



Images of the Balkans

The Greek 'superiority complex' and its shaping factors
The Balkan 'national portraits'

Ninth Lesson
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The Greek 'superiority complex' over the Balkans



- **An imaginary tendency:** Greece merging with the West
- The negative images of the Balkans and the attempt to escape 'Balkan pollution'
- Escaping the Balkans- a widespread tendency for the Balkan people
- The **level of Europeanization** as a contemporary aspect
- Promoting a positive and European self imagine
- *Constructing self-identities*

Maria Todorova: The 'Greek superiority complex'

'Like any national identity, the Greek identity contains a hierarchy of multiple identities; a modern Greek would describe himself as: first, Greek; second, according to his local identity, Cretan, Macedonian, etc.; third, European, and then only Balkan, South European or Mediterranean.'

However, while the Greeks do not show much enthusiasm for their Balkanism, or at least accept it with somewhat mock fatalism, their derogatory characterisations are aimed at the 'East' (Turkey in particular) and not at the Balkans.

After all, Greece has always had an exaggerated superiority complex vis-à-vis the other Balkan countries, which has only been mitigated in recent decades.

Slavoj Zizek-Where do the Balkans begin?

If you ask, 'Where do the Balkans begin?' you will always be told that they begin down there, towards the south-east. For Serbs, they begin in Kosovo or in Bosnia where Serbia is trying to defend civilised Christian Europe against the encroachments of this Other. For the Croats, the Balkans begin in Orthodox, despotic and Byzantine Serbia, against which Croatia safeguards Western democratic values. For many Italians and Austrians, they begin in Slovenia, the Western outpost of the Slavic hordes. For many Germans, Austria is tainted with Balkan corruption and inefficiency; for many Northern Germans, Catholic Bavaria is not free of Balkan contamination. Many arrogant Frenchmen associate Germany with Eastern Balkan brutality - it lacks French finesse. Finally, to some British opponents of the European Union, Continental Europe is a new version of the Turkish Empire with Brussels as the new Istanbul - a voracious despotism threatening British freedom and sovereignty.

The ideas that led to the 'Greek superiority complex' (19th century)



- **Greek classical antiquity**
- Greece as the '**place of birth of Western civilization**'
- The scheme of **Greek continuity**: Greek antiquity, Byzantium, Modern Greece
- Aspects of a '**cultural superiority**': already from the 19th century to the modern era
- Greece as **the first nation-state to emerge from the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire**- The Balkan admiration

The ideas that led to the 'Greek superiority complex' (19th century)



The ideas that led to the 'Greek superiority complex' (20th century)



- Greece in Europe
- The Balkan communist regimes- isolation
- The modern 'Balkan chaos' Vs 'Greece of prosperity'
- The contemporary factor of EU
- Attempts for stabilization VS booming economy

The ideas that led to the 'Greek superiority complex' (20th century)



The Greek superiority complex in the contemporary era



The Greek economic Crisis

- Economic crisis and Western images of the Greek Other
- Constructing the myth of '**the lazy Greek**'
- The relationship between Greece and Europe under new perspectives
- How do those parameters reflect on the Greek superiority complex towards the Balkans?
- Maximization or minimalization of the relative constructions?

Discourses regarding Greece during the period of the economic crisis



Motifs and literary depictions of the Balkans in general



- **Diachronic** constructions
- Were these stereotypical images and discourses constructed in Greece or in the West?
- **Negative connotations** and **romantic perceptions** of the Balkan area
- The common elements of **tradition and origin** between Greece and the Balkan nations
- **Ethnic diversity, savagery, superstition, violence, belief in invisible spirits, backwardness, poor life, ignorance**
- **Besa, bravery, warlike and proud character, authenticity and romanticism**

How were such images constructed? From the early 19th century to the Balkan Wars

- The growing interest regarding the Balkan Other
- **Depicting possible enemies or possible allies**
- The Balkan wars and the creation of negative stereotypes
- Consolidation of those images up to modern times
- **Violence, instability, tendency towards barbarism # romanticism, bravery**
- The Macedonian Struggle and the region of Macedonia (negative stereotypes and national discourse)

How were such images constructed? The communist Balkans

- **Dual perceptions** regarding the communist regimes
- The left and the right Greek authors
- **Isolationism and the growing interest of the Greek reading audience**
- **Happiness, progress, prosperity, moral life, inquiry and rivalry # lack of knowledge, tyranny, lack of freedom and fear**
- *Communism, Europe and the aspect of **culture***
- The 'Western civilization' and the '**Eastern Other**'

How were such images constructed? The post-communist era



- The new era as a popular narrative framework
- 'European Greece' and the 'anti-European' Balkan world
- Self images and images of the Other: describing and creating identities
- The negotiation of the socialist regimes in the post-communist era
- Nationalist extremism, instability, corruption, imitation, poverty, resignation, misery, danger

The Bulgarian Other in the Greek thought

- The Bulgarian Other, the tendency towards **barbarism and the role of modern and past history**
- Macedonian Struggle, the Balkan Wars and the Occupation in Greece
- Consolidating literary images through **historical reality**
- Images in the works of authors such as P.S. Delta, Ion Dragoumis, Kostis Palamas, Christos Chartomatsidis
- The historic events of the Macedonian Struggle and the image of '**the worst enemy**'
- **Barbarism, superstitions, savagery, luck of knowledge**
- Contemporary images of Bulgaria in the Greek Press

Greek images of the Albanian Other

- The Albanian Other and the **common origins** with the Greek nation
- The connections with **anarchy and danger**
- Defying '**besa**' through **bravery and courage**
- Contemporary depictions of the Albanian Other
- The Albanian Other as an *economic immigrant during the decade of 1990*
- **Backwardness, anti-Westernism and poverty**
- **The racist discourse**

Imagining the Romanian Other

- Connecting Romania with **wealth and luxury**
- Romantic depictions during 19th century (*knights, royal court and grandeur*)
- The role of the **Ceauscu** regime in altering Greek images regarding Romania
- **Poverty, anti-Westernism and instability**
- *Depictions of the Eastern woman working in Greece during the 1990s*

The Serbian Other and the 'Greek-Serbian friendship'



- Shaping factors of the **Greek-Serbian traditional friendship**
- The main interest in the Serbian Other
- Negotiating the Yugoslavian nations (Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia etc)
- The images of a '**pride ally**'
- Connection with **brutality and anti-westernism**
- The **role of the common religion**

Images of Montenegro and the West archetype

- Imagining a 'romantic' and 'brave' nation- *The West images of Montenegro*
- The Greek relative images
- The Montenegrins, the **nature and the mountains**
- **Depictions of a heroic and war-like nation**
- The Montenegrin women
- *The Turk Other and the opposition to the Montenegrin Other*
- *Political developments, discourses of admiration and literary depictions*
- The **epicenter** of the relative Greek interest (late 19th/ early 20th century)

The Greek Word regarding the area of Macedonia



- Describing the North Macedonian Other
- A '**victim**' of worldwide interest
- The '**embezzlers of history**'
- 'Is there indeed a Macedonian nation?' Nationalist discourse in the early 1990
- The conflict regarding the name of the country
- **Propaganda and literary texts**
- The undimmed Greek interest for Macedonia



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