

Ježernik, Božidar, Rajko Muršič and Alenka Bartulovič (eds.). 2007. *Europe and its Other: Notes on the Balkans*. Ljubljana: Zupaničeva knjižnica. 226 pp. Pb.: 16.00 EUR. ISBN: 9789612372940.

The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia resulted in an onslaught of scholarly and not-so-scholarly accounts of the causes and repercussions of the once venerated country's gruesome demise. Notoriously, works such as journalist Robert Kaplan's 1993 *Balkan Ghosts* popularised a crude notion of ancient ethnic hatreds as the ultimate explanation of the Yugoslav wars. As the 'ancient hatreds' hypothesis gained credence in American and Western European analyses of the conflicts, old stereotypes of Balkan incivility were resuscitated and they converged with a new multiculturalist agitation against intolerance to doubly other Yugoslavia and the Balkans writ large as the antithesis of the emergent post-Cold War era. Uncivil and intolerant, the image of the Balkans that arose at this time became the perfect foil for an 'integrating Europe'.

In opposition to such depictions of the Balkans, a seeming cottage industry developed that produced analyses and critiques of 'Western' outsiders' (mis)representations of the region across various historical moments. Informed by postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, especially Said's *Orientalism*, this movement was, significantly, spearheaded by scholars from the region. The works to mention here are numerous, but noteworthy among them are Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), Vesna Goldworthy's *Inventing Ruritania* (1998), Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić's edited collection *Balkan as Metaphor* (2002), Božidar Ježernik's *Wild Europe* (2004) and Andrew Hammond's *The Debated Lands* (2007) in addition to earlier, seminal articles by Milica Bakič-Hayden (occasionally with Robert Hayden).

Europe and its Other: Notes on the Balkans, a collection of diverse essays, falls squarely among this lineage of scholarship. As presented in Rajko Muršič and Božidar Ježernik's introduction, the volume is focused on exploding European stereotypes of the Balkans while also documenting these stereotypes' role in various European self-understandings. Many of the contributions to this edited collection succeed in doing just this, whether focusing on post-Yugoslav developments, uncovering untold or marginalised Balkan histories or comparing Yugoslavia to other European contexts. For example, several essays undo simplistic equations of ethnicity with a cultural or religious ideology and foreground how ethnic reductionism is contested in a variety of Balkan contexts. Thus, Alenka Bartulovič's contribution, while making a broader theoretical argument about the fluidity of identity and the scholarly necessity of challenging totalizing concepts of nation and nationality, shows how the figure of Bruce Lee arose in post-war Bosnia as a powerful symbol of shared history and popular culture inappropriable by nationalist logics.

Rajko Muršič's essay, in developing a quasi-Lacanian theory of stereotyping, also illustrates how youth in newly independent Slovenia embraced 'Balkan music', i.e. Yugoslav rock-and-roll, as both a pleasurable other and a political symbol against nationalist entrenchment associated with the older generation. In different ways, Frank Kressing's

chapter on Bektashism in Albania and Narcisa Ştiucă's chapter on Italian-Romanians also challenge totalizing conceptions of national identity by documenting intra-ethnic heterogeneity and its legacies. Risto Pekka Pennanen's piece on early gramophone recordings of popular music in Bosnia presents a fascinating glimpse into urban life and popular entertainment of a bygone era.

Another critical vein present in this collection counters claims of Balkan exceptionalism that are often used to other or exoticise the region. Bojan Baskar compares Hapsburg nostalgia in Friuli to Yugo-nostalgia, demonstrating that each significantly represents a commitment to supranational forms of identity. Petra Stefanović explores contemporary reactions to Franco in Spain and Tito in Slovenia, showing how both regimes produced sentiments of 'not quite' being European despite their leaders being remembered in contrasting fashions. Cathie Carmichael examines violence against religious groups in the Balkans, Anatolia, and Russia around the turn of the 20th century, arguing that, in each case, violence played a role in differentiating social groups in new contexts of state power and changing transnational economic dependencies.

Finally, the essays by Božidar Jezernik and Saša Nedeljković address how shifting valences attached to 'Europe' and 'the Balkans' have played out at moments in Balkan history. Jezernik illustrates how the drive to 'Europeanise' has long existed in the Balkans, motivating profound shifts in the built environment of the Balkan cities, although Jezernik argues that these practices nonetheless contributed to Western stereotypes of Balkan inferiority. Nedeljković analyses how Serbian reactions to the 1999 NATO bombings emerged through tropes of a Serbian spiritual essence contrasted to depictions of crass 'Western' inauthenticity and venality.

Taken individually, the contributions to this collection are often novel and insightful. However, the volume never coheres as a sustained, multi-party dialogue on the practice of othering the Balkans and its relation to the production of unmarked 'European' identities. Rather, from chapter to chapter, the scope and ambition of the research and argumentation varies wildly and, the already broadly defined rubrics of the collection are often strained. Thus, as a work that addresses stereotypes about the Balkans and their consequences for European self-understandings, the book stands in the long shadows cast by the many works on the topic mentioned above. However, the fact that this book still traffics in a paradigm centred on Orientalism or Balkanism raises an interesting question as to why this problem continues to attract so much intellectual energy within contemporary social scientific studies of ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans. What present ideological and political work is done by foregrounding and yet again criticizing distorted depictions of the Balkans and their uptake in various political and social projects within and without the region?

As they tack between the deconstruction of orientalist stereotypes on the Balkans and studies of life-worlds that counter such stereotypes, the chapters of this collection each has a contribution to make. Individual chapters demonstrate how social actors struggle in and with the discursive space of the Balkans, rejecting, embracing, transforming, overcoming, and deploying notions of Balkan identity for different ends.

Other chapters show how alternative histories provide grounds for rethinking the Balkans. However, both the provocations and redundancies of this volume pose a deeper question: whither Balkan studies?

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