Culture

Ethnicity Deconstructed: The breakup of the former Yugoslavia and personal reflections on nationalism, identity and displacement

Edit Petrovic

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article est une tentative de dévoiler, par une approche reflexive, les différents problèmes présentés par la notion d'« ethnicité. » L'obstacle principal à une telle approche prend la forme d'un paradoxe : la crédibilité scientifique ne peut être étayée par des élaborations fondées sur des sentiments implicites, et des contradictions et des expériences dispersées; mais ces mêmes éléments sont considérés comme matériaux ethnographiques valides. Je présente ici des expériences personelles qui relèvent de trois thèmes : le nationalisme, l'identité et le déplacement. Je soutiens que : a) l'« ethnicité » est contextuelle et se traduit par des expériences dispersées et des sentiments contradictoires qui forment et transforment notre identité, surtout envers les autres; b) les situations où l'identité ethnique de l'individu est dévoilée de force et où la loyauté ethnique doit être déclarée, peuvent amener certains à réaliser qu'ils n'ont pas d'identité ethnique (un attachement forcé se traduit en détachement forcé); c) il n'y a pas de groupes qui soient « plus » ou « moins » nationalistes - l'éruption du nationalisme dans l'ex Yougoslavie est le résultat d'une habile manipulation politique, et non pas simplement « quelque chose qui existe en soi »; et d) l'émigration hors du pays d'origine offre le contraste qui permet l'articulation de l'identité.

Testimony / *Témoignage*

Ethnicity Deconstructed: The breakup of the former Yugoslavia and personal reflections on nationalism, identity and displacement [1]

Edit Petrovic*

> *(I) do not have a homeland and I do not lament over it. Lucky enough to posses only a lost homeland I am free from excessive sentiments. But, I do know regions, towns and rooms where I feel at home*
>
> Odon von Horvath (1930)

This article is a self-reflexive attempt to bring to light the different problems presented by the idiom of "ethnicity." The main obstacle to attempting the self-reflexive approach is a paradox: it is difficult to derive scientific credibility from elaborations based on implicit feelings, inconsistencies, and unrelated experiences, yet these same elements are seen as relevant ethnographic materials. I describe personal experiences that revolve around three themes: nationalism, identity and displacement. Implicitly, I argue that: a) "ethnicity" is entirely a matter of context that translates into unrelated experiences and contradictory feelings that shape and transform our sense of who we are, or who we are not; b) situations where individuals are forced to expose their ethnic identity and declare "ethnic loyalties" may influence some to become aware that they have no ethnic identity (forced attachment equals detachment); c) there are no groups that are "more nationalistic" or "less nationalistic" – erupting nationalism in former Yugoslavia is seen mainly as a result of skillful political manipulation, rather than just a "thing out there"; and d) displacement provides a needed contrastive perspective for articulating one's own identity.

Cet article est une tentative de dévoiler, par une approche reflexive, les différents problèmes présentés par la notion d'"ethnicité." L'obstacle principal à une telle approche prend la forme d'un paradoxe: la crédibilité scientifique ne peut être étayée par des élaborations fondées sur des sentiments implicites, et des contradictions et des expériences dis-persées; mais ces mêmes éléments sont considérés comme matériaux ethnographiques valides. Je présente ici des expéri-ences personelles qui relèvent de trois thèmes: le nationalisme, l'identité et le déplacement. Je soutiens que: a) l' "ethnicité" est contextuelle et se traduit par des expériences dispersées et des sentiments contradictoires qui forment et transforment notre identité, surtout envers les autres; b) les situations où l'identité ethnique de l'individu est dévoilée de force et où la loyauté ethnique doit être déclarée, peuvent amener certains à réaliser qu'ils n'ont pas d'identité ethnique (un attachement forcé se traduit en détachement forcé); c) il n'y a pas de groupes qui soient "plus" ou "moins" nationalistes – l'érup-tion du nationalisme dans l'ex Yougoslavie est le résultat d'une habile manipulation politique, et non pas simplement "quelque chose qui existe en soi"; et d) l'émigration hors du pays d'origine offre le contraste qui permet l'articulation de l'identité

This article is a self-reflexive discussion of the turbulent changes taking place in the former Yugoslavia. I reflect upon the idiom of ethnicity as it emerged from the social and political context, and describe my personal experiences that revolve around three themes: nationalism, identity and displacement.

I began to teach anthropology almost as soon as I arrived in Vancouver as an immigrant from Yugoslavia in 1993. In lectures and discussions

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with my Canadian students, I was able to articulate my personal experiences of ethnicity. Teaching forced me to sort out my thoughts and to transform them into an anthropological account. I decided to write about my experiences, hoping that the increasing self-reflexivity of the project, also called "anthropology at home" (Strathern, 1987: 17), would help me come to terms with turbulent changes affecting my life. What follows is an articulation of personal experiences as embodied in the idiom of ethnicity. Rather than a concept, ethnicity is understood here as a shifting frame that stands for various feelings and practices, constructed individually and contextually as an "art of memory" (Fisher, 1986), from a combination of facts, impressions, evocations, attachments and detachments. The idiom of ethnicity draws a "symbolic landscape" (Coplan, 1994; Hatt, 1991) of my personal experiences, particularly during the last three years. My task is to uncover its merged layers, each constructed from the combination of events and facts and carrying entirely contextual meanings; this is why I loosely call the task I undertake deconstruction.

The progression of the text follows the chronology of events. I start by discussing nationalism in relation to the personal idiom of ethnicity and explore the emergence and transformations of the terms and features of the idiom of ethnicity as encapsulated during the postwar political history of the former Yugoslav state. The second part of the paper focuses on transformations of my own identity as affected by the ideology of nationalism, while the third part explores the process of displacement.

I

In postwar communist Yugoslavia, as elsewhere in postwar eastern Europe, ethnicity, nationality, and nationalism were considered dangerous, unusable words. People who dared use them in different contexts ("national culture", "national language", "old national symbols: flag, hymn") faced political and legal sanctions.[2] To be labelled a nationalist was among the worst social stigmas in Tito's Yugoslavia.[3] Stigmatized people might have included, for example, a scientist who insisted on researching aspects of a national culture (such as history, literature, music, and ethnology) or someone observing religious feasts, since religious and national identity were closely linked and condemned in Yugoslavia. The official ideology promoted socialism, atheism, and working class

cosmopolitanism. This meant that all Yugoslav constitutive nations and ethnic or national minorities were recognized, but were to assert themselves as a proletariat, generating social power as a class rather than as ethnic or national unit. Some of the government's secondary aims which were relevant to my personal positioning, included the efforts to dismantle and silence the reactionary-bourgeois elements in the country and to condemn Western attitudes and influences.

I remember a photograph of my grandfather taken in the 1950s in which he is dressed like a factory worker, wearing a beret and a shirt without a tie. It was explained to me that, although he dressed very elegantly prior to World War II, he couldn't risk being attacked for his "Westernized" attitudes by extremists promoting the new "working class image." As a result, he had to adapt his appearance to the accepted standards. This anecdote exposes the way in which, in post-war Yugoslavia, one could become socially stigmatized by projecting the image of a class enemy. I recall how, in post-Tito Yugoslavia, people who wrote using the Cyrillic alphabet exposed themselves to charges of being "ethnic enemies." These two images of intolerance parallel two structurally similar systems, both of which are rigid and create and support xenophobia. The shift was from inter-class xenophobia and antagonism in the communist period to the inter-ethnic hostilities and xenophobia in the period of disintegration of the state.

Official doctrine also insisted on the marginalization of some religions practiced in the former Yugoslavia.[4] There is evidence that in the 1940s and 1950s national and religious symbols such as churches were destroyed by Communist Party extremists (Dimic, 1988: 65). To make the ideology work, a cultural policy was established with the aim of fostering a greater closeness among the Yugoslav people (a political slogan of the day called for "brotherhood and unity") and to bring uniformity through education into the official doctrine, Marxism, drawn mostly from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Ethnic antagonisms which erupted during the so-called "first Yugoslavia" (of the period between the two world wars and especially during World War Two) were officially ignored and considered solved following World War Two.[5]

The only accepted way to express national characteristics was via folklore performed by ethnically undifferentiated groups such as folkloric

dance groups dressed in folk costumes who were supposed to represent various traditions of the country. Such periodic folkloric performances accompanied celebrations of some important historic dates or the visits of prominent state officials. The contextual meaning of such performances (which were accompanied by the slogan "brotherhood and unity") was the assertion of what Cohen (1993: 28) calls "socialist Yugoslavism" and provided a folkloric decor for real life differences: cultural, ethnic, and religious.

My personal idiom of ethnicity in the period up to the end of 1970s draws from a symbolic landscape of boring political slogans and events, unremarkable faces and folkloric dances, and ethnicity reduced to an emblem used in political parades or in the celebrations of Tito's birthday. The harmony of the multiethnic state was supposedly represented, for example, by a girl dressed in a traditional Slovenian folk costume dancing hand-in-hand with a boy dressed in a traditional Macedonian folk costume. During his recent visit to Belgrade my husband bought a cassette of children's songs for our son. Ironically, one of them celebrates the late president Tito on the occasion of his birthday. In the familiar traditions of the communist's ode, this anachronism expresses children's devotion and admiration for Tito in lyrics sung in all the languages of the former Yugoslavia, glorifying the "brotherhood and unity" concept.

Coming from a bourgeois family whose members were marginalized during the communist domination, I recall celebrating religious feasts at home but also receiving a cosmopolitan socialization of a different kind than the one promoted by the politics of "brotherhood and unity." I was taught to travel, meet people, discover the richness in diversity, tolerate differences, and most of all, to be free of any ideological "brain-wash." As a result, I was able to internalize my identity only in contrast to what I was not. I recall the elementary school teacher asking us to answer the question, "Who are we?" My answer was: a Belgradian. Being born in Belgrade, I possessed a very narrow territorial identity that did not even recognize the idiom of "homeland" but expressed a rather reduced sense of locality. My parents were later condemned by the teacher for not educating their child to be a "Yugoslav," an identity of which I was supposed to be proud.

By contrast, as a result of a "socialist-Yugoslavist" education, there was a genuine sense

in Belgrade daily life that the whole territory of Yugoslavia was "our homeland," regardless of the presence of different ethnic majorities in each region. I spent holidays with friends all around the country, especially on the coast. When the country began to fall apart and new boundaries were drawn, my friends and correspondents expressed sadness that the newly imposed artificial limits prevented them from interacting. In the second half of 1991, after the start of the war, each person was left to sort out memories of places, towns and faces, and to reconstruct an idiom of a "homeland."

I was in England studying in December of 1991 when the shelling of Dubrovnik began. Dubrovnik is an ancient town on the coast, and the real jewel of the Adriatic. One anthropology professor was unable to give a lecture the day following the shelling; distraught, he explained that he had spent several years doing field research in Dubrovnik and felt much too emotionally involved to prepare his lecture as he watched the events on television. I recall thinking: if he was so badly affected due to his attachment to his *fieldwork* site, what of those who *originated* in a country that was literally falling apart? Indeed, after spending six months in England, while the war between Serbs and Croats escalated and then declined and the new one in Bosnia was just about to begin, I had problems sorting out my feelings and thoughts. I felt confusion, disbelief, disgrace, and anger.

When the former European communist countries began to disintegrate, Yugoslavia was the first to face the consequences of its hypocritical governmental politics, the rhetoric of which did not correspond to existing relationships between Yugoslav ethnic groups. Old national disputes, far from being resolved, had accumulated over the years of socialist governance and waited the right moment to erupt. In the period of 1989 to 1990, local governments , facing the overall collapse of the communist regimes in East European countries[6] and realizing that the deep economic crisis rendered imminent the disintegration of the country, recognized the huge potential of latent nationalism. Nationalism had to be mobilized for the survival of the political elite and was used or created mainly through the manipulation of the media to build up xenophobia on all sides. (I devote more attention to this strategy later). Once public attention was focused on ethnicity, the manipulation

process began. I illustrate this with the example of a photo which appeared in the Serbian daily newspaper *Vecernje Novosti* (19 November 1994), showing a boy crying over a grave. The caption reads as follows: "... the true victims of the war are children. So it happens in this current war in which Serbian people proudly defend their very existence. This photo circled the world a year and a half ago and it still affects all who understand a child's suffering. It was taken at the graveyard in Skelani where this boy, an orphan, laments over his parents' grave. His parents were killed by the Muslims. In the meantime, the boy has been adopted by a family from Zvornik and is attending his first year of military school" (quote and photo reprinted in the magazine *"Vreme,"* November 28, 1994). In fact, this photo is a reproduction of the famous 1989 painting "On Mother's Grave," by Serbian artist, Uros Predic, used here to provoke ethnic antagonism.

In 1991, the shift from official pan-Yugoslav communism to ethnic nationalism in official political ideology and rhetoric was remarkable. Within a couple of months following the last attempt to hold the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, an effort which resulted in the Slovenian and Croatian delegations leaving the Congress in January of 1990, nationalism began to appear in political discourses accompanying a declared democratization of the state and the introduction of so-called political pluralism. When Slovenia and Croatia declared political independence from former Yugoslavia in May-June 1991, the problem of ethnic enclaves emerged on all sides with no adequate political solution proposed.

I will not provide here the political genesis of the ethnic conflicts, but rather concentrate on the new nationalist rhetoric employed by all sides. In the beginning of the conflict it was still possible to buy and read daily newspapers from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia in Belgrade and to watch television programs from parts of the disintegrating country. I remember being struck by the similarity of the media rhetoric used by all ethnic groups ("we should defend our land; we should protect our national and historic boarders; we are not going to leave our brothers outside of the republic borders; our people did not deserve this; we suffered enough; we have only deteriorated, regressed and declined in the post war Yugoslavia; we want what belongs to us, what is ours..."). This

rhetoric is illustrated in the following examples, and its devastating effects on people's lives were soon to be seen.

Example 1

On June 23, 1989, Serbian president Milosevic gave a speech at the celebration of the 600th anniversary of battle of Kosovo against the Turks: "... we are celebrating 600 years of the Kosovo battle in the year when Serbia regains its state, national and spiritual integrity after many years. ... By historical coincidence, in 1989 Serbia regained its state and its dignity and celebrates an historical event from the remote past that has huge historical and symbolical impact on its future . . . ." (Naumovic, 1993: 108).

Example 2

Croatia's president Tudjman: "In the last 45 years, Croatness has not only been exposed to pressure, but also to persecution . . . . Streets and squares named after Croatian kings were changed, Croatian children were not allowed to sing innocent Croatian songs..." (Cohen, 1993: 97).

Example 3

President Izetbegovic of Bosnia: " Intelligent and conscious people in Bosnia desire to maintain their independent position in relation to both Croatia and Serbia. Muslim national consciousness is the only answer to the great state pretensions from both sides. We are neither Serbs nor Croats, and that must be clear" (Cohen, 1993: 145).

Evidently, the idiom of ethnicity now covers the symbolic landscape. The word "nation" dominates the media and everything one says or does is evaluated according to the criteria of national "correctness" as determined by the dominant political elite. The first target for generating national euphoria was religion: the embrace of religion and nationalistic ideology has become unconditional. The church was recognized again after fifty years of social marginalization; religious feasts and holidays became celebrated as the national days, and old national myths and heroes were once again introduced in the official discourse. Accordingly, the church regained an active role in political life. For example, a recent resolution of the Canadian-Serbian Orthodox Church declares that the church "... (s)upports the rightful fight of Croatian and

Bosnian Serbs, and greets Serbian leaders by praying to the Lord to give them strength and wisdom to persist and achieve the final victory of the Serbian nation keeping in mind the principle: we do not give up what is ours and respect what belongs to others".[7]

Naumovic (1994: 105) analyzed the phenomenon of the political use of Serbian folk traditions and determined three domains of so-called "political folklore": the use of traditional epic lyric verse called *deseterac* in political slogans or meetings; the use of ready-made folk lyrics with textual adjustments for political purposes (election slogans, military propaganda); and the use of the Kosovo epic[8] and its heroes in political slogans. Following the first battles between Yugoslav army and Slovenians and Serbs and Croats in 1991, national euphoria became endemic. Throughout the former Yugoslavia, some six million people had become kin-related through inter-ethnic marriage (Petrovic, 1991). However, this fact was not enough to stop the rise of nationalism on all sides. People of mixed ethnic origin, true victims of the situation, had to decide which side they wanted to support. One of my colleagues expressed this in a phone call from the besieged town of Karlovac: "... mom's army is fighting dad's army, and I do not know what to do." In such a context, any voice calling for civil rights and democracy and questioning the very nature of a political system producing an ideology of nationalism and ethnic intolerance was to be marginalized and silenced. Nevertheless, what Prosic-Dvornic refers to as "Second Serbia" has existed in the past three years, as individuals have attempted to articulate political options that called for dialogue and tolerance (Prosic-Dvornic, 1994: 180). As was the case in Serbia, similar weak voices were occasionally heard in other territories of the former Yugoslavia (for example Istria in Croatia). It was as though the two Yugoslavias were fighting: one modern, extrovert, cosmopolitan, market-economy oriented and the other, tribal, xenophobic and introverted. Sadly, the second one prevailed.

II

Changes in the dominant dogmas and values forced every individual to become highly self-aware and to re-examine one's own standpoints concerning the ongoing ethnic conflicts. I remember being surprised as an anthropologist and a Belgradian by the transformation of many friends and acquaintances. People who for years celebrated only those feasts that were officially recognized, who despised religion, and who declared themselves to be "Yugoslavs," started going to church, representing themselves as true believers and emphasizing their Serbian origin. As mentioned earlier, ethnic and religious identities are considered inseparable in the Yugoslav context: to be a "real" Serb means the same as to be a "real" Orthodox Christian." Although I was socialized at home in Orthodox Christian traditions and cherished the cultural values attached to them, I did not associate ethnic with religious identity; I found myself "out of context" when compared to the mainstream pattern.

In early 1991, when the war between Serbs and Croats was just about to begin, the Federal Statistics office conducted an irrational census of the whole territory of Yugoslavia. As before, I was facing the dilemma of whether to declare any ethnic identity at all, and I decided to follow the same pattern as in previous years. I declared myself to be a "Yugoslav" (referring to citizenship rather than identity or homeland) and a "Secular Orthodox Christian," meaning not a believer, but a practitioner of religious traditions, belonging to Orthodox Christianity because of family tradition and the associated cultural values (I am fascinated by early medieval sacral monuments, particularly monasteries and churches scattered in the vast territory of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. I derive pleasure when listening to liturgies and a church chorus).

The identity issue became crucial in my personal Belgradian context in 1989-1993. As a person for whom ethnicity was out of focus and out of context (except for professional purposes), I found myself almost overnight in an environment where nearly everyone started to recognize, question, and determine their own identities, as well as to classify others according to certain ethnic/national criteria. For example, "good, loyal Serbs" were distinguished from "betrayer" or "bad" Serbs, heretics who did not support the national unity efforts.

I recall sitting in a friend's house when he suddenly announced: "All people who do not use Cyrillic letters should be deported from Serbia". (Cyrillic letters are used in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia). In this context, when the war against Croats was going on, the statement drew a parallel between one's alphabet and one's ethnicity: to use

Latin letters in Serbia thus "meant" one was against national interests, more like the "enemy" Croats. It defined one as a person not to be trusted.

The process of my personal detachment from the social environment was in a direct relation to the quantity and intensity of situations where ethnicity mattered in which I found myself. As an anthropologist fascinated with ethnic studies, I tried to understand and explain why this issue mattered to different groups of people, without examining the grounds for my personal lack of ethnic identity. Then, for the first time in my life, somewhere in 1991, I was forced to recognize the "problem" of my non-existing identity. I was considered "weird," "wrong," "dangerous," and "treacherous": all these words were used to designate someone who, even though nominally a member of the group, nevertheless chose to remain a detached observer, an outsider. One was expected to take sides by labelling oneself in ethnic terms.

As the war became more and more violent, many of my friends and other people with whom I communicated on a daily basis started expressing intolerance and even aggression towards my indifferent outsider's comments. The underlying attitude was: the war has started and it is not time to remain a detached observer; one has to choose sides. The only thing I was able to expose was a profound sadness that so many lives (of all ethnicities) were wasted on all sides. I truly sympathized with the poor peasant whose house had suddenly become the center of the battle zone, whose life of effort was soon to be destroyed, no matter who won and who lost. One of my relatives, a self-declared anti-Communist and nationalist, often argued with me for hours. He usually ended our debate with the conclusion: "I despise your empty cosmopolitan rhetoric. But I know you better. Because you belong to a respected Serbian family I am certain this is not what you really think. You just want to be provocative." Such a critique followed the same logic as those of the communist political elite: people were told that the politicians knew better than they, themselves, what they actually thought or what they should think.

In everyday life, people were intolerant of any heretical, anti-nationalistic views expressed in front of a stranger, an outsider. To say what one thought publicly, to the outsiders, and to provide accusatory material for "all kinds of enemies of Serbia" was considered to be the worst of all crimes. For example, when a Serbian writer was asked in an interview to comment on some statements given by a Serbian historian living in exile, she said: ". . . I agree with his criticism, the only problem is that he is criticizing now, when he is no longer living in Serbia, which is wrong. That is an act of cowardice: you should say what you mean at home, not go abroad and then throw garbage into your nation's face. . . ." (*Svet*, January 13, 1995).[9] Here unconditional belonging to one's family is equated with one's unconditional belonging to the nation. Accordingly, it was considered outrageous to expose "internal" wrongdoing to the outside world.

As I have no ascribed ethnic identity, what the notion of my homeland loosely refers to is certain dispersed places within the disintegrating state, such as Koper in Slovenia where I spent three adolescent years; several villages of the Vojvodina plain where I did my fieldwork on Montenegrin colonists and met some remarkable people; my old house in Belgrade where I spent practically my whole life; in the wider context, the Mediterranean, some villages in northern Greece, Alexandria streets or the Sahara desert, and so on. My mind creates these geographic maps and symbolic landscapes and when I think of a "homeland" I actually refer to the places that make me feel at home, where I felt belonging for some reason, or felt attached. Being self-defined in this manner I found myself in an acute state of detachment from the environment where ethnic and national classifications and measurements became everyday practice, where nationalism exposed itself in most unexpected situations. The alienation process was rapid and I soon found myself an outsider. Ethnicity as an idiom stood for the whole ideology of "correctness."

Finally, flash-backs from my personal chronology could go in this order:. . . exposed to constant political propaganda demanding patriotism from "real Serbs," . . . watching long forgotten symbols becoming alive once again. . . feelings of frustration, anger, denial. I started to protect myself, ignoring the media advocating war. Contrary to my beliefs, I engaged in certain actions, including political protests against the war and current governments, all along being aware of the uselessness of such activities. Belgrade, my home town, was such a sad place that I finally left in February of 1993.

III

My initial displacement actually started six months after the war between Serbs and Croats erupted, when I went to England on scholarship. After six months I returned to Belgrade only to find that I could not tolerate living in constant fear about the future. Political and economic disaster seemed inevitable. Being away made me aware of the nationalistic transformations the country had undergone. By the end of that year I was packing for Canada, considering my exile temporary, but knowing in my heart that going back was out of the question.

Dozens of Belgradian friends entered Canada as immigrants at the same time. For some time my husband and I lived in Vancouver, occasionally contacting fifteen or twenty Belgradian friends. When we moved to Calgary the situation was much the same: we remained in contact with approximately ten families that had emigrated from former Yugoslavia. My situation was ambiguous: as an anthropologist I took every opportunity to do fieldwork when we would gather to discuss current topics. At the same time, I was an immigrant actively creating my ethnographic account, contributing to the discussions. We had evenings that could be called "sentimental journeys," when each of us would recall the places that were dear to us, the best holidays and parties, and recount stories of a year of military duty served in different parts of our nonexistent country of origin. We would discuss the political situation, the Canadian and Yugoslav contexts, and analyze war strategies, nationalism, and identity. We considered how Canada differed from Yugoslavia and the advantages and disadvantages of each, and compared Belgrade with Calgary, and North America with Europe. More recently we debated patterns of ethnic secession by comparing Canada to the former Yugoslavia and all sorts of topics concerning the adaptation process.

There are two events from my immigrant's "diary" which have become significant vignettes. I entered a Calgary café with friends one day, and a group of seated Muslims recognized me as an "enemy" by the dialect I was speaking. They cursed us ("Serbs") and quickly declared: "One day all this is going to be a Muslim state." This event left me bitter. I felt like a cosmopolitan, and yet stood accused of being an ethnic enemy. When this event occurred I was teaching a course on ethnicity and was preparing a lecture on ethnic identity. I took the opportunity to analyze the event for my students. I was aware of multiple statuses and multiple identities (as an immigrant, anthropologist, and cosmopolitan). There was also a paradox of the Canadian multicultural context that made it impossible for onlookers in the café to tell the difference between "friendly shouting" and the actual inter-ethnic conflict that was taking place.

On another occasion, I gave a lecture on nationalism. When I returned home, a television program was showing horrible pictures of one of the many Sarajevo massacres: suddenly I felt as if my theoretical discussion on nationalism had become painfully alive. I asked myself what was the point of teaching about nationalism when one actually encountered one of its many demonic faces? By exposing and analyzing it, were we really able to educate people to recognize its huge negative potential?

* * *

My circumstances as an immigrant provoked in me many ambivalent feelings and many paradoxes. I was simultaneously an insider and outsider, observer and participant, and someone analyzing others while trying to figure out my own position. What is my perspective? As an anthropologist I want to research and write about current immigration to Canada from the former Yugoslavia. While awaiting a better time to begin my research, I realized that one such immigrant was looking back at me through the mirror. It was a painful realization, as I had forgotten her.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Noel Dyck, Andrei Simic, Jean Guy- Goulet, and Lenard Cohen for their comments and criticism while preparing this article for publication. I would also like to thank numerous friends who argued with me and helped me to be more self-reflective in writing this article.

2. Individuals in this period were labelled as "politically incorrect", as a "reactionary element" or as a "dissident," and were imprisoned for activities such as singing national songs whose text glorified one nation or disdained other Yugoslav nations.

3. The period from the end of World War II up to 1980 is the period of Tito's rule. Tito initially followed the Russian Stalinist political pattern, but gradually distanced himself from it and opened up

to the west economically. Generally it was a form of dogmatic rule with a one party political monopoly.

4.   Three main religions were targeted: Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

5.   For a discussion of the complexity of the ethnic problems in more recent Yugoslav history see Cohen, 1993: 1-44.

6.   For more details see J. F. Brown (1991).

7.   This passage appears in *Istocnik, Herald of the Serbian Orthodox Church-Canadian Diocese*, April 1995, No 29.

8.   There is a whole cycle of valuable folk epics created after the Serbian battle against the Turks in 1389. Such lyrics stigmatized as "national poetry" were suppressed during Tito's rule and regained significance in the context of the post-Tito national awakening in Serbia.

9.   Even now as I examine my own idiom of ethnicity, I cannot ignore the fact that my writings are likely to be disapproved of by colleagues and anthropologists in my country of origin. Some of my friends who read the manuscript also expressed disagreement with me, accusing me of "parading my lack of identity." One of my closest friends argued that "(i)f you feel this way, you should at least be quiet about it and not advertise your lack of identity. You are almost showing off your lack of attachment to Serbia, which still is your home no matter what you say." The unspoken critique is that I am a self-promoter trying to gain professional recognition in the West by parading my lack of identity, thereby making all my friends who consider themselves to be patriots appear to be nationalists. Such accusations are devastating and they have motivated me to share my identity crisis with the professional crowd. However, I regret that this paper could not be presented in Belgrade, my original social context.

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