

Chapter 15

Balkan as a Sign: Usage of the Word *Balkan* in Language and Discourse of the ex-Yugoslav People*

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The collapse of Yugoslavia and the civil war which followed it in the 1990s have revitalised the word *Balkan* to move into the foreground of world media in an unfortunate way. Not only the word but also the old stereotypes of the Balkans seemed to have come back from the past. A good number of publications has surfaced using the word *Balkan* in its title: *Balkan Ghost* (Kaplan 1993), *Balkan Worlds* (Stoianovich 1994), *Balkan Holocauste* (MacDonald 2002), etc. Old works on the Balkans, such as Booth (1905), Fraser (1906) and Ancel (1930), just to name a few, were taken down from the shelves of library stacks. ‘Balkan Characterology’ originated by Cvijić (Cvijić [1922] 1987; Cvijić and Andrić 1988) and Dvorniković ([1939] 1990) was recollected as well. Writers and scholars from the Balkans, too, have not hesitated to undertake tasks to work on *Balkan* in their own way. Their purposes are to trace the legacy of *Balkan*, to ultimately clarify what *Balkan* is, to describe how the Balkan world has been produced, or to redefine *balkanstvo* (balkan-ness) throughout their history and cultural

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circumstances (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bjelić and Savić 2002; Kitromilides 1996; Labon 1995; Stoianovich 1994; Todorova 1997, 2004). My study is, however, addressed to an aspect which has been given little attention in all these *Balkan* phenomena, viz, I examine how the word *Balkan* and its derivatives have been and are being used in daily verbal performance in the ex-Yugoslav regions, precisely in SerBoCroatian¹ (henceforth SBC) speaking area. In this paper, I use the words *Balkan*, ‘the Balkans’ and the ‘Balkan world’. *Balkan* (in italics) is a SBC word which corresponds to the English expression ‘the Balkans’. However, the word *Balkan* is used in the discourse of the people of the Balkans with different meanings and implications, and its semantic feature is the focal point of this paper. ‘The Balkans’ represent the states on the Balkan peninsula, i.e. Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Greek and ex-Yugoslav countries (Slovenia may be excluded). The ‘Balkan world’ is used to denote a world with cultural and historical continuity, the border of which does not directly correspond to a geopolitical map of the Balkan peninsula but is conceived as a psychological reality for the Balkan people.

The first section of this paper treats lexicographic aspects of *Balkan* and its derivatives, and the second section presents semantic and syntactic features of *Balkan* in ex-Yugoslav media texts. In the third section, a remark on the meaning of *Balkan* in a self-identification context is presented.

1. *Balkan* and Its Derivatives in Lexicographic Tradition

1–1 A collocation *balkanska krčma* (the Balkan tavern) has become popular in verbal activities of political and socio-cultural life in post-Yugoslav countries. HER (2002), in which this collocation is entered as an idiom for the first time in the dictionaries ever published in Yugoslav regions, defines it as follows: *loše, primitivno društvo u kojem se ne zna tko pije a tko plaća; takvo opće stanje u društvu* (a bad, primitive society, in which no one would know who drinks and who pays; such a state in society). It is, therefore, a phrase for a chaotic, irrational circumstance without law and order, where someone’s action or reaction to others’

¹ As there is no acknowledged notation that blankets the standard languages of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, I use this name because of its succinctness and convenience with regard to the official name of the language used in Yugoslavia: Serbo-Croatian.

deeds may result in fuss and fighting. This collocation has been ascribed to Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981), the most renowned Croatian man of letters of the twentieth century, with the following sentence: *kad se u balkanskoj krčmi ugase svjetla, onda sijevaju noževi* (knives flash when the lights disappear in the Balkan tavern). An image conjured up with this phrase of Krleža exactly matches the cut-in illustration of the magazine *Kladderadatsch* on 13 September 1903 (Fig. 1),² a satirical picture of the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century just after the so-called Macedonian revolution (Ilinden uprising) in August 1903.

I have not been able to ascertain when and where Krleža wrote the passage in question,³ but it is indisputable that the phrase *balkanska krčma* can be used as an apt quotation to allude to any historical event which happened in the ex-Yugoslav regions. Even in Slovenia, RTV Slovenia used it as a title of the second episode of a documentary series ‘*Dnevnik nekega naroda*’ [A Diary of Certain Nation] when the series was broadcast at the beginning of 2005.⁴



THE
 21. SEPT. 1903
 SATIRISCHES
 WOCHEBLATT
 FÜR
 OSTERREICH
 UND
 RUSSLAND
 Nr. 31
 1903
 VERLAG
 VON
 F. W. SCHUBERT
 WIEN
 1903

According to the captions in this illustration, two men in uniform, Russian and Austrian, are directing another man presented as a tavern runner and a caricature of the Ottoman Empire, to bring order to his tavern again and the tavern runner answers them that the he is too helpless, while in Turk's tavern, people (the Balkan people) are fighting.

Fig. 1: Illustration from *Kladderadatsch*, 13 Sept. 1903

² *Kladderadatsch* is a satire magazine published in Berlin from 1848 to 1944. The illustration inserted in this paper was retrieved 10 Nov. 2005 from <<http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/helios/digi/kladderadatsch.html>>.

³ I came across an information that Krleža wrote this in his piece *Croatian Rapsodie* (Krleža 1918), which turned out to be incorrect.

⁴ The second episode starts with the dawn of World War I and ends with the foundation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918.

Often reckoned as ‘prophetic’, the lights of *balkanska krčma* were quenched again ten years after the writer’s death, the mentioned Krleža’s words and his *balkanska krčma* have been winning more popularity now than any other time in the post-war ex-Yugoslav countries. The followings are some recent examples retrieved from daily media texts:

Kao, da parafraziram Krležu, kao da opet neko u ovoj balkanskoj krčmi gasi svetlo . . . (As if I paraphrase Krleža, as if someone turns off the light in this *balkanska krča* . . .) (*Danas* (Belgrade, Serbia), 15–16 Mar. 2003)

Ako se ove najave ostvare, Bosna i Hercegovina ce ostati uvezana u čvoru sa Srbijom i Crnom Gorom, čamiti u posljednjoj balkanskoj krčmi i tu čekati da putovanje u mračnu prošlost zamijeni putovanjem u budućnost. (If these announcements are to be carried out, Bosnia Hercegovina will stay bound together with Serbia and Montenegro, just to languish in the last *balkanska krčma* and to wait there for a trip back to the dark past instead of a trip to the future.) (*Monitor* (Mostar, BiH), 17 Feb. 2005)

postoje određene međunarodne političke snage koje usprkos svim povijesnim činjenicama Hrvatsku žele isključivo u »balkanskoj krčmi«. (certain international political powers exist, which, despite all historical facts, want Croatia to be left exclusively in the ‘*balkanska krčma*’.) (*Glas koncila* (Zagreb, Croatia), 18 Apr. 2004)

Balkanska krčma is, as the examples cited above show, a metaphor for a place where the ex-Yugoslav people do not want to be thought to belong to but are afraid that they might be dwelling in: a dark, disorderly society with bloodthirsty company. In short, it is an alternative expression for *Balkan*, a word representing the stigmatised world of conflict and hatred. As is the case with this *balkanska krčma*, *Balkan* and its adjective seem to be resurrected in the present ex-Yugoslav regions. In the following part of this section I treat historical aspects of the word *Balkan* and connotations given to this word in lexicographical tradition in (ex-)Yugoslavia.

1–2 Western stereotypes about the Balkan people and their lands have more than a century of history. As Todorova mentions, for example, when De Windt depicted an incident of a vendetta in Montenegro and commented that ‘life is valued here almost as cheaply as in China and Japan’ (De Windt 1907: 45; Todorova 1997: 118), the Balkans were as East as China and Japan: a different, backward, incomprehensible world

for the West. An image of violence had been so unquestionably confirmed after number of conflicts and battles at the beginning of the twentieth century that Rebecca West must have found no difficulty in inserting episodes of 'Balkans' in the introductory chapter of her work *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*: 'I have heard the sound of three slashing slaps and a woman's voice crying through sobs, ". . . *Balkan! Balkan!*" Once in Nice, . . . a sailor lurched out of the next-door bar, and the proprietress ran after him, shouting, "*Balkan! Balkan!*"' (West [1941] 1994: 21). Since a number of works have treated the question of how the Balkan world has been created in the West (Finney 2003; Todorova 1997, 2004; Bjelić and Savić 2002, etc.), I confine myself to quote one similar description from American popular literature. A character in *The Head of the House of Coombe* (1922) written by F. Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924), completely extraneous to the subject of the tale refers to the Balkans as follows: 'By the way, somebody important has been assassinated in one of the Balkan countries. They are always assassinating people. They like it. Lord Coombe has just come in and is talking it over with grandmamma'.

These writings thus affirm that the stigmatised stereotypes of the Balkans and the Balkan people had been widespread throughout the Western world by as early as the 1920s. How, then, have the word *Balkan* and its derivatives been used in (ex-)Yugoslavia? Contemporary with West's '*Balkan! Balkan!*', as quoted above, D. Radić used the word *balkanac* (inhabitant of the Balkans, a man from the Balkans) in his work as following (Radić *Kroz život* 1935: 57, cited in RSHKNJ 1959: 273): *Želeo sam . . . da ne budem balkanac, već budem ispravan drug, koji shvata brak kao ravnopravnu zajednicu.* (I wanted to . . . not to be a Balkan, but to be a righteous man who accepts marriage as an equal partnership.) Ten years earlier than Radić, Prohaska describes '*balkanac, na prijelazu ka evropskoj civilizaciji* (the Balkan, on his way towards European civilisation)' as '*poluobraznovan, nesavjesni inteligent . . . vulgaran, a opet delikatan*' (a half-educated, unconscious intelligentsia, vulgar, but also a delicate man) (Prohaska 1921). If a *balkanac* 'on his way to Europe' is a half-educated, vulgar but a delicate man, then a *balkanac* staying in his homeland should be an uneducated, vulgar and an impertinent man. As these examples illustrate, the nucleus of the stubborn image of *balkanac* was ingrained and lexicalised in the language of the Yugoslav people at just about the same time that stereotypes for the Balkan people were built in the Western world.

Let us turn to how *Balkan* and its derivatives have been treated as constituents of the SBC lexicon in lexicographical history and verbal practice in the Yugoslav period. Table 1 shows the entry distribution of *Balkan* and its derivatives, the adjective *B/balkanski* and the person noun *B/balkanac*, *B/balkanka* (female form of *Balkanac*) in the dictionaries of SBC from the first Serbian dictionary of Vuk Karadžić (1818)⁵ to the most recent HER.

As Table 1 shows, *Balkan* and its derivatives are all entered in the dictionaries of SBC after World War II, with lexicographical tradition of distinguishing the derivatives of *Balkan* with uppercase *B* and those with lowercase *b*, the former referring to the geopolitical area, the latter being a reflection of pejorative meaning of *Balkan*. All these words are, as with the case of *balkanska krčma* (cf. Section 2), found with a certain frequency in various contexts of daily discourse, papers and journals in ex-Yugoslavia countries today, and therefore, we might think that they have always been used as often as today in daily political and cultural discourses. Linguistic practice in the Yugoslav period was, however, quite different. The data given in HČR (1999) are quite unexpected from the present-day view point (see Table 2): in the corpus consisting of five types of sub corpora with different genre (prose, verse, newspapers, drama and school textbooks), each of which comprises 200,000 words from texts published between the 1950s to early 1970s in Croatia, only 7 examples of *balkanski* are attested, and of these seven none occurs in the newspaper corpus. *B/balkanac* and *B/balkanka* aren't attested at all.⁶ The occurrence

⁵ In Karadžić's 'Srpski rječnik' (Serbian dictionary) none of these words including the word *Balkan*, are entered. This is not strange, at least for the first edition published in 1818, as it was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century when this word was selected by a German geographer to denote the geographic area which we call 'the Balkans'. That Karadžić's successors continued to 'omit' the word *Balkan* and its derivatives in the later editions must be interpreted otherwise (maybe because their idiolect was such that they were not aware of the geopolitical significance of what these words designate, or merely because they were reluctant to alter Karadžić's original edition), but it does not mean that *Balkan* was not used in the nineteenth century. Gjalski (Ksaver Šandor, 1854–1935), a Croatian writer, for instance, uses *Balkan* in his *Pod starim krovovima* (1886): *Kud ćeš da se prevarimo pored činjenica, da se od Urala do Balkana širi jedna ista krv, ori ista riječ i ista pjesma.* (What is the use of being mistaken, when the fact is that there spread one and the same blood from Ural to Balkan, same language and same songs echo throughout there?)

⁶ Data for *Balkan* cannot be obtained as proper nouns are excluded in this frequency dictionary.

Table 1 Entry distribution of *Balkan* and its derivatives in the dictionaries of SBC

	Balkan	Balkanski	balkanski	Balkanac/ Balkanka	balkanac/ balkanka
Karadžić (1 izd., 1818)	*	*	*	*	*
Karadžić (4 izd., 1935)	*	*	*	*	*
Broz and Iveković (1901)	*	√	*	*	*
RSHKNJ (1959)	√	√	*	√	√ ⁽¹⁾
RSHKJ (1967)	√	√	√	√	√ ⁽¹⁾
RHJ (2000)	√	√	√	√	
HER (2002)	√	√	√	√	√
RMJ (1961)	*	*	*	* ⁽²⁾	*
SSKJ (1994)	*	√	√	* ⁽²⁾	*

⁽¹⁾ Only the masculine form *balkanac* is entered.

⁽²⁾ Macedonian and Slovenian forms are *B/balkanec*.

Table 2 Occurrence of *balkanski* and other related adjectives in HČR

entry (type)	corpus genres					
	prose	verse	drama	newspaper	school textbook	total occurrences
balkanski	√	√	√	*	√	7
evropski (European)	√	√	√	√	√	106
jugoslavenski (Yugoslav)	*	*	*	√	√	208
hrvatski (Croatian)	√	√	√	√	√	133
srpski (Serbian)	√	*	*	√	√	35

of other related words underscore the total low frequency of *balkanski*: *Evropski* (European) is found 106 times, *Jugoslavenski* (Yugoslav) 208 times, *hrvatski* (Croatian) 133 times and *srpski* (Serbian) 35 times.

That *balkanski* is not attested in the newspaper corpus should be remarked, too, for the adjective in question occurs rather frequently in present-day media texts. As the newspaper corpus of HČR is compiled from five Croatian daily papers in 1975, as listed in the Table 3, the issues of the same newspapers still published in Croatia on 1 December 2005 are examined and compared with the data presented in HČR.

As listed in Table 3, *balkanski* is found 6 times in three newspapers issued on 1 December 2005. We cannot compare the data of *Balkan* as proper nouns are not included in HČR, but it is hardly conceivable that a noun (in this case *Balkan*) would occur frequently while its adjectives are rarely found in one and the same corpus.

Summing up what has been noted above, we cannot help agreeing with Todorova, who describes the strategy the Balkans imposed on themselves after World War II as such that ‘the feeling of Balkan commonality was pushed aside’ (Todorova 1997: 140). The rare occurrence of *balkanski* attested in HČR is to be understood as an indication that Tito’s Yugoslavia, likewise the other Balkan states, institutionalised its linguistic practice in such a manner that the word *Balkan* together with its derivatives, as well as its memory, was removed from daily use as if they were obsolete ones.

Table 3 Occurrence of *balkanski* in the Croatian daily newspapers used in HČR

Issues surveyed	Newspaper Title ⁽¹⁾					Total occurrences
	<i>Vjesnik</i> (Zagreb)	<i>Slobodna Dalmacija</i> (Split)	<i>Novi List</i> (Rijeka)	<i>Glas Slavonije</i> (Osijek)	<i>Borba</i> (Zagreb edition)	
1975 ⁽²⁾	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 Dec. 2005	2	0	3	1		6

⁽¹⁾ In the parentheses are given the city names indicating where each title is published. *Borba* ceased to be published in Croatia after the Croatian independence from SFRJ.

⁽²⁾ Searched issues are: 21 Apr., 21 June, 21 Sept., 21 Dec. of 2005.

Obviously, the resurrection of the word *Balkan* and its derivatives is not accidental but is due to the fall of the communist regime and the collapse of Yugoslavia which was followed by civil war in the 1990s. The Western world began to use the word *Balkan* to refer to (ex-)Yugoslav turmoil and the post-war clean up of this turmoil, and the ex-Yugoslav countries, as if keeping step with the West, started to recruit the word *Balkan*. But it was not only the frequency that has changed as the shade of meaning appears to have changed as well. The word *balkanac* was already charged with pejorative meaning in the dictionaries of the Yugoslav period and was defined as ‘*surov, primitivan čovek* (coarse, primitive man)’ (RSHKJ 1967), *surov, neuglađen čovek* (rough, rude man)’ (RSHKNJ 1959), but it is specified with more concrete representation as ‘*onaj koji se u društvu ponaša sirovo, koji ne usvaja stil i vrijednosti života u Europi*’ (one who behaves rude in society, who does not acquire the styles and values of European life)’ in the post-war HER. The word *Balkan*, which was defined solely as a geopolitical name in previous dictionaries, is explicated in addition to neutral geographical meaning as *surova i primitivna sredina (o kulturnom i političkom životu)* (coarse, primitive surroundings, about cultural and political life). The relentless, rather masochistic way HER defines *Balkan* and its derivatives⁸ may partly indicate a Balkanophobic *ozračje* (atmosphere) characteristic of the Croatian intelligentsia, but represents, I presume, the overall feelings of ex-Yugoslav regions, which experienced war at the end of the twentieth century and were imposed to think that they fall far short of avowing that

⁷ In Croatia, the word for Europe is *Europa*, not *Evropa*.

⁸ The other derivatives of *Balkan* are: *balkanizacija, balkanizam, balkanstvo, balkanština*, and the verb *balkanizirati*. All these derivatives have unfavourable meaning in definition of HER: *balkankzacija*, a direct loan of ‘balkanisation’, initially used in the Western geopolitical discussion in the early twentieth century, is defined as ‘*stanje teritorijalne rascjepkanosti među državama na nekom području i nesposobnost postizanja minimalnog dogovora da bi se zaštitili zajednički interesi* (a situation in which a certain region is divided into small countries and these are not possible to cooperate for reciprocity), *balkanizam* is, besides as a linguistic term, described as ‘*ono što je balkansko (po shvaćanjima ili preduvjerenjima u Zapadnoj i Srednjoj Europi)*’ (what is assumed to be *Balkan*, understood or prejudiced as such in the Western and Middle Europe). The words *balkanstvo* and *balkanština* are ‘*ukupnost primitivizma i nečasnih postupaka u javnom, kulturnom i političkom životu što se po preduvjerenjima u Zapadnoj i Srednjoj Europi smatra tipičnom za Balkan*’ (all what is uncivilised and discreditable behaviour in public, cultural and political life, deemed as typical for the Balkans by the prejudice of the West and Middle Europe).

they are a part of Europe. In fact, it is worth noting that a *Balkan-Evropa* contrast that could be sensed already in Prohaska (*Balkanac ka Evropskoj civilizaciji*, as previously quoted) has become more conspicuous. *Na balkanski način* (in a Balkan style) is, for example, contrasted with *na evropski način* (in a European style); the following passage by Svetozar Marović, the incumbent president of Serbia and Montenegro, transparently illustrates how this contrast should be used: —*nama ovdje treba da se pitanje sudbine Crne Gore riješi na evropski, ne na balkanski način, da riješimo ne iracionalnošću nego razumnom, sporazumom, a ne svađom, konfliktima, podjelama, već dogovorom koliko je to moguće.* (Here, it is necessary for us to resolve the future course of Montenegro in a European style, not in a Balkan style, not irrationally but with reason and agreement, not by fighting, conflicting and breaking up, but by negotiating if at all possible.) (*Vijesti*, 15 May 2005)

2. Semantic and Syntactic Feature of *Balkan*

If ‘word’ is a conventional term for a ‘sign in a language system’, and a sign consists of a combination of ‘signifiant’ and ‘signifié’ in Saussurian terms, it can be stated that *Balkan* as a ‘sign’ is frequently used in ex-Yugoslav media and other discourses but its ‘signifiant-signifié’ combination pattern is not univocal. In addition to the original geopolitical meaning, *Balkan* is used to refer to a particular part or parts of the Balkans. It can also be a ‘signifiant’ for an imaginary Balkan world. Thus, at least the following four definitions of *Balkan* are discernable in scrutinising ex-Yugoslav media texts:⁹

1. A geographic or geopolitical area where the Balkans are located: *tržište na Balkanu* (market in the Balkans); *Makedonija želi biti sljedeća zemlja sa Balkana koja će početi pregovore o članstvu sa EU* (Macedonia hopes to be the next country which will start membership negotiation with EU from the Balkans) (*Slobodna Bosna*); *zona slobodne trgovine na Balkanu* (the Free Trade Area of the Balkans); *problemi država na Balkanu* (problems of the Balkan countries) (*Novi List* (Croatia))

⁹ Examples, of which sources are not given, are expressions found elsewhere in the media.

2. A part or parts of the Balkans; certain (which may be but not necessarily all) states on the Balkan peninsula: *okupilo se preko šezdeset pisaca, izdavača, prevodilaca i novinara sa Balkana* (more than 60 writers, publishers, translators and journalists from many/some Balkan countries are gathered together) (*Slobodna Bosna*); *nije porijeklom sa Balkana* (He is not from somewhere in the Balkans), *mi djevojke sa Balkana* (we, girls from the Balkans) (*Slobodna Bosna*)
3. ex-Yugoslav regions (Slovenia is excluded in general): *ratni zločin na Balkanu* (war criminals in the Balkans); *ključna godina za Balkan* (Key year for the Balkans) (*Vreme* (Serbia)); *brzog i jednostavnog rešavanja za Balkan nema* (there is no quick and simple resolution for the Balkans) (*Vreme*); *Al kaida je još prisutna u BiH i na Kosovu, a njeni članovi sa Balkana učestvuju u terorističkim napadima u Evropi* (Al kaida is still in BiH and on Kosovo, and their members from the Balkans are taking part in terrorist attacks in Europe) (*Vreme*); *izbijanjem rata na Balkanu* (with the blow-up of war in the Balkans) (*Novi List*)
4. the Balkan world, which is a historical and cultural continuity and which can be discerned by the people from, and in the Balkans, as ‘theirs’: *Ne znam da li još prihvataju mitologiju o Balkanu kao prostoru na kome . . . sukobi i ratovi izbijaju u redovnim intervalima . . .* (I don’t know whether they (i.e. representatives from Europe) still accept the mythology on *Balkan* as a space where . . . conflicts and wars break out at regular intervals) (*Vreme*); *sav ovaj Balkan, to je ludo, to je nevjerovatno, od Hrvatske do Rumunjske i Makedonije, svi su isti!* (All this *Balkan*, it’s insane, it’s incredible; from Croatia to Romania and Macedonia, all are the same!) (*Feral Tribune* (Croatia))

Thus, to use the word *Balkan* means to select at least one of these *signifiés*: especially notable is the usage of *Balkan* in the sense of 3; it is a usage of synecdoche, a type of metaphor that functions in whole-part alternation; a word which otherwise denotes an entity, which is used to represent its part, and vice versa. That ex-Yugoslav people often rely on this synecdoche of ‘whole in lieu of part’ even when they could use proper, individual words that would precisely denote the part in question, such as

(ex-)Yugoslavia or Bosnia, should be attended to, since it suggests that the usage of *Balkan* has been incorporated in the verbal behaviour of these peoples' self-identification process. We will return to the relationship between *Balkan* and the self-identification in section 3.

Let us now turn to the syntactic aspect of *Balkan* and examine if its polysemic feature depicted above is relevant to the syntactic behaviour. Table 4 below shows the syntactic distribution of *Balkan* attested in the media texts from ex-Yugoslav countries (for the details of sources see notes under Table 4).

The second line in Table 4 gives total tokens of *Balkan* in each corpus: it should be noted that all types of occurrences of *Balkan* are included, namely, the usages of bare *Balkan* (i.e. without modifier), usages in proper nouns (ex. enterprise names, festival names), organisation names such as *Međunarodna komisija za Balkan* (The International Committee on the Balkans), *ICG za Balkan* (The International Crisis Group (ICG) Balkan Projects), and *Balkan* with a modifier such as *zapadni Balkan* (the Western Balkans) are counted.

Table 4 Syntactic distribution of *Balkan* (clause subject and locative)

<i>Balkan</i>	<i>Slobodna Bosna</i>	<i>Vreme 1</i>	<i>Vreme 2</i>
Total tokens: number (per cent)	536 (100.0%)	307 (100.0%)	377 (100.0%)
Clause subject: <i>Balkan</i>	15 (2.8%)	16 (5.2%)	12 (3.2%)
Locative: <i>na Balkanu</i>	217 (40.5%)	158 (51.5%)	64 (17.0%)

corpora¹⁰:

Slobodna Bosna: weekly, Sarajevo (Bosnia Hercegovina), No. 386 (8 Apr. 2004)–No. 464 (6 Oct. 2005); online PDF versions acquired from <<http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/>>

Vreme: weekly, Belgrade (Serbia): DVD 'Elektronska arhiva: 1997–2005'

Vreme 1: No. 430 (16 Jan. 1999)–No. 480 (18 Mar. 2000)

Vreme 2: No. 708 (29 July 2004)–No. 757 (7 July 2005)

¹⁰ These journals are chosen for their availability as corpora but the choice is not sheerly arbitrary: the journals are from different parts of ex-Yugoslavia, one from Bosnia Hercegovina and the other from Serbia, so that they could reflect the different verbal practice in relation to the usage of *Balkan*; My aim to select the period from 1999 to 2000 (*Vreme 1*) and 2004 to 2005 (*Vreme 2*) is to observe the verbal practice of the period when Serbia and Montenegro (Yugoslavia, at that time) was in the most critical situation with the Kosovo war and NATO air attack, and that of the recent time of Serbian recovery after the Milošević regime. Croatian media should be included but in fact there was no paper-media available to serve as a corpus.

As is displayed in Table 4, the usage of bare *Balkan* as a clause subject is very low in frequency: it is not higher than 5 per cent in each corpus.¹¹ The low frequency of *Balkan* in the subject position contrasts with the evidently high occurrence of bare *Balkan* in the locative prepositional phrase *na Balkanu*. It is the most frequent syntagma in all types of usage of *Balkan*, with and without the modifier; the number of prepositional *na Balkanu* accounts for about 50 per cent of all tokens of *Balkan* in *Vreme 1* and *Slobodna Bosna*. *Vreme 2* shows a lower proportion but its frequency is still the highest in all occurrences of *Balkan* in this corpus. For reference, the distribution of main prepositional phrases with bare *Balkan* is presented in Table 5.

The data from the corpora suggest that the primary function of bare *Balkan* is, whatever its *signifié* may be, to indicate a space for some action or event to take place, and that the function as a clause subject is rather peripheral. Why does *Balkan* behave like this? Is this idiosyncratic for *Balkan*? In order to answer this question, I examined how the word *Evropa* is used in the same corpora. *Evropa* has a good reason to be contrasted as, like *Balkan*, it is a geopolitical term, it can be as ambiguous in relation to its *signifiés* as *Balkan*, and as we have surveyed in the previous section, there is a tacit understanding in linguistic practice in SBC that *Evropa* is as an antonym of *Balkan*. The result is listed in Table 6.

Table 5 Occurrence of main prepositional phrases in the corpora:

	<i>Vreme 1</i>	<i>Vreme 2</i>	<i>Slobodna Bosna</i>
<i>na Balkanu</i> (on the B.)	158	64	217
<i>za Balkan</i> (for the B.)	15	5	32
<i>sa Balkana</i> (from the B.)	5	2	28
<i>na Balkan</i> (onto the B.)	5	3	8

Table 6 Syntactic distribution of *Evropa* (clause subject and locative)

<i>Evropa</i>	<i>Slobodna Bosna</i>	<i>Vreme 1</i>	<i>Vreme 2</i>
Total tokens: number (per cent)	1548 (100.0%)	1168 (100.0%)	1039 (100.0%)
Clause subject: <i>Evropa</i>	70 (4.8%)	92 (7.9%)	71 (6.8%)
Locative: <i>u Evropi</i>	295 (19.0%)	202 (17.3%)	153 (14.7%)

¹¹ Examples of subject *Balkan* with a modifier, such as *zapadni Balkan*, are attested 5 times in S.B., 7 times in *Vreme 2*, none in *Vreme 1*.

As is the case with *Balkan*, all occurrences including proper nouns, organisation names (ex. *Vijeće Evrope* Council of Europe), and usages with modifiers such as *zapadna Evropa* (West Europe), *istočna Evropa* (East Europe) and *jugoistočna Evropa* (South East Europe, which actually denotes the Balkans) are included in the total tokens. The proportion of bare *Evropa* as a clause subject in all usages of *Evropa* is under 10 per cent in each corpus, which is not significantly yet slightly higher than the subject proportion of *Balkan* in total usages of *Balkan*. To add to it, *Evropa* is different from *Balkan* in that the locative prepositional *u Evropi* is not so remarkably frequent in the total occurrence of the word as is the case with *na Balkanu*.

Thus the data seem to support the idiosyncratic feature of *Balkan* in that it is primarily used in the locative, i.e. to denote a place for something to take place, but it is difficult to serve as a clause subject. As for a subject function, *Evropa* does not appear significantly more frequently than *Balkan*, and in this respect these two words do not differ so much. An important difference is found, however, in subject feature of these two words. The Data from the corpora show a clear tendency that *Balkan* is used as a subject of a sentence which includes a copula (see 1–5 below), BECOME sentence (6–7), REMAIN sentence (8–9) and a subject of a sentence which includes a passive form of the verb (10–12), but it cannot function as an agentive subject of sentence with an active verb¹² (V. is for *Vreme*, S.B. is for *Slobodna Bosna*):

- (1) ***Balkan je u krizi.*** (*Balkan* is in crisis.) (V. 465, 4 Dec. 1999)
- (2) ***Balkan je kudikamo složenija stvarnost.*** (*Balkan* is a far more puzzling reality.) (V. 477, 26 Feb. 2000)
- (3) ***Balkan je područje sa najviše ratova u Evropi u ovom stoleću.*** (*Balkan* is a region where battles happened most frequently in Europe in this century.) (V. 461 supplement, 6 Nov. 1999)

¹² There is indeed an instance, in which *Balkan* is the subject of sentence with an active verb: ‘(*Balkan*) *trpi i nasleđe propalih projekata izgradnje nacija*’. (*Balkan* suffers and inherits failed projects of making nations.) The subject of verbs such as *trpjeti* (suffer) or *naslediti* (inherit), unlike that of typical active verbs such as ‘make’ and ‘do’, is not an active agent but a ‘patient’ in linguistic terms, i.e. one who receives something or get affected by some other participant in an event. These verbs are therefore active in grammatical voice, but passive in meaning.

- (4) **Balkan je mesto gde se interesi i politike EU-a i SAD konačno susreću.** (*Balkan is the place where interests and politics of EU and USA finally meet.*) (V. 734, 27 Jan. 2005)
- (5) **Balkan, izuzev Kosova, više nije predmet interesa tamošnje administracije.** (*Balkan, except for Kosovo, is no more an object of interest of their administration.*) (S.B. 428, 27 Jan. 2005)
- (6) **Izgleda da Balkan i njegova istorija polako definitivno postaje egzotični rub civilizacije.** (*It looks like that Balkan and its history are slowly but definitively becoming an exotic periphery of civilisation.*) (V. 462, 13 Nov. 1999)
- (7) **što je Balkan postao višestruki problem Evrope** (*that Balkan became a multiple problem of Europe*) (V. 461, 6 Nov. 1999)
- (8) **Balkan ostaje posljednji kamen spoticanja na putu jačanja demokratije i sigurnosti u Evropi.** (*Balkan remains the last stumbling stone for Europe to enhance democracy and security.*) (S.B. 386, 8 Apr. 2004)
- (9) **Balkan će vjerovatno ostati najnestabilniji region u Evropi.** (*Presumably, Balkan will remain the most unstable region in Europe.*) (S.B. 428, 27 Jan. 2005)
- (10) **jedinstvena crta kojom se definiše Balkan** (*sole trait with which Balkan is defined*) (V. 468, 25 Dec. 1999)
- (11) **da se Balkan uključi u procese modernizacije** (*so that Balkan will be included into process of modernisation*) (V. 461 supplement, 6 Nov. 1999)
- (12) **da će za desetak godina čitav Balkan biti 'evropeizovan'** (*that in ten years the entire Balkan will be 'europeanised'*) (V. 725 European forum, Nov. 2004)

In contrast with *Balkan*, *Evropa* can be used, not to mention as a subject of BE and BECOME sentences (13–15), and a subject of other intransitive verbs (16), as a subject of active verbs, which suggests that it is conceived as an entity with a will to act and control something (17–20):

- (13) **Evropa jeste u dubokoj krizi.** (*Europe is indeed in deep crisis.*) (V. 756, 30 June 2005)
- (14) **Buš je poručio da je Evropa 'najvažniji partner'** (*Bush sent word that Europa is 'the most important partner'*) (V. 739, 1 Mar. 2005)

- (15) da će . . . **Evropa** postati američki vazal (that . . . Europa will become a vassal of the USA) (S.B. 407, 2 Sept. 2004)
- (16) U zaključku izvještaja stoji da se **Evropa** zagrijava brže nego ostatak svijeta (In the conclusion, the report says that Europa is warming more rapidly than other part of the World) (S.B. 406, 26 Aug. 2004)
- (17) **Evropa** je dobila šansu da afirmiše svoju zajedničku politiku na Balkanu (Europe got an opportunity to affirm its common policy towards the Balkans) (V. 455, 17 July 1999)
- (18) izvesno je da će **Evropa** gledati svoj interes i da će druge, zemlje u razvoju isključiti sa svog tržišta (it is certain that Europe will see its interest and will exclude other developing countries from its market) (V. 431, 23 Jan. 1999)
- (19) **Evropa** je imala veoma tešku istoriju obilježenu međusobnim ratovima, tragedijama (Europe has had a very bitter history marked by wars and tragedy) (V. 725 European forum, Nov. 2004)
- (20) *zbog čega ga* **Evropa** *izuzetno ceni i voli* (because of this, Europe exceptionally appreciates and loves him) (V. 730, 30 Dec. 2004)

Idiosyncrasy of *Balkan* in syntax and semantics observed in ex-Yugoslav media texts is, to be stated again, that the word can be used to denote a location, or an object which is to be characterised, described and affected by other participants of event, but is not used as an agentive subject of an active verb. This feature of *Balkan* is contrasted with that of *Evropa* in that the latter can function as an agentive subject, and the function to denote location is less notable than with the case of *Balkan* (frequency of the locative propositional *u Evropi* in total occurrence of *Evropa* is obviously lower than that of *na Balkanu* in total occurrence of *Balkan*). Cognitive linguists would claim that the word *Balkan* can be conceptualised as a ‘ground’, or a ‘landmark’ by Lagnecker, but is difficult to be conceptualised as a ‘figure’ or a ‘trajector’, while *Evropa* can be a ‘figure’ as well as a ‘ground’.

What makes *Balkan* behave like this? What is crucial for the different behaviour of *Balkan* and *Evropa*? Let us try to interpret this in terms of difference of saliency in ‘figure-ground’ opposition. A ‘ground’ designates a space where an event takes place but it does not take part in event as a participant. This feature of ‘ground’ is in harmony with its peripheral position in syntax as an adjunct. It may be enough, then, for a locus of

event not to be princely articulated but to be mentioned with its hypernym; to be represented by an alternative word with wider, more ambiguous meaning may be sufficient. *Balkan* in synecdoche of a 'whole-part relationship' stands for any part of it, and therefore it can be used as a 'signifiant' for any locality in the Balkans. Unlike 'ground', a 'figure', or an agentive subject in a syntactic term, is a core participant of an event that must be far more salient than a 'ground', and it should be especially so for recipients of informative texts. The entity in question is often requested to be specified. In this regards, the chance for *Balkan* to appear as an agentive subject must be restricted. After observing the polysemous character of this word, we are aware that *Balkan*, whenever used, stands for either a particular part of the Balkans as a hypernym, or signifies the whole Balkans as an entity. In either case, *Balkan* as an agentive clause subject might be possible only when activity and benefit of some part(s) of the Balkans would be consistent with those other part(s), and cooperation among the members of the Balkans would be secured with respect to the matter in question. However, such a case is hardly to be expected in the Balkans at this time, as it is a region with internal conflicts and opposition: the whole cannot be a consistent entity that acts for its own good, a part which lacks cooperative relationships with other part(s) cannot be represented by the whole. The specificity of the Balkans reflected in the syntactic feature of *Balkan* can be highlighted by contrasting with the current state of Europe and the usage of *Evropa*. As the presented examples with *Evropa* above reveal, *Evropa* denotes not only a geographic scope as is in the example (16), but also a political unit (ex. 17 as well as 13) and an economic unit or a market in the global economic context (ex. 18). In instance (19) *Evropa* is conceived as a historical entity and the usage of (20) suggests that *Evropa* signifies a civil society which is understood to have a common cultural value. *Evropa* is indeed, like *Balkan*, a word for a region consisting of many states with different nations and various historical backgrounds, but unlike *Balkan*, it can be a sign, the *signifié* of which is a political, economic and cultural entity institutionalized as EU.

We should notice, however, that the idiosyncrasy of the word *Balkan* so far observed is not inherent in this word. Circumstances that the (ex-)Yugoslav people are living in are transforming, and language changes along with society. If the time comes when ex-Yugoslav countries will find common interests among themselves and with other Balkan countries,

for example in the future course of EU integration, which is becoming conceivable, then the word *Balkan*, as long as it will keep being used, will have the potential to appear as an agentive subject as *Evropa* does in the current situation.

3. *Balkan* in Self-identification

Despite the negative, stigmatised implication attached to *Balkan* and its derivatives, as we have observed in the previous section, the ex-Yugoslav people use the word *Balkan* when they talk about places where they live or they are from, and where things related to them happen, *videlicet*, they use the word *Balkan* in self-reference or in self-identification contexts. To use the word *Balkan* in self-identification discourse is, stated alternatively, to articulate (intentionally or unintentionally) the belonging to the world which is called *Balkan*. What is then the sense of ‘belonging to *Balkan*’ like? It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with this question in full as it would require an examination from all angles, including historical, cultural and ethno-psychological. I therefore confine myself to give one example as a key to address this matter, and present a brief remark in relation to what is the *Balkan* identification.

Yugoslav rock songs have been revived recently in ex-Yugoslav countries. It’s not only the middle aged who remember the *dobra stara vremena* (good old times), but it’s also the younger generations without the clear memory of the time of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity) who enjoy *Yu-rock* music from the end of 1970s to the middle of 1980s. An old hit ‘Balkan’ by Azra, a Zagreb-based rock band, has been playing the lead in this *Yu-rock* revival scene (cf. Ugrešić 2003).

Why this song has been revived and favoured by the youth of ex-Yugoslav regions, both in Croatia and Serbia? It may be simply because, as a member of an amateur rock band in Zagreb told me (personal communication), that it is a simple, nice piece and easy to perform, but may be because what this song describes fits into the circumstances of post-war ex-Yugoslav regions. What seems to be the key is the passage: ‘We are Gypsy people cursed by fate’. Following this passage, probably those who have been interested in the Yugoslav cinema recall the Serbian film *Ko to tamo peva/Who’s Singing Over There* (Šijan [director] 1980). The movie is about a band of people including two Romany (Gypsy) boys,

who happened to travel together taking a bus bound for Belgrade; the date of 5 April 1941 is crucial. After a succession of comical and tragicomic incidents, towards the end of the movie one of travelers who dropped his wallet out of his trouser pocket while he was outside the vehicle finds his pocket empty. The Serbian (rather Yugoslav) fellow passengers definitely think that the Gypsy boys have stolen the wallet and start to violently beat them. While a scene which looks like a real *balkanska krčma* continues, the bus arrives at Belgrade the next morning (6 Apr. 1941), when the city is destined to be bombarded by the Nazi army. The bus is hit and so is the city, and the bus explosion indicates the death of the passengers. The movie ends with a scene of the two Gypsy boys coming out of the fumes after the explosion into the foreground of the screen, singing their Gypsy song. It may be not difficult to find an under-the-surface commonality between the message of this film and what Azra sings in 'Balkan', if we consider what the people in ex-Yugoslavia have gone through in their twentieth century history. Romanys (Gypsies) are for the Yugoslav people what the Yugoslav people are for 'someone' surrounding them; 'Gypsies' are entertaining companions at best, and inferior, second-class citizens who are often considered to be guilty for any disastrous incident. 'Gypsies' are disturbing factors in society which can be dangerous for the stability and order in the communities around them. Let us not enter into the question of what or who was 'someone near to come to menace' the Yugoslav youth at the time when Azra released this song, but it can be

'Balkan' (Štulić 1979, performed by Azra)

*jednog dana nema me da nikada ne dodjem
prijatelje koje znam ne poznajem kad prodjem
kao da me nikada na svijetu nije bilo
kao da me njezino tijelo nije htjelo
Balkane, Balkane, Balkane moj
budi mi silan i dobro mi stoj
mi smo ljudi cigani sudbinom prokleti
uvijek netko oko nas dodje pa nam prijeti
ni bendovi nisu visee kao sto su bili
moj se amaterski priprema da sviri
Balkane, Balkane, Balkane moj
budi mi silan i dobro mi stoj*

one day I do not exist as if I had never come
friends I know I don't recognise as I pass by
as if I have never existed in this world
as if her body didn't want me at all
Balkan, Balkan, my Balkan
be mighty and stand strong
we are Gypsy people cursed by fate
always someone near comes and threatens us
rock bands are no more as they were
my amature band is preparing to play
Balkan, Balkan, my Balkan
be mighty and stand strong

stated that the message of ‘Balkan’ of Azra jibes with circumstances that the people of ex-Yugoslavia think they are condemned to live in: they are teasing their ‘Gypsies’—internal enemies—when suddenly they find themselves at the mercy of ‘fate’ or some bigger power from outside.

Exposing the feeling of being ‘*prokleti sudbinom* (cursed by fate)’ appears to be a popular manner for the Balkan people when they want to express themselves: Azra sang it, another public figure from the Balkans, a Greek-born film director, Theo Angelopoulos tried to express it through his film work; he revealed it in his interview of *Vreme*, saying that he ‘is concerned about the Balkan matters’ since he was going through ‘*Balkan*’ as one body, and ‘He, i.e. a Greek-Albanian refugee boy in the film *Mia Aioniotita kai mia mera/Eternity And A Day* (Angelopoulos [director] 1998), is a symbol for cursedness (*ukletstvo*) of the Balkan space and its terrifying future’ (*Vreme*, No. 432, 30 Jan. 1999).

I do not maintain that people from and in the Balkans in contemporary Balkan societies are haunted by an old myth of *Balkan*, that it is a world cursed by fate, destined to be everlastingly bloodstained, nor do I assume that the Balkan world is identical for all those who identify themselves as ‘from the Balkans’. For example, in his talk as the first Man Booker International Prize winner, Albanian writer Ismail Kadaré (1936–) is reported to present himself as ‘a writer from a peripheral part of the Balkans which have been a long while proclaimed exclusively as notorious for all sort of malice: armed crash, civil wars, ethnic cleansing’ (*Slobodna Bosna*, No. 448, 16 June 2005). While describing himself as ‘one from the Balkans’, Kadaré must have been aware that once he expressed his solidarity with Albanian people, supporting NATO’s intervention in the Kosovo War to cease ‘the tragedy of Albanian inhabitants on Kosovo’, which inevitably disclosed his political position against Serbia. Thus, despite that he had been conscious of the fact that the Balkans are not unanimous but consist of disparate communities, each with a different make-up, he articulated the word *Balkan* to identify himself. The Balkan world in Kadaré’s mental representation must have been different from that in the mind of Angelopoulos; there may be as many Balkan worlds as number of people who are from the Balkans. None the less, there seems to be ‘a sense of Balkan commonality’, to quote Todorova’s expression again, restored, or to state correctly, developed anew throughout the 1990s and the first few years of twenty-first century, since the fall of communism and Yugoslavia through the

Yugoslav war to the present-day situation in which the ex-Yugoslav and other Balkan people are presented with a selection of their future, whether to stay in *balkanska krča* or to go forward to live together *na Evropski način*.

Articulation of a word with negative implications, such as *Balkan*, in self-identification discourse may be interpreted as irony, mingled with a protest against the Western stereotype and a touch of self-derision as well. It is possible to understand the strategy of the people from the Balkans to actively use *Balkan* in terms of what I would like to designate 'a collective feeling of resignation'. A Bulgarian playwright, Hristo Boytchev precisely describes this feeling in his play 'The Colonel Bird' (1996): after UN humanitarian aid, meant for the occupied zone in Bosnia, was dropped accidentally five hundred kilometres away from Bosnia, a person who found it elucidates this incident, stating that 'they (i.e. The UN) don't know the difference. It's all the Balkans to them. They were told to drop the stuff over the Balkans and they've done'. This view of 'it's all the Balkan', which is primarily an external one that lumps everything in the Balkans under the term of 'Balkan' and which has been incorporated into the self-identification procedure of the Balkan people, may partly explain why people from the Balkans, among which are ex-Yugoslav people, use the word *Balkan* in their self-identification.

All factors so far mentioned may account for the recent popularity of Azra's 'Balkan' and the *Balkan* self-identification; a sense of belonging to a community 'bound by fate', an irony intermingled with frustration and a touch of self-derision, and a feeling of resignation. Yet I should like to note that Azra's 'Balkan' carries another, positive implicature of *Balkan*, a feature of a robust, solid man who never emerges in political discourse nor in refined talks, which the ex-Yugoslav intellect is fond of engaging in. The message of 'Balkan' sounds to claim that however negatively nuanced, Balkan is a stronghold for those who are living in it, after all and above all, to be mighty and stand strong like Balkan, that is to be a Balkan.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have observed the feature of the word (sign) *Balkan* in lexicographical tradition, in syntax and semantics in contemporary media texts and in self-identification contexts of the ex-Yugoslav people. *Balkan*

is, as an example quoted in the section 2 (2) tells, *kudikamo složenija stvarnost* (far more puzzling reality). As is stated at the end of the same section, circumstances of the ex-Yugoslav countries are changing. Language and verbal performance change along with the changes in the real world. Usage and occurrence of *Balkan* will be a clue to understand the change of language performance and of the society which uses it, and to keep up with *Balkan* will be our future task.

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