance that a "Balkan" identity is a fiction. In so far as the entire South Eastern European region is concerned, Momo Kapor would likely have little issue with this idea in principle. He would probably bristle at any suggestion that the Balkans, or Yugoslavia itself, was incapable of exercising its own agency in the face of external narratives, and would likely wield his pen with great sarcastic joy in response to such thinking. Although Koprivitsa's outline of the historical contexts and pressures of the region are rather cursory and run the risk of essentializing Balkanism, his approach does provide some interesting ideas. Among these is the notion that narratives of identity always provide an incomplete picture, and as such the idea that the identity of the Balkans was predominately constructed by outside forces is equally incomplete. The West and Russia might constantly try to influence and pull the Balkans in different directions, but like what Boyan Penev would have argued, neither can replace or overwrite the indigenous agency of the Balkans and what makes the region unique.

In a move reminiscent of the more cautious early 20th century scholars analyzed in the previous chapter, Koprivitsa rightly argues that the existence of a monolithic Balkan identity is dubious.[210] Identities in the Balkans are in fact nebulous, shifting, and difficult to pin down. To

[209] Ibid.,
[210] Koprivitsa, "'Balkanism' as Discourse(s)," 58.

go back to Shishmanov's idea of cultural borrowings, and particularly how Penev adapted it to focus on issues of authenticity, the Balkans is actually made up of a variety of national and cultural identities which have evolved through significant interaction with each other. This is of course to be understood alongside influential ideas such as Cvijić's metanastasic movements.[211]

This makes the region a good target for conceptual reimagining, which due to the reality of power dynamics favours Western constructs. Indeed for Koprivitsa, the various nations of the Balkans can be plucked out of the "Balkan muddle" whenever it suits the rest of Europe[212]. In essence they can go from being demonized to being welcomed into Europe at any time, given the right geopolitical alignment of interests. While there is a certain amount of intrinsic truth to how Koprivitsa frames this issue, his cynicism towards the ability of the Balkans to construct its own meaningful self-identifications while stuck in the quagmire of the Balkanist binary is intellectually depressing. Koprivitsa's approach is also fairly silent on the issue of Russia and its influence on the region as a counterbalance to the West and the dynamics of Western constructs or identity impositions. It also leaves little room or hope for a compromise which does not involve a near wholesale rejection of European cooperation or of inevitable European colonization. It will be the task of this chapter to lay many of these issues bare, and to suggest ways by which it might become possible to dismantle both the Balkanist binary, but also the gaze of the West itself.

The Dark Side of Postmodernism, Postemotionalism, and *Balkan Ghosts*

Andrew Hammond embarks on an extensive survey and discussion of the Western traveling writing of the 1990s to examine the presence of Balkanism and to analyze what impact

[211] Diana Mishkova, "The emergence of the Balkans as a cultural-historical space," in *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (London: Routledge, 2018): 45-46, 48, 54.
[212] Koprivitsa, "'Balkanism' as Discourse(s)," 58.

it, and the postmodernist vision of Europe that spawned it, had on the development of identities in the region.[213] Also present in his article is the understanding that the chaos which constituted the Balkans in the 1990s was interpreted by the West as due to some sort of inherent "bent for self-destruction", rather than a result of serious political and economic pressures placed on the region as a result of rampant globalization.[214] According to Hammond, the Post-Cold War landscape left the West with a vacuum to fill: who was going to be the new ideological bogey man to replace the Soviets? Hammond argues the answer was the Balkans, which "were chosen as a little piece of Cold War Eastern Europe to be retained as the model of otherness" for the younger generation, similarly to what their parents had felt with the USSR and Communism.[215]

A serious question posed by Hammond is what impact did the West have on its denigrating approach to the Balkans. A key part of this is understanding to what extent the representations that developed actually helped the West consolidate itself and its cultural influence or civilizational "ethos". In discussing the idea of postmodern scepticism, Hammond suggests that it has caused a mass "loss of faith in the grand narrative" of Western civilization, and that that this "has undermined one half of the traditional binary."[216] What is meant by the traditional binary is the view which the West has against the rest, underlined by conceptualizations of the progressive, prosperous, and civil self, against the backwards, impoverished, and barbaric "other". I argue that such scepticism of the Western ethos could also prove useful for disrupting the Balkanist binary of European vs. Balkanic as well. If it is beneficial to argue from the position that the Western version of its legacy of political and economic colonialism in the

[213] Andrew Hammond, "The danger zone of Europe: Balkanism between the Cold War and 9/11," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2005): 136.
[214] Ibid., 135-136.
[215] Ibid., 135.
[216] Ibid., 137.

Balkans should be taken to task, as it is has been in Africa and other regions of the world, then a similar critical analysis of its social colonialism in the region is just as valuable. In particular, it becomes paramount that scholars look at the ways images of the region have been constructed and influenced under a Western gaze. By first understanding the pernicious nature of these Western visions, filtered through Balkanism, it becomes possible to focus more powerfully again on the identity, agency, and reality of the Balkans as seen by those who live there.

This thesis is not advocating for an absence of Western-Balkanic cross-cultural exchange. Rather I am harkening back to the likes of Shishmanov, Penev, Iorga and Cvijić, discussed in Chapter 2 and brought up throughout this thesis. As the Balkans borrowed from each other, yet still managing to hold on to their own forms of authenticity, so too could the agency inherent in such a cross-cultural process apply to the modern Balkan Peninsula as well. The main difference is that within an increasingly globalizing world, the framework of where this cultural borrowing comes from takes on much larger international and intercontinental dimensions, with the EU being the closest geographical player.

A critical contribution of Hammond's is when he discusses how postmodernism, and particularly its penchant for cynical self-criticism, impacts how the region was perceived in the 1990s and beyond. He leans on language and literary scholars like Mary Louise Pratt to discuss how modern Western writers followed a predictable pattern when writing about the violence or otherwise negative aspects of postcolonial societies in the decolonizing third-world. These writers always tend to first condemn the society, before trivializing or essentializing their realities, and then finishing by completely disassociating from that society. [217] This mode of

[217] Ibid., 138.

disassociation is the same force discussed as rendering the Balkans contextually empty in Chapter 1.

Critically, this dissociation is a product of postmodernism—specifically the cynical and judgemental aspect. The problem occurs, as Hammond points out, whenever postmodernism becomes used in a non-western context, especially by the West. If at home the West uses postmodernism to criticize itself and its legacy, then when viewing non-Western societies, especially via travelogues, the script becomes-mind-blowingly uncritical. It is worth analyzing Hammond's quote directly:

> "As if wishing to harrow, to appal, to find relief from the boredom of the postmodern, travellers appear to be hunting down the most shocking aspects of their travelled environment, interpreting, mastering and condemning that environment in the same way that they condemn the mores of a hypermodern West. The only inconsistency is that, in the non-western context, this postmodern gaze deploys an interpretative framework similar in all major features to the racializing practices of both traditional colonial discourse and today's official political rhetoric. In short, what seems radical and oppositional at home is profoundly reactionary abroad."[218]

The issue as outlined by this quote is that the traditional binary which was supposed to be broken by postmodernism does not apply to the non-Western world. If the Balkans try to use postmodernism to resist Westernization as a form of colonization, they are judged harshly as uncivilized, backwards, and reactionary. Any alternative strategies from the post-colonial world which don't rely on the West are met with suspicion. What the Western postmodern gaze fails to perceive is its own hypocrisy. Since it inevitably needs to posit a self when engaging in cross-cultural discourse, the temptation to resort to Western frames of reference is great. The most pernicious one of all is the self-evident Western notion that progress is good, and a lack of it is criminal. Progress has been considered in many forms, but I argue that even the criticism of

[218] Ibid.,

progress is itself a form of progress. Postmodernism can be seen as a progressive development in which traditional mores around power, colonialism, progress, and even the Western ethos are all challenged. Yet at the same time, positing postmodernism as a good thing conflates it with the Western connotations of progress. Suddenly, those who don't ascribe to postmodernism are not progressive – and this means they are not civilized in the mold of the very West postmodernism was designed to criticize. Thus postmodernism cuts both ways. It is a tool of potentially powerful resistance and decontextualizing of old definitions, but it is also prone to uncritical Western judgements and comparisons. In Hammond's words, "this paradoxical mode forms the paradigm of the age: tough, hip, world-weary, negotiating the traditional duality of home and abroad only to bring down both."[219]

There is also an aspect of uncritical thrill seeking which Western commentaries engage with, which also often creates a sense of unproductive passivity – as if watching a train-wreck in slow motion. Hammond sees this as a major "aspect of the postmodern mindset", which for him is the "inability to perceive a foreign crisis as anything other than a distant, even illusionary, media event."[220] Stjepan Meštrović unpacks this in his 1994 *The Balkanization of the West*, which Hammond argues uses Jean Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality. This is essentially the idea that our modern culture is in fact "a society of the spectacle" in which media depictions and imagery are "so prevalent that the boundary between fact and fiction is blurred and the individual becomes merely a consumer of simulations of reality, lacking in coherence, depth or ethical consequence."[221] Indeed this aftermath of hyperreality seems to go some way towards explaining

[219] Ibid.,
[220] Ibid.,
[221] Ibid.,

the passivity of Western journalists and travel writers during the 1990s as discussed by Hammond and this thesis earlier.

It is also perhaps worth looking at the example which best encapsulates all of the pernicious dimensions of postmodernism as imposed on the Balkans via Balkanism. Robert Kaplan's 1993 *Balkan Ghosts* has achieved a level of infamy which far exceeds its alleged influence on President Bill Clinton.[222] As Hammond states, Kaplan's work is unable to find any reason for optimism in the Balkans, "with the author unearthing such an incessant round of strife and antagonism that any possibility of social progress or moral redemption is precluded."[223] Indeed the sort of the language and framing Kaplan uses is highly deterministic, and pins everything wrong with the region on his thesis of "ancient ethnic hatreds" which saturate and cripple the region. The ancient ethnic hatred between the Serbs and the Croats is posited by Kaplan as being behind Yugoslavia's fratricidal Wars in the 1990s.[224] He describes Bosnia as made up of ethnically mixed villages full to the brim with similar savage hatreds and worsened by rampant poverty and alcoholism.[225] Kaplan has similarly uncritical things to say about Macedonia and Kosovo, always stressing the connection between ethnic or racial hatred and the inevitably of violence.

What is perhaps one of Kaplan's most blatant examples of Balkanism (and there are many), is when he takes pains to locate the origin, or "genius loci", for what ties together "the places where people commit atrocities."[226] As Hammond argues, Kaplan finds his answer later in the book in the city of Pristina. The thing which Kaplan found so appalling about Pristina was its

[222] Michael T. Kaufman, "The Dangers of Letting a President Read," *The New York Times*, May 22, 1999. Accessed July 30, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/22/books/the-dangers-of-letting-a-president-read.html
[223] Hammond, "The danger zone," 143.
[224] Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 15.
[225] Ibid., 22.
[226] Ibid., xxiii.

architecture and mere organization. He calls the city "a vomit of geodesic, concrete shapes", and took pains to point out how decrepit wooden stalls can be found alongside brutalist communist-era apartments that "appeared to reel like drunks on cratered hillsides."[227] To use Hammonds wording, it was "all the unpleasantness, conflict and moral disorder that Kaplan" found so abhorrent. Here was a human community, "beset by sectarianism, alcoholism and physical violence", but the primary problem in his mind was that he never managed to feel safe while there.[228] What is critical here, as outlined by Hammond, is that the way Kaplan chooses to represent the Balkans is ridiculously close to racism.[229] Just like the other Western writers affected by the darker sides of postmodernism, he points out the problem in the region (its violence and political collapse), before essentializing the realities (via ancient ethnic hatred), and then totally distancing himself from his subject (by stressing how backward and revolting they are, and how out of place he felt).

To push the point even further, it was not only his own skin that he was worried about. As Hammond further contends, all of Kaplan's posturing about the "congenital evil" of the Balkans is meant as a future threat to the West.[230] With Kaplan the issue has gone beyond mere dissociative voyeurism, and towards the kind of armchair theorizing that can drive policy. Kaplan contended that the history of the twentieth century actually "came from the Balkans." Indeed, "here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming them to hate. Here politics has been reduced to a level of near anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed

[227] Ibid., 48, 41.
[228] Hammond, "The danger zone," 143, Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, 41.
[229] Hammond, "The danger zone," 143.
[230] Ibid.,

up the Danube into Central Europe."[231] This perceived historical impact is even connected to German Nazism:

> "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." [232]

Hammond refers to this claim as foolish, and little more needs be said on that front. Yet what is particular about Kaplan's insistence on the outsized impact of the Balkans is how he links the region to the Middle East. For Kaplan it is the historical impact of the Balkans that created the modern conflict which the European world found itself in the twentieth century. As Hammond points out this was only possible because Kaplan conceived of the Balkans as a "time-capsule world" in which the ethnic tensions and volatile emotions had the primordial distinction of always "upsetting Great Power relations."[233] What is equally important is the fact that Kaplan's Western audience would certainly be following the media spectacle that was the Bosnian War, and so this seed of the Balkan's status as the eternal troublemaker of Europe would find fertile soil in which to grow. As Hammond argues, Kaplan's book "defines the conceptual framework that the vast majority of writers from the period used", and the fate of the entire region was increasingly being seen as inevitable.[234]

An examination of Stjepan Meštrović's theory of Postemotionalism can help us explore the connection between Balkanism and how the Western gaze came to construct, permeate, and become absorbed by it—truly treating the Balkan's as the West's internalized other. Postemotionalism, in its most basic form, is "the manipulation of *emotionally* charged collective

[231] Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, xxiii.
[232] Ibid.,
[233] Hammond, "The danger zone," 144.
[234] Ibid.,

representations of 'reality'".[235] More specifically, postemotionalism is a "mechanism found in Western societies in which the culture industry markets and manipulates dead *emotions* from history that are selectively and synthetically attached to current events."[236] These "dead emotions" are precisely the bread and butter with which Balkan nationalism and Balkanism are made. Our earlier examination using Hajdarpasic for how Serbia and Bosnia were obsessed with narratives of primordial and romantic sacrifice, heroism, and victimization allows us to situate the idea of Kaplan's "ancient ethnic hatreds" within a larger historiography. It is important, however, to distinguish between perception and reality when examining how old feuds and historical justifications are revived and utilized to explain violence. A key part of postemotionalism is the *manipulation* of emotions, and the harnessing of historical experiences to make sense of the present. This does not mean that these historical justifications always exist throughout time in a concrete sense, only waiting for an inevitable spark. What it does mean is that these justifications and motivations are *perceived* to exist, and perceptions are enough for individuals to act.

Meštrović diligently furnishes us with examples of how these old emotions and conceptions are manipulated when attempting to justify and explain the genocidal violence of the 1990s, and crucially he does this in ways that allow us to see the continuation of Balkanism. Meštrović makes the argument that in the early stages of the Yugoslav Wars (and in some circles even until the end of it) the West displayed sympathy for the Serbs, who were seen as victims despite mounting evidence documenting their participation in war crimes and genocide. This "projected sense of victimization stems from quasi-historical arguments in which the Serbs are portrayed as victims of World War II Croatian Ustashe" fascists and even "further back in

[235] Stjepan Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War* (London: Routledge, 1996), 11.
[236] Ibid.,

history, of the Ottoman Turks."[237] Anthony Lewis, a prominent American journalist, is only one intellectual who made a connection between the injustices of the past and those of the 1990s. Fitting nicely with the exploitation of historic memory, he linked German participation in the creation of fascist Croatia during World War II with contemporary German involvement during 1991–92. He claimed that Germany getting involved by formally recognizing Croatian and Bosnian sovereignty, while the war was still ongoing, was "a provocation to the Serbs, even a spark for paranoia."[238] As Meštrović argues, this seems to imply that "Belgrade-sponsored crimes *in Bosnia* in the 1990s are somehow understandable because of Zagreb-sponsored crimes *in Croatia* from World War II."[239] The ease with which such historical and geographic distance is erased and condensed together is emblematic of both postemotionalism and Balkanism. The motivations stay the same, perennially fixed—as do the fundamental characteristics of the region itself, mired in ethnic violence and un-European "otherness". The concept of postemotionalism is an apt one for the phenomenon of "the obfuscation of facts through the use of displaced emotions from history."[240] Meštrović uses this term to understand how the 1990s Yugoslav Wars is perceived by the West and how the West is in turn impacted by its own subjectivity. As this paper has shown so far, modern Balkanism in all of its forms relies on an internalized estrangement which complicates and mystifies the Balkans as an area of study without even necessarily being aware of the process by which this happens. It is the Western gaze (uncritical of its bias and colonizing tendencies) and the local Balkan responses to this gaze (including strategies to conform to or resist it), that unknowingly and unwillingly cooperate in the continued Balkanism of the region.

[237] Ibid., 1.
[238] Ibid., 2.
[239] Ibid.,
[240] Ibid.,

Meštrović illuminates one of the key problems with perceptions and studies of the Balkans, and particularly of the Western view. This is the fact that the rich cornucopia of historic wartime experiences and traumas is continuously revived by politicians and media outlets around the world, and fitted into contemporary contexts. In discussing events as far back as the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, to the 1870s Balkan Crisis, to fascistic and genocidal trauma during World War II, Meštrović refers to this series of events as historic "ghosts" – a consistently undying phenomenon which finds itself directly mirrored in the title of Robert Kaplan's own exercise in postemotional Balkanism - his *Balkan Ghosts*.[241] For Meštrović these *"*historical *relics* are often treated in Western discourse as if they existed in the *present*, so that 'this Balkan War' or 'these Balkan Wars' seem to take on a seemingly postmodern dimension that invokes huge chunks of European, Islamic, and other histories."[242] This blurring of the temporal basis for events in the Balkans is internalized within the Balkans themselves, such that Serbian aggression is rationalized by Belgrade as a justified act motivated by fears of the legacies of Croatian fascism during the 1940s or Islamic domination of the region following 1389. When President Slobodan Milošević "gathered more than a million Serbs on Kosovo Field on June 28, 1989, to commemorate the 600th anniversary" of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, he was actively participating in a postemotional understanding of Serbian history and identity.[243] He played on the fears of perceived Serbian genocide and discrimination at the hands of Kosovar Albanians, and gave fiery speeches encouraging ultranationalist Serbs "to take their fate in their own hands" and

[241] Ibid., 3.
[242] Ibid.,
[243] Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing In twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2002), 142.

pursue active militant struggle against those who were threatening to steal their homes – promising direct support from Belgrade if they did so.[244]

The use of historic victimization as justification for disenfranchisement, suppression, and violence against others is a well-established and repeated trope by the 1990s. What is interesting for Meštrović is that Western governments "accept these rationalizations rather uncritically" and refuse to face up to the skeletons in their own closets.[245] It is more convenient for the West to accept the simplified Balkanist discourse which they helped to build, rather than come to terms with their own postemotional legacies. Examples of these include the French inability to come to terms with its Vichy past, the U.S. still psychologically trapped in Vietnam, and Great Britain's continued delusions of political grandeur post-Empire.

Critically, Postemotional rationalizations by Western powers is positioned by Meštrović as impacting and even hindering policy decisions related to getting involved in the Balkans during the Yugoslav Wars. America's hesitancy stems from its fears of another Vietnam quagmire, while initial British support for Belgrade's violent suppression of Bosnia's Muslims comes from a psychological obsession with insuring stability—itself a holdover from the political considerations of the British Empire during the nineteenth century, when the British supported the Muslim Ottomans against the Balkan upstarts.[246] What is interesting here is that these are internalized *Western* historical traumas which affect perceptions of how to deal with the Balkans. These Western powers on the outside-looking-in are reluctant to critically explore the traumas and contemporary political realities of the Balkans themselves. The West prefers to remain trapped in their own postemotionalism or to simplistically absorb Balkanist

[244] Ibid., 150.
[245] Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion,* 3.
[246] Ibid., 13-14.

rationalizations, even if its hurts their ability to offer meaningful solutions that could mitigate the violence. While the traumas of Croatian fascism/Nazism are invoked in the Western imagination as a justification for Serb fears and violence against Croats in the 1990s, there was little to no effort to expand the discourse of collaboration or resistance during World War II beyond this relationship. To open the door to a discussion of Croatia's role as Europe's largest anti-fascist resistance, to Serbia's prominent pro-Nazi collaboration, or to the massive violence perpetrated by Tito's communists, would be to problematically challenge the neat primordial justifications which the West so readily adopted at the start of the Yugoslav conflicts.[247] Such admissions would also necessitate a deeper examination of the West's own postemotional relationship with its own past collaboration with the Nazis—and how one-sided the conversation has been, such as how Vichy France is swept under the rug while the Croatian Ustaša is revived to explain the 1990s.

The inability of the West to deal with their postemotional obsessions results in a two-faced approach when dealing with the Balkans. For example Bosnian Muslims are perceived as innocent victims, while simultaneously being accused of religious fundamentalism and having their right to secede or defend themselves questioned by Western powers.[248] This uncritical Janus-faced approach is also responsible for how Belgrade is initially awarded the benefit of the doubt for seeking to preserve Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, and how the Serbs' claim to primordial victimization is held up as a justification for their victimization of others – despite how undemocratic and horrific the actual situation had become. The unconscious Eurocentrism of the West, itself a fundamental building block of Balkanism, is always at play. Importantly Meštrović noted that genocidal violence in the post-colonial world had received significantly less

[247] Ibid., 18.
[248] Ibid., 14.

media attention than the Balkans. Indeed, the hyper-focus on the Balkans may have something to do with the unwillingness of a "civilized" and "superior" Europe to admit that genocide can happen so close to home – creating a sort of heightened fascination with the Balkan region.[249] Here too Balkanism rears its head, as there is a prejudice against the Balkans when viewed by the Western gaze. The Balkans is seen as "tribal", and this tribalism is equated with "Africa in the Euro-American collective consciousness."[250]

What Hammond notices, however, is that quite quickly the development of any sort of "sympathy or moral commitment in response to … the Bosnian conflict is replaced by voyeurism."[251] Meštrović calls this "the business of war-watching", and goes to great lengths to paint a picture of just how wide spread it was. He charts out how everyone from the United Nations to the European Community invested primarily in tools and infrastructure that would allow them to *watch*. Indeed "instead of acting decisively in the name of the principles it espouses (universal human rights, the sovereignty of nations), the West has responded with still more ineffective, even perverse, voyeurism."[252] The West decided that it was more important "to send still more monitors to the Balkans, and to protect the monitors, but not the civilian population under fire from Serbian attacks."[253] That those monitors already there are literally observing the violation of safe havens and the execution of war crimes, yet no further protective action is taken, is not lost on Meštrović. Neither is just how insidious, and even profitable, war watching is:

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[249] Ibid.,
[250] Ibid., 14-15.
[251] Hammond, "The danger zone," 138.
[252] Stjepan Meštrović, *The Balkanisation of the West: The Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 79.
[253] Ibid.,

> United Nations *monitors*, European Community *observers*, Western journalists, Helsinki Watch *watchers*, Amnesty International observers, all those television camera crews and even book writers on the Balkans… are now engaged in the business of war-watching. And this perverse, postmodern response to the human suffering in the Balkans is big business, indeed. Millions upon millions of dollars have been and continue to be spent on one of the biggest intellectual exercises in recent years, Balkan war-watching in its many forms…while Balkan people continue to suffer, and the West preaches to the world about the importance of agreeing on a universal standard of human rights."[254]

For Hammond, this entire dilemma is compounded by another pernicious result of how postmodernism can have a dark side. This is the fact that the West refused, for as long as possible once the real violence began, to assign any meaningful credibility to the claims of any of the combatants.[255] Indeed it felt "as if postmodern relativism had entered western government", since as each warring party attempted to support their positions, those claims "were all cynically deconstructed as forms of fiction-making."[256] By trying not to pick sides, the West glossed over the question of culpability, which only furthered "the official claim that all sides were equally guilty for atrocities." As Hammond points out, "the outcome is typically postmodern: the vicarious thrill of the spectacle, yet with no obligation to do anything to help."[257]

The final, perhaps most powerful contribution from Hammond is how he connects his discussion of postmodernism's dark side in the Balkans with how the West was able to further strengthen its position and the place of its civilization ethos as preferable. The media spectacle of war, fed to us via television and newspapers, constituted "a highly symbolic attack on the core values and practices of western society."[258] In essence, the Western viewer came to appreciate what a horrific reality might await them should the Enlightenment ethos of modern Western

[254] Ibid.,
[255] Hammond, "The danger zone," 139.
[256] Ibid.,
[257] Ibid.,
[258] Ibd., 150.

civilization collapse. This created, for Hammond, "an unconscious loyalty both to those civilizational qualities presented as the antithesis of the Balkans and to the state system that preserved them from the spectacle they were witnessing."[259] Critically, this reinforcement of loyalty could only come at the expense of postmodern scepticism. The Balkans through this spectacle, which was itself underscored by postmodernism, served as a frame of reference for the West's alterity. By positioning the Balkans as the example of the other to avoid, the West shored up its own position. In Hammond's phrasing, "the Balkans lack, the European Union is plenitude, and the viewer is made to feel intense gratitude for being on the right side of the equation."[260]

Dismantling Western Subjectivity and Breaking Balkanism

This thesis has already discussed Bryce and Čaušević in the previous chapter, but they also make a critical contribution towards the potential dismantling of Western subjectivity and Balkanism via Postmodernism. One thing they discuss, using Alex Jeffrey and Slavoj Žižek, is how seeing the "Balkans as Europe's internal other" affects how scholars view and construct the region.[261] In particular, Žižek's following thought is explored: "the object of our perception is constituted through the subject's attitude towards it."[262] In so far as Bryce and Čaušević are concerned, the Balkanist construction of the region, largely done by the West, serves to reinforce the validity of "correct" European norms. To dive more deeply into the Žižek article they pull from, Žižek argues that the very image of the Serbs and the Bosnians within the Yugoslav Wars and Bosnian Genocide were seriously impacted by this relationship of construction. Indeed the

[259] Ibid.,
[260] Ibid.,
[261] Derek Bryce and Senija Čaušević, "Orientalism, Balkanism and Europe's Ottoman Heritage," *Annals of Tourism Research* 77 (2019), 94.
[262] Ibid.,; and Slavoj Žižek, "Underground, or Ethnic Cleansing as a Continuation of Poetry by Other Means," *InterCommunication*, no. 18 (1996), paragraph 1 of 19.

West created a reinforced image of Serbia and Bosnia as the demons and victims of the conflict because it was what worked best for the simplistic narratives which the West used to explain how something so brutal could happen on European soil. These are the same sorts of simplistic narratives which define the postemotional reality of the West, as indeed the Balkans *itself* serves as a form of Western postemotionalism. This is because contending with the realities of guilt for mishandling the response in Bosnia, or not understanding realities better is less preferable to hiding behind the shield of Balkanism.

That said, as Žižek argues this simple Western construction of the dichotomy of the demonic Serb and victimized Bosnian was a fiction, which he calls a phantasmagoria, wherein the Serbs needed to keep winning so as to take the lion's share of the blame for the war crimes and "tribal killing" which characterized the war.[263] It is important to note that Žižek himself is not making a judgement on how blame should be divided between the three major sides of the conflict (Serbia, Croatian, and Bosnian) here. Rather he is merely highlighting how the Western gaze worked to push the narrative towards a particular direction which had long term impacts for how Balkanism engendered the region post-war. For Žižek, the West absolutely needed to keep this phantasmagoria alive, and:

> "For that reason, the moment the Serbs began to lose on the battlefield, the West instantly stepped up the pressure and ended the war. The Bosnians had to remain the victims. The moment they were no longer losing, the perception of them changed into that of fanatical Muslim fundamentalists... The truth of the so-called "demonization of the Serbs" resided in the fascination with their victims, which was clearly perceptible in the Western attitude towards horrifying pictures of mutilated corpses, of wounded and crying children, etc. They were horrified by them, yet at the same time they "couldn't avert their eyes."[264]

It is worth linking this aspect of morbid fascination and the inability to look away with our earlier discussion of Hammond and Meštrović. In many ways what this quote is suggesting is

[263] Žižek, "Underground," paragraph 4/19.
[264] Ibid.,

that the West decontextualized the war and it's horrors to serve a particular narrative which made the most sense for the West. The crucial aspect was not how much blame Serbia should receive for its crimes, or even if any of the other sides contributed. Rather the West needed Serbia to stand in as the single best representation of its internal other. The Balkans as the bogeyman, symbolized through Yugoslavia in this war, was condensed down to Serbia for practical reasons, as they were the hegemonic dominant power in whose hands the best official levers for murder and destruction lay. This aspect of the official is another question for Žižek, as he noticed how this entire framing is simultaneously a war between "the 'official' and the true desire" behind how the peoples of the Balkans are framed.[265] Officially the West stood with Bosnia and condemned Serbia as blood thirsty criminals, but in truth the West cared more about maintaining the conceptual and ideological status quo than on actually addressing questions of guilt or immediate aid.

This brings us to an analysis of the first part of his larger quote, which has immediate connections to present-day Western anxieties surrounding Islam, even 26 years later. Within the claim that the West needed Bosnia to lose is a reminder of how Balkanism constructs the region as an internalized other. For this idea to function, there must be some capacity to reach across the divide and thus potentially "pluck" (to use Koprivitsa's phrasing) Bosnia out of the Balkan muddle, leaving Serbia behind as the demonized mirror which the West must avoid. Yet once the status quo is broken, and Bosnia begins to come into its own, the paradigm immediately shifts to Orientalizing, as Bosnia is transformed from victims into potential "Muslim fundamentalists." This betrays a deep-rooted anxiety which runs along the same lines as what Meštrović suggested was the West's postemotional response to Vietnam (for the Americans), or recent suppressions

[265] Ibid.,

of colonial histories (for Europeans). It is also worth reiterating, as Meštrović pointed out, that the Bosnian Muslims were able to be perceived as innocent victims while also being accused of religious fundamentalism because of this Western phantasmagoria. Their own ability and right to defend themselves, even up to winning their own independence, was questioned and challenged by Western powers desperate to maintain control.[266]

For Žižek, one of the first things which must be done if scholars are to make any progress in our understandings of the Balkans and the horrors which occurred specifically in Yugoslavia during the 1990s, is to seriously question the Western gaze, how it is constructed, and to "call into question the innocent gaze of liberal and democratic Europe on the Balkans."[267] This gaze, constructed as it is through understandings of ancient ethnic hatreds (a la Kaplan), or as an internalized other to the West which shields them from responsibility, serves to obfuscate the region through a paradigm reminiscent of Western imperial and colonial legacies. Hywel Dix was not being flippant when he described Western literature as *colonizing* the Balkans.[268] Thus in stark contrast to Todorova, who questions the validity and even applicability of postcolonial theory to the Balkans, I argue that it is perhaps our best avenue forward out of the muddle of Balkanism and the Balkanist binary.[269]

A potential solution to how scholarship should proceed arises in Bryce and Čaušević's study, through a series of interviews with educated Bosnians working in the field of international development. What several participants alluded to was "a growing awareness of the importance

[266] Meštrović, *Genocide After Emotion*, 14.
[267] Žižek, "Underground, paragraph 8/19.
[268] Hywel Dix, "On Balkanism and Orientalism: undifferentiated patterns of perception in literary and critical representations of Eastern Europe," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 5 (2015), 974.
[269] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16-17.

of emphasising heritage diversity in the case of Bosnia."[270] This idea of heritage diversity once again harkens back to our study of Cvijić, Shishmanov, Penev, and their contemporaries. In particular for Bryce and Čaušević, this is a direct and "potent manifestation of the legacy of Ottoman social organisation across the region."[271] Indeed, through stressing the legacy of the region's interconnectedness and mutual-cooperation, vis-à-vis a framing of the Ottoman period as open and relatively culturally and religious free, it might be possible to extricate ourselves from the Balkanist game – at least where Bosnia is concerned. Yet despite examples of Muslim and non-Muslim pride at their shared history of cooperation, through which they built such beautiful architecture like the Old Mostar Bridge, Bey's Mosque, Sarajevo Cathedral, and various Orthodox monasteries, the Western gaze still has to be contended with. What Bryce and Čaušević term as "heritage syncretism" has potential, at least in the countries they studied (Bosnia, Albania, North Macedonia), but the incessant demands of international tourists, and the Balkanist binary they brought with them and superimposed on the region, tied many hands.[272] Regardless of how hard the various Bosnians, Albanians, and North Macedonians interviewed tried to share the "truth" about the region with Western tourists, they nevertheless found themselves playing to the expectations of Balkanism which kept Westerners coming, the local tourism board happy, and many of the guides surveyed in their jobs.

This is a real crux of the matter of how to deal with Balkanism. As Bryce and Čaušević synthesize, the Balkans, containing a significantly mixed cultural and religious heritage, particularly Muslim, "does not 'make sense' – is 'remarkable' – and must, therefore be constructed as a de-historicised anomaly in order to accommodate Western-identified

[270] Bryce and Čaušević, "Orientalism, Balkanism," 102.
[271] Ibid.,
[272] Ibid.,

subjectivity."[273] The question of the Western subjectivity, the Western gaze, and the Western narrative (among other phrasings) which I have repeatedly discussed in this thesis all point to this reality. In order to dissect Balkanism, and potentially build past it in a positive, non-orientalising, non-colonial, and particularly non-Balkanist fashion, scholars need to strip the Western gaze down just as Hammond argues the West stripped the Balkans down. Postmodernism, and particularly postcolonial frameworks, need to continue applying the same levels of critical analysis to the colonial and neo-colonial legacy of the West in the Balkans, in the same vein as it has been doing with regards to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In the preface to his 1999 *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, the decorated BBC journalist Misha Glenny described the view of Yugoslavia present during the horrors and in the post-war period. He wrote, "generalisations about the peoples who inhabit the region, and their histories, were spread by media organizations that had long ago outlawed such clichés when reporting from Africa, the Middle East or China."[274] This understanding needs to permeate scholarship and enter mainstream consciousness in order to avoid the darker sides of postmodernism from again reaching for the easy Western-centric and colonialist explanations for occurrences deemed "outside" of the normal Western cultural model of acceptance.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to unpack and unravel the Balkanist binary as it exists within post-Yugoslav era scholarship and cultural production. In so doing it has demonstrated the many ways by which the Western gaze has acted upon and been received by the Balkans—and not always positively. In particular the question of the balance between the Balkanic and Western self was analyzed in order to set up a discussion of postmodernism and its dark sides. This

[273] Ibid.,
[274] Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999), xxi.

chapter relied on contributions from figures like Hammond, Meštrović, and even Robert Kaplan himself to problematize how the Western gaze created a postmodern understanding of the Balkans which reinforced the Western ethos at the expense of colonizing the Balkans. Critically postmodernism as it is used in the West against itself is not applied in the same way to the Balkans. Rather the Balkans is set up to doubly fail, for not being enough like the West while also trying to criticize the West. As a fundamental hallmark of Balkanism is liminality, this in-between-ness within which the West traps the Balkans is par for the course. The final part of the chapter tried to dismantle Western subjectivity in and of itself in order to call attention to how the West and its gaze is still mired in uncritical Balkanism. This paper continued its use of previously mentioned scholars and added Slavoj Žižek to its armoury to argue that only by questioning and dismantling the gaze of the West can we hope to consistently and clearly see the Balkans without the ghosts or blinders of Balkanism.

Conclusion
Learning From the Ghosts We Hunt

Many of the scholars relied upon in the last chapter, and indeed this thesis, have struggled with the question of Balkanism, its perniciousness, and how scholarship can move forward. Yet despite the likes of Žižek, Hammond, Bryce and Čaušević, and Meštrović (among many others) drawing our attention to the gaze of the West, Balkanism continues to live and breathe as a relatively un-critiqued phenomenon in larger policy making and public discourse. In a 2016 article on international relations, Abazi and Doja argue that in our contemporary climate Balkanism has fully resulted in what they call "the timeless image of the Southeast European propensity for war and extreme violence."[275] This is in spite of attempted strides made to de-Balkanize perceptions of the region, as discussed throughout this paper, and despite increasing scrutiny on the role of the West in constructing these imaginaries. Specifically Abazi and Doja argue that images of the sheer brutality and barbarity associated with the Balkan Wars were uncritically revived when discussing Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and chief among the examples they cite for propagating this pernicious Balkanism is Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*.[276]

Furthermore, Bryce and Čaušević have discussed how a Serbian nationalist subjective view can construct itself through narrow definitions of "Westerness", in order to position "Christian Serbia as the protector of core European values"—and how the same argument can be made for Viktor Orbán's Hungary today.[277] Within that comparison is also the understanding that rising nationalism carries with it the potential to "erase any serious acknowledgment" that the "older Ottoman presence in Europe is anything other than an imposition from without", incapable of

[275] Enika Abazi and Albert Doja, "International Representations of Balkan Wars: A Socio-Anthropological Account in International Relations Perspective," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2016): 585–586.
[276] Ibid., 585–586.
[277] Bryce and Čaušević, "Orientalism, Balkanism," 94.

finding a meaningful or "intrinsic place in the development of societies across the Balkans" or indeed within Europe.

If it proves impossible to overcome the alienation and ostracizing tendencies which are engendered by Balkanism there is more at stake than the image of the region. Marina Lazetic, in a 2018 article, argued that the far-right movements of Europe saw the Balkans and Serbia in particular, as "fertile ground" for "national rebirth, and as a good starting point" for the spread and further "emergence of movements that will mobilise and organize masses across Europe."[278] Indeed pushing Serbia away and treating the Western Balkans as civilizational outliers risks radicalizing the region, and this could have dire consequences for the rest of Europe, even threating the project of EU integration as a whole. Viktor Orbán has already been mentioned, but with rising tensions in Poland over European integration, and the current major challenge posed by the war in Ukraine, it seems imperative that commonality be pursued over difference.

The Balkans is more than a geopolitical curiosity in the wake of the Yugoslav Wars. It is, in many ways, a case study for the project of pan-European integration and cooperation in the aftermath of unspeakable horrors and intergenerational wounds that run deep. The question of how to move past the Western gaze of Balkanism, and how to build towards reconciliation, forgiveness, and cooperation within the Balkans—both amongst themselves but also with the West—on equal terms is an issue that might very well soon have a Russian-Ukrainian dimension when the current war, like all wars, inevitably ends. The question of what to do with the accusations of war crimes, and the question of culpability, is a matter for international tribunals and governments to sort through, as it was with the ICTY. The more problematic and

[278] Marina Lažetić, "'Migration Crisis' and the Far Right Networks in Europe: A Case Study of Serbia," *Journal of Regional Security* 13, no. 2 (2018): 2.

nuanced issue is the question of perceptions and memories going forward, and of how to rebuild what has been lost. The war in Ukraine, although frequently compared to World War II for its scale, destruction and civilian damage, shows glimpses of Bosnia within the devastation of cities to rival even that of Sarajevo. To compare the Balkans in the 1990s to the current war in Ukraine is perhaps imprudent and premature on several levels, but in so far as perceptions arranged from outside and the dangers of festering resentments are concerned, this connection is a space much worth looking towards in the future.

In the meantime, scholars are left with the region variously known as Southeastern Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, the Western Balkans, or merely "the Balkans." Fundamentally, scholarship is also left with difficult questions to answer about how to conduct the future study of this region and its people, trained as most scholars are in a Western tradition and struggling to expand the realms of postmodernism and post-colonialism as far as academics can hope to make them reach as compensation. If scholars consider questions of alterity, such as Spivak's exhortation that the subaltern cannot speak, then how is scholarship to resist the tendency to view things from the lens of the familiar, in this case, dominant Western cultural framework? In reviewing Glenny's *The Balkans*, Michael Moutoussis admitted how depressed, squeamish, and ill the depictions of horrific Balkan slaughter made him feel. This drove him to ask, "How is one to own it as a westerner or a European? How am I, the pacifist, Balkan-born reviewer to own it?"[279] Glenny doesn't have an answer beyond the need to question the Western gaze, but for Moutoussis Glenny does something crucial. He "leaves us staring at the hacked-up, dying child. And maybe, so he should." It is perhaps this sort of unadulterated reality, stripped away from the obfuscating qualities of the Western gaze, Balkanist binary, and Žižek's phantasmagoria that holds the

[279] Michael Moutoussis, review of *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, by Misha Glenny, *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 16, no 4 (2000): 456.

answer. Yet taken too far there is the risk of desensitization, and a retreat into the uncritical reporting and depictions of Balkanism which Meštrović and his contemporaries warned about. As noted by Lazetic, there is also the risk of pushing the Balkans and the rest of Europe further way from each other than perhaps ever before. The true solution might lay in the ideas of early-twentieth-century Balkan scholars who pursued a framework of interconnected commonality and cultural cooperation, rather than something akin to Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations.*[280] Nikola Bobic, whose *Balkanization and Global Politics* was discussed in Chapter 2 posited that Balkanism could be reconceived of by removing the negative associations of its identifiers. Instead the narrative would double down on the region's "ambiguous and heterogeneous potential" as a protest to all that the West considers "alternative, anomalous and abnormal" but is in fact part of what makes the Balkans beautiful, robust, and capable of moving on from the current "frozen frame of Balkanism as villainy."[281]

Although much has been written about Balkanism, what I have done in this thesis is comb through the literature to suggest several ways in which Balkanism is to be dealt with. Through the use of early 20th century Balkan scholars the tenets of universalism and finding an interconnected middle ground is suggested as a third way out of the Balkanist binary. Furthermore there is the notion that Balkanic stereotypes and identifiers could be usefully reclaimed and emptied of their negative connotations in order to build something indigenous to the Balkans that celebrates local realities and cultural value. Part and parcel of such a strategy of a third way and reclaiming "Balkan-ness" includes intentionally occupying the role of Europe's crossroads, in order to contribute something critical to the rest of Europe on its own terms. Lastly

[280] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, illustrated edition. (Simon & Schuster, 2011). It was originally published in 1996.
[281] Nikolina Bobic, "Balkanism and balkanization: Fragmentation, grouping and excess," in *Balkanism and Global Politics: Remaking Cities and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2019), 38.

I suggest, in ways I have yet to see other historians do, that as academics we cannot get anywhere until we find a way to dismantle the Western gaze in so far as it exists as a colonizing force in the Balkan region. Unlike Todorova herself, I suggest that the Balkans does indeed have an ongoing colonial legacy, making post-colonialism a fruitful avenue through which this Western gaze can be problematized and shattered. Since Western bias impacts the ways scholars do history, recognizing and dismantling how we look at and talk about the Balkans really matters.

As stressed earlier, failing to find ways to grapple with the Balkans on its own terms could prove perilous. Without putting too poetic of a point to it, if as scholars we are not careful to adjust our paradigms soon to dismantle Balkanism, the fate of Europe might once again hinge on Bismarck's old adage of some damned foolish thing in the Balkans. Or, to once again give the devil his due before his ghosts are put to rest, Kaplan's notion of a land of "anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed up the Danube" to wreak havoc on the rest of Europe.[282] By dismantling the Western gaze and moving past Balkanism, scholarship might truly be able to enter an era of Post-Balkanism. Whether such a development proves up to the task of reconciling the Western postmodern self with its internalized Balkanic other remains to be seen.

[282] Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, xxiii.

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