Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia Study Guide

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia by Rebecca West

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Introduction

From 1936 to 1938, journalist and novelist Rebecca West made three trips to Yugoslavia. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* is a record of her travels. This immensely long book, which runs to 1150 pages, is much more than a travelogue, however. It is also a vivid account of the violent history of the Balkans going back many hundreds of years. West admits that before she visited the region, she knew almost nothing about it, other than that events in the Balkans (notably the assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914) had led to World War I. Since the war had affected West's own life - as it had all members of West's generation - she wanted to understand how and why it happened. Her aim in writing *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was to show the Balkan past alongside the present it created.

In her travels, West became an admirer of the Serbs and their culture, often contrasting it favorably with the West. She repeatedly refers to the devastation that followed the famous battle of Kossovo in 1389, in which the Serbs were defeated by the Turks, and which led to five hundred years of Turkish rule. (In modern spelling, one "s" for Kosovo is preferred, rather than West's "Kossovo".) In the epilogue (written in 1941, two years after the outbreak of World War II) she praised Yugoslavia for refusing to capitulate to Nazi Germany.

In addition to being a travelogue and a history, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is a forum for West's forcefully argued views on a variety of topics, ranging from relations between men and women, to art and music, to the nature of empires and questions of metaphysics. The book in some sections resembles a novel. It illustrates the relationship between West and her husband, and contains a lively cast of traveling companions, including Constantine (the Jewish Serb poet) and Gerda (his nationalistic German wife).

Author Biography

Rebecca West was born Cicily Isabel Fairfield on December 21, 1892, in London, England. Her father was Charles Fairfield, a former army officer, and her mother, Isabella MacKenzie Fairfield, was a pianist. Cicily Fairfield spent her early years in London, England, and was then educated at George Watson's Ladies' College in Edinburgh, Scotland. She also studied at the Academy of Dramatic Art in London. In 1911 she joined the suffragist movement and became a book reviewer for the *Freewoman,* a feminist magazine. In the same year she adopted the name Rebecca West. In 1913 West became a political writer for the socialist magazine, the *Clarion.* She was ready to embark on her distinguished career as novelist, literary critic, journalist, and biographer.

In 1916, West's study of the writer Henry James was published. Two years later her first novel, *The Return of the Soldier,* appeared, followed in 1922 by a second novel, *The Judge.* In 1923 she went on a lecture tour in the United States. She returned to the United States in 1926, and began reviewing books for the *New York Herald Tribune.*

In 1928 West published a collection of literary essays titled *The Strange Necessity,* followed by books on D. H. Lawrence (1930) and St. Augustine (1933), and a third novel, *The Thinking Reed* (1936). In the mid-1930s, West made three trips to the Balkans, which resulted in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* (1941). During World War II West was asked to supervise the British Broadcasting Corporation's wartime broadcasts to Yugoslavia. After the war, West attended the Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1946□an experience she discusses in *A Train of Powder* (1955)□ and wrote a nonfiction work titled *The Meaning of Treason* (1947).

In 1953, West wrote a series of controversial articles for the London *Sunday Times* in which she downplayed the damaging consequences of McCarthyism in the United States. This work came as a surprise to many since West had previously supported liberal points of view and defended civil liberties.

A novel called *The Fountain Overflows* was published in 1956, followed by the literary essays in *The Court and the Castle* (1957), consisting mainly of West's Terry Lectures at Yale University. West wrote about a spy scandal in Britain in *The Vassall Affair* (1963), and then returned to fiction in *The Birds Fall Down* (1966). In 1982 1900, a social history of the year 1900, was published. The novels *This Real Night* (1984) and *Cousin Rosamund* (1985) were published posthumously.

West was awarded numerous honors, including the Order of St. Sava in 1937, the Women's Press Club Award for Journalism in 1948, Companion of the British Empire (CBE) in 1949, and Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1957. She was named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 1959.

West had one child, Anthony (born in 1914), by H. G. Wells, whom she met in 1913 and had a close relationship with for ten years. In 1930 West married Henry Maxwell

Andrews, a banker and investment counselor, who died in 1968. West died in London on March 15, 1983, of pneumonia, at the age of ninety.

Plot Summary

Prologue

In the prologue to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West explains how she came to be interested in Yugoslavia. She recalls her distress when she heard in 1934 that King Alexander of Yugoslavia had been assassinated in Marseille. At that point, West knew nothing of Yugoslavia, other than the fact that the Balkans was a violent place. But given the fact that events in the Balkans led to World War I, in which West as a British citizen had been endangered, her ignorance of the region meant that she knew nothing about her own destiny. In 1936 she was invited to lecture in Yugoslavia, and the following year she visited the country again.

Journey

West and her husband travel by train from Salzburg, Austria, to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Traveling in a first-class carriage, they meet some disagreeable Germans, who force a young man to vacate his seat because he only has a second-class ticket. It later transpires that the Germans have second-class tickets too.

Croatia

In Zagreb they meet three friends: Constantine, a Serb poet; Valetta, a Croat mathematician; and Marko Gregorievitch, a Croat critic and journalist. The three men dislike each other and they argue constantly. West and her husband see the sights of Zagreb, and engage in intellectual conversations in the cafes. They visit the village of Shestine and two castles in the country during Easter. Then, they return to Zagreb and visit the cathedral. West interweaves the travelogue with the turbulent story of Croatian history. Oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian empire, Croats had rarely known peace and security, and West regards the Austrian influence to have had very bad effects. She also reports on the fragile state of Croatian politics. Valetta fights for free speech and a free press, but the undemocratic forces are in control of the government.

Dalmatia

West and her husband travel south by train to Dalmatia on the Adriatic coast. West observes that Dalmatia has changed hands many times over hundreds of years and has known little stability. They visit the isle of Rab, and West declares it to be one of the most beautiful places in the world. She admires the people of Dalmatia because they resisted the Ottoman Empire and so "saved" the West from Islam. In Split, she admires the Roman architecture and discusses the Roman emperor Diocletian. West and her husband then visit Trogir, Korchula, and Dubrovnik. In spite of its beauty, West does not like Dubrovnik.

Herzegovina

Herzegovina is a Slav province, which, according to West, has suffered great degradation like Bosnia and Macedonia through being subjected to Turkish rule. West and her husband visit the market at Trebinye, which is full of Muslims, descendants of the Slavs who were converted by the Turks. Then they visit an old Turkish house where an elderly man in a frock-coat gives them a very exaggerated account of the historic value of the house. As they are driving out of the town, West and her husband have one of their many discussions about politics and history. They then visit the small Muslim town of Mostar.

Bosnia

They visit Sarajevo, where they meet up again with Constantine. West admires the men and women she sees, both Christian and Muslim, and comments on relations between the sexes. She also gives an account of the history of Sarajevo, which fell into Turkish hands in 1464. It was freed from the Turks in 1878, only to fall under the rule of Austria. The main focal point of this section of the book is West's account of the events leading up to the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. The assassination prompted Austria to declare war on Serbia, which led quickly to World War I. West describes the unsavory character of Ferdinand, redeemed only by his love for his wife, Sophie Chotek. Ferdinand stupidly visited the city on St. Vitus's day, a Serb day of celebration, when he knew Serbs regarded him as an enemy. West describes the plot against him by Serbian nationalists, and the assassin, Gavrilo Princip.

Serbia

In Belgrade, West, her husband, and Constantine are joined by Constantine's German wife, Gerda. West and her husband are offended by Gerda's rudeness. West does not find Belgrade attractive, and complains about the lavish government display which coexists with an impoverished professional class. They go sightseeing to local monuments and to a group of monasteries at Frushka Gora. One of the monasteries contains the mummified remains of Tsar Lazar, who led the Serbs to a famous defeat against the Turks in 1389. West goes on to describe the history of Serbia (culminating in the Balkan War in 1912, in which the Serbs defeated the Turks) and the tragedy of World War I. After World War I, King Alexander tried to forge a unified state out of the mix of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In 1929 he abolished political parties and declared a dictatorship. He was assassinated in 1934.

Macedonia

West admires Macedonia as the repository of a "supremely beautiful" Byzantine civilization. She and her husband visit a succession of churches and monasteries; they go to a Turkish pasha's palace at Bardovtsi, and they examine the frescoes in a Byzantine church in Neresi. At Ochrid they meet Bishop Nikolai, who strikes West as the most remarkable human being she has ever met. They visit Kaimakshalan, the mountain where the Serbs drove out the Bulgarians in World War I. But the most significant scene occurs when they go to a ceremony on St. George's Eve and watch the sacrifice of a lamb in a fertility rite. West regards this as shameful and repulsive.

Old Serbia

West, her husband, and Constantine visit the great plain at Kossovo, where the Serbs were defeated by the Turks in 1389. Kossovo strikes her as desolate and full of tragedy, the population steeped in misery. She visits a church at Grachinatsa, forty miles from the battlefield, which displays many valuable aspects of Serb culture that were destroyed after the Turkish conquest. She describes Serbian history during the pre-1389 period, emphasizing the life of Stephen Dushan (died 1365), a king who built an empire and made Serbia great. Constantine recites the folk-poetry about the battle of Kossovo, and West sees its credo of sacrifice as immensely significant.

Montenegro

West reviews the history of Montenegro and calls it a prison because its people are locked up in centuries-old ideas about heroism involving slaughter and victory. On a mountainside, West meets and is inspired by an old woman who is struggling to understand her own tragic life. Inspiration turns to horror when West and her husband climb a steep mountain, only to find that their local guide is lost. The guide insists that they make a dangerous descent down a track on the other side of the cliff. When they manage to return the way they came, they learn that the guide risked their lives simply because he did not want to admit he was lost.

Epilogue

West reviews the significance of her knowledge of Yugoslavia up to 1941, in light of World War II. She comments on the nature of empires and on the causes of the rise of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. West has bitter words for the policy of appeasement practiced by the British government during the 1930s that left Britain unprepared for the approaching war with Germany. She makes a parallel between 1930s Britain and the way the Serbs were defeated by the Turks in 1389, and she warns of the terrible consequences of defeat. Finally, West has high praise for the bravery of the people of Yugoslavia, who refused to capitulate to Hitler, thus providing inspiration to the rest of beleaguered Europe.

Characters

King Alexander I

King Alexander I became king of Yugoslavia in 1921. He had fought in World War I and believed passionately in the ideal of a Yugoslav state. However, ethnic and political divisions within the new kingdom were acute. Croats demanded independence and there were so many political parties that stable government proved impossible. In 1929 Alexander abolished the constitution and ruled as a dictator. He was assassinated in 1934 in Marseille, France - an event that first aroused Rebecca West's interest in Yugoslavia.

Henry Andrews

Henry Andrews is Rebecca West's husband. He is an Oxford-educated banker who speaks fluent German, and he accompanies West throughout her travels. In their discussions about people, culture, and history, West presents Andrews as a man who speaks reasonably, without anger or prejudice. He is patient and full of common sense, although he and his wife do not always agree with each other.

Nedyelyko Chabrinovich

Nedyelyko Chabrinovich was one of the Serb conspirators in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. He threw a bomb that missed the archduke but wounded his aide-de-camp (camp assistant). Chabrinovich was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

Archduchess Sophie Chotek

Archduchess Sophie Chotek was the wife of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. There was opposition in the Austrian court to her marriage because, even though she was a countess, she was not considered noble enough to marry an archduke. After the marriage, she continued to be excluded from the most intimate functions of the Austrian court. West presents Sophie as an ambitious woman who nursed petty resentments and had many enemies. However, she and Ferdinand felt great love for each other, although she feared that her husband was on the verge of going mad. Sophie was assassinated with her husband in Sarajevo in June 1914.

Constantine

Constantine is a close friend of West and her husband. He accompanies them on most of their travels. A forty-six-year-old poet, Constantine, who is a Serb and is Jewish, lives in Serbia. He is also a member of the Orthodox church. Constantine is short and fat, with black curly hair, and he talks incessantly: "In the morning he comes out of his bedroom in the middle of a sentence; and at night he backs into it, so that he can just finish one more sentence." But his talk is very entertaining. He is emotional and excitable and sometimes boastful, with strong opinions on almost everything. Constantine fought in World War I and is now an official in the Yugoslav government. He believes firmly in the ideal of Yugoslavia. He is a passionate, cultured man who studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. He is also an accomplished musician.

Constantine is married to Gerda, whom he adores, although the German Gerda is a difficult wife. As Constantine tries to appease her, he becomes an increasingly unhappy figure. West notes that when Constantine is with Gerda, his personality changes, and he does not express himself so fully. Instead, he seems to mold himself according to his idea of what she might find acceptable. Sometimes he adopts the role of the Jewish comedian. Later in their travels, West observes that because of the influence of Gerda, Constantine has undergone a "disintegrating change," and she no longer trusts his judgment. Constantine becomes irritable and complains about everything. West concludes that there is something in Constantine's personality that compels him to be loyal only to those who despise him.

Diocletian

Diocletian was the Roman Emperor who, after a twenty-one-year reign as emperor, built a palace in 305 at Split in Dalmatia. West considers him the greatest of the Roman emperors who came from Illyria. He died, probably by poisoning himself, sometime between 313 and 316.

Dragutin

Dragutin, a Serb, is the chauffeur for West and her husband during their travels through Macedonia, Old Serbia, and Montenegro. West presents Dragutin as the embodiment of the passionate, fierce temperament of the Serbian male. Raised in both Germany and England, he is young, handsome, brave, and honest. He is also an effective tour guide and takes charge when necessary, knowing the ways of his people and the hazards of the terrain. Dragutin is strongly pro-Yugoslavia, and when his party visits the ancient battlefield at Kossovo, he shows great contempt for the Turks.

Stephen Dushan

Stephen Dushan was the monarch of the old Serbian empire during the mid-fourteenth century, when Serbia reached the height of its power and its culture flowered. West compares Dushan to Elizabeth I of England, who, like Dushan, inherited a threatened kingdom and left it a powerful one. Dushan successfully confronted the hostile Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Hungary, and had he lived longer, he might have reunited the entire Byzantine world. Dushan died at the age of forty-eight in 1365, only thirty-four years before the Serbs were defeated at Kossovo in 1389. (In modern spelling, one "s" for Kosovo is preferred, rather than West's "Kossovo".)

Archduke Franz Ferdinand

Archduke Franz Ferdinand was the nephew of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria. Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were assassinated in June 1914 in Sarajevo - an event that sparked World War I. West presents Ferdinand as an extremely unattractive figure. He was dull-minded, ungracious, obstinate, bigoted, suspicious, and aggressive. He loved hunting simply because he liked to kill, and he hated the entire world, with the exception of his wife and children.

Gerda

Gerda is Constantine's German wife. West and her husband meet her in Belgrade, and she accompanies them on some of their subsequent travels. Gerda is middle-aged and stout, with fair hair and gray eyes. Constantine claims she is beautiful, and he adores her, but Gerda is a thoroughly unattractive figure. She is a nationalistic German who despises the Slavs, even though she lives amongst them. In her opinion, they have no culture; they are all primitive and stupid. Gerda and West get off to a bad start when Gerda expresses contempt for the book West is carrying, even though she has never read it. Gerda is smug in her sense of her own superiority as a German, and she is determined to dislike West and her husband. Her views are compatible with the Nazis. She believes for example that all Slavs in Germany should be expelled so that the land can be given back to "true Germans."

Gerda proves to be a disagreeable traveling companion. In Skoplje, Macedonia, she disparages Byzantine art, hates West and her husband because they are English, and calls all Yugoslavs liars. She hates the Gypsy dancers, saying that Gypsies are "dirty and stupid," and she has to smoke a cigarette to "disinfect" herself from their contamination. After this episode, she insults a poor old man.

Gerda becomes so unpleasant that eventually West and her husband are forced to insist that she accompany them no further. She returns to Belgrade on her own.

Marko Gregorievitch

Marko Gregorievitch is a friend of West and her husband, whom they meet in Zagreb. He is a gloomy fifty-six-year-old Croat critic and journalist who looks like Pluto in the Mickey Mouse films. For sixteen years before World War I he was an active revolutionary, fighting the Hungarians for the right of Croatia to run its own affairs, for which he suffered imprisonment and exile. He now supports the Yugoslavian state with great enthusiasm because it symbolizes Slav defiance of the Austrian-Hungarian empire. He dislikes Valetta and regards him as a traitor.

Karageorge

Karageorge was a leader of Serbia in the early nineteenth century. He led an insurrection against the Turks in 1804. West describes him as one of the most remarkable men in European history. Although he could neither read nor write, he excelled as a soldier, strategist, and diplomat. In 1813 his career came to an disreputable end when he fled the scene of a great battle with the Turks. He later returned to Serbia but was assassinated in 1817. In spite of his failures, Serbs still regard him as the founder of their liberty.

Tsar Lazar

Tsar Lazar was the leader of the Serbs defeated by the Turks at Kossovo in 1389. West visits his tomb and touches his mummified hand.

Draga Mashin

Draga Mashin was the hated wife of Serbia's King Alexander Obrenovitch. She was born in 1866, married young, and was widowed in 1885. In 1900 she married Alexander, who was more than ten years younger than she. Draga was loathed throughout Serbia because it was said she was of low birth and had led a vicious life. West is sympathetic to Draga but concedes she may have led a loose life before her marriage. After marriage Draga was further reviled because it was believed she was unable to bear a child. She was brutally murdered along with her husband by Serbian army officers in 1903. The naked, mutilated corpses were thrown out of the window of the palace.

Bishop Nikolai

Bishop Nikolai is Bishop of Zhitcha and of Ochrid, in Macedonia. He holds an Easter service at the Church of Sveti Yovan (St. John) that West attends. She is greatly impressed by his spiritual power and charisma.

King Alexander Obrenovitch

Alexander Obrenovitch inherited the throne of Serbia in 1890, when he was twelve years old. Until the age of seventeen, he ruled through three regents. Alexander showed little wisdom in government, one of his first acts being to abolish freedom of speech and of the press. In 1900 he married the hated Draga Mashin. In 1901 he appointed a military dictatorship after a failed attempt to establish anew constitution. In 1903, with the Serbian economy in shambles, there were riots in Belgrade. A general election was held and the government falsified the results. A month later, in June 1903, a group of army officers assassinated both Alexander and his wife in their palace at night.

Gavrilo Princip

Gavrilo Princip was the Bosnian Serb nationalist who shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand to death in 1914. When he was a young man, Princip's peasant family sent him to Sarajevo to get an education and earn money. He soon dropped out of his studies and traveled to Belgrade to enroll in secondary studies. He then volunteered to fight in the Balkan war in 1913, but he was physically weak and was discharged from the army. Back in Belgrade, he met Nedyelyko Chabrinovich, who was to become one of his fellow conspirators. When he was convicted of the assassination, Princip was too young to be sentenced to death (no one under twenty-one could be executed), so he received a twenty-year prison term. In prison he did not receive the medical care he needed, and he died in 1918.

Bishop Strossmayer

Bishop Strossmayer was a great Croat patriot whose statue stands in Zagreb. Stossmayer fought for over fifty years for the liberation of Croatia from Austria-Hungary. As bishop and scholar, he campaigned for the preservation of the Serbo-Croatian language and for the right to use the Slav liturgy rather than the Latin. He also founded the University of Zagreb. He refused to have any part of the movement to persecute the Orthodox Church, because that would have set Croats against Serbs, and he also opposed anti-Semitism. West presents him as an entirely saintly human being. Strossmayer died in 1905 at the age of ninety.

Valletta

Valletta is a friend of West and her husband. A twenty-six-year-old lecturer in mathematics at Zagreb University, he is a Croat from Dalmatia, and a Roman Catholic. Unlike Constantine, he does not believe in the ideal of Yugoslavia; he is a federalist and believes Croatia should have autonomy. West considers him gentle, kind, and charming.

Rebecca West

Rebecca West is the author of the book, and Yugoslavia is seen for the most part through her eyes. She presents herself as endlessly curious and highly intellectual, with strong opinions and the ability and will to express them. She can more than hold her own in any company. Her abiding quest is to explore life in all its manifestations and understand the nature of it, its laws and purposes. She calls this "process," and sees it as a never-ending quest. She often makes sweeping statements about life, and sometimes her pronouncements are somewhat idiosyncratic, as when she says she does not like the city of Dubrovnik because its citizens appreciate the wrong kind of art.

West is an admirer of the Serbs, particularly Serbian men, and their culture. Her descriptions of Serbian history often have a romantic glow about them (the Balkan war in 1912, for example). She takes an intense interest in politics, history, and all aspects of current affairs. She is a feminist. She is also, in the 1930s, keenly aware of the threat posed by Nazi Germany and does not share the pacifist sentiments professed by many in the intellectual classes in England. She is convinced that the preservation of civilization requires a willingness to fight.

At the personal level, West has a loving relationship with her husband, although she has a tendency to give herself the last word in any of their civilized disagreements. Sometimes, however, in dealing with others she can be haughty and difficult, as when an Austrian student consults her about a dissertation she wishes to write on West's work.

West values the trivial things in life as much as the important ones - she can gain intense pleasure from a small item acquired as a bargain at a market or shop. She also appreciates fine food (and comments when necessary on the lack of it), and elegant fine manners. She is a lover and discerning critic of art and music, especially, so it seems, Mozart, and she believes in the transcendental value of art.

Themes

Sacrifice and Atonement

The main theme of the book is the damage caused in human history by the idea of sacrifice that is embedded in Christian and pagan traditions. West sees this idea working at many levels in history. Her abhorrence of it becomes clear to her in Macedonia, when she witnesses a black lamb being sacrificed on a rock in a fertility rite. She objects to the idea that the infliction of pain and death on one creature can cause another to become fertile.

West traces the idea of sacrifice to the Christian doctrine of atonement, a concept she finds repugnant. According to this doctrine, which was developed by St. Paul and refined by St. Augustine, God sacrificed His son on the cross so that man could be freed from the punishment that his sins deserved. According to West:

This theory flouts reason at all points, for it is not possible that a just God should forgive people who are wicked because another person who was good endured agony by being nailed to a cross.

The ramifications of this doctrine have permeated Christian culture. People have been inculcated with the idea that pain and suffering is the price of anything valuable. This belief has led to the idea that there is something virtuous in being defeated, that somehow, cosmic law rewards the sacrifice of the good. West sees this idea operating in the pacifism of 1930s-Britain waiting to be the passive victim of Nazi aggression because Britons did not want to soil their hands with violence. She sees it operating also in the Serb defeat at Kossovo in 1389. To substantiate this, she refers to the epic poem commemorating the defeat, which is treasured by all Serbs. The poem relates how, before the battle, the prophet Elijah came to Tsar Lazar, the Serb leader, in the form of a grey falcon. The falcon asked Lazar what kind of kingdom he wanted - an earthly kingdom or a heavenly kingdom. If he chose the former, the falcon implied that he would be victorious, but if he chose the heavenly kingdom, he would he defeated. Lazar chose the heavenly kingdom, because a heavenly kingdom would last forever, whereas earthly kingdoms survive for only a short time. In making this choice, Lazar condemned himself to death and his army to defeat. He chose sacrifice as a means of salvation.

Empires

The theme of the destructiveness of empires runs throughout the book. Most of West's ire is concentrated on two empires: the Ottoman Empire, which subjugated the Serbs; and the Austrian Empire, chronically mismanaged by the Habsburg dynasty, which later became the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was finally destroyed as a result of World War I.

However, West, who grew up as a citizen of the British Empire at the height of its power, was not an absolute opponent of imperialism. She states that it has often proved "magnificent" in practice. An empire could spread civilization, develop technology, bring the rule of law, and tame nature. But empires are not always enlightened. In the case of the British Empire, in addition to its achievements in granting self-government to its dominions, there was hypocrisy. The Roman Empire in some respects destroyed more human achievements than it fostered. The disadvantages of empire are best illustrated in the Balkans. The Turks, according to West, despoiled Macedonia and old Serbia (which included Kossovo) and robbed its inhabitants for so long that there was almost nothing left. The same was true of Dalmatia by Venice, and Croatia by Hungary. The history of the Balkans shows that when an empire attempts to travel too far beyond its boundaries, it is nothing but a curse to the native inhabitants.

Manichaeism

Manichaeism was a Christian heresy, which is an opinion or doctrine contrary to church dogma. According to its cosmology, there had originally been a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness that were quite separate from each other. The present world resulted from the aggression of the kingdom of darkness. It was the task of the virtuous to extract the sparks of light that were imprisoned in the darkness of this world. The heresy was ruthlessly suppressed by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.

West discusses Manichaeism in relation to the history of Dalmatia. She regards the heresy as an extremely useful conception of life and uses it as an allegory of history. West tends to think in black-and-white terms, and she sees the Germans and Turks aligned on the dark side, and the Serbs, for the most part, as representing the light. She also sees herself as somewhat like a virtuous Manichaean living in a world full of darkness, charged with using her discriminating intellect to understand life and extract from the darkness whatever fragments of light she can discover.

Relationships between the Sexes

West writes about relations between the sexes at the personal and societal level, and describes the differences between them. She observes that men and women see totally different aspects of reality. Women are often interested only in the personal side of life and ignore the wider context of history. This weakness she calls idiocy, after the Greek root meaning "private person." Men, on the other hand, are so obsessed by public affairs that they cannot see the details correctly; they see as if by moonlight, and West calls this "lunacy."

During her travels, she sees frequent examples of the oppression of women by men. She regards the costumes of the women in Herzegovina - who wear masculine-looking coats much too large for them that can be pulled up and used as a veil - as a sign of male hostility to women. Such clothes, she says, are imposed by a male society that has neurotic ideas about female bodies and wants to insult them and drive them into hiding. Women cannot be happy in such societies. One of the reasons men oppress women is that they need to be reassured; they like to feel superior to women.

West feels compassion for the oppressed women of Macedonia. She is also angered when in Kossovo she sees a young female peasant walking with a ploughshare tied to her back, while her husband walks alongside her, carrying nothing. West is disgusted by societies where women do all the physical work, not only because of the unfair burden placed on women but because such arrangements also emasculate the men. West observes in one of her typical generalizations that men are easily discouraged. Once women have proved they can do something just as well as men, the men are reluctant to go on doing it. They either become enemies of their wives or relapse into an infantile state of dependence. This bewilders the women, who expect men to be strong.

However, at times, to the consternation of some feminist critics, West seems to accept the traditional gender roles. In a phrase that sounds somewhat old-fashioned today, she writes that in Dalmatia she encountered a world "where men are men and women are women." She is referring to the virile strength of Slavic men (in contrast to the effete men of the West). And in Bosnia, in contrast to Macedonia, she finds women who seem completely free in spirit, in spite of the fact that they must wait on their husbands, take beatings from them, and walk while the men ride. On this occasion, West offers no censure of such arrangements, even though she knows they are based on a pretense by the women - that the women accept the men's judgment that they are inferior.

Parallel to West's observations of and generalizations about relations between men and women is her own relationship with her husband, which seems a civilized and tolerant one. Their disagreements are of the intellectual kind and they discuss them in even, respectful tones. She allows her husband his eccentricities and they seem to regard each other with good humor. Each cares for the welfare of the other. As the chauffeur in Macedonia says, touchingly, "Yes, they're fond of each other all right, look how close they are sitting and they aren't young either."

Style

Symbolism

The central symbols in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* are those that supply the book with its title: the black lamb and the grey falcon. The black lamb appears several times. Its first appearance is an innocent one. In a hotel in Belgrade, West watches as a peasant enters the hotel carrying a black lamb in his arms. The lamb twists and writhes, "its eyes sometimes catching the light as it turned and shining like small luminous plates." The significance of the lamb as a symbol is only made clear later in the narrative, when West attends the fertility rite on a rock in Macedonia and watches a lamb being sacrificed. She describes the process in grisly detail and then reveals the symbolic significance she attaches to it: the slaughter of the lamb represents a particular way of thinking, the idea that suffering and cruelty are not only necessary but are the only ways by which good may come forth. West prefers to see the ugliness of the ritual for what she perceives it to be. Those who practice such "beastly retrogression," claims West, do so because "they wanted to put their hands on something weaker than themselves ... to smash what was whole, to puddle in the warm stickiness of their own secretions."

In a later incident, after West has visited the ancient site of the battle of Kossovo, an Albanian man joins them to eat, and he is carrying a black lamb. The lamb unexpectedly stretches out its neck and lays its muzzle against West's forearm. She is startled and cries out. The men laugh, and she is reminded once more, because of the symbolic value she has ascribed to the lamb, of the "infatuation with sacrifice," and she admits that she herself is not free of it.

The grey falcon, which appears in the Serbs' epic poem about their 1389 defeat, represents the same ideal of sacrifice. It symbolizes Tsar Lazar' s willingness to sacrifice himself and his army in exchange for a heavenly kingdom. On the battlefield at Kossovo, West remarks, the grey falcon and the black lamb worked together.

West even extends the symbolism of the lamb and the falcon to apply to the relationship between Constantine and Gerda. Constantine is the lamb. He loves Gerda innocently, wanting to serve her, even though she treats him cruelly. He has absorbed the myth of sacrifice, that it is better to be pure and loving (even if this means a personal defeat) than to involve himself in the unsavory tactics of the aggressor.

In the epilogue, West returns to the image of the grey falcon, but this time she interprets it differently. She applies it to the heroic resistance of the Yugoslavs against the Nazis in World War II, even in the face of certain defeat. The Yugoslavs, fully conscious of their great poem about Kossovo, fought on this time not because they were in love with sacrifice and death, but, on the contrary, because of their "love of life"; because they knew that, ultimately, a state based on justice would outlast one based on evil.

Digressions

The book does not have a clearly delineated structure. Passages describing West's travels—which include delightful nature descriptions, scenes in restaurants and cafes, and visits to churches and monuments—jostle alongside long and colorful accounts of the troubled history of the Balkans. At any point, triggered by some observation of the scene or a conversation, West is likely to digress about one of her many pet topics. Often she sees deep significance in small details, and a particular incident may prompt her to make sweeping generalizations about life.

For example, when a doctor at a sanatorium in Croatia tells her that the sanatorium sends patients home heavier than when they came in (because they feed them well), West makes a generalization that is also a comparison between Slavs and Westerners: "These people hold that the way to make life better is to add good things to it, whereas in the West we hold that the way to make life better is to take bad things away from it." This type of statement is known as an aphorism: a concise statement of a principle. There are many more aphorisms in the book. "It is not comfortable to be an inhabitant of this globe," West says as she contemplates Croatian history. Few would argue with this statement, but sometimes West's aphorisms are more idiosyncratic: "All women believe that some day something supremely agreeable will happen, and that afterwards the whole of life will be agreeable."

Sometimes West's observations lead her to an epiphany. The term epiphany is used by literary critics to refer to a revelation of some profound truth or vision that is prompted by an ordinary object or scene. William Wordsworth's poem, *The Prelude* (1850), for example, is full of epiphanies, and there are several in West's book. The most striking is when, in Montenegro, West encounters an old peasant woman walking on a mountain road.

The woman tells West that she (the woman) is not going anywhere; she walks about only to seek understanding of her tragic life, of why it took the form it did. West admires her because she does not simply accept her fate; she attempts to understand what West calls"the mystery of process," which is the sole justification of all art and science. The woman inspires West to believe that at some point in the future "we will read the riddle of our universe. We shall discover what work we have been called to do, and why we cannot do it." Only then, West says, will we be able to face our destiny.

Historical Context

The history of the Balkans is long and complex. The Slavs first entered the region in the sixth century, and by the medieval period, the Slavic group known as Serbs had established a formidable kingdom, including the areas now known as Macedonia and Montenegro. But the Turks defeated them in 1389 and the Ottoman Empire then dominated the region. Many Serbs in Bosnia converted to Islam. Most of Croatia (Croats are also Slavs) fell first under the influence of Hungary and then of Austria-Hungary. Most of Croatia remained Roman Catholic; the Serbs were Orthodox Christians.

In the nineteenth century Serbia began to shake off Turkish rule, culminating in the Congress of Berlin in 1878, under which the Serbs gained their independence. But the same congress gave Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary. Macedonia was freed from Turkish rule in 1913, most of it being awarded to Serbia.

In 1918, after World War I, a new state was formed, officially called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. It consisted of Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Within Serbia, Kosovo was created as an autonomous province, because of its largely Muslim population.

From the outset, it was difficult to forge unity amongst such a multi-ethnic people. There were also differences in religion. Croats and Slovenes were Roman Catholics; Serbs and Montenegrins were Orthodox Christians; and a large proportion of Bosnians were Muslims.

A constitution was created in 1921 that established a constitutional monarchy operating within a centralized system based in Belgrade, the Serbian capital. From 1921 to 1929 the new state functioned as a parliamentary democracy, dominated by Serbia. However, there was continuing hostility between Serbs and Croats and an ongoing debate about the desirability of central control. This is amply reported in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* especially in the early chapters set in Zagreb, Croatia, in which Valetta is the spokesman for an independent Croatia. He regards government from Belgrade as a tyranny. He is opposed by Constantine, who supports the Yugoslavian state.

In 1928 a delegate from Montenegro shot five members of the Croatian Peasant Party. Faced with a severe crisis in the country, King Alexander I abolished the constitution and declared a dictatorship. He also renamed the state Yugoslavia (Yugoslav means "South Slav"). Alexander was assassinated in 1934, and, after his death, Yugoslavia was ruled by a three-man regency, since Alexander's son was only eleven years old.

During the late 1930s, when West made her trips to Yugoslavia, the storm clouds of war were gathering once more over Europe. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. In 1940 Germany asked Yugoslavia to sign the Axis Tripartite Act. This act would have caused Yugoslavia to be enslaved by the Axis powers of Germany and Italy. Yugoslavia's pro-German government signed the agreement, but two days later the government was overthrown by an army coup that had the support of the Yugoslav people. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West gives a vivid account of these events, presenting the Yugoslav people as united in their desire to resist the Nazis: "The passions of the people blazed up into a steady flame.... The whole country demanded that ... arms must be taken up against the Germans." In April 1941, Germany declared war on Yugoslavia, and eleven days later the Yugoslavs were defeated.

During the war, thousands of Serbs were sent to concentration camps and killed. In Croatia, the Germans put the fascist Ante Pavelic and his Ustasa forces in charge. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West describes Pavelic as a terrorist who was responsible for the deaths of many people and who supplied the assassins of King Alexander with weapons. When Pavelic gained power in Croatia, he ruthlessly persecuted the Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia, as well as gypsies and Jews. Many were sent to their deaths in concentration camps, such as the one at Jasenovac, southeast of Zagreb.

In the meantime, resistance movements against the Germans were formed in Yugoslavia, and they carried on guerrilla campaigns. The most successful of these movements was led by the Partisans, a communist group headed by Josip Broz Tito. In 1944 Partisan and Russian forces took Belgrade. After World War II ended in 1945, Yugoslavia was reestablished as a communist state under the rule of Marshal Tito.

Critical Overview

When published in 1941, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* received high praise but also some criticism. Time magazine (quoted in Wolfe) called it "one of the most passionate, eloquent, violent, beautifully written books of our time." Katherine Woods, in the *New York Times Book Review,* regarded it as "the magnification and intensification of the travel book form," and added that it was "carried out with tireless percipience, nourished from almost bewildering erudition, chronicled with a thoughtfulness itself fervent and poetic." Clifton Fadiman in the *New Yorker* thought it "as astonishing as it is brilliant ... it is also one of the great books of our time."

Other reviewers took West to task for an over-romanticized view of the virtues of Serb culture. In the *New Republic* (quoted in Rollyson, *Rebecca West: A Life),* Nigel Dennis wrote that the book was a "retelling of a tale we know all too well; the quest of the frustrated Western intellectual for a Nirvana of vitality and self-expression."

Later critics often refer to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as West's masterpiece. Peter Wolfe calls it her "biggest and boldest work" containing some of her best prose. Wolfe characterized the work as a "modern epic," pointing to the following elements in the book: "coursing back and forth over long stretches of time, the many characters, the battle scenes, the ritual sacrifices, the trip to the underworld of a Serbian mine shaft, the founding of a new world order, and Balkan heroism over the centuries."

Wolfe also argues that the book has a unified structure, the first part revolving around the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, and the second part focusing on the defeat of the Serbs at Kosovo in 1389.

In *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West,* Carl Rollyson describes the book as an exemplification of what West called "process," which he defines as "the mind's ability to think through the stages by which it comes to know itself and the world." Rollyson also notes that in addition to being a travelogue and history, the book is also West's "spiritual autobiography."

Harold Orel notes how West's sense of an impending war between Germany and England shaped and colored her narrative. Orel argues that the book is not unified by any literary structure. He prefers to see it as a "spider's web," in which all the separate elements lead to many different connections, "larger generalizations, greater truths, than the conventional writer of a travel journal can imagine."

During the Balkan wars of the 1990s, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* attracted fresh attention not from literary critics but from a new generation of journalists and commentators on current affairs who sought to understand the region that once again had drawn the Western powers into armed conflict. As of the beginning of the twenty-first century, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is regarded as an indispensable source of knowledge and insight into the former Yugoslavia, as well as essential to an understanding and appreciation of West's work as a whole.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses how West's book sheds light on the wars that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Any reader of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is left with a strong impression of the history of the Balkans as a place of violence, bloodshed, and tragedy. Fifty years after the book's 1941 publication, the region erupted in a new wave of bloodletting that quickly turned into the worst violence in Europe since World War II. Many in the West, who knew little about one of the most unstable regions in the world, turned to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* for an understanding of the roots of the conflict.

The wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s occurred as a result of the demise of communism and the resurfacing of old ethnic enmities. Yugoslavia had been a communist state since the end of World War II. Its leader, Marshal Tito, hoped that under a communist ideology, long-standing conflicts between the various ethnicities in the state would gradually wither away. Only part of this idea was new. As West reported in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* King Alexander I tried in 1929 to abolish the traditional names of the provinces - Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia etc. - renaming them after rivers. He hoped that this would undermine people's identification with a particular group and lead to a more cohesive state. He was wrong, as was Tito.

After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia was governed by a collective presidency consisting of representatives from each of the republics. But Serb nationalism was soon on the rise. In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic became president of Serbia and adopted an extreme nationalist agenda. He called for the creation of a greater Serbia, uniting all Serbs in a single state. (In the 1920s, according to West, King Alexander had also envisioned a greater Serbia, so Milosevic's idea was not new.)

Serbian nationalism alarmed the other Yugoslav republics, and in 1991 Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. The Serbs attacked Slovenia but were soon forced to withdraw. With Croatia it was a different story. The Yugoslav army launched a major offensive, coordinating its attack with the Serb minority within Croatia. The war was savage. Serbian forces targeted civilians, and the long siege of the medieval city of Dubrovnik resulted in the destruction of many cultural landmarks. This was the same city that West had visited and regarded as "lovely." Later in 1991, there was a cease-fire that left nearly a third of Croatia under Serb control.

Some of the murderous hostility between Serbs and Croats can be traced to World War II, in which thousands of Serbs perished in Croatian concentration camps. But the hatred goes back even further, as a reading of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* amply demonstrates. It is apparent at the beginning of the book, in the quarrels of Constantine (a Serb) and Valetta (a Croat). And as West and her husband travel in Croatia, they find that many Croats refuse to meet with them because they are traveling with Constantine, who is a representative of the Serb-dominated Yugoslavian state.

When West and her husband visit the site of a World War I battlefield in Macedonia, where the Serbs had been victorious, Constantine suggests bringing a thousand Croats there to show them how freedom is won. Dragutin, the Serb chauffeur, laughs and says, "Yes, yes, show them how liberty is won, and then hang the lot of them." It is the kind of joke that reveals an uncomfortable truth. Later, in Kosovo, West and her husband meet two soldiers guarding a monument, one of whom is a Serb, the other a Croat. Dragutin is surprised to find that the two soldiers get along well. He twists the Croat's ear and says lightheartedly, "We'll kill you all some day." Another revealing joke.

West later finds out that the Croats dislike the Serbs because they regard Serb civilization as inferior to their own. They feel that they belong to the West, while the Serbs are "Oriental." Needless to say, the Serbs have other ideas about whose civilization is superior.

With the outbreak of war in Bosnia in 1992, the situation in the disintegrating Yugoslavia dramatically worsened. The war began when Bosnia - which was a multi-ethnic republic consisting of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims - declared its independence. The subsequent war, which lasted until 1995 and claimed 250,000 lives, was horrific in its savagery. Bosnian Serbs, in alliance with the army of the Serbian republic, pursued a policy of "ethnic cleansing," in which Serbs drove Muslims from their towns and villages and then claimed the depopulated areas as their own. The Serbs killed thousands of civilians, set up detention camps, and committed mass rape. The most notorious example of mass murder was the overrunning of the Muslim town of Srebrenica in 1995, in which forty thousand people were expelled and up to six thousand men and boys killed. These were the worst atrocities in Europe since World War II.

As in the 1991 war in Croatia, the 1992 Bosnian war resulted in damage to the country's cultural heritage. When West visited the Bosnian town of Mostar in the 1930s, she took delight in the medieval Turkish bridge there. The city was even named after the bridge ("Stari most," old bridge), and this is how West describes it:

It is one of the most beautiful bridges in the world. A slender arch lies between two round towers, its parapet bent in a shallow angle in the center. To look at it is good; to stand on it is good.

Future generations will have to take West's word for it, because this beautiful old bridge was destroyed during the Bosnian war.

The merciless conflict also devastated Sarajevo, the scene of another cataclysmic event from earlier days, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, which is described so vividly in West's pages. In 1992 the Bosnian Serbs laid siege to this splendid multi-ethnic and tolerant city, where for generations Serbs, Croats, and Muslims had lived together in peace, and where over fifty years earlier a delighted Rebecca had watched snow fall on the roof of a mosque in a cold early spring.

The siege went on for over three years. Roads in and out of Sarajevo were blockaded; the airport was closed. The 400,000 residents were short of food, medicine, water, and electricity, and many were killed by mortar attacks made by Serb gunners from the hills surrounding the city. In 1994 shelling killed sixty-eight and wounded two hundred in the Sarajevo marketplace.

As the war in Bosnia drew to a close, thanks to a U.S.-brokered peace agreement signed in 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, another act in the long-running drama of ethnic antagonism in Croatia was being played out. The Croats launched a successful offensive to regain territory they had lost to the Serbs in 1991. Over 100,000 terrified Serbs, many of whom had lived in Croatia for generations, were pelted with bricks and verbal abuse as they streamed across the Croatian border into Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia or into Serbia.

Before the decade was out, the Serbian republic had entered upon yet another war. This war was over control of the southern Serbian province of Kosovo. In post-World War II Yugoslavia, Marshal Tito had granted Kosovo autonomy. This meant that Kosovo, which was populated largely by Muslim ethnic Albanians, was allowed to manage its own affairs. But after Tito's death and the rise of Serbian nationalism, Serbs in Kosovo began to complain of ill-treatment by the ethnic Albanians, who made up 90 percent of the population. In 1989 Serbian president Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy and arrested many ethnic Albanian leaders.

During the 1990s Serbia ruled Kosovo as a police state, in which ethnic Albanians were treated as second-class citizens. The province was important to Serbs because they saw it as the birthplace of their great medieval culture that was destroyed after the victory of the Muslim Turks in the battle of Kosovo in 1389. Any reader of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* will be aware of the place that Kosovo has in the hearts of Serbs. West reported that tens of thousands of Serb pilgrims traveled to the battlefield site every year on St. Vitus's Day, the anniversary of the battle. The defeat is commemorated in Serbian folk-poetry, and West confidently tells her husband that an experiment during World War I showed that 90 percent of the patients in a Serbian military hospital knew the poems and songs about the ancient battle.

West also provides insight into the deep-rooted enmity between Serbs and ethnic Albanians. Dragutin, who with his earthy vitality and fierce passions is the embodiment of the Serbian peasant, speaks the following piece of wisdom when he and West and her husband encounter an Albanian man in Kosovo: "This one must be something of a villain, since he is an Albanian. The Albanians . . . being brigands and renouncers of Christ, are great villains." For their part, the Albanians in Kosovo appear to be equally good haters. An Albanian cab driver and his friend tell West that they hate Serbs. West reports that they told her they "would thoroughly enjoy another war if only it would give them the chance of shooting a lot of Serbs." By way of explanation of this hatred, the Albanians say that the Serbs ill-treated them after World War I and took their land. Since the Balkan animosities have been passed down from one generation to the next, anyone reading this passage could hardly be surprised at what happened sixty years later in Kosovo.

Matters came to a head in 1998 with the formation of the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army, which advocated violence in pursuit of its goal of an independent Kosovo state. The Serb police responded with attacks on ethnic Albanian villages, in which many civilians were killed. Then another round of "ethnic cleansing" began, as the Serbs attempted to drive the Muslims out of the province. In the spring of 1999, thousands of ethnic Albanians were forced to flee their homes, threatened at gunpoint by Serb paramilitary forces. Some were herded onto crowded trains that transported them to open fields near the Kosovo border. Others were forced to march on foot in long columns, flanked by masked Serb gunmen who threatened to shoot them if they moved out of line. Many of the refugees' homes were then burned. The aim of the Serbs appeared to be to empty Kosovo of Albanians and repopulate it with Serbs.

This time the West, which had failed to stop the carnage of the Bosnian war, decided to act. In March 1999, after talks between NATO and the Serbs broke down, NATO bombs began to fall on Serbia, including heavy raids on Belgrade, the capital city. It was the first time since World War II that bombs had fallen on a European capital.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the NATO bombing, it must have reminded elderly residents of Belgrade of other terrible nights, fifty-eight years earlier, when the Nazis unleashed ferocious attacks on the city from the air. West describes these attacks, not long after they happened, in the closing pages of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon:*

Eight hundred planes flew low over the city and methodically destroyed the Palace, the university, the hospitals, the churches, the schools, and most of the dwelling-houses. Twenty-four thousand corpses were taken away to the cemeteries and many others lie buried under the ruins.

As the NATO bombs continued to fall in 1999, it was widely reported that the Serbs felt they were once more being victimized by the great powers, as they had been so many times in their long history. It was difficult for Serbs to comprehend that most in the West saw them as the aggressors in the conflict with the ethnic Albanians, as well as in the earlier wars in Bosnia and Croatia. The prototype of this Serbian attitude appears in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* in the form of the Serb Constantine, who complains in Bosnia that "nobody outside Yugoslavia understands us," and later offers the opinion that "most foreign books about us [the Serbs] are insolently wrong."

Finally capitulating after over two months of NATO bombardment, the Serbs surrendered control of Kosovo, which they regarded as an integral part of the Serbian state, to NATO. Milosevic, the instigator of the Serbian nationalism that brought disaster on the whole country, was ousted from power a year later, in 2000. In 2001 he was handed over to the United Nations war crimes tribunal in the Hague, Netherlands. Milosevic, along with four of his aides, was accused of deporting 740,000 ethnic Albanian civilians from Kosovo and of murdering 340 Albanians identified before May 24, 1999, when the indictment against him was confirmed by a judge.

Milosevic's trial may supply some measure of closure to a horrific series of events, but it will take many years before the memory of the grotesque violence that went under the name of "ethnic cleansing " fades. As West wrote in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* "It is sometimes very hard to tell the difference between history and the smell of skunk."

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Goldsworthy explores the introspective nature of West's travel work and locates its autobiographical elements.

A belief in the broader relevance of the individual voice, implicitly present in any (auto)biographical work, has meant that - until relatively recently - there were few purely autobiographical writings by women. Privileged 'historical' insight, such as that provided by high political office or military leadership, is still viewed as a prerequisite for memoir writing. It is hardly surprising that women writers continue to seek other outlets for a record of their own time and thought. Travel writing is one of the more obviously 'self-legitimizing' genres, which has offered women a space in which to inscribe their experiences and views.

Given the paucity of personal memoirs, travel accounts written by women - from the earliest ones, such as Lady Mary Montagu Wortley's *Turkish Letters* (1763), to twentieth-century examples, such as Edith Durham's explorations of Albania or Freya Stark's adventures in Arabia and Asia Minor - have been examined as often for glimpses into their authors' lives as for their descriptions of remote corners of the globe. Indeed, particularly in the case of older travel accounts, those that reveal details of their author's personality and attitudes frequently seem more interesting than more impersonal, 'objective' descriptions of different lands and peoples.

Although written with an explicitly stated desire to offer a highly personal view of Europe in the late 1930s, Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia* presents a different case. While West's early life in has been subject of much - often prurient - attention, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* widely recognized as the most important work of one of the leading British women writers of this century, continues to be interpreted almost exclusively by those interested in Balkan history.

Few travel books compare with *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* in the way that it still provokes controversy and heated debate in newspapers and magazines more than 50 years after its original publication. When it first appeared in 1941, West's half-million word account of her Balkan journeys was welcomed by the reviewers as one of the masterpieces of travel literature. In 1948, the historian A. J. P. Taylor called it 'a work of genius'. As recently as 1991, it was recommended as 'still one of the best introductions to the country and its people'.

In the throes of Yugoslavia's disintegration, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was referred to, in a *New Yorker* article tellingly entitled 'Rebecca West's War', as 'the key reference for the new generation of Balkan commentators'. One of the most influential accounts of travel through the Balkans in the 1990s, Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts,* which has counted among its admirers President Clinton, his wife Hillary and the former chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff General Colin Powell, described *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as 'this century's greatest travel book'.

In the 1990s, West's work sold tens of thousands of copies, but also came under renewed attacks for what was seen as its 'unfashionable' Serbophile and pro-Yugoslav attitude. New editions of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* now provide a short introduction, explaining how political developments in the 1930s encouraged West to believe that a union of small Balkan nations - in which the Serbs would play a role analogous to that of Piedmont in Italy - was the best defense against the imperialist aspirations of neighboring states.

Useful though the debates between Balkan historians, journalists and commentators have been in assessing the intricacies of West's historical judgment, they have also, in a sense, annexed West's travelogue to the realm of Balkan scholarship. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* continues to be used, in the words of West's biographer Victoria Glendinning, as 'an area of battlefield'. Seemingly reluctant to join in the 'Balkan' fray, English literary studies have offered remarkably few interpretations of 'this century's greatest travel book', despite the fact that it is the most reprinted of West's many works. To cite a not altogether dissimilar example, it is as if Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* were still debated exclusively as an eyewitness account of the rights and wrongs of Ottoman rule in the Balkans.

For students of English literature, Rebecca West seems instead to be frozen in an eternal late Edwardian moment, the dying summer of 1912, as the fiercely outspoken young feminist who, on the pages of *The Freewoman* magazine, called H. G. Wells 'an old maid among novelists' and continued - 'as a measure of intellectual honesty' - to dish out bad reviews of his work even after they became lovers. The charismatic twenty-year-old suffragette, embodied in the icon of 'Young Rebecca', the single mother of H. G. Wells's son, has stood in the way of an appreciation of Rebecca West as a mature writer. Some of her most important later work remains neglected. Examples include *The Meaning of Treason* (1948, and out of print), which examines the case of William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw), who broadcast Nazi propaganda during the Second World War, and *The Birds Fall Down* (1966), set in pre-revolutionary Russia and described in a recent history of English literature as 'one of the most stimulating novels of the latter half of the century'. West's attempt, in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* to provide a personal insight into the political developments of the 1930s, and, in particular, the role Britain and America should play in a Europe threatened by Hitler's expansionism, is neglected, even though it is a rare example of an explicitly political memoir by a British woman writer whose record of anti-fascist activism spans the decade.

West was already a renowned journalist and author, with five novels and two lengthy critical studies behind her, when she encountered the Balkans for the first time in 1936. She went to the region on a British Council lecture tour, with no great prior knowledge and no specific interest in Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia: the countries to which her first Balkan tour was to take her. She was, however, acutely aware of the developments in Germany and recorded - as her biographer Carl Rollyson notes - her 'growing sense of the apocalypse' in a series of articles written for the *New York American* as early as between 1931 and 1933. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was to provide West with an outlet for a vehement denunciation of new European nationalisms. In the guise of travel literature and eyewitness account, she offered an astute and early political analysis of the causes of the Second World War, setting out her counterblast to the proponents of appeasement.

Perhaps because of West's gender, her most seminal work often receives less attention than some of her love affairs. Indeed, notwithstanding the recent wars in former Yugoslavia, a casual observer of television arts programs and reader of the arts pages in newspapers might have concluded that her relationship with H. G. Wells was infinitely more significant than her longest and most deeply felt book.

While representing one of the most exhaustive literary and historical examinations of a Balkan country available in any language, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is just as important as an attempt by West to redefine the boundaries of travel literature. British travel writing in the earlier part of this century tended to follow the traditions of Victorian travel narratives, which - much like the realist novel - claimed to be 'objective', unbiased, omniscient accounts of journeys, usually undertaken by intrepid male travelers in 'obscure' corners of the planet. As in the novel, the shift towards modernism increases the importance of the individual perspective. The individual voice which narrates the journey begins to be as important as the journey itself.

Rebecca West contemplated the changing philosophy of travel in her account of an encounter with D. H. Lawrence who, on reaching a new city, went straight to his hotel and proceeded to 'hammer out articles about the place, vehemently and exhaustively describing the temperament of the people ... This seemed obviously a silly thing to do', West thought at first, but later realized that he was writing 'about the state of his own soul', 'and the city of Florence was as good a symbol as any other'.

Writing about Yugoslavia in the late 1930s, West similarly wrote about 'the state of her own soul'. Her journey to Yugoslavia forced her to face the increasing certainty of another European war, and she resolved to provide one of the most deliberately revealing and personal records of the intellectual anguish and soul searching undergone by a British woman writer in the late 1930s:

This experience made me say to myself: 'If a Roman woman had, some years before the sack of Rome, realized why it was going to be sacked and what motives inspired the barbarians and what the Romans, and had written down all she knew and felt about it, the record would have been of value to historians. My situation, though probably not so fatal, is as interesting. ' Without doubt it was my duty to keep a record of it. So I resolved to put on paper what a typical Englishwoman felt and thought in the late nineteen-thirties when, already convinced of the inevitability of the second Anglo-German war, she had been able to follow the dark waters of that event back to its source.

West's friend, the journalist John Gunther, characterized *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as 'not so much a book about Yugoslavia as a book about Rebecca West'. Seeking to pay her an underhand compliment, Gunther pointed to one of the most abiding values of West's study. While the title defines West's work as a travelogue, 'a journey through Yugoslavia', *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is also a 'social autobiography' - that is, a very personal account of an important historical moment, described by its author as a record of 'what a typical Englishwoman felt' in the face of a war. Its Epilogue, written during the Blitz, while West watched the bombs falling over London and the sight of the burning city 'touched deep sources of pain that will not listen to reason', was a powerful mobilizing call directed at her readership in Britain and America. Brian Hall describes it as 'one of the most stirring and intelligent pieces of war propaganda ever written'.

Combining as it does historical study, political essay, autobiography and elements of fiction, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is a unique meta-text. West does not observe chronology. She merges three journeys - the first lecture tour in 1936; the second, an Easter journey with her husband in 1937; and the final visit, which ended in the early summer of 1938 on the Adriatic coast - into one. In order to protect her Yugoslav friends whose country had - by the time when her book appeared in 1941 - been dismembered and occupied, she alters their names and identities.

West's primary concern is not the accuracy of her book as a record of her travels. She focuses instead on those insights into the Balkans which can help her make sense of British and European history. Her attempts to understand Yugoslavia are permeated with a sense of self-recognition. 'Nothing in my life had affected me more deeply than this journey through Yugoslavia,' she notes, adding: 'This was in part because there is a coincidence between the natural forms and colours of the western and southern parts of Yugoslavia and the innate forms and colours of my imagination'. She defines her efforts to understand the Balkans as an attempt to gain a deeper knowledge of herself:

But my journey moved me also because it was like picking up a strand of wool that could lead me out of a labyrinth in which, to my surprise, I had found myself immured. It might be that when I follow the thread to its end I would find myself faced by locked gates, and that this labyrinth was my sole portion on this earth. But at least I now knew its twists and turns, and what corridor led into what vaulted chamber, and noting in my life before I went to Yugoslavia had ever made plain these mysteries.

With its very personal insights, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is quintessentially a modernist travel narrative. Introspection is the essence of West's journey. External descriptions of travel and people frequently end in moments of epiphany, when the country 'offers knowledge of itself. ''Sometimes a country will for days keep its secrets from a traveller,' she wrote in Macedonia, 'showing him nothing but its surfaces, its grass, its trees, the outside of its houses. Then suddenly it will throw him a key and tell him to go where he likes and see what he can'. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* invites the reader to find such a key to the understanding of Balkan history. The book begins with a very private moment, as West urges her husband, Henry Andrews, a reluctant traveler to Yugoslavia, to expect a country in which 'everything was comprehensible,' a country which, after one brief visit, feels like her 'mother country':

I raised my hand on my elbow and called through the open door into the other wagon-lit: 'My dear, I know I have inconvenienced you terribly by making you take your holiday now, and I know you did not really want to come to Yugoslavia at all. But when you get there you will see why it was so important that we should make this journey and that we should make it now, at Easter. It will all be quite clear, once we are in Yugoslavia.' There was, however, no reply. My husband had gone to sleep. It was perhaps as well. I could not have gone to justify my certainty that this train was taking us to a land where everything was comprehensible, where the mode of life was so honest that it put an end to perplexity. I lay back in the darkness and marvelled that I should be feeling about Yugoslavia as if it were my mother country, for this was 1937, and I had never seen the place till 1936.

A similar, strongly personal tone permeates her travelogue right through to the Epilogue in which West's own country is facing Nazi Germany, alone and vulnerable. Britain's suffering, finally, makes her understand 'what it means to be Balkan'. The recognition of her 'mother country' in Yugoslavia comes a full circle in these final moments of the book. She had originally chosen Yugoslavia as her subject because of her interest in the relationships between small states and great empires - 'because I was born a citizen of one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen, and grew up as its exasperated critic'. Before her journey to the Balkans, West had, as she explained to one of her Yugoslav correspondents, contemplated a book about a small country in a different corner of Europe:

I went to Finland in 1935 and saw a lot of people there including the Communist leader, Vuoluoki, who seemed to me a superb woman, and I wanted to write a book on a small nation torn between the conflicts of greater powers. I meant to go back to Finland from time to time for a matter of years, but I went to Yugoslavia some months later on a lecture-tour for the British Council and realized that this was a far more exciting and noble subject. I went with some experience of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and a supreme loathing of both, and a great distaste for Austria, which I thought the nastiest of the old European powers and in her present phase very willing to hold the bag for Nazi Germany.

Her initial, strong sense of identification with small nations whose destiny was controlled by the aspirations of imperial powers, perhaps typical of West as a woman writer, finally becomes a source of personal courage when Britain itself is threatened. The memory of South Slavs enables the author to face the destiny of her own country, whatever it might be, playing the music of Mozart on her gramophone ('Deh vieni, non tardar' - 'O come, do not delay'. - Susanna's aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*) against the sound of bombs exploding over London. 'This has seemed to me at times an unendurably horrible book to write, with its record of pain and violence and bloodshed,' West writes, adding that 'perhaps the most horrible thing about it is that... I have to end it while there rages round me vileness equal to that which I describe'. While many recent autobiographical writings by women seem inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's argument that the personal is political, in West's work the political always becomes profoundly personal. Her moving account of the Blitz, with its deliberation on the redemptive power of art in moments of historical darkness - when there was 'no solid ground, only blood and mud poached to an ooze by the perpetual trampling back and forth of Judases seducing one another in an unending cycle of treacheries' - offers the most strongly autobiographical moments in the book. West's descriptions of walking with her husband through the rose-garden in London's Regent's Park, 'while France was falling, and after she had fallen', as Londoners sit among the roses under a heaven 'curiously starred with the silver elephantines of the balloon barrage . . . reading the papers or looking straight in front of them, their faces white', provide some of the most vivid evocations of the Blitz in English literature. 'Let nobody belittle them by pretending they were fearless,' she urges. 'But their pale lips did not part to say the words that would have given them security and dishonour'.

The sheer power with which West writes about this theme underlines the danger of seeing *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as exclusively a 'Balkan' travel book. Such as preoccupation neglects its value as testimony to a British woman writer's attitude to the Second World War - with its plea not in favor of mindless courage but against dishonor - written at a time when the war's outcome was far from clear.

Source: Vesna Goldsworthy, "Travel Writing as Autobiography: Rebecca West's Journey of Self-Discovery," in *Representing Lives: Women and Auto/biography,* edited by Alison Donnell and Pauline Polkey, Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000, pp. 87-95.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Colquitt explores how West summons forth "an extended battle cry to the English" to fight Hitler and Germany as the Serbs did, honorably.

Few literary masterpieces of the twentieth century have been so highly acclaimed and so roundly neglected as Rebecca West's tour de force, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. When *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was first published in 1941, West's contemporaries reacted with a mixture of praise and confusion. Most reviewers seconded Clifton Fadiman, who in 1941 saw this work both as West's "magnum opus" and "also [as] one of the great books of our time". Even those who judged West's accomplishments more severely were forced to admit that "... Rebecca West's book is a magnificent piece of writing". It was when critics grew frustrated by their failure to find an anchor with which to secure *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* - a literary genre of sufficient dimensions against which West's achievements could be measured - that confusion and at times hostility were in evidence. Stoyan Pribichevich, for example, concluded his review by criticizing West for attempting to do too much, for stepping out of generic bounds: "Had Miss West thrown out of her manuscript much of the history and all of the politics, her book would have come out half as long. It would have been not only one of the most colorful pictures of Yugoslavia, but one of the most beautiful books written in recent years". Although the subtitle of this "odd masterpiece "is *"A Journey through Yugoslavia,"* West had little intention of composing an innocuous travelogue filled with "beautiful" and "colorful" pictures, as more perspicacious critics recognized. Indeed, concerning questions of genre, West's critics can agree on only one point: *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* "is more than a travel book". As Victoria Glendinning recently argued in her memorial essay on West, the "temperamental diversity" which characterizes *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* as well as Rebecca West's life work is probably responsible for keeping from West the "popular fame" that should be her due: "She was a major stylist, a major critical intelligence, a major commentator on public events and sexual politics, and a radical moralist". She was, Glendinning asserts, "the most interesting woman of this century in England".

Without a doubt Yugoslavia was for West the most interesting country of this century in Europe. Indeed, much as the reader of West's masterpiece is stunned when first confronting this "epic testament", so the writer herself was initially overwhelmed when she first toured Yugoslavia in the spring of 1936; for the country so inspired her that the very next year she returned at Easter with her husband, Henry Maxwell Andrews, in order that he too might experience life in a "land where everything was comprehensible". West's second pilgrimage to the Balkans begins in a train. On the long ride across Europe that carries the couple to their destination, West cannot keep from singing Yugoslavia's praises one night just after Andrews has climbed into bed; yet despite her enthusiasm for her subject West soon discovers that her "husband had gone to sleep". The image of man asleep, of a nation asleep, is one of the central motifs of this work, for this image relates both to Yugoslavia's past - to the legend of Prince Lazar and his dream of the grey falcon - and to West's rhetorical purpose, which was not so much to "justify" her belief in this strangely "comprehensible" land, a land which by 1941 had already been devastated by Hitler's forces, but rather to persuade her own people through Yugoslavia's example that they must strive to stave off the sleep of death which would both induce and follow Nazi conquest. As her two-volume epic dramatizes, the sleep of the conquered can last for centuries. In the case of the Slavs, the sleep that resulted from Turkish conquest endured five hundred years, from the Battle of Kossovo in 1389 to the nineteenth century, when some of the Slavs at last freed themselves from the Ottoman Empire to form the independent nations of Serbia and Bulgaria.

The powers that work towards the annihilation of self and of state, however, come also from within; and as a student of Freud, West was well aware of the conflicting tendencies toward Eros and Thanatos that divide the human psyche. Before her travels through Yugoslavia, West admits, "Violence was all [she] ... knew of the Balkans; all [she] knew of the South Slavs"; yet despite West's acknowledgement that " 'Yugoslavia [was] always telling [her] about one death or another,'" it was here, she believed, that the Westerner "should come ... to learn to live". Considering West's concerns, it is not surprising that *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is both a joyous celebration of life and a scathing indictment of our "infatuation with sacrifice", in particular, of mankind's propensity toward self-sacrifice. West had inveighed against such self-sacrifice ever since her early years as a radical reporter when in numerous articles for *The Freewoman, The New Freewoman,* and *The Clarion,* she exhorted her fellow suffragists to be fighters, not martyrs. More than thirty years later when she was writing *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* West's concerns for humanity's masochistic inclinations had broadened to embrace both men and women, both the British and the Slavs.

Of the Slavs whom West knows and loves, it is her friend Constantine, "a true poet" who "knows all about things he knows nothing about", who most clearly embodies the Slavic *Lebensfreude* West celebrates, as well as the "compulsion to suicide" she decries. As chief character in West's travels, Constantine is both hero and victim, Churchill and Chamberlain. In his failure to control his inclinations toward self-sacrifice, Constantine is also symbol, for the martyring impulse to which he abandons himself is symptomatic of that same malaise that West sees operating in the whole of Europe in the late 1930s as country after country capitulates to Hitler and Mussolini. By painstakingly depicting Constantine's slow "dying", West warns her readers of the consequences that follow when men as well as nations choose to obey the Sirens' call. The Siren to whom Constantine listens is his German-born wife, a woman whose "blond, blind will" both unmans her husband and spoils West's second pilgrimage to Yugoslavia.

As a poet of some note and a politician of some notoriety, the voluble Constantine is well-equipped to guide the Britishers through the country he loves, a country for which he "fought in the Great War very gallantly". A polyglot and a polymath, the seemingly irrepressible Constantine is eager to show off his country's beauties: "He talks incessantly," West reveals, and "Nearly all his talk is good..." The extraordinary aura surrounding this dynamo is well indicated by the fictional name West gives him. The imperial Constantine, it seems, is exceptional in every respect, not least of which in his religious make-up, for Constantine is not only a Serb, that is, an Eastern Orthodox Christian, he is also a Jew. As West describes him, "Of all human beings I have ever met he is the most like Heine: and since Heine was the most Jewish of writers it follows that Constantine is Jew as well as Serb... He is by adoption only, yet quite completely, a Serb". In the presence of Gerda, however, this exuberant personality begins to erode, and as West records the progress of Constantine's disintegration, she works to establish the chief propositions of the complex argument she will unfold in her epilogue; for Constantine' s spiritual and physical decline is no isolated phenomenon. The sickness that saps his strength relates both to the cultural and political differences that weaken his country and to one of the principal tenets that, West claims, unites western civilization - the Doctrine of Atonement. As heir to this tradition, the "Slav Jew with a German wife" begins to crumble when he misguidedly lets himself fall victim to the "age-old hatred of the Slav" and of the Jew that in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* finds its most ardent disciple in the person of Gerda.

From entrance to exit, Constantine's wife is singularly "disagreeable". Even West's first glimpse of Gerda in the Belgrade train station suggests something of this: "among the dark hurrying people she stood as if drawing contentment from her own character, from her advantageous difference". As a "true German", Gerda is firmly convinced she is one of the "elect", and for this reason she feels herself well-qualified to deliver pronouncements about matters and cultures she understands not at all; but unlike her poet husband, Gerda "knows [nothing] about things [she] knows nothing about". Most of her decrees concern Yugoslavia, for when Gerda discovers West's love for the country, she resolves to dispel any notion the writer holds that the nation possesses qualities of value. Shortly after being introduced to the British couple, Gerda criticizes West's "'liking for the Serbs'" with characteristic tact," 'But it is stupid to be like that... you cannot like people who are stupid'". For Gerda, the ranks of the "stupid" are legion. Slavs, gypsies, Marxists, and Jews - all are stupid and therefore worthy of contempt because their values run counter to those of "Hitler's Germany". As West later explains to her husband, for true believers like Gerda, " 'Religion and death are not so important as being a German, nothing must exist except Germanity'".

Gerda's "contempt for everything Slav and non-German" ruthlessly manifests itself in two visits the travelers make to war cemeteries on the same day. The first stop on their agenda, the German memorial at Bitolj, is criticized by West as being "one of the most monstrous indecencies that has ever been perpetuated." Ostensibly built to honor the German soldiers who died during the First World War, this fortress-like structure "is the only war cemetery [West has] ever seen that is offensive. .." West has good cause to dread this outing: "There could be nothing more disagreeable than to accompany Gerda on a visit to this unfortunate symbol of her race. . ." Not surprisingly, the excursion is a disaster, for Gerda's insulting behavior finally causes the amazingly patient Andrews to crack. Pressed by Gerda to explain why the Bitolj memorial is displeasing, Andrews truthfully but rudely responds: " 'I don't like it because it pays no sort of respect to the individuals who are buried in it and because it is a tactless reminder of the past to an invaded people.'" Gerda's melodramatic outburst stuns everyone: "'Now he has insulted my people! He has insulted my whole people! ... [T]hink of it, here I am, far from my home, and he insults my blood, the German blood!'". Constantine's response to this ugly scene is equally disturbing, for he mimes his wife's illogic by explaining Gerda's behavior through the lie of race hatred: "'The Germans are all like this. They are a terrible people'".

Shortly after this explosion, West and Andrews become suspicious when Constantine returns from comforting Gerda with a "beaming" countenance and a message that his " 'very sweet [wife]... wills that we all go now to the French war cemetery'". The couple's suspicions are justified, for Gerda's peace-offering is tainted with venom. West is in fact particularly reluctant to visit this second memorial in Gerda's company, for this site has always struck the writer as being "one of the most affecting places in the world": "It lies out on the plains among the flat fields edged with willows and poplars, and it is a forest of flimsy little wooden crosses painted red, white and blue, each with a name or number, and each with its rose tree". Predictably, the "very sweet" Gerda sees this memorial differently, through the distorted lens of "Germanity" - "'[T]hink of all these people dying for a lot of Slavs'" - and even as she utters this remark, Gerda denies not only the heroism of the French and the humanity of the Slavs, but also her own husband's dignity and self-worth. Gerda's hatred knows no bounds; to it she will sacrifice Constantine.

The sacrifice would prove less unsettling to witness if Constantine did not voluntarily prepare himself for the slaughter; yet as such episodes amply attest, the "Slav Jew with a German wife" is "willing to cast away his self-respect, and indeed all he care[s] for, art and philosophy and his country's life" solely in order "to win the good opinion" of a woman who scorns everything he values. Not surprisingly, Constantine's compromising defense of Gerda takes its toll on his own mental and physical health, as well as on his relations with West and Andrews. Spiritually the patriot is maimed by his wife's hatred of the Slav and her unswerving veneration of Nazi Germany; yet because Constantine wishes to "uphold Gerda in her attack on the world, and ... in her contempt for him", he painfully assumes her many prejudices as his own. The paradox of his position becomes particularly clear when Constantine allows himself to fall sway to Gerda's anti-Semitic influence.

Constantine's capitulation to Gerda's "strange strength", however, is no new cultural or historical phenomenon; nor is it peculiar to the Jew. This is in fact the chief lesson that West learns in her journey through Yugoslavia as she comes to understand the far-reaching hegemony of an entity that she summarily labels "Central Europe." Over and over again in her Balkan travels, West is reminded that the influence of Central Europe - and of its various empires - is "corrupt", and its principal legacy "a profound malady" which effectively cripples its former victims long after they seem to have won their freedom. This lesson is most dramatically impressed upon West when, toward the conclusion of her vacation, she finds herself being interviewed by a Slav university student who deliberately poses before the writer as Viennese.

West is "appalled" that she has been chosen as a subject for research, and she at once tries to steer the student to a different topic: "I explained that I was a writer wholly unsuitable for her purpose: that the bulk of my writing was scattered through American and British periodicals; that I had never used my writing to make a continuous disclosure of my own personality to others, but to discover for my own edification what I knew about various subjects which I found to be important to me..." Undaunted, the university student queries West about influences on her writing. After mentioning several American and British authors whom she admires, West discerns that the young woman is more interested in the continental tradition that has helped shape her work. The student, however, is dismayed by West's many references to the French:" '[S]urely all these people put together do not equal Goethe?'".

At this point the writer discovers that "the golden-haired girl" is not Viennese but actually a Croat. Although revolted by the deception, West recognizes that the student's embarrassed and ignorant attitude towards her heritage is symptomatic of that same "malady" that affects even Slav patriots like Constantine. Empire has wreaked its "corrupting " influence over the nation as a whole:

It cut off this girl from pride in her own race, which would have been a pity had her race had much less to be proud of than the superb achievement of defending European civilization from extinction by the Turks. It cut her off from enlightenment by that French culture which has the advantage over all others of having begun earlier, branching straight from the Roman stem, and having developed most continuously. What it offered her instead was sparse, was recent. It might fairly be defined as Frederick the Great and Goethe... It had left this girl flimsy as a jerry-built house with no foundation deeper than the nineteenth century, when loyalty to her Slav blood and adherence to the main current of European culture would have made her heiress to the immense fortune left by the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. Not only Constantine, but this girl and her family, and many others like them, had made this curious choice.

Despite West's claim that her literary purpose is never "[self-]disclosure", her account of this interview is revealing; for as West's political and literary allegiances become increasingly manifest, the reader is allowed to glean precisely why West names Constantine's wife "Gerda". Although previous passages have suggested West's general distaste for German literature and her more specific disregard for Goethe's achievements, this exchange makes these views explicit.

Holding that Goethe's art is intellectually bankrupt, West is "grieved" to learn that the "Viennese " student cannot even read French: "[I]t seemed to me that any one of [the French writers I had mentioned - Montaigne, Racine, Voltaire, Hugo, Proust] had as much to say as Goethe, whose philosophy, indeed, boils down to the opinion, 'Ain't Nature grand?'". For West, the German writer's reputation is as overinflated as Gerda's confident belief in her "advantageous difference," and thus it is natural that West gives the most vocal proponent of "Germanity" she meets during her travels the name of the writer who epitomizes a cultural heritage she regards as shallow. Significantly, West regards the student's veneration of Goethe and German literature not simply as a question of aesthetics, but rather as a matter of life and death. As she sums up her reaction to this exasperating encounter: "Nothing is less true than that men are greedy. Some prefer poverty to wealth, and some even go so far as to prefer death to life. That I was to learn when I returned to England".

West begins to understand mankind's infatuation with death, however, long before her arrival in England. Indeed, at no moment during her stay in Yugoslavia is this celebration of death rendered more graphic to the traveler than when she witnesses the ancient "rite of the Sheep's Field". West has no idea what to expect when she ventures into the countryside on St. George's eve in order to watch the annual fertility rites that take place around a "flat-topped rock". The sight which greets West as she approaches this "uneven" monument is "abominable": the rock was "red-brown and gleaming, for it was entirely covered with ... blood... [A]s we came nearer ... we had to pick our way among a number of bleeding cocks' heads". West is further repulsed when she sees a gypsy sacrifice a black lamb on this rock in a ritual gesture that she condemns as "purely shameful": "It was a huge and dirty lie... Women do not get children by adding to the normal act of copulation the slaughter of a lamb, the breaking of a jar, the decapitation of a cock..."

West's response to this gratuitous slaughter is complicated by her recognition that she too is acquainted with this rock: "I knew this rock well. I had lived under the shadow of it all my life. All our Western thought is founded on this repulsive pretense that pain is the price of any good thing. Here it could be seen how the meaning of the Crucifixion had been hidden from us, though it was written clear". Perceiving that this "hidden" doctrine, the "theory of the Atonement", is the "theological ruse" upon which Christianity is based, West argues that such bloody logic "flouts reason at all points, for it is not possible that a just God should forgive people who are wicked because another person who was good endured agony by being nailed to a cross". As West further analyzes the influence of this unwritten creed upon western culture, she strives to show how it is that marriages of love and hate, Constantines and Gerdas, are possible. The Doctrine of Atonement, she reasons, points its legatees in opposing directions: "We are continually told to range ourselves with both the crucified and the crucifiers, with innocence and guilt, with kind love and cruel hate". Given this conflicting instruction, it should scarcely shock that many are lured to the cross, or that the Jewish Constantine, Christian "by adoption", "bare[s] his throat to Gerda's knife" in a sacrifice suggestive both of the slaughter of the black lamb and of the crucifixion of the *agnus dei*.

Importantly, West relates Constantine's "self-dedication to death" not only to Christian doctrine, but also to a pivotal episode in Serbian history, the 1389 Battle of Kossovo in which the Slavs were conquered by the Turks. Slav legend has pictured this defeat as "holy" and "honourable". In a long poem recounting the battle, the Serb leader Prince Lazar is said to have been visited by a divine messenger who appeared to him in the form of a grey falcon. This emissary, however, was "no falcon, no grey bird, / But. . . the Saint Elijah", who asked the czar whether he sought a "heavenly" or an "earthly kingdom". According to West, Lazar chose wrongly, for no "man can procure his own salvation by refusing to save millions of people from miserable slavery". When West visits the scene of this battle, she reflects at some length upon the "disagreeable" truth embodied in the legend of the grey falcon, for she recognizes that the poem speaks directly to her own "gift for martyrdom". As she continues her meditation, West discerns that Prince Lazar is "of a pattern familiar to [her], that he was one of that company loving honour and freedom and harmony", a company that for West includes many notable English liberals of the 1930s. Thinking of these English Lazars, West begins to weep when she asks herself '"if it be a law that those who are born into this world with a preference for the agreeable over the disagreeable are born also with an impulse towards defeat,'" for if this is true, " 'then the whole world is a vast Kossovo... where people who love go out to fight people who hate'". Having already observed Constantine's resemblance to the black lamb, West now sees that the "grey falcon had visited him also". Like Prince Lazar, Constantine has made a "curious choice" - to "procure salvation" by "offer[ing] his loving heart" to Gerda's abundant hate.

In their private talks with one another, West and Andrews agree that Gerda is " 'an international phenomenon.'" However, the couple conclude " 'that there may be enough Gerdas concentrated in separate areas to make her in effect a nationalist phenomenon. She probably exists,'" Andrews asserts, "'in sufficient numbers in Central Europe to make it an aggressive, and, indeed, irresistible power'". Although West and Andrews hold that her empire "'cannot last long ... while it lasts it will be terrible.'" By the time West writes her epilogue, she knows firsthand how "terrible" "Gerda's empire " is. World War II is under way, and bombs are falling in London. The war began with an England unprepared for battle, an England that, under Chamberlain' s misguidance, was experiencing not merely "a white winter of the spirit", but rather the sleep of death. According to West, the government's treachery in Munich awoke the sleeping nation, for many then realized that unless they could rid themselves of Chamberlain, the populace would be sacrificed to "Gerda's empire".

When *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* was published in 1941, West did not know what the outcome of the war would be. She did know, however, the fate that had met Yugoslavia, for when its leaders began to negotiate with the Nazis, the people staged a nearly bloodless coup and installed a new king who led the willing populace into a doomed battle against the Axis powers. Although thousands died during this conflict, West judges this slaughter as worthy. The defeat, she maintains, ironically proved to be one of the country's "great victories", for "the unexpected resistance... diverted the German forces in Bulgaria" and delayed the Russian campaign. West's depiction of this "victory" is no less "paradoxical" for her assertion that as the Slavs readied for battle, they "often repeated the poem of the Tsar Lazar and the grey falcon". The Slavs who participated in this twentieth-century Kossovo, however, differed from their fourteenth-century counterparts: "[T]here was no one who would have bought his personal salvation by consenting to the subjugation of his people... It was their resistance, not their defeat, which appeared to them as the sacred element in their ordeal".

Jane Marcus has rightly called West "a propagandist of genius", and nowhere is this more true than in the epilogue to *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* which stands as one of the most inspired and inspiring pieces of war propaganda ever written. This was, after all, a book West claims she "ha[d] to write". As the passages I have quoted suggest, West sees her own mission as grey falcon as both elegiac and hortatory; for as she celebrates the Slavs, who in World War II "never capitulated" although they were "destroyed", West seeks to rally her own people to follow the heroic example of the Yugoslavian army - to resist the combined forces of "Gerda's empire" even if resistance means death. As West declares, "it is sometimes necessary to fight for one's life". In this extended battle cry to the English, West makes clear that the defeat the Slavs suffered under King Peter Karageorgevitch II was, to borrow from the legend of the grey falcon, both "honourable" and "holy". For West, the sacrifice was all the more poignant because "[t]his was a state and a people that, above all others, wanted to live". The Slavs' decision to die fighting was not the masochistic submission of a Constantine to a Gerda. On the contrary, the doomed populace recognized their invaders for what they were, but unlike Constantine, they chose not to offer themselves passively "to the service of hate".

Both Victoria Glendinning, the authorized biographer, and Jane Marcus, the editor of West's correspondence, have recently called attention to an early review in which "the young Rebecca" addresses the slippery problem of women and genius:

Women only differ from men in that they have not been geniuses; but that is because they have lived virtuous and normal lives. And genius is the abnormal justifying itself. Men who are conscious of deep imperfections, of madness and sinfulness and spiritual failure, know that they are condemned by the laws of life, and to escape that condemnation they make themselves one with life by some magnificent act of creation.

In many respects, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* may be said to represent "the abnormal justifying itself". After all, West opens her "odd masterpiece " by admitting that she wanted her husband to journey with her to Yugoslavia because she felt unable "to justify" her belief in "a land where everything was comprehensible". Given West's reading of Yugoslavian history and her interpretation of European politics in the 1930s, the reader well understands why West dedicates what is undoubtedly her most "magnificent act of creation" "To my friends in Yugoslavia, who are now all dead or enslaved", and why she includes in her epilogue a prayer that begins," 'Let me behave like a Serb'". For Rebecca West, there could be no nobler fate.

Source: Clare Colquitt, "A Call to Arms: Rebecca West's Assault on the Limits of 'Gerda' s Empire' in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,*" in *South Atlantic Review,* Vol. 51, No. 2, May 1986, pp. 77-92.

Topics for Further Study

Research the causes of the 1999 Kosovo war. Was NATO justified in the actions it took? Were U.S. vital interests at stake? How should those interests be defined?

Research the causes of World War I. Would the war still have happened had Archduke Franz Ferdinand not been assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914? Why or why not?

West admired the Serbs, including Serb nationalism, which she regarded as "defensive" rather than aggressive. What is nationalism and is it a positive or negative force in the world today? Provide some examples.

In the Bosnian war of 1992 to 1995, should the West have intervened earlier than it did to prevent the slaughters that happened there? Should the United States be responsible for ensuring that the peace agreement of 1995 is maintained? Why or why not?

Write a character analysis of Gerda. Explain how her attitudes reflect the Nazi ideology that gripped Germany in the 1930s.

Compare and Contrast

1930s: The independent state of Yugoslavia includes Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Dalmatia.

Today: Following the breakup of Yugoslavia after the fall of communism, and a series of wars in the 1990s, Yugoslavia consists of Serbia and Montenegro only. Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia are independent nations. Kosovo, although still officially part of Serbia, is under the jurisdiction of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) following the conflict between Serbia and NATO in 1999.

1930s: The Nazi party under Adolf Hitler takes power in Germany. Hitler bans all other political parties and brings economic and cultural life under the control of the central government. The persecution of non-Aryans begins. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 deprive Jews of their German citizenship and forbid marriage between Jews and Aryans. More anti-Semitic laws are passed over the next few years. Hitler's rearmament of Germany and his aggressive, expansionist foreign policies lead to World War II.

Today: Germany, divided into East Germany and West Germany after World War II, is reunited (since 1990), and is a democratic nation that is a member of the European Union and NATO.

1930s: The world is dominated by competing political ideologies of socialism, fascism, and communism. In much of Europe, this is an age of totalitarianism, in which the state has power over many aspects of individual life. Totalitarianism is on the rise because, with the coming of the Great Depression in the United States, capitalism appears to be a failed system. Many in Europe are attracted to new systems that seem to hold out a promise of full employment and greater social equality.

Today: As political systems, communism and socialism are on the wane throughout the world. Only a few countries still have communist governments, including North Korea, Cuba, and China. Because capitalism and parliamentary democracy have had greater success in providing economic prosperity and political freedom, these systems are being adopted by an increasing number of nations. International terrorism presents a greater threat to world stability than conventional war between nation-states.

What Do I Read Next?

In West's first novel, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), a shell-shocked soldier returns from World War I in 1916 having lost his memory of everything that happened to him over the previous fifteen years. The novel analyzes the lives of three women who are emotionally connected to him.

The Balkans: Nationalism, War & the Great Powers, 1804-1999 (2001), by Misha Glenny, is a history of the Balkans, showing how it has long suffered at the hands of the great powers that surround it. Glenny is highly critical of NATO's 1999 war against Serbia over Kosovo.

Kosovo: A Short History (1999), by Noel Malcolm, a British historian and journalist, provides the troubled history of the province where conflict between Serbs and ethnic Albanians led to the 1999 NATO intervention.

Kosovo: War and Revenge (2000), by Tim Judah, is an account of the 1999 Kosovo war by a journalist who covered it as it was happening.

Like *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (1994), by journalist Robert D. Kaplan, is a travelogue deeply imbued with the political history of the Balkans. Kaplan sees the major players in the Balkan wars of the 1990s as reincarnations of aspects of the violent history of the region going back six hundred years.

Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo (1995), by Zlata Filipovic, translated by Christina Pribichevich-Zoric, is a diary kept by eleven-year-old Filipovic from 1991 to 1993 in Sarajevo. Her childhood was disrupted by the terror of war as Bosnian Serbs besieged the city. She endured years of misery, fear, and deprivation.

D. H. Lawrence admired Mexican Indian culture as much as West admired Serb culture. In his book *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), he writes of his travels in Mexico with the same kind of passion and insight that West brought to her Yugoslavian adventures.

Further Study

Deakin, Motley, *Rebecca West*, Twayne, 1980.

This is a concise survey of West's work in all genres. Deakin considers West to be a "voice of sanity" during the turbulent events of the twentieth century.

Hall, Brian, "Rebecca West's War," in the *New Yorker,* April 15, 1996, pp. 74-80, 82-83.

Hall notes that, because the Balkans are once more in turmoil, interest in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* has increased. He gives a very insightful analysis of the main elements of the book.

Scott, Bonnie Kime, ed., *Selected Letters of Rebecca West,* Yale University Press, 2000.

West was a prolific letter writer, and this volume contains hundreds of her letters, all annotated by the editor.

Tillinghast, Richard, "Rebecca West and the Tragedy of Yugoslavia," in *New Criterion,* Vol. 10, No. 10, June 1992, pp. 12-22.

This is a discussion of West's book in the light of the disintegration of modern Yugoslavia.

Weldon, Fay, *Rebecca West,* Viking, 1985.

Weldon is a novelist, and this is an imaginative biography of West that examines her love affair with H. G. Wells. Weldon admits she invented a lot of material.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NCfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NCfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NCfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NCfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NCfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NCfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Nonfiction Classics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

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□Night.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Nonfiction Classics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NCfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Nonfiction Classics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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