Imagining the Balkans

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Introduction Balkanism and Orientalism: Are They Different Categories?

A specter is haunting Western culture -- the specter of the Balkans. All the powers have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: politicians and journalists, conservative academics and radical intellectuals, moralists of all kind, gender, and fashion. Where is the adversarial group that has not been decried as "Balkan" and "balkanizing" by its opponents? Where the accused have not hurled back the branding reproach of "balkanism"?

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe had added to its repertoire of *Schimpfwörter*, or disparagements, a new one that, although recently coined, turned out to be more persistent over time than others with centuries-old tradition. "Balkanization" not only had come to denote the parcelization of large and viable political units but also had become a synonym for a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian. In its latest hypostasis, particularly in American academe, it has been completely decontextualized and paradigmatically related to a variety of problems. That the Balkans have been described as the "other" of Europe does not need special proof. What has been emphasized about the Balkans is that its inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behavior devised as normative by and for the civilized world. As with any generalization, this one is based on reductionism, but the reductionism and stereotyping of the Balkans has been of such degree and intensity that the discourse merits and requires special analysis.

The "civilized world" (the term is introduced not ironically but as a self-proclaimed label) was first seriously upset with the Balkans at the time of the Balkan wars (1912-1913). News of the barbarities committed in this distant European Mediterranean peninsula came flooding in and challenged the peace movements that not only were gaining strength in Europe but were beginning to be institutionalized. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, founded in 1910, established an international commission "to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan wars." The report of the commission, which consisted of well-known public figures from France, the United States, Great Britain, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, was published in 1914. This is a magnum opus that looked into the historical roots of

the Balkan conflict, presenting the points of view and aspirations of the belligerents, as well as the economic, social, and moral consequences of the wars, and their relation to international

law. The report included an introduction by Baron d'Estournelle de Constant reiterating the main principles of the peace movement: "Let us repeat, for the benefit of those who accuse us of 'bleating for peace at any price,' what we have always maintained: War rather than slavery; Arbitration rather than war; Conciliation rather than arbitration." [1]

De Constant differentiated between the first and the second Balkan wars: the first was defensive and a war of independence, "the supreme protest against violence, and generally the protest of the weak against the strong . . . and for this reason it was glorious and popular throughout the civilized world." The second was a predatory war in which "both victor and vanquished lose morally and materially." Still, for all their differences, both Balkan wars "finally sacrificed treasures of riches, lives, and heroism. We cannot authenticate these sacrifices without protesting, without denouncing their cost and their danger for the future." While not optimistic about the immediate political future of the region, the commission concluded: "What then is the duty of the civilized world in the Balkans? . . . It is clear in the first place that they should cease to exploit these nations for gain. They should encourage them to make arbitration treaties and insist upon their keeping them. They should set a good example by seeking a judicial settlement of all international disputes." De Constant reiterated:

> The real culprits in this long list of executions, assassinations, drownings, burnings, massacres and atrocities furnished by our report, are not, we repeat, the Balkan peoples. Here pity must conquer indignation. Do not let us condemn the victims . . . The real culprits are those who by interest or inclination, declaring that war is inevitable, end by making it so, asserting that they are powerless to prevent it. [2]

In 1993, instead of launching a fact-finding mission, the Carnegie Endowment satisfied itself with reprinting the 1913 report, preceding its title with a gratuitous caption, *The Other Balkan Wars.*" Also added was an introduction by George Kennan, ambassador to the Soviet Union in the 1950s and to Yugoslavia in the 1960s, best known as the *padre padrone* of the U.S. policy of containment vis-à-vis the USSR. Entitled *"The Balkan Crises: 1913 and 1993,"* this introduction was in turn preceded by a two-page preface by the president of the Carnegie Endowment, Morton Abramowitz, which recounts his almost serendipitous idea to reopen the eighty-yearold report. It convinced him "that others should also have the opportunity to read it. It is a document with many stories to tell us in this twilight decade of the twentieth century, when yet again a conflict in the Balkans torments Europe and the conscience of the international community." Abramowitz considers Kennan the person to best bridge the two events and instruct the conscience of the international community (which seems to have been tormented primarily by the Balkans throughout the twentieth century). We "all now benefit from his insight, his sure sense of history, and his felicitous style." [3]
Kennan's introduction began with a praise of peace movements in the United States, England, and northern Europe that sought to create new legal codes of in-

ternational behavior. Although the initiative for an international conference on disarmament came from the Russian Tsar Nicholas II, it was "immature dilettantism, . . . elaborated by the characteristic confusions of the Russian governmental establishment of the time, . . . not a serious one." Its unseriousness notwithstanding, it was seized upon with enthusiasm" by the proponents of peace who convoked the two Hague Peace Conferences and other international initiatives. Having separated the serious men from the dilettante boys, thus retrospectively essentializing cold war dichotomies, Kennan described the historical context at the turn of the century, the outbreak of the Balkan wars, and the report of the Carnegie commission.

> The importance of this report for the world of 1993 lies primarily in the light it casts on the excruciating situation prevailing today in the same Balkan world with which it dealt. The greatest value of the report is to reveal to people of this age how much of today's problem has deep roots and how much does not. [4]

Confirming thus his belief in the maxim *"Historia est magistra vitae,"* the second part of Kennan's introduction analyzed analogies with the past and the lessons of these analogies, its approach indicated by the slip "the same Balkan world." The newly created Balkan states were summed up as monarchies whose leaders were "as a rule, somewhat more moderate and thoughtful than their subjects. Their powers were usually disputed by inexperienced and unruly parliamentary bodies," [5] leaving one to wonder which was the rule and who were the exceptions. The Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand, "Foxy Ferdinand," plunged his country into the second Balkan war, despite better advice, to achieve his wild ambitions (not Balkan, but Central European, more particularly Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) to enter Constantinople as a victor; he accomplished the loss of his crown, and the unruly parliamentary body ruled that he was never to set foot in Bulgaria again. The "moderate" Milan Obrenović humiliated Serbia in an adventurous war with Bulgaria in 1885, used by George Bernard Shaw to produce his own "peacenik" variation on a Balkan theme. Kennan could have used the bloody assassination of the last pathetic Obrenović, Alexander, in 1903, to illustrate typical Balkan violence had he not been of royal birth. Finally, the HohenzollernSigmaringen dynasty of Romania was moderation incarnate, especially the soapopera Carol II, but then his mother was the beautiful Queen Marie (a "regular, regular, regular, regular royal queen" according to a caption of the 4 August 1924 Time), the favorite granddaughter of Victoria and an intimate friend of the Waldorf Astors. [6]

The explanation for the Balkan irredenta, for dreams of glory and territorial expansion, was summarized in one sentence: "It was hard for people who had recently achieved so much, and this so suddenly, to know where to stop." No mention that the recent Balkan upstarts under the "moderate" guidance of mostly German princelings were emulating the "frugal" imperial behavior of their western European models. Critical of the original report in that "there was no attempt to analyze the political motivations of the various governments participating in the wars," Kennan stressed that the strongest motivating factor "was not religion but aggressive nationalism. But that nationalism as it manifested itself on the field of battle, drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably, from, a distant tribal past. . . . And so it remains today." And he continued:

> What we are up against is the sad fact that developments of those earlier
> ages, not only those of the Turkish domination but of earlier ones as well, had
> the effect of thrusting into the southeastern reaches of the European continent
> a salient of nonEuropean civilization which has continued to the present day to
> preserve many of its non-European characteristics. [7]

Had Kennan's essay introduced the original report, written a whole year before the outbreak of World War I, one could empathize with its moral outrage even while overlooking its conceptual inaccuracies: at the time, it seemed that with little effort La Belle Époque would endure forever. Mary Edith Durham was disgusted with what she saw of the Balkan wars but she was confident that this could not befall the human species inhabiting the lands to the west of the Balkans:

> The war was over. All through I used to say to myself: "War is so obscene, so
> degrading, so devoid of one redeeming spark, that it is quite impossible there
> can ever be a war in West Europe." This was the one thing that consoled me in
> the whole bestial experience. War brings out all that is foulest in the human
> race, and the most disgusting animal ferocity poses as a virtue. As for the
> Balkan Slav and his haunted Christianity, it seemed to me all civilization
> should rise and restrain him from further brutality. [8]

Kennan, on the other hand, had full knowledge of the butcheries of the two world wars, or else one should assume that the spirit of Mary Edith Durham went to rest in 1913 and was reincarnated following an innocent amnesia between 1913 and 1989. Although at least technically it is indisputable that the spark for the powder keg came from the Balkans, very few serious historians would claim that this was the cause of World War I. World War II, however, had little to do with the Balkans, which were comparatively late and reluctantly

involved. It is probably because of the total inability to attribute World War II to anything Balkan that Kennan does not even mention it: "Well, here we are in 1993. Eighty years of tremendous change in the remainder of Europe and of further internecine strife in the Balkans themselves have done little to alter the problem this geographic region presents for Europe." Indeed, there is something distinctly non-European in that the Balkans never quite seem to reach the dimensions of European slaughters. After World War II, it is arrogant to hear the benign admission that "these states of mind are not peculiar to the Balkan people, . . . they can be encountered among other European peoples as well. . . . But all these distinctions are relative ones. It is the undue predominance among the Balkan peoples of these particular qualities." [9]

Kennan has been echoed by a great many American journalists who seem to be truly amazed at Balkan savagery at the end of the twentieth century. Roger Cohen exclaimed "the notion of killing people . . . because of something that may have happened in 1495 is unthinkable in the Western world. Not in the Balkans." [10] He was quite right. In the Balkans they were killing over something that happened 500 years ago; in Europe, with a longer span of civilized memory, they were killing over something that happened 2,000 years ago. One is tempted to ask whether the Holocaust resulted from a "due" or "undue" predominance of barbarity. It occured a whole fifty years ago but the two Balkan wars were even earlier. Besides, Kennan wrote his essay only a year after the "neat and clean" Gulf War operation. In seventeen days,

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American technology managed to kill, in what Jean Baudrillard claimed was merely a television event, at least half the number of total war casualties incurred by all sides during the two Balkan wars. [11] If this is too recent, there was the Vietnam War, where even according to Robert McNamara *In Retrospect* "the picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1,000 noncombatants a week . . . is not a pretty one." With the ease with which American journalists dispense accusations of genocide in Bosnia, where the reported casualty figures vary anywhere between 25,000 and 250,000, it is curious to know how they designate the over three million dead Vietnamese. [12] Whether the Balkans are non-European or not is mostly a matter of academic and political debate, but they certainly have no monopoly over barbarity.

It is not this book's intention merely to express moral outrage at somebody else's moral outrage. The question is how to explain the persistence of such a frozen image. How could a geographical appellation be transformed into one of the most powerful pejorative designations in history, international relations, political science, and, nowadays, general intellectual discourse? This question has more than a narrow academic relevance. It is the story of (1) innocent inaccuracies stemming from imperfect geographical knowledge transmitted through tradition; (2) the later saturation of the geographical appellation with political, social, cultural, and ideological overtones, and the beginning of the pejorative use of "Balkan" around World War I; and (3) the complete dissociation of the designation from its object, and the subsequent reverse and retroactive ascription of the ideologically loaded designation to the region, particularly after 1989.

While historians are well aware that dramatic changes have occurred on the peninsula, their discourse on the Balkans as a geographic/cultural entity is overwhelmed by a discourse utilizing the construct as a powerful symbol conveniently located outside historical time. And this usage itself is the product of nearly two centuries of evolution. There has appeared today a whole genre dealing with the problem and representation of "otherness." It is a genre across disciplines, from anthropology, through literature and philosophy, to sociology and history in general. A whole new discipline has appeared - *imagology* -- dealing with literary images of the other. [13] The discussion of orientalism has been also a subgenre of this concern with otherness. Orientalism has found an important and legitimate place in academia as the critique of a particular discourse that, when formulated by Said, served to denote, "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient -- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short . . . a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." [14]

Almost two decades later, Said reiterated that his objection to orientalism was grounded in more than just the antiquarian study of Oriental languages, societies, and peoples, but that "as a system of thought it approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint; this suggests both an enduring Oriental reality and an opposing but no less enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and, so to speak, from above." [15] Orientalism has had a tumultuous existence, and while it still excites passions, it has been superceded as a whole. This is not the case in the Balkans. On the one hand, Said's book has not been translated and published in the relevant Balkan languages

and thus has not yet entered the mainstream discourse. On the other hand, the notion has been introduced and is popularized by intellectuals who find that it describes adequately the relationship of the Balkans with the West. Insofar as there is a growing and widespread concern over this relationship, the discourse is becoming circumscribed in the category of orientalism, even when not explicitly stated. This book argues that balkanism is not merely a subspecies of orientalism. Thus, the argument advanced here purports to be more than a mere "orientalist variation on a Balkan theme." [16] Given the above-mentioned anticipation of a growing influence of orientalism in the Balkans, the category merits a closer discussion.

Inspired by Foucault, from whom he not only borrowed the term "discourse" but the central attention devoted to the relation of knowledge to power, Said exposed the dangers of essentializing the Orient as other. He was also strongly influenced by Antonio Gramsci's distinction between civil and political society, especially the notion of cultural hegemony that invested orientalism with prodigious durability. This is quite apart from how exactly Said's thought relates to the general Foucauldian or Gramscian oeuvre. [17] Predictably, the response to Said's book was polarized: it produced detractors as well as admirers or epigones. It involved hefty criticism on the part of modernization theorists or from classical liberal quarters. It entailed also serious epistemological critique, an attempt to smooth off the extremes and go beyond Said, and beyond orientalism. [18]

Some of the more pedestrian objections were made on the ground that Said was negating and demonizing the work of generations of honest and well-informed orientalists who had made prominent contributions to human knowledge. Said's professions that he was not attributing evil or sloppiness to each and every Orientalist but was simply drawing attention to the fact that "the *guild* of Orientalists has a specific history of complicity with imperial power" were insufficient to assuage the outcry that the very idea of disinterested scholarship had been desecrated. [19] Even less distinguished objections judged his work on the basis of how it was appropriated in the Arab world as a systematic defense of the Arabs and Islam, and imputed to Said a surreptitious anti-Westernism. There have been more substantial and subtle critiques of Said's endeavor aimed at refining rather than refuting his work. They concerned his nonhistorical, essentialist inconsistencies; the overgeneralization of Western attitudes on the basis of the French and British paradigm; mostly, and justly, Said was reproached for the lack of social and economic contextualization, for his concentration on textuality, for his manifestly idealist approach. [20] It was also charged that by positing the falseness of the orientalist representation, Said did not address the logical consequence "that there has at least to be the possibility of representation that is 'true.'" Yet, like most impassionate renunciations, there was an inevitable element of reductionism. Said had successfully addressed the charge that his negative polemic was not advancing a new epistemological approach. [21]

Despite his later strong declarations against imputing essentialism and ahistoricism to his category, Said overgeneralized speaking of a generic Orient that accommodated Aeschylus, Victor Hugo, Dante, and Karl Marx. Maybe he could not resist the display of literary erudition, but the treatment of Aeschylus *The Persians* or Euripides *The Bacchae* at the beginning of a European imaginative geography articulating the Orient, brilliantly insightful as they were, were not helpful in pro-

tecting him from charges that he was essentializing Europe and the West. [22] The appropriation of ancient Greek culture and its elevation to the founding status of Western civilization was only a gradual and controversial historical process, whereas Said's sweeping account of the division of East and West suggested a suspicious continuity.

This Saidian fallacy is rooted in the tension between his attraction to Erich Auerbach (as a thinker and existential role model of the intellectual in exile) and Said's simultaneous, and incompatible, attraction to Foucault. Despite lavishly adopting Foucauldian terminology, Said's ambivalent loyalty to the humanist project is essentially irreconcilable with Foucault's discourse theory with its "Nietzschean antihumanism and anti-realist theories of representation." Moreover, his transhistorical orientalist discourse is ahistorical not only in the ordinary sense but is methodologically anti-Foucauldian, insofar as Foucault's discourse is firmly grounded in European modernity. [23] Still, maybe one should listen more carefully to Said's latest selfexegesis with its recurrent insistence on Islamic and Arabic orientalism, without even an honorary mention of his detours into antiquity and the Middle Ages. When he says that "the reason why Orientalism is opposed by so many thoughtful nonWesterners is that its modern discourse is correctly perceived as a discourse originating in an era of colonialism," [24] I am inclined to see in the qualifying slip -- "its modern discourse" -- the hubris and weakness of the academic prima donna who has to accommodate defensively, though discreetly, his past faults and inconsistencies rather than openly admit to them. Then, it would be possible to ascribe his literary digressions (which, anyway, fill only a small part of his narrative) to a tension between his professional hypostasis as a literary critic and his growing identity as Palestinian intellectual, something that might explain the foregoing of theoretical rigor for a profound emotive effect.

Despite distinguished and undistinguished objections, the place of *Orientalism* and of "orientalism" in academic libraries and dictionaries has been secured. In a more narrow sense, it acquired an enviable although contested prestige in avantguardist cultural theory; in a broader sense, it indicated possible venues of resistance and subversion. Said undoubtedly succeeded in crystallizing an existing concern at the proper moment, in the proper mode. [25] It is healthy to react against the iconlike status Said has acquired both among his apostles and his opponents. To deny, however, or even downplay a connection with Said resembles (although on an incomparably more modest level) the efforts to disclaim any connection with, and even profess aversion for, Marx, while, quite apart from the consequences of where his self-professed followers led, deeply internalizing and unconsciously reproducing Marx's immense contribution to how we theorize today about society. The continuing resonance of Said's category is perhaps best explained by the growing awareness of students of society "of the role of their academic disciplines in the reproduction of patterns of domination." [26]

In a broader context, Said's attack on orientalism was a specific critique of what has since become known as the general crisis of representation. More significantly, he posed the question not only in epistemological but also in moral terms: "Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the

consequences humanly?" [27] No other discipline has been as strongly affected by this crisis as anthropology since the ontology of separateness, difference, otherness is its methodological basis. Anthropologists have been long aware of what in physics is known as the Heisenberg effect: the notion that, in the course of measuring, the scientist interacts with the object of observation and, as a result, the observed object is revealed not as it is in itself but as a function of measurement. It is a problem that led anthropology as the par excellence discipline studying the alien, the exotic, the distant in faraway societies and the marginal in nearby ones into its present deep theoretical crisis. It led it to the articulation of an often honest, but

verbally helpless solipsism; as Wittgenstein remarked "what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest." [28] But this need not be the case. The realization of the limits of knowledge that accompanies the self-conscious act of acquiring it should not necessarily produce a paralytic effect. Carrier, who has focused on essentialization not merely as an unconscious attribute of anthropological studies but as an inevitable by-product of thinking and communication, sees the problem as a "failure to be conscious of essentialism, whether it springs from the assumptions with which we approach our subject or the goals that motivate our writing." [29] Maybe the feeling of philosophical impotence in anthropology and other disciplines affected by the examination of their own techniques will be dissipated simply by getting used to or learning to live with it: familiarity breeds a healthy ignoring of the final philosophical implications of theory, but by no means erases the necessity for rigorous and responsible adjustment of the methodology of observation. This is what happened in physics despite and over the objections that Heisenberg's philosophy of knowledge encountered in no less formidable figures than Einstein, Schrödinger, and Louis de Broglie.

Already in *Orientalism*, Said warned that the answer to orientalism was not occidentalism, yet neither he nor his followers paid enough attention to the essentialization (or, rather, self-essentialization) of the West as the hegemonic pair in the dichotomy. While "East" has become less common recently, this has not affected the casual usage of "West": "Even theorists of discontinuity and deconstruction such as Foucault and Derrida continue to set their analysis within and against a Western totality." [30] It took James Carrier to accost this problem:

> Seeing Orientalism as a dialectical process helps us recognize that it is not merely a Western imposition of a reified identity on some alien set of people. It is also the imposition of an identity created in dialectical opposition to another identity, one likely to be equally reified, that of the West. Westerners, then, define the Orient in terms of the West, but so Others define themselves in terms of the West, just as each defines the West in terms of the Other. . . . Of course, the way I have cast this privileges the West as the standard against which all Others are defined, which is appropriate in view of both the historical political and economic power of the West. [31]

Insofar as the discourse describing the relationship of the Balkans to a putative West is considered, there is an increasing tendency to treat it as a structural variant of orientalism. Introducing the notion of "nesting orientalisms," Milica Bakić-Hayden prefers to treat the discourse involving the Balkans as a variation of orientalism be-

cause "it is the manner of perpetuation of the underlying logic that makes Balkanism and Orientalism variant forms of the same kind." The same approach is employed by Elli Skopetea. [32] One can readily agree that there is overlap and complementarity between the two rhetorics, yet there is similar rhetorical overlap with any power discourse: the rhetoric of racism, development, modernization, civilization, and so on. My aim is to position myself vis-à-vis the orientalist discourse and elaborate on a seemingly identical, but actually only similar phenomenon, which I call balkanism. [33] What are, then, if any, the differences between these categories?

In the first place, there is the historical and geographic concreteness of the Balkans as opposed to the intangible nature of the Orient. In his preemptive afterword to the new edition of *Orientalism*, Said explicitly insists that he has "no interest in, much less capacity for, showing what the true Orient and Islam really are." This is premised on a justified conviction that Orient and Occident "correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact." [34] Said's treatment of the Orient is ambivalent: he denies the existence of a "real Orient," yet, by attacking texts or traditions distorting or ignoring authentic characteristics of the Orient, he gives it a genuine ontological status. [35]

Indeed, the opposition between an abstract East and West has been as old as written history. The ancient Greeks used Orient to depict the antagonism between civilized and barbarians, although their main dichotomy ran between the cultured South and the barbarous North (Thracian and Scythian). The Persians to the east were in many ways a quasi-civilized other. [36] From Diocletian's times onward, Rome introduced the East-West division into administration and considered Orient the dioceses of Egypt and Anatolia. In the medieval period, the division was used in the narrow sense to depict the opposition between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and in a broader sense to designate that between Islam and Christianity. In all cases, the dichotomy East-West had clearly defined spatial dimensions: it juxtaposed societies that coexisted but were opposed for political, religious, or cultural reasons. East was not always the pejorative component of this opposition: for Byzantium, the unrivaled center of the civilized European world for several centuries after the fall of Rome, the West was synonymous with barbarity and crudeness. Only after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the eclipse of the Orthodox church, but especially with the unique economic takeoff of Western Europe, was East internalized also by the Orthodox world as the less privileged of the opposition pair.

As Larry Wolff has convincingly shown, the conventional division of Europe into East and West is a comparatively late invention of eighteenth-century philosophes responsible for the conceptual reorientation of Europe along an East-West axis from the heretofore dominant division into North versus South. [37] This new division, although also spatial, began gradually to acquire different overtones, borrowed and adapted from the belief in evolution and progress flourishing during the Enlightenment. Because the geographic east of Europe and the world situated to the east was lagging behind Europe primarily in economic performance, East came to be identified more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment. This added an

additional vector in the relationship between East and West: time, where the movement from past to future was not merely motion but evolution from simple to complex, backward to developed, primitive to cultivated. The element of time with its developmental aspect has been an important, and nowadays the most important, characteristic of contemporary perceptions of East and West. Thus, since the ancient Greeks, the East has always existed as an elastic and ambiguous concept. Everyone has had one's own Orient, pertaining to space or time, most often to both. The perception of the Orient has been, therefore, relational, depending on the normative value set and the observation point.

Even had Said been more historically minded and rigorous and had spoken merely of the Near East and Islam, instead of the Orient (as he is increasingly doing in his later works), he still would have had a problem with two very broad and shifting categories. Not only are the Near and Middle East amorphous and ascriptive terms devised by the West, [38] but one would have to deal with Ottoman and Turkish orientalism as quite apart from Arabic orientalism, and would have to distinguish between different Arabic orientalisms. Likewise, the notion of Islam as an entity is problematic, both in a geographical and chronological sense. [39] To try to fend off criticism, Said would have had to be what he is not, circumspect and precise, and organically, not only verbally, devoted to the notion of historical specificity, to the idea that "human reality is constantly being made and unmade." Then he would have spoken cautiously of the orientalism of the Arabic Islamic Near East in the relatively short era affected by expanding French and British imperialism before the fragmentation of a putative Arabic identity. Then he would not have written Orientalism.

The Balkans have a concrete historical existence. If, for the Orient, one can play with the famous mot of Derrida: "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," the question whether they exist cannot be even posed for the Balkans; the proper question is "qu'est-ce qu'il y a de hors texte?" While surveying the different historical legacies that have shaped the southeast European peninsula, two legacies can be singled out as crucial. One is the millennium of Byzantium with its

profound political, institutional, legal, religious, and cultural impact. The other is the half millenium of Ottoman rule that gave the peninsula its name and established the longest period of political unity it had experienced. Not only did part of southeastern Europe acquire a new name -- Balkans -- during the Ottoman period, it has been chiefly the Ottoman elements or the ones perceived as such that have mostly invoked the current stereotypes. Aside from the need for a sophisticated theoretical and empirical approach to the problems of the Ottoman legacy, it seems that the conclusion that the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy is not an overstatement. While, in the narrow sense of the word, the presence of the Ottoman Empire in the southeast European peninsula had a lifetime spanning from the fourteenth to the early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman legacy bears first and foremost the characteristics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In practically all spheres in which the Ottoman legacy can be traced (political, cultural, social, and economic), a drastic break occurred at the time of secession and was largely completed by the end of World War I. In the demographic sphere and the sphere of popular culture, the Ottoman legacy has had a more persistent and continuous life. It also has had a prolonged existence as the legacy of per-

ception, constantly invented and reinvented, as long as historical self-identity will be deemed crucial in Balkan societies.

There is a widespread notion that the Balkans began losing their identity once they began to Europeanize. That this phrasing implies their difference from Europe is obvious. Far more interesting is the fact that the process of "Europeanization," "Westernization," or "modernization" of the Balkans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries included the spread of rationalism and secularization, the intensification of commercial activities and industrialization, the formation of a bourgeoisie and other new social groups in the economic and social sphere, and above all, the triumph of the bureaucratic nation-state. From this point of view the Balkans were becoming European by shedding the last residue of an imperial legacy, widely considered an anomaly at the time, and by assuming and emulating the homogeneous European nation-state as the normative form of social organization. It may well be that what we are witnessing today, wrongly attributed to some Balkan essence, is the ultimate Europeanization of the Balkans. If the Balkans are, as I think they are, tantamount to their Ottoman legacy, this is an advanced stage of the end of the Balkans.

Closely linked to the intangible nature of the Orient, in contrast to the concreteness of the Balkans, was the role the oriental image served as escape from civilization. The East, in general, was constructed for the West as an exotic and imaginary realm, the abode of legends, fairy tales, and marvels; it epitomized longing and offered option, as opposed to the prosaic and profane world of the West. The Orient became Utopia, "it represented the past, the future, and the Middle Ages." It was the admiration of the romantics, which produced Byron *Child Harold*, the *Ghiaour*, and *The Bride of Abydos*; Goethe *Westöstlicher Diwan*; Chateaubriand *Itinéraire de Paris a Jérusalem*; Victor Hugo *Orientales*; Heinrich Heine's *Romanzero*; and the works of Pierre Loti, Théofile Gauthier, Samuel Coleridge, Thomas Moore, and so forth. The Orient nourished the imagination of the romantics, but it became also an escape for liberals and nationalists who felt stifled by the rise of conservatism and reaction after the Napoleonic wars, when the Orient "became a symbol of freedom and wealth." [40]

This last component, wealth and, inseparable from it, excess, made the Orient the escapist dream of affluent romantic conservatives, too. English gentlemen found desirable models of behavior and dress that they readily emulated. "Men smoking was a custom much associated with Turkey, Persia, and the rest of the leisurelyinhaling domain of North Africa." Benjamin Disraeli spoke in praise of the "propriety and enjoyment" modeled on the lives of Turkish pashas that allowed him the luxury of smoking in repose. "Western would-be sultans retired to smoking rooms after dinner to enjoy the social license of a men's society akin to that of the Arab world. They wore banyans and robes, informal attire that corresponded with Western undress." [41] The imagined Orient served not only as refuge from the alienation of a rapidly

industrializing West but also as metaphor for the forbidden. "Confected from Western desire and imagination," the East offered a sumptuous wardrobe and an even more extravagant nudity. There was an explicit relationship between the Orient and the feminine, and it has been argued that oriental discourses Involve a theory of sexuality and sensuality in the disguise of a theory of asceticism. [42] Alongside "eastern

cruelty," a main theme in orientalist descriptions and painting, came also another component with a strong appeal, lust:

> Scenes of harems, baths, and slave markets were for many Western artists a pretext by which they were able to cater to the buyer's prurient interest in erotic themes. . . . Such pictures were, of course, presented to Europeans with a "documentary" air and by means of them the Orientalist artist could satisfy the demand for such paintings and at the same time relieve himself of any moral responsibility by emphasizing that these were scenes of a society that was not Christian and had different moral values. [43]

The Balkans, on the other hand, with their unimaginative concreteness, and almost total lack of wealth, induced a straightforward attitude, usually negative, but rarely nuanced. There was some exception at the time of romantic nationalism in the words and deeds of philhellenes or slavophiles, but these efforts were extremely short-lived and usually touched on the freedom component, totally devoid of the mystery of exoticism. Even the one exception that espoused Balkan romance was of a distinctly different nature. In 1907, an American, Arthur Douglas Howden Smith, joined a Macedonian cheta organized in Bulgaria. He left a lively account that opened with reflections on the prosaic character of modern civilization depriving its populations of the picturesqueness of days bygone. Resolved to pursue his call for adventure in "lonesome corners of the earth, [where] men and women still lead lives of romance," Smith decided to head for the Balkans, which had long interested him.

> To those who have not visited them, the Balkans are a shadow-land of mystery; to those who know them, they become even more mysterious. . . . You become, in a sense, a part of the spell, and of the mystery and glamour of the whole. You contract the habit of crouching over your morning coffee in the café and, when you meet a man of your acquaintance, at least half of what you say is whispered, portentously. Intrigue, plotting, mystery, high courage, and daring deeds -- the things that are the soul of true romance are to-day the soul of the Balkans. [44]

As with the Orient, there is the mystical escape to the Middle Ages but without a whim of the accompanying luridness and overtly sexual overtones of orientalism. It is a distinctly male appeal: the appeal of medieval knighthood, of arms and plots. In Belgrade one got, wrote Smith, the first feeling of the Balkans: "Intrigue is in the air one breathes. The crowds in the Belgrade cafés have the manner of conspirators. There are soldiers on every hand." [45] Still, Smith's is one of the few examples where the "maleness" of the Balkans received a positive account. In practically every other description, the standard Balkan male is uncivilized, primitive, crude, cruel, and, without exception, disheveled. Herbert Vivian chapter on "Brigandage" in Macedonia, written at the same time as Smith's account, began by introducing the Balkans as still medieval; brigands to him were an appropriate medieval topic and he felt "like meeting the ghost of Sir Walter Scott and extracting fresh tales of a grandfather." The chapter ended on a nostalgic note that the next generation might view all this as a myth of the Middle Ages: "No doubt the world will plume itself upon the uniformity of civilisation, but the traveller's last opportunity of romantic adventure will be no more." The photograph he chose, however, to illustrate this properly controlled discourse was a close-up of a staring, disheveled Macedonian brigand displaying two

equally disheveled heads of either his foes or his friends. [46] Unlike the standard orientalist discourse, which resorts to metaphors of its object of study as female, the balkanist discourse is singularly male.

The one woman who excited Smith's imagination did so because of qualities ostensibly held for masculine in this period, despite his insistence that she was "feminine to the core." She was the Bulgarian Tsveta Boyova, born in a Macedonian village, who had graduated in medicine from the University of Sofia and, after having lost her husband, father, and two brothers in a Turkish raid, had offered her services as nurse and doctor to the Macedonian bands. Smith was enchanted to be served a three-course meal by a woman who, lacking enough silverware, washed it after each course:

> To a man who had almost forgotten what civilization meant, and who would
> have been prone, like his companions, to stare in dull amaze at a frock-coat, it
> was like an essence from the blue, to have coffee in the afternoon at five
> o'clock, served by a woman who knew Tolstoy, Gorki, Bebel, Carl [*sic!*] Marx
> and the leaders of Socialism, from A to Z, to whom Shakespeare was more
> than a name, and who bad ideas on the drama and modern society,
> revolutionary, but interesting. [47]

Describing her as a sul generis Joan of Arc, Smith was evidently taken by the indefinable quality of Boyova: "I have never met a man or a woman who was her equal in pluck. There was a quality about her, indefinable in nature, that made her striking." [48] Yet, even in the rare exception of Smith, the mystery of the Balkans was incomplete. On arriving in Sofia in 1907, he found the city lighted by electricity, with trolley cars and telephones and well policed, a situation that might "dissatisfy the tourist who is looking for the picturesque." Yet, the disappointment was only superficial:

> Sofia has not been entirely civilized as to lose its Old-World charm, its spicy
> aroma of the East. The veneer of civilization is only skin-deep in some
> respects, and in others it has not made an appreciable difference. You feel,
> instinctively, as you step from the corridor train onto the platform of the low,
> clean, yellow station at Sofia, that Europe is behind you; you stand in the
> shadow of the Orient. [49]

It is, thus, not an innate characteristic of the Balkans that bestows on it the air of mystery but the reflected light of the Orient. One is tempted to coin a new Latin phrase: "*Lux Balcanica est umbra Orientis.*" Apart from the above solitary example of romanticizing the Balkans, the images they evoked were for the greatest part prosaic. Durham, too, had approached the Balkans to "forget home miseries for a time," but from the outset she had not seen or expected from the Balkans more than "a happy hunting ground filled by picturesque and amusing people, in which to collect tales [and] sketch." Her favorite refrain was that the Balkans were an opéra bouffe written in blood. [50]
What practically all descriptions of the Balkans offered as a central characteristic was their transitionary status. The West and the Orient are usually presented as incompatible entities, antiworlds, but completed antiworlds. Said has described his own work as "based on the rethinking of what had for centuries been believed to be an unbridgeable chasm separating East from West." [51] The Balkans, on the other hand, have always evoked the image of a bridge or a crossroads. The bridge as a metaphor

for the region has been so closely linked to the literary oeuvre of Ivo Andrić, that one tends to forget that its use both in outside descriptions, as well as in each of the Balkan literatures and everyday speech, borders on the banal. The Balkans have been compared to a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia. Writing about the Greeks, a British author at the beginning of the century summarized the status of the Balkans:

> A Greek says he is going to Europe when he is going to France and Italy. He calls Englishmen, Germans, or any other Western people who happen to visit or reside in Greece, Europeans in contradistinction to the Greeks. The occidentals in Greece do likewise. They are Europeans, and by implication, the Greeks are not. . . . The Greek is racially and geographically European, but he is not a Western [*sic*]. That is what he means by the term, and the signification is accepted by both Greek and foreigner. He is Oriental in a hundred ways, but his Orientalism is not Asiatic. He is the bridge between the East and West. . . . [52]

The Balkans are also a bridge between stages of growth, and this invokes labels such as semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilized, semioriental. In a short passage, a veritable masterpiece in conveying the English feeling of forlornness and aversion for the Balkan backwaters, and in discreetly depicting the civilized straightforwardness of British diplomats who found semi-Orientals distasteful, Durham wrote in 1925:

> A Balkan legation is to an Englishman a spot which he hopes soon to quit for a more congenial atmosphere in another part of Europe. As for a Consul, he often found it wiser not to learn the local language, lest a knowledge of it should cause him to be kept for a lengthy period in some intolerable hole [. . .] To a Russian, on the other hand, a Balkan post was one of high importance; the atmosphere of semiOriental intrigue, distasteful to an Englishman, was the breath of his nostrils; nor did any Slavonic dialect present any difficulty to him. [53]

The issue of the Balkans' semicolonial, quasi-colonial, but clearly not purely colonial status deserves closer attention. Admittedly, the categories of colonialism and dominance or subordination can be treated essentially as synonyms. For W. E. B. Du Bois, the legalistic distinction between colonized and subordinate was ephemeral: "[I]n addition to the some seven hundred and fifty million of disfranchised colonial peoples there are more than half-billion persons in nations and groups who are quasi-colonials and in no sense form free and independent states." The designation "free states" was a fiction that disguised a reality of oppression and manipulation: "In the Balkans are 60,000,000 persons in the 'free states' of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece. They form in the mass an ignorant, poor, and sick people, over whom already Europe is planning 'spheres of influence'." [54]

It is this discourse that makes the notion of orientalism appealing to a number of Balkan intellectuals who hasten to apply it as a model inclusive of the Balkans. The issue of the legalistic distinction, however, should not to be underestimated. It is not only a predisposition to historical specificity that makes me resistant to the conflation of historically defined, time-specific, and finite categories like colonialism and imperialism with broadly conceived and not historically circumscribed notions like power and subordination. For one, the formal difference is crucial in explaining why the Balkans have been left outside the sphere of discussion on

orientalism and postcolonialism. But the real question is, even if included, whether the methodological contribution of subaltern and postcolonial studies (as developed for India and expanded and refined for Africa and Latin America) can be meaningfully applied to the Balkans. In a word, is it possible to successfully "provincialize Europe" when speaking about the Balkans, to use the jargon for epistemologically emancipating non-European societies? To me, this is impossible, since the Balkans are Europe, are part of Europe, although, admittedly, for the past several centuries its provincial part or periphery. In the case of the Balkans' European allegiance, the discrepancy is based on the different territorial span between the geographic, economic, political, and cultural Europe. But eurocentrism is not a banal ethnocentrism; it is "a specifically modern phenomenon, the roots of which go back only to the Renaissance, a phenomenon that did not flourish until the nineteenth century. In this sense, it constitutes one dimension of the culture and ideology of the modern capitalist world." [55]

Second, not to be ignored is the self-perception of being colonial or not. Despite howling Balkan conspiracy theories and the propensity to blame one or the other or all great powers for their fate, the sensibility of victimization is much less acute. There is always present the consciousness of a certain degree of autonomy. Even the nominal presence of political sovereignty has been important for the ones who have felt subordinate, dominated, or marginalized; therefore, the coinage or appropriation of this otherwise meaningless category "semi colonial." Meaningless as it is as a heuristic notion, it is indicative both of the perception and the self-perception of the Balkans insofar as it emphasizes their transitionary character.

Unlike orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity. As Mary Douglas has elegantly shown, objects or ideas that confuse or contradict cherished classifications provoke pollution behavior that condemns them, because "dirt is essentially disorder." These confusing or contradicting elements Douglas calls ambiguous, anomalous, or indefinable. Drawing on a general consensus that "all our impressions are schematically determined from the start," that "our interests are governed by a pattern-making tendency," she holds that "uncomfortable facts, which refuse to be fitted in, we find ourselves ignoring or distorting so that they do not disturb these established assumptions. By and large anything we take note of is pre-selected and organized in the very act of perceiving." Although Douglas recognizes the difference between anomaly (not fitting a given set or series) and ambiguity (inducing two interpretations), she concludes that there is no practical advantage in distinguishing between the two. Thus, ambiguity is treated as anomaly. Because of their indefinable character, persons or phenomena in transitional states, like in marginal ones, are considered dangerous, both being in danger themselves and emanating danger to others. In the face of facts and ideas that cannot be crammed in preexisting schemata, or which invite more than a single interpretation, one can either blind oneself to the inadequacy of concepts or seriously deal with the fact that some realities elude them. [56]

It is this exasperation before complexity that made William Miller exclaim at the end of a paragraph on an extraordinary medley of races and languages where "the Bulgarian and the Greek, the Albanian and the Serb, the Osmanli, the Spanish Jew and the Romanian, live side by side": "In short, the Balkan peninsula is, broadly

speaking, the land of contradictions. Everything is the exact opposite of what it might reasonably be expected to be." [57] This in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitionary reasonably be expected to be. I character, could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as other but as incomplete self Enlarging and refining on Arnold van Gennep's groundbreaking concept of liminality, a number of scholars have introduced a distinction between liminality, marginality, and the lowermost. While liminality presupposes significant changes in the dominant self-image, marginality defines qualities "on the same plane as the dominant ego-image." Finally, the lowermost suggests "the shadow, the structurally despised alter-ego." [58] The reasons that the Balkans can be treated as an illustration of the lowermost case, as an incomplete self, are two: religion and race.

One of the versions of the East-West dichotomy played itself out in the opposition between Greek Orthodoxy and Catholicism. It is Catholicism and not Western Christianity in general that is part of the dichotomy, because it was the political and ideological rivalry between Rome and Constantinople that created a rift between the two creeds and attached to Orthodoxy the status of a schismatic, heretic deviation (and vice versa.) The Reformation made unsuccessful attempts to reach an understanding with the Orthodox church in a common fight against papal supremacy. The notion of a general Western Christianity as opposed to a putative Eastern Orthodox entity is not a theological construct but a relatively late cultural and recent political science category, as in Toynbee or Huntington, that appropriates religious images to legitimize and obfuscate the real nature of geopolitical rivalries and boundaries. In the Catholic discourse, there has been a strong ambiguity, and in some extreme cases one can encounter

rhetoric where Turks and Greeks were lumped together, yet this was the flagrant exception. Serious attempts at reconciliation and common language between Orthodoxy and Catholicism have emanated precisely from the religious establishment. Orthodoxy, for all the enmity that it evoked among Catholics, was not seen as a transitionary faith to Islam; what was usually emphasized was the unbridgeable boundary between Christianity (even in its Orthodox variety) and the Muslim religion.

Said's orientalism is very distinctly identified with Islam. Skopetea, who has studied Balkan images at the end of Ottoman rule in a framework of Saidian orientalism, contends that there is no difference in the treatment of the Islamic and the Christian East, that there is no Christian monopoly in the Western tradition, and, accordingly, he defines the Balkans as "the west of the east." [59] It seems that Skopetea conflates two different Western attitudes and rhetories that were grafted on each other: one of religion and the other of class. Whereas the treatment of Islam was based on an unambiguous attitude toward religious otherness (ranging from crusading rejection to enlightened agnostic acceptance), there was an ambiguous attitude toward the Ottoman polity that invited a very distinct class attitude of solidarity with the Muslim Ottoman rulers. This was in stark contrast to the poor and unpolished, but Christian, upstarts, who have been described in a discourse almost identical to the one used to depict the Western lower classes, a virtual parallel between the East End of London and the East End of Europe.

The racial component offers a more complex analysis. On the one hand, there exists a discourse that describes that Balkans as a racial mixture, as a bridge between

races. From a pervasive but not explicit theme about the mongrel nature of the Balkans in travelers' accounts until the end of the nineteenth century, it adapted itself neatly to the dominant racial discourse of the twentieth century and resorted to overt racial slurs in the interwar period. On the other hand, despite the presence of the theme of racial ambiguity, and despite the important internal hierarchies, in the final analysis the Balkans are still treated as positioned on this side of the fundamental opposition: white versus colored, Indo-European versus the rest. This also comes to explain the preoccupation with the war in Yugoslavia in the face of more serious and bloody conflicts elsewhere on the globe. As shown by sociological studies on stigma, "difference is an essential part of the process of typification. Put most simply, differences are variations between or within types." [60] It is my thesis that while orientalism is dealing with a difference between (imputed) types, balkanism treats the differences within one type.

What I define as balkanism was formed gradually in the course of two centuries and crystallized in a specific discourse around the Balkan wars and World War I. In the next decades, it gained some additional features but these accretions were mostly a matter of detail, not of essence. In its broad outlines, it was and continues to be handed down almost unalterable, having undergone what Clifford aptly defines as "discursive hardening" and Said explains by introducing the category of "textual attitude," that is, the fallacy "of applying" what one learns literally to reality." [61] Long before that, Nietzsche had given his own description of this process:

> The reputation, name, and appearance, the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for -- originally almost always wrong and arbitrary, . . . -- all this grows from generation unto generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows to be part of the thing and turns into its very body. What at first was appearance becomes in the end, almost invariably, the essence and is effective as such. [62]

The balkanist discourse, rampant as it is, has not equally affected intellectual traditions or institutions. It is present primarily in journalistic and quasi-journalistic literary forms

(travelogues, political essayism, and especially this unfortunate hybrid -academic journalism), which accounts for its popularity. These genres have been the most important channels and safeguards of balkanism as an ideal type. Speaking of racist attitudes, Roland Barthes remarked on how frozen collective representations and mentalities can be, kept stagnant by power, the press, and reigning values. [63] For the Third World, while the press continues to cling to normative views of civilization formed during the colonial era, anthropology and cultural criticism have questioned the consequences of such views. This has not happened for the Balkans, possibly because their noncolonial status has left them out of the sphere of interest of postcolonial critique and cultural criticism, and because Balkan, and in general European anthropology, has been somewhat marginal. Although dealing with facets of the academic discourse, I am extremely hesitant to go into generalizations. The problem of the academic study of the Balkans is a significant theme and deserves separate and profound investigation. I am not trying to avoid it but at this point my research is insufficient to commit myself to a more definite opinion. Tempting as it is to see academic study as partaking in the overall balkanist discourse, the relations

between scholarly knowledge and ideology and propaganda are not so straightforward: "[I]t seems in the end that the two forms of discourse remain distinct, that the production of scientific knowledge moves along a line that only occasionally intersects with the production of popular mythology." [64] Still, it would be fair to maintain that academic research, although certainly not entirely immune from the affliction of balkanism, has by and large resisted its symptoms. This is not to say that a great number of the scholarly practitioners of Balkan studies in the West do not share privately a staggering number of prejudices; what it says is that, as a whole, the rules of scholarly discourse restrict the open articulation of these prejudices.

Balkanism evolved to a great extent independently from orientalism and, in certain aspects, against or despite it. One reason was geopolitical: the separate treatment, within the complex history of the Eastern question, of the Balkans as a strategic sphere distinct from the Near or Middle East. The absence of a colonial legacy (despite the often exploited analogies) is another significant difference. In the realm of ideas, balkanism evolved partly as a reaction to the disappointment of the West Europeans' "classical" expectations in the Balkans, but it was a disappointment within a paradigm that had already been set as separate from the oriental. [65] The Balkans' predominantly Christian character, moreover, fed for a long time the crusading potential of Christianity against Islam. Despite many attempts to depict its (Orthodox) Christianity as simply a subspecies of oriental despotism and thus as inherently non-European or non-Western, still the boundary between Islam and Christianity in general continued to be perceived as the principal one. Finally, the construction of an idiosyncratic Balkan self-identity, or rather of several Balkan self-identities, constitutes a significant distinction: they were invariably erected against an "oriental" other. This could be anything from a geographic neighbor and opponent (most often the Ottoman Empire and Turkey but also within the region itself as with the nesting of orientalisms in the former Yugoslavia) to the "orientalizing" of portions of one's own historical past (usually the Ottoman period and the Ottoman legacy).