

TOWARDS MONTENEGRO: A LAND OF GIANTS AND PANTHERS

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Abstract. *This paper problematizes the caricatural presence of Montenegro on the symbolic map of travellers from the contemporary Anglophone world. To depict the contours of this paradoxical presence, we propose a brief look at the romantic image of the country developed in the last two centuries. Then we provide a chronological overview and stress details from the most recent depictions to conclude that the image of the place has almost stayed frozen till the present day. While avoiding politicizing, essentializing, and self-stigmatization, we conclude that the absence of the country as a real historical, socio-political, and cultural complexity has been conditioned by its long and manifold isolation. We provide examples from travel writing, tourist and media representations, fiction, and film. Our analysis relies mostly on authorities on the travel-writing genre.*

Key words: *Montenegro, history, travel writing, fiction, tourism.*

THE OLD MONTENEGRO

Until it was declared a kingdom in 1910 Montenegro was an isolated space surrounded by the hostile Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. It was only the rare politicians and scientists, but usually actually spies, who visited it. As we learn from Branko Momčilović, the first reports about Montenegro appeared in the eighteenth century, two published in *The Annual Register* (1767-1768) focusing on Šćepan Mali, the imposter king, and one by Eyles Irwin (1788) who claimed that “the Natives of Montagna Negro” are of Greek origin (1990: 10-11). Đukanović notes that the first official encounter between Montenegro and Great Britain took place during the Napoleonic wars. Although delighted with their Spartan bravery, the instructions sent to Admiral Freemantle– not to field Montenegrins in the battle for Kotor because their lawlessness might inflict animosity towards the British among the peaceful citizens of the Bay– speak of the British attitude towards Montenegrins (2006: 375). In 1843 Charles Lamb wrote that there were few nations about whom one knew so little and that the name Montenegro

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could hardly be found on maps (*Ibid.*). Barović's research (2014) confirms that the intentions of the old cartographers are reflected through the neutralization of geographical orientation markers and invalidation of Montenegrin territory and status.

Another obstacle barring Montenegro came in the form of a steep and winding goat path as the only road at the time leading from the port of Kotor over the mountains to its capital Cetinje. This terrifying path made even Edith Durham comment ironically in 1900 that despite the fact that its description is found in almost all of the foreigners' sketches, she herself could not ignore this "vast desolation of impassable rock, crag over crag, an endless series of bare mountaintops, utterly arid and lonesome" (Hodgson, 1991: 10). This gothic impression was deepened by Montenegrin features. *National Geographic* from 1918 describes Montenegrins as "tall, large and erect [...] liberty-loving mountaineers who have lived apart and distrust strangers" (Winchester, 2009: 429).

MONTENEGRO IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A wider frame to this isolation, as Preston discussed (2009: 11), came from the absence of a Hellenist, Roman, and Renaissance heritage that determined the perception of Montenegro as a culturally empty space. Like the Balkans in general, as Goldsworthy elaborated in *Inventing Ruritania: Imperialism of Imagination* (1998), Montenegro appeared especially suitable for the projection of Western fantasies. Preston argues that Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601), set in Illyria, "an imaginative realm, an evocative but remote location, unvisitable and unverifiable," (2009: 27) may be considered to have pioneered this tradition. The nineteenth century's romantic imagination gave birth to the sonnet "Montenegro" (1877) by the British laureate Alfred Tennyson, which celebrated the indomitable Montenegrin spirit ("They rose to where their sovereign eagle sails,/They kept their faith, their freedom, on the height,/Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and night..."). The sonnet promoted W.E. Gladstone's liberal politics. Gladstone's speech was also published as "Montenegro. A Sketch," in May 1887 in *The Nineteenth Century*, while neither of them ever visited Montenegro. Yet, despite the charged drama and unconventionality, none of the great romantic rebels—Byron (who was in Albania and Greece, that so powerfully lacked the choking restrictions of home), Shelley and Keats—and not one of the modernist self-exiles, D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce, who were as close as Italy and Croatia, ever saw Montenegro.

A few minor authors, but not lesser travellers, wrote about their sojourn in Montenegro at the same time when these great British novelists, in their self-imposed exiles, were crossing the meridians in search of constructive ways of being. Thus, Joyce Cary arrived in 1912 during the Balkan Wars because, among other things, he was anxious that "there would be no more wars. And I had a certain romantic enthusiasm for the cause of the Montenegrins; in short I was young and eager for any sort of adventure" (Qt. Goldsworthy, 2002: 30). The country, in his *Memoir of the Bobotes* was "stones, stones, stones" (Qt. Đorić-Francuski, 2009: 42).

In *Two Vagabonds through Serbia and Montenegro* (1916) Jan and Cora Gordon are roused in Pljevlja by bronchitic roosters (1939: 50). From here they ride starved mulesto Cetinje, via mount Durmitor that emits "japanesiness [...] equalled only by Japan itself" (65). From time to time they hear "a faint 'pop! pop!' as though far-away giants were holding feast and opening great champagne bottles" (59). Further south the region reveals

itself as “a weird sight reminiscent of some romantic Dutch painter” (78). When they finally reach a “polychromatic” village, situated in a great crater filled with mud and Montenegrins, looking like “a watchmaker’s wife in her best silk dress,” (99) it was the “cheerfully dreary” capital. A pink building called *Billiadow* had the only billiard table in the country, so that the narrators infer that “billiard tables were rarer and more curious than kings” (79-81) in Montenegro. Travelling to the coast in an Indian looking cart, the architecture starts resembling Italy’s. Apart from this unique international conglomeration, Montenegro is also scenery with literary allusions, such as the one to W. M. Thackeray’s satirical novel *The Rose and the Ring* (1855), set in an imaginary state of a similarly fantastic order. On their way back to Rijeka Crnojevića, in a boat rowed by four Montenegrin women, the visitors experience a striking revelation of a dark otherness. Namely, the women start their four-tone folk melody in nasal falsettos, sounding like “a great ox wagon drawn uphill by four bullocks and one of the wheels ungreased” (96).

Rebecca West travelled through the Balkans in the 1930s in an effort to understand the persistence of the human will to death embodied in Serbian Prince Lazar’s choice of a heavenly over an earthly kingdom on the eve of the battle of Kosovo Field in 1389. In Montenegro she finds a curious solution. As Preston notes, the most striking Montenegrin characteristic for West was its “chilling blankness” (2009: 23). Montenegrin architecture reveals “the terrible purity of Montenegrin good looks,” (24) i.e. a Montenegrin woman in her prime has a face “like a niche designed for a statue it does not hold” (25). West’s, being a more profound attempt to depict the spirit of a place so imbued with blood and struggle, prompted a whole surge of interpretations and is a work of art to be discussed as a whole in a separate paper.

MONTENEGRO AFTER WORLD WAR II

After World War Two, when the empires disintegrated and globalization erased the exotic anomalies of the locations (Huggan, 2012: 6), depriving travellers and their hosts from performing their traditional roles (Iverson, 2003), travel writing as a genre faced a major crisis. It felt as if the entire globe was mapped and there was nothing left to discover. However, the footsteps genre of rediscovery was still handy. That is how R.E. Gruber travelled in 1987 to investigate the 1954 adventure of Rex Stout’s Nero Wolfe, the genius detective, who “was a Montenegrin”, which was “part of his mystique” (1987). Gruber notes that “Yugoslavia has enjoyed a boom in tourism,” but that “the stunning Gulf of Kotor” is still “the unspoiled entryway to the Black Mountain” (*Ibid*). Like Wolfe in *The Black Mountain*, she arrives by boat and takes the zigzagging Lovćen pass to Cetinje, where “[e]verything is white, like frozen sea waves or gargantuan bleached bones [...] that you don’t really expect to find civilization at the other end” (*Ibid*). From Cetinje she goes into “Wolfe country,” Rijeka Crnojevića - “the village where Wolfe [...] makes important contacts,” Ruth in forms, quoting the novel: “all they had to do was knock off chunks of rock, roll them down to the edge of the valley, stack them in rectangles and top the rectangles with thatched roofs” (*Ibid*). Along the Cijevna Canyon, she drives on a dirt road and hits the Albanian border where Wolfe was born and where he legendarily solves a murder mystery. The Montenegro of this road was an unpleasant experience, but the Montenegro of the novel, Wikipedia says, was “one of the most dangerous places on earth” (*The Black Mountain*).

Wolfe, weighing a “seventh of a ton” would “under no circumstances [...] leave his home or violate his routines in order to facilitate an investigation” (Wikipedia, Nero Wolfe). Yet, in the novel he wants to avenge the death of an old friend, whose family is involved in a dissident movement called “the Spirit of the Black Mountain,” guerrillas for Montenegrin independence. Wolfe is prompted to action by a dark-eyed Montenegrin woman, who summons: “you are of the race that fought back the savage Turks for five hundred years” (Stout, 1954: Ch.3). When he learns from Italian sources that “the man [he] seek[s] is within sight of the mountain,” (Ch.5) Wolfe ventures where “neither the New York police nor the FBI could reach” (Ch.4). He knows he cannot enter legally, “but among those rocks and ravines,” he deems, “what’s the difference?” To this bold statement his Italian contact warns that “the rocks and ravines [...] around that mountain, are the lairs of the Tito cutthroats and the Albanian thugs from across the border who are the tools of Russia” (Ch.5). Nevertheless, with only “[a] hundred and ninety-four dollars and twelve cents in petty, and thirty-eight hundred in emergency reserve,” (*Ibid*) Wolfe flies off to Rome, then with a special charter to Bari, wherefrom he sails into Montenegro past Tito’s coastguards. Once on land, he heads up the mountains, steered only by the stars. In the morning, he comes across a villager who must only be Montenegrin because he is “[s]ix feet tall, a jaw like a rock, an eagle’s beak for a nose, a brow to take any storm” (Ch.7). Entering Titograd (for Wolfe, the hateful socialist name for Podgorica), his companion, Archie Goodwin narrates in the suave and sensitive style of Sherlock Holmes’ accomplice Dr. Watson: “I decided that if and when I become a dictator I would damn well clean a town up and widen some of its streets and have a little painting done before I changed its name to Goodwingrad” (Ch.8). Travelling under an alias, Wolfe learns that Montenegro’s society is crawling with spies: “You may be Russian [...] agents of the World Bank [...] foreign spies from God knows where [...] American friends of the Spirit of the Black Mountain [...] even [...] sent from Room Nineteen in Belgrade, to test the loyalty and vigilance of Montenegrins” (*Ibid*). Of course, Wolfe eludes the police and—believing that “man’s sole responsibility is [not] to his ego” (Ch.13)—conveys the murderer into American custody.

Although the Nero Wolfe novels were nominated for Best Mystery Series of the Century at Bouchercon 2000, Stout never visited Montenegro, but learned everything from the immigrant Louis Adamič’s memoir *The Native’s Return* (1934). However, there was a whole discussion about Wolfe’s origin. Someone claims that he is the “offspring of an affair between Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler (a character from ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’),” who met in Montenegro in 1892 (Wikipedia, Nero_Wolfe). Some maintain that “physical and psychological resemblances” suggest that Holmes’ brother Maycroft is “a more likely father for Wolfe” (*Ibid*). There is also a suspicion that the French thief Arsène Lupin may be Wolfe’s father, because “in one story Lupin has an affair with the queen of a Balkan principality, which may be Montenegro” (*Ibid*). Nevertheless, the community “Wolfe Pack” advertised a 2006 meeting in “Bona Fides Garden for a delicious traditional Montenegrin dinner [...] served without any Albanian spies [sic],” where they welcomed – Montenegrin ambassador Nebojša Kaluđerović, who “spoke [...] regarding one of Montenegro’s national heroes [sic], Nero Wolfe” (*Wolfe Pack*, 2014).

One of Brad Pitt’s first appearances on screen is in Božidar Nikolić’s *The Dark Side of the Sun*, described as “pure drama [...] the 1988 Yugoslavian tragedy.” Pitt’s character Rick suffers from a skin disease that “has taken his family to the ends of the Earth to find a cure” (Reardon, 2011). This exotic place is the Sv. Stefan Island, while we are offered

inescapable romanticism on Ulcinj's beach, a drive through the UNESCO protected Perast, and a brawl in a Kotor bar. Alas, Pitt's 2010 revisit must have questioned his purported nostalgia. The media reported that he and Angelina Jolie called for room service twice after midnight while staying in the hotel Splendid.¹ The chase that the media conducted after the famous couple was described as comparable to *Ocean 11* because Pitt was driving fast. In the end he was even "insulting," they complain (he called them "obnoxious"), "but did not throw anything at us."²

MONTENEGRO AFTER YUGOSLAVIA

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of "hidden" Europe enabled a new modus of travelling called "responsible tourism," one significant part of which is "tourism of suffering" (Huggan, 2012: 6). As Eastern Europe's disorders called many a traveller to urgent social and political action (Hulme and Youngs, 2002: 93), the travellers insist on the tragic notes of this world (Decker, 2009: 27), perceiving poverty stricken communities, bad transport, dirty hotels, and newsstands abounding with pornographic magazines. Established pilgrimages in the 1990s through the countries that made up Yugoslavia mostly encompassed the sites of atrocities. As Goldsworthy notices,

some of the dullest backwaters [...] have acquired a dubious romantic resonance over the past ten years while reporters searched for the Balkan heart of darkness, in order to return with tales of "unspeakable" horror. The relative anonymity of those parts [...] is another indication of this particular fascination. (2003: 29)

It explains why during his Mediterranean tour Paul Theroux devotes only two pages of *The Pillars of Hercules* (1993) to Venice, but over thirty to Albania. Montenegro, which did not suffer serious calamities, held no interest for him even as an opportunity for a quicker route from Dubrovnik to Albania. Bill Bryson, in *Neither Here Nor There* (1998), and Tony White, in *Another Fool in the Balkans: In the Footsteps of Rebecca West* (2006) fail even a mention of Montenegro. Even for R.D. Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1990) – the book which allegedly influenced the U.S. policy towards the Balkan crisis (Lisle, 2006: 33) and in which, even more famously, its author claims that "Nazism [...] can claim Balkan origin" and that it was from "the southern Slavic world [that] Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously" (2005: li) – Montenegro was not appealing.

It may be for this reason that the currently popular fantasy genre finds Montenegro a friendly setting. Thus, set in the dark period between the Berlin Congress and World War One, Lawrence Starling's novel *Montenegro* retains the country's fantastic contours. Its hero, Auberon Harwell, an Oxford educated Briton, climbing the famous path from Kotor, meets the typically gigantic and bearded "mercurial Montenegrin" (1998: 62). Harwell introduces himself as a botanist studying mountain herbs, whereas he is actually a spy sent to investigate the possibility of British intervention in the complex administrative politics of Sandžak, which was temporarily in the hands of Austro-Hungarians. A road through the terrifying Morača canyon takes him to another "heart of darkness," the mountain village of Kolašin near the border with Serbia. Here he lives with Danilo Pekočević on a farm circled with Turkish heads impaled on pikes as a

¹ Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MquqJ83bb7I> (accessed 02.10.2014).

² Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN5o9OWsDaU> (accessed 02.10.2014).

symbol of triumph and a threat to his Muslim neighbours. Pekočević, who himself cut his wounded leg in one of the numerous battles, lost two sons in the wars with the Turks, but still teaches his only remaining Toma to continue his mad endeavours. In line with generic expectations, Harwell develops a platonic relationship with Pekočević's wife, Sofia, and fulfills her last wish to help Toma escape to the United States.

The same motive is exploited in Petar Antonijević's disturbing film *Savior*, 1998, starring Dennis Quaid and Nastassja Kinski. Yet, while depicting the brutalities of the 1990s, to remind that "human nature [...] sometimes drags us down to our dog-eat-dog beginnings," (Ebert, 1998) the director obviously assumed that shooting the movie in Rijeka Crnojevića and on Lake Skadar would effectively add to the drama.

During NATO's bombing of Serbia and Montenegro in 1999, Simon Winchester visited Montenegro and reported in *The Fracture Zone*. He travelled with a 1918 book, hence not surprisingly his expectations framed an impression of "the wild and barren hillsides" (2009: 492). Winchester retells the local story that "God had shaken out his last bag of rocks at the conclusion of his seven days of world-creating genesis, and where they fell, lo! there stood Montenegro," (*Ibid.*) and remembers a drive up a "cliff face via a dizzying switchback of a track, called the Ladder of Cattaro, that is more suited to mules than for the kind of passengers – diplomats, bureaucrats [...] – that a capital city ordinarily attracts" (*Ibid.*).

However, he manages what Theroux did not even try, to enter the country near the border of Croatia. There he faces the checkpoint staff "surprised to see anyone venturing into Montenegro." While "grin[ing] uneasily," the concerned officer warned: "Are you sure [...]? [...] Dangerous people ahead" (237,0/429). Like in the movies, a black Mercedes waits for Winchester's group on the other side of the border, "with two tough young Yugoslav women inside. [...] they were known in the trade as fixers – members of an elite corps of unsung heroes who operate in all distant wars, the local helpmeets without whom almost no foreign correspondent could ever ply the craft" (240,8/429). Winchester learns that Montenegro is "a nervous country, living on a razor's edge," (255,5/429) as it did not fully support Belgrade, but was unready to contradict it. Therefore, it welcomed foreign reporters, but had to smuggle them in the special police car through the checkpoints of the Yugoslav Army.

The idea was that we would drive in the Mercedes to the police station, we would transfer to the police van and hide under blankets on the floor while the women remained in the car, and then the two vehicles, with an extra police jeep for security "in case things get rough," would drive toward Podgorica. (*Ibid.*)

For Winchester, this was a proof of the mythical reputation of Montenegrins as "fiercely independent [...] they are a people of the sea and the mountains and not the rivers and the plains. They would never [...] accept subjugation" (245,0/429). Their independence is ensured by the employment of "the simplest but most effective of guerrilla methods [...] that would be duplicated hundreds of years later, half a world away, by such strategists as Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and Mao Zedong in China" (*Ibid.*).

Of the old capital, Cetinje, Winchester makes a series of overstatements. High in the mountains, Cetinje was still "remote and unreachable," its isolation is "curious and glorious" (266,0/429). What is more, "there is a lunar bleakness to the place that makes one wonder why anyone lives there." And not only that, but "[i]n every fold of rock [...] there are six kinds of snakes" (269,5/429). However, this is described as the "Montenegrin sea

of tranquility,” in which Cetinje “slumber[s] in the eternal sunshine” (*Ibid*). In this “tiny old city,” everything is miniature as if it were “the capital of Toytown: You half expect the figures – a mayor, a fireman, a constable [...]– to be made of plastic, and move from place to place only when the gigantic stubby fingers of a child reach down from the skies” (*Ibid*). Finally, the fact that “[e]veryone, the Russians included, had embassies here” makes Winchester claim that Montenegro is “a full-fledged if somewhat Ruritanian kingdom” (*Ibid*).

Facing the controversial canvas of Balkan politics, travel writers are eager to retain credibility by complementing personal experiences with historical facts, cultural theories and philosophical meditations. To balance this eclecticism, they often include academic apparatuses, such as indices, bibliographies, maps, tables, lists of abbreviations. However, the experience of travel is difficult to translate, not only because travellers often rely on second-hand sources, but mostly because the journey always takes place in the past in relation to the moment of narration. This secondary journey (Hulme and Youngs, 2002: 32), therefore, means recollection and inevitably entails idiosyncrasy in the form of chronological relocations of events and of their meanings. Recollections, however, repeatedly lead to smaller or flagrant errors. In *Through the Embers of Chaos* Dervla Murphy bicycles through the region and often stops to rest when she gets an opportunity to observe nature. Thus, struggling up the Herzegovinian cliffs to Montenegro she writes of an aesthetic appreciation of Montenegro’s timeless and “profound silence[...] broken only by mewing falcons and croaking ravens. And theirs was the only movement in all the expanse of harsh beauty” (2004:175). Entering Nikšić, the first city after the border, Murphy notices an impossible eight-story building to her right. She pays an overpriced 45 DM for a bed in the *Onogošt* hotel, in which, as was usual during this journey, she does not find hot water. This is only an introduction to the reality of Nikšić, “one of Yugoslavia’s most violent and lawless towns.” Its deserted factories make it so “dead” that she wonders “if Nikšić was real – or was [she] having a nightmare about being in this place of immeasurable destitution and gloom?” (176). One morning she comes across something unimaginable to Montenegro (if only for the number of unemployed loitering in the streets): an empty square, all shops closed, café life almost non-existent. Even the waiters of the hotel refused her alcohol because she was a foreigner. This notion of absentness gives her time to contemplate Nikšić’s military activities in Dubrovnik in the early 1990s, which, again, serve as an introduction to her general impression that Montenegro is a Chetnik country. It is full of “Chetnik-friendly bars frequented by bearded intellectuals,” which to her is “the source of the poison that had killed Yugoslavia” (184). In Podgorica, the “Montenegrins’ symbol of all that is modern and progressive,” (183) the caricature of Montenegro is complicated by the sight of a series of new shiny cars parked on the sidewalks.

Many have no registration plates, all are untaxed and uninsured. [...] approximately 80 per cent of cars in Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania have been stolen in Western Europe and are driven by untested and unlicensed men (never women). Having bought your cut-price Mercedes off you go and if you happen to kill a cyclist or pedestrian so what? This is equivalent to killing a dog or cat and in most cases there is no penalty, beyond what the individual driver’s conscience might impose. (183-184)

In an effort to emancipate their experience from the inheritance of their “imperial eyes,” (Pratt, 2002) some travellers reject authority over the place they describe and

instead offer entertainment. For its famous abandon, the Balkans has seen many a traveller under the influence of alcohol. Frequently after discomfiting scenes Murphy has to drink glasses of *rakija* and sometimes gets “perilously drunk, verging on footlessness” (2004:10). *The Guardian* published recently that “Montenegrin enthusiasm for oenology can be dangerous, as they haven’t really grasped the concept of a wine tasting yet. You don’t spit, just glug – and the wine is normally followed by a slug of **rakija**” (Novakovich, 2014). Reviewing travelling trends through the Balkans, Antonia Young (2014) suggests that it is reasonable to expect that authors will focus on their field of interest while maintaining their readers’ attention by embellishments and exaggerations. However, with this reservation in mind, could we believe what we read?

MONTENEGRO AFTER SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

With the acute awareness that the globalized world has obliterated the alluring “otherness,” a new wave of travel writing appeared, called “salvage travel writing,” (Carr, 2002: 82) with travellers resembling scavengers that pick up the leftovers of once exotic beauty. In 2011 *Lonely Planet* placed Montenegro on the list of the countries – not states – that did not exist twenty years earlier. Travellers now mainly delight in its landscape – Montenegro has the largest lake, the highest peaks, the longest beach, primeval forests, and the deepest canyon in Europe. After this drama, the capital, Podgorica, despite its recent architectural revival, is “a letdown,” (Tapon, 2012: 349) “the unlovely socialist-realist city” (Winchester, 2009: 266,0/429). Travellers of this type strive to get insights into the places hidden from tourists, while their naïve observations paradoxically enable them authority over the truly “authentic” (Bracewell, 2005: 88-115). In her “unconventional guide,” an Australian traveller realizes that the Montenegrin “classic symphony of pure, mountainous splendor,” which one can see nowhere “else on the planet,” may help those looking for “a change of life” (Bulatović, 2010). After such an experience, another traveler:

crossed the most obvious border of the trip, the one between traveler and tourist. Despite wandering through a place of such hardship, the trail had introduced me to a rare part of Europe where the very idea of walking freely between worlds is still a gift as sweet and momentous as your first soft drink. A whole new Europe, a gracious and wild one, had presented itself, and to experience it I just needed to lace up my boots.

That all may one day disappear, too. (Neville, 2013)

At the end of her tour, Murphy reaches Dubrovnik and observes how “[t]he contrast with Montenegro was striking.” She fears that “perhaps this is how Montenegro will soon be – and Albania, and everywhere else awaiting conquest by ‘globalization’. My granddaughters will grow up deprived, in a monotonous world where prosperity is equated with TNC-imposed homogeneity” (2004: 326).

After independence in 2006, Montenegro went through a great “discovery” in the media. An article in *The Guardian* from December 8, 2006, titled “Montenegro: essential information,” advises travellers to use vaccines against “tetanus, polio and hepatitis A [...] Others may be recommended if you’re planning to stay a while” (Anon, 2014). In June 2007, *The Observer* concludes that Montenegro is “refreshing untouristy,” but “a little quirky” (Dunford, 2007). Therefore, fantastic notes from pre-discovery logically

continue. “Film director Peter Jackson could have shot his Lord of the Rings trilogy here; at night the black pine-covered slopes of [...] Durmitor [...] are as foreboding as the shadows of Tolkein’s thunderous peaks” (*Ibid*). Entering Podgorica, one passes by “a series of anti-corruption billboards [...] erected in an Orwellian gesture” (Samuels, 2010). On his way from to Cetinje, this reporter drives by “shattered white boulders and tenacious green foliage” that strike a chord of “the Judean hills.” Besides, “insect life was so loud that [...] it sounded as if you had suddenly tuned into a radio frequency from another planet” (*Ibid*). But, as he approaches the coast the country becomes reminiscent of “a movie-set version of the South of France, except that most of the beaches are two feet wide and covered in cement” (*Ibid*).

Although a great number of the jet set favour the coast – as “the perfect short haul, ”yachting under “the rugged snow-capped mountains,” along the “pristine beaches”(*I montenegro*, 2012)– it is now for the “first time” that one can find “decent” accommodation in the mountains, *The Observer* argues in 2007, presenting the multi-million euro project, the hotel *Bianca* in Kolašin, where, if one is rich, “the strains of modern living feel a lifetime away” (*Imontenegro*, 2013). *The Guardian* then claimed that “Montenegro has only recently arrived on the tourist map [...] So if you venture just a little off the beaten track, you’ll find few other tourists to disturb the peace” (Ingle, 2007). The author walks through the national park Biogradska Gora and contemplates that if by chance he were in Germany or England, “there would be a small battalion of ruddy-cheeked walkers, admiring, smiling, snapping away. But Montenegrins [...] prefer to stick to the roads, beep-beep-beeping loudly in their late 80s Golfs, oblivious to the beauty that surrounds them” (*Ibid*).

As for Montenegrins, like their mountains, “they are huge!” Ingle exclaims and warns: “journeying around can feel like being Gulliver in Brobdingnag” (2007). Someone notices that “highlanders still treat visitors as honorary guests; their welcome (bone crushing handshakes, carbohydrate-heavy dishes and copious pre-breakfast brandies) enhanced by a carpe diem attitude” (Rafanelli, 2009). Here one always has to help oneself with “another mashed potato mountain” as not to offend the hostess, who is always wearing “a black dress” (*Ibid*). At the end, all one can do is to “curl up in [one’s] wood-clad bedroom and fall as sound asleep as a bear that’s gorged itself before hibernation” (*Ibid*). In Cetinje, *The New Yorker* author visits the mayor, whose “large nose was matched by elephantine ears and big bags under his eyes, which combined to give his face the mournful aspect of a Balkan Lyndon Johnson” (Samuels, 2010). Meeting an “extravagantly theatrical” Catholic priest, another traveller is reminded “of Anthony Blanche, or at least the Nickolas Grace version of him, in *Brideshead Revisited*; I thought he might stutter and roll his eyes, and refer to the Serbs as ‘wuffians’ or ‘hobbledehoys’” (Winchester, 2009: 259,0/429).

Although someone claimed in 2005 that “[i]f your tastes – culinary and otherwise, extend to something a bit different and you’ve a healthy sense of curiosity about an area of which you’ve heard much but know little, go and visit Montenegro while it’s still relatively undiscovered,” (Jones, 2005) the phrase “relatively undiscovered” repeats in 2008 in “Letter from Montenegro: See the Coast while You Can” (White, 2008). Although in May 2013 *The Times* reasoned that for the “**steady inflow of high net worth individuals [...]** it seems unlikely that Montenegro will stay hidden for long” (*I montenegro*, 2013), one year later *The Guardian* still presents a tourist agency “Undiscovered Montenegro,” whose report opens quoting the Montenegrin Prime Minister who needed

to stress that “Montenegro is not Moscow-on-Sea” (Novakovich, 2014). Homer’s heroes, Mercurian giants, Japanese mountains, Judean landscapes, Italian architecture, etc., are now enriched with Russian traits. Still, it all remains so mysteriously hidden that in January 2014 someone still asserts that Montenegro is “a place of mind, before a real place” (*I montenegro*, 2014). Even Montenegrin TV “Vijesti,” in October 2014, started a documentary series titled “Wonderful Montenegro.”³

“FROM MONTENEGRO, WITH LOVE”⁴

However, an indeed undiscoverable Montenegro appears in the James Bond movie *Casino Royale* in 2006, which takes place in Montenegro but was shot in the Czech Republic. Namely, another legendary spy is in a luxurious train passing through idyllic countryside when the screen shows the credit “Montenegro,” and Bond rushes to the famous casino in the town covered with cupolas and roof peaks, supposedly Budva. Nevertheless, in 2007 *The Observer* recalls the days of Montenegro’s fame, when Sophia Loren, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor caroused by the Adriatic. It mentions that Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones are thinking of buying property near Kotor, where Ralf Schumacher owns land. But it still claims that the recognition of Montenegro is significantly helped by *Casino Royale* in which James Bond plays poker in Budva (McLaughlin, 2007). The article quotes the hotelier who believes “that in 10 years, [Montenegro] will be better than Monte Carlo” (*Ibid*). Montenegro, Preston elaborates (2009: 29), sounds almost like Monte Carlo, it is exotic enough and would certainly be a cheaper place to shoot the movie. Yet, the filmmaker did not come to Montenegro. More unbelievable is an interpretation from June 2014, titled “Budva, Montenegro,” which says: “It’s all about sun, sand and James Bond in the Montenegrin resort town of Petrovac[!], which was used as a filming location for **Casino Royale**” (Abbasi, 2014). Wikipedia confirms this: “In the 21st James Bond film, *Casino Royale*, Petrovac was the location of the eponymous casino.” What is more, it adds that “a part of the movie *Brothers Bloom* was filmed in Petrovac” (Petrovac_Budva). Although on the page devoted to this movie, Wikipedia says that it was filmed in Ulcinj, Montenegro (The_Brothers_Bloom). *The Brothers Bloom* (2008) is a crime comedy about a group of con artists operating in Prague, Mexico, and St. Petersburg, but hiding out in Montenegro. Petrovac’s Castello, built on a gothic rock protruding into the Adriatic, does appear twice in the movie as an alluring background while two characters conspire by the beach.

When he “discovered” Kotor, Francis Tap on dreams of buying a villa on a hill overlooking the sea, together with shares in the newly opened casino “Maximus”: he will be using the VIP entrance, dressed in Versace, enjoy free drinks, send drinks to “the hottest chicks” at the bar and take them later to his own Jacuzzi... (2012: 342). But, just as in the movies, in front of this dream place in broad daylight he witnesses the murder of his buddy Fritz, who was also a friend of the notorious drug dealer Mr. Sarić.

Apart from their phonetic similarity, and that they are both tiny geographical stretches, with a climate favourable for tourism and a large number of casinos, Montenegro and Monte Carlo share another feature. *The New Yorker*’s 2010 article “A tale of diamonds,

³Cf. <http://www.vijesti.me/tv/cudesna-crna-gora-predstavljamu-tradicionalnu-njegusku-trpezu-800617> (accessed 18. 10.2014).

⁴A reference to the 1963 James Bond film *From Russia, with Love*.

thieves, and the Balkans” derives: “Montenegro is a beautiful, forbidding country of six hundred thousand people. It shares borders with Serbia, Albania, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, making it one of the leading centers for smuggling in the Balkans” (Samuels, 2010). The story is about a group that Interpol dubbed “Pink Panthers,” after Peter Seller’s crime comedy *The Pink Panther*. The “Pink Panthers” are a loosely connected gang of over 200 jewel thieves allegedly led by Dragan Mikić of Cetinje. Many of their heists around the world have been described as glamorous and even artistic (Allen, 2009). As such they inspired a 2013 feature documentary *Smash & Grab: The Story of the Pink Panthers*. After a brief *montage* of Hollywood-style robberies, world landmarks and glittering shopping centres, *Smash & Grab* opens with the eponymous landscape around Rijeka Crnojevića. Video clips, conversations with detectives and reporters, animated interviews with the members of the gang – in a typical Montenegrin bar on a beach, with the rolling sea and waves crashing on the pebbles – are interrupted with excerpts from an American 1980s’ tourist documentary about “amazing Yugoslavia.”⁵ The filmmaker was intent on giving her work a socio-historical note by rooting the Panthers’ behaviour in Slobodan Milošević’s destructive politics that fragmented a thriving country into desperate conflicting zones. Thus, it can be easily inferred that ordinary people mostly support the Panthers’ actions. Samuels also reports that Montenegro wholeheartedly harbours the notorious gang in the heart of its historical darkness, Cetinje, in which its past and its present superbly meet. The first look at the desperate town told Samuels enough – Montenegrins jokingly claim that Cetinje is the only town King Nikola would recognize because so little has changed since 1918. Still Samuels offers the hesitant mayor two more brandies so that the latter may tell his amusing anecdote of how Gianni Versace once visited Cetinje, saw people dressed in the stolen designs and nonchalantly commented: “Let them wear it [...] It’s good advertising” (Samuels, 2010). Samuels reasons that “stealing from the West was so ingrained in the local culture that it approached a form of patriotism” (*Ibid*). In *Smash & Grab*, therefore, the leading Interpol detective has to emphatically explain that the Panthers are not a modern Robin Hood but the worst Balkan criminals, a manifestation of the post-communist Balkan mob mentality.

All the interpretations in *Smash & Grab* are intertwined with images of eagles circling above Montenegro’s cliffs, the waves wildly beating into the naked shingles, and, of course, casinos. Therefore, we cannot help but wonder if the Panthers will finally bring about Montenegro’s debut on the world stage, or should we wait for a recently announced movie in which Leonardo Di Caprio portrays the leading Panther? (Anon, 2014)

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KA CRNOJ GORI, ZEMLJI DŽINOVA I PANTERA

U ovom radu problematizuje se karikaturno prisustvo Crne Gore na simboličkoj mapi putnika iz savremenog anglofonog svijeta. U namjeri da predstavimo konture ovog paradoksalnog prisustva, rad otvaramo osvrtom na romantični lik zemlje razvijen u prethodna dva vijeka. Za ovim dajemo hronološki pregled i naglašavamo detalje najnovijih prikaza da bismo ustanovili kako je lik zemlje ostao gotovo zamrznut do naših dana. Da bismo izbjegli politizovanje, esencijalizovanje, samostigmatizaciju, zaključićemo da je odsustvo zemlje kao stvarne istorijske i društveno-političke kompleksnost uslovljeno njenom dugom i višestrukom izolacijom. Koristićemo se primjerima iz putopisa, turističkih i medijskih odjeljaka, fikcije i filma, oslanjajući analizu na autoritete iz oblasti teorije putopisne književnosti.

Ključneriječi: *Crna Gora, istorija, putopis, fikcija, turizam.*