What is the Balkans? This question reemerges periodically as scholars, students, journalists, and bloggers, general readers, diplomats, and policymakers encounter the complex, fascinating history and current affairs of the region. Inevitably, the answer comes down to Maria Todorova’s work, which has become a major reference point for all things Balkan: the concept, the name, the metaphor, the region. Whether we discuss the boundaries or specificities of the Balkans, debate their place in European or world (mental) geographies, or refute long-standing stereotypes of backwardness, enmity, and peripheralization, Todorova’s scholarship is indispensable to making sense of the Balkans as a geographically concrete region shaped by multiple and diverse historical legacies. Croatian literary scholar Katarina Luketić summed it up aptly: “it is not possible to contemplate the Balkans without Todorova, but after her, it is very important to continue to contemplate and discover the Balkans on our own.”¹ Our contributors do just that.

It is a pleasure and honor to serve as editors of this festschrift that celebrates Professor Todorova as much as it showcases the vitality, diversity, and innovation of the field of Balkan studies, broadly defined. The inspiration for the compilation came from the academic contributions of Maria Todorova, whose research and mentoring in the fields of Southeast, East-Central, and Eastern Europe have shaped generations of historical practitioners. In this vein, Re-Imagining the Balkans is a celebration of a path-breaking scholar, inspiring teacher, generous mentor, and ardent public intellectual who in the last few decades has reshaped how we speak, write, research, and teach the Balkans. At the same time, our idea was through the volume to address head-on one of the hottest issues in our field today: how to incorporate East and Southeast Europe into broader scholarly trends and epistemological currents. In other words, should area studies with Cold War origins go European or global, and how much, if we are to retain claims of expertise? In the end, we decided to bring together established and new names in the fields of Southeast and East European studies to highlight the relevance of those regions for the study of Europe and the world through three paradigms: 1) empirical case-studies and research questions;

¹ Katarina Luketić, Evropa koja to nikad neće postati, tportal.hr (2016), at <https://www.vijesti.me/zabava/144140/evropa-koja-to-nikad-nece-postati>, quoted in Ivan Čolović in his contribution to this volume.
2) methodological, theoretical, and historiographical contributions; and 3) pedagogical engagements. We envisioned it as a helpful compendium that would both display cutting-edge research and teaching, and orient the general reader in the state of the field. Hence, we opted for short, crisp, and punchy contributions, meant more to illuminate, stimulate, provoke, or synthesize, rather than present extensive research in the traditional scholarly article format.

We are grateful to the authors in this volume for their enthusiastic endorsement of this project and their alacrity not only to contribute a nonstandard article, but also to address how Todorova’s work has informed their thinking within this short format. The biographies of the scholars featured here bespeak Todorova’s overlapping linkages and multiple influences: they stretch across an impressive geography, from her native Bulgaria to the rest of the Balkan states, including Romania, Serbia, Greece, Turkey, Croatia, and Slovenia, to scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, representing Austria, Germany, the United States, and Canada. They include established names with multiple scholarly contributions, spanning various disciplines (history, anthropology, political science, ethnomusicology, sociology), approaches, languages, and theoretical frameworks, but also, notably, a new cohort of her graduate advisees who continue to expand the horizons of Balkan and East European studies.

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Collectively, the chapters in this volume speak to many of Todorova’s academic contributions: the geopolitics of the Eastern Question or the place of Bulgaria in regional and European politics; historical legacies, whether imperial, socialist, or post-socialist; Balkanism, balkanization, and orientalization as discourse and reality; structural borrowings, intellectual transmissions, generational influences, and matters of knowledge production and dissemination; imaginative archival, historiographical, and methodological interventions that restore the voices of the silenced and marginalized; doing humanities and social science work in and about the Balkans while giving back to the region; and pedagogical reflections on how to trigger interest in and question stereotypes about the corner of Europe we all love but many are ignorant about. In this sense, given the thematic richness of the chapters and the diversity of their analytical angles, this volume is also a celebration of the originality and vitality of Balkan studies. While some of the writers choose to directly link to key aspects of Todorova’s work or ruminate on their professional relationships with her, others offer presentations that reflect lasting intellectual and personal connections. In the end, the twenty-nine chapters offer a staggering range of both rigorously academic and more intimate reflections on and engagements with Maria Todorova, the scholar, the mentor, and the person.

The opening section of the volume, (Geo)Politics and Legacies, demonstrates the dialogical relationship between Todorova’s early work on the Eastern Question and Bulgaria’s place within it, on the one hand, and her later influential analyses of Ottoman and post-Ott-
toman legacies in the Balkans, or as she famously says, the Balkans being the Ottoman legacy. Ivan Parvev presents a sweeping narration of the Eastern Question in a long durée and transregional perspective, expanding our understanding of an “Eastern matter” in a pan-European context. In lieu of the nowadays fashionable approach of invented geographies, Parvev looks at actual geography as a factor influencing the configuration of “civilizations,” which functions as a “power constellation” – a “type,” a “legacy,” and a “possibility” all at once. Andreas Lyberatos then tackles one of the most pervasive tropes of Balkan national histories, that of revolution against Ottoman rule, to think through the concept of “revolution as legacy” and emphasize the inspirational charge of the Greek Revolution of 1821 for several generations of Balkan intellectuals and conspirators. Examining the writings and biography of Pandeli Kisimov, he restores the messy nineteenth-century logic of zavera, or conspiracy, from a national(ist) analytical framework that sees straight lines between political action and national destiny. Stefan Peychev deals with yet another stereotype: the lingering need to orientalize the Ottoman past, shown here through the Bulgarian capital Sofia, whose Ottoman past archaeologists and architectural historians continue to present through the prism of mismanagement and even decline, the most detested characterization of Ottoman governance. Peychev vigorously critiques these attempts to contrast alleged Ottoman orientalism to both the ancient pedigree of the Bulgarian nation and the modernizing, European aspirations of post-1878 state-building. Pelin Tığlay then eloquently provides a larger framework on how to think about the Ottoman legacy as the “alter ego” of nationalism, presenting an array of examples from multiple Balkan case-studies of how the past is sanitized and reimagined for the sake of national(ist) projects; the comparison between the diverging yet converging goals of Balkan nationalists is particularly effective here.

The acknowledgement of methodological nationalism as foundational to the discipline of Balkan history, something that many of the contributors in this volume call out, is a solid basis for undermining “the trap of the national,” to paraphrase another signature Todorova concept. Thus, Evgenia Kalinova, through her meticulous reconstruction of the political dialogues between Bulgaria and Turkey for nearly a century, highlights that addressing the Ottoman legacy critically shaped interstate politics. She focuses on the presence of a significant Turkish population in Bulgaria to powerfully demonstrate how governments in both countries, spanning wide political affiliations, constantly faced challenges of how to best resolve the demographic legacy of empire, often politicizing the issue for their own goals. Finally, Iskra Baeva takes on a thorny theme, that of the place of Bulgaria among its Balkan neighbors, to candidly and calmly explain the uneasy place of modern Bulgaria in the region, inevitably tied to the conflicting interests of each neighbor in the post-Ottoman settlement. Here, the mirage of San Stefano Bulgaria appears as a fatal obsession, blinding generations of politicians and publics in Bulgaria and frustrating viable alliances with its neighbors. The historical legacies of the Eastern Question, connected to the place of the (Islamic) Ottoman Empire in relation to (Christian) Europe,
appear to have a lingering effect on Balkan realities from the early modern to the contemporary periods.

The volume then moves to a section titled Balkanisms, drawing on the term Balkanism that Maria Todorova coined, in conversation with Edward Said’s Orientalism, to denote the discursive paradigm that portrayed the Balkans as essentially different from Europe and legitimized a policy of relative non-involvement and isolation. While her *Imagining the Balkans* remains the seminal book, as our contributors demonstrate, it has stimulated prolific and multi-directional research on this complex topic that allows us to speak about the existence of multiple Balkanisms. In her essay, Milica Bakić-Hayden traces the trajectory of Orientalism as a concept that originated in the Middle East in the late 1970s, and its subsequent applications to different geographic and historical settings: India in the 1980s and the Balkans in the early 1990s. In crossing time- and location-specific disciplinary divides, she sees the potential for *reciprocal illumination* – the possibility for ideas and concepts from one discipline to shed light on aspects of another field of knowledge or region. Ivan Čolović offers a valuable overview of the receptions and translations of *Imagining the Balkans* in Serbia and Croatia from the immediate aftermath of Yugoslavia’s bloody disintegration until the most recent scholarship. Amidst the blooming of Balkanism after the wars, *Imagining the Balkans* was greeted across the post-Yugoslav countries as a welcome critique of the essentialist portrayal of the region as particularly harsh and savage. Cristina Petrescu contrasts the making and shifting meanings of two post-Cold War collective identities, Central European and Balkan (showing how the former employed Balkanism to construct itself in opposition to the latter) and traces their legacies in the current political geography of Europe. To Petrescu, while “Balkan” and “Central European” lost much of their initial meaning, Balkanism still survives in the Western Balkans that continue to be seen as an “incomplete self” of the West. In a bold reversal, Mitja Velikonja questions the status of Western Europe as the shining idol of the Balkans, proposing that since the end of the Cold War, it was the Balkans that actually became the avant-garde of contemporary Europe. Turning Balkanism on its head, he contends that the negative exceptionalism of the Balkans proved to be anticipation of recent developments in Europe, signaling where uncritical neoliberal and ethno-nationalist politics can lead. Finally, Dragoș Petrescu builds upon the notion of Balkanism, which he brings together with Todorova’s writings on backwardness and the Ottoman “legacy as continuity,” to examine the creative use of modernization discourses in the post-Ottoman Balkans. As Romanian elites embarked on the project of state-building, they sought out development shortcuts and sketched out a process of catching up with the West that used external negative stereotyping for practical internal use; in this analysis, imitation and cognitive dissonance lose their negative connotation to portray a diversity of modernization scenarios. In the end, the notion of backwardness and the reality of incomplete nationhood remain the cornerstones of a “Balkan identity” due to their association with Ottoman legacies.
The next section, Imagining–Remembering–Reinterpreting, deals with cultural transmissions, generational shifts, processes of knowledge-production and consumption, and the (re)centering of experiences in the (Eastern) margins of Europe. Philipp Ther takes on opera, a beloved topic of Todorova’s, to shift our attention from the Western gaze on the Balkans to the influence of another small nation, the Czechs, on cultural transfers in the region. His chapter aptly demonstrates that cultural transmissions between the Czech, Croatian, Slovene, and Bulgarian musical scenes were lively, multidirectional, and often productive; thus, he invites future scholars to examine more fully Bulgarian musical and theatrical developments after 1878 from a transregional lens. Ioannis Tsekouras stays on the topic of music with his exploration of Pontic folk dance festivals, which mediate Pontos and Pontic identity as sonic and visual images through what he calls choreocartography: the diagrammatic representation of a philosophically defined territory through the performance of its designated dance genres. Within the cultural and musical realm, Tanja Petrović looks at the Slovenian alternative scene of the 1980s through the lens of generation. Exploring the intergenerational dynamics of the 1980s alongside the main actors’ twenty-first-century recollections, Petrović challenges the teleological narrative of Slovenian unity and “working together” towards “an independent and internationally recognized state” on the one hand, and bringing down communism, on the other. Donna A. Buchanan examines the “auditory culture” of Bulgarian church bells (kambani) to demonstrate how these instruments sonify state sovereignty as physical, sonic, spiritual, and aesthetic objects in monumental and multimedia heritage displays, particularly Veliko Tŭrnovo’s “Sound and Light” production. She argues that how kambani are sounded and apprehended evokes a post-socialist “sonic medieval imaginary” which, in its confluence of nation and religion, situates contemporary Slavic Bulgarian subjectivity in the heritage of its imperial past.

The next three chapters continue unpacking how the past and the present intersect with and illuminate each other. Integrating anthropological and historical frameworks, Keith Brown demonstrates the power of comparative analysis to expose claims of “historical truth.” Presenting a key moment in Yugoslav reckoning with World War Two during the 1980s, which led to the revision of zealously guarded historical interpretations in the Federal Republic of Macedonia, Brown shows that the full complexity of the question only emerges after adding the Bulgarian angle to the already conflicting Macedonian takes on national history. Continuing with considerations of how an idealized past is weaponized in the present, Ivan Krastev tackles the notion of demographic catastrophe, reminding us that Todorova’s early work on demography remains salient. As right-wing populists in the East and West alike mobilize a discourse on shrinking nations, the politics of migration and citizenship emerge as central to the future of democracy in a global perspective. While Krastev builds on the idea of an East-West divide in Europe, he explains the much-debated East European hostility to refugees in 2015 through a universal phenomenon: the dominant group’s fear of being politically marginalized due to demographic change, also visible in Western Europe and the United States today. Kristen Ghodsee
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similarly discusses poignant global concerns, yet she collapses the East-West divide and focuses on the agency of inanimate objects. She applies the theoretical framework of new materialisms to Cold War Eastern Europe to revisit the notion of “primordial consumerism” that allegedly eroded faith in twentieth-century state socialism. By reading contemporary global environmental concerns back against the post-socialist East European fetishization of single-use menstrual products, she reflects on alternatives to the wasteful capitalist regimes of consumption and disposability. This entire section, while spanning disciplines, geographies, and themes, shows the big implications of small places, undermining an alleged distinction between centers and peripheries in the global, European, and Balkan imaginations.

The following section on Historiographies and Methodologies again offers a range of explorations, from the presentation of new directions in the scholarship, to the interrogation of academic silences, to the experimentation with methodological approaches to archives, fieldwork, and analysis – many of those endeavors advocated by Todorova throughout her career. Ulf Brunnbauer shows the flourishing of work on migration in and out of the Balkans, demonstrating the multiple scholarly vectors that have transformed a foundational field of study into a hotbed of cutting-edge research. Brunnbauer underscores what he calls the symbolic dimension of migration; in three dialogical micro-studies, he highlights three overarching frameworks where migration was turned into a “problem”: identity, development, and security. Next, Anca Mandru delves into the historiography of early socialism in Romania, whose examination has been distorted by both communist and post-socialist historiography. She complicates what traditionally is understood to be “the left,” and similarly to Todorova’s latest book, argues for a reappraisal of the place of traditionally peripheral movements within the European and global left. The development of the historiography of the region continuously introduces more nuance in our knowledge of key topics, as shown by Peter Wright who questions another long-standing trope about the Balkans related to the widely believed exceptionalism of Cold War Yugoslavia. Instead, by surveying recent literature on global socialism and Non-alignment, he highlights important similarities and shared logics in the global overtures of Nonaligned Yugoslavia and other state socialist regimes politically tied to the Soviet Union. As all three contributors demonstrate, considering more empirical evidence only leads to the revision of beliefs and stereotypes.

The section then turns to methodological explorations. Straddling historical and ethnographic approaches, Gerald W. Creed offers an ingenious exercise in critical speculation, using his extensive fieldwork experience in Bulgaria to articulate his intuitive understanding of how larger historical frameworks and belief systems shape rural rituals, such as masquerade or mumming. In this analysis, nationalism appears not as a homogenizing ideology and practice, but – as apparent in key elements of mumming rituals – as accommodating of local practice and adaptive to pre-existing belief structures, both pagan and Christian. The next two contributions deal with silences and erasures in
the name of clearcut national narratives. No question is more emotionally loaded in the national imagination than that of religious conversion, especially the presumed universally forced conversions to Islam that Todorova has dealt with extensively in her work. But Stefanos Katsikas turns usual interpretations on their head by analyzing an overlooked phenomenon, Muslim conversions to Orthodox Christianity during the Greek War of Independence, excavating new archival evidence and placing Muslim baptisms in their rightful and logical political and socio-economic context. When people faced massive turmoil, as they did in the early nineteenth century, they often made decisions reflecting family or personal circumstances, in which change of religion only seemed necessary or logical. In a similar vein, Varban Todorov takes issue with how historians have interpreted, or not, a set of archival documents related to children “kidnapped” or “rescued” during two traumatic wars, from 1877–1878 and 1918–1919. Instead of prioritizing the perspectives of military or religious leaders, he reconstructs a range of behaviors of the affected individuals during the wars. Thus, Todorov offers a microhistorical critique of methodological nationalism, and especially selective archival uses that condemn the actions of “the other” vis-à-vis “our” children, but excuse the same doings of “our own” vis-à-vis assumed national adversaries. Finally, in his (self-)reflective chapter, through a set of personal recollections Max Bergholz addresses the challenge and the responsibility Western European and North American historians have to translate their historical research into the languages of their protagonists in order to reach the public in the region itself. At the same time, he engages with methodological questions at the very core of the historical profession – the questions of how we become experts, of who owns history, of the relationship between historians and their subjects, and ultimately the question at the center of our volume: how do we write the history of and for our region? In its totality, this section demonstrates the remarkable analytical and methodological diversity of recent scholarship of the Balkans, which has both countered pervasive nationalist frameworks of analysis and introduced tremendous sophistication in the presentation of evidence.

Maria Todorova took her role as educator equally seriously, so the last section of the volume turns to educational and pedagogical perspectives, under the title Teaching the Balkans. The power of history to shape individual and collective consciousness, its emancipatory potential or conversely its misrepresentations and instrumentalizations, the role of the past in the present and of the present in the past are some of the main themes tackled here. Our contributors are especially concerned with novel approaches and strategies in transmitting Balkan history to new generations of students both within regional and international academic settings. The authority and longevity of ingrained stereotypes is brought to the point by Dubravka Stojanović in her essay, which analyzes representations of Serbian-Bulgarian relations in Serbian history textbooks over the last hundred years or so. Through the lenses of the most severe conflicts between the two nations – the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the Second World War – she traces the instrumental role of Bulgarian-Serbian conflicts for modern Serbian identity. Next, Pamela Ballinger’s contribution on
teaching strategies demonstrates how to fruitfully employ *Imagining the Balkans* in class to take on manifold, at times even contradictory tasks; by confronting existing stereotypes, we learn how to expose the constructedness of the very idea of the Balkans, but also how to disseminate real historical knowledge about the processes that shaped the region. Further, Ballinger brings Todorova’s work in conversation with related texts that allow for creatively clarifying, refining, and expanding theoretical concepts, research objectives, and questions for students. In a similar vein, using her classroom experiences as a starting point, Maria Bucur illustrates how to activate and utilize unexpected, lesser-noticed facets of *Imagining the Balkans*, like satire, humor, and self-irony, as effective pedagogical tools for countering stereotypes and bringing the Balkans closer to students without much prior knowledge. Inspired by Todorova’s use of literary texts like Aleko Konstantinov’s *Bai Ganyo* and Ion Luca Caragiale’s theatrical plays, she resourcefully utilizes the ambiguous space between satire and critique, self and imputed stereotypes, and reality. Finally, Christina Koulouri reminds us that history education has always been a battleground when she discusses the complexities inherent in history education reform in post-conflict societies, but also the high expectations invested in peace education as an instrument for reconciliation. She points at a series of challenges that arise for reformers faced with contradictory tasks; it is difficult to strike a balance between the critical claim to come to terms with the past and the need to provide for positive identities, or the *de facto* national compartmentalization of regional history and the attempts to promote a “Balkan consciousness” through history education. Together, these chapters remind us that Todorova has left a mark with her own critical interventions on how to cultivate both nuanced appreciation for and constructive critique of key Balkan identity markers and regional characteristics.

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While Maria Todorova’s versatility and originality as a scholar is evident in her oeuvre, a brief intellectual biography will sketch the multiple academic traditions and influences that turned the native of small Bulgaria into a globally recognized and influential thinker. Who is then Todorova the historian? Working at the intersections of modern Balkan, Ottoman, and European social and cultural history, Todorova’s work combines rigorous, multilingual primary source research and sophisticated theoretical engagement with broad, groundbreaking debates related to alterity, (post)coloniality, backwardness, nationalism, socialism and post-socialism, historical memory, nostalgia, and the history of emotions. Her methodological range is equally staggering: she has produced paradigmatic works in quantitative history, family history, intellectual history, comparative history, *Begriffsgeschichte*, and microhistory – utilizing approaches from *longue durée* to prosopography to autobiography to digital history. She is uniquely responsible for both publicizing perspectives from the Balkan periphery and provincializing the western paradigm by demonstrating the importance of voices from the margins in the historical record. Through her path-breaking research, she has elevated Balkan studies to a globally recognized scholarly field.
Educated in Bulgaria and having specialized in the Soviet Union, France, and the United Kingdom, Maria Todorova has been working in the United States since 1988, first as a Fulbright Scholar at University of Maryland and University of California-Irvine, then as a Visiting Mellon Professor at Rice University (Texas), followed by a tenured position at the University of Florida (1992–2001). In the last twenty years, she has worked at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), holding the Edward William and Jane Marr Gutgsell Professorship of History before her retirement in 2021. She has held visiting positions at the University of Graz (Austria), Bosphorus University (Istanbul, Turkey), Harvard University (Massachusetts), and the European University Institute (EUI, Florence, Italy). She has been recognized with honorary doctorates from the University of Sofia, EUI, and Panteion University (Athens, Greece). She has held myriad prestigious awards and fellowships: New York University’s Remarque Institute, the John Guggenheim Foundation, the National Humanities Center, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the United States; the Volkswagen Foundation and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in Germany; the Vienna Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Austria; and the Centre for Advanced Academic Studies in Dubrovnik, Croatia. On 28 April 2022, Maria Todorova was elected a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of only seven historians nationwide to receive this recognition during that year.

The author of monographs, edited volumes, and over 200 articles and book chapters, Todorova is best known for her *Imagining the Balkans* (1997; second updated edition 2009). Acclaimed as foundational to the broader field of Slavic and East European studies, this book has been translated into thirteen languages and has been cited in over 4,200 scholarly publications across multiple fields. Building upon her previous work on travel literature, in *Imagining the Balkans* Todorova scrutinizes the discourse of Balkanism, a term she coined in conversation with Edward Said’s Orientalism, to denote the construction of the Balkans as Europe’s “Other,” simultaneously European and not European enough. First published in the midst of the Yugoslav Wars, this scholarly work had an enormous public resonance with its historical and contemporary revision of clichés of Balkan backwardness, “ethnic conflict,” and primordial nationalism. Todorova pursued these questions further in a series of oft-cited articles in flagship journals and influential edited volumes, which have become classics for scholars, educators, and policy experts working on Europe’s “peripheries” and on marginality in general.

Todorova’s work also spans multiple chronologies, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, examined through multiple interpretive lenses. Her early research at the crossroads of Ottoman, modern Balkan, and imperial Russian history revealed new empirical knowledge about the Eastern Question and the nineteenth-century Ottoman reform movement known as the Tanzimat. She then embarked on a meticulous study of demographic history, implementing Annales school methods, in her *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern* (1993), which undermined western clichés of an allegedly unique and “non-European” Balkan family formation, the *zadruga*. Subsequent-
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ly she dealt with questions of historical memory and collective identity, editing *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (2004) exactly when memory studies were emerging as a hot academic commodity, placing the Balkans at the forefront of scholarly debates. This work culminated in her next monograph, *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria’s National Hero* (2009), which explored “weak nationalism,” the construction of national heroes, and historical memory in Bulgaria from the Ottoman to the post-socialist periods. This microhistory not only intervened in the two liveliest theoretical debates in Eastern European scholarship – the study of nationalism and memory, as well as the study of socialism and the socialist legacy – but also engaged issues at the core of the historical discipline: the nature of producing historical knowledge and the place of historiography compared to other memory-making projects.

More recently, Todorova has delved into the issue of post-socialist memory and nostalgia. She co-directed *Remembering Communism*, a pioneering research project involving scholars of Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and the former GDR, exploring how the state socialist experiment is remembered between nation-states, as well as within societies. This work culminated in two edited and co-edited volumes: *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation* (2010); and *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* (2014). She also co-edited another volume on the topic, *Postcommunist Nostalgia* (2010). As a further testament of Todorova’s wide-ranging influence on the profession, a recent volume, *Scaling the Balkans: Essays on Eastern European Entanglements* (2018), features her various published and unpublished articles that again place the Balkans in a European framework through the perspective of scale, a question central to her intellectual efforts throughout her career. Finally, with her latest book, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe’s Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (2020), Todorova turns to the “golden age” of the socialist idea, which she rewrites through the lens of the Bulgarian socialist movement in the late nineteenth century. By analyzing the lived experience of utopia through a combination of digital humanities methods and the history of emotions, this book reengages with critical issues, such as core and periphery or power in history. This book is another example of cutting-edge work on a purported “semi-periphery” that will change our thinking about global historical questions.

Todorova’s breadth of expertise and relentless promotion of East and Southeast European studies is evident from her extensive and multifaceted academic advisory activities in the United States, Europe, and the Balkans. Notably, she has been actively engaged in the support and internationalization of scholarly institutions in her region of expertise: the Central European University (Hungary), the Center for Advanced Study (Bulgaria), and the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in the Balkans (Greece). This dedication to scholarship produced for and in the region is confirmed by her long-standing service for numerous journals, press editorial boards, and research centers. Her public outreach beyond the ivory tower is also extensive: she has written articles for the *Guardian*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and *Jacobin*; has been interviewed by the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and
Belgian, Austrian, and Finnish national radios, to say nothing of her numerous appearances on local media, newspapers, magazines, and documentaries across the Balkans.

Beyond her scholarship, in the last two decades Maria Todorova has become the builder of one of the most impressive graduate programs in the United States, recruiting some twenty international scholars at the UIUC, in addition to her students from Florida. Her inspired teaching, mentorship, and advising have given UIUC the international reputation of having one of the strongest programs in Southeastern Europe globally. Those graduate students—whose work also spans Ottoman, modern Balkan, East-Central European, and Habsburg, Russian, and Soviet history—form what is often referred to as the Todorova school. Judging both by the breadth of dissertation topics and the professional paths of her graduate students, Professor Todorova has created a stellar history program.

At the end of this prologue, we are eager to acknowledge Maria Todorova, the human. Colleagues across fields and continents cherish her endless generosity and kindness, her keen sense of justice, and her delightfully wicked sense of humor. She is always ready to offer feedback, share her work, give life advice, oppose the ideological uses of history, or advocate for a worthy cause. Her sarcasm can be biting, as her tolerance for intellectual provincialism and black-and-white thinking is low. But she is always warm, personable, prompt, and generous to a noteworthy extreme; the early xeroxing and mailing of her work to colleagues throughout Eastern Europe has become a lightning email response to detailed queries, approaching deadlines, and advocacy for not-so-popular causes. Her home in Urbana, Illinois, became a favorite destination of UIUC’s East European Reading Group and the site of celebration of professional and personal milestones of her colleagues and students. Her continued intense fostering of intellectual exchanges with scholars in her native Bulgaria and throughout the Balkans speaks volumes about her intellectual commitments. Her appearances at various high-profile fora across Europe have similarly become sought-after performances of intellectual excellence. Finally, she is also a cosmopolitan traveler and consummate lover of good food, wine, poetry, fiction, music, and art, who cherishes spending time with her children and grandchildren in Canada, France, or Morocco.

It is to this fine person we dedicate this volume; Maria Todorova, the illustrious historian, but even more importantly, the outstanding human being.