Turbofolk and Narratives of Local and Cosmopolitan Identity in Contemporary Banja Luka

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ABSTRACT: Turbofolk is a style of popular music popularized in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the former Yugoslavia that incorporates traditional instrumentation with beats commonly employed in EDM or Electronic Dance Music. Although turbofolk originated within Serbia, Banja Luka, the Serb-dominated capital of Republika Sprska (The Republic of Serbia), Bosnia and Herzegovina, offers a productive space for observing post 1990s turbofolk consumption as a powerful constructor of contested identities. Several interviews held in Banja Luka, especially with young people who attend turbofolk spaces and consume an entirely postwar popular culture, led to the finding that turbofolk serves as a source of authenticity and resistance in a space that has served as a cultural bridge, historically contested between empires, and now by the U.S. and the E.U. to the West, and Russia, its Slavic counterpart, to the East. Informants frequently expressed the psychological release of performing identities in bars and clubs, especially in turbofolk spaces that serve as an extolling of what they describe as a unique "Balkan spirit." While much literature focuses on turbofolk as historically associated with nationalism and war, this paper focus upon the contemporary experience of turbofolk in Banja Luka in relation to theories of cosmopolitan/local divides, seeking to evaluate turbofolk's potential as resistance to orientalist representations of the region and the pervasive influence of Western culture.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction, Historical Context, and Positionality

In his *The Location of Culture* Bhabha argues for the continuing need to apply post-colonial theories of domination in a broad context, as economic "solutions" to global inequalities as practiced by the IMF and World Bank "have the feel of a colonial ruler"—and so-called cosmopolitans generally celebrate the periphery only in so far as it reproduces profit for the metropole (Bhabha, 1997, pp. xv-xvi, xiv). Furthermore, he promotes a vantage point for research that takes everyday meaning making, and everyday lives into account. While he does not wish to "glorify" life at the margins of the world system, he seeks:

> to make graphic what it means to survive, to produce, to labor and create, within a world-system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country or your people. Such neglect can be a deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary, and it spurs you to resist the polarities of power and prejudice, to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery. (Bhabha, 1997, p. xvi)

Bhabha's words acknowledge the deeply personal effects not only of economic investments, but of cultural productions, that threaten one's lifeworld. It also acknowledges the inability to "place" any individual squarely in center or periphery as such; I hope to show that aesthetic decisions are in themselves a form of resistance and self-definition, especially in their ability to depart vitality to the listener. It is through this lens, and corroborating critiques of the assumed hierarchy of the cosmopolitan over the local, that I will evaluate turbofolk's resistant potential in the locality of Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. While some research has addressed turbofolk's role as a cultural form in the turbulent decades since its origin, little attention has been paid to the implications of turbofolk for a contemporary Balkan identity consistently threatened by Western cultural influences—especially in this Serb-dominated, and often vilified, region of Bosnia.

1.1. Historical Context of Turbofolk

Turbofolk embodies contradiction as an art form while reflecting the social contradictions of contemporary Balkan society. The name derives from the concept of "turbo," or the means of injecting fuel and air into an engine, which could symbolize the cultural pervasion of "high pressure" capitalist ideals, and "folk," which more obviously points to concepts of conservatism and tradition. The music is perhaps best defined by the man who coined its name, Antonije Pušić or "Rambo Amadeus," a Montenegrin avant-garde musician who called his own parodies of late 1980s folk music "turbofolk" (Čvoro, 2016, p. 180). As Cvoro points out, everything about turbofolk's coinage, from Rambo Amadeus' own anachronistic name, to the term's "fusion of tradition with advanced machinery," to the nods within the music itself to high and low culture, constitute "a postmodernist gesture, steeped in irony and parody" (Čvoro, 2016, p. 180). As Irena Šentevska notes, the word has long been employed within the literature as a metaphor for such contradictions. It remains even in scholarly approaches an "elusive term…still unclaimed by official academic protocols" (Šentevska, 2014, p. 413). Turbofolk seems to incite as much enthusiasm among academic observers as it does among its most avid consumers, yet no "'official' academic methodology" emerges with which to study it (Šentevska, 2014, p. 413). The evasiveness of its definition recurred in my own fieldwork, with informants variably defining it in the following terms: one the one hand, as music that popularizes nationalism, that is Jersey Shore with a twist, the fast food of music, a haunted house you should escape, shitty, ugly, torturous, horrible, and brain-washing, and on the other hand, as music that unites the region, that is hymn-like and "our treasure."

Not only turbofolk's etymology, but also a brief overview of its historical development, are necessary for understanding its contemporary status. Its rise in popularity occurred alongside the Yugoslav wars, which began in 1991 and caused approximately 300,000 deaths and displaced hundreds of thousands more (Volčič and Erjavec, 2008, p. 106). After the fall of President Josep Broz Tito,

and with it, the fall of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, factions split along the nationalist lines of Muslim Bosniaks, Catholic Croats, and Orthodox Serbs, categories largely constructed and abused by political elites. Slobodon Milošević, who emerged as the premier leader of the Serb faction in the late 1980s, is often accredited with mobilizing rural Serbia to promote Serbian nationalism, appropriating communist resistance to the bourgeoisie and socio-cultural tropes of pastoral life to rally Serbs against what he described as the other, more aggressive and urbanite nationalisms, all of whom constituted "the global conspiracy against Serbia" (Čvoro, 2012, p. 126).

As Eric Gordy argued, turbofolk emerged as a potent tool of Milosevic's aims, "steeped in consumption, hedonism, and sexuality" (Čvoro, 2012, p. 126). Throughout the nineties, despite "war, international sanctions, poverty, record inflation, systematic corruption, and organized crime," turbofolk remained a flashy distraction infused with "materialism, luxury, and sexual innuendo" (Čvoro, 2012, p. 127). This phenomena finds its prime example in the character of Svetlana Ražnatović Ceca or simply "Ceca," whose hyper-gendered appearance, famed plastic surgeries, and spectacular persona are now part of the collective consciousness of the Balkans (Čvoro, 2012, p. 128). Ceca regularly performed for Serbian troops, and eventually married Zejlko Arkan Ražnatović, leader of the right-wing Serbian Unity Party later indicted by the U.N. for crimes against humanity. Her distinct blend of contradictory elements—materialism, kitsch, nationalism, and melodramatic love stories—came to be the industry standard, and landed Ceca the title of *Srpska majka* or "the mother of Serbs."

The distinct and affective power of turbofolk continued into the late 1990s, when, as Uros Čvoro argues, the 1999 air strikes on Serbia by NATO marked "a profound moment of transformation [for turbofolk] from Serbian nationalism into pan-Balkan regionalism" (Čvoro 2012, p. 129). Although rationalized as a humanitarian intervention against Milošević's ethnic cleansing of Albanians, and supposedly targeting infrastructure rather than civilians, the bombings led to increased anti-

NATO and anti-West demonstrations. Turbofolk stars emerged as spectacles "singing against the bombs," and the genre obtained an intimate relationship between music and the will of the people, articulating "resistance to the dreaded neoliberal new world order" (Čvoro 2012, pp. 130-131). I agree with Cvoro's evaluation of the most recent stage in turbofolk's history, wherein this resistance transforms turbofolk's specifically Serb origins, not only because of turbofolk's popularity across the former Yugoslavia and prevalence across national groups (both in its production and consumption), but also due to the processes by which the so-called "primitiveness and backwardness" of its hedonism now fuel a pan-Balkan identity that resists globalization and cosmopolitanism. As Čvoro comments on its current state, "nationalist turbofolk is always perceived in isolation as a cultural aberration that appeared at a certain time and disappeared with that time, despite the fact that its cultural logic permeates every aspect of today's sociability in Serbia and the Balkans" (Čvoro 2012, p.135).

1.2. T Banja Luka

Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a fertile ground for studying turbofolk as not only a metaphor, but also a powerful constructor, of contested identities. The city itself lies at a complex crossroads of Balkan society. The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, constructed largely by the international community, was granted one "entity," Republika Srpska or the Republic of Serbia, to appease the ethnic Serb constituency within post-war borders. Because the narratives of the Bosnian war within the former Yugoslavia often vilify the Serb faction, Bosnian Serbs as a broad generalization resist the Western media's condemnation of Serbs who participated in the war, viewing them as defending longstanding Serb traditions that were historically contested by Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman invasions. Thus, Serbs within Bosnia often relate to Serbian cultural manifestations with greater interest or dedication than Serbs within the state of Serbia. Although turbofolk originated within Serbia, Banja Luka is a necessary field for observing turbofolk's post-1990s implications for identity.

My positionality in the Banjan Lukan context influenced my work throughout the process, from the formulation of my research question to my conversations with informants to my theoretical considerations. I first visited Bosnia during my undergraduate years to teach English and film in Sarajevo, where I felt an intense co-existence of the failure of structures and the success of individual friendships that have long bound me to the region. I experienced cultural clashes in matters of financial privilege, of feminism, and of health. My American co-workers and I marveled, so problematically, over the cheap cost of a Bosnian bus ticket on the U.S. dollar. Women could not sit on the ground, lest their ovaries malfunction. Two taxi windows could not be open at once, or the *promaja* breeze might paralyze our necks and faces. But oftentimes, the personal affects of my Bosnian friends felt somehow less foreign to me than the home that waited for me across the Atlantic.

My relationship with Banja Luka began in the fall of 2013 when I arrived to work for the U.S. Embassy as a Fulbright scholar, and later for an NGO and a Belgrade-based publication. My love of Banja Luka can be best explained through my experiences in the summer of 2014, when, after getting evicted, I had to stuff everything I owned into two suitcases, and move to my friend Sandra Brankovic's apartment. My neighbors believed that I lied in my landlords' contract. Too many friends came and went—I couldn't possibly be the only tenant. And besides, I was a single American woman in the capital of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia. My job, my nationality, my existence, on the thirteenth floor of Kordunaška 12 was deviance enough.

I remember the ministry of education ridiculing my visits to History classrooms—only English could, in their minds, remain apolitical. They urged me not to mention identity, or the war. But I always encouraged the students' burning questions: "Do you like Sarajevo or Banja Luka better? Why did you bomb Belgrade? Do you speak Serbian? It is called Serbian, not Bosnian, you know…" Locals in bars, dizzied from *rakija* and cigarette smoke, demanded similar explanations. But I attempted to listen, understand, and recount.

I remember that Sandra did not know I was coming. On the day I moved, the taxi driver helped me assemble my things haphazardly on the sidewalk in front of her apartment, and just when Sandra lifted her blinds to say, "Dana?!" rain began to fall. "I see you are finally coming to live with us."

In Sandra and her sister Daca's apartment, more than in any school, embassy, or bar, I witnessed Banja Lukan life. When I moved in, I felt the absence of their mother, who had died one month earlier of rapid onset cirrhosis, and of the failures of the Bosnian health care system. Nurses and tenants stole her medicine. The best doctors could only be enticed by money or connections to give her proper care. Sandra, Daca, our friends and I scrambled our money together for the funeral. As I counted the crumpled bills on Sandra's bed, I watched her cry and say, "My mom died because she was poor."

The schools, hospitals, and even international NGOs represented for me the utter frustration of Bosnian life, but Sandra represented its counterpart: resiliency. In my new home, with friends that came over for Bosnian *kafa* or *Nektar*, Sandra and I laughed at the absurdity of our external labels: Bosniak, Croat, Serb, American. The light that peered out through every broken system illuminated the daily dramas of Sandra and Dana. I laughed with Sandra at her late paychecks and she laughed with me at the nationalists that interrogated me about Balkanist. We both laughed at the cheap šunka and bread we broke for dinner, the sexist men that tried to understand us, and the football hooligans' chants that echoed through our bedroom windows.

I found it all too easy during my year in Banja Luka to conceptualize Bosnia as a unified culture or space. I see now that, while making my own ethnographical observations of Bosnia, perhaps in an effort to transcend the problematic, tripartite approach to Bosnian peoples—deeming them either Bosniak, Croat, or Serb—I found myself mythologizing a pan-Bosnian "spirit." While Americans came to represent to me an Appollonian fixation on productivity and Puritanism, Bosnians came to

represent to me the casting away of self-criticism in favor of a joie de vivre that did not seem possible in the bounds of my American past. I interpreted otherwise dilapidated and broken spaces as defiant. I witnessed my friends spin the darkest situations into comedy, and began to laugh along when they would mock the pervasiveness of my own country in their spaces. In short, I noticed Bosnians' defiant spirit because I saw it as beautiful. I approached culture not with Boasian empiricism, but rather as a Benedictian "interpretive art," wherein my understanding of "the other" bled into an understanding of myself (McGee and Warms 213).

This paper, while stemming from, and hoping to honestly represent, my personal attachment to Banja Luka, constitutes an inquiry into meaning-making in the spirit of Bhabha's words on life at the margins. In the following chapters, I will explore the extent to which turbofolk represents a narrative of reclaimed Balkan identity in opposition to Western hegemony—the hegemony I inhabited during my Fulbright year as a teacher of English language and an employee of the U.S. government. It is with great humility and self-criticism that I seek to represent the answer to this question. And it is my hope that my most recent fieldwork period, in tandem with my witnessing of Banjalukan nightlife throughout 2013-2014, have led me to properly represent Banjaluka's community.

Over the course of my fieldwork, it became clear that my research question must be answered in relation to three major concepts: others' representations of the Balkans as oriental or "lacking" Europeanness; the processes by which Banjalukans associate themselves with Western and hence "cosmopolitan" music and values, or with local music and values; and finally, the potential (or not) of musical experiences to carry political weight. Throughout, I refer to my informants' struggle with self-stigmatization, or internalization of a critical Western gaze, and with it, orientalist depictions of the Balkans. If my hypothesis is true, turbfolk emerges as a reclamation of self-exoticization which, through spite and defiance, disempowers the Western gaze.

Following a review of my methodology and the literature to date on turbofolk and cosmopolitanism in the Balkans, I will elucidate my ethnography and analyses in relation to these three topics. In Chapter 4, I will use Maria Todorova's seminal work on orientalist views of the Balkans, and especially her depiction of the Balkans as a "bridge" between various hegemons, to discuss how a bridge-like existence leaves the region both vulnerable to and empowered by its in-betweenness, especially when argued through Mary Douglas' concept of powers and dangers. In Chapter 5, I will explore the local significance of "going out" in Banja Luka, and the means by which aesthetic forms and their consumption come to symbolize moral-political values among my informants, especially in relation to the local/cosmopolitan divide. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I will evaluate the dialectic inherent in the embodied experience of music in public space; from the perspective of false consciousness, it could be mere escapism, while from a post-colonial perspective, it could give rise to the very vitality necessary for dismantling the invasion of geopolitical structures into everyday life in the semi-periphery.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Although turbofolk is a widely acknowledged aspect of Balkan culture, and could have great bearing on musicological, anthropological, sociological, literary, and media and urban studies of the Balkans, it occupies limited space within academia. Turbofolk is described in such discrete ways as fake folk or kitsch, and therefore unworthy of serious study; as having key implications for Orientalist approaches to culture within the Balkans; as a mainstream culture of socialist and postsocialist Yugoslavia; as a subculture within socialist and postsocialist Yugoslavia; as an escapism from socialism's harsh political realities; or, as the voice of the winners and of the losers of post-socialist transitions (Šentevska 2014, p. 413). Given this unresolved nature of turbofolk within previous study, it requires deeper exploration. I share Sentevska's suggestion that the goal in academic approaches to turbofolk should not to be to choose among these various, contradictory definitions of turbofolk, but to use its very complexity as a way of illuminating the identities that were produced by the fall of socialism, ethnic warfare, and by the post-socialist, post-war context.

One faction of the existing literature discusses issues of representation surrounding female turbofolk stars, whose hyper-gendered performances were often used as tools of nationalization. As Marija Grujić notes, the music form's increasing success in the 1990s aligned with the increasing homogenization of the Serbian state (Grujić, 2009, p. ii). From this perspective, expressions of national homogeneity and gender norms within turbofolk performances reinforced political conformity in an era of rampant corruption and of genocidal warfare. While Grujić pays some attention to audience and consumption, her work comprises, primarily, a reading of turbofolk singers as avatars of state sanctioned values.

Catherine Baker's work similarly delves into turbofolk performances as constructing normativity and inclusion. While researching, like Grujić, turbofolk's implicit reinforcement of

Serbian norms, Baker also explores, through a historical approach, the explicit aims of professional interests groups that promoted turbofolk in opposition to more marginalized forms of music (Baker 2013, p. 2). This focus on turbofolk as an arm of Slobodon Milosevic's regime in the 1990s also appears in Ivana Kronja's work. Kronja even paints turbofolk as the "popular culture counterpart" to radio and television propaganda that justified Serbia's involvement in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo (Kronja 2004, p. 103). While turbofolk can be, on the one hand, associated with a time of "war, chaos and despair," Kronja argues that its glamorous and danceable tone, its glorification of cults of violence, and its nods to Western acceptance of gratuitous consumption can also act as a mask (Kronja 2004, p. 103). Turbofolk comprises a dazzling spectacle, and hence, could provide a mass distraction for those who suffered dire violence and poverty in turbofolk's prime.

While much of the literature does justice to the problematics of turbofolk, i.e., its potential for reinforcing nationalism and justifying the glamorous materialism of Serbian elites who rose to power through exploitation and crime, much work remains to be done in exploring turbofolk's capacity for maintaining Serbian entity that was marginalized through processes of Western intervention in the 1990s and in postwar reconciliation efforts. I will align my own arguments with Uroš Čvoro, who points out that turbofolk is often described as '"backwards' and 'kitsch"' in Western media such as *The Vice Guide*, rendering it a perceived threat to cosmopolitan art forms and values (Čvoro, 2016, p. 2). Turbofolk, he argues, could be seen as a sort of "genuine" art form that resists cultures brought to the region via the forces of globalization and neoliberalism. As I have explained in the historical context, this holds especially plausible in the post-Milošević years where turbofolk could reflect what Čvoro deems "a reverse 'postmodern' nationalism," or a self-exoticization, wherein Balkan cultural consumers affirm their "Balkan other" identity over the influence of Western popular culture (Čvoro, 2016, p. 53). Although this affirmation of identity which Čvoro deems "new Balkanness" does not absolve nationalism within the former Yugoslavia, he argues that it "displaces" nationalism and thus

begets "a shared transnational cultural space" (Čvoro, 2012 p. 132). In this space, turbofolk inverts "from a marker of backwardness and primitivism into a self-exoticizing label of passion, emotion, and joy of life, in contrast to the lifeless West" (Čvoro, 2012, p. 132).

In their "Paradox of Ceca and the Turbofolk Audience," Zala Volčič and Karmen Erjavec take a more critical view. While they acknowledge Ceca's potential as a cultural icon to recreate ties between the nationalisms of the former Yugoslavia, they delve into a difficult and as yet unresolved paradox: "Why and how do audiences, who survived the bloody war of the 1990s, listen to turbofolk music that once incited and motivated Serbian soldiers" (Volčič and Erjavec, 2008, pp. 103-104)? With greater scrutiny than Čvoro, they question the extent to which an "affective economy" of popular production really guarantees "struggle, resistance, or even survival"; perhaps, it can only be proved that it "provide[s] the 'energy' that is necessary for audiences to act," and does not imply either nationalist mobilization, or its counterpart as per Čvoro's work—anti-neoliberal mobilization. In pursuit of this answer, Volčič and Erjavec embark on the significant task, in Croatia and Slovenia, to study turbofolk audiences, claiming that prior research relegated them as "an undifferentiated, unthinking, or brainwashed mass" (Volčič and Erjavec, 2008, p. 109).

While I support the intent of Volčič and Erjavec's research question, I take issue with their interpretation. They surmise that their informants' expressions of a desire to enjoy popular culture "without," as one of their informants put it, "having to reinsert it into the legacy of violence and hatred that we would like to put behind us," signifies "politicization fatigue" (Volčič and Erjavec, 2008, p. 116). This does not allow for the possibility of enjoyment to be associated with political acts, nor does it allow turbofolk the potential to signify Čvoro's concept of new Balkanness. Ceca symbolizes only, in their analysis, "the triumph of commodity over history"—a figure who capitalized both upon Serbian militant nationalism and, ironically, the tragic circumstances this ideology created for her fans in the war's aftermath. Once again, Volčič and Erjavec fail to situate the spectacle of

turbofolk as a possible "counter-spectacle" within a broader frame, both in the literal sense of geography (how the Balkans could be set against Western hegemony) and within the metaphorical field of possible music consumption (how turbofolk could be set against Western cultural production) (Debord, 2014). Lastly, I seek in my own work to distance myself from Volčič and Erjavec's psychoanalytic assumptions. Their claims that the negotiation of one's "blood-drenched past" causes repression and denial, and that a painful life "demands the development of different defense mechanisms" consigns their informants' claims to false consciousness (Volčič and Erjavec, 2008, p. 116). Contrastingly, in my methodology, I considered informants' own characterizations of their own cultural consumption as imbued with the very agency I am seeking to study.

My study also must be situated within the legacy of Eric Gordy's seminal work, The Culture of Power in Serbia, in which he addressed turbofolk as a part of his "thick description" of the socio-cultural environment of 1994-1995 Belgrade. In a 2005 revisitation of this book, Eric Gordy offers suggestions for further research. Gordy affirms my own informant-centric approach, suggesting ethnography as necessary in any sociological evaluation of politics and culture (Gordy, 2005, pp. 15-16). Most evaluations of his book lauded his engagement with political questions beyond elite perspectives. Secondly, he affirmed that the divisions between "overarching worldviews which are generally open and ones which are generally closed" he encountered in Serbian society in 1994-1995 remain. This gives credence specifically to my engagement with theoretical problematizations of cosmopolitanism and Balkan orientalism, especially as explored by Maria Todorova, Homi Bhabha.

This problematic has been explored anthropologically by Ivana Spasić, Marina Simić, and Stef Jansen, who apply theories of cosmopolitanism specifically to the Balkans. In her "Cosmopolitanism as Discourse and Performance: A View from the Semiperiphery," Spasic urges social theorists, who often describe themselves as cosmopolitan, to apply their critiques inward, and to realize that in automatically painting cosmopolitanism as "open, enlightened, progressive, global diverse,

contemporary, inclusive," they paint the local as its "closed, isolated, homogeneous, conservative, local autistic and intolerant" counterpart (Spasić, 2011, p. 270). This becomes especially significant in controversial social spaces where "a discursive practice of (self) labelling and classifying, and a performative practice of 'being' cosmopolitan (or not)" influence one's symbolic capital (Spasić, 2011, p. 274). The Balkans offers a prime example of such a semi-peripheral social space, where many feel themselves to be, at once, "'too white,' too industrial, too developed, and, most importantly, not eligible for claiming victimhood due to the absence of colonial experience," and although partly engaged in Western "superiority," feel an enduring lack of Europeanness (Spasić, 2011, p. 275). Lastly, Spasić offers a convincing indictment of cosmopolitanism theory that universalizes the contemporary experience of globalization—that assume all inhabits of the 21st century live, love, and work on an international scale. This holds especially true for Ulrich Beck's concept of "banal cosmopolitanism," which disregards the class divides, especially those stemming from global inequalities, that deny many an "everyday" experience of cosmopolitanism. As Spasić says of Serbia, "In these quarters, it is not common at all to cook Korean dishes for the family dinner, or have a tortilla for lunch: eating foreign is a marker of social distinction" (Spasić 280). In my experiences in Banja Luka, especially given my deeply internal view of so-called "ex-pat" culture, Spasić's critique rings true—and far beyond the culinary. Only those with excess capital, not only of the monetary but also of the emotional, temporal, and the bodily variety, have the luxury of reaching past their original belongings in order to build new communities (Spasić, 2011, p. 280).

In Simić and Jansen's text, we see Balkan cosmopolitanism, which Jansen associates with antinationalism, articulated through aesthetics and distinction. Simić, who pursued an ethnography of young cultural consumers in Novi Sad, Serbia, realized that for her informants, the aesthetics of rock 'n' roll music were imagined as granting access to the West, or at least to a "socio-cultural aesthetic" that is expressed, if not universally, by several listeners around the world (Simić, 2013, p.

331-332). This sort of moralization of aesthetics held true, also, for cultural forms specific to the Balkans which, in the eyes of some of Simić's informants, failed to achieve a "universal" aesthetics (Simić, 2013, pp. 331-332). Through his ethnography in the mid-to-late 1990s throughout the former Yugoslavia, Jansen came the similar conclusion that, from the nationalist point of view, cosmopolitanism represented inauthenticity and "the dangers of rootless disloyalty" while from the antinationalist point of view, it represented "a desirable alternative organization of social life" post-war (Jansen, 2008, p. 76). Like Simić, Jansen acknowledges the concomitant, morally charged binaries produced by the cosmopolitan/local divide: "pro-Western or European (vs. Balkan), educated (vs. illiterate), autonomous-individualist (vs. conformist-collectivist), gender equal (vs. homogenous), sophisticated (vs. boorish), connected (vs. isolated), welcoming towards otherness (vs. xenophobic), going forward (vs. standing still), etc." (Jansen, 2008, p. 88). As Jansen notes, each of these dichotomies could fit within an evolutionist schema, thus corroborating the relevance of post-colonialism and orientalism to the region.

Following the problematic laid out by Spasić, Simić, and Jansen, I will align my own work with Gordy's suggestions and with Čvoro's intent on extoling the identity-building aspects of turbofolk, especially insofar as it serves as a source of authenticity and resistance in a space explicitly and implicitly controlled by the West in the war and post-war years. I hope to produce new epistemologies surrounding turbofolk through 1. A deeper look into its contemporary connections with cosmopolitan/local divisions; 2. my methodology in the field, which I will explicate in the following section; and 3. My field itself, which I have described in my introduction as especially relevant to resistance against cosmopolitanism.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

As I explained in my introduction, my positionality in the field meant that my informants are also among my most intimate friends—friends who have witnessed me try, fail, and try again to understand the complexities of culture within Republika Srpska. Structurally, this gave me wide access to my target group—young people who regularly go out on weekends. As Simić explains of her own ethnography, youth is a constructed category defined and "demarcated" differently across different societies (Simić, 2013, p. 326). In my own project, most of my informants ranged from ages 16 to 34, with occasional exceptions in the cases where older informants offered their opinions about youth with whom they interact. Within the interviews themselves, this intimacy was often a privilege rather than a limitation; informants felt comfortable sharing, for instance, sexual experiences that stemmed from practices of going out, memories of the war, and honest points of pride or insecurity in their processes of becoming in relation to cultural consumption.

My former job as an English teacher gave me several starting points among former students and among institutions now working with new students. Thus, I had access to English language conversation courses that allowed me to conduct interviews in large focus groups, and was able to hear the opinions of a total of 42 Banjalukans in a structured interview setting (several others offered insights during participant observation). Focus groups proved especially helpful grounds for debate, as informants often disagreed in illuminating ways about turbofolk's implications. Many of these informants are fluent English speakers who have traveled widely across other parts of Europe, and in some cases, the U.S. This led to extremely helpful insights on external views of turbofolk and Balkan culture more generally, which are significant to my analysis of orientalism and self-stigmatization. It also included several people who themselves study, formally or informally, cultural difference and social problems. I owe them credit, in this regard, as co-informants who often synthesized personal

stories with their own anthropological theories. However, my pool of informants also lacked the perspective of those who would not usually attend, or be in the community of those who attend, English language courses—especially courses offered by the U.S. Embassy. Not only my past connections but also my intermediate Serbian language skills limited me in this regard; my informants were perhaps more sympathetic with cosmopolitan rather than local values.

Beyond interviews, I underwent constant participant observation. Firstly, I inhabited turbofolk spaces and their counterpart, alternative and/or rock spaces, as frequently as possible, often staying out until sunrise to dance with and talk with informants, affording me an empathetic lens into their rituals of celebration and leisure. Secondly, and more significantly, I stayed once more with Sandra and Daca, my former roommates. This allowed me to perform ethnography in the deeply personal style of Abu Lughod, and to evaluate the public spaces I studied while grounded in the realities of the private sphere (Abu Lughod, 2008). My conversations, meals, money-spending practices, and extremely intimate conversations with Sandra, Daca, and Sandra's boyfriend proved invaluable. As Sandra and Daca often accompanied me on our nighttime adventures, I was able to incorporate their views of space and people with my own, much less emic, observations.

Post-field work, I transcribed all interviews and coded them for their relevance to my three main arguments: orientalism and self-stigmatization, style and distinction and their relation to local versus Western music, and ecstatic experiences of music.

CHAPTER 4: Balkan Orientalism—Self-Stigmatization and the Powers and Dangers of a Bridge-Like Existence

In the section, I will explore the relevance of longstanding orientalist depictions of the Balkans to the need for localized, resistant practices. Maria Todorova's extension of Said's theory of orientalism to the Balkan region is the natural starting point. Todorova notes the discursive power of the phrase "balkanization," and the socio-historical link between this phrase and the Balkans themselves. Thus, she places the term balkanization in the Derridean context of polysemy, succeeding where Said fails in considering non-Western individuals' and communities' production of meaning from signs and cultural products "which come from afar" (Todorova, 1997, p. 22).

Despite its origin in the seemingly apolitical mountain range separating Romania from Bulgaria, the phrase "Balkans" carries longstanding orientalist and post-colonialist implications. From as early as the 1930s, it was employed as a derogatory term, both by Western outsiders and by contingents within the region that sought to distance themselves from the term's implied "disorder" and inferiority. Even in attempts to use the less politically imbued "Southeastern Europe," the region and its imagined characteristics were influenced by Germany's quest to dominate the region and force its multiplicities into an easily dominated collective (Todorova, 1997, p. 28). Throughout the twentieth century, the imagined geographies surrounding the term ebbed and flowed depending upon whether the nations in question could "attain" the anti-Balkan signifier, "European." For instance, Romanian scholars in the 1930s resented the fact that the people who "nourished the theater and music of ancient Greece and the thought of Plato…had given Rome so many emperors and dignitaries" bore a name with Turkish origins (Todorova, 1997, p. 29). Similarly, German scholars took only the historical sway of hegemonic powers, such as the Habsburgs and Ottomans, or Rome and Byzantium, into account when drawing the geography of the Balkans; due to apparent similarities with the West, for example, they often excluded Hungarians from the name. The rhetoric of period travelogues insists that the

Hungarians "resent[ed] being called Balkanites" and considered themselves "greatly superior to the Slavic people of the Balkans" (Todorova, 1997, p. 29).

Todorova notes that, interestingly, Balkan peoples' internalization of balkanization's myriad negative signifiers is not simply a linear cause of Western discourse, but part of a complex power relation wherein a negative self image, incited by the standards of both the internal and external gaze, also plays a role. Through the lens of Erving Goffman's stigmatization theory, the geographically Balkan person may come to identify with the word's negative connotations, "perceiv[ing], usually quite correctly, that whatever others profess, they do not really 'accept' him" and become "intimately alive to what others see as his failing" (Goffman, 1978, p. 7). For Goffman, it is a reversal of expectations that produces such a stigma. Regarding stigma of "race, nation, and religion" as in the case of the supposedly non-Western and non-European Balkans, there remains "an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated," since what we come to anticipate via the hegemony of representation is, in fact, Western and European (Goffman, 1978, p. 4). The stigma of enjoying a Balkan cultural production leads some consumers to turn the same gaze upon themselves as the imagined gaze of the Western, Orientalizing critic, and "shame becomes a central possibility" (Goffman, 1978, p. 7). This sense of shame was evidenced by many of my informants joking that, since they admitted to liking turbofolk, I should delete the whole interview.

Even elite Balkan intellectuals have interpellated certain archetypal Balkan characteristics that absorb and reflect the Western gaze. The literary hero Bay Ganyo Balkanski created by Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov, for instance, came to stand for "boorishness, crudeness, grossness" even among Bulgarians themselves. The same phenomena can be illustrated in post-communist Albania, where Christian values became lauded as the next generation's only hope against, as one Albanian article put it, "the Islamization of life [in the Balkans] and primitiveness of our social and economic development" (Todorova, 1997, p. 45). Fascinatingly, this pattern spans several of Todorova's

examples from Balkan discursive history; the terms coarse, cruel, ruthless, bantering, materialist, telluric, and rude recur, seemingly as much in Balkan peoples' self-designation as in their stigmatization by others. While many of Todorova's cases are more extreme, including expressions of hatred and rejection of one's ancestry, the same structural processes apply. Even into the 1990s during the beginnings of Yugoslavia's dissolution, Yugoslav writers living in Western Europe referred to the region as "down there" in the "mounds of death," diametrically opposing their own culture to a "higher" one and reiterating Enlightenment/Neo-Platonist/Christian associations between knowledge and power with upward movement (Todorova, 1997, p. 53). Other discourses described the Yugoslav wars as an animalistic quest for "soil and blood", hypocritically distancing violence and territorial expansion from Western histories.

In Banja Luka, self-stigmatization recurs frequently in conversations with foreigners viewing the culture through an external gaze. Especially foreigners working with international organizations tend to speak with sorrow or shame about the state of affairs in Republika Srpska; one informant from Banja Luka, but working at the U.S. Embassy library, lamented the lack of "progress" in her community but felt proud to be part of the resistance to "backwards" norms. Individual traits such as tardiness or disorganization are, for the librarian, a sickness of Balkan mentality that can be remedied through her careful regard for her students, several of which she is "training" in the norms of the U.S. work ethic with hopes they can find educational opportunities outside of Bosnia. In less extreme forms of self-stigmatizations, Banjalukans expressed surprise at the sheer existence of academic interest in turbofolk, and more broadly, in my consistent visits to the region. After concluding an interview with my friend Marko, a gay man who feels more painfully than most the pervasive norms of Bosnian "traditions," he grabbed my phone and placed it before my face like a microphone said, "Now Dana, the real interview will begin. Why would you ever choose to come here?" This same informant employed the aforementioned postcolonial insistence on "progress,"

describing non-turbofolk brands of pop as inherently more "civilized" and counter to an "animalistic" Balkan pop. And when asked what Marko was proud of in the Balkans, he said simply, "Nothing. I am proud of nothing…I'm not even proud that I survived. I am proud of nothing here. I really think this is like the black hole in the universe, this area."

This attitude is further interpellated by several of my former colleagues in the "development," NGO, and international organizations fields not from the Balkans themselves, including one acquaintance from France, Corentin, who works as an I.T. consultant with clients from several countries, but is based in Banja Luka largely due to the cheap rent. While walking home after a night out, Corentin exclaimed, "Everyone in Bosnia thinks in a short term manner!" Pointing to bad air quality resulting from people burning illegal materials to generate heat, he quipped, "Well, we probably have a few years knocked off our life just from living here." Rather than blaming unemployment and a lack of resources upon structural phenomena, Corentin chalked it up to orientalizing notions of laziness and disorder. He applied the same attitude to late, unreliable transportation systems, blaming not the elite but rather the same imagined, pervasive Balkan "character."

For many, self-stigmatization is managed through the geographical logic proposed by Milica Bakić-Hayden* as "nesting orientalisms"—"a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised" (Bakić-Hayden, 1995, p. 918). In Bakić-Hayden's schematic, the Balkans are not only viewed as east of "Western Europe" and thus having inherently "violent" characteristics, but also incorporate this logic within, placing the eastern Balkans closer to a mythologized East and to an Ottoman past, thus fulfilling more oriental stereotypes (Bakić-Hayden, 1995, p. 918). Those who live in areas previously dominated by the Hapsburgs assume superiority to those from areas previously dominated by the Ottomans, while Orthodox peoples in the latter areas assume superiority still to the truly "oriental" Muslims with whom they share space. Bakić-Hayden's theory is especially relevant to the Serb-dominated Banja Luka, as Serbs who "have not scored high

on the hegemonic western scale" often affirm their own Europeanness by referring to their defense of European culture and Christianity against further westward Ottoman invasion (Bakić-Hayden, p. 924-925). Of course, as in previously mentioned cases of orientalism, these instances of stigmatization were largely interpellated by the Western gaze; as Bakić-Hayden notes, the western media recurrently referred to "ancient hatreds" as an explanation for the Bosnian war, thus "obscuring the modernity of conflict based on contested notions of state, nation, national identity and sovereignty" and conjuring images explored in Todorova's text of the "primitive" Balkans (Bakić-Hayden, 1995, p. 929).

Interestingly, attitudes towards turbofolk align with the imagined geographies of nesting orientalism, at least in terms of what my friend Anđela, an English language teacher who herself studied turbofolk at the English faculty at the University of Banja Luka, described as "official attitudes." In Zagreb, she noted, turbofolk performances are not aired on national television and people do not admit to enjoying the music. Croatians are, in Anđela's view, "a little bit more open to other kinds [of music]." Jovan, a young web designer who has been my constant friend'—and debate partner—over years of discussing politics, held a similar view of Croatians' consumption, but with more derision:

> "Croats are leaning to the pop music. Like if you watch their tv it's all about pop. But Muslims are not even trying. In Serbia everyone is listening to folk. But you also have rock bands, like really good ones…In Serbia you have like all the music you have in Croatia but, Croats don't sing their songs, not like Serbians. In Croatia they'll sing more American songs and I really don't like that because you have so much beautiful songs in Croatia…and they are not singing them. They seem more Americanized, you know?"

For many, such patterns of consumption amounted to a kind of betrayal. In a conversation with Đorđe, a seventeen-year-old student who feels allegiance both to the U.S., where he studied abroad, and to his own region, he said laughing of Croatians and Slovenians, "I don't like their culture. They try to be Italian, they try to be everything they're not. And that's what I don't like. I'm like no, you're still in the Balkans! You cannot run away!" Here, we see an outright example of Bakić-

Hayden's theory. While imagining the borders of the "true" Balkans, he expresses derision towards Croatians and Slovenians, both members of the E.U. and situated West of Republika Srpska. His joke also betrays the essentialism of oriental tropes; no matter the political, economic, or social changes within Croatia and Slovenia, they nonetheless retain "a Balkan spirit"—and are all the more foolish to attempt "running away."

Interestingly, though, informants' takes on their "balkanized" surroundings are often coupled with humor, as when Sandra, while explaining a German shop selling the lowest quality German goods to Banjalukans, exclaimed, "We'll just send this to these motherfuckers! They'll like it!" This humorous engagement emerges in many informants' relation to turbofolk, as most relegated their experience of the music to a space of joviality and drunkenness rather than one of hatred. My former student Andrej, a medical student at the University of Banja Luka, who had the most extensive knowledge of and lust for turbofolk of all my informants, explained his pride for Bosnian culture as stemming from, and not in spite of, its disorganization. In reference to the law, he said, "You can do anything," even relaying a story of his neighbor implicated in accidentally killing someone else in a car accident and receiving a light sentence. The focus groups I held at the U.S. Embassy library and Oxford English language center that dared not raise a hand when I inquired who liked turbofolk still enjoyed explaining the presence of the music at special occasions such as *slava* (saint's days) unique to Serbian culture.

The internalization of the term "balkanization," then, can be set against an embracing and affirmation of the region's position between East and West. In opposition to self-stigmatization comes an unabashed "self-designation," to borrow Todorova's term. In addition to the Western gaze and the internalized Western gaze some Balkanites turn upon themselves emerges a third discourse of re-appropriation and empowerment that sees the multiplicity and disunity—and with it, the difficulty of being understood and governed by an Other—of the Balkans as boon instead of bane. Near the

end of the Bosnian war, a Croat playwright Slobodan Snajder proclaimed, "I would like to stress that this is not only a region of misfortunes but also a space in which the strong traditions that have shaped European culture are oscillating" (Todorova, 1997, p. 54). This implies a spirit of creativity and change, instead of animalistic violence, deriving from unsettled times (Swidler, 1983). From such a perspective, the mechanisms of self-stigmatization could turn to de-stigmatization, from an assertion that one is not either East or West to an assertion that one is both East and West, occupying an exclusive positionality that both hegemons, crystallized and essentialized as in Said's works, cannot.

Here, Todorova beautifully employs the Nietzschean aphorism from the prologue of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal" (Todorova, 1997, p. 59; Nietzsche, 2006). The "abnormality of life on the bridge" is not easy, as Balkan cultures historically engaged in violent clashes, both symbolic and bodily, between hegemons. But Todorova, herself a Bulgarian intellectual, suggests that Balkan nations turn the discourse towards a Nietzschean pride in undergoing and overcoming, in having to exert more effort towards maintaining their ontological status than the less threatened hegemons on either side of the "bridge" (Todorova, 1997, p. 59).

The force of the bridge metaphor and its prevalence beyond theoretical observation is evidenced by a conversation with Aleksa, a nineteen-year-old studying philosophy at the University of Banja Luka. He explained to me the tumultuous history of the region: "You've got us [Serbs] settling here, killing a lot of people and settling in, you've got Orthodox Christianity taking its hold, basically a feudal empire. You've got the Turkish empire taking over and then years of blood mixing to the point where people who hate Muslims are 60% genetically Muslim ourselves." At the end of his historical summary, Aleksa looked me in the eyes and repeated Todorova's theory back to me, saying, "One of our writers described this area as a bridge—a very beautiful place, but it's not a good place to live."

Todorova cleverly places the bridge metaphor in Mary Douglas' terms of purity and pollution, wherein "polluted" in-between space could emerge as more powerful than unified, "pure" space. I would like to delve further than Todorova into Douglas' commentary on interstitial space, which recurred throughout my fieldwork both in aesthetic terms, as turbofolk defies categorization, and in geographical terms. Drawing from Van Gennep, Douglas offers a similar metaphor, this time viewing society as a house wherein danger lies in passing from one room to another, "simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable" (Douglas, 1966, p. 97). But in Douglas, as in Nietzsche, society's quest for order does not signify a damnation of disorder. While disorder threatens existing patterns, "it has potentiality. It symbolizes both danger and power" (Douglas, 1966, p. 95).

This view is central to some Banjalukans' concept of the local as resisting the inherent hegemony of cosmopolitanism—because Balkan localities are themselves defined by transition. As Ivor Glavaš and Alesandra Tatić note from Aleksandar Diklic's and Dubravka Stojanovic's historical account of urbanization in Belgrade, "there were a number of public spaces that made 16th century Belgrade especially attractive for passers-by: bazaars, sorts of pedestrian streets, shops, markets, and kafanas. Several other travel writers witness the abundance of food and drinks on their way through, notably river fish. One might link this interesting continuity in catering with the discontinuity in every other economic branch needing more maintenance.." (Glavaš and Tatić, 2017). This suggests the centrality of "bridge-like" life in metaphor and in materiality; while Todorova's reference to the bridge is a materialist account, Tatic theorizes that the culture's longstanding focus on "the traveler" lent "third spaces" such pubs and dancehalls more value than they might hold in less "bridge-like" cultures.

Among Banjalukans, several point to this inherent diversity and even indefinability as a "power" more than a "danger," to borrow Doulgas' terms. The post-war consumption of turbofolk, then, aligns with a potential shift in imagined geography. While some of the aforementioned informants' views fit into the logic of nesting orientalisms, others signified a shift towards a united

cultural front against a stigmatizing West—and not against one another. This stemmed for them both from the from the lasting memory of NATO involvement in the 1990s and the inescapable nature of Western media. As for the former, Aleksa confessed, "Even I felt sometimes, when I was a kid, I felt like a patron when I heard Kosovo was no longer part of Serbia. You get caught from first grade discussing what our great epic poems were written about taken away from us in a political move so that NATO would have more power." He then directly linked cultural consumption with the political, noting:

> "There is a big hatred of everything American with most people around here. Which I completely understand and in some cases completely agree with. I'm 50% American already because of all the music, t.v. shows, everything I listen to. I don't even have much of an accent when I speak English because it's kind of my culture already. It's international. But there's also underneath this national pride where you know, my father fought in the war, my mom was there when bombings were happening. You have this entire super force bomb your entire country and people remember that. But the next thing you see, your kids are listening to their music, dressing like them, watching their movies. That's why they want to come back to this, and that's where turbofolk comes in."

Jovan offered a similar point of view:

> "I feel like when you see little children listening to American music and speaking really good American English, and then they go tomorrow to the high school, elementary school and they don't know how to properly write a sentence in Serbian, that's a really fucked up thing. Because nobody in Serbia is trying a bit, because everybody today is on the internet, on telephones, on computers, on games…So when I'm singing those American songs, I don't know."

Although both Aleksa and Jovan describe themselves as anti-turbofolk, they offer significant insight into the political potential for turbofolk despite its frequent dismissals as kitschy and lacking the import of avant-garde music. Even with the continuation of the nesting orientalisms attitude, the distinctively Balkan aesthetic of turbofolk becomes set against the West—and not against other nationalisms. The post-war experience of turbofolk serves as a pawn in a new relation of dominator and dominated, especially since nearly all informants held the opinion that turbofolk is no longer tied with nationalism. In contrast with B-H's theory, as Lela, a young employee of the U.S. Embassy's

program for student exchanges, put it, "I would actually argue that turbofolk has been uniting the region. Because guess what? None of these turbofolk stars…most of them are, when it comes to this kind of stuff, pretty decent people. They don't give a shit if you're Bosniak, Croat, Serb, Albanian."

Bhabha's stance on the subversion of post-colonial power dynamics buttresses the view that turbofolk, as a cultural form, has the potential to shift the self-stigmatization stemming from the Western gaze, and to reaffirm a bridge-like identity. If we apply Bhabha's stance on the relation between colonizer and colonized to the framework of the orientalism of the Balkans, his concepts of "mimicry, sly civility, and hybridity" can amount to a rupture in in the far-reaching impact of Western cultural production (Brooks, 2007, p. 194). In a Foucauldian approach to power, Bhabha holds that these "ironic reversals," in their everydayness, show "the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Brooks, 2007, p. 194). As for "hybridity," it is difficult to imagine a historical context wherein the term more aptly applies; instead of an easily categorizable and thus, easily governable, post-Dayton Bosnia, the "powers" and "dangers" of Balkan resistance lie in its hybrid identities.

CHAPTER 5: A Geographical Approach to Style and Distinction

I will now explore in more detail the ways in which this everydayness is enacted by young Banjalukans through their aesthetic choices of style and space. Given the town's size and relative lack of geographical mobility among Banjalukans, young people often have allegiances to one or a few of these spaces from the time they begin going out, around the age of fifteen according to informants, into their thirties. These spaces, more often than not aligned with specific musical styles, have a distinct materiality reflected even in the city's graffiti. Wedged between rampant graffiti of *Kosovo je Srbija* (Kosovo is Serbia) and *Ne u NATO* (No to NATO) are the arguably equally political murals of Tupac and Bob Marley, two figures memorialized by most of my friends who conceptualize themselves as resisting the current state of affairs in Republika Sprska.

Bourdieu offers a helpful frame for exploring the relationship between these allegiances to a musical style and distinctions between social groups. As he notes in "Symbolic Capital and Social Classes," "In a universe where everything is classified, and therefore classifying – the places, for instance where one ought to be seen, such as fashionable restaurants…….is indispensable to obtain the highest yield for one's society investments and, at minimum, to avoid being identified with groups whose value has fallen (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 296). This is especially fascinating within the Banjalukan context, wherein a 67.6% youth unemployment rate leads the symbolic capital of where one goes out, rather than capital itself, to reign supreme in processes of distinction (World Bank). Bourdieu argues further that "the symbol of distinction, arbitrary as the linguistic sign, receives the determination that make it appear as necessary in the consciousness of agents only from its insertion in the relations of opposition constitutive of the system of distinctive marks which is characteristic of a given social formation. This explains why, being essentially relational…symbols of distinction, which can vary widely depending on the social foil to which they are opposed, are nonetheless perceived as the innate

attributes of a 'natural distinction'" (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 297). The processes of identification that occur in "alternative" or "rock" spaces versus turbofolk clubs are indeed so naturalized as to create an ideological divide in the way one is perceived by others. Savo, my friend and former student who knows the words to every Tupac song, and once dressed as Tupac for Halloween, went so far as to say, "I don't like when someone listens to, for example, Tupac, and puts some song on the [Facebook] wall, and after that puts on the wall some turbofolk. They can't like both. They can't mix those two types." Seemingly, Savo believes that listening to music is not part of a series of fluid moments, but a static signifier of distinction. Further evidence of the intense interpellation of these consumption identities lies in the fact that a debate was held last autumn at a local high school, Gimnazija, between rock and turbofolk fans. According to Anja, a current Gimnaija student who said she sat in between both factions at the debate, the event escalated quickly. Students on each side questioned the authenticity of the other—the extent to which their musical and spatial allegiances really reflected themselves.

Many observations I heard of turbofolk fit into Bourdieu's schema, as when my informants related the consumption of turbofolk to low education level, to a "village" or *selo* mentality. As Jovan said, "I wouldn't say turbofolk is popular between smart people. Definitely not." Similarly, Anja observed, "They'll look at you like you are lower class in every way, economically, intellectually, if you listen to turbofolk and go to places where turbofolk is played." Repeatedly, among the rocker or *rokeri* crowd, the consumption of turbofolk by others was not explained as an isolated, or depoliticized, aspect of their taste. Rather, it became "naturalized," in the Bourdieuian sense, as an innate aspect of their social being.

The same occurs in reverse. *Rokeri*, marked by dressing in less decadent clothing and prefer pub spaces such as Peckham Pub, a space stylized to mimic the British sketch comedy Fools and Horses, to the flashy Opium or Drama turbofolk clubs, whose names directly signify the flashy

materialism of turbofolk, experience judgment from broader society. This creates a complex field wherein both *rokeri* and turbofolk listeners could be construed as existing in a subculture. As Dick Hebdige notes, "Spectacular subcultures express forbidden contents (consciousness of class, consciousness of difference) in forbidden forms (transgressions of sartorial and behavioral codes, law breaking, etc.) They are profane articulations, and they are often and significantly defined as 'unnatural'" (Hebdige, 1980, pp. 91-92). In this field between turbofolk and rock, both spectacular subcultures can be dismissed and Othered as exotic or even clown-like (Hebdige, 1980, p. 97).

As Anđela noted, many people who go to turbofolk spaces tend to judge others using Hebdige's sense of competing cultures. "If you dress differently then you're considered, I don't know, a strange person. If you have piercings or you have an undercut or whatever." Several others noted generalizations of *rokeri* as "not normal" or engaging in drug use. Perhaps most significantly, they are judged for being posers. When I met Andrej and my other former student, Aco, for an interview, they did not want to meet at Žiža, the unspoken—and only—LGBT bar in the city, frequented by young people with hipster dress who often work as activists, teachers, or artists. They felt ashamed to talk in that space about how much they love turbofolk, but jokingly insisted, "They are stupid because they don't like turbofolk! Because they're like, I'm hipster! I'm so high!" Similarly, Sandra mocked the "coolness" of the alternative crowd:

> "I guess it threatens their image or the image they would like to present to other people I guess. Because they're like, oh I'm so cool because I listen to dubstep or drum and bass. And I'm such a crazy party person and I never listen to turbofolk. Which is a lie because you've seen [them] in Galerija like "woo!" And [they] know all the songs so they obviously listens to that. [They] just think it will make [them] seem less cool. They want to seem smarter and better than that. Because they know a Japanese dubstep band or Scandinavian hard rock."

Most significantly, however, what many view as the false sense of superiority among *rokeri* is deeply connected to semi-peripheral positionality of the Balkans. As Anja noted, "I think that they are kind of trying to escape the culture and go above the Balkans like, trying to be so urban and so

Western in a way… They are seen like that, trying to be superior when it comes to intelligence." Ultimately, it is the narratives of self-stigmatization and nesting orientalisms that determine distinction more than class as defined by Bourdieu. The field of consumption in Banja Luka becomes more significantly linked to values associated with certain geographies than it does to class as it is usually construed; even the aforementioned references to education were spoken about in terms of "Western" ideas of equality or open-mindedness rather than receiving a degree. In Marko's words, "Maybe this music is for lower class people in the West, and here it is for everyone. Because there is no high class here. There is no jet set. It is so funny to even imagine a Serbian jet set."

As Simić says of Spasić's work in the Serbian context, "the scope of levels of 'cultural achievement' was very broad and separated from its formal links to levels of education, becoming more like a category of 'cultivation' that was a question of morality and civilization " (Simic, 2013, p. 332). Spasić similarly refuses a wholly Bourdieuian take, suggesting that that while his idea of class included capital based on "social and symbolic movements through social space," it focuses on tropes of Western capitalism and ultimately cannot speak to the post-socialist context (Simić, 2013, p. 332). Most significantly, Simić experienced a similarly geographical, or global, take on class that relates back to the cosmopolitan/local divide:

> "The locations that my subjects came to occupy, and the tactics of positioning that they employed, depended on a notion of cosmopolitanism that obscured their economic class. In addition, people with whom I worked claimed their 'cultural' status on the basis of their aesthetic knowledge, seeing themselves as righteous protectors of culture against urban peasants. There was the belief that the moral corruption that goes hand in hand with a lack of 'culture' was widespread after the fall of socialism." (Simič, 2013, p. 333)

I also wish to align my consideration of distinction with Simić and with Spasic, who calls into importance the positionality of the people of the Balkans in a way that mirrors my own focus on the powers and dangers of their bridge-like perspective. "Bourdieu (1994) insists that the conditions disfavouring the development of universalist potentials," she notes, "are differentiated along lines of

social position, and across societies. What he does not see clearly enough is how these two planes interact, producing what recent feminist theory has aptly called 'intersectionality'. The semiperipheral perspective helps us grasp to what extent these are two interrelated, mutually shaping dimensions produce their effects jointly, and may be analyzed only as such" (Spasić, 2011, pp. 277-278). The region's position "on the global geosymbolic map" must reflect international "imbalances of economic wealth, political power, and military might" (Spasić, 2011, p. 278).

When defining the values of the alternative, rock crowd, for instance, Marko used the terms, "open-minded, liberal, more like some human values like freedom and LGBT friendly." Two female friends and fellow medical students of Andrej and Aco, Anđela and Nikolina, claimed they are "more open-minded about everything," including to different races or to the LGBT community. Moreover, most performances of identity in club spaces, contrary to my original hypothesis, did not denote a higher or lower income; turbofolk spaces can be among the most expensive and yet denote a rural or even "trashy" distinction. In the case of these expensive spaces, I was informed that in many cases it was performative rather than indicative of greater capital. "It's kind of a paradox," Anđela from the Oxford school said, "because they tend to look like these singers and they dress in short dresses provocative way of dressing, and it looks fancy, but it doesn't really matter if they have money or don't have money." This perspective recurred throughout my interviews, as some friends of mine who preferred Western rock or the Western-influenced rock of the former Yugoslavia ascribed the same orientalizing terms I described in chapter one to turbofolk consumption (primal, wild, exotic, or base) rather than "poor."

Most fascinatingly, some friends associated the consumption of turbofolk or not with a capacity to critically engage with one's society. As my friend Milan, a student of mechanical engineering and an avid learner, explained, "I think people who generally listen to rock and roll here are more open minded to ideas and think for themselves more. When you're growing up here if you

don't care about music you will listen to turbofolk the most. If you don't play any song on your computer or on your phone or anything you will just hear it the most and most people don't like to explore or be different and they just go with the flow. Andjela of the Oxford school similarly placed turbofolk within a framework of inevitability:

> "I think the problem, it's not just the turbofolk, but everything is just connected here. I don't think it's the only thing that makes or influences those people. The education system doesn't teach you to think critically, critical thinking. You just accept it. Really the problem lies in education. Everything is just bad. It's all connected. I think Plato said that music has direct correlation with the state or the situation. So, it's not actually just music, but everything. The culture. If you don't have choices you're taught to think in a certain way and obviously that influences your life and everything else."

This distinction of turbofolk as fundamentally acritical requires a deeper look into the experience of popular music. While *rokeri* such as Milan and Anđela see turbofolk as brain-washing, informants such as Andrej and Aco derive authenticity and power from it, a phenomena which I will explicate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: Turbofolk and Club Culture—Escapism or Resistance?

I will use the work of Ben Malbon, who conducted field work in late 1990s Britain, to explore the vast split between music as escapism and music as resistance. Malbon describes the motivations for clubbing as fitting one of three categories: an alternative social space within, yet drastically different from, the urban space outside; an alternative social space with codes of interaction that are more liberating than those outside; and a space with the potential to fulfill one's desire to belong. The final of these three motivations, he argues, emerges as the most significant, as it underlies the first two. This finding proves significant in the Banja Luka context, where all informants connect "going out" spaces with "the search for spaces and experiences of identifications or affective gatherings" (Malbon, 2005, p. 46). Malbon explains this process of identification within clubbing spaces as "foster[ing] a going-beyond of individual identities, an experience of being both within yet in some way outside of oneself at once" (Malbon, 2005, p. 49). In some cases, Malbon argues, this physical closeness with others deemed similar to oneself, and simultaneously distancing from those deemed unlike oneself, produces "ecstasy or exstatis" (Malbon, 2005, p. 49).

From my conversations and participant observations, I can conclude that many Banjalukans' affective responses to turbofolk illustrate Malbon's concept of ecstasy. The extolling of turbofolk stars as idols of the nation, as in Ceca's nickname *Srpska Majka* represent the depth, if with a note of irony, of fans' experiences of turbofolk. Andrej, for instance, who describes the most famous turbofolk songs as "hymns," developed a joke wherein he makes a sign of the cross in the manner of an Orthodox Serb, and at each corner of the cross says "Ceca, Seka, Jejca, Stoja, Ksenija"—the names of popular turbofolk singers.

The divisive potential of turbofolk exists at the divide between these affective responses that occur during Malbon's process of identification. As we have seen, while some *rokeri* describe turbofolk

as "the fast food of music," fans such as Andrej find in turbofolk's affective power feelings "of surrender, of reverence, of devotion, of self-dedication, of humility and oblation, of awe and the feeling of smallness," to borrow from Maslow's theory of peak experiences (Maslow, 1970, p. 31). The significance of a-religious sources of peak experiences for the development of the self increases, he says, in contemporary societies characterized by non-theisms or "valuelessness," terms often deployed by informants to express dissatisfaction with the corruption of post-Dayton Bosnia (Maslow, 1970, p. 51). In such a psychological landscape, Maslow argues, a gap remains wherein individuals used to have something "to admire, to sacrifice themselves for, to surrender to, to die for" (Maslow, 1970, p. 51). Here, art emerges as the force most capable of ridding cognition of the familiar, and hence, of the dull.

These insights also reflect the concept of Durkheimian collective effervescence. Most informants did not desire to listen to turbofolk in the private sphere or while alone. Thus, the club emerges as the space wherein Malbon's concept of ecstasy allows for the process of identification. Just as the totemic emblems that Durkheim observes in aboriginal culture fail to achieve social significance on their own, so too do the expressions of popular music as experienced by Banjalukans. Although Durkheim ultimately makes a religious point, equating the totemic emblems of the given society with god, I argue that the totemic quality of turbofolk produces an equation with Malbonian ecstasy. As with divine experiences, ecstatic experiences within a club space result from the individual's experience of group cohesion. As Durkheim writes, "because society can exist only in and by means of individual minds, it must enter into us and become organized within us' (Durkheim, 1995, p. 211). For example, in Durkheim's description of an aboriginal corroboree, he sets this intensely emotional spectacle against aborigine's daily economic activities, in much the way that Maslow sets plateau experiences of mere satisfaction or calm against peak experiences. Similarly, going out in Banja Luka to turbofolk spaces fulfills the need to "release the stress," as Andrej put it. Periods

of economic activity followed by weekend adventures exist for some, even, as something deserved. Daca, who experiences this release in *rokeri* and turbofolk spaces alike, says "I like to be out. I like to be free. I like talking with people, dancing, drinking. If I work all week, I should have one day to relax." As I mentioned previously, nearly every young person with whom I discussed turbofolk admitted to enjoying it—or being unable to resist it—while at clubs, weddings, national holidays, or *slava*. As for the collective experience of turbofolk, Andrej and Aco explained that perhaps due to the uncomplicated nature of the lyrics, or to the fact that lyrics are in their native Serbian, one experiences complete surrender to the music. As in Durkheim's description of the corroboree wherein one "loses his self-control," Andrej insisted that "when they play Stoja it's like hell raises…and then everybody gets crazy." "Some glasses will be smashed," added Aco. The power of Durkheimian collective effervescence recurred throughout Banjalukans' stories. Unlike listening to turbofolk alone, listening in a club environment echoes Durkheim's words:

> "The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation. Every emotion expressed resonates without interference in consciousnesses that are wide open to external impressions, each one echoing the others. The initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along (Durkheim, 1995, pp. 217-218)."

Although many described meaningful collective experiences in alternative, rock spaces, the two always fell on either side of an Apollonian/Dionysian split; it was always in turbofolk, not rock, spaces that "base desires," as described by Marko, reigned: "It's over sexual, it's over violent, it's over everything. There is nothing for second guessing…base desires like sex, death, cheating, and that's it." Similarly, while debating with his friend Anđela, who insisted that the drums of ex-Yu rock music "pumped her adrenaline," Andrej adamantly denied that such adrenaline could result from rock. Across our table at a dark pub with pop music blaring in the background, Andrej shouted, "The drums

in turbofolk are so much better! You can't shake your booty with rock music. You can imagine that but you can't *feel* that."

In fact, every informant mentioned alcohol, associating an openness to those practices with an openness to the rhythm itself. I want to argue, however, that it is not alcohol alone that causes this feeling; rather, alcohol forms one part of the foundation of the dancefloor corroboree—turbofolk. As my friend Duško, a 26-year-old I.T. consultant with a famous sense of humor, said, while listening to turbofolk "your inhibitions are over and you're like, well fuck it, I don't care, I'm drunk….and it has the rhythm, the repetitiveness, so you don't have to pay attention." Although both Duško and our mutual friend Aleksandar expressed a disdain for turbofolk, they also associated it with positive memories for the body and a distancing from rational, or Apollonian, problems. As I argued from Durkheim's perspective, this common or public experience of the music within a club reaffirms the centrality of space in expressing identity—the club is necessary for the bodily liberation associated with turbofolk, and gives way to effervescence rather than an individualizing, cathartic release.

Simon Frith offers a helpful reading of club space that rings true in my own participatory observations of Banja Luka nightlife. In dancing spaces, he argues, music and environment blend to create "a kind of moving sonic image…Lights and mirrors, darkness and deception, are used so that what one sees seems always an effect of what one hears" (Frith, 1996, p. 156). Because the "dancers are performers, programmed by the deejay," the "scene" or corroboree ends as much with the end of the musical track as it does with the transformation of the space as the lights come on at 4 a.m.—when individuals appear suddenly distinct from one another and their tiredness shows, when even their dress becomes more obviously differentiated from others' as it is no longer inscribed by the same flashing lights that appeared on everyone else. As in Daca's expression of desire for a release from the work week, Frith acknowledges the significance of dance not only to spatiality, but also to temporality. While many club dancers describe time spent transfixed by music as "more intense, more

interesting, more pleasurable than 'real time,'" this time must also be set in relation to how we experience time in the everyday rhythms of "night and day, work and play" (Frith, 1996, p. 156). In a broad context, according to Frith, this expands the significance of musical time beyond individual or aesthetic concerns to include concerns of history and sociology.

However, Frith fails to make a historicist account of clubbing particular to any one field. His, among other universalizing claims I have referenced, must be specified to the Banjalukan context, where the performance of turbofolk within club spaces includes singing in Serbian and imitating the glamorous affect of turbofolk, thus relating to the possible self-exoticizing and counter-hegemonic attitude explained in Chapter 4. Aleksa offered his own theory:

> "It was always this weird cocktail of influences when it came to this place. You always have groups of people that hate each other that have been neighbors. They live next to each other. They have to, they start wars, they kill each other again, then they live with each other again. They have marriages, they're friends, then they start killing each other again. They're socialist, their main music is rock and roll, they travel the entire world, yet they're complete patriots. And that was a very delicate balance. And after the war that broke down and you kind of were left with this void of culture. There weren't many people that wanted to make something great because they were all beaten down….[pop] melded with what was left of folk and this is what we have now."

Here, Aleksa connects the aesthetic quality of music production with the energy of the society—the extent to which it has been "beaten down." The low quality of turbofolk, for Aleksa, relates significantly to one of Durkheim's points about effervescence: The "great collective shock in certain historical periods" causes people, he argues, to come together more often and to live "more intensely than in normal times" as a result of "heightened general stimulation of individual energies" that come with effervescence (Durkheim, 1995, p. 213). But while Aleksa, a self-described *roker*, would associate a "heightened general stimulation" with rock music produced under socialism, other informants associate it with the defiant nature of post-war turbofolk, with its emphasis on bravado and self-empowerment. The latter offered some perspectives that lend themselves yet again to a

Nietzschean reading, this time on a perspective of *amor fati*, or affirming one's destiny, of adapting to or even celebrating the leisure culture of post-Dayton Bosnia. Beyond Firth's explanation of the timelessness of dancing, these informants connected such timelessness to what they seemed to view as intrinsic aspects of Balkan culture. Andrej argued, for instance, that with Western artists like Lady Gaga, "you can't dance and be free"—and hell will not be raised as it is when the deejay plays Stoja. Andrej and Aco also compared themselves to animals while under the spell of Stoja's music, but exhibited pride in this rather than shame. Several others made similar claims, as in how Marko said he would explain turbofolk to someone who was "into women": "Turbofolk is like a really big Latin girl while the Western music is like, a ladylike Parisian woman, you know, who is really skinny and all about details and decent."

Moreover, most informants, while describing a typical night out, placed turbofolk as a sort of final frontier of the evening, played by deejays after earlier periods of playing rock music or Western EDM. At the base of some people's description of this late-night stage was a feeling, either spoken or suggested by a knowing smile or laugh, of pride, and a subversion of the Western, orientalizing gaze. If self-stigmatization remained, it was expressed with a powerfully undermining sense of humor.

Đorđe, the seventeen year old student who had studied in the U.S., held an especially valuable view into the subversive self-orientalizing potential of turbofolk. Đorđe comes from what he describes as conservative, pro-Russian family who initially resisted his involvement with the U.S. Embassy's study abroad program, through which he lived in the U.S. for one year with a host family. Đorđe at once loves the U.S., claiming he feels like he was born in the wrong country, and is "definitely pro-LGBT, pro- all of those liberties you have in America," and detests U.S. hegemony's threat to pluralism. Spending a year in the U.S., he explained, made him appreciate Bosnia in a way that no one in his surroundings in Banja Luka does—at least not openly. "We have all of this American influence and we don't even know about it, we don't know what American intension are. Maybe they want us

all to be Westernized," he says. "I don't want to see Bosnia westernized. I want it to be traditional." Even more than the traditional instruments used in turbofolk, the music's references to partying feel specific to the Balkans for Đorđe —and not entirely universalized as in Frith's claims. "I love it because you can drink to it. It's a party, you know? It describes the spirit of the people here. And that's what I love about it: it's stupid but it's great. It's the great stupid. And we are stupid great."

Several other conversations drew connections between the ecstasy, effervescence, and timelessness of "going out" and references to a "Balkan spirit." Marko, for instance, related East-West divisions to North-South divisions within Europe, explaining that his Spanish friends enjoyed turbofolk because of they, unlike like Northerners, "find that passion." Once again in reference to alcohol and leisure, Anja explained to me over a hungover coffee, "[Turbofolk] is really connected to our mentality. Because people really love going out, getting drunk. Drinking is a habit here. It's not a generalization. Everyone drinks here. It's just something that we do. We are really laid back and all about partying, and I think this is really connected to it." From this perspective, turbofolk emerges even as a possible, yet of course not essential, metaphor itself for being Balkan. Just as every informant described the inevitability of knowing turbofolk lyrics in spite of oneself, Anja's assertion suggests that Balkan life entails or even requires experiencing Firth's timelessness or Durkheim's effervescence on the weekends.

Post-war turbofolk emerges, then, more as a signifier of post-war leisure culture across the Balkans as set against the capitalist influence of the West. This became especially apparent among informants who sympathized with Western culture, were fluent in English, and sought work or study outside of the region, thus turning the judgmental gaze of the other upon themselves. Aleksa and his colleague at university, Dragana, for instance, concluded their conversation with me by insisting that turbofolk simply "pushes people away from reality…it's escapism." Others were more condemning; as Lela insisted:

> "People say why can't we be like Germany, why can't we be like Sweden? I'm like well if you want to behave like a Swede and behave like a German and accept differences and people of all races and sexualities like a Swede you would have a country like Sweden but if you want to behave like a Balkan person and go out until 4 a.m. on a Wednesday, you want to have coffee breaks every two hours while working, you can't be Germany! ….You cannot live in Yugo-nostalgia and say, well we used to be given everything. That's not happening right now, you need to get your shit together and you need to start working like you're in a capitalist country, which you are."

In our conversation, Lela did not outwardly stigmatize herself, instead explaining how her hard work demonstrated by the acquisition of internships and volunteer hours led her to acquire a high-paying job. But Lela deployed a Goffmanian self-stigmatization of her own culture, perhaps not casting accusations of violence, hypersexuality, and materialism upon turbofolk and its correlative mentality, but instead appealing to Orientalizing myths of the lazy native. From her absorption of the Western gaze, she came to blame her country's high unemployment rate and lack of social "progress" (which she claims falls behind the political and economic transition) on the people themselves rather than upon institutions. Furthermore, Lela warned me of what others might say in defense of leisure and/or clubbing culture in the following statement:

> "This turbofolk thing feeds into this, as you said, this pan-Yugoslavian sentiment, you know, screw capitalism, screw the West, but what it also feeds into is this sort of microcosmic personal belief that people cling to in the end, and use turbofolk as an element in it, where they're like, yes they have money, but we have soul. And you're gonna hear a lot of that….it feeds into this sentiment of sort of cultural pride and everybody being like, 'We have soul!"

From Lela's perspective, the culture of going out and of "clinging" to the moments of ecstasy as defined by Malbon and Maslow constitutes a Bakhtinian carnivalesque—a momentary subversion of power that, ultimately, constitutes no more than an empty gesture to social change, whether that change means obtaining the work ethic of a German or the tolerance of a Swede, or overcoming issues within the country such as obtaining a living wage (Bakhtin 1984). If turbofolk is nothing more than a grotesque spectacle, perhaps it does not have the power to subvert the power dynamic between

Balkan endemic culture and the hegemons with which it has always battled to maintain its own self-definition. Even Marko, who has long committed himself to dancing and club culture, did not associate his practices necessarily with subversion. When asked about the future of the Balkans and whether or not Bosnia will join the European Union, he simply replied, "I don't know, and I don't care." When asked if he had any final statement for his interview, Marko said with his usual sass, "Instead of the Balkans going to be westernized, the whole word is going to be balkanized. Thank you."

However, I would like to argue for the potential for resistance within the identification processes that occur in club spaces. Through Malbon's lens, informants who expressed an almost divine release of stress while dancing can achieve political potential through vitality. Seeking to expand upon traditional sociological approaches to domination, Malbon argues that the affective processes of creating an "alternative conception [of the self] which may provide a sense and a source of vitality, or personal worth" (Malbon, 2005, p. 146). This is especially significant for my field and the presence of self-stigmatization as I have described it through Todorova and Goffman's lenses. Malbon argues that subordinate groups (in this case, people from the Balkans subordinated by their peripheral status in relation to the core) more commonly rely on "off-stage" resistance than open resistance—"an embodied and spatialized critique of power that is almost always spoken behind the back of the powerful" (Malbon, 2005, p. 147). Although one could construe a night spent dancing as occupying an imaginary realm outside the bounds of "normal" life within which "normal" rules apply, it could also provide a space in which "a sense of vitality, of personal worth, of energy and of reward is experienced" (Malbon, 2005, p. 147). Vitality and play, then, give rise to a form of power that is not "evaded through play," but rather "can be inhabited through play" (Malbon, 2005, p. 147). Although not enacted against a specific, embodied authority or even against "'all the dangers and dysfunctions of the moment,'" dancing can be out of spite (Malbon, 2005, p. 149). Reflecting upon many

informants' dissatisfaction with the influence of Western cultures, no performance could be more spiteful than shouting and dancing to, in collective effervescence, Serbian lyrics.

This theory of vitality resounds with my findings in the field. Anđela the medical student relayed an anecdote in which she stood on a table and performed a kind of "belly dance" to Ceca and Stoja's songs at her brother's eighteenth birthday party. Despite her identity as a *rokera* and rejection of turbofolk as "shitty" and "ugly," Anđela has a positive memory of this moment. Even more interesting, though, were the gaps between informants' stated opinions and their behavior with regard to turbofolk. One friend danced with me at Galerija turbofolk club until 6 a.m., alternatively confessing that the songs reminded him of the nineties and made him sad and laughing, spinning my other friends and I around between tightly packed bar tables. Another friend, Biljana, who eagerly consumes Ceca, Stoja, and Lepa Brena messaged my roommate rather than responding to my own request for an interview, asking in indignation why she was sought after as any sort of "expert" in the field of turbofolk. Although I never received a response, I saw her in Galerija the next Friday, where she in turn sang every word and drunkenly insisted that it was all "a joke" and not at all a reflection of her true taste.

This vitality can be seen in Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" and "On Violence" from The Wretched of the Earth, where he subverts the Hegelian master-slave dialectic existing between the colonizer and colonized, between the dominator and dominated. Macrocosmic struggles interpellate into the body and mind to produce a kind of "shame and self-contempt…nausea" in the oppressed subject, whose race becomes coded for cultural and social inferiority (Fanon, 2008, p. 116). When a young boy shouts "Look at the nigger!" Fanon expresses his body "given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning"—not determined by himself (Fanon, 2008, p. 113). This recognition made by the other, the white boy, reconstitutes Fanon's self; the construction of superiority based on a racial signifier overrides the recognition of the self by the self, in which the

non-white man or woman (although Fanon focuses, problematically, upon the man) might subvert the construction and assert the liberated reality of the slave.

In "On Violence," although speaking through the lens of coloniality specifically, Fanon writes of the moment when the black man achieves this subversion. Once he realizes, "My life is worth as much as the colonist's, his look can no longer strike fear into me or nail me to the spot and his voice can no longer petrify me," he obtains the ability to subvert the imperial domination of whiteness: in this moment, the European obsession with organization will not* reign over the perceived "chaos" of the colony, and the "real" status of whiteness' power over blackness will not continue as such (Fanon, 2011, p. 10). As occurs with dancing, these changes occur in the psychological and bodily revolutions of the self. They exist in parallel with the colonized man's dreams of a kind of virility that transcends the bounds ordinarily placed on his body"—"dream[s] I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing…I burst out laughing…" (Fanon, 2011, p. 15). On the dancefloor and in this dream, the body is no longer a site of contest for power structures, but instead the origin of subversion, wherein the Hegelian "slave" can finally be recognized by himself and not an other.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

In my final claim, I will argue that the performative nature of "going out" and its capacity for vitality bear real significance in the lifeworlds of my informants, and transcend mere escapism. While this remains true for general practices of dancing, drinking, and singing as a public collective, I maintain that the performative nature of turbofolk, as an art form sung in the local language, produced within the region, and carrying its very distinct blend of tradition and conservatism, of folk instrumentation with cyborg-signifying electronic beats, of transient materialism with sentimentality, carries counter-hegemonic possibilities beyond those offered by Western-influenced rock. Secondly, I give more weight to informants' self-descriptions of their experiences of the music than to accounts of false consciousness at the hands of the market, in contradiction with Volčić and Erjavec's approach.

In defense of my finding, I will call upon the work of Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Who Sings the Nation-State?*. Like Bhabha and Fanon, Butler and Spivak regard everyday acts of the body such as singing, when performed in a collective, as "an articulation of plurality" (Butler and Spivak, 2006, p. 59). In reference to a 2006 demonstration against the discrimination of immigrants in Los Angeles wherein demonstrators sang the U.S. anthem in Spanish, they discuss the discursive power of this subversion. The problem of plurality, of who comprises "we," is so inscribed within the anthem that it points beyond the singing act to the question of the "claim to rights of possession" and "to modes of belonging" (Butler and Spivak, 2006, 59). Their evaluation has significant bearing, also, on my concern with space. Butler and Spivak define the singing of the anthem as performative politics precisely because it restages the street, "enacting freedom of assembly precisely when and where it is explicitly prohibited by law," fostering a spirit of defiance (Butler and Spivak, 2006, p. 63). This is true of Banjalukans consuming turbofolk in public space, of their ecstasy and liberation experienced both in spite of themselves and their self-stigmatization, and in spite of

stigmatization at the hands of the Western Other. In its most present iteration, and as distanced from its nationalist past, it can signify none other than the defiance of global hegemony and its potential to rust away the specificity and locality of Banja Luka.

In further research, one could take an ethnomusicological look into the significance of Arabic music for turbofolk, as even Serbian turbofolk, while historically demonizing Ottoman influence within the Balkans, itself uses Arabic instrumentation. Second of all—and much work has been done in this area—one could study the relation between the local/cosmopolitan divide I have employed with rural/urban dichotomies in the Balkans, perhaps comparing the consumption of turbofolk in Banja Luka, a relatively large city in Bosnia, with the consumption of turbofolk in villages. Lastly, although it was not possible within the limitations of my thesis, it would be helpful to contextualize ex-Yugoslav rock as turbofolk's double, also sung in the local language, within the field of counter-hegemony. This would have significant bearing on the phenomena of socialist nostalgia, and upon pluralism and anti-neoliberalism as I have defined them in my own work.

I have hoped to argue my claims from the backdrop of Balkan Orientalism, from ethnographic engagement with individuals' self-described style and consumption, and ultimately through the bodily experience of vitality that arises through clubbing. These arguments circle back to my introductory reference to Bhabha—to the incomplete, "invidious narratives of center and periphery" (Bhabha, 1997, p. xi). The contradictions in turbofolk's very definition and the paradoxes through which it is experienced as at once tortuous and emancipatory, grotesque and deific, render it a metaphor in itself for the bridge-like existence that exists neither at center or periphery—escaping definition, and thus domination, by the external gaze.

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