

A Brief Inquiry Into American Perspectives of Balkan Nationalism

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Abstract

The renewal of interest in nationalism, especially since the anticolonial movements and ethnic nationalisms of the post World War II period, is both a reflection of earlier historical inquiry and recent developments in the social sciences' systematic study of nationalism, and a resonance to the recent events in Europe. Historical inquiry has its origin in the middle of the nineteenth century and social science analyses in the early twentieth century.¹ Differences in methodologies notwithstanding, the common focus and interdisciplinary nature of the studies have a morphology and, therefore, a historicity. When conflated with current analyses and popular commentaries of recent nationalist expressions, a new dimension in historiography appears.

This essay has two purposes. First, to draw attention to a rapidly developing concrescence between two general categories of historiographic works which, together, influence popular perceptions of nationalism and presentations as "Balkan nationalism." Second, in consideration of this trend, to contend that a compelling case for rethinking historiography of nationalism is emerging, given the dramatic changes in information technology, with its application in analyses of human affairs, and, most importantly, in the dissemination of "information."

¹ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (New York, 1994), p. 3.

Introduction

Rethinking any historiography of nationalism to include new realities about "analysts" and information technology, and the end-product is based on the argument that the assumptions which have underpinned the conventional notions of historiography are a poor fit with the new realities. MIT's President Charles M. Vest reminds us that at this intellectual threshold of information technology "we do not know what the consequences will be for the nation-state... [or] how the vast store of instantly available information can or will be understood and used."² To be sure, any redefinition of historiography will provoke debate in an already crowded arena, given the rapidly expanding interest in the field of nationalist phenomena. Suffice it to say, there are many avenues of approach and something to be said for each.

For the purpose of this essay, a conceptual distinction is made between historiography of nationalism and nationalist historiography. In the former, the focus is on "analysts," and the forms and level of scholarship, with all that that implies, brought to bear in the study of nationalism. Its principle distinction from nationalist historiography is in focus and purpose. Historiography of nationalism is the intensive treatment of the "why" and "how" of nationalism as history, however recorded, critically examined in some orderly and systematic way. For the historian of historiography, the subject is a study of causes. The historian asks the question: Why? about new things or in new contexts. As an analytical strategy, historiography is a paradigm of synthesis: the causal why it happened leads to the functional how it happened, which again leads back to the question why. While the many learned disciplines may distinguish between the different kinds of causes – political, social, economic, psychological, cultural, communications, religious, linguistic, and so forth – they continue to regard historical cause as a factor or as a category of its own. Conceptually, within this context, historiography of nationalism adds to our knowledge and, presumptively, our understanding. The idea advanced here is relational – knowing history and its communication – that is historiography *qua* historiography.³ In contrast, whatever the nation-

² *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 15, 1995), p. B5.

³ David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, V. 6 (New York, 1968), pp. 369-370. Karl Deutsch, in advancing communications theory in the integration of "tribes" into peoples, suggests that for

alist historiography, in whatever form of presentation it professes to explain its case, "it must in so many other cases, immediately hasten to explain away."⁴

To begin with, it may prove fruitful if the terms most often linked with "analysts" and methodologies are broadened, since both the newly generative aspects of history and its dissemination are as much a part of the human record as is the conventional notion of historiography pertaining to the writing of history or to the delineation of historic events. Robert A. Rosenstone implies as much, when he states: "Somewhere along the line, I realized that film makers could be historians, too. Now I'm more interested in seeing films as works of history, asking what can they do in images that scholars can't do in words."⁵ In short, professional historians "are faced with film by necessity [simply because] their students – and the general public – are learning history through film."⁶

Grappling with the impact of information technology – satellite communications, the Internet,⁷ and fiber optics cable television for the "students of history,"⁸ or the efforts of movie makers and makers

"those who wonder how present-day Africa is going to grow from tribes to nations could do worse than consult experts in medieval history for comparative data. Every European nation has gone through a period of rule by tribes and local chieftains and, therefore, has had some experience – usually about 1000 years ago – in persuading tribesmen to consider themselves members of a larger group." *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York, 1969), pp. 12-13.

⁴ Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism and Self-Determination," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism*, 52. See, also, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY, 1983), pp. 1-7.

⁵ Quoted in, Karen J. Winkler, "History in Hollywood: The Way Films Present the Past," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 15, 1995), p. A16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. A11.

⁷ The increasingly popular use of on-line texts has provoked a debate among scholars on how best to cite research conducted on the Internet. The changing technology is not making standardization easy. The International Organization for Standardization representing more than 100 countries has been wrestling with the same issue for five years. See, Lisa Guernay, "Cyberspace Citations," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 12, 1996), pp. A18-A22.

⁸ Cable television's "history" programming channels include: "The History Channel," "Biography," and "Discovery." For Television's capacity to

of documentaries increasingly plying their skills as "students of history,"⁹ in behalf of a growing population of viewers and a declining one of readers – requires clarification and redefinition of some existing terminology, as well as development of theory and new conceptual frameworks. Simply put, in this information age there is a growing concern among historians about what they regard as "the larger historical truths," and the approaches used to educate audiences in that reality.

The expository approach of how films shape perceptions of history is seen in the growing number of scholarly conferences, journals, and books devoted to the subject. To be sure, questions about the nature and uses of history have concerned historians since the time of Herodotus.¹⁰ In the newly cultivated interest in films, however, historians "must read films by new standards" and are compelled by the reality of their impact "to take on the questions of just what those standards should be."¹¹ It follows that new scholarly standards of analyses for films has implications for the entire spectrum of information technology.

Important as films are, however, they are but one form of information technology which passes as history in delineating historic events. The point being that accessibility of information technology, its dy-

manufacture images about politics both contemporary and historical, see, Rodger D. Masters, *Machiavelli, Leonardo, and the Science of Power* (South Bend, IN, 1995).

⁹ Since "Birth of a Nation," films suggesting historical content as "history" have been controversial. Yet the in depth study by professional historians and social scientists, until recently, has been relatively neglected. Oliver Stone's films, called "cinematic revisionism" by Jim Hoagland, have become the catalyst for scholars from several disciplines. See, for example, Jim Hoagland, "Revising History As It Happens," *The Washington Post Weekly Edition* (January 8-14, 1996), p. 29.

¹⁰ See, Page Smith, *The Historian and History* (New York, 1966); Robert G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York, 1964), Part I. Herodotus defined his objective in the beginning of his work: to preserve a memory of the deeds of the Greeks and the barbarians and, specifically, more than anything else, to give cause of their fighting one another. Collingwood's answer is that "history is 'for' human self-knowledge" . . . the value of which "is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is." p. 10.

¹¹ Karen J. Winkler, "History in Hollywood" p. A16.

namics, its application, and products today pose new and serious challenges theoretically, when it comes to the highly intractable subject matter of nationalism, with its many interlocking variables. Currently little consideration, if any, has been given in the matter of formulating propositions that causally link variables to account for or explain the impact of technology in the generation and dissemination of information labelled historical. In the ideal situation the linkages should be empirically verifiable, with "analysts" operating within a clearly defined framework of acceptable standards.

This problem of standards emphasizes the relational nature of the concept, since there is not as yet an accepted framework of rules in information technology or in the social sciences. If we consider the historical record of conventional approaches and products, then technological artifacts, too, can be notoriously imprecise, with products propagating error. Logically, then, underrating the impact of information technology historiographically could prove consequential in that the line between fantasy and reality may blur even more, as the technological process of inventing and reinventing the past accelerates the generative and disseminating aspects of history.

Against this tapestry of new realities and renewed interests in nationalist studies, the reconsideration of existing theories, concepts and terminology becomes a requisite step in treating the newly generative aspects of history and its dissemination historiographically. Arguably, then, in this broadened perspective, the "student of history" is any one with an interest in the past, and the "analyst," "commentator," and "observer" is anyone who commits the interest to writing, or to some technical form of presentation (oral or visual), with the product defined as historiographic.

The Academy and Extramural Presenters

Constructing a model differentiating two pyramidal categories of analysts and methodologies with interests in nationalist phenomena can be useful in grappling with perspectives of the American context. One is a catchall category distinguished as much by the variety of authors, analysts and methodologies as by its extra mural nature. Outside the academy, however, there is both formal and informal linkage to it. Scholarly boundaries of sorts are represented in the catchall pyramid but may be transcended routinely, since higher academic train-

ing in history, or in the social sciences, or in the myriad of recognized disciplines of the academy is less represented. In part, this factor and its variety may account for the shortcomings in the abstraction of rules. Here is where authors, broadcasters and journalists abound, and where artistic and journalistic license flourish; where Robert Kaplan, for one, may cite John Reed's "The War in Eastern Europe" (1916), as the quintessential prophecy on the question of Macedonia, that place which harbors the "most frightful mix-up of races ever imagined. Turks, Albanians, Serbs, Rumanians, Greeks and Bulgarians live there side by side without mingling *and have so lived since the days of St. Paul* (my emphasis)[;]¹² where in the information age "popular history" may appear as an icon on a template; and where both critical analyses and the less than critical shape many popular perceptions of the past. In short, within its parameters we may place analysts and approaches concerned with nationalist studies that are extra mural to the academy.

The second pyramidal category is the academy, which may be formally defined as incorporating a society of learned disciplines "united for the promotion of arts and sciences in general, or of some particular area or science."¹³ Within its ranks, the genre of nationalist studies was traditionally identified with the multidisciplinary social sciences and history. In time, it came to include interdisciplinary or combinatorial efforts (e.g. political sociology) whose product may or should be labelled as historiographic. As with the catchall category, assumptions can be made about academic boundaries and standards, and about formal research criteria, and peer review, among other things. In the academy, the purpose, level, and quality of scholarship vary significantly.

Traditionally, at the top of each pyramid was a small relatively homogeneous elite: In the academy, political and cultural historians and social scientists; in the catchall (syndicated) columnists, authors, broadcasters and (editorial) writers for influential newspapers and magazines. In the academy, the several layers below the historians and social scientists were occupied by analysts in such fields as the humanities, law and education. In the catchall, the layers below the

¹² Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts* (New York, 1993), p. 52.

¹³ *Webster's Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1979), p. 9.

(syndicated) columnists, broadcasters and (editorial) writers were filled with free lance journalists, writers of travelogues, movie makers, and a variety of intellectuals with interests in nationalist phenomena, in national histories, or in regional history.

In theory and appearance, the academy has status but no longer exercises a monopoly in developing information or in disseminating it. The study of nationalism was once the preserve of its elite, where the work of Carlton Hayes, Hans Kohn, Louis Snyder and Boyd Shafer, among others, provided considerable groundwork for understanding the vernacularized culture of the ethnic model which continues to symbolize the nature of Balkan nationalisms. No longer. As the Second World War ended, not only did the number of analysts in other disciplines within the academy focusing on the phenomenon grow but so, too, did the extra mural numbers. Yet even then the numbers were not large relative to the total population. They, perhaps, numbered in the several of thousands. However, their numbers increased substantially some thirty years ago along with some striking advancements in information technology. The point is that in each pyramid the elite's share of influence declined, as more interest in nationalism developed and more information was generated and disseminated.

The level of competition within each pyramid appears obvious, but so often taken for granted that few bother to think about it. Equally important are the forms of competition between them, where the utterly familiar is often received uncritically. To a lesser or greater degree analysts in both pyramids depend upon history, even as they engage in studies clearly identified as other than history. In the academy, scholars routinely formulate hypotheses, develop theories, construct models, devise strategies, appropriate data and borrow methodologies, in what may be described as an enterprise exercising the utilitarian practice of interdependence. The analysts compete, although usually for different audiences. Their informal linkages are seen variously in studies as quotations, references, book reviews, or of works cited; while formal linkages often appear collaborative, as jointly sponsored research in institutes and centers, in edited products, or professional and scholarly round tables and conferences, or in the form of the "pyramidal revolving door." In sum, collaboration both varies and dovetails as does the level and quality of substantive intercourse.

Commingleing Confusion

"Nationalism is, no doubt, the most powerful force in modern history," writes Henry Steele Commager, "it is scarcely surprising that it should have captured historiography and enslaved historians."¹⁴ Since Commager's observation in the 1960s, the field of nationalist studies has greatly expanded into cognate subjects such as race and racism, ideology, linguistics, political religion, communalism, ethnic conflict, international law, minorities, immigration and genocide. The development of a variety of typologies of nationalism – religious, cultural, political, integrationist, separatist, irredentist, diaspora, pan, et cetera – presents a clear picture of the expansive nature of the academic pyramid: historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, scholars of linguistics, geographers, international relations specialists, philosophers, regional economists, and humanists, among others. While this has enriched the field, clearly interdisciplinarity has become problematic because analysts of any one discipline seldom focus on more than a few aspects and examples that constitute the core of their discipline.¹⁵

One arresting problem in nationalist studies is with the rival definitions and discord over key concepts. "Nationalism and its corollaries," notes Louis Snyder, "are suffused with inconsistencies, contradictions, and paradoxes."¹⁶ And John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith inform us that, "While it is recognized that the concept of the nation must be differentiated from other concepts of collective identity like class, region, gender, race and religious community, there is little agreement about the role of ethnic, as opposed to political components of the nation; or about the balance between 'subjective' elements like will and memory, and more 'objective' elements like territory and language; or about the nature and role of ethnicity in national identity."¹⁷

¹⁴ Henry Steele Commager, *The Story of History* (Columbus, OH, 1966), pp. 55-56.

¹⁵ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., p. 3. For one type of treatment of nationalism, see, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Chapter 9.

¹⁶ Louis L. Snyder, *Global Mini-Nationalisms* (Westport, 1982). Snyder's "Introduction" is a matter of definition, in which he attempts "to meet Socratic objections" in clarifying terms, pp. xv-xvii.

¹⁷ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, p. 4. See, also, James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York, 1991), pp. 51-54. Ac-

Intellectually, despite the emphasis on precision and "scientific terminology" within the academy, especially by social scientists, there continue to be notable differences and "widespread misuse of the most elemental terms...."¹⁸ Given this reality, the question is: what effect, if any, does it have on extra mural perceptions of nationalism and of presentations of the Balkan region: For example, *The Economist* recently noted that where people in different countries have "the means to know far more about each other, [where] they can see on television how others entertain themselves, or argue about politics, or kill their neighbors; and on the Internet...they can exchange opinions about it all.... One day, perhaps, [the] blur of peoples' similarities and differences...may become harder for tomorrow's equivalent of Serb politician to persuade their people that tomorrow's Bosnian Muslims are an inferior breed."¹⁹

Over a decade ago, Walker Connor focused his curiosity on a related matter confronting analysts concerned with political development: "How a single national consciousness was to be forged among disparate ethnic elements." The issue, then, was the gap between political development theory and reality. To this day, the issue remains problematic. Initially Connor suggested twelve overlapping and reinforcing reasons for the divide, which he has since augmented – in Edward Bellamy fashion – with five additional reasons.²⁰ To Connor, the latest list, too, is not exhaustive. Yet its profundity continues to draw attention to the problems that plague analysts in the field of nationalist studies in general, and the theoreticians of "nation-building" in particular. The fact is that in political science neither the clas-

cording to cultural historian John Breuilly, "the most commonly held assumption about nationalism is that it arises ultimately from some sort of national identity or that it is a search for an identity... this is a very misleading idea.... To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is primarily about control of the state." *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 89-117.

¹⁹ (December 23, 1995 – January 5, 1996), pp. 15-16.

²⁰ Edward Bellamy's nineteenth century work, *Looking Backward*, was Connor's inspiration; Walker Connor, pp. 69-71.

sifications of multiethnic states, or the focus on forms of governments, or geography, or the level of economic development has adequately dealt with the central problem: "the fissiparous impact of ethnicity" in the context of nationalism.²¹

This raises a related question: Does any discipline showing evidence of a wide divide between theory and reality influence our understanding of the analysts' perceptions of (ethno)nationalism and presentations as "Balkan nationalisms"? With the end of the Cold War, for example, Balkan ethnic conflicts reemerged as a source of international concern, as the conflict in Yugoslavia so amply demonstrated. There the problem was simultaneously "viewed as a local conflict...[that is,] an atavistic 'tribal war,'" with little strategic importance, and as "a major international crisis...[with] enormous political consequences for European stability." In effect, the void directly resulting from the erosion of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe has circumstantially configured Balkan nationalisms in both Francis Fukuyama's notion of the "end of history" and F. Stephen Larabee's counter notion of the "return of history."²² In shifting the focus from events as examples to the analyst, specifically to the conflation of "influence that the ideals of the analyst exert upon his [or her] perceptions," the nature of the problem can be illustrated through a historiographic perspective.²³ A popular characterization of the ethnic basis of Greek national identity provides a case in point.

Anthony Smith tells us the "(modern) Greeks" maintain that they are the heirs and lineal descendants of both Greek Byzantium and classical Hellas. (Note here the propensity in the academy to apply the term "modern," as the modifier, which, interestingly enough is

²¹ "Fissiparous" was used firstly in a national context by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who expressed concern over the "fissiparous tendencies" which one day may dissolve the Indian union. Walker Connor refines and extends the concept considerably, p. 39.

²² F. Stephen Larabee, "Balkan Security After the Cold War: New Dimensions, New Challenges," in F. Stephen Larabee, ed. *The Volatile Powder Keg* (Washington, D.C., 1994), pp. xi-xii. See, also, Nicholas A. Stavrou, "The Balkan Quagmire and the West's Response," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 4:1 (Winter 1993) 24-45; and Nicholas Zahariadis, "Nationalism and Small-State Foreign Policy: Greece and Macedonia," *Political Science Quarterly*, 109:4 (Fall 1994) 647-667.

²³ Walker Connor, p. 57.

used almost exclusively in Greek identity.) Their claim of "descent...[is] predicated on demographic continuity," even though the noted "historian and liberal pan-German nationalist," Jacob Fallmeyer (1790-1861)²⁴ purportedly "demonstrated" otherwise. According to Fallmeyer, the historical evidence suggests the Avar and Slav peoples moved massively into central Greece and the Peloponnese in the late sixth to eighth centuries, and were followed by Albanians who forced the original "Greek-speaking and Hellenic inhabitants (themselves already intermingled with earlier Macedonian, Roman and other migrants) to the coastal areas and the islands of the Aegean. Two effects came from this migration. First, Hellenic Civilization, in its true form, shifted eastward, "to the Aegean, the Ionian littoral of Asia Minor and to Constantinople." Second, the demographic shift severed the (modern) Greeks' claim of descent from the ancient Hellenes, Smith reminds us, "even if this could never be ruled out."²⁵

In pointing out how important a factor "descent" has been in Greek identity, in the "Greekness" that they assert as "members of one great 'super-family,'" Smith also points out how irrelevant the notion is when examined against the background of ethnic change, dissolution and survival. More relevant, he concludes, is "the sense of continuity, shared memory and collective destiny...of the lines of cultural affinity embodied in distinctive myths, memories, symbols and values retained by a given cultural unit of population." Even the cultural influence of surrounding peoples and civilizations on the Greeks, he notes, has not brought an end to the common sentiments of Greek ethnicity; sentiments that are "said to have persisted beneath the many social and political changes of the last two thousand years."²⁶

Smith's analytical rendering of a dichotomy contrasts sharply with Fallmeyer's predisposing perception in the use of the lenses of history. Fallmeyer's perception conversely exemplifies that which Walker Connor cites as the analyst's predisposition: "passionately wish[ing] the people of his academic purview well...and that his compassion has colored his perceptions so that he perceives...trends he deems desirable as actually occurring, regardless of the factual situation."²⁷ In this instance, though, far from wishing his academic pur-

²⁴ Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More* (New York, 1986), pp. 75.

²⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NE, 1991), pp.28-30.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Walker Connor, p. 57.

view well, which is equally an egregious flaw, Fallmerayer intentionally set out to deny the (modern) Greeks that which Michael Herzfeld describes as "their national *raison d'être*...in explicitly treating modern Greece as conceptually outside 'Europe'" thus "reject[ing] the very notion of the Greeks as Europeans."²⁸ Fallmerayer's view gained currency despite the ambiguity historiographically. In short, this meant that the cultural claims of the Greeks were being "extended and denied to them, in the very same gesture, by those at the imperial center who continued to define the notion of Europe. . . according to the tenets of nineteenth-century nationalism."²⁹

Ironically, Greek nationalist historiography and Fallmerayer's approach appear parallel, since each views "the modern Greeks' 'racial' origins as the key issue and ethnographic and historical evidence as the means of resolving it."³⁰ Obviously they differed in their conclusions, as they did in their predispositions. The inseparable characteristic of nationalist historiography, of whatever century, is its capacity to gain currency. This is what makes the work of Etienne Balibar on the subject so interesting and relevant, since "[n]o modern nation possesses a given 'ethnic' basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle." In a probatory process, what follows is the larger question: How are people socialized in the dominant form of national belonging?³¹

Among the most ubiquitous and influential "presenters" of the Balkan region is Robert Kaplan, who is credited with influencing President Clinton and other policy makers on the issue of intervention in Bosnia.³² A contributing editor of "The Atlantic" magazine and au-

²⁸ Michael Herzfeld, pp. 75-76.

²⁹ Yiorgos Chouliaras, "Greek Culture in the New Europe," in *Greece, the New Europe, and the Changing International Order* Harry J. Psomiades and Stavros B. Thomadakis, eds. (New York, 1993), pp. 79-122.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

³¹ Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991), pp. 86-106. For some further remarks on this controversial point, see Anastasia Karakasidou, "Politicizing Culture: Negating Ethnic Identity in Greek Macedonia," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 11:1 (May 1993) 1-28; and Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict* (Princeton, NJ, 1995).

³² Michael Ignatieff, "Future Meltdown," *The New York Times Book Review* (March 31, 1996), p. 7.

thor of "Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History," Kaplan's portrait of peoples and place is painted with unadulterated primordialism. The Balkans is caricatured as "a region of pure memory: a Bosch-like tapestry of interlocking ethnic rivalries where medieval and modern history thread into each other." An accomplished "wordsmith," he argues that the "sights, smells, sounds, exalted emotions, grim statistics and cruel ironies" that characterize history and memory are writ large in that most "foreign" landscape, "the Balkans." Kaplan considers the region so "truly foreign" that the Balkans cannot be understood except through extensive reading. The "complicated" depth of the region's history and hate, he argues, can not be captured on television because "the Balkans are unsuited to the reductions of the television camera." Therefore, as a news story in the 1990s, the Balkan region "means a victory for print over television."³³ The key to understanding the behavior of the Balkan peoples, according to Kaplan, is to understand the "process – the process of history and the process of memory...[and] the fact that in the Balkans each individual sensation and memory affects the grand movement of clashing peoples. For today's events are nothing but the sum total of everything that has gone before." To grasp this "process," he compiled a "Balkan reading list" for the American audience "consisting mainly of books that, although written long ago, explain the essentials of today's violence."³⁴

Kaplan's list of fiction, nonfiction, and poetic works is noteworthy for several reasons, the least of which is the fact that most were, indeed, written long ago. A representative sampling clearly makes the point: Rebecca West's "Black Lamb and Grey Falcon" is recommended because of her "clairvoyance" in reading a place that "culturally may be the world's most intractable area"; Peter Petrovich Njegos's "The Mountain Wreath" because of its emphasis on "national character" and its revelations "inside the minds of some of the world's best haters"; John Reed's "The War in Eastern Europe" because of his descriptions of the Serbs as "half-savage giants dressed in the ancient panoply of that curious Slavic people whose main business is war...[and Reed's] wonder of their origin and their destiny...[since] they alone of all the Balkan peoples have been one unmixed race";

³³ Robert D. Kaplan, "A Reader's Guide to the Balkans," *The New York Times Book Review* (April 18, 1993), p. 1.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

Ivo Andric's "The Damned Yard: And Other Stories" because he captures Bosnia's "secret depths" ...[where] you are condemned to live on deep layers of explosives, which are lit from time to time by the very sparks of your loves and your fiery and violent emotions"; Eric Ambler's "Coffin for Dimitrios" for its "insight into the chaos and anarchy now being unleashed in the Balkans"; and, also, Bram Stoker's "Dracula" because its opening chapters "provide a wonderfully evocative description of the geography, customs and ethnic complexities of what Stoker called 'one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe.'" ³⁵

While Kaplan proclaims the triumph of "print over television" in understanding events in Yugoslavia in a Balkan context, Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times* argues differently. "It was not 'ancient hatreds' that produced ethnic cleansing" he writes, "it was men: ambitious men who stirred up extreme nationalist emotions as a way to power." And, for "those who are skeptical of television's potential as a medium for sustained journalism of a high order" in proving that, Lewis recommends "they should see 'Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation' and think again." ³⁶

Here the suggestive historical relativism of Lewis both conflicts and competes with the organic perspective of Kaplan who imagines Balkan nationalisms as recurrent and immutable. To Kaplan, it remains only for the student of history, and analyst, to trace them through the tribal history of the region.

Some analysts intone moral self-righteousness in the capacious descriptions of Balkan peoples, their behavior, and lands, ³⁷ and others seek to assess the historical record in ex-Yugoslavia through graphic vignettes of nationalists in the principal ethnic groups and make broad generalizations about "the new nationalism." Even Freud was invoked to explain the war in Bosnia as one driven by "the narcissism of minor difference" in which people, more alike than not, concentrate on exaggerating what separates them in a desperate search for identity. ³⁸

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶ Anthony Lewis, *The New York Times* (January 5, 1996), p. A 13. The five hour series, "Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation," was first aired with the BBC and then, in the United States, on cable's Discovery Channel, December 26-31, 1995.

³⁷ For example, see, Scott L. Malcomson, *Borderlands* (Boston, 1994); and Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia* (New York, 1996).

³⁸ See, Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (New York, 1994); and

Some analysts share in a reliance upon anecdotal material to shape images of the Balkans. For example, Conor Cruise O'Brien notes that commentator William Pfaff's ideas about nationalism are "far-ranging in space and time, abounding in miscellaneous information... didactic, and sometimes sweeping in generalizations." ³⁹

Conclusion

There is in all this a distinction to be made about the kinds of analyses offered of ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkan region. ⁴⁰ In political science, that distinction includes knowledge of the region's history as the underpinning of a paradigm in professional analysis without which political scientists would be merely "prisoners of events or, like journalists. . . [they would] pursue the moment... cling[ing] to whatever theories seem simplest or fit [their] personal preference." ⁴¹ Yet distinctions can be misleading if the intent in making them implies that adding to our knowledge and understanding of nationalism rests with one domain or the other. Distinctions do, however, help us differentiate serious studies of nationalism, which add to our knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, from those that misinform or simply entertain the uninformed.

Given this reality, how should the academy demonstrate concern with the latter when the conventional approach asks: Does the work merit scholarly attention through which we learn from an extended study of it? If yes, does the product in particular illuminate Balkan nationalisms and make a contribution to the scholarly literature. To

Peter Maass, *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War* (New York, 1996). Brian Hall's review of the work states bluntly that "Maass doesn't show a particularly sophisticated awareness of the background of the conflict." *The New York Times Book Review* (March 10, 1995). p. 8.

³⁹ William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Fury of Nationalism* (New York, 1993). The work is nicely analyzed by Connor Cruise O'Brien, "The Wrath of Ages," *Foreign Affairs*, 72:5 (November/December 1993) 142-149.

⁴⁰ In contrast to the many books written by journalists, Susan Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C., 1995) is a scholarly treatment of the subject, well-researched and documented in its requisite historical background.

⁴¹ David E. Apter, *Introduction to Political Analysis* (Cambridge, MA: , 1977), p. 26.

be sure, a great deal of work is currently produced outside the academy, and with information technology. The acceleration of history appears most likely. Since we recognize responsibility for critical evaluation within the academy as "self-evident," may we presuppose a comparable responsibility for extra mural products intended for audiences other than scholars.

Noel Malcolm had just that purpose in mind when he wrote *Bosnia*.⁴² The bits and pieces of "historical misinformation" appearing in the Western media "and washed in the tides of national and political mythology from within old Yugoslavia" required his response. His example suffices in support of the point. In general, Malcolm found "the need to dispel some of the clouds of misunderstanding, deliberate myth-making and sheer ignorance in which all discussion of Bosnia and its history has become shrouded." Particularly appalling to him were the policy makers in Europe and the United States whose "minds were... filled with a fog of historical ignorance." Others showed their ignorance by parroting the familiar expression of "'ancient ethnic hatreds,'" while some writers portrayed "Bosnia as a wonderland of permanent inter-religious harmony." As Malcolm reminds us, Bosnia's history shows "that the animosities which did exist were not absolute and unchanging. Nor were they inevitable consequences of the mixing together of different religious communities. The main basis of hostility was not ethnic or religious but economic." And even these data indicate that this hostility between Christian and Muslim "was not some absolute or irreducible force," but "varied as economic circumstances changed," and was, in turn, subject to political pressures which significantly altered attitudes. Relations, too, between Catholic and Orthodox communities was affected by changing influences, the rivalries between their respective hierarchies and political pressures from neighboring states. In sum, "these animosities were not permanently built into the psyches of the people who lived in Bosnia; they were products of history, and could change as history developed."⁴³

Given the observations presented here, what may we imply about American perspectives of Balkan nationalism to date? There is little

⁴² (New York, 1994).

⁴³ Ibid., pp. xix-xxiv, *passim*. See, also, Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: 1995), Chapter 1.

that can be described as "new" in the historiography and theory of nationalism, although there is work in process with monographs placing nationalism in a context of social history. The focus of analysis, however, favors non-Western societies rather than European history.⁴⁴ The traditional "Western Europe and Eastern Europe" model – the invented handiwork of eighteenth century scholars intent on contrasting the former as "progressive" and the latter as "backward" – continues to prevail,⁴⁵ in part, because of a lack of consensus about what Europe is and what it symbolizes. Although historically, and historiographically, acknowledged as a continent its boundaries "have never been fixed" leading Richard Rose to conclude that "[l]ocating Europe on a map is a test of political values. Where we look depends upon what we are looking for."⁴⁶

If political values capture a recurring flavor and determine questions of definition, focus and methodology in the field of nationalist studies, then, surely, where we look depends upon what we are looking for, even though perspectives can and do change. At the cognitive level, the "pictures in our heads," as Walter Lippmann put it, are often stereotypes of a world filled with "so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations... we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model..."⁴⁷ In other words, stereotypes are convenient, if not accurate. They are unscientific and unreliable generalizations people and groups (and nations) make about other people and groups (and nations). Ideally, then, the due process of inquiry fixes responsibility of the academy and extra mural presenters alike: be reflective, firstly, and, secondly, intellectually challenge and preclude the simpler model from gaining currency.

⁴⁴ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National* (New York, 1996), pp. 3-37.

⁴⁵ See, Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994).

⁴⁶ Richard Rose, *What Is Europe?* (New York, 1996), p. 1.

⁴⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922), p. 16.