



Images of the Balkans

The Balkan nations in 19th century Greek Literature- National portraits

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Fourth Lesson
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Period of Interest

- From the **early 19th century** to **1890**
- The Greek '**exploratory**' word of the period- A word of exploration towards the Balkan nations
- Categorizing the Balkan nations into **potential enemies** or **potential allies**
- Main topics: describing a nation (**appearance, character and way of life**), *religion, comparison with Greece*, the common struggle for Independence

Images of the Balkans and Images of the Balkan nations

Does the term 'Balkan'
has a concrete form in
the early 19th century?

Different Images for
every Balkan nation/
Same function of these
images

The gradual unification
of the term 'Balkan'

The term 'Balkan' in the 19th century

- **Period of interest-** From the foundation of the Modern Greek Kingdom to the period of preparation of the Balkan wars
- The adjective "**Balkan**" was used in Modern Greek as a loan from the Franks, already decades ago
- Progressively, the term "Balkans" appears in **the Greek press** before 1890 becoming **standardized during the Balkan Wars**
- The usage of the term comes together with a concrete tendency (**Greece's exclusion of the Balkans**)

The 19th century in the Balkan Peninsula: A historical Introduction

- The birth and rise of **Balkan nationalist movements**
- The gradual formation of **the Balkan nation-states**, the **Independence movements** and the eventual **collapse of the Ottoman Empire**
- As early as the second half of the 18th century, the need for **national liberation** was clearly visible on the Balkan horizon
- Strong involvement of the **European Great Powers** in the Balkans should not be underestimated
- The independent states of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia were **largely the creation of the Great Powers, remaining under their control** for a considerable period of time
- **Fluid and intense political and military context**
- Greek interest in the Balkans rises. Why?

General characteristics of the texts under examination

- **Historical, political, anthropological and social studies** concern the bulk of the works discussed # **relatively few literary texts**
- Small literary production and the **importance of travel literature**
- Which countries have the most images? **Why?**
- Texts about Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and, to a lesser extent, Montenegro, Romania
- **Exploratory Word and varying national images**
- Concrete stereotypical references to the Balkan nations, which will prove to be extremely **resistant** to time.
- The birth of an imaginary idea. **Greece and West vs Balkans and East**

Travel Literature- describing and imagining a place

- Travel literature as a literary genre
- Travel impressions were a **particularly popular literary genre in Europe during the 19th century, especially for British readers:**
- Transporting the reader to an *unknown place*
- Narration, mystery and **exoticism**.
- Mystery novel and the area of the Balkans
- **The author's personal perspective**
- **Reflections of values and culture**
- **Religious, political, social, economic and autobiographical issues**
- **Describing and inventing a reality**



Georgios Tertsetis- 'What I saw during my four-month tour'

- Georgios Tertsetis belongs to the Ionian school
- **'What I saw on my four-month tour'**: the author's tour of a number of European countries in the summer of 1858 (Milan, Trieste, Vienna, Munich, Edinburgh, Strasbourg, Paris, London, Manchester and Montenegro)
- Direct or implied **comparisons** between Western Europe and Montenegro
- The relationship of the Balkans and Europe as a motif
- **Separating Balkan and European civilization**
- **Western civilization and the Balkan reality** (*references to states of law, social, political and economic welfare and progress, respect for human beings VS Balkan structures, primitivism and rough roads of Montenegro*)



The images of Montenegro. Between politics, romanticism and national interests

- Tertsetsis: Far from being disappointed by Montenegro and its inhabitants, he is **fascinated by the heroism of the Montenegrin nation**
- **Enthusiastic description**
- The image of the Montenegrin ruler *Daniel*
- *Honesty, heroism, warlike character*
- The *reasons* behind these images
- **Common religion** as a pattern
- The **Montenegrins' admiration** about Greece's Revolution

The images of Montenegro. Between politics, romanticism and national interests

- **Balkan admiration and the Greek 'superiority complex'**- A first parameter
- The **support on the Montenegrins' struggle for independence** and the image of a *friendly nation*.
- The common goal of **the Fall of the Ottoman Empire**. Politics, ideology and national images in literature
- Travel memoirs, political aspirations and national interests
- Romantic depictions of the Montenegrins. **A European motif**
- *Heroism, struggle for freedom, beautiful nature, grandiose mountains.*
- The image of the **Turk as enemy** Vs the **friendly Montenegrin nation**

What I saw during my fourth-month tour

Shall I tell you how I was received by the **brave warrior of Montenegro**; I was not worth so much; [...] we raised our glasses to **Christendom** [...] How shall I describe to you the young, enriched by the gifts of Athena? I only tell you, so great is **her grace and beauty**, that even if she were to furnish the embroidered girdle of Aphrodite, as told by Homer, she would be no more beautiful than what I thought. [...] I confess to you, gentlemen of the audience, that whether from my morning discussions with Daniel, or from **the war-song, my heart was so enlarged, I felt such a power** [...] If you ask, gentlemen, about my age in the mountains of Montenegro, I **was eighteen years old, not yet nineteen**, arriving in Cetinje. I stood there speechless at what I saw before me- **the eight cannons, five thousand rifles numbered, the swords of the Pasha, their proud steeds, the golden reins, and hanging medals of the English, French, Ottoman, and the Crimean army.**

The ode of Georgios Martinellis

- In 1878 the Ionian Poet **George Martinellis** publishes in a bilingual - Greek and French - edition, the ode *The Heroes of Montenegro*
- **Ode as a literary genre**
- Heroism, modesty and virtue of the ruler-The bravery of his people
- The **evident Greek support for the Montenegrins' struggle** for national independence.
- The image of Montenegro as **the bulwark of Europe** against the invasion of the barbarians from the 14th century
- The creation of a literary image. Describing a **heroic nation** (fighting spirit, warlike character, love for freedom)

Defining 'ode'

- An **ode** is a type of poem, commonly written to **praise** something or someone
- Irregular metrical form
- Originated in Greek choral songs performed in religious festivals
- Different types of odes through the centuries

The ode of Georgios Martinelis

- The idea of the war and the Montenegrins
- A people familiar from childhood with the idea of war
- A nation 'obligated' to be heroic
- The *Ottoman threat of the East*. Constructing an ally
- **Idealizing the Montenegrins** (unselfish spirit, bandit way of live and the role of the European texts)
- The consolidation of a positive image (end of 19th century)
- Montenegro begins to be perceived in Greece as a '*romantic country*'
- Greek images for Montenegro (based on concrete facts?)
- Literary images of the Montenegrin Other and the **political context** of the time



Images of the Montenegrins (Montenegrin-Ottoman War 1876-1878)



The ode of Georgios Martinelis

- Historical relations between two nationalities at a certain point in time and the literary image
- “The construction of the image of the 'other' is a complex phenomenon, formed through a process largely explained by the political and social reality of nation states”.
- Historical reality and the positive image of Montenegro
- The contrast to the '**barbaric**' and '**oriental**' Turkish nation
- A potential ally and the Balkan Peninsula against the Ottoman Empire
- The myth of an '**Invincible**' and '**glorious**' race
- Martinellis' ode, the Balkan unification and **Rigas Feraios' vision**

The heroes of Montenegro

In those **proud** mountains,

The flag of the enemy never rose

Every citizen knows,

To live there **independent, or to die there.**

There, the **children dream of battles** in their sleep.

Turkey fought to punish for centuries this bravery [...]

Everybody's saying it. [...]

And they run, so as to bring **Freedom to other people**

Alexandros Rizos Ragkavis- Memoirs

One day my father took me with him in such a place. I remember **the bodyguards who magnificently guarded the carriage**, and the **bows of the pedestrians who we met** [...]. My father sometimes included me in **the original council for the pleasure of my curiosity**, and placed me near him in the place appointed for him.

When he had first brought me in, he showed me in the back of **the vast hall a throne set apart for the Lord**; [...] Then there was a sound of barbarous music, **composed of drums and strains**, and the **voice of the preachers announced the coming of the Lord**. [...] And the Lord wore his **official uniform**, that is to say, **his silver cloak**, and on his head, a high cylindrical cap made of **precious leather** (which was also worn -but on official days only- by the ministers)



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October 2022