



# Imagining the Balkans

*Maria N. Todorova*

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## **Imagining the Balkans** Maria N. Todorova

"If the Balkans hadn't existed, they would have been invented" was the verdict of Count Hermann Keyserling in his famous 1928 publication, *Europe*. This book traces the relationship between the reality and the invention. Based on a rich selection of travelogues, diplomatic accounts, academic surveys, journalism, and belles-lettres in many languages, *Imagining the Balkans* explores the ontology of the Balkans from the eighteenth century to the present day, uncovering the ways in which an insidious intellectual tradition was constructed, became mythologized, and is still being transmitted as discourse.

The author, who was raised in the Balkans, is in a unique position to bring both scholarship and sympathy to her subject. A region geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as "the other," the Balkans have often served as a repository of negative characteristics upon which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the "European" has been built. With this work, Todorova offers a timely, accessible study of how an innocent geographic appellation was transformed into one of the most powerful and widespread pejorative designations in modern history.

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