



Images of the Balkans

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

Alexandros Rizos-Ragavis

Georgios Tertsetis

Georgios Martinelis

Fourth Lesson
Lecturer: Petros Marazopoulos
petrosmarazopoulos@gmail.com

Period of Interest (1821- 1890)

- From the early 19th century to 1890
- The Greek '**exploratory**' word of the period- A **discourse 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 **gradual 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 framework**
- *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**
- Limited 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 discourse 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 being disappointed by Montenegro and its inhabitants, he is **fascinated by the heroism of the Montenegrin nation**
- **Enthusiastic portrayals of the Montenegrins**
- 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 against the Ottoman Empire

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, romantic 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 Martinelis

- In 1878 the Ionian Poet **George Martinelis** 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*)

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)



Πέτρος Μαραζόπουλος
petrosmarazopoulos@gmail.com
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