

edited and rebroadcast in the UK during the Kosovo war, and made a well-suited background introduction to the continuation of hostilities. Names of Bosnian places which had appeared and then disappeared from the public mind – Goražde, Prijedor, Jajce, Zvornik – were replaced by another set of names – Kosovo's Priština, Decani, Račak, Mitrovica. Authors who began their careers as freelancers in Bosnia, and who in the meantime became established experts on all things Balkan, now returned to their files looking for research notes dealing with ethnic Albanians or Montenegrins – notes that had never been used, because up until recently there had been no need to use them. Even I was told that I should think of becoming more actual and devote more attention to the films that appeared in the aftermath of Kosovo – the Serbian feature *Nebeska udica/Sky Hook* (1999), or documentaries like the Austrian *The Punishment* (1999), or the British *The Valley* (1999) and *Moral Combat* (2000).

I do not see much point in making my scholarship as directly dependable on political developments. My commentary is, indeed, mostly based on examples from the Bosnian war. The Balkan context seems to be changing incessantly, and the story continues to unravel. The role of film and other visual mediation in the cross-cultural representation of the Balkans, however, remains invariably important and controversial. And it is this subtle role that I hope to have captured and problematised in my work.

## Chapter 1

### War in the Balkans – Moving Images

This book surveys the wide range and variety of films that were made in response to the 1990s crisis in the Balkans, and in particular the Bosnian war. It tries to compensate for the insufficient attention paid to the ambiguous roles the mediated moving images of conflict in the Balkans play.

Why film?

First, because the visual has a crucial role in discourse formation at any level and because the informative power of transmitted images is at least as influential as the exchange that takes place in spoken and written language. Unlike the written word, however, the role of mediated images is so subtle that it often remains unaccounted for. Looking at cinematic texts helps bring to light the underlying dynamics of cross-cultural image-making as it unravels within the wider context of communicated concepts and interpretations. Second, because in today's world of electronic media, images reach out wider than writings, a fact which is still rarely recognised or explored in a persistent manner. Nowadays it is the moving image rather than the printed word that carries more persuasive weight.

By analysing film and visual representation, I remain confined to explanations that do not offer solutions. I cannot explain how to put an end to the violence or settle the competing claims. I do not know how to shelter hungry and desolate refugees, how to provide therapy for raped and traumatised women, or how to give children with amputated limbs the self-esteem they will need when growing up. All I can do is critically examine the politics of representation and its impact on the developments in the troubled Balkans.

This is, however, more significant than it may at first seem.

I analyse the transformations in Balkan narrative discourse and visual representation that take place in the context of the global exposure the region received through the medium of film. My study is not just an account of the film-making effort that came into being as a response to the Balkan crisis. Rather, it is an attempt to show how film registered the dynamic interplay of perceptions and self-perceptions, and to show why the continuity and the direction of cinematic mediation is of crucial importance.

In my study I persistently point out that cross-cultural causality is a crucial area on which to focus, because it has more to do with the construction of marginality via selectively mediated images than nationalist discourse does (this last one I see as a derivative of the 'Balkans as a socio-cultural periphery' motif).

### Key Concepts

Specific features of my approach throughout the text involve the way I look at the concept of 'Balkans' and at the issues of transition and context.

#### Balkans

In my approach I retain 'the Balkans' as a common denominator when referring to this diverse and complex region, which allows me to name and critique important transnational issues that often remain neglected when the exploration is limited to individual countries. Abandoning the one-country approach and taking the issues on a cross-cultural level, even within the boundaries of a region, is a necessary precondition of this research. What we see when looking at one country, we see even more clearly when we transpose it onto the region at large.

'Any serious consideration of the Balkan peninsula,' writes Misha Glenny, 'runs up against the unanswerable question of borders' (Glenny, 1999, p. xxii). He points out that every definition of the Balkans is compelled to use 'a mixture of the geographical, historical, and political'. When brought together, these elements often do not coincide with concrete countries and leave the conceptual contours of the region fuzzy and flexible.

My concept of the Balkans is not identical with the former Yugoslavia, but relates to a wider region in South-East Europe bordering on Asia Minor, the islands of the east Mediterranean and the Black Sea shores of the Caucasus – the lands travelled by such a quintessential Balkan author as Romanian Panait Istrati.<sup>1</sup>

In my usage, the Balkans is not a geographical concept but one that denotes a cultural entity, widely defined by shared Byzantine, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian legacies and by the specific marginal positioning of the region in relation to the western part of the European continent. Nominally, the Balkans include Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. Countries such as Croatia, Slovenia, Greece, Romania, Moldova and Turkey are also 'Balkan' in a number of elements of their history, heritage and self-conceptualisation, even though some of them may be, for a variety of reasons, positioned differently in the modern Western imaginary.

More importantly, however, my concept of 'the Balkans' is especially concerned with this unique positioning, defined by some as marginality, but by others as a crossroads or a bridge across cultures. (In the same way, my concept

of Europe relates not only to West European countries but also to the Western hierarchies of values and lifestyles. Only occasionally is Europe referred to in this book in its geographical sense, mostly to point out the trivial fact that the Balkans happen to be located there.)

There were some who criticised my description of countries like Turkey or Greece as 'Balkan'. Turkey, I was told, did not belong, as it stood with the Islamic/Middle Eastern world. Greece could not fit into the Balkan mould either, because in many contexts it 'stands' for civilisation, and moreover is an EU and NATO member. I have had no comments on why Romania, Slovenia or Croatia may not be suitable for inclusion, but I have no doubt that other critics could pick on these as well.

While I agree that there are contexts in which these countries do not appear 'Balkan', there is a range of contexts in which they do, and in the concrete discussion of the first part of this book I will show in what precise contexts they fall under the 'Balkan' concept. Where do the Balkans end, as Žižek (1994) has shown, is a question which cannot be answered in a precise definition, as this would require measuring the imaginary.<sup>2</sup>

I have several reasons for insisting on an inclusive understanding of the Balkans. First, all countries here share a common socio-cultural legacy and modern-day trends. Although the concept of the 'Ottoman legacy' is far too often abused by journalists to explain every manifestation of lesser political culture, the very fact that the Balkans were part of the Ottoman empire should not be ignored, as it is in the roots of shared trends such as the orientalist isolation of the region, the hostility to Islam and the numerous territorial claims which most often can be traced back to political decisions taken in response to the dissolution of the Ottoman monolith. The legacies of communism, shared by many of the countries in the region, should also be considered when one explores their present-day economic volatility, the state-sanctioned nationalism and the lack of stable political structures.

Furthermore, as 'the Balkans' have been labelled and treated by the West as an indivisible semantic space characterised by common traits, the critical examination of this labelling and treatment should not be carried out piecemeal, but as a whole. Take all the media speculation of contagious Balkan violence, of the Balkans as a 'powder keg', or even of the Balkans as *balkanised* – in most of these not much difference is recognised between the Balkan countries.

The war in former Yugoslavia has, no doubt, had serious repercussions on all the other Balkan countries. Many of the phenomena we witness in the former Yugoslavia – such as the malicious nationalist propaganda, the large-scale emigration or the profaned public space – can be considered as an extrapolation of trends present in other Balkan countries. This is why, while my

discussion often focuses solely on Yugoslav examples, it can often be expanded to apply to the Balkan sphere at large.

One more reason why we should look at these together is that according to the image offered to Westerners by the media, the Balkan countries all look alike on a visual level. The similarity in landscape, architecture and dress styles justifies their blurring into one shared inventory of images – the Kosovo Albanian villager is easily mistaken for a Bosnian Muslim, Bulgarian Pomak or a Romanian Vlach, and as far as demeanour and appearance is concerned, there is not much difference between politicians like Albanian Sali Berisha and Bosnian Serb Radovan Karadžić. The Balkan iconic repertoire of Western media remained unchanged with the eruption of the new crisis in Kosovo, as the same visual tropes were repeated all over again. The media face of the Balkans is one of destroyed churches and mosques, refugee women in camps, stray sheep on the dusty streets of villages and alien UN forces.

While it would be relatively easy for me to persuade a Western audience that I have good reasons to insist on an inclusive Balkan concept, such an endeavour is likely to face fierce resistance within the Balkan context itself. If one looks from the West, the Balkans are often perceived as culturally coherent and homogeneous. If one looks from within, however, they are more often perceived as diverse and heterogeneous. People in the Balkan countries generally do not relate very favourably to each other and prefer to think of themselves as unique rather than similar to their Balkan neighbours.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the shared heritage, they prefer to stress the difference rather than the closeness. Take the variety of alphabets – Greek, Cyrillic, Latin (and even this most common one is modified with a variety of phonetical diacritics for each of the languages in the region). Or the readily articulated differences in language, religion, history and foreign orientation. The failure to acknowledge shared traits and the lack of interaction results in unproductive isolation from each other. It is a specific feature of the Balkan situation that each one of the countries in the region prefers to look at some West European country for cultural identification rather than to any of its Balkan neighbours. Greeks look traditionally to the UK, Romanians to France, Bulgarians to Germany and the Slovenes to Austria and Italy.<sup>4</sup>

The Balkans do not conceptualise themselves together, and this resistance to togetherness has become an essential part of the concept of *balkanisation*, which connotes them as consistent only in their persistence to stay divided. The unwillingness to recognise that cultural closeness to the neighbours is logical and may even be beneficial is a profound characteristic of the national philosophy of most Balkan countries, lying much deeper than the economic cooperation or formal political interaction that are occasionally observed on the surface.

Having said all this, I must underline that there are examples of a movement toward mutual recognition and assertion of a shared Balkan cultural space. In cinema in the 1990s there have been a series of co-productions involving various Balkan countries.<sup>5</sup> The film festival at Thessaloniki specialises in showcasing Balkan cinema, Balkan film programmes are a regular feature at the other film festivals in the region, *Balkan Media* magazine regularly reviews and compares the cinematic output of all Balkan countries and the Greek Helsinki Monitor works systematically on studies of hate speech and media in the region.

### Repositioning

In the 1990s, the cold-war line dividing Europe into two was abolished. The changing international balance meant that all countries in the region had to reposition themselves within the wider context of the new Europe.

Did the new times mean a deletion of the mental division of Europe along the lines of 'the West and the Rest', however? Was there public consensus on the ideas of mutual understanding and harmony in a pan-European shared home? The international roles of all countries in the East were dynamically changing. Unlike Central Eastern Europe, which seemed to gravitate toward Europe 'proper', the shift in the Balkans seemed to move in the opposite direction. The Yugoslav breakup enhanced the isolation of the region. The Balkans gravitated from a dreary unpredictable outpost of the old Soviet Empire toward a gloomy orientalist fringe of the new Europe. Within a short time, they became more 'other' than they used to be.

In discussing this repositioning, opinion-makers readily applied a cultural approach. The journalistic and diplomatic discourse on the Balkans more and more often referred to the juxtaposition of Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian legacies, and was largely built up on concepts such as the 'clash of civilisations', 'ethno-linguistic tapestry' and 'dormant ethnic tensions'. The continuing reconceptualisation of the Balkan space set the context for a perception of the Balkans as 'Third World', and defined the terms of their quest for admission to Europe. I believe the cultural aspects of this process to be of utmost importance and will be analysing them in my text.

### Textual Versus Contextual Analysis

In my approach I am more preoccupied with contextual rather than textual analysis. Where world cinema is concerned, textual analysis only makes sense if grounded in a good contextual study, which takes into account a whole range of socio-political and cultural specifics, one that gives as much weight to the background and implicit politics of a film as it does to its aesthetics and cinematic language. This is why I often choose to survey a large body of works and

see how they coexist in the dynamic context of film production, distribution, exhibition and reception, rather than concentrate on analysing one particular text. I feel I can offer more insights into a given film by continually contextualising rather than by textually analysing.

For such an analysis to be meaningful, I widely employ the concept of Balkan cinema. As there has been little regional unity or even cultural interaction between the Balkan countries in the past decades, such a concept may seem somewhat artificial. My knowledge of the cinematic traditions of the countries in the region, however, reveals a number of consistent aesthetic, stylistic and thematic features that allow me to be confident when speaking of Balkan cinema as an entity. Film has a long and rich tradition in countries such as Greece and Yugoslavia, and the cinemas of Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania have yielded sensitive and beautiful works, many of which will be discussed in this text. I do not doubt that in the years to come we will see the concept of Balkan cinema recognised in film scholarship, and studies on Balkan film will appear to fill in the current gap.

### The Films

The cinematic image of the deconstruction of the Berlin Wall became synonymous with the new era for East Europeans and was used in documentaries and features. It was not the demolition of the Berlin Wall, however, but the crisis in the Balkans that became the subject of most extensive cinematic interest. The Bosnian war was explored in nearly forty features and over two hundred documentaries made worldwide, thus becoming the event that occupied the minds of the largest number of film-makers since 1989.

I think it is significant here that I first and foremost highlight the films that I consider most important. While the US-UK co-production *Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997) undoubtedly received the best distribution and became the most widely seen film on the topic of the Bosnian war, it ranks far below other films in artistic merit. In my view, the most significant films made in response to Yugoslavia's breakup are: *Pred dozhdot/Before the Rain* (1994), *To vlemma tou Odyssea/Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), *Underground* (1995), *Lepa sela, lepo gore/Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996) and *Bure baruta/Powder Keg/Cabaret Balkan* (1998). Looking back over the cinema of the Balkans, I feel I should also mention several works which, were they better known, would greatly assist the understanding of today's aesthetic quests of Balkan film-makers and the way history and politics are treated in the cinema of the region: Theo Angelopoulos' *O Thiassos/The Traveling Players* (1975), Lordan Zafranović's *Okupacija u 26 slika/Occupation in 26 Scenes* (1978), Emir Kusturica's *Otac na sluzbenom putu/When Father Was Away on Business* (1985) and the early works of Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik and Živojin Pavlović.

After several years of working on this project, I still cannot say for sure exactly how many films – features and documentaries – were made as a reaction to the breakup of Yugoslavia and the overall crisis in the Balkans during the 1990s. Even after completing an annotated filmography listing over two hundred titles, I have reasons to believe that at least another hundred remain unaccounted for. Every week I come across reports about new films being shown at festivals or that are currently in production.

Sometime in 1998 I decided that it was now futile to try to keep up. I am still doing my best to see as many of the new films as possible, but none of those that I have seen since the end of 1997 has challenged or changed the essence of the claims that I make in this book. Therefore, in 1999, I could draw the line and go public with what I had to say on the issues that had concerned me during this period.

The body of film productions about the Balkan conflict is, in its nature, a truly international project. From the point of view of its international perception, the Bosnian war was often compared to the civil war in Spain. Hundreds of intellectuals engaged in public support for the cause of ending the war in ex-Yugoslavia. The most visible expression of solidarity came from the international community of film-makers. Gathering in the Balkans from many different countries around the world – the UK, USA, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Greece, Australia, New Zealand and Russia – they engaged in a truly transnational cinematic project. Unlike Spain, in Bosnia the cameras had firmly taken over from arms, giving a clear indication that, with time, media had acquired an equal combat power.

References to the Balkan war are scattered throughout a number of films from the 1990s: from *Blue* (1993) by the late British director Derek Jarman who, while chronicling his own death from AIDS, talked about the plight of Bosnian refugees, to Hungarian Ibolya Fekete's *Bolshe Vita* (1996), which featured documentary footage from the Bosnian war in the epilogue; from *Viagem ao Principio do Mundo/Journey to the Beginning of the World* (1997) by Portuguese veteran Manuel de Oliveira, which featured Marcello Mastroianni, in his last role, talking about Sarajevo, to Elia Suleiman's *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), where radio commentary on the Bosnian war provides the background to the daily concerns of the Palestinian protagonists.

The global trend that turns all feature film-making into a multinational enterprise is clearly visible in the case of the features (at least thirty) that looked at aspects of the Yugoslav breakup. *Territorio comanche/Comanche Territory* (1997), for example, told a story about Sarajevo but was a co-production of Spain, Germany, France and Argentina. *Tudja Amerika/Someone Else's America* (1995) was written and directed by Serbs, and told the story of exiles from

Montenegro and Spain who lived in New York but who also travelled to the Texan–Mexican border at Rio Grande. The film was produced by France, the UK, Germany and Greece, though none of these countries was referred to in the film in any way. *Before the Rain* was financed by France, the UK and Macedonia. *Welcome to Sarajevo* was an UK–USA co-production.

Some of the films, indeed, were produced with financing from only one country, but nevertheless featured a diverse crew and cast. The New Zealand production, *Broken English* (1996), the story of an inter-ethnic couple oppressed by a violent Croatian father, brought Maoris, Croatians and Chinese together on the set. The Italian *Il carniere/Gamebag* (1997) used a Bulgarian actress in the leading role and told the story of two Italian hunters caught in the middle of the Sarajevan siege. The Greek film *Ulysses' Gaze* featured American Harvey Keitel, Swede Erland Josephson and Romanian Maia Morgenstern.

Major European directors turned their attention to the Balkans: some to enjoy acclaim, like Goran Paskaljević with his *Powder Keg*, some to stir controversy, like Emir Kusturica with his *Underground*, some to face criticism, like Jean-Luc Godard with his *Forever Mozart* (1996).

Still, most features came from the countries of the former Yugoslavia – Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Savršeni krug/Perfect Circle*, 1997), Serbia (*Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*), Croatia (*Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku/How the War Started on My Little Island*, 1996) and Macedonia (*Before the Rain*).

The films were telling different stories. The most ambitious ones were tackling the complex history of the Balkans, like *Underground* or *Ulysses' Gaze*. Some chose to focus on the fate of displaced children in Sarajevo (*Perfect Circle*), others on the stagnation in Belgrade (*Ubistvo s predumišljajem/Premeditated Murder*, 1995; *Dupe od mramora/Marble Ass*, 1995), on committed journalists (*Welcome to Sarajevo; Comanche Territory*), on the difficult choices in taking sides (*Before the Rain; Pretty Village, Pretty Flame; Shot through the Heart*, 1998; *Savior*, 1998), or on the experiences of displacement (*Broken English; Müde Weggefährten: Funf Geschichten aus dem Krieg/Tired Companions*, 1997).

The mushrooming of new countries after the breakup of Yugoslavia was felt as far as the entertainment field: as early as 1994 critics in trade journals could not help noticing the proliferation of East European entries for the Oscar competition. Whereas before, Yugoslavia would submit only a single entry, now there were five countries in competition. Rump Yugoslavia's entry for 1994, for example, was Boro Drašković's *Vukovar – jedna priča/Vukovar: Poste Restante*, a co-production between the USA, Cyprus, Italy and Yugoslavia, and for 1995, Emir Kusturica's *Underground*, a co-production between France, Germany and Hungary, with the participation of Radio-TV Serbia. The international involve-

ment clearly indicated that one-country financing for film was no longer a possibility for smaller countries in the 1990s.

The Balkan crisis attracted the attention of internationally renowned documentarians, such as French veterans Chris Marker, Marcel Ophuls and German Helga Reidemeister, along with many more, bringing the number of documentaries to well over 200. Documentaries were made not only by professional film-makers but also by well-known public intellectuals whose usual domain is the written word, like Frenchman Bernard-Henri Lévy and Canadian Michael Ignatieff. A number of displaced Yugoslav directors returned from exile to make their films, while others had to go into exile to continue their work.<sup>6</sup>

Documentaries scrutinised and critically investigated a wide variety of topics – Western mercenaries,<sup>7</sup> the UNPROFOR and the UN involvement,<sup>8</sup> the perpetrators,<sup>9</sup> the workings of media<sup>10</sup> and the refugee camps.<sup>11</sup> There was a range of documentaries on issues as far apart as the Serbian point of view,<sup>12</sup> cultural criticism of Neue Slovenische Kunst (NSK),<sup>13</sup> life in Bosnia after the war<sup>14</sup> and, most recently, Kosovo-themed documentaries.<sup>15</sup> The best-known documentary probably remains the international TV co-production *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (1995), which used a large variety of documentary sources and featured interviews with most of the main political figures involved in the conflict.<sup>16</sup>

Critical voices from within Yugoslavia came up with a specific genre of short films, which can be placed somewhere between documentary and fiction for their use of re-enactment and autobiographical elements. The hilarious Studio B92 Željimir Žilnik's *Tito po drugi put medju srbima/Tito among the Serbs for a Second Time* (1993), which featured a Tito impersonator taking a stroll around downtown Belgrade, revealed a great deal about the state of mind of ordinary Serbs and provided more social insights than any other piece of investigative journalism. Films like *Ghetto* (1995), another production of the dissident Studio B92, depicting a rock musician cruising around his native Belgrade and witnessing the profanation of public life, or *Rupa u dusu/Hole in the Soul* (1994) by cosmopolitan exile Dušan Makavejev, testifying to the isolation of Yugoslavia, are the deeply personal and painful works of concerned intellectuals.

Sarajevo was the subject for several dozen films. Parallel with its destruction, the city was perpetually revived in the films that chronicled its proud survival. There were films telling about the inhumanity of everyday life in Sarajevo, about the children of Sarajevo, about the women, about the villains, about the artists, about the horrors of war and the insanity of it all. There were also features set in Sarajevo, and seen by larger audiences. Of these, only the stories of *Perfect Circle*, about the bonding of a lonely writer and two orphaned boys, and of *Heroje/Heroes* (1998), concerning a tense evening spent awaiting the return of a missing friend, were told from the point of view of locals; all the rest

followed the formula of the transplanted Western narrator. There were films that told the story from a very personal point of view, like the documentary made by the Australian who, while filming the movie, fell in love with his Bosnian sound engineer. There were films that proved that the humour of Sarajevans, though black, is still intact, like *Mizaldo* (1994), which was made as an extended infomercial about the city. And there were the testimonies shot by Sarajevans themselves – the works of the Sarajevo Group of Authors (SaGA), who chronicled day by day the agony and the strength of their city.

Besides feature and documentaries, there were various productions that remain unknown and difficult to track down. There were indie movies by film-makers who, inspired purely by humanitarian urges, travelled to Yugoslavia and filmed whatever they came across, but then did not know how to distribute the product of their work. Besides the television documentaries produced and aired by BBC 1 and BBC 2, CNN, PBS, Channel 4 and others, there were many lesser-known television programmes. While most of the British documentaries were made for television and thus received better exposure, the bulk of American documentaries were made independently and received little exposure, mostly seen at festivals or at occasional screenings. There was also the genre of the so-called home-videos, shot on the spot in former Yugoslavia and then distributed via clandestine channels to the relevant diasporas across the world. In addition to film, there has been intensive activity in the field of multimedia, and new technologies were widely used for projects such as the French-supported Sarajevo on-line journalism site, the on-line exhibits of the Sarajevo pop group Trio or the web-site of the Zagreb-based feminist group Nona, featuring the creative work of refugee women.<sup>17</sup>

Reputed international film festivals, with their attentive and committed audiences, proved to be the ideal venue for the films about Bosnia. And, indeed, programmers across the world did a lot to bring the films about the conflict in former Yugoslavia to their festivals. The first major venue to schedule a special series related to Bosnia was Berlinale. In February 1993, it held a programme called 'No More War'. Ironically, this scheduling was a bit rushed – only a few films had appeared by that time, and the end of the war was nowhere near in sight. The programme included a few documentaries by German and French film-makers. As no feature had yet been made, a film by Bosnian-born Emir Kusturica was screened – *Arizona Dream* (1993), which dealt with America and barely touched on the Bosnian crisis.<sup>18</sup>

After 1993, films related to the war in former Yugoslavia started appearing regularly at all major feature and documentary festivals. In 1994 Milcho Manchevski's *Before the Rain* won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. The 1995 Cannes season brought awards to Kusturica's *Underground* and Theo Angelopoulos' *Ulysses' Gaze*. Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo* was

one of the contestants at Cannes in 1997. Srdjan Dragojević's *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* enjoyed acclaim at festivals all over the world, and an award at Sao Paulo. Kenović's *Perfect Circle* won the main award at the 1997 Tokyo Film Festival. Films from and about the Balkans played at special panoramas at the International Documentary Filmfest in Amsterdam in 1993, at the International Feminist Filmfest in Créteil in 1997 and at the Toronto International Film Festival in 1997. Films about Bosnia are regularly featured at Sundance, at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival and in Montreal, Vancouver, San Francisco, Chicago, Mannheim, Karlovy Vary and London.

Two festivals that regularly showcase the production of films from and about the region should be mentioned in particular: the Thessaloniki Film Festival and the Alpe-Adria cinema meetings in Trieste. Local festivals that take place in the countries of former Yugoslavia are also important as it is here that most of the domestic productions are shown – Pula, Belgrade, Subotica and Bitolja. In 1995, a special series called 'Sarajevo Film Days' was organised in Zagreb. Sarajevans themselves were quite active in scheduling film events and there were several organised during the siege by courageous groups and individuals. The Sarajevo International Film Festival was first held in the autumn of 1997 and has since become a regular event. It is at this venue that Sarajevans themselves get to see many of the films made about Bosnia.<sup>19</sup>

Depending on the background of the film-maker, the specific approach or the target audiences of the distributor, various films received visibility through various channels. *Miss Sarajevo* (1995), for example, made by a U2 fan, Bill Carter, became well known to *Billboard* and MTV fans, whereas turbo-folk fans in Serbia watched the populist show of *Arkan and Ceca's Wedding* (1995). *Calling the Ghosts* (1996) became best known to feminist audiences, as it tells of the difficult path taken by two rape survivors from the Bosnian camps who decide to talk publicly about their experiences. Polish *Demony wojny/Demons of War* (1998), a sequel in the popular series *Pigs* starring Bogusław Linda, attracted fans of the action-adventure genre. Other films reached out to religious audiences: the Croat story of the Virgin Mary's appearance, *Gospa* (1993), was exhibited by a California-based Catholic film distribution network. The gay community expressed interest in *Marble Ass*, featuring a transvestite prostitute from Belgrade who fights violence in his own special way. Anthropologists showed their students films made by other anthropologists, featuring communal rituals at the intersection of tradition and modernity.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this segmented audience, some films achieved popularity within a limited reception framework while remaining virtually unknown beyond it. Only a few enjoyed a wider exposure. Many of the acclaimed films about the Balkans were classified as low entertainment value by distributors. Seen only at festivals, they were never picked up for theatrical distribution. The situation is only partially

corrected by some distributors of arthouse type feature films, such as the American New Yorker (they currently carry *Forever Mozart*, *Underground* and *Vukovar: Poste Restante*) or October Films (they distribute *Someone Else's America*).

There were also some paradoxes: with a few exceptions, films made by film-makers associated with Serbia (Srdjan Dragojević, Boro Drašković, Predrag Antonijević, Goran Paskaljević) enjoyed theatrical and video exposure in the West, while those made by Croats (Vinko Brešan) or Bosnians (Ademir Kenović) were only seen at festivals. The bottom line is, however, that films made about the Balkan conflict by Westerners enjoyed much better international exposure than most films made by Balkan film-makers. A good example is provided by the contrasting fates of the widely publicised *Predictions of Fire* (1996) by American Michael Benson and the largely unknown *Laibach: A Film from Slovenia* (1988) by Yugoslav Goran Gajić, both of which dealt with the phenomenon of the Neue Slovenische Kunst and the rock group Laibach. Another example is Frenchman Bernard-Henri Lévy's *Bosna!* (1994), which makes extensive use of footage shot under fire by the members of SaGA, and which was distributed in various formats, and the films produced by SaGA that have screened only at a handful of festivals.

Whereas the feature films at least have the chance for exposure in the system of non-theatrical distribution or within the festival circuit, the outlook for documentaries is deplorable. Only a few have found distributors, and even those are quite often poorly advertised or are listed at prices that even institutions can rarely afford. Electronic Arts Intermix, for example, which carries the remarkable Chris Marker's *Le 20 heures dans les camps/Prime Time in the Camps* (1993) only advertises to programmers; the Cinema Guild routinely charges \$300 for a video: *Truth under Siege* (1994), an excellent documentary tackling the workings of independent media across the former Yugoslavia, has ended up on their list, severely limiting its distribution chances. There is a huge unrealised potential in documentary distribution. The documentary body of work about Bosnia remains, and will remain, largely unseen and un(der)exposed.

There have been some archival efforts, like those of the International Monitor Institute in Los Angeles and the Documentation Centre of Social Movements in Amsterdam. The Audiovisual Department at the Central European University, Budapest, has a collection of videotapes related to the conflict in former Yugoslavia. The branches of the Soros Foundation in Bosnia, Croatia and other countries of former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe have been involved with a number of projects to promote the work of local film-makers about the conflict. The researchers at the video department of the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, organised the exhibit 'Faces of Sorrow' in 1994, and are collecting videotapes related to the conflict in former Yugoslavia. But

even if they manage to compile a comprehensive collection of tapes, these will be available only to researchers.

### The Scholarship

While I believe that the films about the Balkan crisis were at least as instrumental in the formation of the public discourse as the written texts, my writing evolved in a context largely informed by scholarship and popular writing. (I give a detailed account on the various works that informed my writing in the Bibliography.)

My material were the films about the troubled Balkans, but my topic was the dynamics of marginality and self-perception. It was interesting to realise, however, that the books which most influenced me were not necessarily ones that dealt directly with South-East Europe.

### Critical studies

The two studies that had most influence on my initial understanding of Balkan issues were by women, who, like myself, were born and raised in the Balkans, but had then continued their academic careers in the West – Maria Todorova (1994, 1997) and Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995). They were ready to abandon the one-country approach, to reach out and bring into the discussion of the Balkan realm the orientalist and the post-colonial theories that were first created for the discursive needs of other marginalised but non-Slavic and non-European cultures, and to show Balkan marginalisation as a result of the workings of a culturist discursive construction. My work follows in their footsteps.

Milica Bakić-Hayden's 1995 article was a direct continuation of an earlier one, written by herself and Robert M. Hayden and published in *Slavic Review* in 1992. It was the first text to point to the dangers of the orientalist treatment of the 'Balkans' that came into being during the early stages of the Yugoslav dissolution. It is a seminal piece in Balkan studies, and needs to be acknowledged as such.

Then, there was Larry Wolff's (1994) exploration of the Enlightenment's construction of the notions of Russia and Eastern Europe. Wolff was probably the only author who dealt with Russia but whose conclusions I was able to transplant to the territory I was studying. In spite of my familiarity with the cultural studies work that focused on the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, very little of the findings in that field were relevant to my work, as they remain locked in the self-centred universe of most studies that deal with Russia. The studies that examine what is now called Central Eastern Europe were equally self-absorbed. Most of the influential scholarly work on Eastern Europe was preoccupied with the formation of the concept of Central Europe, a notion the very development of which was based on the conceptual exclusion of the Balkan space (Garton Ash, 1989; Rupnik, 1990; Graubard, 1992). The

important works of Central Eastern Europe's critical intellectuals always looked to the West and never to the lands of the South-East (Michnik, 1985; Vaculik, 1987; Haraszty, 1987; Brinton and Rinzler, 1990; Baranczak, 1990; Havel, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1992; Konrád, 1995).

At first I was surprised to realise that the theories that had materialised out of the ideological needs of Third World cultures, and that therefore barely seemed relevant to the Balkans as part of the Eastern bloc, turned out to be the most insightful and informative. Besides Benedict Anderson's (1983) conceptualisation of the nation as an imagined community, Edward Said's (1978) and Homi Bhabha's (1990, 1994) views were crucial, as was the entire post-colonial discourse, raising issues such as the nation's need for metaphors and the functioning of the subaltern and the hybrid. Stuart Hall's discussion on 'the West and the Rest', though not directly related to this discursive lineage, was another strong shaping influence on my work (Hall and Gieben, 1992). In the context of my research, Arjun Appadurai's (1996) work was one of extreme importance – maybe because he was the only cultural theorist whose work moved from a preoccupation with a particular region (post-colonial India), through a study of global issues, to a discussion, in *Modernity at Large*, of the Balkan conflict and its cross-cultural perception as a manifestation of universal trends. Appadurai's text contains many insights. More than anything, however, he confirmed my belief that one can legitimately extrapolate from the regional to the global, and that to work in regional issues does not mean shutting oneself out of the world's dynamics, however safe such a self-contented immersion in the local microcosm that one is familiar with may seem.

Other studies that looked at things globally were also important, such as Benjamin Barber's (1995) tireless highlighting of the dynamic dichotomy between the cosmopolitan and the regionalist and Samuel Huntington's (1993, 1996) theories of the clash of civilisations, which, though retrograde and hateful, must be taken into account precisely because of their potential harmfulness. Paul Gilroy's (1993) discussion of the dynamics of culture and politics in the context of the African diaspora greatly influenced my views when I came to look at the migrations that resulted from the Balkan crisis. The numerous Holocaust references that the Balkan crisis triggered brought back to mind Hannah Arendt and Bruno Bettelheim's texts, but also inspired me to look at a diverse range of more recent interpretations of the Holocaust legacy (Bauman, 1989; Felman and Laub, 1992; Todorov, 1996).

#### Balkan cultural studies

Most attractive to me, unsurprisingly, were the books conceptually discussing Balkan culture, in particular the works by Todorova and Bakić-Hayden I have already mentioned. The literary explorations by Vesna Goldsworthy (1998),

Andrew Wachtel (1998), Branimir Anzulović (1999) and David Norris (1999), all important studies containing a wealth of material and interesting observations and insights, were published too late in the course of my own work to call them major influences, but they nonetheless developed views that I have taken into account throughout my study. Further, there were the works of anthropologists, abounding with important observations on national character and complexes. I most valued the works of Michael Herzfeld (1987) on the self-perception of modern Greece, of Ivan Colović (1994a) on the idiosyncrasies of Serbian popular discourse and of Marko Živković on the stories that Serbs tell about themselves. In spite of the fact that Slavoj Žižek's (1994, 1995) comments on Balkan issues are scattered amid an avalanche of critical commentary on a range of Western cultural concerns, he has spelled out some most important preconceptions about – and within – the Balkans that are missed by many other critics.

#### Film Studies

The disintegration of what used to be called the Eastern bloc into the new geopolitical spheres of Central Eastern Europe and the Balkans rendered further research on East European cinema as an entity meaningless, and 'the cinema of Eastern Europe', explored by authors such as Mira and Antonín Liehm (1977), David Paul (1983), Daniel Goulding (1989) and Thomas Slater (1992), is gradually becoming a concept of the past.<sup>21</sup> Although a forthcoming scholarly collaborative effort, edited by Daniel Goulding and Catherine Portuges, discusses the cinemas of the former Eastern bloc countries, it is my feeling that this will be the last edited volume to approach the cinema of 'Eastern Europe' as an entity.

The next logical step is to regroup the cinemas of the region to reflect newer geopolitical realities. As more and more thematic and stylistic affinities will be rediscovered, supporting the change of conceptual focus, there is bound to be more and more talk of 'Balkan cinema', a concept which will include the cinemas of the former Yugoslav lands, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. With a few exceptions in Germany (Grbić *et al.*, 1995) and Italy (Germani, 2000), no comprehensive studies exist on the cinema of the Balkans as a whole, and scholarship on Balkan cinema is mostly represented by monographs focusing on single countries or directors. The amount of English-language writing on Balkan cinema is really scarce. There are only two American studies that claim to deal with Balkan cinema as an entity, both of which are by Michael J. Stoil (1974, 1982). However, they do not systematically concentrate on the subject matter, widely use cold war rhetoric and speculate on issues of 'Zhdanovist' cinema without giving an idea of what the cinema of the Balkans is like.



The cinemas of the various countries of the region have been studied separately. Berlin-based film critic Ron Holloway has carried out extensive filmographic and critical work, which has seen little exposure due to the fact it is mostly published by organisations that do not have a distribution arm. The most comprehensive study on Yugoslav cinema to date is by Daniel Goulding (1985), while Bulgarian film is discussed by Ronald Holloway (1986) and Greek cinema is covered by Mel Schuster (1979) and a reference work by Dimitris Kolioudimos (1999). Andrew Horton's persistent and enthusiastic involvement with the cinemas of the Balkan countries, and particularly his long-standing interest in Greece, resulted in a number of articles, chapters and screenwriting projects. His most important contribution is the monograph on Greek director Theo Angelopoulos (1997a), a remarkable study not only of Angelopoulos' work but also of the spirit of Balkan film-making. Horton also edited a collection of articles on Angelopoulos (1997b) and has written widely on Yugoslav cinema and on humour in Balkan film.

Overall, very little has been published on Balkan cinema, one of the most interesting film cultures in Europe. But while other lesser-known cinemas are coming out of obscurity to take the spotlight, the treasures of Balkan cinema remain unknown even to cineastes. The masterpieces of Živojin Pavlović, Želimir Žilnik, Branko Ćopić, Karpo Godina, Pantelis Voulgaris, Nikos Kunduros, Ali Ozgentürk, Zeki Ökten, Dimithar Anagnosti, Kujtim Çashku, Liviu Ciulei, Mircea Veroiu, Rangel Vulchanov, George Dyulgerov, Binka Zhelyazkova and many others remain virtually unknown beyond the borders of their respective countries, and even the work of internationally celebrated veterans such as Theo Angelopoulos, Michalis Cacoyannis, Yilmaz Güney, Dušan Makavejev and Lordan Zafranović is considered exotic and rarely seen.

Balkan cinema is still to develop as an area of study – not because of a shortage of cinematic traditions, but because there is a shortage of scholarship that recognises the affinities within the region. I hope that this book will help to precipitate a move away from the prevalent one-country approach.

I also became increasingly interested in the issues of film and history, particularly as explored in the work of theorist Robert Rosenstone, whose *Visions of the Past* (1995) made me think of the choices that film-makers face when representing historical material.

Studies looking at general issues of cross-cultural representation were, once again, of great importance in my work. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) was a major influence, mostly because it outlined the controversial effects of the Eurocentric construct, and systematically challenged it on the ground of Hollywood film-making. An earlier discussion of recent trends in European cinema organised by the British Film Institute, and including contributions by Ien Ang, Stuart Hall and Fredrick Jameson, was also very

useful (Petrie, 1992). Further, a series of books that explored issues of international cinema and cross-cultural Western representation turned out to be directly relevant to my research in Balkan cinema (Armes, 1987; Downing, 1989; Naficy and Gabriel, 1993; Scherzer, 1996; Bernstein and Studlar, 1997; Naficy, 1999). My work was also greatly informed by studies of diasporic media consumption (Naficy, 1993; Gillespie, 1995; Cunningham and Jacka, 1996; Clifford, 1997; Ong, 1999), by accounts of the national cinemas of southern countries, such as Israel and Spain (Shohat, 1989; Kinder, 1993), and to some extent by studies that dealt with Holocaust film (Insdorf, 1983; Avisar, 1988), war and film (Virilio, 1984) and film and history (Rosenstone, 1995b). My judgment was often influenced by a preference for certain film critics: Jonathan Rosenbaum (*Chicago Reader*), Emanuel Levy (*Variety*), Derek Malcolm (*The Guardian*) and Kenneth Turan (*LA Times*).

### Structure

The chapters in the first part of the book, 'Europe: Location or Destination?', explore different aspects of the continuing repositioning of the Balkans within post-cold war Europe. I maintain that the representation and conceptualisation of ethnic conflict should be considered and understood in this wider context. In Chapter 2 I outline some basic discrepancies in the conceptualisation of *Balkans* and *Europe* and explore a series of mediated misperceptions in the Balkan's quest for admission to the European semantic space. Chapter 3 explores traditional narrative structures that enable the positioning of the Balkans as a cultural space beyond the boundaries of what is considered legitimately European. Here I show how the dominant travelogue narrative of the large number of 'Balkan' plots is internalised in Balkan cinema, thus reiterating existing stereotypes and furthering the conceptual exclusion of the Balkans by perpetuating a trend of self-exoticism. In Chapter 4 I focus on some problematic aspects of the teleological construction of the Balkans in historical narratives of a putative character.

Part 2 is devoted to exploring a variety of personal and creative commitments as they evolved at the time of the Yugoslav breakup. My focus in Chapter 5 is on the treatment of Balkan history in film. I focus my attention on some of the non-conventional cinematic approaches to historical material, by directors such as Dušan Makavejev, Lordan Zafranović, Želimir Žilnik and Theo Angelopoulos. It is my intention to show how feature films that do not claim historical accuracy but choose to appeal to a shared historical imagination ultimately have influenced public perceptions of history more than its 'official' versions.

Chapter 6 is a case study of the controversy surrounding Emir Kusturica's *Underground*, which identifies a whole series of underlying moral problems