Dystopian Depictions of Serbia in British Travel Literature

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A Balkan Tour

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This book is dedicated to my beloved grandmother, whose memory has left a lingering effect on our family.

I also with to express my gratitude to my Serbian teacher Jelena Djordjević for her vast contribution to my better understanding of Serbian language and culture.

ABSTRACT

Without any doubt, one of the European regions that has never ceased to trouble the Westerner traveller was the Balkan Peninsula with its complex political and national conditions. Divided between the West and the East, Serbia functioned as a terra incognita within the British travel canon, that served as the transit point to the Ottoman Empire or the Old Grecian world. At a time when Anglo-Saxonism occupied a prevalent position in the British political discourse, the Balkan peninsula came to epitomise all the negative qualities of the Orient that British travellers were anxious to apply to alien countries that were far removed from the nation-building agenda of the Empire. Thus, classified as the fringe of the Orient, Serbia was persistently depicted as a politically unstable region, inhabited by primitive ethnic groups that could possibly threat the viability of the British imperialist interests in European Turkey. In the light of the Serbian national struggle to promote the idea of a South-Slavic Union or forge an identity against the Austrian and the Ottoman Empires, some British travellers undertook a journey to all the Balkan states where Serbians formed the majority of the population to demonise the War of Liberation of the Balkan states against the Ottoman yoke, treating it as visible evidence of Russian Expansionism. Inevitably, the dystopian view of Serbia as a primitive, savage Other was linked to the pan-Slavic movement that emerged during the 1850s in the Balkan nations as a response to their long subjugation to foreign powers.

This book concentrates on dystopian British imagology on Serbia as a travel destination, including travel accounts produced from 1717 until 1911, a year prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The travel texts incorporated into this volume shed light on all the conceptualisations of the Balkans, addressing the sociopolitical conditions that sparked the national awakening of Serbia.

INTRODUCTION

The present work should be seen in close relation to the texts *Greek Dystopia in British Women Travellers' Discourse* and *Deconstructions of the Russian Empire in Western Travel Literature.* In particular, the text concentrates on the representations of Serbian identity in British travel discourse from the early eighteenth century up to the beginning of the twentieth century on the basis of the Balkan Tour that several British travel writers undertook through the course of time.

A Slavic nation with a rich Orthodox tradition, Serbia did not fare well as a travel destination, given that it possessed all the qualities deemed negative by the average British reader: first of all, Serbians lay scattered amongst different dominions of the Austrian and the Ottoman Empires until the outbreak of the First World War: Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia were often annexed to different imperial states, posing a challenge to the construction of a common Serbian identity.

Second, one could trace the anti-Serbian attitude of the Britons prior to the Romantic period and the evolution of the field of travel tourism with the advent of the Grand Tourist ideals. According to Katarina Luketić, the Balkans were persistently depicted as a dangerous zone, antithetical to the civilised Western nations, which posed a threat to the very existence of the Western traveller, given that "in Western collective representations, the Balkans are often considered to be the refuse, a menagerie of Europe, it's dark and out-of-the-way part, it's wild edge, Europe's appendix" (54). This point is of major importance, if one takes into consideration the geographical position of the country which impacted its overall representation by British travel writers of the periods that are included in this volume.

Discussing the dystopian view of the Balkans as a perilous zone, remotely connected to Europe both culturally and spiritually, Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš defines this set of negative beliefs and values as balkanization, a term used to denote

> a region of hopelessly mixed races […] more or less backward populations, economically and financially weak, covetous, intriguing, afraid, a continual prey to the machinations of the great powers, and to the violent promptings of their own passions. (105–106)

In that respect, British travellers were already negatively prejudiced before embarking on their Balkan tour, having been exposed to dystopian beliefs on the Balkan peninsula and the people that inhabited this southern part of the European Continent. Inevitably, Serbia triggered British discourse on Otherness, projecting Serbia as a peripheral world, untouched by the refining spirit of culture and social improvement. As argued my Cy Mathews, in British travel literature of the Romantic era and until the 1850s, "Serbia was represented as an unstable and dangerous zone caught between different worlds: between civilization and savagery, between the primitive past and the modernizing present" (67).

Third, scholars who flocked to the Balkans were often intrigued by a pilgrimage to the ancient Greek sites, and therefore, Serbia was often treated as a transit station between Western Europe and the Grecian part of the European Continent. In that sense, as Matthews purports, "Serbia was overshadowed by Greece and Albania, regions described in detail in Lord Byron's poetry and letters" (67). It is noteworthy that ancient Greece occupied a prominent position in eighteenth-century travel discourse and a significant number of travellers were anxious to link the country's former glory to its current condition. In the case of Serbia, however, the country did not pertain to the anxiousness of British travellers to have a close encounter with the ancient Greek tradition.

What is more, the rise of Panslavism and the ascending influence of the Russian Empire on the Serbian political affairs were factors that exacerbated the demonisation of Serbia as a nation culturally attached to the European Slavic Orient. As Božidar Jezernik puts it,

> through the study of the voyagers' diaries to the area (among other historical sources), it is shown the different words used and that the label "Balkans" refers mainly to the "Other" Europe, the Europe under the ottoman rule. (1)

Aside from the constant Othering of the Slavic populations during the Panslavic movement, the Britons tended to place a special focus on the detrimental effect of the Serbian Orthodox Church on Serbian manners and mores, since the Orthodox faith was perceived as a challenge to the predominant role of Protestantism in Europe and "was often treated as visible evidence of the Russian expansionist agenda, having preserved a Christian tradition which was overtly Oriental in appearance" (Kassis 5). Undoubtedly, the strenuous effort of British imperial discourse to denigrate the role of the Orthodox Church should be seen in connection to the British nation-building agenda that was founded, to a significant extent, on Protestantism and, at the same time, it coincided with the

Anglo-Russian rivalry that gave rise to the Eastern Question. Trapped between the two imperial realms, Serbians were however spiritually attached to their religious doctrine, given that religion fulfilled a paramount role in the nation's emancipation from the Ottoman Empire, even though Serbs coexisted with the Muslim element for centuries. This is further substantiated by Martha Meyer's point that

> The church through the centuries served a vital function in maintaining the Serbian nationality. The Turks did not believe in forcible conversion to the Moslem religion and based their empire on the separate existence of religions. (12)

If nineteenth-century Britons venerated Protestantism as an embedded value of the expansionist agenda of the British Empire, the Serbian Orthodox Church fulfilled the role of the spiritual leader of the nation under the Ottoman rule, "dedicated to protecting Serbian cultural and religious values from Ottoman Muslim culture" (Aleksa Djilas 12). Acknowledging the pivotal role of the Orthodox Church in the construction of Serbian nationhood, British travellers were reluctant to trace elements of "Russian intrusion" into the spiritual life of the Serbs, based on the hypothesis that the Church assumed the role of the indoctrinator of people's exposure to nationalism at a time when Serbia and the Serbian-speaking populations of the Balkans had not established a nation state (Jay Winter).

Notwithstanding Serbian political and cultural ties with Russia that encouraged the Serbians to identify with the pan-Slavic movement, the awakening of Serbian national identity contributed to the construction of its own nation-building agenda, that placed Serbia as the leading nation in a South Slavic Union, a step that further shattered Anglo-Serbian geopolitical relations. As observed by Meyer,

> by 1862, when Serbia freed itself of direct Turkish interference, it had already launched a nationalistic policy for the creation of an enlarged Serbia, as well as plans for a South Slavic Union with Serbia at the helm. (11)

Based on the above realisation, Serbia clashed with Britain in various ways, both culturally and geopolitically, resulting in the view of the Serbian nation as a backward Other, challenging British interests in the Balkan Peninsula. Nevertheless, Sylke Nyssen notes that, by undermining the role of the Greek Orthodox Church in Serbian life, Western observers oversaw the fact that Orthodoxy constituted the sole pillar of national

identity that "had a significant influence as far as culture, customs and religious beliefs" (21), especially during the long Ottoman rule of the Serbian territories.

Instead of associating Serbia with the European Continent, during the nineteenth century British travellers tended to use the generic term European Turkey to address all the "new states that emerged in the territory" (Jezernik 2), thus emphasising the Slavic populations' Oriental character as well as their distance, both ontologically and geographically, from the main Western cultural centres. Admittedly, the political struggles of the nascent Balkan states came to prominence during the Russo-Turkish wars which led to the remapping of the European Oriental states and accelerated their political emancipation from the Ottoman rule at the threshold of the twentieth century.

As regards the issue of the Ottoman heritage of Serbia, Rainer M. Lepsius identifies the Ottoman rule from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century as one of the principal reasons for the country's image as a nation in eclipse (3). Owing to the long subjugation of the Serbian territories to the Ottoman Empire, Westerners rarely referred to the connection of the medieval Serbian state to the Western world, considering the fact that, "at one side there was no Serbian state anymore, and on the other because the Ottoman power has set its own patterns of politics, economy and culture" (Lepsius 4).

Stavros Stavrianos appears to corroborate Lepsius' argument on the decadent aspect of Serbia under the Ottoman rule, stating that the Ottoman conquest went as far as to denationalise the Balkan cities and cultures, owing to the fact that, "during most of the Ottoman period big towns in the region reflected the "nationality" of those who held political and economic power" (99). In that sense, British travellers who undertook a journey to the Balkans were prone to misconceptions about the true nature of each Balkan culture because the Ottoman influence had left an indisputable effect on the physiognomy of the nations and their political life.

Moreover, the persistent view of Serbia and the surrounding Balkan states as terrae incognitae which posed a challenge to the refined aspect of British Anglo-Saxon culture might be attributed to the undoubted overemphasis of Western travel literature on the "political history, particularly diplomatic history, while social, economic, and cultural history have been relatively neglected (Michael B. Petrovich 5). In that respect, British travellers tended to place extensive emphasis on the political conditions that characterised Serbia at a geopolitical level and seldom manifested interest in the country's other traits, a tendency which

admittedly led to serious misconceptions of the British portrayal of the Serbian nation in the field of travel literature.

According to Ellie Skopetea, the geographical position of the Balkans added to their view as a peripheral region since the Age of the Enlightenment, when the Balkan states were persistently viewed as "at once near (geographically) and far (culturally)" (5). Therefore, their peripheral role was limited to their cultural distance from the British metropolis, while their geographical position nurtured British expansionist phantasies.

That Serbia did not occupy a prevalent position as a tourist destination until the 1850s is further reinforced by its complex political condition. Having been conquered by the Ottomans in 1459, it fell under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire and Russia as an autonomous principality at the beginning of the nineteenth century as the outcome of the "First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813)" (Čedomir Antić 14). However, after the revolutionary movements taking place in the 1850s, Serbia was again put under the control of six European powers, a condition which increased the British involvement in the country's political affairs. For this reason, a great number of travelogues which are discussed in this volume were penned at the time when the British Empire had shifted its glance at the new states, resulting from the gradual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

Regarding the rise of Serbian nationalism, it did not occur in the same manner as British nationhood, given that the concept of national identity did not concern the Serbs to such an extent as Western intellectuals. According to Katrin Bozeva-Abazi, Serbian peasantry "was accustomed to defining itself in terms of religion, locality and occupation, not in terms of nationality" (3). The Serbian lack of concern about the construction of a specific national identity also stemmed from the long Ottoman rule which hindered the forging of a strong nation state, considering the existence of Serbian populations across all Balkan principalities. As maintained by Bozeva-Abazi, it was only when the nation state was formed that "peasants had to be indoctrinated in nationalism. The inculcation was executed through the schooling system, military conscription, the Christian Orthodox Church, and the press" (3).

Consequently, the idea of Greater Serbia came to the foreground as the main political paradigm of the nascent Serbian kingdom in the First Serbian Rebellion of 1804, at the time when the nation rekindled its ties with its distant glorious past. During that period, for the first time one could witness the flourishing of the philological studies in the Serbian context: as Daniel Ryan Van Winkle asserts, the resurgence of interest in

Serbian national literature through the rediscovery of the country's epic poetry precipitated "the creation of a Greater Serbian Nation that would include all of the region's linguistically similar populations" (Van Winkle 8).

Concerning the First Serbian Uprising, Western approach to the early Serbian revolts revolved around the political leader of the Serbians, Djordje Petrović, also known as Black George, whose leadership quickly became the subject of British vehement criticism. Yet his efforts to establish a modern Serbian state was also romanticised in British travel discourse, in view of the constant references to his instrumental role in the Serbian rebellion in British travel narratives at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hence the ambiguous description of Karadjordje's "violent and uncompromising nature […] or idealisation in a particularly turbulent period for the Serbian community" (David Vincent 20).

According to Meyer, Serbian Nationalism was intensely manifest in the Serbian insurrection of 1804-1813, "looked on by some observers as the popular struggle to recreate the great medieval Serbian kingdom of Stephen Dušan and the Nemanja dynasty" (12). One of the most emblematic figures often evoked in Serbian imagination, and which was frequently mentioned in British travelogues on Serbian nationhood, was Stefan Dušan, the King who expanded Serbia territorially southwards. As maintained by Antić

> Stefan Uroš IV Dušan – the most powerful representative of the House of Nemanjić – was crowned emperor in 1346, Serbia gained access to three seas and reached the island of Euboea, the Gulf of Corinth and Chalkidiki. (16)

Moreover, apart from the glorious past of the Serbs during the reign of the Emperor Stefan Dušan, often evoked in Serbian nationalist discourse to address the nation's claim to emancipation from the Austrian or Ottoman Empires, it is worth stressing the leading position of Serbia as the first Slavic nation to challenge the imperial rule, thus contributing to the shift eastwards in the mapping of Europe. According to Meyer

> The Serbs were the first of the nationalities of the Ottoman Empire to seek and win autonomy. Yet the initial revolt, starting in 1804, did not begin as an attempt to free the Serbs from the Ottoman suzerain, but rather as an effort to remove from Serbia Janissaries who were terrorizing the population, and to restore a just representative of the sultan to the Pashalik of Belgrade. (Meyer 8)

Equally significant was the emblematic figure of Prince Miloš, who succeeded Black George and, in spite of his overt dislike of constitutionalism, came to epitomise Serbian liberation from the Ottoman Rule after the First Serbian Uprising, becoming the first Serbian Prince. Exploring Prince Miloš' role in the formation of a Serbian nation state, Bozeva-Abazi asserts that the accumulation of power by the Serbian Prince revitalised the political matters within the Serbian context and paved the way for "the construction and mobilization of invented state traditions through the institution of monarchy" (83).

The initial insurrections of the Serbs against the Jenissaries quickly transformed into a wider nation-building agenda that sought to unify all South Slavs into a single, collective identity, ascribing to the Serbian nation an instrumental role. The inspirator of this self-aggrandising ideology was propagated by Ilija Garašanin [1], who was the first to attribute to the Serbian nation a higher role in the European political scene:

> The Nacertanije (Memorandum) of 1844 called for the eventual creation of a Greater Serbia composed of Serbs in all the lands surrounding the Serbia of his day, later to be expanded to include all the South Slavs, under the Serbian dynasty. (Meyer 45)

Nevertheless, as the rising Anglo-Saxonism exerted systematic influence on the nation-building agenda of the Britons, at times it became more inclusive, incorporating distant nations into the collective Anglo-Saxon project. While elaborating on the common racial background of the Celts, the Slavs and the Teutons, Compte Arthur de Gobineau alleged that "Celts, Slavs and Teutons are descended from a single pure stock may today be regarded as certain in the light of anthropology and ancient history" (Frank H. Hankins 68). Owing to the lack of specific information on the racial delineation of the Serbs in Western literature, a significant number of Britons dallied with the origins of the name Serb in order to foster an image of the nation as subaltern or inferior based on a supposed etymological analysis. As explained by Antic

> The origin of the nouns 'Serb' and 'Serbia' is an interesting question. According to the interpretation of the learned Byzantine emperor and scholar Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, upon their migration to the

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[1] Ilija Garašanin (1812-1874) was a Serbian politician and a prime minister of Serbia, whose influential essay Načertanije (The Draft) expressed the desire of the foundation of a Greater Serbia, through the Union with Southern Slavs.

Balkans the Serbian and Croatian tribes acknowledged Byzantine suzerainty and the Serbs were named 'Servii' to indicate their subjugated position. Hence many European nations, including the British, referred to Serbia as Servia and the Serbs as Servians until 1914. (Antic 13)

Additionally, Serbs were inevitably posited as an inferior stock compared with the Northern Europeans, who came to epitomise all the superior qualities of the alleged Nordic race. As suggested by Kassis,

the prevalence of the pseudosciences which were used to corroborate the Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy overseas and at an insular level led to the parallel demonisation of the nations which were positioned as culturally and racially alien to the Anglo-Saxons. (2)

In addition to the lack of historical or racial ties between Serbia and the Germanic world, Irena Ristić raises an important point with regard to the Serbian nation's view as antithetical to the very conceptualisation of Europeanness. As Ristić puts it, Western discourse has persistently treated Serbs as "an unfinished state with a rather undefined nation" (185) owing to the political instability and the constant change in the mapping of Serbia territorially and culturally. If Britons tended to associate Serbia with political unrest, Marija Todorova purports that Serbian nationalism was also shaped in contrast to the notion of Europeanness, which acquired "a pejorative connotation, meaning soft, decadent or hypocritical" (78).

Moreover, the dystopian image of Serbia as an unfinished state stemmed from the peculiarities that surrounded the forging of Serbian national identity which were related to the absence of a nation state within the Serbian cultural context that could comply with the British standards of federalism and strong democratic values. Persistently fostering the image of the wild Balkan in the nineteenth century, British travel writers and politicians focused constantly on the role of the West as a potential supervisor of the untamed element in the Balkan regions, "assuming the role of an adult and responsible parent" (Vesna Goldsworthy 33).

Furthermore, according to Detlef Pollack, Serbian national identity was constructed both by Westerners and by Serbian intellectuals in juxtaposition with conventional values of Europeanness, given that, even though it retained a strong link to Western liberal values, it also underlines the Orthodox/Slavic heritage and its cultural affiliation with Russia (30). Due to its cultural identification with Russia, the Serbian nation was consequently fathomed as a member of the Eastern cultural and political continuum, thus signalling the dichotomy between the West and Serbian cultural identity.

Given this clash between the West and the East that gradually contributed to the depiction of Serbian culture in British travel literature, Ristić observes that this stock dystopian representation of Serbia emanated from "a changing influence of great powers from East and West, and that it consequently disabled Serbia in defining its own identity" (193). In other words, Serbian identity was seen as a construct aligned with the frequent political conflicts that manifested themselves through the course of time.

This point is also substantiated by Tena Korac Andric, who affirms that historical events and traditional institutions of the Serbian nation contributed to the formation of Serbian nationhood in the nineteenth century, "like the Battle of Kosovo, and institutions, like the Serbian Orthodox Church" (6). In the case of the myth of the Battle of Kosovo, it occupied a prevalent part in Serbian nationalist discourse as a manufactured national myth by the Church to "preserve Serbian Orthodox Christianity […] later serving as the platform for the Serbian national revival movement" (Andric 12).

Additionally, unlike British national discourse which tended to posit the British Empire as a cultural metropolis surrounded by imagined peripheries, Serbian nationhood was formed by following precisely the opposite direction, given that Serbia and the other Balkan territories were a priori seen as the peripheral world. For this reason, as purported by Andric, Serbs endeavoured to construct their national identity as a form of resistance against "Western political ideas of liberalism and individualism, despite culturally being exposed to them in the early Serbian nineteenth century state" (6-7).

Notwithstanding the British tendency to read the Serbian nation as a dark, backward Other, the construction of a Serbian utopia took place towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the Serbian National Movement was crystallised and samples of Serbian national literature circulated amongst European intellectuals. According to Van Winkle, Serbian folk ballads gained international acclaim, and the nation was consequently associated with the continuous struggle of Christianity against the Ottoman threat, placing extensive emphasis on the symbolic function of the Battle of Kosovo:

> It is remembered [the Battle of Kosovo] as the battle in which Serbia defended European culture against the Muslim invaders. Additionally, the Battle of Kosovo has become the subject of Serbian mythology through the creation of innumerable commemorative ballads. (8)

Apart from the literary dimension of the Serbian utopia, a shift was observed in British imagination in favour of the Serbian nation during the

Crimean War, when the antipathy towards Russia and Greece escalated. This change was attributed to the fact that, unlike Greece and Russia, Serbia chose to remain neutral. As a consequence, British travellers' outlook on Serbia impacted its positive depiction as a newborn, Christian nation that could become a worthy ally of the British Empire in the affronting of the Eastern Question:

> Specifically, when Turkey was dealing with the Greek uprising which began in 1821, Miloš kept the Serbs from joining the revolt. They also did not participate in the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29. Under the threat of complete destruction by the Russians, the sultan agreed to honor the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest in the Convention of Akkerman (1826) amid the Treaty of Adrianople (1829). (Meyer 25)

With respect to the dissemination of Serbian national myths across the Balkan Peninsula and in British literature, Vincent argues that, despite the Serbian nation's frequent subjugation to foreign rulers, the process of nation-making in Serbia was often linked to images of strong masculinity, reflecting upon historical instances to "define the Serbian self as carrying masculine qualities" (43), a nation-building strategy which could bear strong resemblance to the parallel attempts of Victorian Britons to attribute a valiant or masculine character to the British Empire.

Aside from the Serbian propensity to ascribe a masculine dimension to Serbian national identity, the battle of Kosovo was revered as a metaphor of national sacrifice and pride, given that this historical event emphasised its function as "the cultural and spiritual center of the early Serbian state […] a repository of the most glorious of the national heroes" (Kathrine Verdery 104). As shall be seen, some of the travellers included in this volume were either anxious to record their observations after a visit to the location where the battle took place or comment on the link between the forlorn aspect of modern Serbia and its glorious past.

If Anglo-Saxonists often drew upon the mission civilisatrice of the British empire, placing emphasis on the pristine Protestant values and the liberal ideas disseminated across the colonial world, Serbs opted for an analogous myth of election by constantly evoking the battle of Kosovo, which gradually transformed into "a myth of military valor, as a myth of victimhood, even as a myth of salvation" (Anamaria Dutceac Segesten 161).

Even though the use of religion and myth-making occurred in different ways in the two nationalist discourses, both nations utilised myths that sought to reinforce a connection between the religious and national identities that they aimed to forge (Bruce Cauthen 17). The self-depiction

of the Serbs as a warrior-nation that fought to defend Christendom against the Muslim element boosted the view of the Serbs as a selected group that transcended politically and culturally (Dutceac Segesten 163).

In pursuit of a new national identity, Serbian intellectuals also resorted to another South-Slavic Unionist paradigm that depended heavily on the parallel flourishing of the national identities of South Slavic nations that fell into the same geographical or historical continuum, namely the Illyrian movement. As Barbara Klen affirms,

> The Illyrian movement began in Croatia in the 1830s. Its center was Zagreb. The movement was inspired by preaching of Slovak poet Kollár about Slav unity and his ideas about Slav solidarity. (1)

As regards the basic tenets of the aforementioned ideological construct that sought to unify all South Slavs into one collective identity, although the movement was originally expressed to promote Croatian identity, it ended up constructing a South-Slav "identity and orientation" (Klen 2). In view of a possible Germanisation of the Slavic populations incorporated into the Hapsburg Empire, the new school of thought embodied by the Illyrians supported the idea that all Slavs were a single people, yet South Slavs also shared a common language, based on the premise that "the Štokavski dialect would reunite the best of both Serbian and Croatian traditions" (Ravelić 65).

By relying on the existence of an ancient Illyrian tribe, Serbian and Croatian intellectuals succeeded in rekindling the historical ties with Europe and in forging a collective identity on the basis of a common racial and cultural past, since the Štokavski dialect came to function as the main nation-building tool between South Slavs, both in Croatia and in Serbia. It is worth mentioning that Vuk Stefanović Karadžić also pleaded "for the Štokavski dialect to be accepted by Serbs" (Klen 24), a fact which shows the significance of the Illyrian movement to the emancipation of Serbs, Bosnians and Croatians from the Austrian and Ottoman rulers respectively.

At a time when the Balkans were still viewed as an unchartered or undefined area, the generic term Illyrian was conducive to the more effective understanding of the Balkan nations, since it was fused into the parallel attempt of the Russians to forge a collective identity of all Slavs in the form of Panslavism. As mentioned by J. T. Leersen, Westerners were more attracted to the aestheticisation of Illyrism, which came to be regarded as "'Panslavism in small', promoting the love, unity and mutual understanding of Southern Slavs who should also support each other culturally and politically" (67). Nevertheless, even though Illyrism facilitated the delineation of the South Slavic populations and drew the

Britons' attention to the unique characteristics of the "Illyrians" as a single nation, racially and culturally akin to the ancient tribe, at the same time its vague meaning could lead to more misconceptions on the correct approach of Serbian identity. As Bozeva-Abazi claims,

> the influence of the so-called "Illyrian Movement" remained limited to language and did not attract most of educated Serbs […] Serbs were proud of being Serbs but, a Serb could be neither a Croat nor an Illyrian. (124)

Given all the above, one could observe that the construction of Serbian nationhood occurred through the parallel development of different nationalist paradigms. Anastasija Karakasidou claims that during the resurgence of distinct Balkan identities, Serbian nationalism was forged according to two separate types of nationalisms: the institutional and the linguistic (78). This mixture of nationalisms was conducive to a cultural nationalism that pertained to the "standardization of colloquial languages and projected images of the nation through poetry and the folklore" (Karakasidou 49). Simultaneously, Serbian nationalism was expressed in the rediscovery of the medieval Serbian kingdom and the old struggle against Ottoman rule often found in Serbian epic poetry (Dennis P. Hupchick 51).

With reference to the first chapter of this volume, it revolves around Lay Mary Wortley Montagu's narrative *The Letters of Lady M. Montagu during the Embassy to Constantinople 1716-18*. In her early eighteenth-century text, Lady Montagu introduces the Western reader to the early conceptualisation of Serbia as a dystopian world, focusing on the binary opposition between the Occident and the Orient, constituting an early record of the Serbian War of Liberation.

Concerning the second chapter, it concentrates on Francis Hervé's *A Residence in Greece and Turkey, with notes of the journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary and the Balkan* sets the pace for the view of Serbia as a tourist destination in the wake of the nineteenth century. The travel narrative also contributes to the aestheticisation of the Balkans as a utopian society which triggers images of the picturesque and the primitive in juxtaposition with the civilised British metropolis.

With regard to the third chapter of the present volume, it pertains to Charles Boileau Elliott's travel narrative *Travels in the Three Great Empires of Austria, Russia and Turkey*. In his text, Boileau-Elliott inaugurates a new era in the projection of Serbia as a modern dystopia, which accords with the concept of Balkanisation as a set of values and representations that give rise to the persistent Othering of the country, foregrounding the

Saidian concept of European Orientalism that reinforced the dichotomy between the civilised West and the backward Orient.

Regarding the fourth chapter, Peter Evan Turnbull pens the travel account *Austria: Social and Political Condition* which connects Serbia to the Eastern Question, challenging the pan-Slavic movements that emerged in the 1850s and demonising the Russian interference in the East.

With respect to the fifth chapter of the book, it is concerned with Edmund Spencer's travelogue *Travels in European Turkey in 1850*, which is associated with the use of the Anglo-Saxon paradigm to attack on all the national institutions and symbols of Serbian culture, on the basis of racial and nationalist theories that came to the foreground at the time of the writer's epoch.

As regards the sixth chapter, it pertains to the narrative *Eastern Shores of the Adriatic in 1863.* Viscountess Strangford dwells on the racialisation of the Serbs as the savage Slavic Other, producing a narrative of expansion and conquest that aims at deconstructing the Serbian national revival in the form of the South-Slavic Union that they fathomed. In her Anglo-centric narrative, the writer opts for a narrative position that seeks to portray the Serbian nation as alien to the European world.

As for the last chapter of this volume, Roy Trevor's *My Balkan Tour, An Account of Some Journeyings and Adventures in the Near East* touches upon unique aspects of Serbian culture and history, inspired by the medievalist movement that flourished amongst Serbian intellectuals drawing a link between the Serbian wars against the Ottoman Empire and the medieval imagery that enhanced the historical and physical attractions of the contemporary Balkan states.

CHAPTER ONE

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU:
THE LETTERS OF LADY M. W. MONTAGU DURING THE EMBASSY TO CONSTANTINOPLE, 1716–1718

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Kingston, born Mary Pierrepont "at Thoresby, about the year 1690, and lost her mother in 1694" (Sarah Josepha Hale vii). During her childhood, she mastered Greek and Latin. In 1712 she married Edward Wortley Montagu, who was appointed ambassador to Turkey in 1716. Despite her class and gender, Lady Montagu ventured into some of the most sequestered corners of Europe at a time when journeys abroad were still viewed as a male enterprise. During her voyages across Europe and the East, Lady Montagu produced a highly acclaimed travel narrative in epistolary form, entitled *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to Persons of Distinctions, Men of Letters and in Different Parts of Europe*, produced during her long residence in Constantinople and Adrianople from 1716 to 1718. Apart from the prominence she received from her travel narrative, Lady Montagu befriended a significant number of intellectuals of her time and gradually came to be held as "one of the highlights of any mid-eighteenth-century Grand Tour" (Jane Robinson 34). She died in 1762.

Despite the writer's status as an early-eighteenth century traveller, I have selected her narrative as an introductory text, based on the premise that she paved the way for other travellers to undertake journeys to Serbia and the territories of European Turkey. Aside from her pioneering travel text as one of the first to focus on this European part of the Ottoman Empire, Lady Montagu should be seen as a pioneer amongst her female counterparts, considering the fact that "she was the first authoress to travel abroad for mere curiosity's sake and call herself 'a traveller'" (Robinson 32). Acknowledging the perilous character of her journey to the unknown

lands of the European East, Lady Montagu posits herself as an adventure heroine in her own narrative, portraying her voyage as an errand to the unknown. In doing so, she might be seen as a precursor to the sentimental travelling of the Romantic era which sought to emphasise the solitary and fragile aspect of voyagers. Elaborating on the issue of sentimentalism in the early nineteenth century, Judith Adler purports that

> Romantic or sentimental travelers of the past century sought episodes for cultivating feeling and confirming the self as a seat of sensibility. Others enacted heroic romances in which to create and test themselves as protagonists or sought occasions for sartorial play with disguise and identity, trying to sound a natural" man or 'othe self-unknown in everyday life at home. (1385)

As mentioned in the prefatory part of her letters, Lady Montagu embarks on a trip to Constantinople across Eastern Europe. The period in which she visits Belgrade is characterised by sociopolitical convulsions that led to the Austrian intervention and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of Serbia. As maintained by Antić,

> From 1718 to 1739 the Austrian authorities established the so-called Kingdom of Serbia on the territory of the Sandžak of Smederevo (Pashalik of Belgrade). After the Treaty of Sistova in 1791, the Serbs in the Sanjak of Smederevo, most of who had settled in this territory during the 18th century, were granted some privileges. The abrogation of these privileges was one of the causes of the Serbian revolution of 1804. (16)

Given the above historical circumstances that pertain to the gradual creation of an independent Serbian state, Lady Montagu describes her entrance to Belgrade as a dangerous undertaking, which poses a threat to the existence of the average Western travellers and simultaneously signals her initial approximation of the dark Orient:

> The twenty-sixth, we passed over the frozen Danube, with all our equipage and carriages. We met on the other side General Veterani, who invited us, with great civility, to pass the night at a little castle of his, a few miles off, assuring us we should have a very hard day's journey to reach Essek. This we found but too true, the woods being very dangerous, and scarcely passable, from the vast quantity of wolves that hoard in them. We came, however, safe, though late, to Essek, where we staid a day, to dispatch a courier with letters to the Pasha of Belgrade; and I took that opportunity of seeing the town, which is not very large, but fair built, and well-fortified. This was a town of great trade, very rich and populous, when in the hands of the Turks. (66)

If one attempts to explore the writer's introductory comment on Belgrade, Lady Montagu immediately assumes the narrative position of the adventure heroine, who defies the dangers attached to the process of travelling and seeks to indulge in new experiences that challenge her supreme role as the citizen of the Empire. By giving a minute account of the political state of the pashalik of Belgrade as a fallen locus, which can pose a menace to the very survival of the British traveller, she ascribes to her journey a heroic mission, stressing her self-depiction as an adventuress. Regarding this travel convention of the eighteenth century, Adler contends that

> Some travel exploits seem designed to display their protagonists' protean facility in adapting to their surroundings; others highlight the uncompromising rectitude with which personal and cultural identity is maintained after its habitual props have been removed. (1385)

What is more, by assuming the role of the adventure heroine, Lady Montague also associates Serbia with a modern dystopia that is constructed upon the binary opposition between the Occident and the Orient. As suggested by Mathews, Serbia came to epitomise a "battleground, a stage on which the struggles of empires and cultures, entities often foreign to Serbia itself, were played out." (67). Furthermore, Lady Montagu inaugurates an era in which Serbia and the Balkans are treated as savage regions and a bridge to the real Orient, beset with Oriental characteristics that reproduce a dichotomy between the civilised West and the primitive East (Stephen Fischer-Galati 1970).

Lady Montagu's reading of Serbia as a savage, dystopian locus inhabited by thieves and bandits is further attested in another excerpt of her travelogue, in which she again adheres to a discourse of Otherness by portraying certain "locations as discursively dangerous in ways that lead to or perpetuate oppression" (Saad Nawras Baradan 34). At the same time, the writer tends to portray the Serbs as a people that clashes with the civilised state of her own capacity as a British citizen:

> The journey we have made from Belgrade hither, cannot possibly be passed by any out of a public character. The desert woods of Servia are the common refuge of thieves, who rob fifty in a company, so that we had need of all our guards to secure us; and the villages are so poor that only force could extort from them necessary provisions. (72)

As can be discerned in the above presentation of Belgrade as a dystopian and perilous tourist destination, Lady Montagu does not hesitate to project

the Serbs as a nation of thieves, who are staunchly opposed to her Western status. In that respect, she is concerned with the dichotomy between the Occident and the Orient that frequently underlies British travel discourse overseas. If Saidian Orientalism is defined as a Western narrative strategy "for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3), undoubtedly Lady Montagu seeks to distance herself from the Serbian Other. Paradoxically enough, although Lady Montagu acknowledges the atrocious face of the Ottoman regime, she "describes the Serb population as almost ungovernable due to their fierce passions and lawlessness" (Mathews 70).

The writer's attempt to Orientalise the country as a barbarous zone, that enhances the image of the Serbs as the savage Other is further encountered in Lady Montagu's indignation at being confined to a place where she cannot identify either with the natives or with the Austrian or Turkish members of the respective empires. As Lady Montagu states, during the Austrian-Turkish account, all that she can witness is scenes of the utmost cruelty in the vicinity of Belgrade:

> You see here that I give you a very handsome return for your obliging letter. You entertain me with a most agreeable account of your amiable connections with men of letters and taste, and of the delicious moments you pass in their society under the rural shade; and I exhibit to you in return, the barbarous spectacle of Turks and Germans cutting one another's throats. (157)

By the same token, Lady Montagu draws the reader's attention to the function of Serbia as a nation in eclipse, where members of more refined societies feel indignant, thus emphasising the political oppression as well as the absence of cultural attractions during her stay in Belgrade. Her inability to identify with the natives or delve into the country's history prior to its subjugation under the Ottoman rule impacts her reading of the Serbian nation. Admittedly, her Anglo-Centric, deterministic outlook on the country's manners and mores sets the trend for other British travellers who undertook voyages to European Turkey, transforming the country into a locus "where the primal past of heroism and savagery flowed through into the modern civilized world" (Mathews 75). Mathews' point is also addressed by Lady Montagu in the following statement:

> But what can you expect from such a country as this, from which the Muses have fled, from which letters seem eternally banished, and in which you see, in private scenes, nothing pursued as happiness but the refinements of an indolent voluptuousness, and where those who act upon the public theater live in uncertainty, suspicion, and terror! (157)

If the writer expresses her indignation for the decadence attached to the regions that she comes across, attuning to the Orientalism of Serbia and the neighbouring regions, there are a few instances which suggest that she is also concerned with the politics of the country visited, shedding light on important events that determined the Serbian fate. Most importantly, however, Lady Montagu should be seen in juxtaposition with her contemporaries, revealing "to her readers for the first time what lay behind the jewelled curtain of the East" (Robinson 33). From that perspective, Lady Montagu produces a travelogue which provides the reader with "unpolished" representations of the cruelties that accompanied the clashes of the Austrian and the Ottoman armies in the area.

One of the main instances which foreground the idea of the Serbian subjects of the Ottoman Empire as an oppressed nation is Lady Montagu's reference to the atrocities committed by the Janissaries[2] against the Christian populations, a point which further reinforces the idea of the Ottoman Empire as the oppressor. As observed by the writer

> Indeed, the janizaries had no mercy on their poverty, killing all the poultry and sheep they could find, without asking to whom they belonged; while the wretched owners durst not put in their claim, for fear of being beaten. Lambs just fallen, geese and turkeys big with egg, all massacred without distinction! I fancied I heard the complaints of Melibeus for the hope of his flock. When the pashas travel, it is yet worse. These oppressors are not content with eating all that is to be eaten belonging to the peasants; after they have crammed themselves and their numerous retinues, they have the impudence to exact what they call teeth-money, a contribution for the use of their teeth, worn with doing them the honor of devouring their meat. (72)

Drawing upon this fragment, it is worth noticing that it is one of the rare occasions that Lady Montague sympathises with the hardships of the Christian inhabitants of Belgrade. What is more, her reference to the oppressive attitude of the Ottoman Empire calls the reader's attention to the growing weariness of the Serbian subjects that precipitated the insurrections of the Serbs against the Janissaries that led to the country's War of Liberation. Regarding the Pashalik of Belgrade, Meyer purports that at the close of the eighteenth century,

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[2] Janissaries were an elite corps that was based on child slavery, through the obligatory enlistment of boys of Christian populations that converted to Islam by force and were incorporated into the Ottoman Army (Jason Goodwin 179)

> Thousands of Serbs joined the Austrians in their war with Turkey from
> 1788 to 1791 as a result of Janissary misrule. Although Austria, which had
> occupied the Pashalik of Belgrade, was forced to return it to the Ottomans,
> the war was not without important consequences for the future Serbian
> struggle with the Turks. (Meyer 15)

Identifying the Janissaries as one of the main factors which exert a
strong influence on the national awakening of the Serbians, Lady Montagu
places emphasis on the Austrian involvement in the political affairs of
Serbia as a positive development:

> at this present moment, it has changed masters, and is in the hands of the
> Imperialists. A janizary, who, in nine days, and yet without any wings but
> what a panic terror seems to have furnished, arrived at Constantinople from
> the army of the Turks before Belgrade, brought Mr. Wortley the news of a
> complete victory obtained by the Imperialists, commanded by Prince
> Eugene over the Ottoman troops. (156)

The above comment is of particular importance, given that the writer
departs from her Anglo-centric interpretation of the events and projects the
national struggle of the Serbians from a less detached perspective.

On the whole, Lady Montagu produces a text which involves various
innovative features that subsequent travellers sought to emulate. First of
all, the writer adorns her narrative with dystopian images of Belgrade that
reinforce the idea of Balkanisation, which, according to Mathews,
encompassed "negative images and imaginings […] deeply rooted in
earlier British interactions with the Balkan region" (66). Second, the writer's
dystopian view of Serbia accords with the dichotomy between the Occident
and the Orient that was conducive to the portrayal of the Serbs as the
savage Other. The writer's interpretation of war events and her overall
impressions of Ottoman Serbia as "an unfinished state with a rather
undefined nation" (185) support Ristić's earlier comment on the clash of
Serbdom with the conventional representations of the concept of
Europeanness.

Third, Lady Montagu's discourse is imbued with the Anglo-centric
approach to the European East as a region totally bereft of culture and
social refinement, which inaugurated the construction of a new dystopia
relevant to the Balkan Peninsula. Notwithstanding its depiction as a
backward and barbarous zone, Lady Montagu's narrative constitutes an
early record of the Serbian War of Liberation, reflecting upon the major
consequences that the Serbo-Turkish conflicts could have in the change of
the European mapping.