

TO WHAT EXTENT THE IMAGES OF SELF-REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE CINEMA OF THE BALKANS ARE BALKAN?

Gergana Doncheva

Abstract

The paper examines the issue about the distinctive iconic repertoire traditionally associated with the Balkans and closely linked with Western European discourse on the region, the so-called *Balkanism*. The research problem is posed in the context of the provocative hypothesis launched by Karl Kaser that the influence of the images (throughout the Peninsula was represented) exerted a stronger effect in terms of Balkan stereotypical perception than the texts produced by foreign travellers. The Austrian scholar alleged that there was a long tradition of the Western European iconic domination on the Balkans – from the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century – in result of a belated *visual revolution*, and further, as a consequence of it, Kaser discovered ‘*establishment of asymmetrical visual power relations between the West and the Balkans*’.

The emergence and development of the conception about *Balkan Cinema/the Cinema of the Balkans* and the authors covering this topic are briefly presented. The article discusses the process of consciously internalization of Western clichés and self-exotization from the part of different local filmmakers who exploit in their works the tropes of barbarism and exceptional vitality. In the same time, even in the most ‘exotic’ Balkan ‘ethno’ movies there is a quite interesting layer: a high aspiration towards rearranging of the meanings; demolishing of the hierarchies created and ironically transforming of important Western cultural markers, for example – cult films – through their inclusion in the frames of the Balkan cultural context.