Recollections of British Medical Women on Serbia during the First World War

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Abstract

The Serbian image was reconstructed to justify British medical women's involvement in the Great War, while show-casing their war work, contributing to the struggle against German domination, as a devotion to protect the British national-imperial interest. Besides the temporal escape from the constraints of industrialized, rushing civilization of Great Britain, Serbia offered satisfaction and moreover motivation for Dr Inglis, Stobart, Dr Matthews and Aldridge to explore their professional interests and curiosity. War-time comradeship, close cooperation with the Serbian authorities and day-to-day encounter with the locals fostered the formation of an imaginary bond between the British and Serbian nations. Resembling the Western geographical imagination, Serbia remained associated with a subordinated and separate geographical space relocated to Europe, while the newly developed friendship, nonetheless, established Serbia as an inferior partner who required British patronisation to achieve civilizational progression.

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1. Introduction

The image of the Balkan countries changed notably during the first two years of the First World War and by the spring of 1915 Serbia had become the most popular Balkan country in Great Britain, as the Balkan Wars and the military success of 1914, the latter being propagated by the British pro-Yugoslav intellectuals as an indomitable service to the Allied cause, won a general recognition for the Serbian Army. Various books were published as a consequence of the joint British−Serbian experience of warfare that contributed to the improvement of the Serbian image, while the months spent in Serbia inspired many British doctors, nurses and journalist to publish their experience in books. These accounts demonstrated a general sympathy towards the Serbs, their army, country and costumes, undoubtedly, strengthening pro-Serbian sentiments in the British public opinion (Hanak, *World War* 91−92; Markovich, *Identities* 124−126, 130).

The thesis paper engages in discussion with the current scholarship over the Balkans and addresses them by analysing the representation of Serbia in the First World War recollections of British medical women. The thesis paper is divided into three major chapters starting with a theoretical discussion over the representational patterns of South-Eastern Europe to frame the context and discourse analyses of the recollections of four notable medical women, respectively of Dr Elsie Inglis, Dr Caroline Matthews, Mary Annabelle St Claire Stobart and Olive Aldridge, who all participated in the British medical mission dispatched for Serbia. Chapter One introduces core concepts and theories pertaining to the spatial and attributive representation of the Balkans in British travel writing prior to the First World War. Chapter Two examines the interrelations between women's medical missionary work and travel writing as a strategy for negotiating new

female identities, while it also gives an overview on the British women's relief war work in Serbia from the outbreak of the Great War until the Great Retreat of the Serbian Army and the civilian population to Corfu in the winter from 1915 to 1916. Chapter Three explores the narrative strategies of the above mentioned four women by revealing major themes and analysing narrative patterns shaping their perception and understanding of Serbia and the war.

Due to the lack of medical personnel, Serbia received extensive medical aid on the behalf of Great Britain in the First World War with the appearance of voluntary medical units comprising almost entirely of British medical women (Krippner 71; Lazović-Sujić 72). As the Balkan Peninsula transformed into one of the strategic theatres of the Great War, the contemporary interplay of national and international politics turned Serbia into the war-time ally of Great Britain, eventually altering the image of the small Balkan country (Hammond, *British Women* 58; Hammond, *Lands* 113). Not only can the extension of British interest into the territory be reflected in the war-time discourse of medical women, but their accounts and commentaries had also significant impact on the shaping and transformation of Serbian image reconceived as a nation comprised of chivalrous, brave, romantic and heroic South-Eastern European patriots.

2. Debating the Balkans

Chapter One theorizes the Western European perception of the Balkans prior to the First World War by examining the relevant scholarly pieces of work and debates over the historical representation of the territory. Furthermore, it discusses through the studies and books published by Wendy Bracewell (*Balkan Travel Writing*), Maria Todorova (*Imagining the Balkans*), Andrew Hammond (*British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts* and *The Debated Lands: British Travel Writing and the Construction of the Balkans*), John Allcock (*Constructing 'the Balkans'*) and Slobodan Markovich (*British Perceptions of the Balkan Christian Countries and their Identities*) whether travel writing produced a unique, separate Balkan image as a means to distinguish the region from the rest of Europe or to allocate it geographically to 'the East.' Although the above mentioned scholars agree on the general characteristics associated with the Balkans, also including Oriental features, nonetheless, they provide different narrative framework to explain how the representation of the Balkans had been shaped over the course of modern history. The primary debate in the scholarship dealing with the Western travel accounts on the Balkans is centred on whether Edward Said's Orientalism is applicable on the representation of the Balkans or not. The chapter intends to explore to what extant was the orientalist discourse used by travel writers to conceptualise the Balkans, by also identifying other narratives in the Balkan's representation which, despite some overlapping attributive features used in representation, were constructed independently of Orientalist discourse.

To understand the British perception of the Balkans, the means and agents of knowledge production had to be identified. To legitimize colonial rule and the conquest *per se*, colonial policy was based on the rule of difference (Steinmetz 592−593) conceptualizing the inferiority of the natives through the absence of those capacities which would enable them to exercise productive

self-governance. The codification of knowledge on native traditions served to establish a static, unchangeable perception of the ingenious people whose lack of valuable traits and abilities justified the presence of colonial authorities, and moreover, fit into the Western discourse on the importance of global cultural civilizing mission. However, the Balkans were neither under British colonial rule nor did the region play a significant role in the global economy, thus, consequently, it is undoubtedly not surprising to state that the knowledge concerning the Balkan Christian nations was rather limited in the United Kingdom (Markovich, *Identities* 116). In the colonial environment, the territorial annexation was justified through establishing the category of civilizational differences, nevertheless, since neither was Western colonial rule nor territorial aspiration present in South-Eastern Europe, therefore, I argue that the discursive conceptualisation of the Balkan difference could go beyond a mere Oriental representation associated primarily with colonial context. The Otherness of the Balkan was subsequently not codified, and furthermore, due to the lack of British strategic and economic interests and the absence of territorial aspirations in the region, resembling the absence of scholarship[1] devoted to explore and explain the Balkan, it was not a product of secular sciences. For these reasons, the Balkans could transform into an uncharted territory and ambiguous space in the imagination of contemporary Western European public. Unclaimed by secular scholarship, British travellers entering this unfamiliar space could easily establish their own explanatory authority over the region without being challenged.

[1] Understanding native traditions and customs was essential in the establishment of colonial rule, and in effect, knowledge gathering began immediately after the annexation of native lands. In the course of scientific professionalization and institutionalization, amateur practitioners were replaced by professional scientists who were financed by the state, while science was credited with value to the society and the nation. These changes transformed the object of investigating nature, which became subject to the interest of the state. With the emergence of secular sciences, which reckoned the exploitation of nature as a way to maintain progression and prosperity, modern science was born during the 19th century. The colonial project of collecting and interpreting information concerning the natives relied upon a number of these modern disciplines encompassing area studies, languages, ethnology, ethnography, political, economic, medical, veterinarian, agricultural, cartographical and bookkeeping sciences (Steinmetz 594−595).

Travellers in the Balkan Peninsula may have sympathised with the commonalities of the region, as one being still pre-industrial or entering into an early phase of industrialisation resembled to the former idylls of British rural life; nevertheless, in spite of similarities and seemingly easy identification, people and territory were both conceived as being somewhat different. Despite the fact that it was hard to define geographically the boundaries of the Balkans, the attributes associated with the region by British travel literature suggested that the territory had been a cohesive geographical unity (Bracewell, *Balkan* 1). Similarly to the representation of the colony, where the colonial state imposed definition of ethnographic distinction between colonizers and colonized, creating the policy of enforced essentialism based on the inferiority of the natives (Steinmetz 593, 596),[2] Western interpretation refused to acknowledge individuality in the Balkans treating the whole region as a unity (Bracewell, *Balkan* 12−13) inhabited by people bearing the very same attributes. As a feature of the post-Enlightenment travel literature the new narrative pattern established 'recognizable groups with certain characteristics' into, thus the wild, the exotic, the unknown and the strange locations and people were presented to make the readers more familiar, yet different with the observed at the same time (Blanton 5). Subsequently, it can be argued that travel writing had a 'tendency to generalize from isolated experience or even contribute[d] to the evolution of stereotypes, while it confer[red] authority on […] generalizations by presenting them as independently derived knowledge grounded in personal observation' (Bracewell, *Balkan* 9). Geographically conceptualising the Balkans as a separate territory as a partially European borderland inhabited by 'the tribal, the backward, the primitive [and] the barbarian' whose

[2] Statistical surveys on the population characteristics and census taking developed as the means for the institualization of knowledge. Serving the efforts of the colonial power in the exploitation and subordination of colonies, the collected data concerning the colony ignored most of the differences in the native society. The administrative and conceptual discourse subjected the native population to standardized enumeration, fostering the simplification and elimination of variations in the aboriginal society. Such overgeneralizing homogenization of colonial society reduced the native inhabitants into being mere statistical data, nonetheless, established a universalized knowledge over the colony (Appadurai 315, 319, 329–330).

qualities, traditions and customs served to reaffirm Western identity by distinguishing 'civilised Europe' from Asia (Horváth 364−365; Todorova, *Imagining* 3). Consequently, due to the issues of classifying the Balkans, the territory remained an ambiguous, paradox and moreover complex space for imagination prior to First World War, while travel literature portrayed the territory as a transitional place perceived either as being the part of the Orient or functioning as a frontier between the modern West and the pre-modern East (Horváth 364−366). To identify the patterns which could influence the individual's perception determining the 'mental mapping' (Bracewell, *Balkan* 13) of the Balkans outside or inside Europe, I intend to summarize the major travel narratives affecting the geographical classification of the region and the image of its Christian population.

It can be stated that travel writing, as a form of transmitting knowledge (Todorova, *Imagining* 89), had a crucial role in establishing power relations, as travel writers formed a relationship between their own community and the ones they visited (Bracewell, *Balkan* 1) reflected in their travel narratives. Travel writing is by definition a literary genre produced for a layer of audience, thus in a certain way, it makes possible to regard travel as 'a forgery of identity' promoted in the course of encountering foreigners (Schulz-Forberg 13). Consequently, both the self and the foreign other were the products of the imaginary, nonetheless the other constructed 'through cultural practices and discursive networks of perception and interpretation' often resulted in the inverse transformation of the self (ibid. 13). Undoubtedly, travel writing, comprising of a number of genres ranging from diplomatic correspondence and fiction to memoir literature, was an 'effective mechanism for organizing differences to generate Otherness,' thus beside assisting in the shaping of Otherness, it also contributed to the discourse inventing the Balkan as a distinct space (Bracewell, *Balkan* 4−5, 9). Most travel writers put down their encounters resembling a set of

different impressions in regards to the foreign land, nevertheless, the presented dissimilarities often lacked of any historical explanations or intentions to engage in a thorough and deep exploration on the claims. The sheer description of impressions promoted the shaping of Otherness, while the distancing from the East evoked the discourse of differences, pejoratively representing the Balkans as place of turmoil and backwardness above all by establishing a mental category of differences between the West and the East, respectively (ibid. 5, 9).

The similarities and dissimilarities which 19th century British travellers discovered usually introduced South-Eastern Europe as a mysteriously exotic, but violent or primitive place in contrast to the rationality and progression embodied by Western modernity. It is important to note that the construction of the Balkans as a distinguishable, separate borderland region of Europe not solely functioned as a means to strengthen Western supremacy, but systematic exploitation and manipulation of the representation of the region rendered it possible to fit either to the travel writer's individual or wider national interests (ibid. 2). Western belief in human progression established the Eastern parts of Europe as a territory of social and economic backwardness in comparison to the advancement of the West. The lack of modernity was pared with an irrational assumption on habits and customs. Additional characteristics of the Balkans such as unpredictability, cruelty and instability were used in contrast to the description of the culturally superior Western Europe where the rule of laws and modern administration joined by the self-control of citizens constituted order (Todorova, *Imagining* 11, 109, 119).

Allcock argued that due to the peripheral and ambiguous nature of the Balkans, three competing and simultaneously existing representational patterns could be identified in the travel accounts on the peninsula (Allcock 226, 234). These three layers of representation with their corresponding themes fostered contradictory and ambiguous ideas in the portrayal of the region

and its inhabitants eventually opening up interpretations for the Balkans as a place of mystical and enchanted quality (ibid. 238−239). Due to these narrative frames the Balkan nations could have been constructed within and outside the orientalist discourse (Allcock 228). Consequently, the Oriental Otherness and the ambiguity of the Balkans cannot be regarded as mutually excluding narrative discourses (Bracewell, *Balkan* 12−13). I would argue that the two key emotional responses associated with the Balkan experience of the travellers were either disappointment (Todorova, *Imagining* 20, 118) or surprise (Bracewell, *Balkan* 20−21). Culturally embedded preconceptions and prejudices before entering the foreign space and expectations linked to the foreign culture and disillusion with it were key features of travel writing (Schulz-Forberg 15, 18). Preconceptions of the travel writer set up personal expectations to experience strangeness, often premised upon abstract differences (Todorova, *Imagining* 11), or expectations to experience the familiar. However, contributing to the element of surprise, the discoveries led to a shock when commonalities were brought to the surface (Bracewell, *Balkan* 20−21).

First of all, being the birthplace of European civilization, South-Eastern Europe could be associated with heritage of the Classical World (Allcock 226−227). As the Balkan Peninsula used to be the part of ancient European civilisations, the region offered several means for the traveller to reconnect with antiquity (ibid. 229), while the Balkan folks were described as 'the still living tradition of the Classical World,' as daily life was often conceived to being 'classical' (ibid. 233−234). In the centre of this experience architecture played the most important role in the shaping of Balkan imagery, as recognition of and encounter with the material heritage and the remains of antiquity including Early Christianity. Western civilisation's claim to be the inheritors of the Ancient European culture was reaffirmed through the travellers' personal experience (Allcock 230−231). The portrayal of South-Eastern Europe forged in the frame of expectations and

disappointment concerning the region. For instance, besides British strategic interest in the Mediterranean Sea, the Greek War of Independence (1821−1832) renewed the public interest in antiquity, resulting in the growth of philhellenic sympathy. Nevertheless, the one thousand philhellene British volunteers eager to assist the cause of 'Hellas' in the war, left the newly established, independent Kingdom of Greece entirely disappointed due to the territory's backward and corrupt nature. The negative perception of the Greece in this case expressed the failure to meet Western expectations towards a former antique territory (Markovich, *Identities* 116−117; Todorova, *Imagining* 20, 94, 118).

South-Eastern Europe identified with the Antiquity and Eastern Christianity removed the representation of the region from the Orientalist narrative framework, corresponding with Maria Todorova's argument which stated that as the representation of the Balkans dated back long before the Ottoman conquest of the region a 'Balkanist discourse' had emerged independently from and before the Oriental discourse was applied on the territory (Todorova, *Imagining* 20). Although, I agree with Todorova concerning that an older representation of the region traced back to the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, nevertheless, the point of her work was to prove that the territory called 'the Balkans' was conceptualised before the fall of South-European Christian states. Based Allcock's three narrative patterns, I argue that pre-modern image of the region was an entirely separate representation focusing on the territories' classical heritage and was shaped independently of either the Balkanist or Oriental discourse, therefore what Todorova called as 'Balkanist discourse' as an equivalent of a non-Orientalist narrative, can be in effect split into two other representational patterns based on Allcock's ideas. Undoubtedly, the West−East division of Europe had been established in the late antiquity with the division of the Roman Empire into two halves, and was sustained in the Middle Ages due to the schism between Catholic and Orthodox

Christianity. The fall of Constantinople and the gradual territorial conquest of Eastern Orthodox lands by the Ottoman forces made the Eastern Christianity seem inferior to Western Christianity (Todorova, *Imagining* 9−11), therefore, identifying the region with antiquity could also evoke negative connotations in the representation, nonetheless the territory remained associated with Europe.

The second narrative pattern displaced the region from Europe due the five centuries-long Ottoman occupation, and relocated it to the Orient (Near East). As the Ottomans were definitely not Europeans, it was easy to construct their image corresponding to the framework of the Orientalist discourse. Although their non-European and non-Christian qualities made the Ottomans conceived to be primitive and unfit to rule, yet Western perception had to cope with the contradiction that the Ottoman managed to defeat and dominate the Balkan Christians. The enslavement of Orthodox Christians embodying Islamic oppression was joined with the notion of Ottoman backwardness constituting together the Oriental representation of the Ottoman Empire and her subjects. The Oriental themes of backwardness and the lack of qualities to govern were the representations which the Balkan Christian small nations inherited when their regained their independence (Allcock 227−228).

In the second half of the 19th century British travellers rediscovered the Slavic Christian people in South-Eastern Europe, often informed, and enlightened Britain, championed and dedicated to the cause of oppressed Christians, presenting Ottoman misrule, while remaining conscious of their British origin. Almost unknown nations were introduced through travel accounts, while the sympathy of the public was always redirected to another small nation (Todorova, *Imagining* 97−98, 101). The 19th century perception of the Ottoman Empire relied upon the incompatibility and separation of Christianity and Islam, viewing the Christian inhabitants of the

empire into peasants who were the only people to be subordinated to the Islam rule (ibid. 162−163). Separate Balkan identities were constructed by the use of the Oriental Islam other, although the image of the Balkan nations retained some Oriental features (ibid. 20, 118). Folk life and celebration became common themes for travel writers, although these practices and rites dominating the life of Balkan peasants were regarded as highly irrational and moreover the overt embodiments of backwardness, while mystery and enchantment associated with these beliefs of the distant past kept them genuinely interesting. This South-Eastern European world associated with antiquity, natural beliefs, and superstitions was beyond the Orientalist discourse used for the depiction of Ottomans, subsequently, picturing the Balkans as a location of folk cultures associated with simplicity and primitiveness was shaped in the course of the 19th century (Allcock 234−238). People inhabiting the area were associated with agricultural work, thus their folk culture, tradition and merits were connected with nature (ibid. 226−227). Although the potential for change was offered for the Christian folks in the region, disassociation from the Ottoman legacy was not possible (ibid. 228).

With the expansion of the British Empire in the second part of the 19th century, British territorial interest became threatened by the presence of the Russian Empire in Central Asia, evoking the Christian Slavs' negative representation as tools for Russian expansionism (Todorova, *Imagining* 109−110). Fearing the potentials of St Petersburg to mobilise the Balkan Orthodox Christian population (Markovich, *Identities* 115), the replacement of the Ottoman rule with independent Balkan countries was considered undesired (Todorova, *Imagining* 110). British were solely active in the Balkan policy whenever Russian expansionism and ambitions needed to be balanced, while the perception of the Balkan became associated with international crisis or war (Markovich, *Identities* 116). First the philhellenic, later the pro-Christian account criticised the

Ottomans presence associating with uncivilised and despotic, and unfit to govern, while the Slavic Christian lacked the capacity to free themselves without the help of Russia, thus becoming a puppet of Russian influence (Todorova, *Imagining* 102). Conclusively, as territory had always been associated with differences, hence the rediscovery of Christian Slavs lead to the invention of a semi-European Other shaped in respect to the West, nonetheless it has to be noted that not every representation was constructed as the negative inverse of the Western Europe (Bracewell, *Balkan* 17, 20).

To form a model for analysing the representation of South-Eastern Europe in British travel literature, besides Allcock's narrative patterns, Slobodan Markovich's explanation on the duality of Balkan image provides convincing arguments. Markovich argued that in the 19th century civilizational, mental-habitual and geographic categorization of Balkan Christian nations in the British perception were constituted of positive characteristics and their corresponding negative counterparts.[3] The temporally prevailing image was determined within the frame of personal and/or national interests as response to the miscellaneous international events happening in Europe. Consequently, the mental mapping of Balkan Christians within Europe or outside of Europe, in the Near East, was always connected to changing positive or negative perception (Markovich, *Identities* 122−123). When Western symbolic geography (Bracewell, *Balkan* 17) conceived the Balkan countries belonging to Europe, they were rewarded with the capacity of moderate and gradual progression, while their negative inverse associated them with barbarism and lawlessness. Imagining the region as a geographic unity, the same perceptual dichotomy were applied to all the

[3] The spatial division of Europe was revisited in the Enlightenment period, when the East-West dichotomy allocated new kind of characteristics for the South-Eastern European territories while kept the dichotomies of opposite characteristics. The reformed East-West dichotomies included the agricultural-industrial, rural-urban, backward-advanced antitheses (Markovich, Identities 115).

Balkan peoples, viewing them either as simple, honest and brave people or as bloodthirsty, coward savages bearing a slave mentality (Markovich, *Identities* 123).

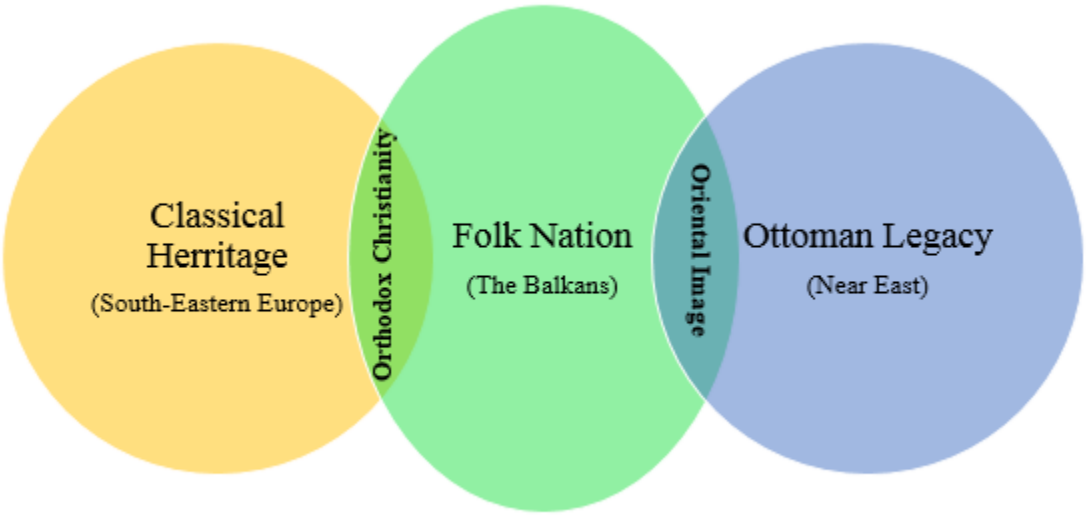


Figure 1

To conclude, it can be stated that three patterns of representation were conceptualised in different periods of time by the West European observers as a response to the events which were believed to be capable of influencing the socio-economic conditions and the political situation of South-Eastern Europe. The territory was first viewed as an Orthodox South-Eastern region belonging to Europe, as illustrated by Figure 1, while the Ottoman conquest of the region evoked the displacement of the territory from Europe by being reconceived as belonging to the East. Lastly, the rise of Balkan Christian peoples' movement in the 19th century and their national aspiration for independence, becoming visible through the unsuccessful revolts and wars (at least until the First Balkan War) waged against the decaying Ottoman Empire, triggered the rediscovery of Orthodox Christians as the European Others and led to the invention of the Balkans as a transitory, European

frontier territory inhabited by the former subjects of the Ottomans. Consequently, the term 'Balkan' opened up an interpretation for the Western observers which merged the oriental characteristics and features inherited from the Ottoman past with the Christian legacy of the territory dating back to the distant Early Christian period or Late Antiquity. The Ottoman legacy comprising of the Oriental characteristics had solely negative connotations, resembling the mutually exclusiveness of the Islam and Christianity categories. In contrast to this exclusively negative narrative pattern, the other two discursive layers enabled both positive and negative representations for the Balkans. The historical evolution of South-Eastern Europe's Western perception, as presented in Figure 2 with positive (+) and negative (−) connotations, offers a combination of narrative patterns to identify personal experience within the intersection of sex, class, individual an imperial interests determined by local (middle-class women's struggle for equality in Great Britain) and global events (the First World War) in the course of analysing travel literature to overcome essentialist conclusions.[4]

Patterns of Perception	**Ottoman Legacy**	**Classical Heritage**	**Folk Nation**
Mental Mapping *Where was the territory located?*	− Near East (outside Europe)	+/− South-Eastern Europe	+/− The Balkans (located inside or outside Europe)
Attributes	− backward − savage – corrupt – lawless – bloodthirsty − coward	+ cradle of European civilization + Rise of Christianity − Orthodox puppets of Russia − primitive − ineffective − unproductive	+ moderate progression + happy peasants + courageous +/− traditional +/− simple − slave mentality − enslaved, defeated

Figure 2

[4] Markovich's study served as a bases for this representational pattern. See Markovich, *Identities* 123.

3. Medical Mission and Travel Writing

Analysing travel literature requires the examination of the observer's background to understand and contextualise the narrative discourse used in the portrayal of the observed other, also resembling the self-reflexion of the author (Bracewell, *Balkan* 14). For this reason, Chapter Two overviews the interconnections between women's medical missionary work and travel writing as a strategy for presenting and negotiating new female roles in the professional sphere of medicine. Additionally, the chapter examines the conditions leading to the appearance of the British medical units in the war-worn Balkan country, while introducing the medical women whose Serbia experience is to be analysed in the following chapter as well.

3.1. British Medical Mission in First World War Serbia

Women's demand for higher qualifications invoked heated political and social debates concerning women's nature and their status in 19th century British society (Crowther 3; Russett 14). Fearing of competition, educated men gradually became concerned with women's demands for education after the economic hardship caused by the economic depression of the 1870's (Offen 344). Fighting for equal opportunities in employment and education, female doctors became one of the symbols of the British women's movement in the late-Victorian period (Poovey 138, 146). Beyond any doubt, women acquiring professional status and high qualifications could have meant economic competition for men in the traditionally male-dominated field of medicine (Crowther 3), thus the fierce animosity surrounding the women seeking for qualifications in the medical domain under no circumstances could be regarded as surprising. As science and medicine were considered to be male priorities and privileges, middle-class men did their utmost to monopolize and guard

access to scientific knowledge. The medical profession was a highly competitive field, thus male practitioners often eliminated each other from the competition through accusations of unprofessionalism in front of the regulative authorities. On the very same basis medical men initially managed to exclude medical women from the most prestigious and well-paying areas of professionalized medicine (Harrison 176; Davidoff-Hall 307, 339).[5] As a consequence, not only were female doctors despised by their fellow male colleagues, but they remained marginalized and excluded from the miscellaneous medical societies embracing the elite of medical profession (Leneman 1592; Crowther 5). Being marginalized by the elite of the male-dominated medical profession, female practitioners sought the means for securing economic stability and professional acknowledgement by reshaping and popularizing female medical work as a contribution to the imperial cause primarily in the colonies. Foreign medical mission of women, extended to Europe, served as a strategy of negotiating emancipatory rights by ascribing women new roles in the national-imperial context, which successfully promoted the degradation of legal barriers and gradual acknowledgement of professional female doctors (Burton, *Question* 153).[6]

With the establishment of charity and relief organizations, such as the British Red Cross, in the second half of the 19th century, medical women were given the opportunity to escape the mundane and strict life of Victorian-Edwardian Britain (Blanton 44−45; Hammond, *Literature*

[5] Due to their marginalization in the profession, medical women could occupy lower positions in the hierarchy of the medical profession (Williams 61). They were primarily involved in preventative medicine and became the pioneers of sanitary reform (ibid. 61, 63). Sanitary reform used to be an agenda embraced by the philanthropic work of women, who tried to improve the conditions of the poor. Consequently, following the female philanthropic tradition, medical women could easily engage in the issues of urban sanitation (ibid. 64-65). Additionally, separate educational institutions were founded by female doctors in the late 19th century, and eventually women physicians became entrepreneurs by establishing their own hospitals and private practices (Crowther 3, 5). These practices operated exclusively in towns and were usually attached to the residences of the doctor, where female and pediatric patients were treated (ibid. 5-6). By the turn of the century these private enterprises in medicine became profitable (ibid. 5-6), which allowed medical women to combine a career with motherhood, and moreover, the acquired financial independence enabled female practitioners to hire a staff of servants for performing household duties (ibid. 7).

[6] Among the goals achieved by the women's movement was opening up of university education, municipal suffrage, marriage-law reform, and the repeal of Contagious Disease Act (Burton, *Burdens* 3, 5).

147). As women's movement was limited and restricted in the contemporary British society, the gradual extension of women's rights was joined by 'the democratization of travel,' although women's travelling always required a sort of mission to justify their journey for the society (Blanton 44−45). Due to the crises evoked by the Eastern Question, British medical women's presence became so marked in the course of the Balkan Wars that a whole article was devoted to the topic under the title 'Why the Balkans Attract Women' in a 1912 edition of the newspaper called *The Graphic*. The article tried to discuss why 'those rough, wild, semi-civilised and more than half Orientalised little countries […] appeal[ed] so strongly to some of [Britain's] astutes feminine intelligence' (qtd. Allcock and Young, Black Lambs and Grey Falcons, xv). With the remarkably increase of women's presence in the Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century, the contribution of women to the literature produced on the region multiplied respectively (Hammond, *Literature* 147).

Women's medical mission and voluntary work became popular and peaked in the course of the Great War, as most of the organisations in the British women's movement ceased all suffrage activities at the outbreak of the war and began championing the British cause at home and abroad as well (Blanton 44−45; Hammond, *British Women* 59; Mayhall 1−2). However, despite war, women's struggle for acceptance was expanded to military medicine as well, since at the beginning of the conflict female volunteers encountered a rejection on the behalf of British authorities under the stereotypical socially prevailing presumption that women in general were inappropriate for wartime service (Watson, *Medical* 486-488).[7] Although neither the British Red Cross nor the War

[7] As St Claire Stobart, one of the medical women whose memoir is analysed in this thesis paper, recalled the contemporary situation of women in her autobiographical work, entitled Miracles and Adventures, in the following way: '[...] it is true when I was young it was not customary for girls to have ambitions or professions beyond [...] marriage; in Victorian days they could faint at the sight of a mouse, and in these days they can cut up human bodies without a shudder' (qtd. Hammond, *Literature* 169).

Office approved the idea of women managing hospitals in the frontlines, nonetheless, threatened by the prospect of invasion, the continental Allies of Great Britain opened up as new areas for women's medical and relief work. Undoubtedly, the Belgian, French and Serbian authorities were eager to accept the voluntary services of medical units composed partly or entirely of British women (*British Medical Journal*, 18 August 1917, 203; Krippner 73; Ross).

With the outbreak of the war, a rapid defeat of Serbia was expected, thereupon the victories of the Serbian Army in the first year of the war raised general astonishment around Europe. Despite these victories, the war found the Serbian medical units and institutions unprepared as resources had been almost entirely exhausted in the course of the Balkan Wars (*Correspondence* I: 197), and moreover, the country suffered a shortage in doctors and nurses. Consequently, the limitations in the infrastructure, the damage suffered in the first months of the war with the lack and casualties of the Serbian medical personnel together made it impossible to contain and prevent the spreading of infectious diseases. The use of modern weaponry (hand grandees, land mines, shell shrapnel) increased the head and limb injuries requiring immediate treatment, while many in the Serbian medical staff were struck by typhus epidemic and with the shortage of medical supplies such as anaesthetics the Serbian situation was undoubtedly terrible (Krippner 72, 75).[8]

For these reason, in the first weeks of the war Robert William Seton-Watson, a Scottish historian and journalist, who was on the one hand, one of the first Western experts writing on the Southern Slavs, and on the other hand, a devoted proponent of Southern Slav unity in Great Britain,

[8] On 20 September 1912, two years prior the outbreak of the First World War, the Minister of War of the Kingdom of Serbia summarized the numbers of the Serbian sanitary service in a letter addressing the Main Committee of the Serbian Red Cross: 'In the whole of Serbia there are 370 doctors only, out of which 296 selected for the war field, 74 doctors remaining in the rear lines. Since from that number we should take off doctors working in the central administration (six), doctors which because of the old age or poor health are incapable (eight) and doctors having abandoned their profession long ago (three) for sanitary service in rear lines, among the population and the army, only 57 doctors remain' (qtd. Lazović-Sujić 72).

was actively engaged in organizing practical help for Serbia (Seton-Watson, *Masaryk* 36). Finally, a number of British pro-Serbian intellectuals established the Serbian Relief Fund in the end of September 1914 (Seton-Watsons 106)[9] whose most important and remarkable activities were attached to the organisation and financing of hospital units in Serbia (Hanak, *World War* 65).

Visiting Serbia with a fellow pro-Yugoslav historian, Trevelyan George Macaulay in December 1914, Robert William Seton-Watson assessed the conditions in Serbia and measured the needs of the war-stricken country for the Committee of SRF. Seton-Watson and Trevelyan summarized the Serbian situation in a letter to the British press as follows:

> […] the problem has complicated by a considerable amount of illness, both among the troops and […] among the civilian population, while at any moment a renewal of Austro German offensive may flood the hospitals with fresh crowds of wounded. The shortage of doctors is distinctly serious, as every civilian doctor is now required for military purposes. The dispatch of British doctors to the base hospitals […] would greatly relive the pressure and leave some of the Serbian doctors free to attend to the needs of the civilian population. These needs have been further complicated by the presence of a host of refugees from the North West departments of Serbia, which were devastated by the invaders last autumn. […] There is a shortage of such elementary requirements as blankets, bedding, medicated cotton, plaster, surgical instruments, serums and disinfectants. […] A further problems for the Serbians is the presence of nearly 60 000 Austrian prisoners, for whom is difficult to find accommodation (*Correspondence* I: 197).

Due to the devastating conditions five fully equipped surgical hospital units were dispatched and maintained in Serbia by the summer of 1915, employing 300 British women (*Times*, 7 December 1917, 5) who were desperately trying to prevent cholera (*Times*, 29 April 1915, 6) and

[9] The SRF managed to boast no lesser a figure than Queen Mary as its patroness, and the Bishop of London as its president (Judah 90). In addition, a number of vice-president positions were created and assigned to the most important contemporary public or ecclesiastical figures such as David Lloyd George, Herbert Henry Asquith, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Winston Churchill, the Bishop of Oxford and Cardinal Bourne (Seton-Watson, *Spirit of the Serb* 33).

to overcome the typhus epidemic (*Times*, 15 July 1915, 9) spreading among the Serbian population gravely (Krippner 72). Appeals for funds met rather generous responses on the behalf of British citizens, and Government funds were also contributed for charity, nevertheless, the claims on the Fund were limitless, since there was a constant need not only of drugs and clothing, but also such things as motor cars, camp kitchens, lorries, marquees, and complete hospital equipment (*Times*, 7 Sept 1916, 8).

Among the British medical personnel leaving for the Serbian front in the spring of 1915 were three well-known suffragettes, Dr Elsie Inglis, a surgeon and the Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies (Leneman, *Inglis* xi, xiii), Dr Caroline Matthews, Mary Annabelle St Claire Stobart, founder of the Women's Sick and Wounded Convoy Corps which served in the First Balkan War, and Olive Aldridge, a nurse volunteer in Stobart's medical unit.[10] With the exception of Dr Inglis, the other three women published their memoirs upon returning from Serbia under the titles of *The Flaming Sword in Serbia and Elsewhere* (written by Stobart), *The Retreat from Serbia through Montenegro and Albania* (written by Alridge), and the *Experiences of a Woman Doctor in Serbia* (written by Matthews). Although Elsie Inglis did not publish a book of her own due to her involvement in Russian and Rumanian relief work and death in the autumn of 1917, her Serbian experience was published in a contemporary autobiographical work based on her personal recollections and letters shared with the respective author (Finder 248). The thesis paper focuses on the recollections of these four women and examines how their perception evolved on Serbia and the Serbian people.

At the outbreak of the Great War Dr Elsie Inglis outlined a plan to establish a fully equipped medical unit staffed by women for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society to be financed

[10] See the Appendix for the pictures of Dr Englis, Dr Matthews and Mrs Stobart.

by the contributions collected by the organisation. Although her idea was soon realised and thus the Scottish Women's Hospital for Foreign Service (SWH) was formed in August 1914, comprised of doctors, nurses, orderlies, cooks, administrators for storing food, drivers coming from the territory of the whole United Kingdom women, however, her proposal for voluntary service was rejected by the British War Office. (*British Medical Journal*, 18 August 1917, 203; Leneman, *Medical* 1592; Ross).[11] Despite the rejection, following a correspondence between Dr Inglis and Seton-Watson (Krippner 72−73), the newly established Serbian Relief Fund and the Scottish Women's Hospital managed to find common voice in light of the shared objectives, therefore in 1915 five units were established and maintained by the SWH through the funds collected by the SRF. British medical, numbering more than 600 volunteers by the end of 1915, remained in Serbian service (Krippner 77), until the Great Retreat of the Serbian Army and the population in the winter of 1915 to 1916. Overwhelmed by the third offense of the Central Power, a large scale military withdrawal and evacuation of the civil population was realised by the Serbian authorities through the mountains of Albania to the island of Corfu (Hammond, *Lands* 113). In the course of the autumn offensive, Dr Inglis and Dr Matthews were captured by the German and Austro−Hungarian forces, to be later returned to Great Britain, while Aldridge and Stobart reached the Albanian coasts marching through with the Serbians the high and demanding Dinarides to be transported home by Allied ship.

3.2. Women's Travel Writing

[11] The British War Office's attitude towards female volunteers could be exemplified through the case of Dr Elsie Inglis, who upon offering her staffed and provisioned hospital unit was told by a War Office administrator that 'My good lady, go home and sit still' (qtd. Leneman, *Medical* 1592; Watson, *Medical* 489-490)

By the mid-19th century not only did travel literature turn into a fashionable genre, but by achieving a significant growth in the British market, it became the second most popular piece of publication behind novels, setting up an almost hundred-year long heyday for travel writing ending only in the inter-war period (Blanton 20; Todorova, *Imagining* 89). The second half of the 19th century witnessed a slow but gradual extension of women's rights. Granted with hereditary rights, inherited wealth enabled women to afford the costs of travelling, eventually transforming travelling and travel experience into an extension of middle-class life accessible for both sexes. Besides the availability of financial funding, the emergence of modern 'lady travellers' may have been also fostered by a number of religious, familial, political or professional motivations (Smith, *Lives* 15−16, 19).

Travelling and travel writing for most of the middle-class women meant a form of escape from contemporary society to a space where they could established themselves as the main authority over perception and interpretation (Blanton 48). Consequently, travel writing was a means for women to enter contemporary social, political and cultural debates (Hammond, *Literature* 147–148), nonetheless, women's commentary was carefully produced not to present the lady traveller as a woman who had not fulfilled or had been incapable of fulfilling household duties as demanded by the Victorian-Edwardian society (Korte 160). As travel could be viewed as a transgressing of contemporary female roles (Korte 160), neither could be male narrative styles used nor could women identify themselves with the imperial masculine identities of adventures and journey experience of men. Consequently, embracing multiple discourses (Hammond, *Literature* 147–148), a separate, female narrative pattern and voice, suitable to display women's self-representation for the public was formed through genres primarily associated with the domestic sphere, such as diaries, memoirs and letters, by adapting them to travel writing (Blanton 57;

Hammond, *Lands* 77, 83). Departure from the narrative style of dominant male travel writing was resembled in the female narrative style through the rebellious tone of the author, while the causes and aims of female travelling (Hammond, *Literature* 166) were always demonstrated as a service delivered for the common cause of the British Empire in order to justify the female traveller's temporal departure from the domestic space.

In the romantic period scientific descriptions in travel writing were replaced by accounts focusing on the personal experience of emotions, therefore journey to a foreign land could serve as a means for women to redefine themselves (Hammond, *British Women* 57), as the discovery of others was transformed into a method to attain self-discovery. Additionally, with the introduction of new types of transportation, travelling eventually turned into as a new form of entertainment in the life of middle-class people, while for women, besides offering escape from the rules and obligations of contemporary middle-class culture, it was a way to express and satisfy their desire for education and knowledge (Blanton 20). Undoubtedly, what travelling provided women was an opportunity to depart temporarily from the fixed female identity shaped in and confined to the domestic space by offering new models for self-exploration and possibility to engage in public discourse through travel accounts (Hammond, *Literature* 145).

The notions of democratic individualism, mobility and travelling offered women new ways to reimagine and establish their identity as being free and modern (Hammond, *British Women* 57; Bracewell 14), while also giving them authority over the experience presented through their own narrative style (Smith, *Lives* 15−16, 19). For women with professions, travel experience was formed out of the mixture of professional interests and goals with the personal accounts on the exotic, picturesque beauties of the observed place, told in a redundant, lyric style expressing the female author's freedom and escape from the British society (Blanton 49, 51). Coupled with the

potentials of adventure and knowledge production, personal aspirations were embodied in the quest for professional acceptance, travelling, in effect, empowered women, and moreover medical women to produce, examine and comment individually on the world surrounding them (Bracewell 14; Smith, *Lives* 16−17).

The 19th century image of the Balkans was reflected in the British Empire's modernity and advancement, as the Victorian-Edwardian travellers' self-interest and ambitions were often shaped to meet the needs of the national-imperial interest, nonetheless, the accounts of travel narrators were formed in regards to their individual traits, characteristics and the observed others. For this reason, descriptions were always accompanied by interpretations on the observed premised upon the discourses shaped by the author's social reality and truths (Schulz-Forberg 24−25). As travel writers placed themselves in a discourse to mediate knowledge on an unknown region of the world, their travel accounts aimed to reveal and interpret social and political processes in a given situation (Schulz-Forberg 30). Besides the often recurring patterns and themes in the piece of a travel account, the images of the Other had to be explore in the contexts and the interests to understand the narrative strategy and discourse used by the observer (Bracewell 2).

The political events in the Balkan Peninsula in the late 19th century made the territory attractive for travellers, and as new interest rose in the region, lady travellers often portrayed the Balkans, prior to the First World War, as a wild and dangerous place in order to justify their call for departure and to attract their readers with new and surprising pieces of information (Bracewell 14). In regards to women engaged in medicine, the outbreak of the Great War marked a cornerstones in their lives, as the war not only did enable medical women to be present in the battlefront, but also to participate in public affairs hitherto preserved for men and in professional discourse by producing their own accounts on war events through newspaper reports, war diaries

and memoirs (Hammond, *Literature* 62, 152–153). The leaders of the Serbian medical relief mission like Elsie Inglis and St Claire Stobart were women of high spirit who considered themselves highly emancipated and felt free to exercise their influence in a strange little Balkan state (Lawrence 132−133) as agents of the superior British civilisation. Establishing their own narrative authority (Guelke-Morin 313) over the Serbians in a territory almost unknown to Britain, the war account of medical women on the one hand demonstrated their professional interest[12] and intellectual curiosity in contemporary war affairs, and on the other hand, it was a way to express the experience of emancipation and to display professional medical qualities (Smith, *Lives* 21−22).

[12] En route to Serbia F. Scott, a woman volunteer, reminded her friends that 'as you know I have always wanted Serbia much more than France.' This was 'firstly because the work is much better, they have no trained nurses and very few Drs' (qtd. Watson, Medical 493).

4. Assessing the Balkans: Mandates of Mobility and Modernity

Chapter Three examines how the narrative discourse of medical experience, adventure and war work were presented in Serbia. To avoid generalization and essentialist conclusions in the discourse analysis the chapter investigates the interplay between medical women's narrative rhetoric and British national interests and their respective personal aims, purposes, to show how these factors were influenced in the war-worn Serbian setting (Bracewell 13). To explore to what extent British medical women's reports were object-bound (Smith, *Lives* 18−19), the volunteers' motivation should be identified in their own account to reveal whether there were clearly and well-defined aims inspiring their medical mission or not.

4.1. British Perception on Pre-War Serbia[13]

For a long time, the Ottoman Empire and all her dominions had been associated with barbarism and corruption in Britain, and, unfortunately, the independent Balkan states could not 'escape [this] legacy of cultural backwardness' (Miller 61).[14] The very word 'Balkan' symbolized

[13] The subchapter is a revised form of a section from my study entitled *R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslav Idea, 1905-1920* to be published in a future volume of *Caiete de antropologie istorica*.

[14] Undoubtedly, Harry De Windt was one among those who strengthened these sentiments. His venturesome journeys from Peking to Paris, from New York to Paris, and Russia to India won De Windt a reputation and frequent readership in Britain, henceforth first the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then the *Westminster Gazette* contracted him for reports on his latest travels. After two decades De Windt, who defined himself as an explorer, revisited the Balkan peninsula in 1905 (Markovich, *Perception of Serbia* 153), and thereafter published *Through Savage Europe*, a book with a title undoubtedly disparaging for the Balkan peoples. Chapter one begins as follows:

> 'Why "savage" Europe?' asked a friend who recently witnessed my departure from Charing Cross for the Near East.
>
> 'Because,' I replied, 'the term accurately describes the wild and lawless countries between the Adriatic and the Black Seas' (De Windt 16).

backwardness, poverty, corruption and violence (ibid. 19), and as a consequence of the Ottoman past, the independence of Balkan nations had not changed their negative characterization at all. Due to the lack of political, economic and strategic interest in the area, the Balkan Peninsula had been almost entirely neglected by the British press. The *Times*, one of the leading organs in the United Kingdom, had employed a Balkan correspondent only for a short time, ever since then all news in connection with Serbia came to Western Europe via Vienna (Markovich, *Perception of Serbia* 91−92). Undoubtedly, few people at the outbreak of the war knew anything about Serbia and her people, and thus the general conception was that it was a nation of swineherds (Woodhouse 71).

Besides Turcophobia, the Serbian image had also suffered the disadvantages of the British Russophobia. As the British interests in the Middle East and India were threatened by Russian expansion, Serbia as a traditional ally to St. Petersburg could not escape the deep suspicion which fell on the Orthodox bloc (Evans 56). It was a widespread belief in Britain that the Russian struggle for the emancipation of the Orthodox people was a means to achieve her imperialist aims, therefore the Pan-Orthodox ideology was proclaimed militant and expansionist (ibid. 56−57, 60).

The year 1903 can be marked as a crucial point in the assessment of Serbia, since the regicides of 1903 had determined her image in Britain for more than a decade. In regard to this event, special attention should be given to Čedomir Mijatović, the Serbian Minister in London at the time of the May Coup. Being a deeply religious person, an anglophile and a strong supporter of the Obrenović dynasty, Mijatović learned the news of the Belgrade regicide with the greatest horrors. 'That some Serbian officers could commit such a crime [...] filled me with such a loathing and shame that I could not remain official representative of Serbia in London any longer, and at once resigned my position as Serbian Minister,' Mijatović wrote in his memoir (Mijatovich 177).

Despite his resignation, he remained an unavoidable source of information for both the British journalists and the officials of the Foreign Office, thereupon his negative interpretation of Serbia confirmed the biased views held by the public so far. He expected the rule of the Karađorđević dynasty to end soon, thereby he did his utmost to blacken the reputation of the small Balkan state and her new sovereigns (Markovich, *Perception of Serbia* 144−148).[15]

In sum, it can be stated that the general conceptions on the Balkans and the murder of the Serbian King did not solely abate the prestige of Serbia, but questioned the place of her people among the civilized nations. In this view, the remote response of the British press on the European conflagration at the beginning of the Great War cannot be regarded as surprising. 'We, in particular, are at war on the behalf of France, the noblest of the European families, and for Servia, the basest,' the Nation wrote on the eve of the war (qtd. Hanak, *World War* 38).

4.2. In the Country of Beauties and Colours

Male travel writing relied on detailed topographical and allegorical landmark descriptions that showed how the masculine self could overcome the challenges posed by nature, subsequently, male accounts often told an adventure coloured with imaginary obstacles to defeat as a way to test and reaffirm the author's masculinity. Subsequently, the male traveller tried to overcome danger and master nature in order to explore and experience the limits and potentials of manhood, while the visual dominance of the narration transformed the masculine observer into a hero of his own journey (Hammond, *Lands* 84). In contrast to the male narrative style, the female accounts on the

[15] For this purpose, he wrote a number of letters and articles concerning the regicide and other Balkan matters, moreover, he became the co-author for *Belgrade the White City of Death*, a book which also contained a sketch on scene of the murder (Markovich, *Perception of Serbia* 144−148).

landscape were less allegorical, and furthermore nature was not conceived as a source of danger, but as a place where harmony and the visual beauties could be attained (ibid. 112–113). In lieu of the brutish, savage lands described by male travellers, wishing to reassert their masculinity by conquering nature, the portrayal of female travellers introduced an attractive, colourful, tamed and domesticated Serbian scene into the representation of the Balkans, which, in contrast to men's reports, were, in effect, in correlation with and not the inverse of their homeland. The pre-travel presumptions, ideas and biases of medical women on Serbia established a number of personal expectations concerning difference and strangeness of the land they would visit, leading to shock and surprise when familiarities were discovered in nature (Blanton 4−5; Bracewell 20−21). Upon her arrival at Serbia in May 1915, Dr Elsie Inglis had such encounter with the Serbian landmark, reminding her of Scotland. While she was travelling to Kragujevac

> the sun shone, spring cast its spell over the country. Primroses, cowslips and violets starred the fields, fruit blossom and liliacs frothed overhead. To a Scottish eye the hills and valleys, woods and streams recalled those of home, only with a heightened colour, a larger scale, that transformed Serbia into a fairyland of childhood imagining (qtd. Lawrence 123).

Since the Serbian landscape was often depicted as being similar to the one in Great Britain (Hammond, *Lands* 114), the occasional overlaps between the domestic and the observed world concluded in revealing nature's harmony as a new kind of experience (Blanton 3) to discover the freedom for the female identity.

The sensual encounters with nature and the landscape offered the female traveller a form of escape from the emotional constraints of the middle-class society. In the absence of modern civilization, the untouched and unexploited Serbian mountainous landscape transformed into a source for sensual pleasure displacing the female travel writer from the temporal and spatial

attributes of her identity forged within the frame of Victorian-Edwardian values and virtues (Smith, *Lives* 7−8). The unknown territory of Serbia simultaneously offered the experience of danger and beauty (Blanton 50) and through the motion of the self in the strange and exotic space, the traveller became aware of the changing landscape, enabling her to compare and interpret sensual experience by presenting her own impressions (Hammond, *Lands* 112–113; Smith, *Lives* 23). Additionally, memoir literature did not solely serve to describe chronological encounter of the events, but was also a spiritual and sensual journey for the self. Stobart's first encounter with Serbia during the train ride via Skopje and Niš to Kragujevac left her with deep impression concerning the beauties of the little Balkan country full of magnificent 'mountains, rivers, gorges, and picturesque houses-one-storied, of sun-dried brick-with clear air, warm sunshine, and blossoming fruit trees' (Stobart, *Sword* 19). Before the third offensive of the Central Powers in September 1915, British medical units dealt with diseases, and medical women had the opportunity to explore the surrounding area. The planning of dispensaries also demanded travelling inside the country to make the necessary inquires and observations of the buildings where their project could be realised. All these travels, with the relatively tranquil war situation, enabled encounters with the locals and the landscape. Stobart's camp 'was finely situated […] surrounded all sides by hills.' The mountains they discovered were 'not ordinary dead hills, these were alive with picturesque villages, half-hidden amongst orchards of plum and apple trees' (ibid. 23). The perfect harmony of nature was also expressed in the following piece:

> On the far side of the white, one-storied town of Kragujevatz, the hills to the east, and south, seemed to be in poetic partnership with the clouds, and all day long, with infinite variety, reflected rainbow colours and storm effects-an endless source of joy. At night, when the tents were lighted by small lanterns, and nothing else was visible but the stars, the camp looked like a fairy city. The cuckoo had evidently not been present during Babel building, for all say long, and sometimes at night, he

> cuckooed in broad English-a message from our English spring. But the climax of surprises came when we found ourselves kept awake by the singing of the nightingales. Was this the Serbia of which such grim accounts had reaches us? (Stobart, *Sword* 23).

En route to Natalinci where another dispensary was planned to be established, Stobart encountered again the beauties of the fertile Serbian land:

> Mountains girt with maple, beech, and oak forests; valleys fertile with ripening grain-wheat and oats, and endless field of the dignified kukurus (Indian corn or maize), its tall, green, large-leaved stalks hugging the half hidden yellow cobs. And orchards, and orchards, and always orchards of purple plums (Stobart, *Sword* 78).

4.3. A Nation of Heroes and Patriots

As the pre-war image of Serbia centring on savagery could not make the Balkan country into a suitable ally to promote medical women's cause for professional emancipation, the wartime representation of Serbia was revisited resulting in the changes of Serbians' regional portraiture. The favourable and deep impressions stemming from the romantic and harmonious landmark, 'a kaleidoscope of colour effects, with purple plums and golden corn, and the rich green, shining kukurus,' was mirrored in the depiction of Serbian folks, as Serbian image was adjusted to fit the beautiful and colourful land descriptions (Hammond, *Lands* 114–115). The representation of Serbia and the Serbians were therefore mutually interconnected and reflected in each other eventually tracing back the gallant and romantic patriotism of locals to the beauties of their country, consequently it was 'no wonder that Serbians love[d] their country' (Stobart, *Sword* 92).

Cleansed of the Oriental image of savages, Serbian people started to be portrayed as admirable folks embracing a number of positive traits, while simultaneously the First World War Serbia was reconceptualised from being an Oriental Other to being an European Ally (Hammond, *British Women* 58; Hammond, *Lands* 114). Subsequently, the departure from the 19th century's depiction of Serbia as the embodiment of backwardness, turmoil and chaos disappeared from medical women's discourse, yet beyond the sympathy felt towards the Serbs.

As pointed out before travelling and travel writing used to be the privilege of white men (Schulz-Forberg 29) for a long time, therefore travelling had an entirely different meaning for women, offering new possibilities to explore and expand the female identity in the course of struggling for political and legal equality (Hammond, *Lands* 112–113). Furthermore, travelling also enabled the female traveller to experience identification with Western progression fostered by reflection both on achievements of the self and the Western civilization. Travel literature for women was therefore a way to show-case modernity mirroring the gradual expansion of women's rights accompanied by increasing number of possibilities to access the miscellaneous new types of mobility (Smith, *Lives* xi, xiii). The women's own recognition of their freedom through mobility and adventures (Hammond, *British Women* 57; Schulz-Forberg 21) empowered them (Smith, *Lives* xi, xiii) to acts as the agents of the British civilization. Functioning as a temporal place of refuge (Todorova, *Imagining* 13) from the rigid structure of the Western European industrial society and the strict morality of the British middle-class, the described pre-industrial idyll constructed Serbia as a space to be freely explored. 'An air of freedom too is everywhere: one can wander at will and is never confronted by "Trespassers will be prosecuted" or even a 'Keep off the grass!"' described Aldridge her encounter with this new kind of freedom (Aldridge 31). Additionally, experiencing

freedom by roaming the villages, nature was joined with the feeling of an imagined timelessness, depicted by Aldridge as follows:

> Peasants [...] would wait quite patiently their turn to see the doctor and it appeared not to matter whether their turn came to-day or 'sutra.' Our staff ─ or rather its western element ─ were the only people in a hurry and who bustled round and fussed over things. Soon we began to feel that all this haste was not only undignified but almost indecent, and had we stayed a little longer, just as we had learned to say 'sutra,' we too might have learned fresh values for things and realised there was no need to hurry and bustle eternity was before us (Aldridge 18−19).

The unstressed, tranquil idealized rural life was also shown through detailed accounts given on towns and villages. The lost innocence of British country life was revisited in Aldridge's description on an inn of a Central Serbian village called Vitanovac:

> There were two inns in the village quite near each other, both double-fronted buildings, and each had a wide roomy veranda on the ground floor, hung with creepers and other plants, extending along the full frontage. A few steps led up from the road to the veranda, which had to be crossed in each case to enter the inn. Seated round the tables on the veranda were always groups of villagers discussing the latest war news with wayfarers. The inns resembled our old-fashioned country inns in the days before railroads (Aldridge 21−22)

Although the perceived absence of rush from the lives of Serbians was often associated with their calmness and enduring patients or the eternity of nature, it also reflected the backwardness of Serbia acknowledging its moderate and slow progression compared to the West. The constant rush resembling change and evolution in Western modernity, transformed into a must, a civilizational burden of Westerners in the quest of bettering the world. During an unveiling of a stone fountain in Mladenovac on 7 September 1915 to commemorate the successful efforts of the SWH to bring pure water to the town, Dr Inglis arrived with two colonels of the Serbian Army an hour late, which

she found ’quite good for this dear unpunctual country,’ also expressing her surprise on the Serbian way of treating time and organizing matters by adding ‘it is curious how one gets used to things’ (qtd. Lawrence 137−38).

The idea of European civilisation associated with some ever-changing qualities and standards was an important theme in the war accounts of medical women, as, in effect, travel writing reinforced their European identity through the reflection of the observed foreign other. Their Serbian experience reaffirmed the self’s identification with Western modernity by transforming the travel account into a social and cultural self-reflection (Schulz-Forberg 15−16, 26). Consequently, a journey to the Balkans promoted women’s discovery of their civilized selves associated with the privilege of personal freedom offered by being British (Hammond, *Lands* 78, 81). Furthermore, the visible material manifestation of British diplomatic and financial power in Serbia, manifested through medical and material relief, reaffirmed medical women’s right as British citizens to enter the foreign space and to exercise their freedom as the members of a wealthier, more cultured and advanced nation to explore, evaluate and judge events, people and in general the whole war (ibid. 92).

Exporting knowledge and organising relief were the subsequent features of medical women’s discourse. Medical relief work directed towards the culturally inferior Serbs (Hammond, *Literature* 166) was as a way to fulfil the obligations of Western civilization pledged to improve the world through the scientific achievements of the modern world. Due to the Serbian war situation and the lack of Serbian medical personnel and equipment Stobart and Dr Inglis received official authorisation on behalf of the Serbian authorities to extend the British medical relief to philanthropic work of educating, enlightening and supervising Serbian nurses and the local population (ibid. 157). Often highlighted in their accounts, the local rural population was unaware

of the great inventions of Western medicine, neither possessing the relevant remedies nor the knowledge to treat their members properly or organise the appropriate sanitary precautions.

It should be noted that charity and the different acts of philanthropy, having been present for a long time in the 19th century religious and medical missions, had been used by women to display themselves as the agents of civilization and progression (Smith, *Lives* 16−17). For this reason memoirs of women tried to highlight their loyalty by presenting their war work as a contribution for 'the common cause' delivered for the sake of the British Empire (Hammond, *Literature* 153). Besides the excitement over the new roles which were made possible for women thank to war, war accounts on Serbia, and war work promoted the acceptance of this expanding female roles in Great Britain (ibid. 153, 166). Fitting into the secular medical mission established by the pioneers of women's medical studies, Dr Inglis also had a desire to help Serbia in many different ways. Besides maintaining and reorganising hospitals and wards, in the relatively peaceful summer of 1915, disturbed occasionally by air raids, Dr Elsie Inglis already outlined her grand plan for post-war Serbia for a local:

> You suffer in Serbia, and here often subject to epidemics, through nothing else but bad water. I have been thinking it over and would like to ameliorate as much as possible this deplorable state of affairs. [C]onstructing in each Serbian village a fountain of good drinking water […] will be, after the war, my unique and greatest desire to do this for Serbs (qtd. Lawrence 118, 120).

To improve the standards at the Serbian Army, Inglis organised a training school providing courses for local medical orderlies (Lawrence 134). She was aware that it would not be easy to convince the locals of the effectiveness of Western medicine, therefore she engaged in local medicine and eventually designed a demonstration centre to educate Serbs how to use and improve their own traditional methods, while also highlighting that these were inadequate and ineffective

in reality. She was concerned about the local's careless attitude toward sanitation in Serbian hospitals, where the sewage passed through open holes in the floor to an open cesspool under each ward, not being cleaned for years (ibid. 134−135). To address the issues of sanitation in Serbian hospitals, Dr Elsie Inglis wanted to raise the level of women's medical education in Serbia, devising her post-war plans regarding it in the following way:

> When the war is over, I want to do something lasting for [Serbia]. I want to help the women and children; so little has been done for them and they need so much. I should like to see Serbian qualified nurses and up-to-date women's children's hospitals (qtd. Lawrence 128).

In the autumn of 1915 the wounded started flooding from Belgrade, therefore fearing overcrowdedness, Dr Inglis had to establish a new policy, keeping the less serious injuries untreated for 24 hours at her hospital in Kragujevac (Lawrence 144). Under the dire war situation Dr Inglis and Dr Curcin, the Chief of the Foreign Missions for the Serbian Government, had a brief, but serious quarrel reflecting the Western method of management superior than the Eastern one. As Elsie Inglis recalled Dr Curcin shouted that

> […] the difference between the Serbian and the English point of view [is that] the Serbs take in every case that comes. The hospitals, it is true, will get dirty and overcrowded, but all the men will be in. But the English will only take in as many as they can properly manage and they will be beautifully nursed and cared for, and the rest will remain in the street. (qtd. Lawrence 144)

On the contrary to Curcin's claims, Dr Inglis was convinced that her unit had chosen a proper and more effective way to address and administer the situation, replying 'that is exactly what would not happen. Nobody lies in the streets, under English management' (qtd. ibid. 144).

Establishing roadside dispensaries was beyond regular war work and marked how medical women engaged themselves in the cultural transformation of Serbian people in the summer of 1915. As military hospitals could not treat civilians as they were preserved for exclusively purpose related to the war, supporting Stobart's idea, the Scottish Women's Hospital funded by the Serbian Relief Fund managed to established seven roadside dispensaries from July to September at places were no medical aid was available for local folks. These dispensaries established at important junctions and spas became popular, and besides offering treatment, it was designed to give medical advice concerning cleanliness, sanitation, and hygiene (Stobart, *Sword* 68−69). To stop various diseases like typhus the medical units of women took serious sanitary precautionary measures when they treated patients. Newcomers were immediately undressed, washed and shaved, while their clothes were being disinfected. As the British medical staff was also struck by typhus time by time, medical women carefully traced back the source of typhus, by paying attention to every small detail to eliminate all possibilities of being infected (ibid. *Sword* 49−50). Losing a number of their own nurses, organising sanitary measures to stop the spread of diseases was professionally challenging for medical women, which they managed to overcome by the end of August. Consequently, it is not surprising to read detailed accounts given on the successful sanitary arrangements made in Serbia by medical women who had never encountered such medical issues in Great Britain, only learnt about them (Lawrence 103−104).

To show their own professional skills, medical women often gave allegorical descriptions on the primitive medical and sometimes superstitious methods used by the 'ignorant peasants' (ibid. 68−69), who cured a headache by applying a salad of potatoes and onions, and rubbed charcoal into a wound and covered it with leaves to heal it (ibid. 83−84). Experiencing a number of worrying encounters with traditional healing, it soon became clear for Stobart that they had not

solely needed to battle the Central Powers, but also the disturbing ignorance of locals concerning the dangers of infections and diseases. For instance, visiting a village family all sick of small-pox, Stobart realised besides the poor conditions of the family, they did not possess even the most basic piece of knowledge on treating illnesses:

> The walls […] were covered with primitive paintings of figures and of trees. The cottage contained a tiny kitchen-living room and a tinier bedroom. The windows of the bedroom were all closed, the lesson of the necessity of fresh air not yet learnt (Stobart, *Sword* 84).

Moreover, visitors would sit next to the bed of small-pox patients and then leave for their respective homes; she concluded that it was 'Small wonder that epidemics played havoc in the country' (ibid. 85). She recalled a similar case through a conversation when her colleague Dr Stewart visited a female patient at Rakovac struck by pneumonia, whom the locals expected to die soon, thus lighting candles for her. Although opening the so far closed windows for fresh air, appropriate food, and the medicine given by Dr Stewart helped the poor patient (ibid. 102) simple instructions given for applying medicine unfamiliar to locals led to an awkward conversation between the doctor and the young woman's mother:

> 'Who was in charge?' the mother came forward. 'Very well, now you must see (through the interpreter) that your daughter takes the medicine, which I will send, every four hours. Do you understand?'
>
> 'Yes, but how are we to know when it is four hours?'
>
> 'Have you no clocks or watches?'
>
> 'None.'
>
> 'And none in the village?'
>
> 'No!'
>
> 'Very well, then you must give the medicine every time you eat your meals.'
>
> 'We only eat three times a day.'

> ‘Then give the medicine three times regularly, and do everything that I tell you, and she’ll get better’ (Stobart, *Sword* 103).

As signs of gratitude and appreciation for the deeds of British medical women (ibid. 113), the medical staff was often awarded pigs and food (ibid. 103) as a compensation, or moreover as a form of payment for their praised medical work involving a number of miraculous serums (ibid. 68−69). Besides the locals gratitude some medical women received medals as the token of appreciation for the delivered services on the behalf of the Serbian authorities (ibid. 121). All these events reaffirmed medical women’s identification with Western superiority.

In the reassessment of Serbian image, often the same pre-war attributes with negative connotation were simply revaluated as positive characteristics, subsequently, such qualities as savagery, hostility and violence previously associated with Serbians were repackaged as a quest for security, hospitability and acts of bravery. As a result, the representation of the whole Serbian nation was reshaped into a kind, chivalrous and polite group of folk people, while the wild and savage attributes were tamed or were entirely dismissed in medical women’s accounts. Moreover, the hitherto negative essentialist representation of Serbians as Balkan Christians transformed into universal positive and exaggerative claims, as the smallest observations were often represented as the typical characteristic of locals (Hammond, *Lands* 114–115; Schulz-Forberg 26−27). With the disappearance of the savage barbarian aspect from representation, the locals became perceived as the best, bravest and most gallant fighters (Hammond, *Lands* 115−116). As Davies’s account claimed ‘the true Serbian peasants are among the most innately courteous people in the world [whose] instincts are essential generous and hospitable,’ while the ‘gaily dressed peasants [as] friendly souls’ were no longer described as savage brutes, but people whom the foreign traveller could easily establish connection (qtd. ibid.114–115; insertions by me).

The image of the 'extraordinarily courageous' (Matthews 31) Serbians who did 'not know the meaning of physical fear' (ibid. 63) were also acquainted with 'unselfish heroism' (ibid. 32) suggested that fighting and struggle had been always dominated Serbian life (Stobart, *Sword* 83). As savagery and war-loving were relinquished from representation, while violence being the part of Serbian life was justified, the 'enthusiastically patriotic' (ibid. 101) capacities of Serbs were discovered in their alleged heroism and fighting qualities. Overtaking the previous Serbian image centred on the surviving forms of clan structures, regicide and barbarity, the discourse of medical women made the Serbian people into one of the finest allies of the United Kingdom (Hammond, *Lands* 115−116). Stobart summarised the patriotic nature of average Serbians in the following way:

> And at once I realised, that the impression which even now largely prevails in Western Europe as the bellicose character of the Serbian nation, is wrong. The average Serbian peasant-soldier is not the truculent, fierce, fighting-loving savage so often represented. He does not love fighting, but loves, with all the enthusiasm of a poetic nature, his family, his home, his hectares of land, and his country. He has fought much in the past, but in defence of these possessions which he prizes, No one can accuse the Serbian soldier of cowardice, yet his dislike of fighting, and his love of home, were so marked, that it was easy to distinguish, by his brisk walk, and cheerful countenance, or by his slow gait, and depressed attitude, whether a drab-dressed soldiers, with knapsack, walking along the road was *Kod kutche* (home) or-his ten days' leave at an end-was going once more *y commando* (to the front) (Stobart, *Sword* 22−24).

With their presence in Serbia, British medical women often formed a close collaboration with the Serbian authorities and military personal. This new kind of relationship between a Western and a small Balkan country (Hammond, *Lands* 114) was also resembled in the portrayal of the Serbian Army which was no longer perceived as a group of warmongering, undisciplined brutes, but as a company of brave and poetic fighters:

> The Serbian soldier is brave. In courage no one can surpass him, he is absolutely fearless and holds death in contempt not that he wants to die more than anyone else does before his allotted time. He loves life and brightness and gaiety, but with duty before him and death in the way he will go straight on not only without flinching, but without even a change of expression. He knows how to die it is more than courage, it reaches sublimity (Aldrige 49).

Depicted as tall romantic-looking highlanders with clear-eyes distinguished by their uniform, shoulder rifle and the habit of singing songs and ballads (Lawrence 132−133), Serbian soldiers were assumed to be 'one of the finest races of fighters in the world [who fought] like lions, careless of death or the most terrible wounds, following their leaders with the most cheerful courage of heroes' (qtd. Hammond, *Lands* 115). For Stobart it was surprising to witness that despite the soldiers' jovial and cheerful nature shown in course of night gatherings, they could still keep their discipline, while the natural comradeship between the officers and their subordinated soldiers was interesting likewise (Stobart, *Sword* 89). The natural depiction and detailed description of dresses, footwear, decorations and habits (Aldrige 19) turned the Serbian soldier into a romantic hero. Matthews recalled these impressions in a scene when 'the uniformed lads looked at us, happy and proud, dreams of great deeds, heroic and unselfish, transfiguring their faces, their sweethearts' kisses fresh upon their lips — we saw the Slav man thus (Matthews 35). These romantic fighters depicted in a setting linked to the harmonious and beautiful nature were always prepared to defend their country as Aldridge wrote in the following:

> A lover of flowers is the Serb, and music is a part of his nature; he takes life easily, and perhaps a little indolently. Often were we fascinated by his gay appearance as he sat on the grass in our camp. And yet this same man would, if danger threatened, rise to attention on the instant and be ready if need be to face death on the spot (Aldrige 20).

Another dominant feature in medical women's account on Serbia was the demonstration of local inhabitants' courtesy and friendliness (Hammond, *Lands* 115), which, in effect, functioned to establish an imagined friendship between Serbia and Great Britain as a natural outcome justified by the alliance and the common causes of the two countries. As the popularity of travel writing grew, a new anecdotal narrative style developed in the 19th century describing stories within a well-defined space managed (Schulz-Forberg 28−29) to satisfy the ever-growing demand of the reader for information. For this reason, thorough anthropological observations (Blanton 20) were included in the war account of women describing social relations, domestic activities linked to cultural information witnessed in the respective social and domestic spaces and activities (Smith, *Lives* 18−19). Undoubtedly, the miscellaneous interrelated cultural activities, ranging from anthropological explorations, cultural encounters, journalistic descriptions, scientific investigation to the transfer of knowledge, in travel writing forged a cultural discourse on the self and the other (Schulz-Forberg 20). Consequently, 'the narrative of custom and manner' (Smith, *Lives* 19) resulting in the detailed descriptions on local Serbian men and women in medical women's war accounts functioned to project the newly established companionship of medical women with the Serbs to the reader by enlightening the public concerning the true nature and virtues of the Serbian nation, also introducing their dire situation while challenging the existing British preconceptions on the locals (Hammond, *Lands* 114; Hammond, *Literature* 156).

To make their subjective experience seem as an objective account, travel writers often relied on the chronological and linear representation of experience within a given space to achieve credibility. Subsequently, introducing the reader to the culture, society and religion of a foreign country, along with the detailed subjective presentation increased the credibility of the account (Schulz-Forberg 15, 26). Besides using linear, chronological structure for writing, British medical

women often borrowed literary elements and narratives to demonstrate action, motivation, setting, character, conflict and resolution. With the use of different writing techniques as a form of representing and mediating experience promoted the credibility and authenticity of travel writing (Blanton 2, 4−5), nonetheless, led to essentialist observations and conclusions pertaining to the observed other.

The essentialist depiction of Serbia also embraced perception on the family, sexes and the nation claiming brotherhood to be most prevailing characteristics of Serbians (Hammond, *Lands* 116). Description of Serbian communities through customs, folklore where often accompanied by brief summaries of relevant historical and cultural events, while Stobart and Matthews also included photographic illustrations. The dichotomy between the observer and observed was conceived through the interesting and surprising anthropological observations on the Serbian social order, wedding, funeral and religious customs, codes of treating guests and their social regulatory functions portraying the Serbs as unenlightened folks possessing some idealized traits and characters (Blanton 20; Finder 240, 245−246; Hammond, *Lands* 81, 117−118). Demonstrating the element of surprise, medical women could easily be lost in the jungle of traditions of a foreign culture due to language barriers, since customs were not clear and were often confusing. For instance, when being invited to the house of the priest in Natalinci, Stobart recalled her confusion in the following anecdotal piece:

> there was water and jam, but no bread. Would bread follow, or must I now take a spoonful of jam? And what about the water? Must I dip my fingers in it or drink it? […] All eyes were fixed on me. But what on earth was to be done with the spoon: Ought I to put it into the glass of water? […] Dead silence all round the room; others were watching me […] I was desperate, and the idea came that perhaps I was expected to put the spoon in my pocket; take it away as a souvenir (Stobart, *Sword* 81-82).

The hospitability and friendliness could fit perfectly into the image of a gallant and loyal ally of Great Britain, therefore accounts on social gatherings, invitations, food and drinking were quite often recalled in the memoirs of medical women. As Davies remembered Serbian hospitability as another positive experience in Serbia:

> There is nothing more delightful than the instincts of Serbian hospitability, and it is such a pity that people will insist […] on carrying English ideas about with them, instead of being willing to adapt themselves a little more readily to the manners and customs of the country. Why carry insularity like a large wet blanket around one? (qtd. Hammond, *Lands* 112–113).

Describing cuisine, for example, was a method to make the Serbian culture familiar with the British readership, simultaneously promoting sympathy towards this little Balkan nation and demarcating it as being different: 'Though some folks find Serbian cooking too rich, the dishes have a distinctive and pleasing character of their own' (Stobart, *Sword* 20). Detailed description of dresses and clothes (Matthews 40−41) was also common regardless of the social event the writer encountered it. For instance, Stobart gave a detailed description of the requiem service in Lapovo, held for those fallen soldiers who had died in battle, and thus could not be buried in the cemetery:

> The women wore tartan skirts, very full; short loose bodices, of different colour to the skirt, generally a plain colour, and kerchiefs which completely covered their hair, and were brilliantly coloured, or else were in black to denote mourning (Stobart, *Sword* 86-87).

The shaping of a very romantic and idealised depiction of Serbs, physical qualities and rebellious nature were also reconceived as being entirely positive traits. Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the positive attributes of Serbs were mostly associated with their bodies and souls, but never with their mental capacities, reflecting the location of Balkan Christian nations in the mental mapping of Europe. Disconnected from rationality, Serbians, portrayed as different kind of

Europeans, were attached to a simple and primitive way of life, while despite the positive values were discovered in their characteristics, these features were at the same time connotations of an inferior nature. Essentialist descriptions such as 'the Serb is strong and, possibly because he has always lived much in the open air, his wounds are quick to heal' (Aldrige 54) shaped the Serbian image as being close to nature and connected to an ancient spirit and irrational heroism. Although the Serbians' endurance of pain was presented as a symbol of their heroism, it should be noted that such quality was often used to describe inferior forms in mankind in British travel literature (Hammond, *Lands* 114–115). As Davies recalled it the Serbian soldiers were 'wonderfully patient and bear pain like heroes [and] after their hurts had been dressed rushed back to the trenches to fight again' (qtd. Hammond, *Lands* 115). Aldridge had similar observations claiming 'just as the Serb can face death so can he also bear pain. He makes light of wounds and will not stay in bed if he can possibly get up' (Aldridge 53). Consequently, altogether Serbian people and their soldiers were conceived to be capable of enduring many forms of different deprivations and hardship (Hammond, *Lands* 114; Hammond, *Literature* 156) often associated with irrational heroism and bravery.

Victorian-Edwardian women's travel accounts were often 'emotional response to the [observed] world [showing] sympathy with politically subjugated people' (Blanton 47), therefore identification with those who were outside the patriarchal power structures both at home and abroad became an important feature of women's narrative discourse. However, it should be noted in the case of medical women that defence of Serbian habits and cultural practices, in effect, also highlighted the difference between Eastern and Western Europe, consequently, reaffirming the distinction between the observer and the observed likewise (ibid. 47−48). Enchanted by the primitive, simply could resemble the female authors' own captivity in the contemporary British

(ibid. 47), therefore besides being chivalrous, brave and strong, Serbians were depicted as 'walking history books' who kept and passed their storied of battles and suffering through oral history, as Stobart recalled it.

> […] our wounded were the most charming patients, imaginable, and it was always a joy to go into the wards and have a talk with them. they were alertly intelligent, with a delightful sense of humour, and a total absence of vulgarity or coarseness, They were all so chivalrous, courteous and delicate in their behaviour to the nurses, and to us women generally, and so full of affection and gratitude for the help given to them, that it was difficult to realise that these were not officers, but peasants, with little knowledge of the world outside their own national history. With this every Serbian peasant is familiar because it is handed down from generation to generation, in ballads and heroic legends, by the bards and guslars (Stobart, *Sword* 24).

Although the descriptions on Serbian cultural practices were not necessarily connected to backwardness or savagery (Blanton 56), nonetheless served to construct the Serbian image as a semi-European Other, allocating the qualities of civility, progression and modernity to the observer's home country in Western Europe (Hammond, *Lands* 83).

The departure from Great Britain, the arrival to Salonika (ibid. 114), the transportation and travel inside Serbia were experiences which also formed medical women's assessment on the Balkan country. Due to the advancement of transportation introducing new modes of traveling, the technology of motion developed into an emblem of progression (Smith, *Lives* xi), henceforth, the means of travelling as a physical aspect of movement made a significant impact on the traveller's perception (Schulz-Forberg 20−21) resembling the interrelations of modernity and mobility (Hammond, *Lands* 112–113). Upon their arrival to Serbia, it immediately became apparent for medical women that neither the Serbian railways nor the roads could be compared 'favourably with

those of larger, richer countries' (Matthews 68). Stobart felt that the low quality and their maintenance originated from the common Balkan characteristic of the neglect:

> A motor drive on a Serbian road is always an interesting adventure, owning chiefly to the mud, which, is literally, in places feet deep, and of a substance peculiar to the Balkans owing partially also to the neglect of road mending during many years of warfare (Stobart, *Sword* 78).

Cars often sunk into deep mud holes of Serbian roads, therefore travel in Serbia 'ended the usual way-ignominiously, with oxen' (ibid. 80). A similar encounter with Serbian roads was remembered by Dr Inglis, describing her travel to Mladenovac as

> The wildest drive I ever had in my life […]. We skidded at least fifty times in the course of the day, but never upset. We bumped all the day and at one time charged a string of boulders, which had been used to mend the road, and got over the,; but it was the most glorious run as regards scenery. For long way the road ran along the top of hills and valleys, and the lights and shadows were magnificent. I don't know when I enjoyed anything so much (qtd. Lawrence 126).

Inglis's description also gives the impression that the gorgeous country of Serbs, decorated by magnificent hill, valleys and streams, was a more ancient and natural land, which mostly preserved the rural idylls of pre-modern times, implying that contemporary Serbia had limited access to the achievements of Western modernity. Other medical women also realised the undeveloped aspects of Serbian society and economy, especially in regards to the lack of education among citizens, who were 'chiefly [...] agricultural people' (Aldrige 16). While Dr Matthews thought as 'the women are carriers of children and tillers of the soil, books and art have no place in their lives (Matthews 68), Stobart admitted that primitive notions and superstitions had prevailed among the ordinary Serbians (Stobart, *Sword* 39). For Matthews

> the Serbs are a wonderful people; but education is only just beginning to make headway and it is common to find men and women unable to read or write. Their ideas are primitive. They have not come much into touch with the greater world (Matthews 68).

'The Serbs belong to the East of Europe and […] therefore have much of the reserve of the Oriental. At first it was the differences that roused our interest; later we not only admired but found the Serbian character lovable' wrote Aldridge (Aldridge 16), however medical women encountered a more ancient feature of Serbia by discovering the Byzantine heritage in architecture and religion. Undoubtedly, the experience with Eastern Christianity was not regarded as an Oriental character, but belonged to an older European civilization. Impressed by the Byzantine architecture, Stobart wrote:

> A sharp curve road brought us in view of a range of hills. Upon an isolated kopje […] an exquisite church of white marble shone, against a brilliant sky of blue, silver in the sunlight, which was elsewhere clouded. The marble had been quarried partly in Serbia and partly in Italy, and the church, of best Byzantine architecture, had been built by order of King Peter (Stobart, *Sword* 79).

The cultural difference attributed to the dissimilarities of Eastern and Western Church was also a fascinating revelation for Aldridge:

> [...] they have a different civilisation [...] most are members of the Greek Church [therefore] not only have they another language but another alphabet, the Kyrillic, based on the Greek instead of the Latin characters. Then, too, there is a fortnight's difference in time between their calendar and ours (Aldridge 16).

Although the First World War Serbia obviously lagged behind Western Europe, nonetheless, the medical women' discourse explained all 'tragedies' (Stobart, *Sword* 37) and uncivilised, Oriental characteristics of Serbia by blaming 'those dark centuries [under the]

tyrannical' (Matthews 25) Ottoman oppression (Stobart, *Sword* 31), while 'after so many centuries beneath the dominant Crescent' the Serbs' 'obvious faults' became 'glaringly perceptible' (Matthews 39). Fitting into the war-time discourse of demonizing the enemy, the qualities of barbarism and violence were shifted to the non-Christian Ottomans (Todorova, *Imagining* 109−110) and the Central Powers accusing them for corrupting the Balkans, consequently,

> The railway journey was interesting, especially to those amongst us who had never before been away from England. We were amused to see real live storks nesting on the chimney-tops. So the German nursery tale, that babies are brought into the world by storks, down the bedroom chimney, must be true. German fables will probably in the future teach that babies are brought through the barrels of rifles (Stobart, *Sword* 19).

Not only was Serbia's backwardness explained, but it was awarded an alternative, spiritual richness, claiming that the greatness of the Serbian nation did not depend on 'material conditions of existence' (ibid. 309−310). Consequently, the excellent traits of Serbians eventually overrode the uncivilized characteristics of their country, as backward qualities were reshaped as symbols of simplicity, while moral virtues of the Serbians were overemphasized to fill the lacks (Hammond, *Lands* 118). Serbians undoubtedly became pure-hearted fighters, who had always struggled for the 'ideal of freedom' (Stobart, *Sword* 309−310), which was one the most appreciated values of Great Britain regarded as a symbol of British political and economic supremacy. Consequently, the common civilizational value of freedom reunited Serbia with Western Europe in course of the Great War, which Stobart regarded as the battles of civilisations:

> Kipling's "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" does not apply to the east and west of Europe. The west of Europe must, and will, unite with the Slav portion of the east, as a safeguard against the Central Powers of darkness. […] The fate of humankind, whilst this war lasts, is in balance. The fight between the Allies and the Central Powers is not merely a struggle between

> one form of civilisation and another; […] The struggle is between militarism and human evolution (Stobart, *Sword* 192).

British medical women in Serbia used the Great War and Serbia's new position among Allied states to reframe and demonstrate their relief mission as a new form of acknowledgeable dedication to the British Empire (Hammond, *Literature* 153). By describing events and experiences in Serbia in civilizational terms, Inglis, Stobart, Matthews and Aldridge produced collective representation of people and their mentalities, therefore Serbia became a source for validating difference (Bracewell, *Balkan* 5, 9; Todorova, *Imagining* 19). The characters of Serbians were reshaped to show that the nation possessed the desire and moreover the potentials for progression, nonetheless, the centuries-long foreign occupation hindered modernization (Hammond, *Lands* 119). Relinquishing or minimising the bad impacts of the Ottoman past, blamed for the region's backwardness and surviving Oriental features, the positive representation of the small Balkan country became possible. Besides the discovery of new attributes, the Serbian image, in effect, was reconceived by transformation of existing qualities and cultural markers associated with Balkans into appealing characteristics fitting into the discourse of war. In contrast to the uniformity and ugliness of industrial Britain, Serbia was depicted as a place of idyllic rural harmony and colourful natural beauties, which were disturbed by the ruthless invasion of the barbaric Central Powers (Hammond, *Lands* 110–112).

4. Conclusion

The Serbian image was reconstructed to justify British medical women's involvement in the Great War, while show-casing their war work, contributing to the struggle against German domination, as a devotion to protect the British national-imperial interest. Besides the temporal escape from the constraints of industrialized, rushing civilization of Great Britain, Serbia offered satisfaction and moreover motivation for Dr Inglis, Stobart, Dr Matthews and Aldridge to explore their professional interests and curiosity. War-time comradeship, close cooperation with the Serbian authorities and day-to-day encounter with the locals fostered the formation of an imaginary bond between the British and Serbian nations. Resembling the Western geographical imagination, Serbia remained associated with a subordinated and separate geographical space (Allcock 218; Hammond, *Lands* 77) relocated to Europe, while the newly developed friendship, nonetheless, established Serbia as an inferior partner who required British patronisation to achieve civilizational progression.

. Plenty of attention was paid to the Balkan offensive of the Central Powers in the autumn of 1915, thus the occupation of Serbia and the immense suffering of the retreating Serbs through Albania arouse a new wave of sympathy in Britain (Markovich, *Identities* 126). It was a widespread belief that reasoned diplomatic and military measures could have saved Serbia, and therefore, most British citizens had a guilty conscious for the betrayal of the little Balkan country, which they tried to compensate with generous contributions to the Serbian Relief Fund (Hanak, *World War* 91−92). Witnessing the devastating evacuation of the small, overwhelmed country, the recollections and memoirs of Dr Inglis, Stobart, Dr Matthews and Aldridge overtly promoted the case of the exiled

Serbian nation, whose spiritual richness and brave sacrifice for the ideal of freedom ought to be appreciated and compensate by the Allies with restoration of their country's independence:

> In the Future for which we are fighting, the Future of Europe's Freedom, the Serbian will become a new man, and all his greater self will radiate, and the shell which has become so hardened and hammered as to be at times impenetrable will be broken asunder. The true man will appear in the rebirth of the Nation (Matthews 55)

Highlighting the civilisation obligations of Western Europe, Aldridge felt that Great Britain to compensate the deeds of Serbia:

> In this short period of time I bad thus seen Serbia under three different aspects: first, life in the village when the land was in a state of comparative peace; again, when the country was invaded on three sides and the Serbs were fighting for their lives; and yet again, when, after defeat, they Were retreating before the on-coming foe. In the following pages I have tried to reflect as I saw it a picture from each of these three chapters of Serbia during those eventful months and have added a note on Serbian history. In the final adjustments of this terrible war may my country do all within its power to secure justice for the liberty-loving people of this Eastern land! (Aldrige 8).

Resembling the Serbian Relief Funds propaganda advertisement, claiming that Serbia sacrificed itself for Western Europe, since it 'drove the enemy back just at the time the Allies needed her the most' (*Times*, 21 May 1915, 11), Stobart also presented the Serbian war efforts as an important service delivered to the Ally cause, while believing that the excellent traits of the Serbian character would be rewarded someday:

> Serbia is ahead of other nations, in her power of sacrificing herself for ideals. […] The Serbian people sacrificed their country rather than bow the knee to militarism and foreign tyranny; they sacrificed their country […] both for themselves and for other Slave brethren […] A people with such ideals, and with such power of sacrifice, must be worthy of a great future (Stobart, *Sword* 310).

Stobart's pro-Serbian sentiment were overtly reflected in the opening page of her memoir dedicated to the Serbian Crown Prince Alexander

> in admiration of courage with which he and the nation which he represents have, in spite of all temptations, upheld the Ideal of Spiritual Freedom, an in fervent hope that this Ideal will soon be realised in that Greater Serbia which will arise from the sepulchre of the Past (Stobart, *Sword* v).

Dr Elsie Inglis[16] also expressed her belief that Great Britain ought to assist Serbia in its struggle against the invading Central Powers:

> The work to which our Scottish women have set themselves in relieving distress in Serbia is worthy of the highest traditions throughout the country. […] To the Scottish people in particular Serbia makes a strong appeal. Its mountains and glens resemble our own Scottish Highlands, its people have made a similar fight for freedom against tyranny and oppression. It has been rightly termed the 'Scotland of the East' and the Scottish people will not fail this brave little nation in her hour of trial (qtd. McDermid 137).

Conclusively, medical women's travel writing played an important role in the emergence and growth of pro-Serbian sentiments in Great Britain, as their involvement in the event of Serbian front and their participation in the Great Retreat became a source for a special emotional alliance with Serbia (Hammond, *Lands* 114; Hammond, *Literature* 156), which was later translated into political claims by the British proponents of the Southern Slave advocating for the establishment of an independent and unified Yugoslav state. With the fundamental transformation of Serbian image,[17] the Balkan state came out of the war with a great prestige. Undoubtedly, the Serbs became

[16] On 3 April 1916, while the royal dignitary and Prime Minister Nikola Pašić visited London, Dr Elsie Inglis was awarded the highest honour in Serbia, the Order of the White Eagle by Crown Prince Alexander. Although, the Crown Prince had been her neighbour at Kragujevac, this was Inglis's first encounter with Alexander (*Times*, 4 April 1916). Additionally, Dr Inglis with Seton-Watson were the brain-children of the 'Kossovo Day' celebration organised as a nationwide tribute to Serbia in 1916 to celebrate the anniversary of the famous Battle of Kosovo (Lawrence 179−180).

[17] Seton-Watson summarized the success of the pro-Serbian campaigns in the *New Europe* quarterly as follows: 'We have travelled far from the days when a popular London weekly could cry "To hell with Serbia." […] There can be

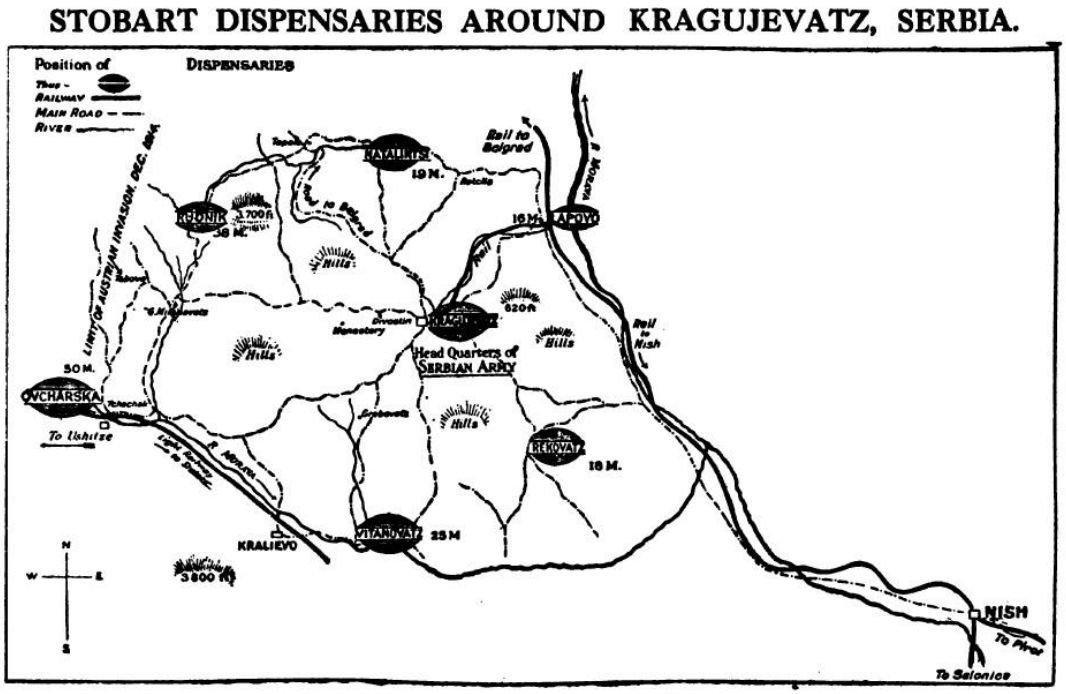
the heroes of the Balkan Peninsula, and as the 'Guardians of the Gate'[18] they were very much appreciated in Great Britain. This Serbian image was transferred to other Yugoslavs, and was more or less maintained in the 1920's until the establishment of personal rule by King Alexander[19] in 1929 (Markovich, *Identities* 135−136).

few in Great Britain who have not now learned that the twin causes of Serbian freedom and Southern Slav unity are British interests in the highest sense of the word […]' (New Europe, no. 44, 16 August 1917, 141).

[18] The term was borrowed from a speech of David Lloyd George (See Laffan, R. G. D. *The Guardians of the Gate*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1918, p 3).

[19] Crown Prince Alexander was crowned the King of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1920.

5. Appendix



Picture 1

The seven dispensaries established by the sanitary units of British medical women

(In Stobart, *Flaming* 75)

Picture 2

'Lady of the Black Horse'

A painting by George James Rankin of Mrs M. A. St Clair Stobart

Picture 3

Dr Elsie Inglis

(In McLaren 1)

Picture 4

Dr Caroline Matthews

(In Matthews i)

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