

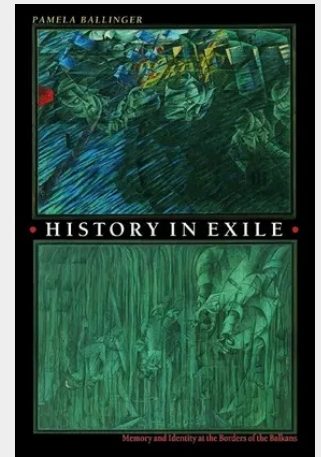
Ballinger

History in Exile

Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans

In the decade after World War II, up to 350,000 ethnic Italians were displaced from the border zone between Italy and Yugoslavia known as the Julian March. History in Exile reveals the subtle yet fascinating contemporary repercussions of this often overlooked yet contentious episode of European history. Pamela Ballinger asks: What happens to historical memory and cultural identity when state borders undergo radical transformation? She explores displacement from both the viewpoints of the exiles and those who stayed behind. Yugoslavia's breakup and Italy's political transformation in the early 1990s, she writes, allowed these people to bring their histories to the public eye after nearly half a century. Examining the political and cultural contexts in which this understanding of historical consciousness has been formed, Ballinger undertakes the most extensive fieldwork ever done on this subject--not only around Trieste, where most of the exiles settled, but on the Istrian Peninsula (Croatia and Slovenia), where those who stayed behind still live. Complementing this with meticulous archival research, she examines two sharply contrasting models of historical identity yielded by the "Istrian exodus": those who left typically envision Istria as a "pure" Italian land stolen by the Slavs, whereas those who remained view it as ethnically and linguistically "hybrid." We learn, for example, how members of the same family, living a short distance apart and speaking the same language, came to develop a radically different understanding of their group identities. Setting her analysis in engaging, jargon-free prose, Ballinger concludes that these ostensibly very different identities in fact share a startling degree of conceptual logic.

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