

War Poetry and the Visual Culture of War – the Case of the *Illustrated War Chronicle* (Belgrade)

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As a genre of specialized publications, war periodicals, among their other functions, aim to document the reality of war and publish up-to-date testimonies and various (non-)literary contributions in order to inform their readership about war events and engage them ideologically, socially and emotionally. Since the genre itself implies that the particular periodical offers a politically desirable view on war, these publications tend to have a stronger war propaganda function which is present both at the level of explicit/implicit explanations given in individual articles and at the level of the thematic or discursive correspondence that occurs between various texts (verbal and nonverbal): poetry, literary fiction, documentary prose, photographs, caricatures, reproductions of paintings, news, obituaries, etc. Due to the highly specific distribution of these discourses, war periodicals thus create an overall sense of the meaningfulness of war: it is inevitable, usually fundamentally justifiable, and as a phenomenon it transcends the contemporary moment, seeking its justification at the trans-historical level.

Although these periodicals are closely related to the act of war in their attempt to reflect its reality and provide a sense of simultaneity (their printing often falls within the timeframe of the actual war events), they also represent a battlefield of sorts in themselves. But, unlike the chaotic and heterogeneous nature of the 'real' human experience, war periodicals show a higher degree of consistency and unanimity, which is determined by editorial policy, as well as the time and the place of the periodicals' publication. In attempting to achieve this sense of consistency, war periodicals very often opt to contain a mixture of texts: some that are published for the first time and others that are taken from the past and reprinted, usually with the aim of constructing a continuity narrative between the past and the present moment, thus "producing content for the war and negotiating the meaning of the war even before it had ended" (SWEET 1990: 4).

Regarding Serbian periodicals on the Balkan wars, there are four main journals that could be considered as war periodicals: the *Illustrated War Chronicle* (Belgrade)¹, the *Illustrated War Chronicle* (Novi Sad)², the *Balkan War in Image and*

1 *Illustrated War Chronicle* (Belgrade) / *Ilustrovana ratna kronika* twice weekly (Thursday and Sunday); owner and chief editor Sv. M. Grebenac. From October 1912 (no. 1) to March 10, 1913 (no. 26); there was no official announcement that the journal would be terminated.

2 *Illustrated War Chronicle* (Novi Sad) / *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*. Published weekly. Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Svetozara F. Ognjanovića. Edited and prepared by Kamenko Subotic, from October 18 (October 31, no. 1) to October 3 (October 16, no. 50) 1913, when all war activities were over.

Word (Belgrade)³ and the *Illustrated Balkan* (Belgrade).⁴ These four journals were published specifically in the years 1912–1913; their thematic scope was almost completely determined by the Balkan wars, and once the conflict had finished, their printing stopped.

At that time, there were also other Serbian periodicals which published articles, texts, reports, and literary works related to the Balkan wars – from the daily newspapers *Politika*, *Pravda* and *Pijemont* to the biweekly and monthly literary magazines *Delo* and *Srpski književni glasnik* – with some of them having thematic issues like the issue of *Bosanska vila* in 1914 – called “Ratna spomenica 1912–1913 / War Memorial 1912–1913”. Unlike specific war periodicals, these latter were only “temporarily” and just up to a certain level engaged with war events because they continued printing other articles, according to their primary political agendas and pre-war editorial policies.⁵

Amongst the four previously mentioned war periodicals, in this article only the *Illustrated War Chronicle* will be discussed since it was the most “war-centred” publication of the time. Published in Belgrade, the journal’s first issue was printed very soon after the First Balkan war had started and the period of time between the news articles and events on the battlefield was rather short, creating a sense of the immediacy of its news. In the first two months, it was published twice weekly (unlike the other three), which implies an intention to continuously follow and report on the news from the front and at home. The printing of the journal had stopped in March 1913, several months before the final peace conference took place in Bucharest; while the demarcation lines were still not decided, major Serbian battles were finished and the territory, held by Serbian troops, covered a very wide geographical area (Kosovo, today’s Macedonia, and regions of what is today Albania). The presence of visual material (photos and paintings) and its relationship with other texts, supported by the frequency of specific historical topics and their internal distribution in the journal, show that an important logic of war propaganda was present in the editing of the journal, which was aimed at influencing the way readers perceived the given texts, both verbal and nonverbal. The journal was not strictly divided into particular col-

3 *Balkan War in Image and Word* (Belgrade) / *Balkanski rat u slici i reči*. Published weekly, owned and edited by Dušan Mil. Šijački. From January 20, 1913 (no. 1) to December 25, 1913 (no. 40). This timeframe is one of the elements that can explain the stronger commemorative function of the journal, in comparison to the Belgrade *Illustrated War Chronicle*.

4 *Illustrated Balkan* (Belgrade) / *Ilustrovani “Balkan”*. Published weekly, owner Sv. Savić, editor Branko Ivić. From March 3, 1913 (no. 9) to April 28, 1913 (no. 9). Pages are mostly covered by photos, although there are textual contributions and articles; in general, this journal is more like a historical and commemorative album, and not a journal that aimed to inform its readers about the historical events and happenings in the front, which is also determined by the date of the first published number, March 3.

5 When it comes to the Balkan wars it is important to briefly mention a few data: the First Balkan War started in October 1912, when the armies of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria clashed against the Turkish forces. One of the main goals was the final resolution of the Ottoman question and its oppressing presence in the Balkans. Interestingly enough and in terms of media coverage, the Balkan wars were one of the first wars where a larger number of foreign journalists went to the battlefield together with the military units.

umns, as in the other Balkan war periodicals, and this served to enhance the notion of spontaneity in the organizing of the material – almost as if the war events, and not the journal’s editors, ordered the way articles would appear on the pages of the *Illustrated War Chronicle*.

This is particularly important when it comes to the semantic relations between literary and non-literary texts – as a war journal that published a variety of poems of “lower” aesthetic value and quality, the journal could turn the poetry and its images into the powerful means of articulating certain social and ideological interests and propaganda, because this poetry could not be read in a manner of close textual reading that sought autonomous artistic meaning. While many poems had no implicit literary value, they were very explicit in terms of creating an emotionally charged discourse of patriotism and ideas of a final liberation and resolution of the Ottoman question. These were especially emphasized through the use of traditional poetic forms and the recognizable and predictable set of stylistic or metric devices characteristic for the era of romanticism and its ideas of national liberation.

In the context of the war and the journal’s poems and photographs, one of the main topics and themes that should also be addressed is the issue of ‘the body’ because the body is one of the main loci of trauma and injury; despite the importance and significance of psychological trauma, “the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring” (SCARRY 1985: 63). Therefore, in war periodicals such as the *Illustrated War Chronicle*, the body (especially and primarily the male body) becomes an important symbolic tool for dealing with the traumatic experience of the Balkan wars, for motivating soldiers to surrender their lives through their own will, and for suppressing the real imagery of bodily suffering for those readers / viewers who safely lived in the back, removed from the front of the war events (Belgrade, for example).

In that sense, it is important to investigate how different models and strategies of representation (verbal and visual) within the pages of the *Illustrated War Chronicle* managed to suppress or remove the images of a body injured or traumatized in war,⁶ and to research to what extent and in what ways poetry and photography employ these strategies. Also, following the claim of Timothy Sweet that there is usually a very strong connection and interrelation between the destruction of bodies and reconstruction of ideology (SWEET 1990: 16) – “actual bodies of soldiers are often marginalized since an individual man can seldom be represented as a figure that can assert priority of order over chaos” (ibid.: 20) – it will be interesting to discover if this interrelation can be recognized in the context of the *Illustrated War Chronicle*, and if it made the journal’s war propaganda more effective and “modern”.⁷

The male body is of course not represented only in poetry, but this literary genre is interesting and more significant in this analysis for several reasons. Poetry is often regarded as being dominated by strong, metaphoric imagery, with condensed and self-referential language, thus implying that the reading of poetry should take into consideration its aesthetic autonomy. Yet, being considered as an emotionally

6 In her study, Elaine SCARRY (1985) defines six such strategies.

7 When using the word “modern“, it is not implied in any way that this should bear any positive connotation, but more an evaluation of the journal’s function which was a propaganda function at that time.

charged type of expression, poetry gains more impact in times of war when the society feels threatened and victimized or exalted and thrilled by the ideas of freedom and final liberation. When printed in periodicals, it becomes even more visible and influential than other literary forms (fiction or other non-literary articles, or genres in-between: memoirs, war journals, personal testimonies) since it is often graphically separated and visually emphasized – poems were often printed in the upper corner of the page so they could easily attract the readers' attention, and even gain an aura of a political and public proclamation. Furthermore, in war journals, thematic homogeneity could be recognized in poetry too: the high frequency of recurring motifs and mythic models results in creating a stronger sense of unanimity and collectivism within the readership, which is additionally amplified by the process of reprinting war/patriotic poems from previous periods. Regardless of their literary values, reprinted and newly printed poems enter into a dialogue that aims to suppress the notion of historicity, omit the contemporary facts and reports from the front (since that is usually considered non-poetic) and avoid narration or any kind of poetic storytelling that is based on linear understanding of time. In that way, poems become an essential vehicle for engaging the psychological and emotional side of their readers.

“It is not difficult to understand why poetry was a popular medium amongst the contributors to this verbal defence of the homeland. Prose writings of comparable length for public consumption, such as letters to newspapers, editorial comment or short magazine articles, were likely to be printed only if the author could offer new information or unusual insight. Poems, on the other hand, are self-justifying. As works of art they are free from a referential constraint ...” (MARSHLAND 2011: 45).

And although Elizabeth Marshland founds her claims on the examples of poetry dedicated to the First World War, a similar issue can be recognized within the Serbian periodicals of the Balkan wars – when it comes to poems in particular, date, authorship and primary context of their publishing become less important since they aim to engage their readers emotionally and ideologically – what is usually seen as a universal meaning in poetry becomes a potent canvas for the readers to project their own contemporary images, ideas and notions of patriotism. Furthermore, it is of no less importance that these poems were published in the war periodicals, because these publications were the most fertile ground for transforming poetic utterances into performative speech acts. Unlike anthologies or collections of poems from singular authors, poetry in the context of periodicals loses its aesthetic autonomy and starts to function as a hybrid genre, which blurs and obfuscates boundaries between imaginary and real, the fictional world of wars and the empirical reality of the war front.

In the particular Serbian context of poetry production, it should be noted that there is a very strong tradition of Serbian patriotic poetry.⁸ In relation to this, Serbian literature of the time (despite the emergence of several important modernist poets

8 Vladimir Jovičić in his study *Srpsko rodoljubivo pesništvo* (Beograd: Arion 1987) gives a historical overview of the patriotic poetry tradition, from the beginnings of modern literature in Serbia to the post-WW2 poetry.

and new, almost avant-garde tendencies in the beginning of the 20th century) is still highly influenced and marked by its oral tradition (both epic and lyric poems) – many poets of that time continued to write in the manner of oral poetry, trying to imitate its poetics in search of wider audiences.⁹ Since the figure of the poet in oral tradition differs from the one in written, authorial tradition, Serbian society often considered and perceived the role of the poet in much wider terms – the poet represented the voice of the community; so, many voices in individual poems tended to take this position of authority, addressing their people, their ethnic community or their heroic and mythical ancestors.¹⁰

Finally, it is important to consider the wider socio-political context of the continuous war threat at the beginning of the 20th century – especially in the second decade, 1908–1914, after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – which influenced the increase in the production of patriotic poetry: after a short period of decline in their production at the turn of the century, from the year 1908 on the patriotic poems appear again, mostly in the tradition of epic folk poetry.¹¹

On the other hand, apart from textual material, the *Illustrated War Chronicle* contained a very wide range of photographs and reproductions, which leads us to the second important part of the journal's policy and identity – the significance and the propaganda impact of the visual material. Due to the available technological means of the time, the visual material included both photos and printed reproductions of paintings or drawings, and only few caricatures. The function of these photos was not only to document events and their participants, but also to engage the journal's readership in terms of their emotional and ideological stance towards the war. Because, together with linguistic material, photographs are always an important part of a journal's propaganda since they can effectively “provide a soldier [or a citizen, a reader] with motivations for fighting” and often leave out “political issues over which the war is being fought” (SWEET 1990: 3).

However, since these photos were not accompanied by textual comments or explanations, readers had more freedom in their own interpretation of the images. Moreover, since the periodical was being published during the war, the distribution

9 Poets such as Milorad Petrović Seljančica, Avdo Karabegović, Aleksa Šantić, Dimitrije Sokoljanin, Milosav Jelić, wanted to reclaim the poetics of oral epic poems, so they turned to writing their poems in more traditional forms and types of verse (the well-known *dese-terac*).

10 Despite this fact, if we look at the list of names that appear in the journal, we will see a wide range of authors of high literary value and some others, unknown or less familiar poets: for example, Milan Rakić (and his poem “Na Gazimestanu”), Dragutin J. Ilijć (“Poklič”, “Veljkova stogodišnjica”), and Sima Pandurović (“Vojnički rastanak”).

11 This fact is important because the predominance of folk poetry, its ethics and aesthetics, shows that the Serbian society and its readers, those readers that are addressed in these journals are not still separated in terms of class identity, or any other; ethnic and religious attributes stay one of the most influential elements. And this has definitely something to do with the political culture at the beginning of the 20th century, and the rise of the Radical Party with Nikola Pašić as its leader.

of 'acceptable' images and motifs was much more controlled,¹² which reminds us of the fact that in the artistic and physical space of war journals "photographs do not just 'happen', photography is a representational practice" (SWEET 1990: 79). This type of practice includes not only the editorial selection of the photos, their arrangement and position on the particular page of the journal, and their interrelation with other articles, but also the photographer's act of shooting. This act – due to the technological traits of photography in Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century – usually involved a process of preparing, or setting the scene, whether it is a scene at the war front or in the rear (hospitals, military units or headquarters, etc.).

The thematic scope of the images printed in the *Illustrated War Chronicle* is very wide, seemingly much wider and richer than it is in the poetry – it includes a whole variety of people (individuals and groups), places (near or at the front, or behind the front lines), cities, historical monuments, culturally specific and semantically pregnant sites of memory – but all the various material could be divided into three groups: portraits, scenes, and genre photos. In terms of representing the male body, it is interesting to investigate this vast material in order to determine to what extent and in what manner these photos (mis)represented male bodies, thus fulfilling the journal's propaganda function; also, it could help us reconstruct the journal's editorial policy on representation of the body.

By classifying the thematic scope of the poems, and determining the frequency of the male body imagery that served to articulate different national self-images and images of the enemy, the aim of this article is to elaborate on the discrepancy/correspondence which occurs between the poems and the visual material at the level of vivid brutal descriptions, horrifying hyperbolic details, and grotesque representations of the male body. Therefore, one of the main concerns is not only to determine how much the visual material complements the imagery of the poems (and vice versa), but also to explore how this potential complementary dynamic enhances and modernizes the propaganda dimension of the journal.

The *Illustrated War Chronicle* presents to its readership a coherent and consistent scope of themes and motifs often related to the notion of the Serbian mythical past and the 'golden age' of medieval Serbia. Constantly reviving both the images of medieval knights in shining armour at the Kosovo battle and the contemporary need to avenge the Kosovo defeat, the articles and photos in the journal succeed in placing modern historical processes in a context which transcends historical limitations and emphasizes another sense of time – where past, present and future blend into one. Therefore, in that mythical frame, the male body imagery (especially in the poems) is deprived of the historical and empirical, of any real life information and details; its naturalistic dimension and graphic descriptions of violence and mutilation (blood, body parts, hands, heads, legs; live and dead bodies of soldiers) lose their potentially subversive force and anti-war element, becoming a semantically productive field for various discourses of war-supporting propaganda.

12 For example, one will not find mass pictures of dead Serbian soldiers.

One of the functions of the male body imagery is related to ritual: decomposed bodies or fragmented body images serve as a sacrifice, offered in the name of the righteous cause and the future, without expressing any kind of doubt about warfare. Blood, expectedly, is one of the key words and the most frequent one, enhanced by the use of epithets like “young”, “fresh” and “warm”. In one of the poems by Proka Jovkić (“*Ratni krici*” / “*War Cries*”) blood is depicted as it covers the soil like morning dew; it besprinkles the fields and awakes the “worm” – the enslaved Serbian people living in the provinces of the Turkish Empire. Finally, the voice in the poems prays and foresees the future appearance of the “beautiful flower garden” on the same spot where “crumbled bodies” will fall.¹³ According to these poetic images, the battlefield is not a place of meaningless death and destruction, but a ritualistic promise of new life that will undoubtedly come, because all those mutilated bodies have been offered as a sacrifice, thus guaranteeing a better life for the future generations, a life in freedom and prosperity.

Similarly, in another poem by Proka Jovkić (“*Veliki dan*” / “*Great day*”), the soldiers’ body parts are separately addressed and depicted in the physiological manner of naturalism, becoming powerful fertilizer for the newly born fatherland.

“Our Homeland, this is a day of power
Your sacred children have surrendered it all
Their blood, hearts, marrow, brains and veins.
Our Homeland, this is a day of power
As pure white doves they fell
And from their death our heart will shine
Their lips becoming a trophy of silk.”¹⁴

However, this type of imagery is rarely seen within the visual material – it would be almost impossible and undesirable to offer photos or paintings that depict such elements because they would evoke feelings of terror and horror in the viewer/reader. But, there is one symbolically powerful photo depicting preparations for the burial of a head that was cut off by Albanians in the city of Peć in Kosovo (see below).

The head is positioned in the centre while people are gathered around, in a semi-circle; the majority of people are male, with the exception of a woman who squats to the right to the head, and a small boy who is positioned right behind the woman. The caption of the photo – “Serbian priests in Peć, performing funeral rites for the head of the Serb Josa Radić, from the village of Škulare; he was killed by Arnauts (Albanians) from Rugovac, who played with his head for two days in the village streets, and only after that did the priests manage to take possession of the head to bury it” – provides the readers with the information on the events that preceded the burial, instructing them implicitly to read the photo as an act of both mourning and creating

13 „Podaj da nikne divni cvetni vrt, / gde ljudsko telo izmrvljeno pada. / Gde naša mlada, sveža, topla krv / poljane puste poškropi i rosi, / nek skoči, klikne, podigne se crv, što vekovima čuti, trpi, snosi“ (Jovkić 1912a).

14 “Otađbino naša ovo je dan sile / Tvoja sveta deca sve ti danas daše / Krv, korene srca, srž, mozgove, žile. / Otađbino naša ovo je dan sile / Kao čisti, beli, golubovi paše / Iz njihove smrti blesnu srce naše / Njihove su usne tebi trofej svile” (Jovkić 1912b).

strong communal bonds. The buried head is a symbolic place for a collective pledge to the war effort and a clear motivation for the liberation of Kosovo. Therefore, while in other cases personal data (i.e. people's names) are usually omitted, in this case we find strong emphasis on the individualization of the head which then, through the photographic depiction of the burial (which is dignified and serene), becomes a point within which the national imaginary community should gather and become more homogenous.



Stradanje Srba u Turskoj

With the exception of this photo (and few others), we can safely claim that the majority of photos show whole / uninjured bodies, even in the photos that depict soldiers in hospitals – even there everything is peaceful and dignified. As stated, there are a few photos that depict soldiers with some parts of their bodies having been amputated. In one such photo, we can see a soldier whose leg had to be cut off, but this photo – the first one of its kind in the journal – is printed in issue 17 when the majority of battles were already finished and the Serbian army had seized a very large geopolitical space in the Balkans.¹⁵ In that sense, the photo represents an isolated case, transforming the body image into the motif of the unfortunate but necessary by-product of war, something that had to be sacrificed on the path to liberty (SCARRY 1985: 80).

15 *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, god. 1, br. 17, 13. decembar 1912, str. 5.

The hyperbolic and occasionally grotesque manner in which decayed bodies are represented in the poetry sometimes reaches the point of an almost necrophilic amalgam of adoration, respect, love and strong feelings of comradeship. Again, in one of the poems by Proka Jovkić (“Našim vojnicima” / “To Our Soldiers”) – the only one printed on the cover page of the journal – the author employs the whole repertoire of body parts, addressing them separately and gradually building an almost surreal experience where death, (homo)eroticism and comradeship intensely blend, and intertwine (Jovkić 1912c).

Beginning with the motif of wounds, the voice in the poem lists various parts of the soldiers’ bodies – using a repetitive line with the same sentence structure “Our Soldiers, I kiss your ... [wounds, bones, feet]” that enhances the hymnic tone – and describes them with a disturbing hyperrealism of details: “The young and brotherly blood, warm and fresh: / Its fibre sacred, its threads, foundation, web, wherever spilled, dropped, gushed”.¹⁶ But despite the sense of horror, this emphasis paradoxically manages to dissolve the image of a particular, individual human body killed in the battle, because it puts too much attention on details – like a powerful microscope that enlarges the image of the human body, thus suppressing the possibility that the viewer will recognize that those enlarged parts belong to a particular, individual body that represents someone’s life.¹⁷ And then, in the fourth stanza, a climax is achieved:

“Our soldiers, I kiss your lips
Foreheads and thighs, crushed by the battle
Those masculine ramparts against the hideous force
Our soldiers, I kiss your lips
Deep caves, wounds, filled with pus,
From the sacred fight, when the sacred rage comes.”¹⁸

In these verses we can see that the male body is not repressed in any way, but it is dissolved through the extensive use of graphic, vivid details and horrifying images. And this is not primarily done in order to invoke a sense of fear in the readership, or to present the male body as a sacrifice or pledge for the future, but to intensely celebrate fallen heroes, their martyrdom and their bodies mutilated in the war conflict, while at the same time avoiding a real life, documentary confrontation with the facts of human suffering during the war.

The poem’s meaning is additionally influenced by the photo which is printed above it; it shows the Czech doctors and medical staff who came to Belgrade to help. They are all males (like in the poem) but dressed in regular civilian suits, posing and

16 „Mladu i bratsku krv, toplu i svežu; / Sveto joj tkivo, niti, osnov, mrežu“ (Jovkić 1912c).

17 Aside from its propaganda and the strong aesthetic and ideological impact, this poem’s tone and mood, the heightened atmosphere of adoration of sacrificed bodies, should also be understood within the context of the author’s work in general since his poetic writing was very often (without any direct relation to the topic) over-dramatic, full of strong feelings, hyperbolae.

18 “Vojnici nasi, ljubim vaše usne / Čela i bedra, izmrskana bojem / Bedemi muški protiv sile gnusne / Vojnici naši, ljubim vaše usne / Duboke jame, rane, pune gnojem / U svetoj borbi, kad sveti gnev pljusne / Vojnici naši, ljubim vaše usne” (Jovkić 1912c).

standing for the photo, creating a strong contrast when it comes to the poem's imagery. They serve as an effective visual "buffer" for the poem since they are the ones responsible for the soldiers' health and well being; therefore, their serious posture complements and, essentially, resolves the chaotic imagery of the soldiers' fragmented bodies.

Similar images of brutally mutilated bodies can also be found in other poems but instead of the ritual role, they are employed as a metonymy for the five-century-long history of violence committed by the enemy. Authors often describe flesh and muscles wounded and mutilated in chains, bodies cut into pieces, slaughtered, bitten and poisoned by snakes, torn by the anonymous but implied and obvious executioner. And, although the body is fragmented in a visually similar way, in this case a completely different connotation is applied: poetic images are there to remind the readership of the reasons that have led to this war, to present the war as the historical necessity and the ethical obligation of the Serbian people, and to mobilize the collective spirit in those areas that are not directly affected by war events.

When it comes to photos, again, this type of imagery is omitted: there are only a few photos that present dead or tortured male bodies – the one that shows the burial of the head has been mentioned previously. Another one, also printed in the first two months of the journal's publication, represents the enemy's violence and savage behaviour: it shows two Serbs, killed by the Turkish authorities, lying on the ground, with several villagers who are brought there to witness the horror so they would be frightened and warned (see "Jednakost u Turskoj").

In most of the cases (whether it is in poetry or in the photos) there is a usual lack of individualization in the body imagery – body parts belonging to unknown or unnamed people – which enhances the notion of the community as the whole and wholesome body. Given the context of the political myths (Kosovo, the Emperor Dušan's empire), this community also appears to be timeless, since it includes both dead and live bodies, bodies of past heroes (usually those depicted in the oral epic tradition) and bodies of the anonymous but historical figures of soldiers engaged in the Balkan wars. At that time, and not only in the war periodicals, there were various articles in which soldiers reported how they had seen their historical and mythical predecessors joining them in the battle, figures of epic heroes who fought alongside them. These unsubstantiated, stylistically and emotionally charged reports also aimed to suppress the growing dissatisfaction among the citizens who were not keen on going off to another war and leaving their crops and families behind unattended.

Yet, in some cases, we do find a certain number of photos that individualize the male body by revealing some personal details (name, military rank or function at the front); however, I believe that this is not essentially an act of individualization – in some cases, photos of important high ranking military officers tend to depict an ideal of a "great man", immortalized in his sacrifice for the nation, while other photos of ordinary men show them more within the frame of the "unknown soldier" symbolism. Despite the fact that there are particular, personal details mentioned, these photos function as a text which is somewhere in between – an image of an unknown soldier and an obituary.

However, when it comes to photos from the front, there are only a few that depict dead bodies: if there are more dead bodies on the ground, scattered around, then

those photos usually depict enemy bodies; photos of Serbian soldiers are usually limited to one or two male bodies in the frame. In one of those photos we can see a soldier saying his farewell to a fellow soldier who died in the battle (see the photo “Poslednji pozdrav”). Nevertheless, this is not an individual body; this is only a singular body, used as an appropriate synecdoche for the whole body of the soldiers and the nation as well, because those two soldiers in the photo stay unnamed while the background of the image is interestingly empty – almost as if the battle itself was something non-violent and non-drastring but rather chivalric and peaceful.¹⁹

Furthermore, when looking closely at the photo, one can safely claim that it is actually an arranged, genre scene of farewell. Considering the technological circumstances of that time, this is not a spontaneous photo from the battlefield. The presented scene contains both the intimate atmosphere of a personal farewell (one friend to another) and, through synecdoche, the imagery of mass sacrifice (one soldier lies there for many other, uncountable victims). It does document death which is a result of war events but, ironically, it does not depict death in war; it restrains itself from any political, ideological or social commentary on the Balkan wars.

The idea of the heroic unity of Serbian soldiers is also expressed through references to medieval knights, their chivalric pride and honour; soldiers' bodies are usually 'covered' with shining armour so their flesh-and-blood quality is suppressed. A similar thing happens in the paintings that are reprinted in the *Illustrated War Chronicle*, especially those that depict scenes from the frontline of the battlefield (there are maybe two or three photos taken directly at the scene of the battle, while others are usually painted). These paintings are done in stronger, unsubtle strokes so the bodies appear as straight lines and rectangular surfaces and shapes, as stone-like figures, solid and indestructible. In this way, the painting technique manages to leave out a sense of realism and thus the potential horror at the image that could prompt the reader's negative attitude towards the Balkan wars.²⁰

The notion of heroic or even supernatural strength is also employed in the images that connect the human body with references to technological and non-organic material, which presents a very significant vehicle for the propaganda discourse since it transforms the act of injury; there is no injured or mutilated flesh because the language of some poems is distinctly “drawn from the unequivocal non-sentience of steel; wood, iron, and aluminium, the metals and materials out of which weapons are made” (MARSHLAND 2011: 66).

19 But, for example and just to illustrate and emphasize the difference, the journal *Balkan in Image and Word* contains photos taken after battles which show the mass of soldiers' bodies in the field, and sometimes other, living soldiers putting the corpses of their fellow fighters on vehicles in order to bury them properly. These photos are printed in the first issue of the magazine, on January 20, which is the beginning of February according to the Gregorian calendar.

20 For more details of these techniques: “Boj Crnogoraca na Tarabošu” (painting) and “Komite u boju” (drawing).

Let iron cast each thread of blood
 As our peoples move into a war five centuries old
 Into our muscles pour steel and lead
 Make them hard, unbreakable, male;
 Within our eyes start fires and lights,
 Of your cannons, shiny lightning flashes, guns.
 Into our throats place the sacred thunder
 So justice can burst and light the Heavens.²¹

All those elements – blood, muscles, throats, eyes – so strongly and vividly depicted in other poems as parts of human physiology and anatomy, are now replaced by the repertoire of non-organic elements in nature, thus constructing the male body in the spirit of a new, technological, industrial era; it becomes not only invincible but completely immune to pain and suffering. This type of imagery which lacks realistic details and real life facts or any historical stance towards warfare is very potent in terms of the journal's propaganda aims and objectives because it distances the sense of pain and death from its readers.

Another way of suppressing the notion of individual human suffering at the front is present in poems with battle themes and motifs, articulated in the form of apocalyptic and cataclysmic clashes between two civilizations or two strongly opposing forces (the tyrant vs. the slave, the beast vs. the enslaved people). The whole warfare is often presented as the ultimate cosmic spectacle, a matter of natural, primal and cosmic forces (and not real, historical and ethnically defined armies or states with their own interests and strategies): violent images full of lightning, thunder, mountains moving, earth opening up and collapsing, rains and unimaginable storms, and floods of biblical dimensions. Also, by exchanging the image of real men with an image of natural forces or mythical beings, the authors transform the war into a battle of cultural symbols (where usually the dragon is perceived as something wicked, negative and belonging to the Oriental East). This substitution between human agency and the natural or supernatural forces is impossible to present in the form of a documentary or a staged genre photo. But, where photography "fails" due to technological limitations, there is a chance for caricature to carry the necessary meaning, although it is rarely used in the *Illustrated War Chronicle*.²² Yet those scarce examples of caricature are in accordance with the poetic imagery of demonized enemy forces versus the innocent, enslaved homeland.

21 "Da gvožđe bude krvi svaka nit / Dok narod borbu petstoletnu dočne / U mišice naše slij čelik i tuč, / Da budu čvrste, nesačlomljive, muške; / U oči naše pali oganj, luč / Topova svojih, sjajnih munja, puške. / U grla svakom daj nam sveti grom, / Da pravdom nebo zablista i plane" (Jovkić 1912a: 9).

22 Some of the caricatures were taken from foreign magazines, while others, created in Serbia, are not of great visual or aesthetic value.

One of the caricatures represents (in the manner of an amateur painter) the relationship between the Turkish Empire and what was called “Old Serbia”.²³ The caption, placed above the picture, offers a straightforward interpretation of the allegorical scene: Turkey is depicted as a demon-like creature (bearing no resemblance to anything human) whose religious identity is clearly revealed in the crescent-moon detail, while its vicious and violent nature is emphasized through the motifs of a long, hairy or pointy tail and long claws that surround and imprison the allegorical figure of “Old Serbia”; the latter is a girl with long beautiful hair (implying innocence and chastity) who, out of fear and powerlessness, holds her head buried in her arms and knees.



Prošlost – Stara Srbija pod Turskom

It is interesting that this is one of the rare images where the female body is used in order to represent the endangered nation or the homeland / fatherland. In terms of propaganda it is very functional since the girl represents “Old Serbia” – those territories that Serbia claimed during the First Balkan War; in that light, the female body is part of the victimization discourse that is used in order to engage the readers and legitimize Serbian involvement in the conflict.

In conclusion, one can argue that the poetry and the visual material included in the *Illustrated War Chronicle* run a whole variety of human body imagery; and whether the body belongs to the soldiers or the suffering nation, it is always depicted as supernaturally powerful, showing no traces of doubt with regards to the sense of

23 Term „Old Serbia“ refers to the regions of the today Macedonia, southern Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija.

warfare. These examples, in the end, effectively illustrate the general claim about the nature of war propaganda and representation: it is “difficult, perhaps impossible, to make poetry solely from the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the number of regiments and the dates” (WINN 2008: 35). And not only difficult but also, in terms of propaganda efficiency in the war journals, it is fundamentally counter-productive.

This is not a periodical which contains textual or visual material employed for the purposes of anti-war criticism; the *Illustrated War Chronicle* represents a journal with a very strong, military and war propaganda background (implicit or explicit); it does not provide its readers with a critical or subversive view on the Balkan wars, and rarely succeeds in showing a greater level of general, human compassion for all those who suffered during the conflict (and not just for the members of the Serbian community). In this context, the various representations of the male body (both in poetry and photography) detail how soldiers’ bodies were consistently depicted as fundamentally opposite to images of a weak, fragile and human powerlessness; also, there are almost no examples of representations of bodies as mere flesh being abused for the interests of the war conflict. On the contrary, the bodies are unanimously given to readers as vehicles and tools for a war propaganda whose main concern was to suppress the real extent of the destruction and loss in the Balkan wars.

By examining the ways the poems and photos present the male body we may state that all the differences and discrepancies effectively function as compatible sets of imagery: everything grotesque, hyperbolic and too horrifying is conveyed through poetic imagery and highly fictional references – which connect these poems more to the genre tradition of the Serbian patriotic and war poetry – while photos and reproductions of paintings / sketches reveal a highly selective approach to the reality of war, depicting it through non-violent, often serene and dignified images from the front or from behind the front (hospitals, fields after the battles). Violent, naturalistic body imagery is employed in the poems in order to engage the readership ideologically and emotionally which can then (due to the poetic language of the grotesque) intensely empathize with a highly imaginary and irrational fantasy of global war. On the other hand, non-brutal photos or heroic paintings of the first battlefield lines successfully suppress any potentially disturbing reference to the real suffering and slaughter in the war.

Through this complementing dynamics, poems and photos together fulfil several important functions: they omit, suppress or reinforce the realistic imagery of war; furthermore, by employing the mythical matrices of the Kosovo battle and the nostalgic invocation of the Dušan’s Empire, they successfully evade history with its chronological and linear meaning, thus transcending the war atrocities and casualties and neutralizing their critical aspects or subversive potential. Therefore, the case of the *Illustrated War Chronicle* reveals how the complex semiotic web (composed of verbal and visual texts) worked as a highly effective and powerful tool of the war propaganda at the beginning of the 20th century in Serbia, drawing its power from both mythical discourses (Kosovo, Dušan’s empire, etc.) and highly modern techniques in using photographs and combining them with poetic imagery. In a sense, the *Illustrated War Chronicle* represents an exemplary model of the war periodical be-

cause its powerful propaganda function is subtly embedded into the documentary and seemingly unmediated visual reporting on the First Balkan War.

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Illustrations

- "Boj Crnogoraca na Tarabošu" (painting), *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, 1, 7, 8. november 1912, 10.
- "Jednakost u Turskoj" (photo), *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, 1, 13, 25. november 1912, 1.
- "Komite u boju" (drawing), *Ilustrovana ratna kronika* 1, nr. 16, 9. december 1912, 10.
- "Poslednji pozdrav" (photo), *Ilustrovana ratna kronika*, 1, nr. 17, 13. december 1912. 8.
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