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Discourse analysis (DA) has informed the study of cultural and political phenomena across a range of disciplines over the last four decades. Its flexibility as a heuristic tool is certainly related to the universal applicability of DA in incidents of global significance, including representations of ‘self’ and ‘other’. This edited volume applies a loosely defined version of DA in violent and non-violent encounters through creative combinations with the political theory on identity construction, ethnic conflict and cultural theory. The context in which these fusions are implemented is the dramatic break-up of the Yugoslav state and the subsequent emergence of renewed nationalist sentiments in its newborn titular states. Individual analyses performed through a variety of media, such as film, television and press materials, converge upon an investigation of discourse as language constitutive of praxis. This post-Foucaultian definition of ‘discourse’ was pioneered in the social sciences in the 1970s through the work of scholars such as Norman Fairclough, whose DA model is still in wide use. The regional specificity of the volume does not detract from the possibility of applying similar methodological models to other ethno-political encounters in neighbouring regions or other corners of the world.

The book is divided into three themes, ten chapters and seven case studies, each reflecting the six major ethno-territorial conflicts following Tito’s death and the subsequent disintegration of the Yugoslav political formation. The introduction (Pål Kolstø) is an essay on the theoretical trajectory of the study of ethno-political conflict and the intersections of DA and representation analysis. Kolstø seeks to unpack the mechanisms of knowledge production and dissemination in societies plagued by violent conflict, thus stressing the role of enunciations in framing and eliminating political alternatives. Special emphasis is placed on the analysis of emotions, which Kolstø pursues through a selective presentation of the political theory of ressentiment in the Yugoslav context. Thereafter, he presents a multidisciplinary analysis of the relationship between discourse, representation and conflict to elucidate scholarly understandings of the ‘we’ versus ‘they’ boundary formation.

The role of the media as both an indicator and a contributor to the Yugoslav conflict comprises the theme of the first chapter by Tarik Jusić. Emphasis is placed on the ways the media are linked to power structures and their active role in redefining relations of power. The political environment in which the media operate is defined for Jusić by the interplay of elite consensus, the severity of the crisis at hand and the sources of media control. The complexity of political antagonisms in the Yugoslav conflict might have been overdetermined by a deep economic and political crisis...
but the crisis itself was escalated by journalistic intervention. The decentralization of TV, radio programmes and news reporting produced a fragmented ‘public sphere’ that served multiple, conflicting interests in the various republics and regions (hence the production or maintenance of varies audiences), framing thus the subsequent conflicts as violent encounters between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Such framing took place in specific registers that facilitated the invention of ‘enemies’ and ‘victims’, a silencing of the actual problems (e.g. the elimination of class, groups and strata in national spaces otherwise ‘at war’ with each other) and the (de)legitimation of political actors.

Chapter 2 (Sabina Mihelj, Veronika Bajt and Miloš Pankov) proffers a longitudinal and comparative design of four samples of prime-time television in late 1980s and early 1990s by two television stations broadcasting in two different Yugoslav republics: TV Ljubljana in Slovenia and TV Belgrade in Serbia. Thus, it focuses on what the authors consider the prelude to the full-blown conflict of the 1990s – the Slovenian context, which remains less investigated in social and political research. By incorporating a study of coverage of events before and during the military trial that took place in Slovenia in 1988, the essay seeks to examine the process of liberalization that led to the political recognition of the Slovenian and Croatian republics as independent states and nations. It is argued that the collective identifications we find later in these two states were fostered to a great extent by the media agents examined here. Ivana Durić and Vladimir Zorić in Chapter 3 use press coverage of military events that took place in Croatia between 1990 and 1995 to highlight how the media partook in the intensification of conflict in the Croatian and Serbian contexts. It is argued that both sides constructed notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ by mobilizing malleable oppositions of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ that both enabled national homogenizations to take place and subjected such homogenizations to the politics of the moment. Through a longitudinal analysis of daily press reporting the study shows how any such discursive constructions were open to structural and circumstantial political change.

Cross-cultural analysis characterizes the next two chapters: Chapter 4 by Nita Lucić and Predrag Marković centres an analysis on the most-discussed zone of conflict, Kosovo. The concern here is not so much on the role and effects of media technologies but the agents instead that control technological broadcasting of potent political messages – what the authors (following Stuart Hall) designate as a ‘relations matrix’ of power, history and politics. Emergent shifts in representations of selfhood and otherness are traced through key incidents that took place between 1994 and 2004 and which contributed to the escalation of the Kosovar conflict. Chapter 5 (Jovo Bakić and Gazela Pudar) opens up the empirical terrain to transatlantic materials. Using intertextuality (frequency in quoting the same material across different texts) and interpersonality (occurrence of the same names across texts to legitimate particular claims) as methodological guides, the case study examines the interpretive frames employed by the American, Serbian and British press in historical hallmarks of the Serbian conflict with the West during the 1990s and up to 2000.

The absence of violent discourse or its covert manifestations inform the next three chapters. The production and transmission of stereotypes about Serbia and the Serbs in Montenegro forms the substantive material of Dorde Pavičević and Srđan Đurović’s analysis in Chapter 6. Montenegro’s independence was violence-free and thus comprises a unique instance to investigate. The authors highlight how the press never challenged the ethno-cultural bond between Serbs and Montenegrins, avoiding precarious demarcations between ‘self’ and ‘other’ that guided ethno-cultural conflict in other Yugoslav cases. Drawing on over a thousand articles of Serbian and Montenegrin-controlled media, the chapter performs an analysis of discursive strategies of mutual
representation, providing links between socio-political context and media coverage. The media coverage during the Bosnian conflict is the theme of Chapter 7 by Michal Sládeček and Amer Džihana. The analysis mobilizes materials from a survey that covers hallmarks of the crisis from the 1992 referendum on independence to the 2006 debate on constitutional amendments. The analysis explores covert meanings and homogenizing functions that support political polarization in the particular period in which they emerge. Chapter 8 (Zhidas Daskalovski) examines the relationship between Albanophone and Macedonophone media discourse and conflict development in Macedonia in three periods in the early 2000s. The rhetoric of Macedonian and Albanian press is juxtaposed to that of the National Liberation Army (NLA) of Kosovar insurgents and the international discourse on the conflict, followed by observations on the action taken by the NLA at the time. It is observed that pre-conflict local media discourse was not as inflammatory, as often assumed. It was during the conflict that ethno-nationalist hate speech began to emerge, only to die out during the parliamentary elections of 2002.

The last two chapters focus on the production of ethno-significant myths. Chapter 9 (Gordana Đeri) is dedicated to an analysis of remembrance and forgetting in the Yugoslav state. It is suggested that the vast, partial amount of information generated by the Yugoslav wars (especially that directly linked to television coverage) can be held responsible for the demise of the confederation. The socialist repression of nationalism failed because it did not manage to completely overwrite tacit knowledge about venerated aspects of the past in various communities. This past survived in intimate stories of collective selfhoods and came back with a vengeance to precipitate the disintegration. Fictional representations of ethno-cultural binarisms form the subject matter of Chapter 10 (Nedin Mutić). The films analysed in this essay are among international award-winning creations produced in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia between the 1990 and 2006. The representational modes used in these films both investigate and deconstruct categories and stereotypes of national or ethnic communities, often within the same cinematic narrative. The concluding chapter (Pål Kolstø) discusses thematic commonalities across chapters, shedding light on the role of the media in the formation of political realities.

One of the strengths of this volume is that it does not treat the Yugoslav case as a single phenomenon but instead seeks ways to tease out the specificity informing a variety of localized phenomena within the Balkan space (hence the pluralization of ‘conflict’ in the title). Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts will be of considerable interest to an interdisciplinary readership – particularly of scholars and students in media, socio-linguistics, sociology, political theory and sister disciplines.

Caleb Smith, The Prison and the American Imagination, London: Yale University Press, 2009; 272 pp.: 9780300141665, $40.00 (hbk)

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Smith’s (2009) The Prison and the American Imagination can be located along two planes of academic thought concerning the early penitentiary. The first looks to the prison as a locus in the creation of the citizen-subject for the nascent industrialized age. The second examines the role of the gothic in shadowing that same project. By marrying these two strands, Smith successfully