

**THE NOT-SO-NOBLE SAVAGE:
BALKANISM IN MARY EDITH DURHAM'S
*THROUGH THE LANDS OF THE SERB***

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Abstract. *This paper deals with the representation of the Balkans in Mary Edith Durham's travel novel *Through the Lands of the Serb*. It aims at analysing the novel from a postcolonial perspective to expose instances of constructing the Balkans as 'the other' within Europe. Maria Todorova's concept of Balkanism provides a useful theoretical framework to engage with western stereotypes about the Balkans critically. The paper's first part concerns the literary conventions of travel writing, and the second part critically examines some examples of Balkanism. The examples of Balkanism investigated include the depictions of the region as primitive, stuck in the past, impure, infantile, violent, and animal-like. Even though most of the stereotypes are negative, it should be noted that Durham also creates positive stereotypes that are not less harmful.*

Key words: *Balkanism, the Balkans, the other, travel writing, Mary Edith Durham*

1. INTRODUCTION

People have travelled and recorded tales of their travels for millennia. The nature of their recordings varied, and Youngs and Nandini discern two types of travel accounts: "the mythological or supernatural on the one hand (which we might extend to or sum up as storytelling) and the documentary function on the other" (Nandini & Youngs 2019, 2). Travel writing contains fictional works such as Homer's *Odyssey* or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and factual documentation such as Mary Edith Durham's *Through the Lands of the Serb*.

The differences between fictional and factual travel writings of documentary nature are not as sizeable as they may initially seem. Hooper and Youngs remind us that Melville's 1846 novel *Typee* was initially assumed to be a retelling of events that actually took place (Hooper & Youngs 2004, 2). To further demonstrate this point, Youngs juxtaposes excerpts from Conrad's *Through the Dark Continent* and *Heart of Darkness*, concluding, due to

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their similarity, that “there is no neat division between autobiographical [factual] and fictional narratives of travel” (Youngs 2006, 4). The fact that travel writing includes both fictional and factual narratives, as well as the fact that it is characterized by “absorption of differing narrative styles and genres [...] and [has] potential for interaction with a broad range of historical periods, disciplines and perspectives” (Hooper & Youngs 2004, 3) makes some authors question its status as a separate genre. This is why, for Jan Borm, travel writing is “a collective term for a variety of texts both predominantly fictional and non-fictional whose main theme is travel” rather than a genre (Borm 2004, 19). It is hybrid and “mixes different forms of writing, while continuously crossing over into other genres” (Borm 2004, 25).

As Nandini and Youngs observe, travel writing has changed over time. Due to the various “[a]dvances in transport and communication,” travel writing became more accessible to the wider population (Thompson 2019, 108). Until the early 19th century, travel writing was mainly a man’s domain, with very few female authors to speak of – “it was not until the 1810s and 1820s that women became a substantial presence in the genre” (Thompson 2019, 113). As tourism developed, it was becoming easier for women to travel, and after the 1850s, independent women travellers were not an uncommon sight (Thompson 2019, 118-9). Mary Edith Durham was one of the most prominent women travellers in the Balkans, whose first travel novel, *Through the Lands of the Serb*, was published in 1904.

Even if the authors of these travel writings might proclaim their work to be of factual, documentary nature, these claims cannot be accepted at face value. In the case of Durham, while she claims she tried to show that “the Balkan Slavs are not as black as they have often been painted” by simply describing their treatment of her, her account, as well as the accounts of many other travel writers before and after her, is not neutral (Durham 1904, 345). The reason for this is not necessarily the desire of Durham or other authors to alter reality. Rather, “there is an element of subjectivity, a mark of a writer influenced by literary conventions and intellectual context” (Brettell 1986, 134). Western travel writings about foreign lands were influenced by and simultaneously contributed to the creation of what Edward Said called Orientalism.

In the most basic terms, Orientalism concerns the creation and perpetuation of the image of the Orient different from reality, which serves to present the Orient as an inferior counterpart to the civilized West. It deals with the Western experience of the Orient, and Said defines it as “a library or archive of information [about the Orient] commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held” (Said 1977, 41). This archive is not necessarily concerned with truth but representation. Orientalism thus stands for “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1977, 3). It is “a set of references, a congeries of characteristics” which often does not have its origins in reality, instead, its roots are found “in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient” (Said 1977, 177). A simulacrum of the various peoples and cultures, lumped together and referred to as the Orient, was being created, and it “allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics” (Said 1977, 42). The image of the Orient, constructed by various texts and writings, including travel writings, presented the Orientals as a recurring set of stereotypes and expected behaviours. Oriental men were represented as primitive, and Oriental women as promiscuous, and as such, they stood opposite to the civilized Western men and virtuous Western women. Orientalism relied on and perpetuated the belief that inherent differences exist between the Orient and Occident, with the Occident being superior (Said 1977, 3). Entire regions and

peoples inhabiting those regions were essentialized. Oriental men were first seen as Orientals and only after that as men (Said 1977, 232).

Additionally, the Orient and Orientals were presented as stuck in time, possessing a forever fixed identity, while the West was always progressing forwards. The Orient was the Other of the West, something different and external from it, and yet simultaneously necessary for constructing its identity. As such, it was the victim of a wide range of projections from Western authors, who attributed to it much of what was repressed in their own cultures. In the novel, we see Durham engage in Orientalism when she is dealing with the Ottoman Empire – she believes the Ottomans are responsible for that the Balkans are, in her opinion, still stuck in the Middle Ages. It is their rule that prevents progress.

However, while Orientalism might explain Durham's treatment of the Ottomans, a more specific concept is required to understand better her treatment of the peoples not considered Oriental that inhabit the Balkans¹. Balkanism is a concept that originates in Orientalism but is more focused on the depictions of the Balkans. The two concepts are very closely related. Nikolay Aretov points out that Balkanism "shares an underlying logic and rhetoric with orientalism" (Aretov 2012, 94). It means that both Balkanism and Orientalism present the West as superior by comparing it to the inferior Balkans or Orient, and they achieve this by employing similar means. As Goldsworthy explains, "The primary aim of many of these Balkan constructions [...] is to project an image of the superiority of Britishness by infantilising or exoticising the Balkan Other" (Goldsworthy 1998, 160).

In "The Construction of a Western Discourse of the Balkans," Maria Todorova outlines significant differences between Orientalism and Balkanism. The first difference Todorova notices is that historically and geographically, the Orient is undefined and ambiguous; what counts as the Orient has changed over time, while the Balkans have always occupied a narrower place. Secondly, the perception of the Orient has not always been entirely negative. The Orient was, Todorova claims, often seen as an escapist utopia that offered freedom, with legends of wealth surrounding it (Todorova 1996, 12). The Balkans, on the other hand, were almost always negative. The Balkans were no utopia. No legends of their wealth were told. It was a land eternally lagging behind the rest of Europe. The only exceptions were brief periods of romantic nationalism, which focused on the perceived freedom-related aspects of the Balkans (Todorova 1996, 13).

The crucial difference, however, lies in the Otherness of the two. The Orient was seen as the Other, different and external, while Balkanism entails a somewhat different type of relationship. Todorova claims the Balkans were seen as "incomplete self," or "the other" within" (Todorova 1996, 21). This sentiment is shared by other authors on the topic as well: K.E. Fleming holds that the Balkans "constitute the "outsider within" (Fleming 2000, 1220), and Goldsworthy points out that the Balkans were "internal Other — a stranger within" (Goldsworthy 2006, 32). All the authors seem to agree the Balkans were not experienced as distant or as external as the Orient; rather, they were a part of the West, yet not fully Western. Goldsworthy properly describes the place of the Balkans as "an always-liminal, insufficiently European Europe, the not-quite-Oriental Orient" (Goldsworthy 2006, 32). They were not as backward as the Orient, but the Orient influenced them enough to prevent them from progressing. This way of thinking is seen in Durham's novel, as she

¹ The Balkans themselves are a vague place. As Todorova notices, what the term designates has changed countless times. Geography seems to be an unreliable tool for assessing the Balkanness – oftentimes, Greece and Romania are excluded from the Balkans despite physically being there. (Todorova 2009, 30)

claims that “After his [the Turk’s] arrival, all further development was arrested” (Durham 1904, 308). Durham seems to agree with Todorova that the Balkans were, with all their backwardness and primitivism, “the Ottoman legacy” (Todorova 1996, 11). The implication of the attribution of this backwardness and insufficient Europeanness to the Orientals is that the existing differences between the Balkans and Europe are not inherent but imposed, confirming Todorova’s claim that the Balkans were an “incomplete self” rather than the Other.

It was no accident Durham chose the Balkans as the destination for her trip – Goldsworthy notices how “long periods of indifference towards the peninsula” were replaced by great interest “at the onset of a conflict” (Goldsworthy 2006, 27). Having recently won their independence, Serbia and Montenegro were attractive locations for many travellers, Durham included. This independence was hard-won and not secure. A sense of potential violence is always present in Durham’s novel, whether she describes the armed Montenegrins or the Serbian guards on alert. So great was the interest in the peninsula that it was becoming very well explored.

Consequently, Goldsworthy notices how “only the remotest corners of the highlands still seemed worth describing” (Goldsworthy 2006, 31). It was precisely where Durham ventures – small places such as Andrijevitza or Pirot were included alongside the more typical locations. In her trip to the Balkans, Durham engages in Orientalism and Balkanism at different points. *Through the Lands of the Serb* is a particularly interesting travel novel. It is Durham’s first book and her first experience of the Balkans before she adopted a “pet nation” (Todorova 2009b, 121). And, while *High Albania* did get recognition, *Through the Lands of the Serb* remains an insufficiently studied novel of this “last of the Victorian travellers in the Balkans” (Goldsworthy 1998, 165). In the paper, we focus on the instances of Balkanism in Durham’s novel, trying to prove that it dominates her approach. What is not included, however, are her other novels and writings on the Balkans or the examples of her Orientalism, as that would be too broad for a study of this scope.

2. ANALYSIS

As previously established, the Balkans were seen as the “incomplete self” that the Ottomans held back. Hammond notes that the Orient and the Balkans were used “for gauging the West’s collective self-image” (Hammond 2007, 211). While there is no established list of characteristics that deemed the Balkans “insufficiently European Europe,” some of the most common features attributed to the Balkans include, as we have mentioned, infantilization and the potential for violence. In Durham’s novel, many more ways of presenting the Balkans as inferior to Europe can be observed. Durham describes the Balkans and their inhabitants as primitive, belonging to the past, and even animal-like.

“Every writer on the Orient [...] assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies” (Said 1977, 20). The same principle also holds for Balkanism; it is part of the “underlying logic” it shares with Orientalism. It was mentioned in this paper on several occasions how Durham relies on the previous works on the Balkans and how these have constructed her expectations of how the region was supposed to look. She does not write in isolation. She writes in the tradition of previous travel writers. Some of her sentences only make sense if we consider that her novel is a mere addition to a large body of work. “The road from Cattaro to Cetinje has been so often written of that it is idle to describe it once again,” Durham tells her readers (Durham 1904, 4). Vesna Goldsworthy explains how this move from the coast deeper into

Montenegro “acquired a certain mystical resonance —” it became an entry point “into the unknown ‘real’ Balkan world” (Goldsworthy 1998, 164). As the Balkans were more and more explored, writing something new about them was becoming increasingly difficult.

For this reason, travel writers ventured deeper and deeper into the peninsula. When Durham visits Dechani, she braggingly explains how “no English traveller had been allowed to go there for twelve or fifteen years” (Durham 1904, 309), indicating to her readers that this is something new, a novel location previous travel writers have failed to visit. Finally, at one point, Durham even gives recommendations for travelling through Serbia, proclaiming that Ushitza is “the prettiest little town that I know in Servia—a place that no traveller in the country should omit to visit” (Durham 1904, 216).

The more of the Balkans was “discovered,” the more different the simulacrum of the Balkans was from the real thing. It is why, on certain occasions, Durham seems to respond to complete myths. Sometimes she engages in a dialogue with the previous travel writings, trying to correct their prejudice: “A good deal has been written about the very inferior position of women in Montenegro. Some writers have even gone as far as saying that the Montenegrins despise their wives” (Durham 1904, 277). Durham enlightens her readers that her “own experience does not bear out these reports” (Durham 1904, 277). Whether she wrote this to correct a perceived misrepresentation or because she wanted to contribute something new to the existing body of work to stand out from other travel writers, we cannot know. Similarly, she goes against what seems to be the orthodoxy and states that “At the risk of being laughed at, I will say that I do not believe the Albanian is by nature cruel” (Durham 1904, 82).

In Durham's novel, several ways in which the Balkans are presented as the “deviation from the norm—the (superior) West” can be identified (Mašović 2015, 24). The most common instance of Durham's Balkanism relates to her painting of the Balkans as a primitive and backward place inhabited by primitive people. That the Balkans are primitive is no matter for debate for Durham. Her description of Cetinje is not at all flattering. While she describes the houses as “solidly built” compared to the “thatched hovels” that used to fill the city two decades ago, she explains that these houses were “devoid of any attempt at architecture,” comparing them to “a row of toy houses” (Durham 1904, 7). Here she appeals to the backwardness of the town, but even that is not enough for her. With obvious irony, she deems Cetinje “far too civilized.” She decides that, to truly “see Montenegro,” we must wander much farther afield” (Durham 1904, 11). On their journeys to foreign lands, people might encounter various things, but, more than anything else, what they are expecting to see. The “real Balkans” Durham wants to experience are not poor towns, but remote, backward hamlets, centuries behind Europe. These expectations might have been fostered in Durham from “a quotation, or a fragment of a text” (Said 1977, 177), from a then already sizeable body of travel writing on the Balkans, just like the “knowledge” of Orientalists was constructed by earlier texts on the topic. Now she is ready to contribute to this tradition herself: when visiting a church in Pirot, Durham describes it as “unpretentiously barbaric,” adding that “All was primitive” (Durham 1904, 186-7).

One of the strongest indicators of Durham's belief in the inferiority of the Balkans is her tendency to hold the peninsula to lower standards than Europe. As an “incomplete self,” the Balkans were not expected to perform as well as, for example, England would, but this did not always exempt them from criticism when they failed to do so. The perceived laziness of Serbian farmers Durham describes in the following way: “He sees no object in exerting himself; it is unjust to call him lazy. He is undeveloped; his wants are so simple

that he can satisfy them easily without working up to his full power, and he has no ideas beyond” (Durham 1904, 207). Durham builds on the previously established primitivism of the peoples of the Balkans, patronizingly adding that he is not developed enough to channel his strengths where it would matter, as, say, an Englishman would. However, in this instance, she seems to say the quiet part out loud – she is irritated that the Serb decides to “lie under a beech tree and play upon a wooden pipe,” explaining how “it has not yet contributed much either to his wealth or wisdom” (Durham 1904, 207). Earlier in the novel, in one of her conversations, Durham confirmed that, to the astonishment of her interlocutors, “Time is money” is a common phrase in England (Durham 1904, 69). It is precisely against this phrase that the lazy Serb is compared, judged, and against which he falls short. Unsurprisingly, this is as much a disparaging of the Serb as it is an elevation of England, the construction of a “self-congratulatory image of the ‘European’” as Todorova calls it (Todorova 2009a, 188).

Durham is not always so unsubtle in her comparisons. It is more common for her style only to point out that the Balkans are inferior and leave it to her Western audience to decode the implication about Europe. Briefly discussing the assassination of Serbian King Alexander I and his wife, she explicitly states how the Serbs “cannot fairly be judged by twentieth-century standards” (Durham 1904, 259), again demonstrating her belief that the people inhabiting the Balkans are too uncivilised. Contemplating whether it is a good thing that Montenegro is taking a long time to open up to the West, she muses: “It is possible that the delay is by no means an evil, for it has saved the people from being overwhelmed by a mass of Western ideas for which their minds are as yet unready” (Durham 1904, 272). The progressive ideas of civilised Europe are incompatible with the barbarians of the peninsula, with the dwellers of the “insufficiently European Europe.” She observes how they would even harm the simple men of these lands: “ideas which, ill assimilated and misunderstood, and forced with a rush upon Servia, have worked disastrously in that unhappy land” (Durham 1904, 272). One of the ideas Durham believes could spell trouble for the land is that of a republic. In Montenegro, she discloses how “Most folk I met thought the Serbs would proclaim a republic,” immediately adding how she “never could resist laughing at the idea of a Servian republic” (Durham 1904, 269). By painting the people of the Balkans as barbarians, Durham adds to the long tradition of travel writers’ tendency to depict the peninsula as uncivilized and backward.

Besides considering the peninsula’s inhabitants simple, Durham sees them as childlike. Several instances of her depicting people of the Balkans as children and, implicitly, herself as an adult with more refined understandings can be observed. During her time in Montenegro, she tells us:

There is a childish simplicity about the conversation of the up-country peasant folk that is quite charming. They are as pleased with a stranger who will talk to them as a child with a kitten that will run after a string (Durham 1904, 9-10).

It is easy to detect here a complete equivocation of children and people of the Balkans. This tendency continues throughout the novel – she speaks of her driver who had the “nature of a very young child,” of the Christian Albanian who “is a pathetically childish person,” and of one of her guides who “played like a child” (Durham 1904, 12, 83, 332). Intentionally or not, by constantly equating them to children, she presents them as people at a lower level of development that she, as a superior adult, looks down on. As Goldsworthy observes, such descriptions of the Balkans only serve to “project an image of the superiority of Britishness by infantilising [...] the Balkan Other” (Goldsworthy 1998, 160).

Another way Durham puts the Balkans below Europe is by insisting on a solid connection between the peninsula and the past. It is in spirit with Durham's depiction of the Balkans as primitive and backward. In the first chapter, she sets up the Balkans as a land of the past. On Herzegovinians fleeing Bosnia, she comments that "it was from the twentieth century quite as much as from the Teuton they were endeavouring to flee" (Durham 1904, 2). They are "survivors of an old, old world" (Durham 1904, 2). With such phrasing, she puts Europe above the Balkans – if the Balkans are atavistic, Europe stands for progress.

In the novel, different parts of the Balkans exist in different periods. On the one hand, some places are "eighty or ninety years behind London," and others predate the Romans (Durham 1904, 101). They are "a whole race, a primeval lot of raw human beings," living in a land where "the conditions of life are those of prehistoric barbarism, and the mass of the people have barely even attained a mediæval stage of civilization" (Durham 1904, 75). She compares present-day Albania with England of the past: "In England, even in Anglo-Saxon times, my ancestors had tables and chairs. I sat cross-legged by the blazing logs with streaming eyes, and wondered which century I was in" (Durham 1904, 125). In Durham's eyes, the twentieth century seems to be a property of Europe that the Balkans lack. It is a measure against which the Balkans are judged. In Durham's vocabulary, the twentieth century becomes synonymous with Europe, so anything not up to the twentieth-century standards is seen as something inferior to Europe. So when she says that, in Montenegro, "the view taken of female virtue was curiously Old Testament," it is automatically contrasted to twentieth-century Europe (Durham 1904, 258). Not even the third country Durham visits, Serbia, is spared the casual comparisons with the primitive past. In Nis, Durham half-jokingly mentions her "quest after things old-world and Servian" (Durham 1904, 173). Finally, even the religion of the Balkans belongs to the past. "[T]he Orthodox Church of to-day" she begins, "is said to bear far stronger resemblance to the Church of the fourth or fifth century than do now the Churches of either England or Rome" (Durham 1904, 179). Durham is trying to make the point that the Orthodox church in the Balkans is lagging behind the rest of Europe. It is not entirely up to the twentieth-century standards. To her credit, Durham occasionally alludes to the positive achievements in the past. She tells us how the ancestors of the Albanians were not "lacking in brain power" (Durham 1904, 76). Similarly, she provides a series of brief, complimentary descriptions of some of the local figures, such as Hajduk Veljko.

While the general depiction of the Balkans has been predominantly negative, on certain occasions, there was "some exception at the time of romantic nationalism," as Todorova notices (Todorova 1996, 12). In Durham's novel, the Montenegrins are idealised the most in certain aspects. The idealised qualities are bravery and love of freedom. While staying in Njegushi, Durham states that "the Montenegrin love of liberty and fair play and the Montenegrin sense of honour have made me feel more at home in this far corner of Europe than in any other foreign land" (Durham 1904, 6). The Montenegrin is depicted as a mountainous brand of the noble savage – he possesses certain simple virtues and is not yet tarnished by civilisation. What he is concerned with is "Junastvo [...] and every man's ambition is to be considered a "dobar junak" (valiant warrior) and worthy of his forefathers" (Durham 1904, 5). Their virtues include the fact that they are "[p]roud, self-respecting, fiercely unyielding by long inheritance of temper," as well as "honest, and their standard of morality is high" (Durham 1904, 334). Lacking any real knowledge of the Balkans, Durham feels free to imagine all manner of things about the peoples and cultures there. They are the white woman's fantasy, a screen on which she projects her anxieties and assumptions about their place in Europe. A great variety of different cultures and ethnicities are reduced to a few

stereotypical images which either demonise or idealise the otherwise complex and vibrant communities. These cultures are presumed to be fixed in what is often seen as a primitive mode. Whether Durham is writing about the lazy Serbs or the brave Montenegrins, the same principle which prevents her from seeing them as complete and complex humans like herself is at play. However, fixed and caught outside time is not how these peoples see themselves, their cultures and their communities. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the level of fantasy and projection on the part of the white, female, British author in this story and the costs of her and other similar stories for the cultures in the Balkans.

Not everything in the Balkans is so noble, however. One of the things that deems the Balkans uncivilized is the ever-present potential for danger. As with many other instances of Balkanism, this attribution of violence and danger to the Balkans only served to elevate the West as the implied opposite of the peninsula. In the first chapter, Durham tells us how “Most of the [Montenegrin] men carry revolvers,” presenting a stark contrast with the rest of Europe where armed citizens are not commonplace” (Durham 1904, 5). Not only are weapons prevalent, they are not often treated with great care.

In a conversation about the killings of country leaders, Durham informs her interlocutors of the death of Charles I. It satisfies her companions: “The idea of cutting off a king's head pleased him so that he passed it onto the Albanians, whose faces became wreathed in smiles” (Durham 1904, 322). Descriptions such as this one portray the people of the Balkans as violent and bloodthirsty. The only time Durham comes close to violence is in Chachak, where the locals offer her to attend the execution of four murderers. She tries to get out of it, reasoning that “if I went, for the next fifty years, it would be said that all Englishwomen were in the habit of seeing men shot before breakfast” (Durham 1904, 213). She does not want herself or her country to be associated with such barbarity as a public execution. In England of her time, public executions were banned – executions were reserved for within prisons. The “backwardness” of the Balkans is used for “gauging the West’s collective self-image.” The more barbaric the Balkans, the more civilized Europe is (Hammond 2007, 211).

Alongside being depicted as violent, the peninsula's inhabitants are often compared to animals. On several occasions, she juxtaposes people of the Balkans and domestic animals: “Goats, sheep, pigs, horses, and cattle, all were equally tame, having been probably all brought up with the family” (Durham 1904, 171). Moreover, in an unnamed village, she describes the villagers in the following way: “Wild—looking, ragged people squatted in the doorways, who stared like startled animals as I passed,” attributing them animal-like qualities (Durham 1904, 227-8). Similarly, when describing a conversation between her guides and “Someone-Effendi,” she compares both of them to animals:

I was irresistibly reminded of the meeting of two dogs who approach each other growling from opposite sides of the road, decide not to bite, wag stiff tails and pretend to be glad to see one another while their bristles stand up on their backs (Durham 1904, 242).

Of course, since Durham is writing about the Balkans, the potential for violence is also present as the two “dogs” might jump at each other’s throats at any moment. The instance most representative of the general view of the Balkans occurs near a church in Pirot. Durham (most likely) overpays bread and starts distributing it to the “poor and afflicted” along with other people, and describes the event as follows: “I dealt round the bread rather shamefacedly, for I felt unpleasantly as though I were feeding animals at the Zoo, and escaped hastily from a storm of blessings, with a new idea about the power of twopence to relieve misery” (Durham 1904, 187). In this statement, we see her entire attitude to her

journey through the Balkans – she feels superior to those around her and does not consider them equal. Just like the animals in the zoo, they are there to entertain her.² In Nish, she “wandered about and waited for people to do something Servian,” just like a visitor in a zoo hopes to see an animal do something interesting (Durham 1904, 179). These “things Servian” is never explained. We only know they exist as a property of the Serb who “drinks enough cold water for an English cow” and that Durham is on a “quest after” them (Durham 1904, 145). Previous travel novels have constructed expectations such as this one. Now, Durham is adding her contributions to the pile, constructing a narrative for the future brave souls who wish to venture into these strange lands.

As we have established, Durham puts Europe and all things European on a pedestal and judges the people of the Balkans, the “insufficiently European Europe,” for not fitting the European ideal. However, when some people in the novel attempt to be European, Goldsworthy observes that they are “looked down upon or patronised in their attempts to be European,” and she is entirely correct in her assessment of the situation (Goldsworthy 1998, 168). They receive no praise – they are ridiculed for trying to mimic something superior. Of the Christian Albanian, Durham says, “He tries very hard to be civilised, but his ideas on the subject are vague” (Durham 1904, 83). In their attempted mimicry, Christian Albanians often fall short of European standards. One of Durham’s companions is in a similar position – he makes a “valiant attempt at being European” and tries to part by addressing her in a proper European manner but fails and mispronounces: “Bon voyage, mamzelle” (Durham 1904, 327-8). The same holds for the clerks in Old Serbia, “who tried to look European on chairs but spoilt the effect by sitting cross-legged” (Durham 1904, 313). Not only does Durham never indicate why she thinks they “tried to look European,” she, like a proper member of the English middle class, decides to indulge in a surgical splitting of the hair and focus on triviality as a marker of whether or not someone belongs to a group. In this case, the group is Europe, and the Balkans people are denied entry. If mimicry is the highest form of flattery, it is also a form of self-mockery. This behaviour indicates that she does not care about the advancement of the Balkans, which is the same as getting closer to the European ideal. The Balkans are merely depicted as an “incomplete self” (Todorova 1996, 20), that is, “insufficiently European Europe” (Goldsworthy 2006, 32), which is contrasted and shown as inferior to the “real Europe” to create “positive and self-congratulatory image of the ‘European’” (Todorova 2009a, 188). This principle motivates many of Durham’s unflattering portrayals of the peninsula.

On several occasions, Durham draws comparisons to Europe that do not serve to humiliate the Balkans but to validate them. In these cases, Durham grants the Balkans the highest honour she can bestow – she finds similarities between what exists in Europe and the Balkans in the same day and age. “What the Serb likes is a perfectly straight street in which all the houses are as much alike as possible,” Durham observes in Knjazevac (Durham 1904, 194). She does not pass any judgment as “This is, however, also the modern Parisian’s idea, and some people admire Paris, so perhaps the Serb is right” (Durham 1904, 194). As we have established that Durham considers Europe superior, we can safely say that the Serb might be right only because he does what some European people do. Were it not for the similarity with Paris, the city’s architecture would only be another peculiarity of the

² To be completely fair to Durham, one has to consider her position as well – she is also in a sort of a zoo. Wherever she goes, she attracts more attention than she would like, and people often flock around her. Just like she sees the people of the Balkans first as Balkaners and only then as people, she seems to be receiving the same treatment – she is first of all English, and only after that a person.

Balkans. About Dechani, Durham says, "The church, built by a Dalmatian from Cattaro, is of white and dull red marble, striped in the manner familiar to us in Italy." Since it is blessed with the European touch, Durham concludes it "would be a fine building anywhere" (Durham 1904, 317). A building in the vicinity of the monastery, which she assumes is from the same times as the monastery, she describes as a "wonderful relic of mediæval days" since she connects it with the "accommodation Chaucer's pilgrims put up with" (Durham 1904, 308). Frequently Durham compliments aspects of the Balkans by drawing a parallel with Europe, like when she describes the landscape around Kolashin as "a new Switzerland waiting to be explored" (Durham 1904, 270).

Andrew Hammond makes the following observation about the Balkans:

In the Western imagination, the region is less a secure marker of alterity than an unstable and unsettling presence loosed from clear identity, an obscure boundary along the European peripheries where categories, oppositions, and essentialized groupings are cast into confusion (Hammond 2007, 204).

For the most part, he is right in his assessment, although some of the aspects of this claim might be contested. Durham is no exception to this tradition, as the Balkans in her novel are also a place of mixedness and indeterminacy. One of the mixed traits is race. Durham says of one of her guides the following: "He is short and dark, a somewhat mixed specimen of his race, and hails from near the borders, where folk are apt to be so mixed that it is hard to tell which is the true type" (Durham 1904, 12). Here we see her failure to essentialise the individual. In her encounters with other Europeans, she can simply label them as Czechs or Hungarians. At the same time, for the people of the Balkans, that is not always possible, especially without any prior information.

A similar story can be told of culture – there is no clear cultural identity in the Balkans. For South East Serbia, part of the reason are the Ottomans – their influences can be identified to a varying degree. The perfect example is Durham's reaction to Nis: "The new Servian town lies on one side of the river Nisava, and the old Turkish one and the big fortress upon the other" (Durham 1904, 171). However, the two parts are not entirely separate – they seem to interact. The culture of Nis is, then, a hybrid one – Nis is a place where the Ottoman culture interacts with the local culture, and something new is formed. Homi K. Bhabha initially introduced the concept of hybridity in his book *The Location of Culture*, which, in the words of Robert Young, "involves fusion, the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up" (Young 2005, 23). The new form created during the hybridization process "may resemble the old ones but is not quite the same" (Kuortti and Nyman 2007, 8). Durham proclaims she is in the "more oriental Servia," where "the number of houses remaining with screened windows, the silver filigree workers and the veiled women give [Nis] picturesqueness and a dash of the Orient" (Durham 1904, 170, 175). The mixed architecture, where "Two slim minarets show that it was once Mohammedan, and a fat new church, bloated with cupolas, proclaims its orthodoxy," also shows a degree of confusion about Nis's identity (Durham 1904, 175). The fact that Nis is a hybrid environment is confirmed by Durham when she compares the Muslim population of Nis to other Muslim populations: "closely veiled women shuffle furtively down the streets, and both men and women have an apologetic and subdued appearance, very different from the swagger of the Mohammedan on the other side of the frontier" (Durham 1904, 170). This description creates a picture of a "more oriental Servia" whose population is yet different from the Muslim population in Turkey. As Homi Bhabha

points out, the return of the “repressed Other” is not a simple substitution of the centre with the margin, but rather a kind of transculturation that erases borders, (Živković 2010, 43)

Even religion is depicted as somewhat hybrid. Looking at a “praying crowd” in Skodra, Durham wonders “what their idea of Christianity may be and what old-world pre-Christian beliefs are entangled with it” (Durham 1904, 111). It is another instance of imagining the Balkans as devoid of clear identity. While no denomination of Christianity has stayed unchanged, Durham points out the mixedness and impurity of the version of Christianity practiced in Skodra. Of Christianity in Serbia, she explains that it is “the oldest form of the Christian faith in Europe” (Durham 1904, 187). In this case, she does not say that as a compliment but rather to explain that it is alloyed with paganism and presents it as inferior to the denominations in the West.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the introduction, we have outlined the key features of the travel novel – what it is, whether or not it qualifies as a genre, and how it served to construct a semi-fictional image of the people inhabiting the places travel writers visited. We relied on Edward Said's *Orientalism* to better understand this process and briefly described what it stands for. As the paper deals with a novel about the Balkans, the term Balkanism was introduced, its similarities and differences with the Orient were outlined, and it was explained why Balkanism as a special category was necessary.

In our analysis, special attention was paid to how travel writing shapes the perception of the travelled regions and how it is influenced by the texts written before it. After that, several ways Durham presents the Balkans as inferior have been identified. Firstly, the depictions of the peninsula were investigated, and it was demonstrated how the alleged primitiveness of the Balkans is always contrasted to their implied opposite – civilized Europe. It was shown how Durham presents the people of the Balkans as simple and childlike, with minds untarnished by thought. The connection of the Balkans with an ancient and medieval past Durham tries to make was another instance of her engagement in Balkanism analysed in detail. Sometimes, Durham idealises the people she writes about, as with the Montenegrins, who are depicted as possessing virtue uncorrupted by civilization. As already clarified, positive stereotyping is just as dehumanising because it deprives a culture of its complexity only to attach a one-dimensional representation onto them.

Having explained how these atypical idealisations are not as flattering as they may initially appear, we proceed to the more typical instances of Balkanism. The ever-present potential for violence dominates Durham's novel, and it is explained how this only serves to essentialise the peninsula. Violence becomes something at the core of the Balkans. Subsequently, the connections Durham established between animals and the inhabitants of the Balkans are analysed as an example of her Balkanism. It was also demonstrated that Durham is not interested in advancing the Balkans – she actively mocks people when they try to act European. Her Balkanism prevents her from seeing them as equal. She draws many comparisons between the peninsula and Europe, where Europe is shown as superior or used to legitimise a phenomenon in the Balkans. Finally, the mixed, hybrid nature of the Balkans is explored. Using Nis as an example, it is demonstrated how the Balkans are not considered entirely European but not quite Oriental either.

The point of this paper was not to show how everything Durham says has no basis in reality. Said himself says that “it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was essentially an idea or a creation with no corresponding reality” (Said 1977, 5), and the same should be said of Balkanism. Durham is not wrong when she says the Balkans are not as advanced as the rest of Europe, economically and technologically. The problems begin when such descriptions begin to define entire regions and populations.

Here, one should remember Said’s example of the fierce lions. “If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce,” Said begins, “and then encounters a fierce lion [...] the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them” (Said 1977, 93). Not only that, Said warns. The mentioned fierceness, which is only one aspect of the lion, might inspire an extended range of text centered around it. Ultimately, the way people, influenced by the books, read about a lion’s approach to the animal also hardens the lion’s behavior. As Said states, their approach “increase(s) its fierceness, force(s) it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about it” (Said 1977, 94). Similarly, if one reads of the brave Montenegrins or the wild Albanians, those traits might become perceived as essential to them. Everything related to, for example, Albanians begins to be interpreted through the lens of being wild. In the novel, Durham labels their language half-wild and their lives primitive. Those who come to Albania after her will bring these preconceptions and remember every time an Albanian might display such behaviours “since that is what [he] is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about [him]” (Said 1977, 94).

In some cases, the stereotyped groups might play into their misrepresentations, especially if they are flattering, as was the case with the alleged heroism of the Montenegrins. Alongside barbarism, violence seems to be one of the most permanently perpetuated “facts” about the Balkans.

This paper has identified and analysed the instances of Balkanism in Durham’s novel, and explained how they fit in the wider context of travel writing. We have shown how, probably unintentionally, Durham engages in Balkanism and in doing so partakes in creating the myth of the wild and primitive Balkans, the “internal Other” of Europe. Nowadays, Balkanism is in great need of further research as many of the myths Durham helped perpetuate are still present, and parts of the Balkans are seen as the heart of darkness within Europe.

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NEBAŠ PLEMENITI DIVLJAK: BALKANIZAM U ROMANU KROZ ZEMLJU SRBA MERI IDIT DARAM

Rad se bavi predstavljanjem Balkana u putopisu Kroz Zemlju Srba Meri Idit Daram. Iz postkolonijalne perspektive, rad nastoji da analizira nastojanja da se Balkan predstavi kao Drugo unutar Evrope. Koncept Balkanizma koji je definisala i razradila Maria Todorova u svojoj knjizi Imagining the Balkans predstavlja teorijski okvir u kome se kritički analiziraju zapadni stereotipi o Balkanu. U prvom delu rada razmatraju se karakteristike putopisa kao literarnog žanra i uticaj žanrovskih konvencija na reprezentaciju predela o kojima se pisalo početkom dvadesetog veka. Značajan uticaj na određenje Balkanizma imala je nezaobilazna studija Edvarda Saida Orijentalism. Putopis Mary Edith Durham je tekst u kome je moguće uočiti sličnosti i razlike u konceptualizaciji ovih pojmova, njihova "ugrađenost" u žanr putopisa sa kraja devetnaestog i prvog četka dvadesetog veka, to jest, načina na koji se (re)produkuju stereotipi o tim regijama. Drugi deo rada se bavi analizom konkretnih primera Balkanizma u ovom putopisu. Neki od uočenih primera su, recimo, predstavljanje Balkana kao primitivnog i nazadnog, i kao takvog suprotnom civilizovanom Zapadu. Zatim, narodi na Balkanu su često predstavljani kao infantilni, kao relikti prošlosti, u kulturnom i tehnološkom smislu daleko iza Evrope. Sveprisutni potencijal za nasilje i animalizam su još neki od negativnih stereotipa koji se vezuju za ove prostore. Iako se često stavlja u superiornu poziciju kritičara balkanskog primitivizma, Daram zapravo varira između dve suprotne pozicije: s jedne strane idealizuje sve što je podseća na Evropu, dok se s druge podsmeva svakom pokušaju Balkanaca da se približe Evropi i ponašaju kao Evropljani. U poslednjem delu rada, fokus je na primerima hibridnog identitetu Balkana.

Ključne reči: *Balkanizam, Balkan, Drugo, putopis, Meri Idit Daram*