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Consuming the "Other:" The South-Eastern European Case

Abstract: This article describes the local and transnational processes that led to ethnic conflict, highlighting the rearticulation of class, ethnicity, and gender which resulted from the 1991 dismemberment of the Yugoslav Federation and the independence of Macedonia. As the entry point for my research, I focused on the domain of consumption and material culture, specifically of interior decorations. I analyzed furniture, decorative objects, and the division of space within the homes of my informants. The central argument of my book is that consumption has redefined and mediated ethnicity in post-1991 Macedonia. My data reveal that material culture and consumption practices both reflect and create ethnic tension between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. Theoretically this article links the analytical concepts prevalent in social anthropology such as ethnicity, material culture and consumption with the psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy, desire and loss. This link provides a rigorous terrain for anthropological investigation that grounds individual and collective experiences of people from different ethnic and class background into a larger national and transnational context.

Key words: ethnicity, conflict, material culture, consumption, Macedonians, Albanians, fantasy, loss.

Introduction

As "a periphery of peripheries" (Freidman 1997) Macedonia has caught the social sciences' gaze for a long time. From the initial interest in the Balkan extended family, the zadruga (an interest created by the American anthropologist Philip Mosely in the 20s), in the post-1991 period Former Yugoslavia became an exemplary place again, but now in the domain of ethnicity, nationalism and ethnic conflict.[1] While a number of anthropologists have turned to rigorous assessments of the post-socialist period in Eastern Europe, especially in the domain of property transformation,[2] the case of Former Yugoslavia has been analyzed primarily through the lenses of ethnic conflict, nationalism and violence.

The broader theoretical point of this article is that the domain of everyday culture is a domain that would allow an anthropological investigation beyond the narrow focus of the concepts such as ethnicity or ethnic conflict predominant in the social science approaches dealing with the Balkans. To do this one needs to introduce new notions of analysis that would allow us better interpretation of the phenomena of ethnic conflict and violence. Therefore, the central theoretical argument of this article is that the analytical tools deployed in psychoanalysis such as phantasy, desire or loss bear significance for our anthropological inquiry. This article highlights the relevance of these concepts for the study of consumption in contemporary Macedonia. I argue that by using these concepts one can link the field of material culture and consumption with the vast body of literature on nationalism and ethnicity.

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[1] See for instance, Danforth 1995, Karakasidou 1997, Brown 2003, Brown 1994..
[2] See for instance, Hann 1993, Hann 2002a, Kaneff 1998, Kaneff 2004.

Material culture and consumption have been an important field in anthropology especially in relation to class and gender. Yet, nationalism and consumption have remained unrelated despite the fact that the changes in contemporary Macedonia related to the ways the two dominant ethnic groups view and feel for each other should be explained in terms of loss, fantasy and desire.

The bridge between consumption and nationalism built through the concepts of loss, fantasy and desire offers a political dimension as well: it allows us to shift the locus of analyzing national groups in Macedonia and the Balkans. Instead of treating them as embodiments of primordial-nationalistic forces contending for political supremacy, the relationship between nationalism and consumption practices adds towards the anthropological theory that decenters the discourse on Balkanism (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Todorova 1994, 1997; Zivkovic 1990) by revealing the inextricable link between the west and the Balkans (the Balkans being a western construction and an embodiment of the west's negative Other). The negative representation of the Balkans which emerged with the opposition between western Christendom and Ottoman Islam (Todorova 1994), was reinforced in the cold war period by an ideological and political geography of the democratic, capitalist west versus the totalitarian, communist east (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992:3-4). It remains to be pervasive in representations of the "the Balkans" in Western news and media, academic and political discourses. By insisting upon the global capitalist system and the consumption effect that it has engendered, but also paying attention to how it has been conducive to local nationalistic discourses, the proposed ethnographic analysis provides a model for understanding the complexities of Macedonian and Albanian nationalisms on different levels: private and public spaces, consumption practices and official national ideologies.

Substantively, my analysis expands the theories on consumption produced by anthropologists and social theorists (Appadurai 1986/96; Baudrilliard 1981; Douglas 1992; Douglas and Isherwood 1978; Friedman 1995; Jameson 1998; Miller1998, 1995a, 1995, 1993) which have been negligent or dismissive to psychoanalytic concepts. Following Bourdieu (1984), I examine taste as a key dimension of the significance of ordinary goods. By focusing on nationality and ethnicity, however, this kind of analysis poses questions that cannot be answered by merely examining strategic choices a la Bourdieu that account for reproduction of social classes. Through the examination of the practice of consumption I hope to demonstrate that nationalism is an ideological fantasy actualized and reinforced through material objects and spaces.

By insisting upon the symbolic (fetishistic) effect of material objects in creating national identities and fantasies, I hope to reframe the concept of commodity fetishism (Marx 1976; Taussig 1980) which treats the "mysterious" power of commodities as deceptive and concealing broader social relations inherent to capitalism. While I incorporate the importance of socio-economic conditions, I also expand the "fetishistic" capacity of material objects to everyday symbolic domains. An object becomes a fetish not only when it is impregnated with a set of contradictions that an individual cannot resolve on a personal level (McClintock 1995: 185); in addition, every day objects such as furniture, curtains, rags and pictures have a fetishistic capacity that symbolize and reify national identity. The body of literature on commodity fetishism can be read in a dialogue with the post-processual archeological theory that has contributed largely in theorizing material culture. I build on Hodder's approach which rejects the view that material

culture only reflects, mirrors, or expresses behavior (Hodder 1982: 36). Artifacts do not have only passive role. Based on his research in the Baringo area in Tanzania Hodder contends that while material culture does reflect and express groups and their competition, it is evident that "material culture can actively justify the actions and intentions of human groups" and that symbols are actively involved in social strategies (Hodder 1982: 36).

Having the advantage that archeologists cannot afford not only to "decode" and read material objects in their own right, but also to juxtapose and contrast Macedonian and Albanian ideas and narratives of the significance of these objects, I explicate nationalism on an everyday level in Kumanovo. Specifically, by assessing people's consumption practices in interior decorations, on the one hand, and revealing the trajectories of the "social life of things" (Appadurai 1986) during the Yugoslav federation (1945-1990) and post-1991 Macedonia on the other, my research provides a mode of analysis that takes into consideration human agency, as well as the cultural/symbolic effect of material objects on people.

My ethnographic framework speaks to the necessity of analyzing the mutual constitutive-ness of material practices and national ideologies and fantasies. While theorists whose work and concepts I try to link with our anthropological inquiry such as Zizek and Salecl have supported the significance of fantasy primarily by applying it to film and literary genres, this scrutiny operationalizes this concept by grounding it in a solid ethnographic fieldwork and by analyzing concrete consumption practices of individuals in Macedonia.

From similarity to fear: "just like you"

I was introduced to Suad in the first month of my fieldwork. He gradually became the most important Albanian informant during my research. He was eager to share his bitter experience of "becoming Albanian." Namely, as a student at the Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje where he graduated as one of the very few ethnic Albanians in his cohort, he became "aware of being different". Having the bad luck to start college in the early 80s, following the demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981, he had encountered nationalistic hostility from some of his professors. Suad could not enroll the subsequent year because he failed the examinations, although he thought he had performed better than his peers who managed to pass. This ецпереинце left him bitter, hurt and most of all, aware that he was different from his peers. The incident redefined his own perception of being an Albanian—it taught him, he claimed, how to be an Albanian.

Towards the third month of the fieldwork he introduced me to his extended family. After getting to know Suad's family for more than 7 months, I was invited into his home for a happy occasion: one of his younger brothers to witness the arrival of new furniture. Luan's brother, Adnan, was getting married and оне afternoon бефоре тхе њеддинг И њас инвитед то сее тхе dowpz доњрз оф тхе бриде. they were expecting the bedroom furniture to arrive..

The young couple occupied the bedroom on the top floor. The bride whose father had a private business with a financial assistance of a relative from abroad, was well off

financially and able to provide a good dowry for his daughter. The bedroom furniture for instance costed approximately $8,000, which was only one part of her immensely rich dowry. Ботх, The bedroom and the next door room was also packed with the remaining items of the dowry.

Mersiha's father owned three shops that sold tractor parts. The first opened in 1992. His brother from Belgium gave him a loan to begin the business and connected him to several producers from Western Europe. The subsequent link with relatives from Turkey allowed Mersiha's father to expand the import business. In time, he started importing goods from Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine. Within seven years, his business has grown to one of the leading tractor businesses not only in Kumanovo, but in the entire country. "If a tractor part was not found in his store, then it is not available anywhere in the Balkans," Mersiha told me once. The stores were equally visited by ethnic Macedonians, Roma, Turks, and Serbs, precisely because of their best choice of commodities.

The Kumanovo rural surroundings are heavily agricultural, hence the business was flourishing. With two stores in Kumanovo, as well as one in Skopje, Mersiha's family was one of the best *nouveau riche* representatives in the town. From the brief conversation with her father I immediately sensed his pride in providing such a rich dowry for his daughter. He purchased the bedroom furniture from the most fashionable furniture store in Kumanovo where most of the pieces were imported from Turkey or Saudi Arabia and they reflected a trendy neo-baroque style. Its main characteristics were the richly gilded appearance of the wood, the strong colors of the textile together with the shiny material, and the large size of the furniture.

A similar trend occurred among Macedonians in the early-1970s. Many of the young couples who had been buying furniture then were attracted to the luxurious style that was not to be had previously. The predominantly simple, modernist style of the 1960s and 1970s became passé. In general, the people from the "leading" layers of the Yugoslav working class such as the managers of state-owned corporations or occupied some other important post in one of the state institutions; they preferred to own the "new" furniture that symbolized aristocracy and luxury. This furniture was usually made of burnished wood. The edges were carved in curvy forms and were often painted in gold.

The dominant tone was dark wood or mahogany. An important characteristic was the size probably because of its symbolic effect indicating grandeur and power. Usually these pieces of furniture were very big, so the moving process was usually a major event, involving a large number of people who either helped or witnessed the important moment of redecoration. Many of the home decorative details that accompanied this kind of furniture were often bought from Salonica in Greece. For instance, the most popular paintings were reproductions of romantic landscapes. The reproductions were framed in golden-painted and richly-carved plaster frames. The sculptures or the ornaments were also purchased from Salonica, and the most popular items were golden and crystal chandeliers, as well as crystal and porcelain glasses, vases, or other decorative objects. The many stores with *kitsch* decorations in Salonica's Egnatia street were attractive to the socialist ruling class because of their luxurious outlook.

Most of the Albanian households according to the survey I conducted introduced couches in the 1980s. Ин Суад'с фамилз хоњевер household, however the couches that were present in every room in the house were bought in the 1970s. Хис family had gotten

rid of the *minderlak* in the mid -1970s, much earlier than their relatives. Хис parents, especially хис mother, were eager to introduce novelties. Since the father was a railroad worker and the mother a housewife, and they had seven children, there was never enough money to buy expensive items. Суад, as the oldest son, got furniture for his new room that was built in the attic when he was 15, and this was the room that he still had: the closet, the couch, the little table and two armchairs were still usable. They were a little worn out but they served their purpose well.

When TV was first introduced, however, the father bought one, but he was forced to sell it again at the insistence of Luan and Adnan's grandmother who condemned the TV set as a sinful irreligious (anti-Allah) object that showed "improper images. A few years later, after the death of the grandmother, a new TV was purchased and watching movies became one of the family's favorite forms of entertainment. Before his wedding in 2001 Adnan bought large TV with satellite dish and digital receiver that receives 150 channels from all over the world.

When Суад married, his wife did not bring furniture as part of her dowry. They used the old furniture. During the daytime, the couch was folded and the room was a sitting room. At night they would unfold the couch and have their bedroom. Суад did make many changes prior to her arrival, however, reparing the wooden floor, the ceiling, painting the walls, the doors, etc. The only thing that the bride brought with her were two paintings--cheap ones acquired in a Skopje flea market (*Bitpazar*). She considered a painting on the wall to be a marker of urbanity even if the painting was unattractive. Суад told me that the quality of the paintingc was irrelevant. Тхез њере a symbol of emancipation unlike embroidery and tapestry that signified housewives' taste.

I had a lengthy interview with Adnan after the TV music show for which he was a host at the local TV station. I was waiting in the small room located next to the studio where the direct broadcast of the show had taken place. It was damp and smelled of mold. As I was waiting for Adnan, I looked through a large pile of Austrian video-magazines. The show had run for a few years and Adnan was its main producer -- everything in it was his choice. He selected the video-clips, the sponsors in the show, and he decided upon the amount of time that they would receive. It was an interactive show in which young people could vote for a particular video-clip and would then win a free CD if they answered a question correctly.

Understandably, Adnan was popular in the town, especially among young people but also among those who wanted to advertise their businesses on his show. As we were getting ready to leave the studio, I asked him why so many of the ads in his show were of furniture dealers or producers. As it turned out, Adnan had made a deal with several furniture shops in Kumanovo to let them run their ads in his show and instead of paying him they allowed him to buy furniture from their stores in 12 monthly payments and with discounts too. Суад had explained previously that Adnan had been burdened by his social background. The house where the family had lived since the mid-1960s was still the same: a modest, old fashioned one with only a few adjustments made by Суад and Adnan's father, when he was still alive. There were two bedrooms for the boys and a bathroom on the second floor, a large *salon* (living room), one family room attached to the kitchen, and two other bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor. The family was large: two boys and five girls. Four of the sisters were married and so only the mother,

the two brothers, and the one unmarried sister resided in the house now. And they were expecting the daughter-in-law within a few weeks.

Many changes were underway in the house in the month before the wedding: new sunshades were installed in the second floor bedrooms, the house was painted, new curtains were bought, furniture was rearranged around the house. Luan redecorated his room entirely too: he painted it, put a new fabric on the sofa and the armchairs, and moved the *credenza*. He wanted to get rid of everything that reminded him of his ex-wife whom he divorced seven years ago. His room was not renovated since he married his first wife in 1994. The most difficult task of all for him was to throw away his first wife's bridal dresses. It is a custom among Albanians for the bride to get many glamorous dresses from her husband and to wear them in the first year while she is still considered to be a bride.

Luan mentioned that he regretted the choice of "bringing" a bride with a good social background, a girl from Skopje with a university degree. It was so important for him to have a wife with a good social background and more importantly, that she be from Skopje. But things would have been much better if he had chosen a peasant, an obedient girl who would show the required respect for his family, especially for his mother and sister. Despite her background, however, his wife never brought new furniture. She never was able to accept the extended family and was always hoping that one day the two of them would move out and live by themselves.

Adnan's new wife Mersiha on the other hand, brought many new things into the house: a new washing machine, a new dishwasher, a new vacuum cleaner, hundreds of pieces of needlework including table cloths, pillowcases, bed sheets, blankets, duvet covers, porcelain pots for the kitchen, several sets of crystal glasses in different shapes, tapestries, a ceramic wall clock with Q'r'anic scripture on it, etc. (The personal wardrobe which her father had bought for her included 22 pairs of shoes in different colors and matching handbags, with several dozens of new dresses, etc.). And Adnan, by finding the alternative way to buy furniture with large reductions, initiated many changes in the common areas of the entire house. He bought two large *kosnici* (L shaped sofas that each could seat 16—18 people) for the salon and the family room. He bought a new wooden dining table and chairs for the salon, new carpets, new commodes, a new stove for the kitchen, etc.

All of this new furniture was purchased from the retail stores in Kumanovo. Luan and Adnan's mother mentioned to me once when we were alone that so many changes had happened that she could not recognize her own house; it was as if it were another house. "It is okay though—if she redecorates, she wants to feel at home. Luan's wife never touched anything, never had a desire to change anything. She always had the desire to leave, to escape from here." The fact that the new daughter-in-law wanted to dominate space, not only in the room of the couple but also in the public areas of the house with objects and commodities from her dowry, was viewed as a positive indicator by the mother-in-law, as a sign that revealed the bride's intention to be part of this family. Thus the changes instigated acceptance and respect. Yet, the class background of the bride was an issue due to fear of domination and disobedience.

During my visit, Mersiha pointed out that the daughter of her father's colleague, a Macedonian lawyer and in charge of the legal procedures of her father's business, also chose the same bedroom furniture for his daughter. Indeed, Mersiha's father had many

ethnic Macedonian friends and she mentioned several times that her family buys things similar to those bought by their Macedonian friends. "What is beautiful is beautiful for Macedonians and Albanians. It is a matter of taste, not a matter of one's ethnicity. There are Albanians now who have sophisticated taste just like Macedonians. There isn't much difference any more. The Albanians are not what they used to be: plain, stupid, and tasteless." Although many times Mersiha pointed to me that she prefers styles with Arabic and Muslim motifs, the fact that her family can afford similar items as their rich and educated Macedonian friends, revealed the change of social space along ethnic lines.

Adnan and Mersiha's wedding was held in one of the most elite restaurants in Kumanovo, one that had been recently renovated hall. The restaurant was popular among rich Albanians because of the recently appointed manager who was an ethnic Albanian. That evening I was approached by several of Adnan and Merisha's relatives and friends who asked me how I liked the wedding. They wanted to know if it were very different from a Macedonian wedding. This was the first time that I had ever attended an Albanian wedding. It was true, the wedding was similar to most of the weddings I had attended; it had loud music and a similar dancing style. In fact, several times, one of the waiters who was serving the dinner, an ethnic Macedonian, rolled his eyes as if to give me a compassionate and understanding look. Towards the end of the evening, on serving the desert, he whispered in my ear: "Nice wedding, isn't it? Albanians are not what they used to be. Their weddings now are just like ours."

A few months later a friend from Skopje, my hometown, came to visit me in Kumanovo. I invited Luan, Adnan and Mersiha to join us. We were in the local night club "7", one of the most popular places in Kumanovo where ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians used to go out together (the club had been closed since March 2001 when the war in Macedonia started, and was newly reopened). My friend, an ethnic Macedonian and an architect, spent most of the evening in deep conversation with Luan despite the unbearably loud music. Later that evening as we were walking back to the apartment where I was staying in Kumanovo, she told me: "These Albanians are really nice. Mersiha and Adnan are a very nice couple—very modern. But Luan impressed me so much—he is so knowledgeable about philosophy and literature. We were talking about death and the afterlife. Wow, he is so well read. And he dresses so well. You could not notice that he is an Albanian at all." As she was taking off her make-up with a cotton ball in front of the mirror in the bathroom, she shouted at me while I was unfolding the living room sofa. "But don't get fooled, Rozita. Albanians like these are the most dangerous ones -- you cannot recognize them. They are so similar and therefore so much more sneaky. These are the ones we should fear and not be impressed by."

My initial reaction to her comment was rather impulsive: I was angry and felt provoked by what I saw as a racist comment directed at people whom I have grown to like and respect during my research. But in time I realized that this was an attitude and a genuine reaction of many Macedonians whose moral integrity I would not question. The fact that a large number of Albanians are "modernized and dressed better than us so you cannot recognize that they are Albanians" reveals the phantasmic dimension from which Macedonians explain the existence of Albanians who are visually similar and undistingushable from "us." These Albanians, however, neither hide their Albanian identity, nor deny their religious affiliation. Successful Albanians during socialism were most often party members, which inevitably meant atheists as well looking up to the

Macedonian citizen as a model of a successful (and modern) member of the society. Nowadays, however, Mersiha and her family are financially more successful than many Macedonians who had the financial privileges during socialism. On one hand, Mersiha is proud that she can own the same commodities as the rich Macedonians (hger father's attorney). On the other hand, she constantly reminded me that she is an Albanian and very proud by the fact that her grandfather was an hodza, anmd that her entire family is religious.

Conclusion

On the previous pages I tried to show that issues of ethnicity and ethnic tension should be examined in the larger neo-liberal context where the political economy of free market, privatization, and new democratic changes inform local идентититес оф еверздаз пеопле. The domain of consumption, I have argued, offers us a place from which we can understand the complexity and the multiple actors in Macedonia, but also to reexamine the theoretical and epistemological boundaries of anthropology as a discipline.

Daniel Miller (Miller 1995) has identified the domain of consumption as one that has transformed the "nature" of anthropology as a discipline. The acceptance of consumption as significant terrain for anthropological analysis indeed marks a fundamental coming to maturity of anthropology—"a final expunging of latent primitivism" (Miller 1995: 250). We can safely assume that consumption is a main feature of the late-capitalist world where any attempt to disrupt or transgress the consumer logic creates a "condition of impossibility" (Derrida 1998). Zizek (2003) argues that there in lies the libidinal economy of the capitalist consumption: in the production of objects which do not simply meet or satisfy an already given need but also create the need they claim to satisfy (Zizek 2003). This calls into question the power of a "proper" Marxist critique that starts from the claim that production creates the need for consumption and the objects it produces. Moreover, Zizek reminds us that "these objects are proliferating maltitude of cultural sublimation, which, however is strictly correlative to a certain lack. In post-revolutionary society, transgression (or subversion) itself is not only recuperated, but directly solicited by the system as the very form of its reproduction" (Zizek 2003 :30)

And yet, I have shown here how the domain of material culture, mediated through consumption practices and social space, has caused transgression of a previously marginalized ethnic group to become socially mobile and to redefine the contours of social space in Macedonia. I have argued that the introduction of a market economy in 1991 has affected the everyday lives of ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians in several different ways: in terms of consumption, power to buy, choice, class distinction, and especially in terms of ethnic difference. Changes in the political economy of Macedonia анд Еасетрн Еуропе have influenced the symbolic space that grounds and gives meaning to ethnic identities, which since 1991 have been re-divided by class; these new distinctions have been fueled by the presence of a vast variety of commodities. The rapidity with which the changes have occurred has not opened up a space for emergence of a signifier with which many Macedonians, who were once relatively privileged working class members, can make sense of the changes in the political-economic matrix. The presence of "just like us" Albanians (ас МерсихаЌс фамилз) has actually created

fear and has threatened the privileged positions that Macedonians were accustomed to having *vis-à-vis* Albanians.

The central way in which ethnic Macedonians make sense of the changes is to explain the loss of their economic privileges and of their previously comfortable lifestyles by holding Albanians ac responsible for that loss. The most effective way to rationalize their loss is through criticizing the Albanian presence. Thus the loss that Macedonians have been experiencing is, in the first instance, material—made visible through the material objects and commodities now owned by Albanians. Many ethnic Albanians have enjoyed the "conspicuous consumption" that has been enabled by the introduction of the market economy since 1991 (Veblen 1998 [1899]). Albanians proudly display their wealth and enact the changes as "social mimicry," as Mersiha and her family did. They also "perform" their social superiority over the other poorer Albanian households by purchasing commodities as their ethnic Macedonian friends have done.

In his book *The Metastasis of Enjoyment,* Slavoj Zizek writes of the importance of similarity by addressing an incident which occurred during his lecturing on Hollywood in the mid-1990s. Zizek received a remark that it was impermissible to talk about such a "trivial" topic when former Yugoslavia was steeped in a bloody ethnic war. Zizek replied that as long as the Western world expects everyone from the Former Yugoslavia to talk or write only about the civil war, the boundary between the West and the Balkans would be maintained as well as a social distance that makes "us" different from "them." Indeed, most of the reports from war-torn Bosnia were sensational, and depicted horror. The West could not "sympathize" with the Bosnian people until there were journalist reports about everyday life and even about the "normality" that many people maintained during the war. The necessity to create a sharp demarcation between the West and the Balkans merely reinforces the view that we are *different* and not the "same."

By building on the idea of "social proximity" introduced by Chakrabarty (Chakrabarty 2002) and that of "similarity" introduced by Zizek (Zizek 1991), I argue that these two concepts are the main factors, along with the new differences in wealth, that disrupt the balance of power between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in Kumanovo. The loss of class privileges for Macedonians becomes visible through the emerging proximity and the similarity between the two ethnic groups. Thus, it is the mutual entanglement of loss grounded in political economy, consumption practices and visual proximity that creates ethnic tension between the two groups.

In a compelling comparison on the dynamics taking place during a psychoanalytic session and a detective case, Zizek (1991) insists that there is a close link between the two. Namely a psychoanalyst resembles a detective (Scherlock Holmes or Philip Marlow for instance) given that for the two their tasks follow a similar path: they both try to decode the hidden signs and meanings attached to…. Could not we also make the argument that a parallel between a psychoanalyst and ethnographer appear rather "logical"? In her/his aim to grapple and explain specific local meanings, practices and symbols, does not an ethnographer conduct a venture of similar "nature" as the one of the analyst, or a detective thereof?

While theorists such as Zizek (Zizek 1989, 1991,1993) and Salecl have shown that fantasy is important in film and literary theory, this approach grounds fantasy in a concrete framework of consumption practices of people in Macedonia. When Zizek argued that the crux of nationalism and racism is most often articulated in terms of "the

other enjoying the things that belonged to us" or "stealing something from us", he paved the way for analyzing ethnic conflict within the domain of desire and fantasy. By historically contextualizing the emergence of these social phenomena, and by grounding them in a firm political-economic setting, the theoretical approach that blends class, consumption, and ethnicity with semiotics, анд десире анд фантасз, Lacan and Zizek, provides the analytical tools that can explain the crux of the ethnic conflict in Macedonia.

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