

The Place at the End of the World by Janine Di Giovanni.  
Bloomsbury 2006.

Janine Di Giovanni occupies a place in the higher reaches of my top 5 'people I would like to have dinner with' and I have been an admirer of her journalism for many years. *Madness Visible* was as powerful a memoir of the Balkan conflict as one could ever wish to read, and *The Place at the End of the World* picks up the standard of its predecessor and raises it unimaginably higher.

Ms Di Giovanni's latest book is an anthology of articles, or *Essays from the Edge*, divided into three parts: *After 9/11*, *Forgotten Wars* and *Private Wars*. The first focuses on Iraq, Afghanistan, the United States and Israel, and its essays date from 2001 to 2005; the second is largely concerned with conflicts in Chechnya and in Africa, though East Timor, Jamaica and India are also included, and its essays date from 1998-2004; the third, the shortest, describes the author's attempts to separate herself from a personal and professional lifestyle that has become incompatible with her partnership with Bruno and the birth of their son.

The essays are searing and shocking; superbly written but detailing events of such horror and brutality that the reader must wonder from time to time how Di Giovanni has not suffered severe psychological trauma. What emerges from this collection, as from all of her writing, is a passionate concern for the stories that would never otherwise get told, a bravery that at times defies belief, and a desire to make the 'small voices', that would not otherwise be heard, audible.

As well as the actual events that she describes, Di Giovanni's sub-text is a constant condemnation of the duplicity and double-standards in international affairs, and the impact on the ground of decisions taken by presidents and Prime Ministers far away from areas of conflict. Janine Di Giovanni is at the top of her form and must surely now qualify as one of the truly great war correspondents of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh