

Blackbirds and black butterflies

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This paper challenges utopian accounts of the digital archive as a distributed, democratic realm in which information is liberated from material location. It argues that the proliferation of digital media has not diminished the importance of original documents, artefacts, monuments and historic places. On the contrary, the material archive remains central to the construction and defence of collective identities. What has changed is the relationship between place and communication: claims rooted in particular landscapes and objects can now circulate instantaneously through global media networks.

Drawing on Arjun Appadurai's concept of "culturalism", the paper shows how political movements deliberately mobilise selected histories, archaeological evidence, religious sites and cultural traditions. The destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya demonstrates the convergence of contested material evidence, Hindu nationalist politics, global media and violence. The conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo similarly reveal how monuments, monasteries, libraries and archives become both proofs of territorial entitlement and deliberate targets of destruction. These cases refute "primordialist" explanations that attribute conflict to inherited ancient hatreds. Ethnic identities are instead actively produced and politicised, often by elites and diasporic communities using historical narratives and modern communications.

The paper extends this argument to the United States, rejecting the assumption that violent culturalism belongs to supposedly backward or peripheral societies. The murder of James Byrd and the digital activities of white supremacist organisations show comparable connections between local identity, archival claims, racial mythology and globally circulating media. The Internet can therefore sustain participatory communication, but it can equally amplify exclusionary identities, historical distortions and organised hatred.

The archive of the digital age is thus simultaneously local and global: local because manuscripts, buildings, objects and landscapes remain the focus of contested possession; global because representations of them circulate without regard to distance. Earlier imperial archives displaced the violence of acquisition to remote colonial peripheries and presented their collections in sanitised metropolitan institutions. Digital communication collapses this distance, returning the violence embedded in claims to history, identity and possession to the former metropolitan centre. The "refigured archive" is consequently not a disembodied virtual repository, but a politically charged conjunction of material evidence, global information flows and recurrent violence.

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Mauritsstad, Brazil, 1636: “since the local moradores knew his taste and inclination, each one brought him whatever rare bird or beast he could find in the back-lands. There he brought parrots, macaws, jacifs, canindes, wading-birds, pheasants, guinea-fowl, ducks, swans, peacocks, turkeys, a great quantity of barnyard-fowls, and so many doves that they could not be counted ... in short there was not a curious thing in Brazil which he did not have ...” Father Manuel Calado.

Sarajevo, Bosnia, 1992: “black, sooty, still hot, butterflies ... books and papers aflame, the library’s treasure ... flying around and falling over distant parts of the city”. Ivan Lovrenovic.

I

In 1636, Prince Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen sailed from Amsterdam to take up his position as Governor of the Dutch West India Company colony in Brazil; a charge that included South America, the Caribbean and the West African coast. Maurits’s entourage included botanists, astronomers and artists and the Governor established a botanical garden into which he attempted to gather every species of plant and animal: “every kind of bird and animal that he could find ... parrots, macaws, jacifs, canindes, wading-birds, pheasants, guinea-fowl, ducks, swans, peacocks, turkeys, a great quantity of barnyard-fowls ... tigers, ounces, cissuarana, ant-bears, apes, quati, squirrel-monkeys, Indian boars, goats from Cape Verde, sheep from Angola, cutia, pagua, tapirs, wild boars, a great multitude of rabbits...” (Fr. Manuel Calado, in Boxer 1957:116). When Maurits returned to the Netherlands, he turned his palace at The Hague into a private museum of his Brazilian collections and, years later, sent a “curiosity cabinet” to Louis XIV in the hope that its contents would be used as models in the Gobelins tapestry factory and woven into a perpetual representation of his achievements (Smith 1938, Benisovich 1943).

Among Mautits’ entourage was a young illustrator, Zacharias Wagenaer. In his subsequent career, firstly with the Dutch West India Company and then with the Dutch East India Company, Wagenaer moved around the outer reaches of Europe’s colonial

world, seeing service in Japan and then as the Company's commander at the Cape of Good Hope (Spohr 1967). Here, his major task was the construction of the new Castle. The foundation stone was laid in 1666 and the Company's chronicler embellished the archive with a poem (Gray 1979):

"Thus more and more the kingdoms are extended,
Thus more and more are black and yellow spread.
Thus from the ground a wall of stone is raised,
On which the thundering brass can no impression make.
For Hottentots the walls are always earthen,
But now we come with stone to boast before all men,
And terrify not only Europeans, but also
Asians, Americans and savage Africans.
Thus holy Christendom is glorified,
Establishing its seat amidst the savage heathens,
We praise the great director and say with one another,
Augustus' dominion nor conquering Alexander,
Nor Caesar's mighty genius has ever had the glory
To lay a cornerstone at earth's extremest end!"

Today, the discovery of new things and the curation and distribution of knowledge of the world seem very different. Time and space - "earth's extremest end" - have been conquered, and digital images are dispersed across continents and oceans without the need for zoological collections, intermediaries such as artists, or the travails of tapestry-makers. Maurits's house in The Hague can be visited from anywhere through the World Wide Web, and Gobelins works can be rendered digitally on any computer screen.¹ It has been suggested that this new "media age" - the constant melee of communication and response across vast but inconsequential distances - is creating multiple, disseminated and decentred human subjects, a different sort of consciousness that has no need of "walls of stone" (Poster 1990, 1995).

What are the implications of this digital world for the concept of the archive? Presumably, Maurits had no doubt that he was collecting rare and valuable things that would be preserved and displayed as part of a record and history of endeavor and discovery, and generations of curators and archivists have been dedicated to this idea. The archive has been, above all else, a place of containment and safety, a mausoleum for the original, the rare and the exotic, a temple to erudition where civility and silence are expected. But now, at the turn of the millennium, things seem different. Archivists can be less certain that there is such a thing as an "original".² The British Library - as always a

¹ The Mauritshuis can be accessed through <http://www.nbt.nl>. An example of a digital Gobblins tapestry (the original is available for \$17000) can be found at <http://www.rodinagallery.com>.

² This is a problem of the last decade of the millennium. A survey of national libraries in different countries that was carried out in 1989 showed that few were actively involved in issues raised by electronic material, although it was recognized that a great deal of information was being lost (McCormick and Williamson, 1990). Ten years on, the situation is very different, with a widespread recognition that archiving dispersed

suitable monument to the times – has established a “digital library”, “the use of digital technologies to acquire, store, conserve, and provide access to information and material in whatever form it was originally published”. Digital documents are available on demand, anywhere at anytime, and are held in more than one place, with a provenance in more than one institution; the antithesis of the conventional archive.³ David Bearman (this volume) sees the distributed, electronic archive as the inevitable way of the future.

The concept of the digital world is firmly rooted in contemporary fantasy, whether this be the utopian vision of a new frontier, a post-bureaucratic civil society (Loader 1997) or the dystopian futures of cyberpunk – Neal Stephenson’s (1992) Hiro Protagonist racing through a virtual world to prevent the infocalypse. Such fantasies assume an “information society” in which the traditional archive and the tangible assemblages of treasures that it contains is an anachronism. Cyberspace is seen as a “virtual habitat” in which creative potential is realized and extended globally (Carter 1997). This is best represented in the work of one of the cyberworld’s patriarchs. Howard Rheingold’s *Virtual Reality* (1991) and *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (1993) have been extraordinarily influential in mapping a new paradise. For Rheingold, Virtual Reality is transformative, “a kind of new contract between humans and computers, an arrangement that could grant us great power, and perhaps change us irrevocably in the process” (Rheingold 1991: 386-387), while Virtual Communities are “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold 1993:5).

This vision is exemplified in the Whole Earth Lectronic Link (the WELL), which grew from the Whole Earth Catalog in the 1980s. In its own words, the WELL is “an online gathering place like no other – remarkably uninhibited, intelligent, and iconoclastic ... a cluster of electronic villages that live on the Internet, with denizens from all over the globe ... More than just another “site” or “home page,” The WELL has a sense of place that is palpable”.⁴ Visions such as these imply that such forms of computer-mediated communication make the old distinction between individual and community redundant because of the capacity of meeting individual and the community needs simultaneously. All will have access to this nirvana, which will be the “spirit of community” – “the subjective criterion of togetherness, a feeling of connectedness that confers a sense of belonging” (Foster 1997:29).

In this chapter, I take a different view. Starting with recent work that links the global flow of information and the construction of local identity as an inseparable connection, I argue

digital information poses many problems. For example, the issue of “non-tangible” forms of information was raised in the United Kingdom in a 1997 Department of Heritage consultation paper (Stoker 1997, Lyon 1997), has led to the establishment of the Nordic Digital Library Centre (Hedberg 1996), and has prompted legal revisions of legal deposit legislation in France (de Solan 1995, Vayssade 1995).

³ British Library Research and Innovation Centre; <http://portico.bl.uk/services/ric/legal/>.

⁴ www.well.com.

that the material evidence of the past is central to the ways in which identities are understood and maintained in today's global world. I want to show that the ethnic nationalisms that are increasingly a feature of the post-1989 world *inevitably* use and manipulate manuscripts, records, artefacts and architecture – either through conscious manipulation, or else because the varied records of the past trap us in identities that we cannot escape. The form of this refiguring of the archive tends towards a distinctive combination of local agency and global flows of information.

Unlike Bearman (this volume), who sees the distributed electronic archive as a means towards participatory democracy, I argue that the distinctive combination of local agency and digital media results in new sites of violence. Seventeenth century conquests and nineteenth century imperial possessions were a long way, in space and time, from Europe's metropolitan heartlands. Consequently the accessions of the great archives of empire were sanitized of the blood and violence that was often inseparable from their acquisitions. The galleries of the British Museum, for example, display treasures from Africa, South America and the East in reconstituted ethnographies; the mundane brutalities of conquest and dispossession are rarely represented. In the British Museum's collections are parts of bodies collected from around the world, including shrunken heads stored in brown cardboard boxes and available for study by *bona fide* researchers (Skotnes 1996). But this separation from the viscera of conquest depends on distance in time and space, allowing the illusion of a detached and objective "science of mankind". Now, the world economies of the past four centuries are being superseded by a global system, "an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale". As a consequence of the quantum increase in computer performance and the capacity and speed of telecommunications, space now organizes time (Castells 1996:92, 376). Distance is dead, and death seems to be returning to the centre, taking the form of ethnic violence, racism and hate politics across Europe and North America; what Arjun Appadurai (1996) has called the "heart of whiteness".

II

Maurits's archive of conquest was one of many that followed from Europe's colonial expansion, and from the transport of the exotic and rare from the perimeter of the known world to its core. Such zoological, botanical and ethnographic collections form one category in a typology that includes national archives, museums and libraries, local records and myriad special collections. Very often, such collections are stored and displayed in monumental buildings that themselves make references to earlier traditions of architecture and culture. In the "high nationalisms" of modernity, autonomous countries had national archives, libraries and museums in their capitals. Together, such treasure houses of the past formed a vital part of national patrimonies, focal points for learning and discovery, and part of the way in which the "imagined community" of the nation state was itself curated and sustained (Anderson 1991). The emblem of knowledge about the past was the respected scholar closeted in a gilded reading room and shielded by a neo-classical portico.

Today, the nation-state is weakened by globalization and myriad expressions of collective identity: “caught between these opposing trends, the nation-state is called into question, drawing into its crisis the very notion of political democracy, predicated upon the historical construction of a sovereign, representative nation-state ... subjects, if and when constructed, are not built any longer on the basis of civil societies, that are in the process of disintegration, but as prolongation of communal resistance” (Castells 1997:2, 11). As a result, it seems simplistic or misleading to map “national patrimonies”. Archives and artefacts are often dispersed, and circulate in global systems of loan, exchanges and markets. Then again, the archive’s treasure is often a simulacrum, simultaneously everywhere in mass media and digital images. There is a parallel dispersal of information, opinion and interpretation; as Edward Said has observed, today everyone can be an organic intellectual (Said 1994). Transnational media feed into the complex construction of local identities, and are linked in turn with large scale movements of people. Contemporary diasporas claim the archive of the homeland and adapt and modify it to local circumstances in faraway places, while local ethnographies gain authority from universal claims for recognition (Hall, S., 1990, Appadurai 1996). In turn – and this is the particular point of interest in this chapter – this has implications for the concept of place, and for the material authority of records of the past.

This can be illustrated by means of one striking example of the connection between global media flows, issues of local identity and competing, violent, claims for possession of the material evidence of history – the destruction of a mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya, the consequential violence, and world-wide attention. The rise to prominence of India’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began with a sacred pilgrimage through the continent to Ayodhya, birthplace of the god-king Rama. This Rath Yatra was a media event in which aspirations for religious revival – Hindutva – were focussed on the outrage that Rama’s birthplace had, for the last four centuries, been the site of a mosque (Malkani 1998). Appeals for the demolition of the Babri Masjid, and the construction of a temple for Lord Rama, were based on interpretations and counter-interpretations of archaeological evidence (Mandal 1993). Two years later – on 6 December 1992 – the mosque was torn apart, stone by stone, by a crowd fired with religious fervor; an event that received huge media coverage. More than 3 000 people died in the subsequent riots between Hindu and Muslim communities across India. Once in power in New Delhi, the Bharatiya Janata Party was committed to Hindutva in the spirit of Lord Rama, asserting Indian sovereignty with a series of nuclear tests that caused a worldwide political crisis. Meanwhile, Hindu revivalism was promoted throughout the world, and particularly through the Web. An example is the electronic journal *Hinduism Today*, based at the Himalayan Academy on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.⁵ “As the new millennium approaches, the world’s oldest religion is donning shining new clothes. The age-old Hindu philosophy passed from mouth to mouth in tiny villages across India is now going high-tech ... bringing ... every aspect of Sanatana Dharma to millions of Internet users across the world” (Melwani 1998). In New Delhi, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) challenged BJP political expediency by announcing that

⁵ http://www.hinduismtoday.kauai.hi.us/ht_home.html. For a South African based Hindu site, see <http://www.hinduism.co.za>.

massive columns for a reconstructed temple – replicas claimed to be based on authoritative archaeological evidence - were being assembled in secret workshops in preparation for transport to Ayodhya; a campaign that rested on its appeal to a global media (Miglani 1998).

The example of Ayodhya shows clearly how global media (broadcast coverage of the Rath Yatra and mosque destruction, and Internet sites), the political manipulation of the past (the Bharatiya Janata Party's use of Hindu tradition), the materiality of the archive (the vital importance of the Temple site, the visceral action of the mosque's destruction, and the appeal of the announcement of its secret reconstruction) and violence (the thousands of deaths that followed the assault on Babri Masjid) are all part of a common nexus. Both Arjun Appadurai and Manuel Castells have argued that it is the connection between global media, large scale movements of people and the contestation of interests and identities on a local scale that renders the late capitalist world so singularly unstable (Appadurai 1996, Castells 1996, 1997, 1998). And, just as diasporic Hindus assert an ethnic identity through claims to Rama's birthplace, so other ethnic identities are asserted through recourse to the past: Croats who have long lived in South America or the US; Algerian "guest workers" in Germany; Chinese in Indonesia or Australia; white South Africans in Seattle, California or New Zealand.

Responses to Ayodhya and other flashpoints where ancient rights, traditions and monuments are the ammunition in contemporary political struggles inevitably lead to attributions of primordialism; the conclusion that such conflicts are the consequence of age-old rivalries that have been inherited through the generations. Such assumptions are deeply rooted, and continually sustained in contemporary media: Shakespeare's Montagues and Capulets, revived in futuristic setting in Hollywood's *Romeo and Juliet*; the medieval horror of Africa, canonized by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1971) and sustaining the assumption of the inevitability of genocide in Rwanda. Indeed, the reach and authority of global media allow such assumptions to be re-routed as fact, sustaining the political agendas they are simultaneously reporting. News media present the politics of Ayodhya as an expression of an inevitable clash of ancient and essential titans – Hindu India versus Muslim India. The BJP and many Hindu Web sites do the same, essentialising Hindutva as the expression of age old ethnic identities that must always move towards a pure form of their expression. But historical analysis shows how Hindu and Muslim India were colonial constructs – the colonial bureaucratic simplification of thousands of local identities for the purposes of administration and control (Appadurai 1996). And more probing journalism has shown that, before the arrival of the Rath Yatra in 1990, the town of Ayodhya accommodated many faiths, temples and mosques, and was relatively untroubled by the domes of the Babri Masjid over the place where Rama was rumored to have been born (Nandini Rao, personal communication). Six years after the destruction of Babri Masjid, local Hindus and

Muslims were attending one another's weddings in Ayodhya, and blaming the riots on the political agitation of outsiders (Iijima 1998).⁶

III

The Ayodhya story reveals the particular relationship between the mobilization of identity in the context of global media flows and the materiality of the archive in localized claims to land and its history. The extent and impact of changes in the representation of heritage are further illustrated in the contested history that prefigured the outbreak of the war between Yugoslavia and NATO in Kosovo in early 1999.

The Balkans have long stood for the backward, primitive and barbarian within Europe. Maria Todorova has argued that "Balkanism" evolved independently from Said's Orientalism, with a Christianity that was opposed to Islam but was also non-Western: "geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as 'the other', the Balkans became, in time, the object of a number of externalized political, ideological and cultural frustrations and have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the 'European' and 'the west' has been constructed. Balkanism conveniently exempted 'the west' from charges of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism and Christian intolerance: the Balkans, after all, are in Europe, they are white and they are predominantly Christian" (Todorova 1994:455).

One of the more prominent revivals of Balkanism has been Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1994). Described as "a dreadful mix of unfounded generalizations, misinformation, outdated sources, personal prejudices and bad writing" (Cooper 1993:592), Kaplan's travelogue was, in its turn, a revisiting of Rebecca West's Balkan journey of 1937. Kaplan carried West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* with him, and reveled in his perception of a centuries-old continuity of experience. Here, Kaplan describes the archive of thirteenth century paintings and frescoes in the Church of the Apostles in Pec: "The workings of my eyes taught me the first canon of national survival: that an entire world can be created out of very little light. It took only another minute or so for the faces to emerge out of the gloom – haunted and hunger-ravaged faces from a preconscious, Serb past, evincing a spirituality and primitivism that the West knows best through the characters of Dostoyevsky. I felt as though I were inside a skull

⁶ Asking questions about the manner in which the archive is appropriated in the contemporary world leads to a reevaluation of the concept of culture. In rejecting the idea that "culture" is a thing in itself, Appadurai suggests the concept of "culturalism", "the conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics ... frequently associated with extraterritorial histories and memories, sometimes with refugee status and exile, and almost always with struggles for stronger recognition from exiting nation states or from various transnational bodies" (Appadurai 1996:15). Culturalist movements are "self-conscious about identity, culture and heritage, all of which tend to be part of the deliberate vocabulary of culturalist movements as they struggle with states and other culturalist forces and groups" – "deliberate, strategic and populist mobilization of cultural material" (Appadurai 1996:15).

into which the collective memories of a people had been burned. Dreams took shape, hallucinations: St. Nicholas, with his purple robe and black, reminding eyes at the back of my head; St. Sava, Serbia's patron saint and founder of this very church, who descended through the watery void to proffer gifts of mercy and inspiration; the Ascended Christ, a dehumanized peasant-god beyond the last stage of physical suffering, more fearful than any conqueror or earthly ideology. Apostles and saints intermingled with medieval Serbian kings and archbishops. They all appeared through a faith's distorting mirror: with elongated bodies and monstrous hands and heads. Many of the saint's eyes had been scratched out. According to a peasant belief, the plaster and dye used to depict a saint's eyes can cure blindness" (Kaplan 1994: xx).

Ten years later, these same medieval frescoes and icons could be visited through the Web. By 1998, every monastery in the Kosovo diocese of Raska and Prizren had its Web site and gallery of images. Visoki Decani Monastery, for example, described its history (beginning in 1327) and its incomparable art and architecture. The twenty black-robed members of its brotherhood were introduced and their daily routine described: prayer from 5.00am, individual obediences, kitchen duties, breadmaking, iconography, farmwork. The monks' current project was publishing, using computers, scanners and the Internet: "in this way the brotherhood is trying to revive the ancient tradition of the monastery scriptoria where hundreds of books were written and translated".⁷

But can a manuscript collection be reduced to a virtual scriptorium? Do the digital obediences of Visoki Decani's monks replace the experience of seeing the image of Christ ascended by the light of hundreds of candles in an atmosphere laden with beeswax? In Rhinegold's world, the answer is emphatically "yes" – there are potentially no limits to the sensory experiences of Virtual Reality. But Visoki Decani's monks were protected by young Yugoslav army conscripts who guarded the monastery from the Kosovo Liberation Army and the surrounding Muslim communities under the pall of imminent conflict; there was no digital escape from an AK-47, as the months ahead would show.⁸ As with Ayodhya, the treasures of the local site were of vital importance – and the violence was palpable.

Kosovo is at the heart of Serbian nationalism; mythologized as the place of defeat by the Ottoman Turks in 1389, the stain of Muslim occupation and the core of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Fine 1983, 1987, Malcolm 1998). Religious and historic places in Kosovo were the ground zero of Serbia's nationalist politics. At the same time, Serb nationalists were dispersed throughout the world, maintaining a fierce loyalty to the idea of "greater Serbia". Local identities in far away places were formed around the idea of Serbia – its history, memories of "home" and imagination of the past and future. Such was the Serbian Unity Congress of the USA, an "international organization representing Serbs and friends of Serbs in the diaspora, committed to ensuring the continuation of the

⁷ <http://www.decani.yunet.com/edecani.html>

⁸ "Marooned Serb monk calls for Kosovo ceasefire" Times (London) 29 April 1998.

Serbian heritage”.⁹ In the run-up to the 1999 war, the SUC was lobbying in Washington, organizing fund raising events and conventions and running a large Web site. This featured “electronic exhibitions” of Serbian culture, including coinage (Bozinovic 1998) and Medieval material culture: “This unique electronic exhibition organized by the Serbian Unity Congress presents, for the first time, the attire, jewelry and ornaments of the Serbian kings and czars in the 12th through 15th centuries. Symbolic significance, political influences and pure fashion can all be traced as they intermingle in this fascinating presentation featuring 24 pictures with careful reconstructions of masterpiece frescoes found in churches and monasteries throughout the Serbian lands” (Vuleta 1998). The SUC’s electronic galleries led directly to Slobodan Milosevic’s Belgrade and attempts to whitewash atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina that were reminiscent of Nazi propaganda (Dabic and Lukic 1997), while the very tangible situation of Visoki Decani’s virtual scriptorium in Kosovo’s impoverished and bitterly contested landscape pointed to the vital connection between the virtual and material worlds.

As with Ayodhya, this example illustrates the differing nuances that “place” and its materiality can have. In the months before the war, the Yugoslav army was defending sacred sites against the Kosovo Liberation Army – a form of action that invited a line of association through epic (or notorious) events back to the beginning of history. But claims to rights over places that may be thousands of kilometers distant (and perhaps never visited) were also central to the construction of networks of “local subjects” in a world of global media flows and large scale migrations (Appadurai 1996). The result – both within embattled Serb communities inside Yugoslavia and among those who saw themselves as ethnically Serb in New York, San Francisco and other cities around the world – was ethnographies of neighbourhoods in which the archive of documents, records and historic artefacts (and their simulacra) were deployed within landscapes, domestic architecture and urban structures. This interpretation insists on an ineluctable connection between the material world and the myriad play of circulating media representations. It is the opposite of the transcendental fantasy of the digital subject, ever circulating and materializing at will in different parts of cyberspace.

Serbian and Croatian nationalisms stem from one major distinction – religion. This has led to a continual emphasis on the differing physical experiences of Catholicism and the Orthodox church, expressed and constantly recreated through art, architecture, iconography, and the divergent experiences of daily belief and worship (Malcolm 1996). Bogdan Denitch, a Serbian political scientist who divides his time between Croatia and New York, makes the point that Serbo-Croatian (or Croato-Serbian) was standardized in the mid-nineteenth century and is spoken by Muslims, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbians. Prior to the disintegration of “old” Yugoslavia in 1990, 80% of its population

⁹ <http://www.suc.org>). The SUC’s “Blago Fund”, based in San Francisco, has as its goal “to preserve and promote Serbian treasures in a way that ties together the past, present and future” http://www.suc.org/Blago/Blago_mission.html.

spoke the same language and, within local areas, shared the same dialects irrespective of religion (Denitch 1994).¹⁰

These perceptions of difference have been fervently held for many years. However, the generally held belief – fuelled by Kaplan and by the archive of Balkanist writing before him, and claimed as a matter of record by the *New York Times* (Appadurai 1996) – that the war between Croatia and Serbia and the sequential Bosnian conflict were the consequence of an upwelling of ingrained ethnic character does not stand closer scrutiny.¹¹ In the last Yugoslav census, more than 25% of the population were in intermarried families while a significant proportion of urban communities declined to describe themselves with the ethnic identifiers of Muslim, Orthodox or Catholic (Denitch 1994, Malcolm 1996). In contrast to the concept of primordial inevitability, there is clear evidence that ethnic affiliations and historical referents were overtly manipulated in struggles for power in the vacuum that had existed since Josip Tito's death in 1980.

In her definitive account of the destruction of Yugoslavia, Susan Woodward (1995) shows how economic reforms forced on Yugoslavia by the international community, and particularly by the International Monetary Fund, destabilized the movement towards multi-party elections. As Todorova (1994:478) has shown, Balkanism had taken on a new tint after the end of the Second World War: “a new facet of the image of the Balkans was added ... when a new demon, a new other, communism, was grafted onto it”. Consequently, Yugoslav nationalists were championed by the West in their opposition to reformist Communists, strengthening the position of political figures such as Slobodan Milosevic (Woodward 1995). Milosevic – Serbia's leader through the war with Croatia and the Bosnian conflict, and subsequently President of the “new” Yugoslavia – established his power base in 1986 as the leader of the Serbian League, manipulating Orthodox suspicion of Islam and Serbian historical pride to oppose Kosovar demands for greater autonomy. In Bogdan Denitch's view, this ignited a chain reaction of nationalist politics led from the “top”: “Albanian self-assertion in the Province of Kosovo led to Milosevic's awakening of the Serbian nationalist populist genie in the mid-1980s. The fear-ridden reaction of the leaders of the other republics to Serbian bullying tactics had encouraged the reactive growth of varying nationalisms in Slovenia, Croatia, and even

¹⁰ Kosovo was an autonomous province in “old” Yugoslavia, and is still at the time of writing a province in Serbia, albeit under NATO supervision following the 1999 war. Kosovars are overwhelmingly Muslim and speak Albanian. Separatist aspirations have focused on the rights of Kosovo's people to be educated in Albanian rather than Serbo-Croatian. Bogdan Denitch is a Serb who has long been resident in the US as an academic at a university in New York. Denitch spends his summers in Croatia on the Island of Brac, and was one of the founders of an anti-nationalist political party standing against Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia. He is both a perceptive analyst of ethnic politics, and an example of the way in which the international diaspora related to local issues.

¹¹ Noel Malcolm, in his history of Bosnia; “the biggest obstacle to all understanding of the conflict is the assumption that what has happened in that country is the product – natural, spontaneous and at the same time necessary – of forces lying within Bosnia's own internal history. That is the myth which was carefully propagated by those who caused the conflict, who wanted the world to believe that what they and their gunmen were doing was not done by them, but by impersonal an inevitable historical forces beyond anyone's control” (Malcolm 1996:xix).

among Bosnian Muslims and in Macedonia. This in turn provoked predictable fears of the minorities about the increasing nationalism of the major national groups in their own republics. There were no instruments at the federal center that could have effectively mediated between the republics. The fat was well and truly in the fire ... Rather than being caused by a popular upsurge of national hate from below, the civil war was the result of policy decisions from the top combined with the all-too-effective use of the mass media, especially television. I claim this in the teeth of the journalistic insistence by many observers that there is something almost biologically imprinted that, for example, would make Serbs hate Croats and vice versa” (Denitch 1994: 61-62).

The central importance of Kosovo to Serbian nationalism rests on the myth of the “Field of the Blackbirds”. Serbian epic poetry and folklore record that Prince Lazar, elected leader of the Serbian nobility, was converted to piety by Elija (in the form of a grey falcon) and built an Orthodox church at Kosovo Polje on the eve of battle that was lost to the Ottoman Turks on June 28 1389 (Malcolm 1996). Hence the doubly inscribed significance of Kosovo to Serbian nationalism: the site of the battlefield where humiliation at Muslim hands must be avenged, and the place where fourteenth century monasteries preserve a direct line, in their art and architecture, to a proud and independent medieval kingdom. The six hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje was marked in 1989 by the culmination of a celebration that had started a full year earlier. A funeral procession of Knez Lazar’s disinterred coffin traveled through every town and village in Serbia, drawing “huge, black-clad crowds of wailing mourners at every spot” (Kaplan 1994:38; Malcolm 1996).¹² This culminated in the battlefield ceremony: “in the courtyard of the monastery at Gracanica (south of Pristina), while people queued to pay their devotions to the Prince’s bones inside, stalls sold icon-style posters of Jesus Christ, Prince Lazar and Slobodan Milosevic side by side. At the ceremony on the battlefield Milosevic was accompanied by black-robed metropolitans of the Orthodox Church, singers in traditional Serbian folk costumes, and members of the security police in their traditional dress of dark suits and sunglasses...” (Malcolm 1996:213).

Similarly, contemporary Croatian nationalism is constructed from a deep history given form by sites, monuments and the material archive of the past. A palimpsest of a rich Adriatic archaeology and architecture – Roman Dalmatia, overlain by early Christian sites and medieval towns and villages – supports the remembrance of tenth century kingship. This is captured in the life and work of Nenad Jeptanovic, a Croatian born in Chile, educated at Princeton and now returned to the Adriatic island of Brac (and living in the same village where Bogdan Denitch spends his summer months). A paragon of Said’s contemporary organic intellectual, Jeptanovic is curator of a family mausoleum built in 1927 at the behest of Francisco Petrinovic, Jeptanovic’s uncle made rich by

¹² Noel Malcolm points out that the battle of Kosovo Polje was less decisive than Serbian epic poetry recalls; both sides suffered heavy losses, and the battle itself left the conflict unresolved. The eventual Serb defeat was due to the Turks’ ability to follow up with repeated attacks on Serbia (Malcolm 1996:20).

Chilean phosphates.¹³ The mausoleum's sculptures express the essence of Croatian historical identity: the unity of Greek and Roman influences, the principles of Catholicism and the struggle between good and evil. Its dome is capped by a bronze sculpture of the Archangel Michael, and its vaults house the coffins of Petrinovic family members, including the mummified corpse of Francisco himself, returned to Brac in 1961, a decade after his death. The mausoleum is set on an ocean promontory, backed by terraced vineyards that predate the Roman empire, a medieval village and church and the beach where four teenage patriots were executed by Italian soldiers half a century ago. Jeptanovic uses this richly material setting as a stage – a living archive that expresses his sense of place, history and identity. He is obsessed with the graves that surround the mausoleum, and with graveyard maintenance; how, after the passage of years, bones in a sarcophagus are swept aside to make way for new corpses and how the bones leach into the limestone soil. As such, he is the curator of his past written across the landscape, and of his own grave.¹⁴

Serb and Croat nationalisms came into direct conflict after elections in 1990, resulting in a war that was to last from 1991 to 1995. Milosevic's nationalist counterpart and bitter rival in Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, won a substantial victory at the polls and promulgated a constitutional change that declared Croatia a "state of Croats", rather than a "state of Croatians". This change of a single word signified the final abandonment of "old" Yugoslavia's multi-ethnic politics and prompted a revolt by Croatian Serbs in the Krajina region that was backed by Serbia (in the guise of the "new" Yugoslavian army). The war that followed resulted in some three hundred thousand Catholic refugees who fled to other parts of Croatia, and about the same number again of Orthodox Croatians who moved into exile in Serbia. The ceasefire agreement specified that only ethno-religious groups would be recognized in negotiations, contributing immensely to the political myth of primordialism that had been carefully nurtured by nationalist leaders on both sides (Denitch 1994).

Later in 1992, the focus of conflict shifted to Bosnia. Bosnia had been conquered by the Turkish army in 1463, and subsequently many Bosnians had converted to Islam, often to improve their social, legal and economic status within the Ottoman Empire (Malcolm 1996). Islamic communities dominated major towns such as Sarajevo and Mostar, which thrived under Ottoman rule (although there were prosperous Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish minorities). Changes in the system of land tenure had a huge impact on the countryside. The earlier, military-feudal system, in which both Christians and Muslims could be landowners, was replaced by a system of hereditary estates, almost all owned by Muslims and on which the majority of peasants were Christian. Through the years, the major causes of conflict in Bosnia had not been religious, or the result of "ancient ethnic

¹³ For the complex history of Croat nationalism and the emergence of the concept of Yugoslavia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, see Malcolm 1996, Chapter 12.

¹⁴ Nenad Jeptanovic, "Mausoleum of the Family Petrinovic in Supetar, Island of Brac" (photocopy), and personal communication, May 1998. The mausoleum's sculptures were by Thomas Rosandic, one of Croatia's foremost sculptors, who carved his own face in the figure of Christ crucified.

hatreds”, but economic; the resentment of a mainly Christian peasantry towards Muslim landlords and Muslim administrators and merchants in the principal cities (Malcolm 1996). Within Bosnia’s cities – and in common with other parts of the former Yugoslavia – there had been increasing secularization, and by the late 1980s 30% of marriages in urban districts were “mixed”: For many rural Muslims, and almost all urban ones, being Muslim consisted of a set of cultural traditions: “Muslim names, circumcision, baklava and the celebration of Ramazan Bajram, getting a godparent to cut a one-year-old child’s hair, a preference for tiny coffee cups without handles, a sympathy for spiders and various other traditional practices, the origins of which are frequently unknown to those who practice them” (Sorabji 1992:5-6, quoted by Malcolm 1996:222).

Rather than being an ethnic inevitability, the destruction of Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 was a further consequence of western support for nationalist leaders, combined with political manipulation by the Serbian government. Following initial engagement by Serbian security forces and volunteers, serving to mobilize Bosnian Serbs, the Yugoslav army withdrew from Bosnia claiming that the conflict was an inevitable civil war based on ethnic rivalry, playing into western belief in the theory of “ancient hatreds”. The pattern of European intervention helped enormously. The Vance-Owen Plan of October 1992 envisaged ethnically-defined “autonomous provinces”, essentially similar to South African Bantustans, and insisted on an arms embargo which prevented the multicultural Bosnian government from resisting Serbian expansionism (Malcolm 1996, Woodward 1995).

The re-invention of Croatian, Serbian and Muslim ethnicity by rival power blocs in the wake of Tito’s multi-ethnic Yugoslavia was facilitated by the manipulation of a wealth of material symbols, records and the tangible evidence of centuries of history. The use of mass media – newspapers and, particularly, state controlled television services – depended critically on the sensory presence of history, the visual and tactile presence of the archive in the everyday experience of the people. This is not to suggest the action of some false consciousness – a media brainwashing at the hands of an evil genius. On the contrary - the particular power of the tangible archive is to make the claims of history seem everywhere in their evidence, and incontrovertible in their logic. The political direction of “invented tradition” may be given by a Tadjman or a Milosevic, but its success depends on organic intellectuals such as Nenad Jeptanovic, who will recreate their sense of identity on a daily basis in the fabric of the landscape, urban architecture and sacred books and relics in the local museum and church, reinforced by shared experiences in cafes, political meetings and Sunday sacraments.

An inevitable corollary of celebrating an identity that is rooted in the archive of manuscripts, records and architecture is the belief that competing claims, passionately denied, can only be defeated if the archive is restored to purity. As Bearman (this volume) has noted, most people see in the archive as the residence of “truth”, and so it follows that its contents will be the popular benchmark for claims of the veracity of identity. From the first weeks of the conflict between Croatia and Serbia, “ethnic

cleansing” was more than driving communities into exile. In the border town of Vukovar, rival ethnic nationalisms escalated as harassment, attacks on individuals and, particularly, damage to houses. In the summer of 1991, the town was besieged by the Serbian army. Some 30 000 Croats fled into exile. The Eltz Manor House, which housed the Vukovar Municipal Museum, was destroyed and the art gallery and other museums in the town extensively damaged. Systematic shelling by Serbian artillery reduced most of the historical precinct to rubble. Many of the surviving art works, archaeological collections and archives were stolen, and are believed to be in collections in Belgrade and other parts of Serbia; some have been offered for sale in Belgrade markets (Denitch 1994; Pavic 1997). Despite counter claims by organizations such as the Serbian Unity Congress attributing the beginning of ethnic cleansing to the Croatian Democratic Union (Dabic and Lukic 1997), it is clear that, in this first major exchange of the war, the Yugoslav army and the volunteer militia were intent on wiping away the historical traces of a Croat presence from the banks of the Danube.

Buildings and archives continued to be specific targets as the war continued. Branka Sulc, Director of Croatia’s Museum Documentation Centre, claims this as a “scorched earth” strategy, an attack on “the Croatian National identity”: “...the systematic destruction and damage was inflicted not only on historical town units, but also on sacral buildings, traditional architecture – especially villages, archaeological sites, entire cultural landscapes, libraries and museums. The inventories of churches, museums and private collections – that for the most part form the reference points of collective memory – were destroyed and plundered...” (Sulc 1997:14). In October 1991 the first Serbian air raids on Zagreb’s upper town – the historical quarter of the city - resulted in damage to historic buildings and museums. In the same autumn, the Yugoslav navy moved along Croatia’s Adriatic coast, first shelling Diocletian’s Palace, a fourth century World Heritage Site celebrated by Croatian nationalists for the association with the glories of Rome, and then moving south to the thirteenth century city of Dubrovnik, which was to remain under siege for a year (Vinterhalter 1997).¹⁵

Those who experienced this war first hand, or who have written about it, describe a conflict far removed from the Hollywood stereotype of high-tech scientific attack on distant targets, although Hollywood has indeed been closely implicated. In the play between locality and global media, focussed attacks on the archives of arcane histories have been mingled with the paraphernalia and memorabilia of transcontinental imagery. Robert Kaplan’s description of Albania in 1990 well captures the mix. Oxcarts were driven by shaven-headed soldiers, women tended wheat and tobacco fields with shovels

¹⁵ War damage in Croatia has yet to be fully assessed, but has been claimed to include damage to more than 60 museums and galleries. Inventories of war damage are compiled by the Museum Documentation Centre (Pavic 1997), but it is not clear to what extent these records are an accurate representation of what happened, and to what extent they are anti-Serbian propaganda. However, from an early stage in the conflict, it was argued that destruction of cultural property on this scale was not just the “collateral damage of warfare”, but rather the “assassination of culture”, following the 1948 Genocide Convention and other international protocols. It has been argued that such “cultural genocide” should be formally recognized by the United Nations Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (Hodder 1996).

and scythes, the air polluted with factory fumes – and a family watched *Dynasty* and CNN (through a Greek frequency) on an ancient black-and-white Russian television. Throughout the war, both the Croatian and Serbian governments maintained a tight hold on all media, and particularly television (Maass 1996). The consequence has been a material expression that encapsulates the global and the local. Many of the direct attacks on civilians and their culture was carried out by volunteer paramilitary units under the protection of the professional army. These militias were often made up of unemployed youth and other marginalized groups - “the same alienated groups from which xenophobic skinheads and soccer gangs have been recruited in Western Europe” (Denitch 1994: 10). Serbian Chetniks adopted long hair and beards, peasant caps and daggers in reference to past struggles.¹⁶ Serbian Volunteers, organized by Belgrade gangsters, chose US style camouflage costumes and were clean shaven with the exception of mustaches, and were strongly influenced by American Vietnam movies. Croat reservists adopted Cherokee roaches and shaved heads, with black headbands, Rambo-style. French and German skinhead mercenaries were formed as a black-shirt legion (Denitch 1994). As the next Balkan conflict began to escalate, the Kosovo Liberation Army was reported as fashioning its identity on Stalinist Albania and Mussolini’s fascist blackshirts (Schork 1998). Global images – a deadly cyberpunk fantasy – had been brought to bear on the specifics of local histories: Knez Lazar’s tragic piety, the Emperor Diocletian’s retirement to grow cabbages in Dalmatia, the Vukovar museum’s assertion of Croat history on Serbia’s doorstep.

In 1992, the epicentre of conflict shifted to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Again there were repeated attacks on cultural property. “It is as if the protagonists, unable to strangle the last living representatives of what they see as an alien culture, seem to think that with the destruction of place, an architectural cleansing, as it were, they can eradicate the people who inhabit that place ... Like the horrifying rapes of women ... these are violent efforts to remake the world in another image. Like the women of Bosnia, for many of whom the preservation of their traditional culture and the creation of home is an essential role, so too architecture creates home, represents memory, and preserves culture. Without minimizing the scale of human suffering, this attempt to destroy architecture, to annihilate place, like the violence against the women, is criminal warfare and cultural genocide” (Adams, 1993: 389). A young Muslim man, after his 500 year old mosque had been destroyed, said: “it’s not that my family was burned down, but it’s my foundation that burned. I was destroyed” (Hodder 1996).

¹⁶ The Chetniks were formed by a Yugoslav army colonel, Draza Mihailovic, as a Serbian royalist opposition to the German invasion of 1941; the name recalls bandit heroes of earlier Serbian history. Elements in the Chetnik movement argued for a “Greater Serbia”, including land all the way to the Adriatic, and that this territory should be “cleansed” of Croats and Muslims, who should be expelled to Turkey or Albania. The Chetnik resistance was opposed by Tito’s partisan resistance movement. After the formation of communist Yugoslavia, Chetniks were seen as fascist (Malcolm 1996). Consequently, the Chetnik revival recalls epic Serbian nationalism, guerilla resistance, fascism, and rejection of Yugoslav modernism – a potent and contradictory bundling together of diverse historical referents.

There were specific attacks on archives – libraries, manuscript holdings, museums and other cultural institutions. This applied as much in the cities – Sarajevo, Mostar – as in the towns and villages, and it has been estimated that the cadastral registers, waqf documents and parish records of more than 800 Muslim and Croat communities have been destroyed by Serbian nationalists (Riedlmayer 1995), and that more than 1200 religious and cultural sites have been destroyed or damaged, including mosques, the historic centres of many towns, Muslim graves and pilgrimage sites, Catholic churches, monasteries, cemeteries and Jewish religious buildings. More than 20000 civilian homes have been reduced to rubble.¹⁷

Attacks on cultural property were carried out by nationalists on all sides, reinforcing Manuel Castells' (1997) argument that nationalism attempts to obviate the conditions of the present by means of constructing a shared interpretation of the past for use as a political instrument to mold the future. Mostar – Bosnia-Herzegovina's second city – had grown from a small village to a prosperous town under the Ottoman Empire. Its focal point – and the key to its economic prosperity – was the bridge over the gorge of the River Neretva; Stari Most ("old bridge"), built in 1566 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Through the 1980s the historic core of Mostar had been conserved and restored in a world renowned project run by an inter-ethnic group of Croats, Serbs and Muslims, winning the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1986. Such a project was anathema to nationalists intent on eradicating all traces of other histories from Bosnia. Much of Mostar's historic precinct was destroyed by systematic shelling in November 1993 (Ozkan 1994). Stari Most, widely recognized as a symbol of Bosnian unity and culture, was blown up by the Croatian army (Woodward 1995).¹⁸

In Sarajevo itself, the pattern of Serbian shelling suggests that libraries and museums were specifically targeted for destruction; surrounding buildings were often left intact. In the summer of 1992 Serb forces bombarded the National Museum. Two hundred thousand volumes were rescued under sniper fire, including the fourteenth century Sarajevo Haggadah, brought to Sarajevo in the fifteenth century by Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition, and considered one of Bosnia's principle cultural treasures. The building was badly damaged by shells, and the Museum's director was killed while arranging for plastic sheeting to protect what was left of the collections (Riedlmayer 1995). In May 1992, the Serbs attacked Sarajevo's Oriental Institute with phosphorous grenades, weapons designed to maximize damage by fire. This time, the entire holdings were destroyed, including 5263 bound manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew and Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian in Arabic script, as well as tens of thousands of Ottoman-era

¹⁷ Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Washington Embassy; <http://www.bosnianembassy.org>.

¹⁸ "Damaged or destroyed Islamic objects in Mostar", <http://www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/mostar/mostar.html>. During 1997, blocks from the destroyed Mostar Bridge were hoisted from the Neretva River by a Hungarian military unit, part of the international stabilization force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The last block was bedecked in flowers and raised in a public ceremony. An attempt will be made to rebuild the bridge; "Efforts to reconstruct the Mostar Bridge", MTI Hungarian News Agency, 1 December 1997. <http://www.applicom.com/manu/mostar.htm>.

documents (Riedlmayer 1998). Serbian forces also occupied the Franciscan Seminary in Nedzarici, a western suburb of Sarajevo, looting and destroying collections of books, sculptures and paintings (Lovrenovic 1994).

The attack on the National Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina came later in the summer, on the night of 25 August. Like the Oriental Institute, the National Library was known for the richness and diversity of its archive, preserving the record of centuries of Serb, Croat and Muslim interaction. Known as the Vijećnica (the name of the elaborate nineteenth century building in which it was housed), this was a legal deposit library for the “old” Yugoslavia, Sarajevo University’s library and the major archival depot for Bosnia-Herzegovina (Kujundzic 1997). The bombardment was witnessed by Sarajevo writer Ivan Lovrenovic, whose own library was destroyed the same summer by Serbian militia in an ad hoc street ritual. Hundreds of incendiary rockets were fired from Serbian artillery in the hills surrounding the city, followed by machine gun and mortar fire to deter people from rescuing the books and manuscripts: “black, sooty, still hot butterflies – books and papers aflame, the library’s treasure – were flying around and falling over distant parts of the city” (Lovrenovic 1994).¹⁹

The ferocity of the attack on the archives of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the wars of the ‘90s, and the way in which the politics of mobilized ethnicity was translated actions by individuals, is captured in this description of a Serb raid on a Croat artist’s studio in the Sarajevo neighbourhood of Grbavica: “Serbian soldiers broke into his studio looking to steal money and equipment. They were incensed to discover an Islamic levha – a calligraphic inscription from the Koran – which the painter had mounted as a wall hanging. They took it down and, cursing, butchered it. According to witnesses, they then took all the artist’s paintings, drawings and sketches, lined them up against the front wall of the house and executed them with machine-gun fire until they were in shreds” (Lovrenovic 1994).²⁰

IV

¹⁹ Many tried to rescue books as the Library burned for three days. Librarian Aida Buturovi, was killed by a Serb sniper while trying to rescue books from the flames (Riedlmayer 1995).

²⁰ There is a direct connection between the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s libraries and the creation of digital archives. The Bosnian Manuscript Ingathering Project aims to track photocopies and microfilms of the Oriental Institute’s manuscripts held by other institutions around the world, in order to restore a “copied archive” (Riedlmayer 1998). A parallel project to reestablish the Bosnian National and University Library centres on the reconstruction of its catalogue. This is being achieved through the use of online catalogues – Online Computer Library Center Inc.’s WorldCat - linking information from libraries around the world to establish “Bosniaca” – “all documents in any format written in any language on or about the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. A search of 36 million records has resulted in more than 100 000 matches, and is being followed by the use of refined search criteria to search other library catalogues that are not incorporated in WorldCat (O’Neill, Young and Bremer 1996).

Four hundred years ago, when Maurits' chroniclers documented his archive, the ethnographic subject - and the violence of its subjugation - was six months away by sea, given exotic value through distance. Today, ethnos is everywhere, and so is the violence latent in claims for purity, difference and heritage. The "Bosnia fallacy" - that "land, language, religion, history, and blood are congruent" (Appadurai 1996:21) - leads in turn to the USA and the "heart of whiteness". Here, the triumphalism of global dominance and a new economic order masks a counter-culture of ethnic conflict and hatred that has all the characteristics of the tribalism that is assumed to be quintessentially un-American.

One of the consequences of essentializing ethnic conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - as well as in other parts of the world geographically distant from western Europe and North America - is the pretence that such conflicts are organic, and therefore organically impossible in the heartlands of late capitalism. But the particular play between the global and local - the "death of distance" that is the characteristic of the "media age" - makes old geographical distinctions redundant. As commentators such as Bogdan Denitch have pointed out, the revival of Serbian and Croatian nationalism has been reinforced by substantial financial support from the Balkan diaspora. Aggressive nationalism in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina has been sustained as much by Serbs and Croats in North America as by Belgrade and Zagreb. Croatian ethnic fervor is felt as much in West Germany - or among Chilean exiles such as the Petrinovic family - as in Croatia. Seen in this way, "Bosnia" cannot be simply bracketed off as an obscure tribal war in a distant corner of the world.

The ways in which conflicts in areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina are connected with the rest of the world can be seen in the use of the Web to mobilize and direct global media flows around the locally manifested "places" of ethnic identity. In 1995, besieged Sarajevo was connected to the outside world via an e-mail satellite link, and this led to the foundation of "Domovina Net" (Homeland Net) in Amsterdam, providing video and audio streams on Bosnian issues, including (in 1998) real-time audio-feeds from the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. Domovina Net was visited by an estimated 25 000 to 50 000 people each week, from all parts of the world.²¹ "New" Yugoslavia used its official Web site - signified by the flag, coat of arms and a sound file of the National Anthem - to claim the Federal Republic's legality of existence and commitment to "peace, security, stability, cooperation and prosperity in the region and in the World of Future". But the main emphasis of the site was to claim a sustained and deliberate media conspiracy throughout the last decade of Balkan conflicts against the legitimate national aspirations of Serbs throughout the region, and in exile throughout the world. This position was supported and extended by the US-based Serbian Unity Congress. Through its Web site, the SUC offered an extensive apology for Serb expansionism, denied claims of atrocities, and presented counterclaims for war crimes by Croats and Muslims. These positions were contested at other points of presence. The Croatian Institute for Culture and Information, for instance, published an online newspaper every week, addressing issues such as religion, cultural heritage, politics and

²¹ www.domovina.net; "Balkans turn to Web for news", www.computerworld.com, 6/26/98.

Croatia's rights of self-determination, and repeating well-tried constructions of history: "the Croats are amongst the oldest peoples in Europe. They have inhabited the territory between the Adriatic Sea and the Drava River for at least thirteen centuries. And yet it was only six years ago that they managed to establish their own independent and democratic state...". The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina presented its position – and the extent of criminal injustice against the rights of its citizens to self determination – on a Web site from Washington DC.²²

Not surprisingly, because of technological advances in the intervening years, the Internet played a greater role during the 1999 Kosovo war. E-mail discussion lists were used extensively by both Serb and Kosovar nationalists, stretching the idealism of advocates of free opinion to the limit as strident claims and counter-claims were made. In the words of the *Economist*, reporting at the height of military action, "now we have war on the net. As NATO planes bomb the former Yugoslavia, American government web-sites display what is destroyed. The Yugoslav government ripostes with numbers of planes shot down, targets missed and civilians killed. Albanian websites chronicle the flood of Kosovar refugees. Serb ones list atrocities by Kosovar terrorists. All of this against a backdrop of interactive maps, living histories, bile-filled bulletin boards and eye-witness e-mails. This is the first web war"²³

There are, of course, important distinctions between broadcast media and more recent forms of digital communication. The ways in which Serb and Croat nationalisms were shaped by state-controlled television services in the late 1980s and the first half of the present decade are different from the use of the Web in the second half of the 1990s. For example, Peter Maass (1996) has argued that Milosevic's control of Serbia's television service was the key to his ability to control the sway of public opinion by denying all reference to alternative points of view. In this respect, Web-based information is the inverse of broadcast television, and by the time war came to Kosovo, Milosevic was not able to prevent at least some Serbians from seeing, and being influenced by, any site that they could find (a quality explicitly exploited by Domovina Net). But the crucial issue, of course was access; the majority of citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia, battling to survive the rigors of poverty and the effects of war, were hardly likely to become cyber-surfers. Thus the attention that is being given to the Web as a medium for claims and counter-claims of regional ethnic rights emphasizes again the ineluctable connection between global media and local place in the cultural construction of identity. The *Economist's* "war on the web" is the conflict of international opinion – the global distribution of snatches of information pioneered by CNN in the Gulf War at

²² The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Official Web Site is at <http://www.gov.yu>, and the Serbian Unity Congress at <http://www.suc.com>. The Croatian Institute for Culture and Information's "Croatia Online Weekly" is at <http://www.croatia.hr>; the quotation is from the edition of January 15th 1998. The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina is at <http://www.bosnianembassy.org>.

²³ See, for example, the Nettime list, "a moderated mailing list for net criticism, collaborative text filtering and cultural politics", archives at www.nettime.org. Vigorous exchanges between advocates of Serb and NATO positions brought into question the viability of list discussion within the context of war. *Economist*, "War on the Web", May 15 1999.

the beginning of the war. Local opinion within Yugoslavia was the domain of broadcast media, a point well understood by NATO strategists, who identified Serbian television stations and transmitters as prime targets for bombing.

The use of the web in war was shown starkly in the escalation of conflict in Kosovo and Albania's borderlands in the months before the NATO airstrikes began. Albania is often presented as the savage heart of this part of Europe; ancient mountain chiefdoms; a place where Byron found primordial inspiration; the most repressive of Cold War regimes; a place of blood feuds where an AK-47 can be traded for a carton of cigarettes and one of the poorest countries in the world.²⁴ But Albania was presented on the Web through a cheerful home page that was pitched at the diaspora: "you may ask yourself, why is this the Albanian home page, rather than a Albania home page. Albanians cover a far larger territory than the country of Albania, and to speak of Albania only would mean excluding half of the ethnic Albanian population".²⁵ This Albanian identity was marked by means of a classic suite of ethnic markers; a description and history of language, folk music and folk costume; a history that is traced back to 2000BC and the Illyrians; and a "virtual menu", including *patë e egër e pjekur* ("take a wild duck, clean it well, and keep it in vinegar overnight..."). The claim to a "greater Albania" (reflecting the same ideology as "new" Yugoslavia's claim to a "greater Serbia") was expressed in a map that embraced Albania, Kosovo and parts of Macedonia and Montenegro. But the most active link on the page was to the "Kosova Crisis Center", with news updates on the breaking war, and a gallery of images of destroyed buildings and victims of the fighting. To navigate the Web site was to move through graphics of historic landscapes and buildings - a deep ethnic past - to folk culture (people in folk costume, dancing), and then to images of buildings destroyed by Serbian militia, twisted and mutilated bodies and close-ups of men, women and children with limbs and faces torn away. The sponsor of this Web site was the Albanian-American Academy, based in the US, and selling "all kinds of Albanian music and movies". The Kosovo news page is linked to one of the world's largest Web-based book stores, Amazon, for purchases of the latest books about the region.

²⁴ As with the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, economic factors played an important role in the Kosovo conflict. Kosovo has rich mineral resources and coal reserves, essential to Serbia's economy. In the words of Novak Bjelic, director of the Stari Trg mine in Kosovo: "the war in Kosovo is about the mines, nothing else. This is Serbia's Kuwait - the heart of Kosovo. We export to France, Switzerland, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Russia and Belgium. And in addition to all this, Kosovo has 17 billion tons of coal reserves, Naturally, the Albanians want all of this for themselves". The Trepca mining complex is valued at US\$5 billion and is of key strategic importance. In 1988 the mines were a focus of fierce opposition to Serbian expansionism, with strike by the 75% Albanian-speaking workforce against nationalist Serbs who were in positions of power at the mines. Subsequently, miners were replaced by Poles, Czechs and Muslim prisoners from Bosnia (Hedges 1998). In July 1998, major conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serbian forces centred on the huge open coal mine of Belacevac. The mobilization of Serbian national pride around the memory of Turkish defeat five centuries ago has to be seen in the context of Kosovo's essential contribution to the Serbian economy, and the potential value of the region in a "greater Albania".

²⁵ <http://www.albanian.com>.

This example of the use of the Web in a local war is a striking illustration of Appadurai's theory of culturalism at work. The political goal was a "greater Albania" – the independence of Serbia's Kosovo province and its realignment with neighbouring Albania, and less specific claims to parts of Macedonia and Montenegro. To this end, long standing images of regional ethnicity were appropriated and revitalized in history, language, costume, custom and food, and were related to the qualities of a fiercely beautiful, primitive landscape. This construction of an integrated Albanian culture was projected at the world and was instantly available to anyone, anywhere, who had access to the Web. Particular targets were Albanians abroad – those with remembered identities living in Western Europe or the US who were also interested in purchasing books, CDs and videos. From this digital perspective, it seemed only natural that Albanians should have the right to live within their landscape as they had for centuries, and that Serb aggression was a travesty of this natural order. The images of twisted bodies of children, headless torsos and destroyed faces of pregnant women made the claim that the Serbian militia were monsters outside this natural order, completing the nexus of local claims to place and identity, the global circulation of the essence of imagination, and violence – the digitally-enhanced, visceral detail of horror.

The further fallacy of primordialism – matching the view that distance still protects the West from tribal conflicts on its old peripheries – is the belief that such cultural conflicts are inherently alien to Western democracies, and are either an inevitable burden of foreign policies, or should be the focus of pressure for reform. Such arguments of exceptionalism are countered by returning to the very "heart of whiteness" – the ways in which forms of culturalism are operating within North America and Western Europe, and mobilizing combinations of global media, local identity and violence in ways that are comparable to the Balkans and other parts of the world (Appadurai 1996). Again, there are many ways in which this could be explored. I will use the incident that was the most prominent in the ebb and flow of the digital media at the time of writing the first version of this chapter (June 1998), and show how a local act of brutality connects to claims of identity, global media, and the refiguring of the archive.

On June 6 James Byrd, a black 49-year old father of three, was walking home in Jasper, Texas. Three young white men in a pickup offered him a lift. Byrd was driven to a deserted area, beaten and chained by his ankles to the back of the truck. He was dragged behind the truck for two miles. Parts of his body, including his head, were dispersed along the dirt road.²⁶ The three men were easily found and arrested – the truck was splattered with blood. One, 23 year old John William King, had tattoos associating him with the Confederate Knights of America, an organization linked to the Ku Klux Klan, and "Odinism", a neo-Nazi sect. Initial reports also suggested a link with Aryan Nations, a white supremacist group. The claim of such an association was immediately denounced by Klan affiliates, asserting that they are law-abiding citizens exercising their democratic rights. The language of denial, however, was designed to escalate the issue well beyond

²⁶ "Man decapitated in possible racial killing", CNN 8 June 1998; "Byrd's friends pay last respects to a murder victim" CNN, June 13 1998. Both reports from <http://cnn.com>.

the small town of Jasper, Texas. For instance, the Knights of the White Kamellia were quick to post a statement on their Web site: “the scumbag, child killing, church burning, jack booted Zionist Occupational Government is using this opportunity to further their course of genocide against the White Race by attempting to link White Christian Patriot organizations to a heinous crime that none of us in the movement would orchestrate, condone, or even permit within our ranks”. The Imperial Wizard of the Knights, speaking from his “CyberKlaven” in the “Invisible Empire” of the Kamellia Internet site, called a White Pride rally at the Jasper County Courthouse.²⁷ He was matched by the Houston-based Black Muslim Movement, whose leader, Quanell X, traveled to Jasper with guns for Jasper’s black community. President Clinton was represented at the funeral service by the Rev. Jesse Jackson. On June 27th, supporters of the New Black Panther Party walked though Jasper’s streets chanting “black power” while about 18 robed Klansmen stood with Confederate flags outside the Courthouse, protected by the Texas Highway Patrol.²⁸

It is to be expected that an ugly racial killing will achieve national symbolic importance in the US, where the history of discrimination by race is recent and raw. What is of interest here, rather, is the extent to which groups such as the Knights of the White Kamellia are representative of claims to local cultural identity, mobilized through the use of widespread media and expressed as the violent rejection of difference. As is well known, one person can establish an Internet presence and claim to reflect mass support. Is the Imperial Wizard’s CyberKlaven little more than a cyberpunk fantasy?

In formation of the “second Klan” in the first quarter of the century was intricately bound up with mass media. Appealing to a populist hostility to established elites (MacLean 1994), Klan organizers made skilful use of a nostalgia best represented by the novels of Thomas Dixon, in which the Klan was presented as the saviour of the South. Dixon’s *The Clansman, and Historic Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, was first published in 1905 and was made into the first full length movie epic by David Griffith as *The Birth of a Nation*. The film was released in 1915, and seen by an estimated fifty million people. “The movie’s climactic scene was unforgettable. Here is the beautiful heroine surrounded by violent blacks about to break into her cabin. A bugle sounds. The Klansmen mount and ride to the rescue. The orchestra matches thunderous strains from ‘In the Hall of the Mountain King’ to the rhythm of galloping hooves. The camera pans back and forth, switching from shots of the menaced heroine to clips of the onrushing, rescuing Klansmen. Will the heroine be raped? Will the Klansmen get there in time to save her? The tension became almost unbearable as audiences waited for those questions to be answered. In the cities of the Old South, men leaped to their feet. They yelled, whooped, and cheered. On one occasion, they became so carried away that they even shot up the screen to save the beautiful heroine from her assailants” (Cook 1980:36). Reaching a zenith between 1920 and 1925, with an estimated two million members and \$44m in revenue, the Klan was a slick marketing operation, offering regalia, books and

²⁷ <http://members.aol.com/realmoftex/index1.html>); <http://www.kamellia.com>.

²⁸ “KKK rallies in town of dragging death victim. New Black Panthers vow to protect Jasper’s blacks”. CNN, 27 June 1998.

magazines, real estate and life insurance and “100 percent Americanism”: an avenue of hatred for blacks, Jews, Catholics, immigrants and radicals (Cook 1980; MacLean 1994). Subsequently, the fortunes of the Klan rose and fell, fragmenting into splinter groups marked by internal dissent and allegations of corruption, reviving with the civil rights conflicts of the early 1960s and again with the backlash against affirmative action in the late 1970s (Cook 1980; Sims 1996). The Klan’s continuing attraction has rested on its versatility – its appeal to changing, diverse and often localised threats to “all American” communities by outsiders: “like the proverbial phoenix, the Klan has died in one setting, only to be reborn in another” (MacLean 1994).

But in recent years, the Klan has been eclipsed by a diverse collection of far right groups that regard the “hooded order” as insufficiently aggressive (Sims 1996). Many of these organisations are committed to the religious orientation of “Christian Identity”. This loose assemblage of churches, sects and militia units holds three key beliefs. Firstly, that white “Aryans” are the descendants of the biblical tribes of Israel and have a divine mission to save the world; second, that Jews are unconnected with the Israelites and are the literal children of the Devil; third, that the world is on the verge of a final, apocalyptic struggle between Aryans and a Jewish conspiracy (Barkun 1994).

How extensive are these groups? The Southern Poverty Law Center, widely acknowledged as a leading monitor of US hate groups, reported in the same month as the Jasper killing that, while many such groups had disbanded, others were becoming more extreme in their politics, and were going underground. They are no longer a feature of the South alone. Despite the reduction in monitored groups, the number of organizations and chapters known to be active through marches, rallies, publications or criminal prosecutions is substantial: 523 listed Patriot groups, many active in war games, and over 200 different Klan, neo-Nazi, Skinhead, Christian Identity and Black Separatist organizations. Many have more than one chapter and are active in several states: American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (18 chapters, from New York to Texas), Knights of the White Kamellia (12 chapters in six states), Aryan Nations (13 chapters), National Alliance (22 chapters), National Socialist White Peoples Party (11 chapters), and the National Association for the Advancement of White People (with 79 branches).²⁹

History, and historical destiny, is particularly important for many of these groups. Some rely heavily on material representations of the Nazi past. Aryan Nations, associated with one of James Byrd’s killers, sets out its manifesto and policy on a Web page titled “the Aryan Warrior”. Pastor Richard G. Butler (a veteran of Christian Identity – Barkun 1994) gives a Nazi salute beneath a swastika, and the site is illustrated from the archive of Nazi propaganda graphics. This material connection with the past is emphasized throughout the Internet site: “Behold the sign! – Look at the proof! By this thundering call the Aryan Warrior awakens his racial kindred from his sleep of death. By this SIGN does he smash

²⁹ “Southern Poverty Law Center say groups plan for race war”, CNN 17 June 1998; <http://www.splcenter.org>.

the lying, murdering jew! By this SIGN do Aryan sons of God arise; unite and live. By this SIGN does the Aryan show his love for his Father and God!” A hypertext link takes the visitor to the “Aryan Nations Literature Archive”; books, pamphlets, posters and memorabilia for the Aryan Warrior; an Aryan Nations arm patch, bronze belt buckle, pendant, collar tabs or an Aryan Nations Youth Korps Dagger at \$25.³⁰

The National Alliance offers more measured, intellectual version of prejudice. Contesting “Semitic ideology”, the site claims a “natural order” that includes a “law of inequality” counter to the Jeffersonian principles of the US constitution: “those races which evolved in the more demanding environment of the North, where surviving a winter required planning and self-discipline, advanced more rapidly in the development of the higher mental faculties...”. Consequently, it is the responsibility of “Aryan men and women to strive for the advancement of our race in the service of Life...”. This takes the National Alliance directly to archaeology’s archive: “a knowledge of and appreciation for the history of our Aryan ancestors are absolutely necessary for even the short-term survival of our people. We need to have a good acquaintance with our roots before we can know who we are and make sound plans for our future...”. Books available through the National Alliance’s Web page cover such subjects as medieval Iceland, megaliths, the Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Stonehenge, Avebury and Colin Renfrew’s *Archaeology and Language*: “the scholar who has revolutionized our understanding of the chronology of civilization in northern Europe returns to prove, in highly readable prose, that the Indo-European-speaking peoples appeared earlier than we’d been led to believe by conventional-thinking anthropologists...”.³¹

Although the context is clearly different, it is difficult to justify a categorical distinction between the Knights of the White Kamilla and Serb Chetniks, or between Pastor Richard Butler’s Aryan Nations page and Slobodan Milosevic’s assertions of Serbian destiny and superiority. James Byrd’s killing has all the face-to-face brutality of an ethnic execution in Bosnia-Herzegovina or an atrocity in Kosovo.

V

Prince Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen’s Brazilian archive was rich in tangible textures, colours and shapes – a testimony of the exotic lands at Europe’s colonial periphery, and a collection that owed its value in The Hague to its rarity, to the distance it had traveled. The refigured archive of the digital age depends on the global circulation of images of material things that are located at specific places where they are valued, and often contested. Thus the difference between the archives of early and late modernity is not, as is often claimed, that the concept of the original has been superceded by infinitely reproducible sets of binary code. It is rather that information technology has completed a

³⁰ Aryan Nation is at <http://www.nidlink.com>.

³¹ <http://www.natall.com>. It is obvious that this claim of support for the philosophy of this neo-Nazi group would horrify Renfrew and many of the other authors whose work is cited.

four hundred year development from a six month voyage in a sailing ship to the instantaneous delivery of a packet of digital data.

In that aspects of the early archive were shaped by the consciousness of distance – the exotic value given Maurits' collection by the very extent of the space between Brazil and The Hague – it follows that the demise of the authority that rests in distancing is affecting the archive today. Building on Arjun Appadurai's work, I have argued that the materiality of the archive remains of critical importance. However, rather than following the modal form of the nineteenth century national archive, the refigured archive of the "digital age" is increasingly local in its contestations of manuscripts, books, artefacts and architecture, and simultaneously global in the circulation of claims to identity and images of ethnic identity. In this, the contemporary archive is part of the politics of global capitalism.

The result of this "culturalism" has been a refiguring of tribal ethnography. It is no accident that commentators on the Balkans such as Noel Malcolm - Bosnia's most recent historian - draw analogies between Serbia's nationalist politics and the Bosnian settlement, and South African bantustans. Appadurai's "Bosnia Fallacy" – the assumption that contemporary politics are driven by "ancient hatreds" that are somehow inherited and can only be resolved by partition – is a rediscovery of the assumptions that characterized Imperial conquests of Africa and apologies for apartheid. Similarly, nostalgia for the Old South, appeals to "one hundred percent Americanism", and the preservation of "Aryan identity" in the face of blacks, immigrants and a Jewish conspiracy are the organizing principles of local identities that have their own ethnographies. Rather than Wagenaer's "stone wall" that kept "Hottentots" and "savage Africans" at bay as curiosities, today everyone is an ethnic subject.

A consequence of this simultaneous play between the local and the global has been a refiguring of violence. In Maurits and Wagenaer's day, violence was pushed out to the colonial periphery, contrasting the core of "holy Christendom" with the civilizing mission at "earth's extremest end". An archive such as Maurits's was initially stained by the blood of those who had been dispossessed and subjugated, but collections of the exotic had been wiped clean, ordered and neatly labeled by the time they were deposited in the collections of Europe's great libraries and museums. But an effect of the defeat of distance – the achievement of today's information technology – has been to cancel this displacement of violence. Ownership of the archive – possession of the documents, artefacts and architecture that are the entitlement to a place in the world – is now claimed and defended at home, whether in Sarajevo, Ayodhya, Waco or Oklahoma.

An appropriate avatar for this "heart of whiteness" is David Duke, onetime National Information Director and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of White People. Hatewatch considers David Duke to be America's most influential and politically active white supremacist. Here is his vision of the role of the digital world –

and the archive – in the coming millennial conflict: “the alien, anti-White media has been my unrelenting enemy. It has been yours as well, because it supports every pernicious liberal program that you can imagine. Up until now, unless someone met me personally, or read my material, the only way they could judge me is by what the liberal-biased media says. Now, that situation has changed. Millions of people are going online in America. Now, If they want to find out about me and my ideas and issues all they have to do is go into one of the search engines and search for "David Duke". Hundreds of sources will show up. There they can access my site and read my writings and reference material, and even hear my radio program which is broadcast 24 hours-a-day to the four corners of the earth ... When egalitarians say that no mainstream scientists believe in inherent differences, instantly they are refuted by lucid and fascinating articles on my page by the leading psychologists, biologists, geneticists, historians, archeologists, anthropologists, and educators of the world. Right now I have dozens of articles from our point of view on my Internet site” (Duke 1998).

A hundred years ago, Joseph Conrad wove together prejudices and assumptions about the colonial periphery in his novella *Heart of Darkness*, and Marlowe’s discovery of the horror at the end of the long journey into the bowels of Africa has provided lasting images and metaphors for the twentieth century. But the tale of Kurtz’s destruction was told on a ship anchored in the Thames, and at nightfall, expressing Conrad’s sense of the corruption at the heart of the metropole (Said 1994). At the turn of this next millennium, there is no longer the possibility of a long sea voyage to insulate the colonial core from its colonized peripheries. Conrad’s prescience has been fulfilled.

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