



Images of the Balkans

The terms 'West-East' and 'North-South'

Orientalism

Balkanism

Third Lesson
Lecturer: Petros Marazopoulos
petrosmarazopoulos@gmail.gr

The notions of West, East, North and South. An Introduction

- The image of the Balkan Peninsula as 'an **imaginary bridge** connecting West and the East
- The Greek attempt to **define** themselves on the basis of East and West
- The similar generalized idea in the Balkans- (**Escaping the 'eastern' image**)
- West, East, South and North as 'theoretical abstractions'
- A **way of dividing through not purely geographical criteria**
- Usage of the terms in the contemporary era

Geography-From observation to ideology

**Geography as science:
mapping the earth and
is people**

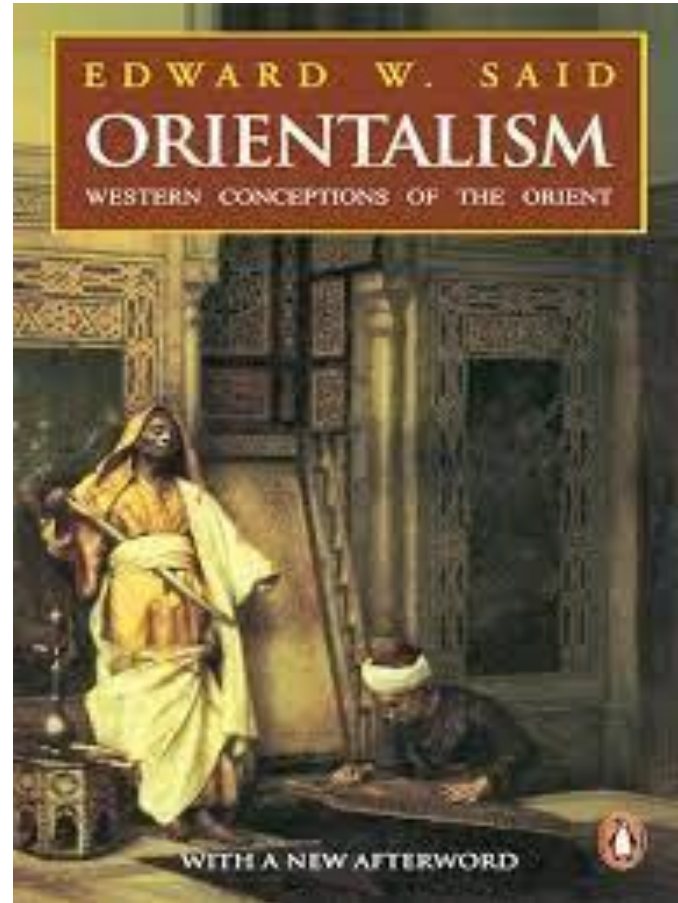
**Descriptions,
imagination, ideology
and evaluation**

**The gradual
appearance of
political, economic or
cultural meanings**

Geography-From observation to ideology

- From ***description*** to ***evaluation***
- A recurring pattern- the *center* of the world and the *periphery*
- Characteristics of a periphery- strange, partly dangerous, exotic
- Mapping the regions of the earth has almost always been accompanied by an **ideological approach** that has sometimes been covert and sometimes more obvious.
- West, East, North and South: notions ideologically charged
- ***Value comparisons***
- Defining the West as **superior** to the East in terms of **intellectual, developmental, cultural or economic level**

Edward Said-Orientalism



Edward Said-Orientalism

- In 1978 Edward Said, attempting to describe the concept of the East as it was created and became known in the Western world, published his study *Orientalism*.
- He explores the **practices of Western writers regarding East** (in political, ethnographic, geographical and literary texts)
- These **texts constitute a knowledge that reflects Europe's dominant disposition towards the East** (Foucault)
- Orientalism as "**a Western way of imposing, dominance and power over the East**"
- Said defines the East as an "**almost European invention**", as one of the deepest and most obsessive European images of the Other, as well as a determinant of Western or European identity
- The relationship between West and East is a relationship of **power, of domination, of complex hegemony** in varying degrees.
- East: **European invention since antiquity**; place of romance, exotic creatures and unforgettable memories

Edward Said-Orientalism

- **Central Idea-** West's **knowledge** of the East emerged entirely through a **power relationship**
- East perceived as '*irrational*', '*depraved*', '*childish*', and '*different*' # Europe perceived correspondingly as '*rational*', '*virtuous*', '*mature*', and '*normal*'.
- According to Said East, through an **imagined (centuries-old) distinction**, East has been associated with inferiority, backwardness, and also intellectual subordination to the West.
- The notions of **racism**, **imperialism** and **ethnocentrism** to the depictions

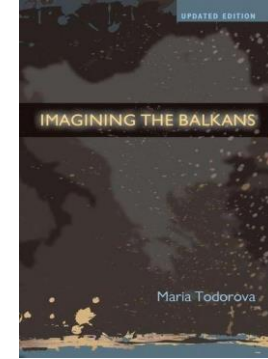
Edward Said-Orientalism

- The West attempt to **impose** through the texts under examination
- The need for **Western conquest**
- Said's study as one of the most influential studies in the modern academic community
- Warm supporters Vs repeated criticism
- Orientalism as a theoretical base for contemporary studies

The four dogmas of Orientalism- A summary

- The absolute and systematic difference between the West and the East: **West is rational, developed, humanistic, superior, East is deviant, underdeveloped, inferior.**
- When referring to East and the "classical" Eastern civilization, **these constructions** are always **preferable to direct evidence** drawn from contemporary Eastern realities.
- East **is eternal and incapable** of defining itself. Therefore, for the Westerner to use a generalized Word to describe the East is inevitable (stereotypes)
- **The East is something to be feared or controlled**

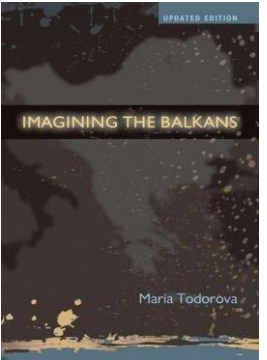
Maria Todorova- Imagining the Balkans



- The discussion of **contemporary images of the Balkans**
- The theoretical framework from Edward Said
- Exploring the imaginative relationship between Western and Southeastern Europe through the phenomenon of **Balkanism**.
- Differences between Orientalism and Balkanism
- Balkanism "*gradually took shape over the course of two centuries and crystallized into a specific discourse at the time of the Balkan wars and World War I*"
- The **imaginary relations between the West and the Balkans and perceptions of the Balkans by Western Europe**
- Travel literature, journalism, political reviews and 'hybrid-texts'

Maria Todorova- Imagining the Balkans

- ❖ Constructions connected with the Balkan Peninsula (primitivism, superstition, unable to govern, political instability, violence etc)
- ❖ The term '**Balkanization**'
- ❖ Balkans and the 'Image the Other'
- ❖ Isolation from main Europe and negative, consolidated connotations
- ❖ Is Orientalism applicable to Balkanism?
- ❖ The depictions used in central Europe so as to describe the Balkans, were used also to highlight the **image of the Balkans as non-Europe** (concrete stereotypes)
- ❖ Balkans as an **imaginary construction of the West**



How did the Balkans react?

- The reaction to these constructions
- Attempt to **avoid being considered as Balkans**
- The seek for a '**European identity**'
- Self-identity and the neighbor
- The role of the EU (contemporary era)

Defining Orientalism

“Every writer on the Orient (and this is true **even of Homer**) **assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient**, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the **Orient affiliates itself with other works**, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore **constitutes an analyzable formation[...]whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.”**

Edward W. Said, Orientalism

Orientalism-Constructing the East through public speech

First of all, look at the **facts** of the case. **Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities for self-government** ... having merits of their own You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, and you **never find traces of self government**. All their great centuries-and they have been very great-have been passed **under despotisms, under absolute government**. All their great contributions to civilisation-and they have been great-have been made under that form of government. **Conqueror has succeeded Conqueror; one domination has followed another**; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of **its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government**. That is the fact. It is not a question of superiority and inferiority.

Arthur Balfour

Orientalism-Constructing the East through public speech

Is it a good thing for these great nations-I admit their greatness. -that this **absolute government** should be exercised by us? I think it is a good thing. I think that experience shows that they have got under it far **better government than in the whole history** of the world they ever had before, and which not only is a benefit to them, but is **undoubtedly a benefit to the whole of the civilised West** We are in Egypt not merely for the sake of the Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; we are there also for the sake of Europe at large.

Arthur Balfour

Contemporary Orientalism

“In newsreels or news-photos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. **No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences.** Most of the pictures represent **mass rage and misery**, or **irrational** (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a **fear** that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world.”

Edward W. Said, Orientalism

Slavoj Zizek- You may!

"If you ask, 'Where do the Balkans begin?' you will always be told that they begin down there, towards the **southeast**. For Serbs, they start in Kosovo or Bosnia where Serbia is trying **to defend civilized Christian Europe against the encroachments** of this Other. For the Croats, the Balkans begin in **Orthodox, despotic and Byzantine Serbia, against which Croatia is 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 **from 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.**"

Agatha Christie, 'Herzoslovakia' as an uncivilized country and the character 'Boris Anchoukoff'

"I say this to you, English policeman, I would have died for him! And since he is dead, and I still live, my eyes shall not know sleep, or my heart rest, until I have avenged him. **Like a dog will I nose out his murderer and when I have discovered him—Ah!**" His eyes lit up. Suddenly **he drew an immense knife from beneath his coat and brandished it aloft.** "Not all at once will I kill him—oh, no!—first I will slit his nose, and cut off his ears, and put out his eyes, and then—then, into his black heart I will thrust this knife.

Agatha Christie as mentioned in Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*



Petros Marazopoulos
petrosmarazopoulos@gmail.com
October 2022