

The making of Balkan wars: the documentary

The real and the imaginary in the construction of the European borders

Perceiving and interpreting images and their messages is a socially and politically defined activity that presupposes a - from the start – defined strategic from the viewer. For instance, although often watching television seems as improvisation and entertainment, in reality it is more a 'strategic' that is dictated by the system of national and social myths, of fantasies and of stereotypes and in general by the viewer's culture. On this basis he/she will pick up – from what he/she personally calls objective reality – the elements he/ she can identify with and will use them to interpret his/ her everyday life. For this reason, in the industry of production of the spectacle, the images do not only represent our culture, but they also compose a colossal system of silent propaganda with planet dimensions and aggressive means of promoting the stereotypes produced by the strong cultures. In other words, in the world of the media idols the viewers find ways to see themselves and the others and this is how oppositions are reproduced, separations and all kinds of exclusions and marginalisation of individuals, of groups, of nations.



An interesting and at the same time dramatic field of exploration of the stereotypes that are reproduced by the media and dictate ways with which populations deal with their existence and their relations with their neighbours or show how they understand their position in the shaping of the global map is the media field of the Balkans.

A place of powerful traditions and historical realignments, of cultural and religious intermixing, the Balkans in any case is an ideal field of exploration of the myths and the ways with which the local cultures are formed and of the stereotypes the mass culture reproduces – mainly the television but often also the cinema – in order to serve a policy of reproduction, that encouraged and continues to encourage conflicts and geopolitical realignments.



More precisely, the Balkan mentality has been one of the most exploited myths in popular discourse and an operative term in many scholarly studies. But "*what is the Balkans?*"

Can we separate what we know, as the essence of the "*Balkans*" from how we know it?

It seems that this question can not be answered directly without examining the very conditions of knowledge about the Balkans.



It is well known that the Balkan studies became very popular into the context of the 90's, because of the interest, improved from the post modern academic world, for the issues related to the identity from one side and the specific events that took place at a part of the Balkan area from the other. Today the results of all this investigation and research that happened the last 15 years have been spread everywhere there is an interest and concern for the Balkans and the concepts related to them like e.g. Balkanisation. Most of the scholars and culture persons are aware of the analysis, the terms and the concepts of these studies, no matter if they are coming from this or that Balkan country or not from the Balkans at all. And in the end if one examines with scrutiny this argumentation will probably agree with that, that some authors like S. Zizek or S. Green are claiming: *every observation that analyses or arguments about the Balkans is as "Balkanised" as are the Balkans themselves.*



This possibility is what the documentary **The making of Balkan wars: the documentary** deals with, having as a basis the history and the polymorphic experience of the Balkan Peninsula and its special characteristics, but taking also under consideration the features of the new technologies. The documentary aims to explore a complex narrative where the viewer can meet, get to know and realise the mechanisms of construction and representation that recycle the –on part- stereotypes that lead to the constitution of the national cultures and on which the hostilities and the fears of one population towards another are based. The making of Balkan wars: the documentary is thematically a composition of what we call Balkan area, of the fantasies and the special characteristics that form it.

In contradiction with the usual way of the visual representation of the narrative used by the media scene, where mythological structures of local identities have roots in the history of every region and collide with the new model of the man – image consumer, this documentary uses different visual linguistic structures of narrative.



It uses and puts in contradiction the TV form of video, the TV interviews and the cinematographic perception of the documentary with the language of digital creation and the software that compose virtual worlds, like those of the video games. The simultaneous people's narratives and the recording of the environment alternate and are continuously transformed, as they are incorporated in the 3D virtual space surpassing the limits and confinements that are usually present in perception by the use of a separate visual language. This way, the viewer can comprehend the fragmentation and the discontinuity of the mechanisms of production that construct the fantasy elements of the

peninsula and get to know the complexity that composes the battle field of the spectacle and its representation in the 21st century.

The making of Balkan wars: the documentary, is based on conversations with theoreticians and artists which discuss these conditions, they depict the multiplicity of the meanings related to the Balkan identity/ies, they examine the use and the content of the term of Balkanisation and finally they approach the definition of the modes of inclusion and exclusion in the European sphere, as a public sphere of bureaucracy and of relations of force, but also as a potential of communication and cooperation between the different peoples.



Production: Personal Cinema, Prosenghisi, Panos Vittorakis

Direction : Ilias Marmaras

Camera : Maya Bontzou, Panos Vittorakis

Editing: Myrto Patsalidou

Music: Stelios Giannoulakis, Vassilis Kokkas

Programming: Yannis Skoulidas

Associated producer: Biljana Tanurovska/ LOKOMOTIVA

Narration: Ian Robertson

Promotion - Communication: Daphne Dragona

Conversation and interviews by: Nevena Dakovic, Milena Dragicevic, Basak Senova Misko Suvakovic, Vladislav Bajac, Bojan Ivanov, Aleksandar Stankovski, Yane Calovski, Ranco Vukcevic

Duration: 78 min