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POZNAŃSKIE STUDIA SLAWISTYCZNE
NR 23 (2022)
DOI: 10.14746/pss.2022.23.6

Data przesłania tekstu do redakcji: 22.12.2021
Data przyjęcia tekstu do druku: 12.07.2022

The Geography of Childhood and Affective Archetypes: A Discursive-Mythological Approach to the Representations of Serbia in British and American Interwar Travel Accounts

ABSTRACT: Lazarević Radak Sanja, *The Geography of Childhood and Affective Archetypes: A Discursive-Mythological Approach to The Representations of Serbia in British and American Interwar Travel Accounts*, "Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne" 23. Wydawnictwo "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne," Poznań 2022. Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, pp. 129–146. ISSN 2084-3011.

One of the key representations of Serbia between the two world wars in British and American travel accounts is the one about a child. Set in the context of Orientalism and postcolonial tradition this representation is usually interpreted as infantilization that reflects the marginalization and symbolic position of Serbia and the Balkans outside the mainstream of world politics and economy. As the academic discourse is mostly occupied with orientalism and postcolonialism, this paper focuses on symbolic and mythological potential of the discourse analysis about Serbia—"the child of Europe." The paper analyses three forms of infantilization of Serbia in the interwar travel accounts, while each chapter is dedicated to specific form of infantilization: 1. Serbia as an orphan of Europe; 2. Serbs as medieval people (unspoiled by civilization and vital); 3. Their "temperament" reveals cultural, and thus, political immaturity. The analysis is based on Darren Kelsey's discursive-mythological approach and it draws a conclusion about the interconnection between the child's image, culture, historical circumstances, internal/external representation and affective archetypes.

KEYWORDS: Serbia; travel accounts; discursive-mythological analysis; child; representation

Introduction

Between the two world wars Serbia was at a political and cultural crossroads, usually referred to as the transition between tradition and modernity (Stojanović, 2020, 223). Whether we are talking about historical periodization, or a mere construct, a striking social dynamic usually considered as modernization marked social and cultural life in Serbia (Čalić, 2004, 22). Since 1918, Serbia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while in 1921 it joined the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Until the end of the Balkan wars, Serbia and other Balkan countries were officially a part of the Ottoman Empire, while uprisings of South Slavs were supported and helped by Great Britain (Pavlović, 2018, 182). In the public discourse of great powers the uprisings of South Slavs under the Ottomans were regarded a part of democratic spirit that should terminate the rule of the feudal empires—the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary (Lazarević Radak, 2012, 112). The First World War that followed the Balkan wars seemed as an official end to feudalism. It was expected that ruins of the old institutions will flourish into a modern capitalist relations. During the 20th century, the whole world was coming out of the conflict—the Great War which significantly shaped the manner in which British and American travellers were writing about Serbia and the Balkans. The role that Serbia played as an alley and losses the Balkan countries suffered also influenced the traveller's perception (Mazover, 2003, 186). In this respect, Serbia and the Balkans were not only the black spots in European history, but places inhabited by allies (Ignjačević, 1994, 52). As Andrew Hammond put it, during the interwar period, the Balkans stopped defining Serbia by the symbolic burden it had, while Serbia started determining the Balkans (Hammond, 2007, 19). The Victorian and Edwardian literary heritage or, to paraphrase Walter Houghton, the Victorian frame of mind, was still present in the interwar travel accounts. Its presence signified an intellectual crisis and “evolutionary” image of the world (Houghton, 1963). But Victorian stereotypes started a new life in modern text (Hammond, 2007, 11). The “backwardness” and “barbarianism” as the inevitable part of the 19th century colonial discourse were mostly replaced by the image of the Golden Age, primordial state, or at least barbarian

atmosphere which provided pleasant nostalgia for the lost innocence. Rather than “brutality,” “absence of manners” and “primitivism,” travellers noticed “courage.” Rather than savagery and “tribal mentality,” they noticed “authenticity” (Lazarević Radak, 2011, 52). During the interwar period, the Balkans were usually a source of expectation of adventure, instead of fear, shock and even disgust that prevailed in 19th century travel accounts. The Victorian popular novel was transformed during modernism by changing places and altering the connotation (Hammond, 2007, 17). Nevertheless, romanticism influenced this literature through the concept of escape from civilization induced by the feeling that the world was affected by the biggest political, economic and social change (Bigz, 2001, 33). Until 1913 in accordance with the needs of society, travellers came to Serbia as missionaries, politicians, journalists or as seekers of some kind of time machine—“the cultural past” of the old continent.

The key strategies of discursive infantilization of Serbia in interwar travel accounts can be summed up in three forms: 1. Serbia is an orphan of Europe; 2. Serbs are medieval people similar to children from fairy tales; 3. Their mentality reveals cultural immaturity and therefore the need of the guidance of adult, mature and experienced cultures. They are all based on affective archetype of child or *puer aethernus*.

The theoretical framework

In his study *Orientalism*, Edward Said draws attention to the strategy of discursive infantilization, referring to Flaubert’s novel *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (*Bouvard and Pécuchet*). The point of reference is the so-called Orient which, although travellers recognized as antique or ancient, functions as a part of the world that is, in cultural respects, still “immature” compared to Occident and therefore civilization. Broadly understood, the discursive infantilization is a revisionist ambition with romantic roots in feelings of weariness and boredom, induced by the development of science and technology or “progress”/civilization. In his novel, Flaubert sketches a utopian idea of Asia as a source of regeneration for Europe (Said, 2009, 34). Here, Said recognizes nineteenth century propensity to renewal of the old continent following the vision of regeneration

(Lazarević Radak, 2011, 174). Nevertheless, Serbia mostly did not share the characteristics attributed to the Orient—antiquity, wisdom, material wealth, decadence, general cultural exhaustion and detrition of institutions. In Serbia, travellers were not in search of an ancient knowledge or scientific potential, like they were in the Orient, but of a “natural,” “authentic” and “childlike” state. So, the infantilization of the Balkans and Serbia, intertwines with the representation of eternal youth and it is linked with the images of ignorance and primitiveness, vitality and regeneration (Lazarević Radak, 2021, 89–96). In bifocal perception, this representation will be present repeatedly as part of a political myth of free spirit, power, health, courage, faith in a better future and the position between the East and the West (Lazarević Radak, 2020, 65–88). Although Said’s paradigm is well known and applicable, the excessive exploitation of the postcolonial paradigm led researchers to ask the similar questions and thus, give the similar answers (Varisco, 2007, 49).

In her book *Inventing Ruritania*, Vesna Goldsworthy analysed the “narrative colonization” of the Balkans by comparing it with other forms of colonization. While other colonized regions and countries were invaded, exploited and settled physically, the Balkans were settled by imagination. According to Goldsworthy the profit from literature on the Balkans was comparable with that of the exploitation of natural resources in other parts of the world (Goldsworthy, 2005, 3). The Balkans were imagined as “childlike,” not mature enough to be capable of participating in “serious world politics” (Goldsworthy, 2005, 114). Their wars, mutual disputes, delimitations and even the act of gaining independence were regarded “childish games” (Goldsworthy, 2005, 114). Thus, at the symbolic crossroads between the East and the West, the Balkans could encompass “boyish books” and “girlish stories” about numerous political and cultural adventures.

Maria Todorova also insists on the imaginability of the Balkans, emphasizing its liminal position, the one between the East and the West. But what interests her the most is the noun “balkanization.” Coined at the end of the 19th century, the very term becomes a kind of explanatory key for political events, wars, crises, cultural differences becoming a part of everyday political vocabulary and an inevitable part of the reports on the Balkans. Given its flexible nature, the term “balkanization”

enables infantilization with all accompanying associations on liminality, immaturity and even backwardness (Todorova, 1999, 74).

More than three decades ago, researchers applied psychoanalytic concepts in a geo-symbolic context, and analyzed representations of administrative and political entities as potentially destructive, regressive, infantile, or disruptive to global political and economic context (Bjelić, 2011, 17). The usage of psychoanalytic language was considered adequate as long as it remained in the context of dynamic psychology and relied on some of Freud's postulates (Jukić, 2013, 160–175). However, pointing to the analogy between racism and projections and to civilization as an aspect of *mana* personality and the Otherness as a Shadow, Franz Fanon draws conclusions based on Jung's concept of "complex of civilization" (Fanon, 1973, 60). These concepts are, in fact, one of the foundations of postcolonial thought and an indispensable part of its history (Baba, 2004, 41). In a seemingly remote theoretical space, in a study by Darren Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies: Discourse, Archetypes, and Ideologies in Contemporary Politics*, Kelsey develops a discursive-mythological approach (DMA) and opens a flexible field designed to systematically analyze discursive and mythological constructs in politics (Kelsey, 2017, 4). In his case study, Kelsey focuses on contemporary British politics: Brexit, the migrant crisis, political scandals and media coverage that includes elements of legends, mythology and fragments of historical events. The properties of striking cultural parallels know no chronological or administrative boundaries. They all use similar images to which most of humanity cannot remain indifferent due to the fact that they seem familiar (Jung, 1977, 117). Although based on examples from the British media, Kelsey's research shows the universality of figures, metaphors, patterns and stereotypes in the context of writing and speaking about political and social issues. A similar study is supported by a comprehensive work *Modernism and Charisma* by Agnes Horvath which the author documents the frequency of occurrence of some of the key archetypes in political life. Her conclusion is that similar archetypes and patterns occur since the Palaeolithic era to modernism (Horvath, 2013, 22). Horvath and Kelsey believe that the archetype, as a dynamic image and an autonomous phenomenon, gains the strength when combined with concepts and practices such as discourse analysis.

Although Kelsey's research remains in the frame of media studies, Horvath observes the archetype in a wide cultural space from cave drawings through literature and folklore to contemporary reporting. So, these figures do not choose genres, time and space. The intersection of experience and the archetypal core, leads to the emergence of a "complex" in trans-cultural, socio-psychological and historical perspective (Samuels, 2002, 69). By developing an interdisciplinary, psycho-discursive approach to affective mythology, Kelsey analyses the transpersonal politics of storytelling and ideology, pointing out the place of discursive construction in mythology. The notion that ideological and communicative practices of society and mythology are deeply entwined with psychological structures and archetypal mechanisms of human psyche lead him to the conclusion about the affective qualities of the mythologies we live by (Kelsey, 2017, 4). They are powerful and they influence public discourse, art, behavior, power and culture in personal, public and private spaces, all of which are political. Therefore, the psycho-discursive mechanics of mythology and the affects they provoke form an inescapable ideological influence.

Travel writing is a complex genre, rich in many styles, varieties of landscapes, descriptions and viewpoints on cultures. The complexity of the genre enables the promotion of images, representations, stereotypes and archetypes. It reflects what is seen and experienced based on filters that provide previous experiences, the cultural context from which the traveller comes, international relations, symbolic geographies, assumptions, and it is often the result of the content with which the traveller has already come into contact. It contains layers of experiences, affects, assumptions, transmitted knowledge, fragments of self-identification and numerous other elements that make it acceptable to the wide readership. The experience of travel itself and the encounter with the Otherness are strong, universal motifs and an indispensable part of the narrative that is consciously or unconsciously used for political purposes (Pisarev, 2013, 71). Reflections of unknown countries and places are the result of transcultural encounter that mobilizes strong affects (Leersen, 2009, 83–98). The symbolic power of the act of travel itself is supported by the anthropological understanding of a journey as close to pilgrimage, while its structure can be interpreted as a sacred journey.

After all, even rituals of maturity to which special symbolic, cultural and social importance is ascribed do not include established periods of transition, but transitional times and spaces (Arnold Van Genep, 2007, 40). These rituals do not take place at home, but are marked by time set aside from the usual routine while the most important are time, space and transformation (Turner, 2005, 70). The separation from home and the known culture is considered sacred and extraordinary (Cragg, 2008, 63–70). The interwar period is not only significant in the political and economic sense. It is about decades during which the strong mythical potential is exploited (Zanini, 2001, 29). This period was the turning point in the historical, cultural and even affective sense, not only for Serbia, but for the rest of the world (Marković, 2002). The traveller projects their expectations, fears, ambivalence and cultural dynamics onto the other. This produces strong discourses and affective mythologies. One of such archetypes is a child, or as in-depth analysts call it—an eternal child, an eternal young man or *puer aethernus*. Jung classifies this archetype as one of the key ones and considers it capable of expressing superpersonal and mythological properties (Jung, 1977, 100). Although childhood remains a construct, according to Jung, *puer aethernus* is a heterogeneous dominant that provides resistance to strictly defined relationships. Like Attis, Dionysus, Krishna, Child-Christ, Narcissus, Hermes, *puer aethernus* encompasses figures with a series of characteristics that may not be present simultaneously in one structure but appear sporadically. As a part of “character structure” these are: subjectivity, rebellion, disregard for rules, hierarchy and given deadlines, propensity for disruption, fanaticism and courage (Jung, 1977, 101). The mythological child cannot be understood as identical to experience, but as a symbol that alludes to states of displacement, ignorance, naivety and renewal (Jung, 1977, 100). In certain periods, childhood becomes a matter of particular cultural concern. In 19th-century Great Britain, children still hold an element of holiness inherited from Romanticism, while growing up is being linked with the evolution. At the beginning of the 20th century, there is concern that children are victims who might need greater protection from abuse and neglect (Gavin, 2012). They are expected to become adults, and therefore human beings in the best sense. This is the quality they draw ambivalence, liminality

and, even holiness from. The end of the Balkan wars also meant the establishment of new administrative units in that part of the world, and Great Britain invested expectations in the “Christian part of the Balkans.” In his famous pamphlet *Horrors in Bulgaria*, William Gladstone used what Kelsey calls an affective archetype, and manipulated the discourse on the sacrifice, vulnerability and sensitivity of “small” nations (Goldsvorti, 2005, 40).

Archetypal qualities of *puer aethernus* stir up strong emotions through the narratives and events in which we see a child suffering or in a state of vulnerability (Campbell, 2008. 123). Dickens’s characters evoke emotional responses within the reader because they operate with tensions between the unconscious and *persona* experience. Therefore, Kelsey starts from the assumption that *Oliver Twist* is a novel of symbolic presentation full of unconscious primordial images that respond to the narrative structure and touch upon fundamental existential themes (Kelsey, 2017, 48). Through abuses and dangers, Dickens points out the power abuse shape-shifted through institutional hierarchies and bureaucracies, while his protagonist, Oliver arrives at self-actualization (Kelsey, 2017, 47). Presented in this manner, Serbia is the “hope of Europe,” an “orphan,” an “uneducated child,” a “place of primordial paradise,” “the youth of Europe.” In archetypal language these images correspond to the language of international politics and symbolic geography.

An orphan of Europe

British Captain Malcolm Burr participated in the Breakthrough of Macedonian Front. He gained a large number of friends among Serbian soldiers and returned to Serbia in early 1930s. He first meets the Balkans as a boy: “The Balkans have called me since childhood, filling me with romantic, boyish dreams” (Burr, 1935, vii). Captain Burr adds to this memory the image of a “typical Serb.” While walking through the capital of Serbia, in the company of his English friend, an unpleasant situation occurs. Burr meets his war friend Kosta, who personifies Serbia to him. His body is between culture and civilization, between an animal and a human. Instead of a hand, Kosta has a hairy paw (Burr,

1935, 287). Seeing the captain on the street after ten years, Kosta salutes, approaches him, squeezes captain's hand and begins to kiss it:

Surely enough, as he turned upon hearing his name, I saw the swarthy face and raven hair of my old komitadji sergeant, Kosta Pavlović. Already oiled with rakia, perhaps still under the influence of the previous night, he saw me with astonishment, sprang to attention and saluted (Burr 1935, 288). His words were Serbian, but his thoughts were Turkish, for he expressed himself with the phraseology of the Orient as he expatiates on my many virtues and the great days spent together in Macedonia (Burr, 1935, 288).

Kosta, a metaphor for Serbia, a country whose political parent is dead, is still thinking in the language of his former master. Support and emotions are sought on the wrong, political level and Burr will conclude that his friend is like a child, unreasonable, irrational, childish. Wondering if Kosta is old enough to realize how Captain's hand is "pale from city life," how pale it looks in his "dark, hairy paw," Burr will continue to refer to Kosta as an old child (Burr, 1935, 289). But, Kosta will answer: "Oh, Captain, not so long ago your hand was as dark as mine." While Kosta is trying to explain that the gap between Nature / the Balkans and Civilization / Britain is not that deep, Burr will step back, concluding that Kosta is looking for a new parent. Since he no longer has a strict parent in the Ottoman Empire, Kosta escapes into a new form of addiction, that of alcohol: "Poor old Kosta, he has been carrying a weapon since he was fifteen, and now he is sixty. Unaccustomed to the atmosphere of peace, he remained confused. One passerby was right: «Rakia (brandy) is now his mother»" (Burr, 1935, 230).

Burr's Serb is a harmless Balkan man. Although he is a warrior, a good-natured hairy man of simple behaviour, likeable, natural, he is dependent on his parents. The political and historical connection between the undergrown Balkan countries is as ambivalent as the period in which Burr wrote his travelogue. With romantic hopes and enthusiasm, Burr will, more clearly than other travellers, express scepticism. For Burr, Kosta is, like any "adult child," a hybrid created by the synthesis

and gaps between cultures that the traveller recognizes as “Ottoman” and “Christian,” “feudal” and “modern,” “old” and “young.” The fear that Serbia will not become part of “civilization” is present in other travelogues between the two world wars, but it exploits other images and other metaphors (Spender, 1912, 61).

Children from a fairy tale

Following her professional task and becoming a member of the Serbian Relief Fund and the Friends’ War Victims’ Relief Committee, Francesca Wilson, travelled to the North of Serbia (present-day Vojvodina) and found herself in the ethnically mixed Bačka region. A closer look at their everyday lives led her to the conclusion that there was no difference between children and adults in Serbia: “The houses are just like the houses you draw when you are a child—very square, with two windows and a door and a chimney perched exactly on the middle of the roof” (Wilson, 1920, 84–85). Socially, spiritually and by their character, “Serbs are very young, and it is always easy to forgive children” (Wilson, 1920, 84). The adults she met, like her acquaintance Bogdan Jordanović were like children: “In spite of his beard, he seemed more like a gentle little boy than anything else” (Wilson, 1920, 24). According to Wilson, the reason behind this would be the possibility that Serbs were medieval people:

Serbs, like all medieval peoples, are craftsmen born. They are children still, and like children they love to create. They have scarcely any machines in their country and few modern improvements, so they have never had the joy and pride of making things crushed out of them as we have in the West. Their designs, when they are left to themselves are unselfconscious, irresistibly gay, naive yet wonderfully sure (Wilson, 1920, 34).

Wilson uses the Middle Ages as a metaphor rather than as a historical period. She does not refer to the sources of her knowledge about the medieval origin of Serbia. However, the dominant internal historical

discourse between the two wars was based on the assumption that a key turning point in the history of Serbs occurred in the Middle Ages, under the Ottoman Empire. The Congress of Berlin recognized the independence of Serbia in 1878 while the Kingdom of Serbia was formed in 1882. The history of Serbia under the Ottoman Empire and before it remains a subject of controversy to this day. It is based on oral tradition whose credibility is questionable. Great narratives that have remained present in Serbian political folklore to this day, such as the Kosovo Myth, the myth of Saint Sava and the legend of a powerful medieval empire are represented in the public discourse of Serbia between the two world wars. It can be assumed that these decades have played a key role in the production of Serbian identity narratives. In various ways, these myths suggest the transience of Serbia and occur cyclically in the periods of political and economic crises that express a desire to “preserve” identity. The feeling of social or cultural vulnerability in the past hundred years in Serbia mobilizes discourses about the Middle Ages as a turning point, earthly decline and spiritual uplift as a kind of social transformation. While the Kosovo Myth narrates the defeat, which is interpreted as a victory due to the honesty of the army, the Saint Sava myth suggests the cultural (religious and political) displacement of Serbia from the two dominant symbolic geographies—the East and the West. However, both are deeply rooted in the assumption of the cultural and political importance of the Middle Ages for Serbia. But for Wilson, the Middle Ages are closer to the metaphor of the “dark ages,” as an imaginary distant past from which new nations emerge. The Middle Ages could figure here as a kind of *prima materia* from which the South Slavs emerged, carrying the burden of ignorance, but also of carelessness. Francesca Wilson recognizes life in Serbia as Grimm’s folk tales in the 20th century:

If you minded to care for such things, and the Middle Ages and the books are not enough for you, the Balkans can give you a grasp of them that little else can. A term of life in Serbia is in truth more instructive than a Medieval Special Period for Oxford Schools. There is your lost century alive around you, with all its virtues, its picturesqueness, its dirt, its darkness of mind, and above all its unquenchable colour. If it is true, as an artist once said, it is just as true that you cannot know the

Middle Ages unless you become them, and here you have your chance. You should have a pig in your kitchen, goats and hens should wander in and out of your bedroom, and a cow should have the adjoining chamber. For in this world the animals take part in your daily life—they live with you, and hold converse with you, just as they do, for the matter of that, in the Tales of Grimm. Grimm to Serbs is what Arnold Bennet is to the people who live in the Potteries. His tales are absolutely realistic to them. They are so interesting and so actual that the oldest and staidest read them with sober interest and attention. It does not seem remarkable that wolves and foxes and hares should follow fiddles through the woods and beg them to teach them craft. Wolves really do knock at the door in that world, and you and the goats together reply in terror, refusing them admittance (Wilson, 1920, 105–106).

Nowadays, it is accepted that fairy tales trace their roots in premodern culture and folklore. There are many elements in the Brothers Grimm tales predicated on medieval culture and social-political conditions, such as kingship, castles, princesses and princes, knights, but also mysterious and magical creatures and various motifs obviously directly borrowed from medieval literature (Classen, 2021, 165–175). Although in the modern/postmodern media space, the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales are seen as narratives with excess cruelty, Serbian myths about the rise of the medieval empire, its fall, "slavery," the cruelty of masters, "centuries of imprisonment," and actors who side with the Good/Evil are very close to this style of re-treating problems inseparably from human existence. Francesca Wilson will also try to reconstruct the history of Serbia by introducing the character of the boy Dragomir, whose imaginary biography in many ways resembles the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm:

Dragomir had a very happy childhood. He did not learn to read and write because the school was too far, but he learnt to imitate the different whistles of the birds and he knew that herbs are soothing for a cough, and the barks of trees and the fungi that are precious for their dyes. It was always he, too, who found the first spring of plum blossom and bore it in triumph to the house each spring that came and went. He looked after the goats, and learnt to make flutes out of a certain kind of reed

and play them. He danced kolas on all high days and holidays... It was a terribly safe world and monotonous. He was romantic and he wanted adventures. He knew that his ancestors had been great heroes and had fought great battles (Wilson, 1920, 38).

Dragomir's fantasy about a heroic adventure is interrupted by the reality of war, family suffering, poverty and facing the world of adults. The notion of a primitive paradise and unity with nature is interrupted due to the new circumstances. Child-Dragomir (Serbia) faces the cruelty of everyday life, which becomes a condition for his upbringing.

Although there is an implicit connection between Dragomir's happy childhood, simplicity, cheerfulness and the imaginary history of the Middle Ages, he is similar to Burr's hero, Kosta. But, unlike Kosta, who remains a boy in his fifties, Dragomir is forced to accept the cruelty of growing up. Growing up in the context of this travelogue is not necessarily political, but social, in terms of inclusion in larger communities such as the one Wilson worked with on her mission. It is this community made up of other children, teachers, educators and other people who have a protective and parental role that will symbolize the rest of the adult and civilized world.

Adolescence and mentality in political culture

Journalist and geographer, Lovett Edwards Fielding writes that Belgrade, the capital of Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is a city with virtues and vices of young people, and in accordance with the intellectual climate that prevails in the 1920s and 1930s, he points out that the mentality of its inhabitants is woven into the architecture:

Despite its long tale of history, Belgrade is a city with the virtues and vices of youth. It is energetic and hasty, inconsiderate and careless of consequence. It has moments of rare beauty, tempered by others of the sheerest vulgarity. It has grandiose plans, which are often spoilt by mediocre achievement. So it is always tearing down, to begin anew. It has an enormous tolerance of all that does not get directly in its way;

it has moments of sheer fanaticism. It is adolescent and blundering!
(Wilson, 1920, 40)

Children and adolescents are both liminal in a symbolic and practical sense. But, childhood always carries risks.

Alexander Powell, an American major, points out that immaturity is a dangerous trait and it is especially visible in the political life of Serbia. An unfounded feeling of pride, defiance and anger associated with them produces a politically unfavourable situation in Serbia again and again. As he walks the streets of the capital, Powell analyses the mentality of its inhabitants, pointing out that the temperament of Serbs is based on conflict and irrational rebellion. Illustrating their behavior, Powell will conclude that the slightest opposition to their (Serbian) arguments leads them to childish, hysterical rage (Powell, 1920, 262). In order to act as a cultural pattern, the representation of youth must be functional in a historical context and within a given institutional framework. Youth is understood here in two manners: it is vulnerable, but unrestrained, and it must be controlled. The criterion on the basis of which the maturity and immaturity of the South Slavs is speculated is inseparable from the evaluation of the development level of this part of the world. Although we argue that this metaphor of adult–child relation can be situated within the context of legitimization of oppression in the “best interest” of an “immature” country, the complexity of the image of the child figure and childhood enables us to reproduce the argumentation about victimization (Mills, LeFrancois, 2018, 503–524).

Interwar self-representation and long-term representation of youth

The celebration of youth took numerous and diverse forms in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slavs and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. During the 1920s, primarily in the context of the affirmation of the avant-garde art, the magazine *Zenit* was published as the magazine for art and culture, gathering some of the most important names of Serbian and Croatian modernism (Rastko Petrović, Stanislav Vinaver, Miloš

Crnjanski, Ivan Gol). Zenitism expresses the vitalistic character of culture, while its *Manifesto* verbalizes an avant-garde program with a motto about the rebirth of Europe and the “naked man Barbarogenius” (Golubović, Subotić, 2008, 6). Imagining Barbarogenius leads to the development of the concept of Balkanization of Europe as the downfall of the old world, which is replaced by new ideas, and a new, fresh power of the East (Subotić, 2000, 81).

Despite its vitality, in the processes of mystification and aestheticization, Barbarogenius actually comes from the depths of history, the distant and mysterious edges of Europe, becoming, in accordance with its generative powers, a source of fresh blood. This is where inclusion of affective-moralizing discourse representations of an exhausted, tired and aged Europe starts. That fresh blood is recognized as a condition for the renewal of Europe and its culture which supposedly lacks creativity and youthful strength. *Zenit*, in mythical terms, predicts the collapse of Europe and represents the Balkans as the sixth continent. Having established a place to which the effects of rejection are attached, anti-Europe was constructed in terms that complicate the relationship between the *puer aethrenus* and the great powers as symbolic parents. The liminality, the creation of a transitional age, strengthens the affective power of this narrative. In the interwar period, this becomes a form of critique of the West and glorification of the parts of the Balkans in quasi-theological discourse with implicit glorification and mystification of its liminal geo-symbolic position. Contemporary cultural historians emphasize the importance of an interwar “transition,” having in mind that the 1920s and 1930s are a chronological border between tradition and modernity in the Balkans (Stojanović, 2012, 12). Important names of the interwar period, such as Vladimir Dvorniković, Jovan Cvijić, Vladimir Velmar Jančević, Ivo Andrić, and public figures, such as Dragoljub Vasić, Đorđe Tasić, represent and question transition and transitional characters in various ways. Affective mythologies based on the archetype of the child are used in the moments when society is unable to identify with the imposed or previous image of it. It induces selective attachment to specific events and embodies the roles and forms which these discourses arise. In the moments of suspension, the subject encompassed by the *puer aethrenus* archetype takes on a different meaning, while internalized content and

existing myths are transformed into new discourses and new affective myths, thus entering the vicious circle of reproducing new images, political myths, new rituals and modified great narratives. Such powerful performances cannot remain one-sided. The affective archetype *puer aethernus* can be understood in this way, while the assumptions about the medieval origin can be made within the framework of transcultural communication, and in the synthesis of the cultural products and representations with which a traveller comes into contact. The images of the other and our own culture can communicate without compromising the assumptions about the relevance of the paradigm that takes power relations into account.

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[Lazarević Radak S. (2020). *Zapadni Balkan kao puer aethernus: prilog čitaњу једног мита*. „Politička ревија,” vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 65–88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22182/pr.64.22020.3>

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