

Madness Visible – A Memoir of War by Janine di Giovanni.
Bloomsbury 2004.

The wars in the Balkans as Yugoslavia imploded in the 1990s hamstrung the international community, gave the English language the ghastly phrase ‘ethnic cleansing’ and brought a wave of savagery to Europe that we all thought the Second World War had banished forever.

Janine di Giovanni, the outstanding foreign correspondent for The Times who has covered many of the world’s major conflicts in the last twenty years or so, was in the Balkans during the worst of its travails. She went everywhere, knew many, and saw sights that no human being should ever witness. She writes about her experiences with a simplicity and honesty that allows the complexity of what she describes to speak for itself.

No reader could fail to be chilled, horrified and moved by this book, or to feel the greatest admiration at the courage and commitment of Ms di Giovanni and her colleagues who covered the Balkan wars so that the world might be aware of what was going on, in Europe’s case, in its backyard.

Everyone should read this book, for it is a classic in the making, and ranks among the best chronicles of modern conflict yet written, as well as being the clearest possible depiction of the madness of civil war.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh