

**Bram Stoker's The lady of the shroud : supernatural
fantasy, politics, Montenegro and its double**

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Montenegro and its Double:

Bram Stoker's *The Lady of the Shroud*

In 1909 Bram Stoker set out to recreate the success of *Dracula* with another novel about a vampire, *The Lady of the Shroud*. However, this time the book performed a narrative and generic volte-face in which the seeming vampire was revealed to be in fact a living girl reduced to sleeping in a coffin for political rather than supernatural reasons. As a result, a book which had begun with a high Gothic encounter between living and seemingly dead concludes with a celebration of the newly established Balkan Federation, which has been brokered by the hero, the charismatic seven-foot tall Irishman Rupert Sent Leger, who has won both the crown of the Land of the Blue Mountains and the hand of the lovely Teuta, that being the name of the girl in the coffin.

The worlds of supernatural fantasy and of politics may well appear to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, and one might therefore see the trajectory of *The Lady of the Shroud* as having made a startling deviation from one genre to another which is entirely different. In many respects, however, the political narrative to which the book ultimately turns is even more fantastic than the supernatural narrative which it disavows. It is a recurring feature of Stoker's writing about the supernatural to insist that, as audiences were later to be warned at the end of the stage version of *Dracula*, such things *do* happen. When it comes to the story of the Balkan Federation and of the Land of the Blue Mountains, though, this is less *realpolitik* than 'a political fable', to use Renfield's term for the Monroe Doctrine,¹ for the events which Stoker postulates are fantastic on a number of levels, and could come to pass only in a parallel universe of the kind proposed by possible worlds theory. In much modern fantasy, the conceit of parallel worlds and intersecting planes has given rise to a set of

narratives in which slightly different versions of our own world are to be found existing elsewhere in the universe (Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is an obvious example). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a loose equivalent to this in what we now call Ruritanian fiction, pioneered by Anthony Hope and soon taken up by other writers including the notorious Elinor Glyn. To some extent, Ruritanian fiction is what Stoker has created in *The Lady of the Shroud*. He has done so, however, not merely in pursuit of an academic idea but to advocate a very real and very specific agenda: to support the struggle for independence of the small Balkan country of Montenegro and, by extension, to cultivate the qualities and values which he saw as underpinning and enabling that strength. In this article, I shall first examine the possible sources for Stoker's book and then consider the implications of these texts' strongly marked propensity to develop an analogy between Montenegro and Scotland. This, I will argue, is symptomatic of a wider trend in Stoker's novel to reach for parallels and comparisons. In the case of *The Lady of the Shroud*, this urge extends to the foregrounding of the text's own generic and ideological affiliations, which, in keeping with the idea of possible worlds, are of two sorts, fictional and factual, as Stoker both registers an awareness of travelogues and political writing about the real Montenegro and simultaneously responds to the burgeoning genre of Ruritanian fiction. Yoking fact and fiction in this way allows Stoker to use the novel as a vehicle for political advocacy, with particular reference to two of his most characteristic concerns, the power and allure of the sea and Celticness.

The political narrative of the novel centres on the Land of the Blue Mountains, and it is here too that the element of fantasy and of the parallel world motif is strongest, for the Land of the Blue Mountains both *is* and *is not* Montenegro, a land that at the time Stoker wrote was on the very cusp of change: it became a constitutional monarchy in 1905 and its hereditary

prince, Nikola, was offered and accepted the kingship in 1910, the year after Stoker's novel was published. Montenegro was a topic of considerable interest to a number of Stoker's contemporaries: the Rev. W. Denton's 1877 *Montenegro: its People and their History* begins, 'The war which has just broken out between Turkey and Russia, and which may yet involve at least some of the other powers of Europe in the struggle to obtain a better government for the long oppressed Christian subjects of Turkey, has made Montenegro a household word in this country',² or as Emmet B. Ford has it, 'During the latter half of the nineteenth century the English public discovered the Balkans'.³ Those who had written on the topic included some of Stoker's own friends and acquaintances, and that he was aware of the fact that there was a lot written on the country is suggested when the old soldier Sir Colin MacKelpie tells Rupert Sent Leger, hero of *The Lady of the Shroud*, that he knows a little about the Land of the Blue Mountains because 'I have been reading about it since we met'.⁴ Matthew Gibson suggests that 'Stoker's major sources were probably William Denton's *Montenegro: its People and their History* (1877) and Mary Edith Durham's *Through the Land of the Serbs* (1908), although no source can be taken as certain since we have no proof of what he read',⁵ and Denton's book is certainly a likely source of information on how the Vladika Peter II died while his nephew and successor Danilo was away and arrangements had to be made for the temporary burial of the body pending his return; this is paralleled in Stoker's book by the supposed death of Teuta during the absence of her father, while Denton's presentation of Prince Nikola's father as being happy to stand aside first for his brother and then for his son is not unlike the Voivode Vissarion's self-sacrifice in favour of Rupert. Denton also records that Stephen, who ruled Montenegro from 1423 to 1450, 'lies buried in one of the islets on the Lake of Skodra',⁶ which comes closer than anything else to Stoker's otherwise baffling mention of 'that first Voivode Vissarion, of whom, in legend, it was prophesied that he - once known as "The Sword of Freedom," a giant amongst men - would some day, when the nation

had need of him, come forth from his water-tomb in the lost Lake of Reo' (p. 145); the lake would be lost not in the sense that it had disappeared or its location been forgotten, but in the sense that it was by then (and is now) Albanian territory rather than Montenegrin.

Denton's book is clearly not Stoker's only source, however. William Hughes's edition of the novel helpfully prints the list of possible reading which Archibald Ross Colquhoun sent Stoker on 10 June 1908, which includes Colquhoun's own *The Whirlpool of Europe* (1907, co-written with his wife), Chedo Mijatovic's *Servia of the Servians* (1908), and Louis Léger's *Le Monde Slave* (1902), *Nouvelles Etudes Slaves* (1880) and *Russes et Slaves* (1890). However, the list is accompanied by the warning that 'Recent books on the Balkans are all poor', and Hughes also notes that it is not clear whether Stoker had sufficient reading knowledge of French to have profited from Léger's.⁷ More certainly, in *Famous Impostors*, published the year after *The Lady of the Shroud*, Stoker discusses the reign of the Russian pretender Stephen Mali in Montenegro and cites as his principal source Cesare Augusto Levi's *Venezia e il Montenegro*, whose dedication page reads 'Auguste Nozzie Savoya-Niegosz in Roma 24 Ottobre 1896', referring to the marriage of Prince Vittorio Emmanuele to Princess Elena of Montenegro. *Famous Impostors* revisits the politics of *The Lady of the Shroud* by observing that 'Turkey regarded the new ruler as an indirect agent of Russia',⁸ and Levi may have been an influence on *The Lady of the Shroud* too, for Levi speaks of 'il vladika Sava II principe della casa di Niegosch' ('the vladika Sava II, prince of the house of Niegosch'),⁹ and St Sava's is the name of the church in which Teuta lies in her coffin.

One could add other potential sources to this list. Tennyson, with whom Stoker was on visiting terms, wrote an 1877 sonnet called 'Montenegro' which hymns how 'They kept their faith, their freedom, on the height, / Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and night / Against

the Turk’;¹⁰ Vesna Goldsworthy notes that Tennyson’s son Hallam said his father thought ‘Montenegro’ his best sonnet and that it was much anthologised, including in the 1882 *Sonnets of Three Centuries* chosen by Hall Caine,¹¹ Stoker’s close friend and the dedicatee of *Dracula*. ‘Montenegro’ was first published in May 1877 on the front page of *The Nineteenth Century*, and the same issue also carried an essay on the country by Gladstone, whom Stoker knew well from dinners at the Beefsteak Club in the Lyceum and who offered a passionate advocacy of the Montegrin cause in the House of Commons in the same month,¹² and two articles by Irving, meaning that Stoker would almost certainly have seen it. Sir John Gardner Wilkinson published a two-volume account of *Dalmatia and Montenegro* in 1848, and Montenegro also featured prominently in Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Adelina Paulina Irby’s two-volume *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* (1867).

Stoker shows signs of indebtedness to several of these texts. Gladstone’s account, for instance, informs us that ‘To Peter the First succeeded his nephew Radatomovo, aged seventeen years ... Sir Gardner Wilkinson informs us that he was nearly six feet eight inches in height, and thoroughly well proportioned’,¹³ and indeed the height and virility of the Montenegrins are often emphasised: Emmet B. Ford notes the plethora of contemporary comment on ‘this strongly proportioned mountaineer who averaged well over six feet in height’ and ‘fought the Turks by tradition, the Austrians for reasons of state, and the Albanians for pleasure’,¹⁴ and this interest in height is obviously echoed in Stoker’s seven-foot-tall Rupert. Similarly Aunt Janet’s and Teuta’s ‘ambitious literary project of some day publishing an *edition de luxe* of his whole collected works’ (p. 243) recalls the fact that the last Vladika, Peter, wrote an anti-Muslim nationalist poem called *The Mountain Wreath*,¹⁵ while Muir Mackenzie and Irby refer to the prince as the *gospodar*, the title also used of Rupert, and note that the present princess is ‘the daughter of the Voivode Peter Vukotic’,¹⁶

Peter being the name of Stoker's fictional Voivode of Vissarion. (Gibson notes that 'The name of the princely house, Vissarion, is the same as that of one of the seventeenth century Vladikas, Baitchka Visarion'.)¹⁷ Stoker is also in line with these texts' notably synoptic approach to the condition of women, which is seen as superficially shocking to a liberal Western eye - as Emmet Ford notes, 'Of all the social customs observed in Montenegro, this degradation of the female sex perhaps most profoundly impressed the English traveler'¹⁸ - but as nevertheless based on respect of a sort. Gladstone observes that

I will dedicate the chief part of my remaining space to the application of that criterion which is of all others the sharpest and surest test of the conditions of a country - namely, the idea it has embraced of woman, and the position it assigns to her.

This is both the weak, the very weak, and also the strong point of Montenegro.

(p. 376)

He finds the ultimate proof of this in the fact that 'even the French writer, to whom I am so much indebted, and who seems to view this matter through a pair of Parisian spectacles, candidly admits that the Montenegrin woman is quite satisfied with her state' (p. 377), but he does concede that women might well seem to be poorly treated in comparison with elsewhere. Similarly, Petrof Vlastimir writes to Aunt Janet of 'the custom of our nation regarding the reverence that women owe to men' (p. 161), while Muir Mackenzie and Irby describe the way a Montenegrin wife greets a guest (Vol II, p. 269), and so too does Gardner Wilkinson, who comments that 'The Montenegrin woman not only kisses the hand of her husband, as in the East, but also of strangers; and a traveller, as he passes through the country, is surprised to receive this strange token of welcome, at the house where he lodges, and even on the road' [p. 421]). This is something to which Stoker devotes considerable attention in the scene in which Teuta makes an elaborate show of greeting Rupert's insufferable cousin Ernest Roger Halbard Melton (p. 201).

Muir Mackenzie's and Irby's book in particular resonates with Stoker's in several respects, and the name of his hero's aunt, the Scottish Miss Janet MacKelpie, might indeed look like a tribute to the equally Scottish Georgina Muir Mackenzie. Muir Mackenzie and Irby note that 'In a hand-to-hand combat the mountaineers reckon ten Turks for each Montenegrine' (II, p. 278), a comment echoed by Stoker's Petrof Vlastimir, who writes to Aunt Janet that 'we only took ten men, as we had only twenty against us' (p. 153). There is also a possibility that Stoker's sources were not merely literary. Some information, such as the names of Queen Teuta (p. 191) and of the Re d'Ungheria, the hotel where the Prince of Wales is said to have stayed, does not leap out from any of his visible sources (p. 199). Perhaps Stoker knew Lehár's opera *The Merry Widow*, which was premiered in 1905 and popularised in London from 1907, albeit with an Adrian Ross libretto which toned down some of the obviousness of the reference to Montenegro. Another possibility might be suggested when Rupert recounts 'a conversation with a young American attaché of the Embassy at Vienna, who had made a journey through the land of the Blue Mountains' (p. 107); perhaps Stoker, too, talked to people who knew the country and could have told him about life there.¹⁹

However, although he certainly deploys it, factual information about Montenegro is ultimately less important to Stoker than the element of mythopoeia which accrues to much of the writing about the country. Gladstone opens his account with

Christendom does not know its most extraordinary people. The name of Montenegro, until within the last two years, was perhaps less familiar to the European public than that of Monaco, and little more than that of San Marino. And yet it would, long ere this, have risen to world-wide and immortal fame, had there been a Scott to learn and tell the marvels of its history, or a Byron to spend and be spent on its behalf. For

want of the *vates sacer*, it has remained in the mute inglorious condition of Agamemnon's predecessors.²⁰

For Gladstone, Montenegro was thus a country in want of a bard, and Gardner Wilkinson similarly observes that 'Many a reproachful speech, made at the siege of Troy, might be adopted by a modern poet, in describing the contests of the Montenegrins and the Turks'.²¹ Stoker's own opening deliberately reaches for the resonances of epic poetry when Ernest Roger Halbard Melton explains that the name was changed from Milton by his great-great-grandfather 'lest he should in the public eye be confused with others belonging to the family of a Radical person called Milton, who wrote poetry' (p. 3). As the sentence continues, however, we turn away from the divine world of which Milton wrote to the political one in which he lived as Ernest continues, 'and was some sort of official in the time of Cromwell, whilst we are Conservatives', which activates an obvious contrast between Melton and Rupert, whose name recalls the Cavalier commander Prince Rupert of the Rhine. What is at stake, it seems, is less a struggle for the immortal soul of man than for the political soul of a country, and insofar as Stoker himself steps in to fill the allegedly vacant role of bard of Montenegro, he does so in qualified and guarded ways, which not only attend to the specificities of Montenegro but also work to ensure that it repeatedly stands in for things other than itself.

The most striking area of convergence between Stoker's novel and the accounts of Gladstone, of Muir Mackenzie and Irby, and of others is a sustained and surprising interest in Scottishness,²² to the extent indeed that Montenegro becomes a proxy Scotland: Mary Edith Durham says of Cattaro (modern-day Kotor) that 'Its "heart's in the Highlands",²³ and Emmet B. Ford notes that in general 'Depending upon the particular background of the writer, the Montenegrins of the middle '50s were depicted as living in rude huts like those in

the Scottish Highlands or in the sod-cabin squalor of the Irish countryside'.²⁴ Though he does quote a German as asking 'Were the border forays of the English and Scotch more excusable than those of the Montenegrins?', Gardner Wilkinson is principally an illustration of the use of an Irish lens:

In some of the wildest parts of the mountain districts, the houses, or huts, are inferior even to the cabins of Ireland, made of rough stones piled one on the other, or of mere wicker work, and covered with the rudest thatch, the whole building being merely a few feet high. The poverty of this people, their pig, and their potatoes, are also points of resemblance with the Irish: and I regret to find, that, since I visited the country, they have in like manner been suffering from the failure of the potato crop, upon which they depend so much for their subsistence.²⁵

Levi, however, writes that 'Gli Asburgo dall'Elvezia, gli Stuart dalla Scozia eran famiglie di montanari nell'Evo moderna' ('the Habsburgs of Switzerland, the Stuarts of Scotland were families of mountaineers in the modern period'),²⁶ and Muir Mackenzie's and Irby's account is configured throughout by references to Scotland, where Georgina Muir Mackenzie had grown up. In the first volume, a note glosses *strooka* as 'the plaid of the Montenegrine highlander' (I, p. 301). In the second, which includes the account proper of the women's visit to Montenegro, we hear again of 'these highlanders' and also of how the Austrian commandant, who likes the Montenegrins, defends their apparent bloodthirstiness on the grounds that 'those raids on the Turkish frontiers are no more than border forays, such as, according to your own history, went on between the English and the Scotch'.²⁷ Scotland continues to provide a point of reference as we are told how

Out of the bachelor quarters of a warrior bishop, Princess Darinka succeeded in forming a comfortable, almost an elegant, residence; and coming on such among the rocks of Montenegro we, as British travellers, were reminded of a first-rate shooting

lodge in the Highlands of Scotland. This analogy was carried out by the dinner, which, though well cooked and served in the European style, was plain, and owed its chief delicacy to a splendid trout from the Lake of Scutari. As in our Highlands, too, master and servants alike wore the Highland dress.

(II, p. 228)

After describing the local costume, Muir Mackenzie and Irby observe that ‘It is a rich dress, and, from its contrasts of white and crimson, beautiful; but, as compared with that of the Scottish Highlander, is perhaps lacking in drapery’ (II, p. 234), and they say of boys singing in the school ‘Their song was rough-voiced, as that in a Scotch kirk’ (II, p. 239), while on another occasion they eat some cakes which ‘were made of apple, and really delicious; unluckily, we have forgotten what they are called, but in Montenegro they take the place of shortbread and bun in Scotland’ (II, p. 274).

Denton, who refers to Muir Mackenzie’s and Irby’s account, also mentions Scotland repeatedly. He declares that ‘another generation of Montenegrins may have reason, like their brother mountaineers, to bless some future road-maker who will do for them what the luckless Hanoverian general did for the Highlands of Scotland’; he says of the houses in the capital Cetinje ‘scarcely any of them are better than those of a superior Highland village in Scotland’; he remarks on how the Montenegrin levies ‘resemble ... the Highlanders of a century ago, and their military array and accoutrements carry us back to the days of Prince Charles Edward and to the bands which fought under his standard at Prestons-pans [*sic*] and Culloden’; he calls a house in a village ‘just such a picture as Sir Walter Scott has left us of a Highland cottage of the last century, or, indeed, such as several estates in Scotland can show even at the present day’; he terms the Prince’s dispensing of justice ‘a very patriarchal scene, and such, I suppose, as might have been witnessed in the Highlands of Scotland little more

than a century ago'; and finally he says of Nikola, to whom the book is dedicated, 'His victories carry us back to the days of Montrose or of Charles Edward'.²⁸ Gladstone too sees Montenegro through the lens of Scotland:

Of the exposure of the heads of the slain I cannot speak so strongly as some, who appear to forget that we did the same thing in the middle of the last century which Montenegro carried on into this one; and that a Jacobite, fighting for his ancient line of kings, may fairly bear comparison with a race which had claimed a commission not only to conquer all the earth, but to blast and blight all they conquered.²⁹

Even a far more modern writer, Norman Davies, comments that 'In essence, the clans were patrilineal kinship groups similar to those in Scotland'.³⁰

It is this innate Scottishness which makes Montenegro, in Stoker's eyes, both a suitable ally and a suitable comparator for Britain in a way that, Ailise Bulfin has argued, he showed in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* that Egypt was not.³¹ Its potential amenability to incorporation within a British sphere of influence is emblematised by Rupert's decision to import a large quantity of Sir Colin's clansmen and clanswomen in order to help people his new kingdom, and the underlying comparison between the Land of the Blue Mountains and Scotland also works to bolster one of the book's principal aims, which is, appropriately enough for a novel focused on nation-building, to show how a sense of a community can be created by engagement in common and collective imaginings. Throughout the novel the formation of groups is of paramount importance, although it is held in tension with the inherently individualised nature of a narrative form which, as in *Dracula*, insists on the conditioning power of a surprisingly large number of competing voices. Throughout the novel there is a constant striving for a communality of mindset, ideally one so deep-rooted that it need not be articulated. Sir Alexander MacKelpie speaks to his niece Janet of 'subjects that *we*

understand' (p. 65); later, Janet herself notes that 'of course, Teuta understood, and so did Rupert' when young men volunteer to form the Crown Prince's guard (p. 247). The acquisition of a second ship prompts Rupert and Rooke to think in flock terms, and Balka itself forms the culminating group and affords a fine opportunity to register the ceremony which pertains to the formation of a new community, something which is also echoed in the panoply attending Rupert's transfer of citizenship, which seems clearly driven by emotional rather than logical wellsprings. Underlying all these aspects of the book is, I think, a concern with what might be best termed 'social thinking', and it is that shared *mentalité* which, in line with Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as 'an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign',³² will enable the formation of the new nation-state of the Land of the Blue Mountains, and make it so successful that although it would make a fine ally for Britain, it is also not inconceivable that it might make a credible rival.

This is complemented by the novel's own herd instinct, manifested in its urge to affiliate itself to as many genres as possible, being as it is by turn vampire story, romance, adventure, comedy of manners, Ruritanian fantasy and comedy, all the while underpinned by the classic Victorian motif of a will and its consequences. Here too there is a tension between strongly marked parallels and obvious and potentially disturbing signs of difference. Part of the impetus of *The Lady of the Shroud* is that Stoker is, as Jeffrey Richards points out, clearly writing a riposte to Elinor Glyn's bestselling novel *Three Weeks*, which drew on the story of Queen Draga of Serbia.³³ Glyn's book would almost certainly have been markedly too feminist for his taste:³⁴ the queen tells Paul that 'You, for the day, belong to me' and, in a suggestive inversion of the glass-coffin motif of *The Lady of the Shroud*, 'you yourself are the Sleeping Beauty, Paul', and Stoker would presumably also have raised an eyebrow at the

queen's declaration that 'in all ages it is unfortunately not the simple good women who have ruled the hearts of men'.³⁵ Another powerful influence which is both absorbed and challenged is Anthony Hope's Ruritania trilogy. Although Mary Edith Durham in her account of Montenegro says of her frustrated attempts to learn the language that 'As I am not a character in one of Mr. Anthony Hope's novels, but merely live in a London suburb, I thanked everybody and retired upon a small grammar',³⁶ Rupert Sent Leger might well be just such a character. Not only does Stoker share with Hope's books the prominence of the name Rupert and the motif of an Englishman ascending (albeit temporarily in Hope's case) a foreign throne, but in the last of the Ruritania stories, *Rupert of Hentzau*, Rudolf in Strelsau can move only by night, as if he were a vampire; the Chancellor is named Helsing;³⁷ and Flavia, foreshadowing Aunt Janet, dreams repeatedly that she sees Rudolf both dead and crowned. There is thus a circle in which Hope responds to *Dracula*, and Stoker in turn responds to Hope. In the case of Hope's books, though, there is virtually the opposite problem from that in *Three Weeks*, for though Hope's Flavia may not be too independent for Stoker's taste, she is perhaps slightly too tainted by her adulterous love, making her more like Draga than Teuta, just as in the second book of the Ruritanian series, *The Heart of Princess Osra*, Osra is innocent yet forever compromised by the fact that she cannot help but feel something for all the many men who fall in love with her (one of whom, the battling Bishop of Modenstein, né Frederick of Hentzau, has perhaps something in common with Stoker's combative clergy). Moreover, neither Osra nor Flavia can marry a man of lower rank, forestalling any possibility of the social mobility which allows the simple commoner Rupert Sent Leger to ascend a throne in *The Lady of the Shroud*.

The most significant difference between Stoker's novel and Hope's, however, is that although we learn in passing from *The Heart of Princess Osra* that the palace would later be burned in

the rising of 1848,³⁸ Ruritania for the most part is safely remote from the real world (indeed *The Heart of Princess Osra* is close to fairy tale in its repeated motif of threes). Stoker, though, is pointedly interested in the real world; in Matthew Gibson's formulation, 'Stoker has not only created a fictional world from real historical circumstances, but has also massaged those historical circumstances in accordance with his political designs',³⁹ while William Hughes calls it a 'prophetic - and *almost* realistic - warning of war *in* the world ... In effect, the novel warns the British - if not the wider English-speaking - readership that wars *will* eventually arise which the conventionally armed nation will find beyond its capabilities'.⁴⁰ Indeed Victor Sage suggests that a major aim of the book is 'to challenge the "liberal" approach to Britain's foreign policy in the Balkans. The novel plays on traditional (but apparently outdated) British fears of Turkey, and further suggests to the reader the desirability of Serbian expansion against Austria-Hungary, in the wake of the latter's annexation of Bosnia in 1908'. In particular, Sage notes that the tenor of actual events led to much improved relations between England and Turkey, but that 'Stoker's text moves in the opposite direction'.⁴¹

Stoker's text, then, can be seen as intervening in a wider debate about the proper balance of power in the Balkans, and it homes in on one aspect of that debate in particular, which was a topic of immense interest both for Montenegro and for Stoker himself. Stoker was interested not only in the idea that Montenegro should have independence, but also in the question of what it should do with it, and how it could best manage its natural resources. Central among the texts with which *The Lady of the Shroud* affiliates itself are of course others by Stoker himself, and particularly important in a number of these texts is the idea of the sea; as Paul Murray notes, 'The anonymous author of a profile of Stoker in the *Literary World* in 1905 divided his fiction into two categories, the supernatural and the marine'.⁴² The sea loomed

large in contemporary discussion about Montenegro, and Stoker's focus on it gives *The Lady of the Shroud* an element of advocacy which moves it beyond the paradigm of Ruritanian fiction. Georgina Muir Mackenzie's and Adelina Paulina Irby's account of their visit to Montenegro begins when 'we found ourselves on board an Austrian Lloyd steamer, entering the Bocche di Cattaro' (II, p. 213). This vast natural inlet, the modern Bay of Kotor, was of crucial importance to both the fortunes of Montenegro itself and to the agendas of nineteenth-century descriptions of it.⁴³ Muir Mackenzie and Irby recount how an old man assures them that 'when we get a seaport, learning will come to us in our own country' (II, p. 236), and their account as a whole closes with the assurance that

To the dweller on the Black Mountain the sea is England, and the day that opens his country to the sea opens it to intercourse with England - to English sympathy, to English commerce ... Also, it is a fixed idea with the Montenegrine, that if England really knew that what he wants is access to the ocean - to that great world-highway on which the ships of England are the carriers - she would be the first to admit and to advocate his claim. We cannot close this record of a Christmas spent in the Black Mountains of Zeta without delivering the message intrusted to us by an old highlandman, "Tell your great English queen that we Montenegrines can live no longer without a bit of sea."

(II, p. 279)

There is a similar emphasis in Gladstone, where we read that

From 1719 onwards, at intervals, the Sovereigns of Russia and Austria have used the Montenegrins for their own convenience when at war with Turkey, and during the war of the French Revolution the English did the like, and, by their cooperation and that of the inhabitants, effected the conquest of the *Bocche di Cattaro*. To England they owe no gratitude; to Austria, on the whole, less than none, for to satisfy her, the district she

did not win was handed over to her with our concurrence. She has rigidly excluded the little State from access to the sea, and has at times even prevented it from receiving any supplies of arms.⁴⁴

Levi too notes that ‘Persi, macedoni, palestini, ecc., tutti i popoli montani ebbero sempre ardente desiderio di possedere un porto sul mare’ (‘Persians, Macedonians, Palestinians, etc., all mountain peoples have always had an ardent desire to possess a gateway to the sea’).⁴⁵

Only Gardner Wilkinson strikes a rather different note: in his opinion

it would certainly be highly conducive to their prosperity, and to their progress in civilisation if their territory reached to the sea, and enabled them to enjoy the advantages of direct commercial communication with other people. It would not, however, be desirable, either for themselves or others, that they should have possession of any stronghold, like Cattaro, which they once greatly coveted; and nothing would be required, but a port for the purposes of trade.

However, this is because Gardner Wilkinson remembers the siege of Clobuk which pitted Montenegrins against English.⁴⁶ For the later writers, the question of Montenegro is primarily the question of access to the sea, and the collective viewpoint is overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Montegrins’ desire to achieve this.

This is an emphasis also strongly present in Stoker. Norman Davies notes that ‘At the prince’s accession, landlocked Montenegro was separated from the Adriatic by a long coastal strip’.⁴⁷ Prince Nikola expanded its borders and added in particular the seaport of Ulcinji, in which (under the name of Ilsin) Stoker set a key scene of the novel, the rescue of the Voivode from the Silent Tower by Rupert and Teuta. Jimmie E. Cain, Jr suggests that Ulcinji ‘offered Stoker an ideal setting’ because its principal characteristics bore on so many questions which are important in the *The Lady of the Shroud*: ‘with almost equal Montenegrin and Albanian

populations, [Ulcinj] had long been caught up in the tug of war between Orthodox Slavs and Muslim Turks and did not become a Montenegrin possession until 1878, when it was ceded to Montenegro in the Treaty of San Stefano that ended the 1877-1878 Turko-Russian war',⁴⁸ so that its history thus inscribed both the threat posed by the Turks (the undoubted villains of *The Lady of the Shroud*) and the Montenegrin quest for access to the sea. Moreover, much of the latter part of the novel involves discussion of 'the harbour - as yet quite undeveloped - which is known as the "Blue Mouth"' (p. 213). Rupert declares of the Blue Mouth that 'as a port it is peerless in Mediterranean seas' (p. 213), and here we return to the idea of possible worlds, for the Voivode says that Rupert 'has undertaken the defence of the Blue Mouth at his own cost in a way which will make it stronger than Gibraltar, and secure us against whatever use to which the Austrian may apply the vast forces already gathered in the Bocche di Cattaro' (p. 222). Stoker thus posits a geography which is obviously fantastic, one in which the Blue Mouth is not standing in for the Bocche di Cattaro but is, impossibly, a second version of a geographical feature whose uniqueness is so strongly insisted on, and he does this because it enables him simultaneously to maintain the Ruritanian atmosphere and to intervene in the debate which was central to contemporary discussion of Montenegro.

The Land of the Blue Mountains is, then, a Montenegro through the looking glass, a Montenegro in which everything is just very slightly different. It is a world which Stoker knows does not and cannot exist, but whose fantastic geography affords him scope to explore some of his most fundamental preoccupations and which offered him many possibilities. Stoker was exceptionally interested in other countries not only for their own sakes but also for what they could say about England and perhaps above all about Ireland, and Catherine Wynne suggests that in *The Lady of the Shroud* 'The Irish Gothic legacy of sexual danger and racial annihilation is transformed into a narrative that celebrates the subordinate wife and

mother in an industrially progressive and independent (to a point) nation, a nation which celebrates a strong alliance with Britain, much like Stoker's conception of a Home Rule Ireland'.⁴⁹ Insofar as the Land of the Blue Mountains *is* Montenegro, then, it enables a plea for political action which while applying most obviously and immediately to Montenegro itself can be read by extension as endorsing Irish Home Rule. Insofar as the Land of the Blue Mountains is *not* Montenegro, however, its fantasy double is still recuperative, for the Irish Rupert's decision to colonise it with Highlanders, which echoes the idea of instinctive alliance between Scots and Irish posited in *Lady Athlyne*, presents a dreamscape in which Celticness faces no twilight but can be instantiated as a distinct and flourishing country, a Ruritania which might just possibly come true.

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Notes

¹ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, edited by A. N. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 244.

² Rev. W. Denton, *Montenegro: its People and their History* (London: Aldy, Isbister and Co., 1877), p. 1.

³ Emmet B. Ford, 'Montenegro in the eyes of the English Travellers 1840-1914', *Südost Forschungen* 18 (1959), pp. 350-80, p. 350.

⁴ Bram Stoker, *The Lady of the Shroud* [1909] (London: Alan Sutton, 1994), p. 46. All further quotations from the novel will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

⁵ Matthew Gibson, 'Bram Stoker and the Treaty of Berlin', *Gothic Studies* 6.2 (November, 2004), pp. 236-251, p. 246.

⁶ Denton, *Montenegro*, pp. 31-2, 289, and 192.

⁷ Bram Stoker, *The Lady of the Shroud*, edited by William Hughes (Westcliff-on-Sea: Desert Island Books, 2004), pp. 13-14.

⁸ Bram Stoker, *Famous Impostors* (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1910), pp. 32 and 34.

⁹ Cesare Augusto Levi, *Venezia e il Montenegro* (Venezia: a cura dell'autore, 1896), p. 69. I am not aware of any evidence for the degree of Stoker's competence in Italian, but I have estimated that it might have been roughly similar to my own, which is not based on any formal tuition but has been acquired through visiting Italy and through attending Italian operas, both of which Stoker is known to have done, and by extrapolating from Latin, which he too had studied. The translations are therefore my own, but have been checked by someone more conventionally qualified.

¹⁰ This is most conveniently reproduced as part of the *Modern History Source Book* at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/tennyson-montenegro.asp>

¹¹ Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 33.

¹² Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania*, p. 32.

¹³ W. E. Gladstone, 'Montenegro. A Sketch', *The Nineteenth Century* 1.3 (May 1877), pp. 360-379, pp. 370 and 379.

¹⁴ Ford, 'Montenegro in the eyes of the English Travellers 1840-1914', pp. 357 and 361.

¹⁵ Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 586.

¹⁶ G. Muir Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Daldy, Isbister and Co, 1977), II, p. 220 and II, p. 229.

¹⁷ Gibson, 'Bram Stoker and the Treaty of Berlin', p. 246.

¹⁸ Ford, 'Montenegro in the eyes of the English Travellers 1840-1914', p. 364.

¹⁹ It is also not impossible that Stoker himself might have visited the area. Jimmie E. Cain, Jr points out that 'Although no record exists of his ever having visited the Adriatic coast of the Balkans, Stoker was in Cava di Terreni, Italy, in the province of Campania, between Naples and Salerno, in 1876 for his father's funeral' (*Bram Stoker and Russophobia: Evidence of the British Fear of Russia in Dracula and The Lady of the Shroud* [Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland

and Co., 2006], p. 152). That he might just possibly have crossed the Adriatic on this or another occasion, and visited or at least come close to what was then Montenegro, is suggested by a number of small but significant hints. As Denton's *Montenegro* explains,

Most travellers who visit Montenegro enter the country from Cattaro in Dalmatia.

Immediately above the small city, which is built on the narrow strip of land interposed between the waters of the Bocche and the mountain rampart of the Principality on that side, lies the pass into Montenegro (pp. 16-17).

The town of Cattaro itself (modern Kotor) is mentioned several times in *The Lady of the Shroud* - the arms 'were kept in secrecy at Cattaro' (p. 118) and we are told of 'the armoured yacht, which had lain off Cattaro the previous night' (p. 124). It is dominated by the Sveti Ivan fortress (Levi speaks of 'Ivani Czernovich il vero fondatore del principato montenegrino' (Ivan Czernovich the true founder of the Montenegrin principality' [p. 20]); *The Lady of the Shroud* opens off 'The Spear of Ivan' (p. 1), and we thereafter hear of 'the Castle of Vissarion on the Spear of Ivan' (p. 40). The entrance to the town itself is dominated by a huge clocktower, and we hear of 'the great clock at Vissarion' (p. 153). Stoker certainly has some sense of how it might be possible to reach Cattaro - the Voivode came via Ragusa, modern Dubrovnik (p. 163), and the journey from Trieste to Durazzo is mentioned (p. 49) - and could conceivably have been drawn there by the presence of the Napoleon theatre, which opened in 1810. Most intriguingly, on the altar in the collegiate church of Sveta Marija 'is exhibited the preserved body of the Kotor saint the Blessed Ozana, from the first half of the 16th century, in a glass sarcophagus' (Vlada Majstorovic, Jovica Martinovic and Predrag Martić, *Kotor*, translated by Marina Ciric [Belgrade: Branmil, n.d.], p. 45); the process for her beatification began in 1905, and it would not be hard to connect her with Teuta, who sleeps in a glass-topped coffin and whom the Mountaineers treat with such reverence.

²⁰ Gladstone, 'Montenegro. A Sketch', p. 360.

²¹ J. Gardner Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1848), I, p. 441.

²² For comment on the role of Scots in the book, see also Cain, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia*, pp. 160-1.

²³ Mary Edith Durham, *Through the Lands of the Serb* (Memphis: General Books, 2012), p. 2.

²⁴ Ford, 'Montenegro in the eyes of the English Travellers 1840-1914', p. 354.

²⁵ Gardner Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro*, pp. 522 and 418.

²⁶ Levi, *Venezia e il Montenregro*, p. 8.

²⁷ G. Muir Mackenzie and A. P. Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe* (London: Daldy, Isbister and Co, 1977), II, pp. 217-8.

²⁸ Denton, *Montenegro*, pp. 30-1, 60, 92, 112, 130 and 290.

²⁹ Gladstone, 'Montenegro. A Sketch', p. 375.

³⁰ Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, p. 585.

³¹ See Ailise Bulfin, 'The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal', *English Literature in Translation, 1880-1920* 54.4 (2011), pp. 411-443, pp. 431-2.

³² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

³³ Jeffrey Richards, 'Gender, Race and Sexuality in Bram Stoker's Other Novels', in *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*, edited by Christopher Parker (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 143-171, p. 165.

³⁴ Hopkins, *Bram Stoker: A Literary Life*.

³⁵ Elinor Glyn, *Three Weeks* [1907] (London: Duckworth, 1974), pp. 62, 64 and 212.

³⁶ Durham, *Through the Lands of the Serb*, p. 3.

³⁷ Anthony Hope, *Rupert of Hentzau* [1898] (London: Wordsworth, 1994), pp. 118 and 121.

³⁸ Anthony Hope, *The Heart of Princess Osra* (London: Frederick A. Stokes, 1896), p. 226.

³⁹ Gibson, 'Bram Stoker and the Treaty of Berlin', p. 247.

⁴⁰ Stoker, *The Lady of the Shroud*, ed. Hughes, Introduction, p. 13.

⁴¹ Victor Sage, 'Exchanging Fantasies: Sex and the Serbian Crisis in *The Lady of the Shroud*', in *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic*, edited by William Hughes and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 116-133, pp. 116 and 128.

⁴² Paul Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 28.

⁴³ Any discussion of the literary representation of Montenegro is complicated by the extent to which its territorial boundaries have changed over time. Most modern visitors to Montenegro are likely to go to Kotor, a famous beauty-spot and an easy day trip from Dubrovnik, but for much of the relevant period this was an Austrian possession which Montenegro could only covet.

⁴⁴ Gladstone, 'Montenegro. A Sketch', p. 365.

⁴⁵ Levi, *Venezia e il Montenregro*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Gardner Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro*, pp. 426-7 and p. 434.

⁴⁷ *Vanished Kingdoms*, p. 584.

⁴⁸ Cain, Jr, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia*, p. 154.

⁴⁹ Catherine Wynne, 'Bram Stoker, Geneviève Ward and *The Lady of the Shroud*: Gothic Weddings and Performing Vampires', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 49.3 (2006), pp. 251-271, p. 264.