AFFECT'S SOCIAL LIVES

Post-Yugoslav Reflections

Edited by
Ana Hofman and Tanja Petrović

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Založba ZRC

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Introduction

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More than 30 years since the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, the talk about this country is still highly emotionally charged and situated in the registers of passion, pain, sentimental recollections, or nostalgia. However, what if we go further and take the sphere of affective, sensorial, and embodied as fundamental to understanding the historical project of Yugoslavia and its afterlives? The chapters in this book address this question and explore how affect is simultaneously constitutive to and unsettling of the social lives in the (post-)Yugoslav space in its different temporalities. We aim to discuss how the attempts to conceptually capture our social realities in their messy nature raise a more general question about how we have thought and written about (post-)Yugoslavia in particular historical moments.

The task of theorizing the work of affect means understanding social realities in their constant transformations, which often challenge not only the expected politics of belonging, identifications, and solidarities but also how we (as scholars) give them a socio-political meaning.[1] In doing that, we tend to show that focusing on affect enables observing the instances of identification and social dynamics beyond an exclusive focus on the ethno-national (and increasingly racial) differences emphasized in the scholarly examinations of this geographical region.

We start from the assumption that affect has complicated the picture of the social realities during Yugoslavia and in the post-Yugoslav present and that it unveils fleeting and indeterminate interactions, encounters, and relationalities

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1   Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth write that affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters but also its non-belonging (2010, 2).

that profoundly shape our social worlds. However, our interest is not in exploring affect as a universal, hidden force that drives social relations. This volume comes at a moment when universalizing discourses and approaches are gaining significant appeal in the research of state socialism and its aftermath. There is an increased interest in looking at the socialist and post-socialist world through the perspectives of global networks of power, subordination, and "the global formation of race" (Baker 2018). The region's social, political, and cultural formations, encounters, and inequalities are examined in their global constellations, often through an explanatory apparatus that universalizes quite diverse (local, regional) contexts and historical periods. Through the lenses of postcolonial critique and global history, scholars have encouraged an understanding of Yugoslavia's ambiguous position that was subjected to long-lasting frictions between hegemonic colonial powers and exploited populations and classes. However, colonialism, post-colonialism, and decoloniality, and related concepts often serve as metaphors that provide a framework in which very diverse historical realities and processes are positioned, regardless of the actual existence of both the colonizer and the colonized. The (post-)Yugoslav space and the Balkans are frequent but not exclusive subjects of such (re)positioning,[2] usually used as an example (often with other post-socialist countries) that destabilizes the colonizer-colonized binary due to its specific semi-peripheral position toward Europe/West and yet implicit identification with European whiteness.[3] Still, the global approach, informed by postcolonial theory rests on (and often

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[2]   In his article on Ukraine and its position in Europe in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea, Timothy Snider interprets processes of integration and disintegration as colonization and decolonization. According to Snyder, "colonization began to yield to decolonization in the 20th century in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but in the 19th century in Europe. Balkan revolutions against Ottoman rule, usually categorized as national, were the beginning of the decolonial moment" (2015, 696). For theoretical approaches that engage with the intersection between post-socialist and post-colonial, see Tlostanova (2012) and Koobak, Tlostanova, and Thapar-Björkert (2021).

[3]   About the need for reclaiming the Global East as a liminal space that complicates the notions of North and South, see Müller (2020). For the ambiguous position of Yugoslavia in the global racial entanglement, see Baker (2018), and for post-socialist Eastern Europe's engagement with the politics of race, see Imre (2005) and Mark and Betts (2022).

perpetuates) hierarchical distinctions between core and periphery, metropole and province, or center and margin.

While we do not deny the value of the global perspective in explorations of (post-)Yugoslav social worlds, we tend to embrace such epistemological promises only to the extent that they do not dismiss the concrete historical and material contexts in their dynamic and lived manifestations. We are keen to keep the perspective that is historically specific and informed, that is, "in which time-bound and place-bound specificity counts" (Todorova 2015, 711). Likewise, without reducing it to a universalized embodied intensity, we discuss how affect, translated between multiple registers—discursive, cognitive, and visceral—is operationalized and historically and culturally situated for allowing particular social relations, marking particular bodies and differences (or equality) among them. We draw on the work of scholars who offer a sophisticated interpretation of affect that is placed beyond the dichotomy between culturally situated and universalizing approaches, as they call for a recognition of the existence of an "escaping autonomy" which is embedded in the concrete historical, cultural, social, and political environment.[4] Therefore, our analysis foregrounds the explanatory capacities of affect in its historical and context-specific workings in different historical periods, ranging from pre-World War II Yugoslavia to post-Yugoslav societies.

After Affect

"We are in the moment after the affective moment," wrote Nigel Thrift in his essay from 2010, claiming that the scholarship of affect had moved away from simply arguing that affect is a propelling explanatory concept. New studies draw attention to the specific forms and works of affect in distinct political

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4   Such as the works of Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009; White 2011, 2017; Ahmed 2014; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Gill 2017; Newell 2018; Garcia 2020 and Hofman 2020.

and cultural situations, thus deepening existing theoretical and methodological approaches (Thrift 2010, 289). Thrift was right in many aspects: 12 years later, at the moment this book was taking shape, affect has been a well-established field of inquiry. Some would say "so well-established" that it has become an academic fashion or even an "empty concept," a label often circulating in scholarly works to prove their timeliness. However, precisely this "sense" of omnipresence makes the exploration that concentrates on affect either the exclusive domain of "affect theorists" or underacknowledged in its full explanatory capacity by other scholars.

Why then write another book on affect *after affect*? For us, after affect is more than a phase in the development an explanatory field. Thinking *after affect* is the ability to conceptually engage with the field of embodied, sensorial, and material in all its contradictions, limits, and potentialities.[5] For this reason, in this introduction, we decided not to delve into yet another overview of the dominant streams in theorizing affect or offer a programmatic approach to affect and what it brings to the epistemological turn (Jansen 2016, 63). We made this decision not simply because there are already many excellent reflections on the genealogy of affect studies[6] or because we do not believe in the epistemological move an affect-oriented view makes. This book is situated after affect in that it tends to engage exactly with the tensions and blank spots in the vast field of inquiry that claims to bring "an (affective) turn" in humanities and social sciences.

As a result of such an epistemic position, while chapters in this book draw on the broader range of approaches that are today subsumed under the "affect theory," our take on affect is deeply contextually informed and, in many ways, tends to provincialize the theory production on affect. The theorizations of

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5   As suggested by the organizers of the recent conference entitled "AfterAffects," we need to move beyond an "affective turn" that has been superseded or foreclosed and instead reimagine the limits and affordances of the affect theory and its methods (The University of Chicago n.d.). See also Anna Gibbs's text "After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication" (2010).

6   For example, see Laszczkowski and Reeves (2018) and Desai-Stephens and Reisnour (2020).

affect, dominantly produced in the Global North/Anglophone academia, are often blind to the power hierarchies behind the presumed "universality" of the power to affect and be affected. As Xine Yao, in her book *Disaffected*, points out, emotional expression is not simply the signifier of a "universal human" but is deeply conditioned by the very operation of "humanity," as it is itself based on an exclusion of the Other, to whom the very possibility to be included into this category is denied and whose feelings are not recognized as such (2021, 5). She joins the scholars who are attentive to the epistemic erasures and argue for turning to the context and scope to challenge Western intellectual tradition in studying affect.[7] We concur with such claims and draw on the existing theorizations in this field while simultaneously nurturing the explanatory apparatus used to capture affect arising from the distinct historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts of the (post-)Yugoslav space. While we would say more about the context-specific ways to denote the very diverse and rich social lives of affect (such as *merak*, *sevdah*, *čaga*, *dert*) later in the text, here, we would like to emphasize that the contributions in this volume tend to build on the historically informed, process-oriented workings of affect.

In doing that, the ontological status of affect, which is key to the "disparate nature of affect studies" (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2017, 4), does not appear relevant. Thus, we are not perpetuating the split based on the conceptual distinction between affect and emotion and the two strands of theorizing affect: on the one hand, by theorists who, drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and Massumi (1995; 2002), claim affect's autonomy from the social constructivism and understand it as a living intensity that connects us to the world and matter, and which cannot be "reduced" to subjective feeling; and, on the other hand, by theorists who refuse this gap and the existence of something—regardless of being visceral, sensory, tactile, and unconscious—that can "exceed" the capture by socio-cultural context (Mazzarella 2009; Rutherford 2016; White 2017).

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7   As suggested by Gill (2017, 188–89); see also Mankekar and Gupta (2016).

For us, in the words of affect theory, affect is both "fleeting" and "sticky." In recognizing these qualities, we embrace its transitive ontology (Yao 2021, 5) and its attachment to subjects and objects, as Sara Ahmed puts it (2010). Some contributions in this book sustain the division between affect and emotion and consider affect an autonomous force. Mišo Kapetanović, for example, discusses encounters among post-Yugoslav migrant workers as constituted by a "never-to-be-conscious autonomic reminder" (Massumi 2002, 25), something that inhabits bodies of post-Yugoslavs and allows them to recognize each other's commonalities, without establishing communalities. Marina Simić similarly draws on Deleuze and Guattari, whose emphasis on an encounter between bodies (including non-human bodies) helps her to theorize how affect is key to politics of (un)becoming. Others do not see the affect-emotion gap as productive and use affect, emotions, feelings, and sentiments interchangeably, placing an emphasis on the subjectively recognized affective states, mediated and signified in the representation or discourse. However, they all agree on the relational capacity of affect (Slaby 2016) and its ability to connect personal and interpresonal, social and visceral.

The Aesthetics and the Social

At the center of our conceptual engagement is not what affect *is* but what affect *does*, which is the key question many theorists pose (see Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004; Murphie and Bertelsen 2010, 140). In her seminal work, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed argues for the "sociality of emotions" (2004, 8). For her, we are not simply inhabited by affects and emotions, but they establish the surfaces and boundaries between individual, collective, and social worlds (2004, 10). This emphasis on sociality resonates not only with our theoretical strivings but also with the material upon this book is built. The chapters engage with music, sound, film, and literature in their affective potentiality through which socialities materialize. The authors explore how affective engagements with specific musical genres, performances, or practices of listening, sound environments, and film and literary works on/from the region weave or dissolve

the social fabric, senses of belonging, and social formations in often unexpected and contradictory ways.

Our approach aligns with the insights of numerous scholars from different disciplines for whom the expressive practices and aesthetics are not some "surplus" of the political realm but its inherent element.[8] In particular, scholars inspired by Jacques Rancière's thought on politics as the "distribution of the sensible and the visible" pay attention to sensory perception as the most fundamental dimension of political and social relations (Moreno and Steingo 2012; Sykes 2015; Steingo 2016; Benčin 2019). For example, for Gavin Steingo, aesthetics is neither related to a particular artistic practice or object nor is it a theory of the beautiful and its judgment but a particular mode of sensory experience (2016, 6). He claims that aesthetics should be taken seriously if we want to understand the potential of "this experiential modality for particular political action" (2016, 20).

This book is driven by the same desire to expand the understanding of social forces through the affective dynamics governed by the content, practices, and behaviors usually considered entertaining, banal, or quotidian, and, therefore, "apolitical." Going against that grain, in our consideration, we focus on the relationality of affect in its political potentiality, exploring how the sensorial and embodied draw attention toward subtle, fleeting, dynamic forms of sociality and their political effects. For instance, Martin Pogačar in his chapter attends to the role of mundane pop-entertainment music in boosting national(ist) sentiments and tracks how the notions of Slovenian exceptionalism and victimhood were affectively disseminated by the popular band Agropop. Through mixing various musical styles and its "humorous" take on the banal, quotidian, and "apolitical" topics, which can hardly be attached to any "real" political engagement (in comparison to punk or other alternative musical genres), Agropop's music affectively resonateed with the majority of Slovenians.

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8   Among many others, Ahmed 2004; Anderson 2010; Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020, and Hofman 2020.

Nevertheless, we agree that building an argument on fleeting and situational social relations demands a profound theorization of denials, limits, and failures. Because of that, we are cautious in dealing with one part of the literature on affect, which argues for its presumed ability to exceed power relations. Many authors assert that attending to affect becomes synonymous with a promise (Anderson 2010; Muehlebach 2013). They critically address the tendency to theorize affect's key role in transformative encounters and becomings exclusively in a positive light often ignore the processes of affective alienation, isolation, and distance, usually attached to the marginalized or unrecognized social strata (Yao 2021, 11). In our examination, we share the stance that the centrality of affect's political promise for scholars derives from the crisis-riddled scholarship in humanities (Hemmings 2005, 551) but also from the more general urge to offer a theoretical "way out" from the totalizing sense of global neoliberalism, followed by the feelings of apathy and exhaustion, also in terms of theoretical dead ends (Hofman 2020).

The chapters in this volume challenge a "promise" of affect in bringing a "new politics" detached from the socio-political mechanisms and power struggles. Instead, drawing on the abovementioned claim that social realities and political projects are deeply affect-imbued, we see the conceptual power of affect in connecting the micro and macro levels of political lives. Our view—focused on the expressive practices of playing, singing, listening, and acting—attends to the affective dynamics of political mechanisms in their mundane and ordinary existences. In doing that, we stand in between two dominant strategies: one that takes affect as a category to understand/emphasize new forms of political communities and often obscures the social conflict and tensions, and the other that invests much explanatory potential in the fixed social categories, predominantly ethno-national identities and is, therefore, less nuanced in explaining the (post-)Yugoslav social worlds in their hectic materialities and realities. We study an ability to affect upon and be affected by expressive means as deeply attached to the material and political conditions of life and labor, power relations in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and race, social subordination, inequalities, and exploitation. Therefore, we critically

engage with the conceptual gap between the fields of affect or aesthetic on the one hand, and the concrete material, political, and social realities, on the other (Reber 2016; White 2017; Hofman 2020; Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020; Garland 2021). In the context of former Yugoslavia, this means considering several profound shifts in political systems, economy, and state formation from the pre-World War II monarchy through the socialist project, its dissolution and the violent ethnic wars, and the present post-socialist neoliberal Yugoslav states.

Theorizing (Post-)Yugoslav Affective Regimes

We can hardly say that scholars did not recognize the significance of emotion- and affect-centered views for exploring the radical societal transformations in the region. The collapse of socialism was the fertile ground for examining the intense emotions of the citizens of the former Second World. In the volume *Post-socialism and the Politics of Emotion in Central and Eastern Europe*, Maruša Svašek writes that post-socialist Europe is a fascinating area of research from the perspective of emotion (2006, 2). Those are not individual emotional reactions, she argues, but have to be understood in the light of specific temporality of the system change: in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of socialism, the dominant emotions were joy, hope, desire, enthusiasm, and euphoria, mixed with fear, hatred, and sorrow (2006, 9). Soon after, when people faced the broken promises of "democratic transition," their (emotional) lives were structured by nostalgia, anger, and outrage.

While Svašek's claim that emotions have been produced, felt, objectified, and politicized in specific ways in the post-socialist contexts (2006, 3) is valuable, it implicitly reproduces the teleological paradigm about the "old world that is falling apart and a new world coming into being." Such an approach is deeply ingrained into the western-liberal transitional paradigm about the post-socialist societies as taking a "path" from the authoritarian past to a democratic future, which dominated scholarly production about the region. Like

many others who offer a critical examination of the narrative of transition and totalitarian paradigm,[9] we refuse the teleological view and employ affect to get an insight into the mechanisms of social lives that can not be easily subsumed under the narrative of the radical socio-political break.

The chapters in this book demonstrate how the fall of socialism and the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, while they entailed an array of profound societal transformations, cannot be reduced to the old/new world narratives. Old practices were not simply replaced with new ones; the processual and unpredictable dynamics of social lives testify how rupture and break coexisted with continuations and prolongations. As Martin Pogačar shows in his chapter, already in the 1980s, some pop-cultural genres successfully nurtured the intense feelings of "national re-connecting," which would be utilized by the official ethno-nationalist politics at the beginning of the 1990s.

While emphasizing continuities, we fully acknowledge Yugoslavia's bloody breakup in its extreme affectivity. The expressions used to operationalize such an extreme event, usually through the categories of craziness or wildness, indicate the "irrational" state of accumulated feelings and intensive affective dynamics that (re)constituted everyday lives and social formations across the region. How people feel and affectively engage with the social condition of distress, violence, loss, and instability has been of particular interest to scholars who, in the last decade, have engaged with the certain types of affect and emotion not as simply individual(ized) reactions to the historical moments of rupture but as a way people position themselves in the world of ethno-nationalism, war, displacement, impoverishment, and dispossession. Although it does not directly build on the theoretical vocabulary of affect theory, we can follow the long-standing scholarly interest in hope and its specific affective modalities in the region.[10] Hope, as a future-oriented

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9   For a recent discussion of the totalitarian paradigm and its application in the post-Yugoslav context, see Petrović 2012, Bailyn, Jelača, and Lugarić 2018, and Kirn (2019, 4–5).

10 See Greenberg 2010; Jansen 2015; 2016; Razsa 2015; Jovanović 2018; Kurtović and Sargsyan 2019.

affect or disposition (Jansen 2015), helps people to navigate the uncertainty of lives and the intense feelings of disappointment (Greenberg 2010; 2014; Greenberg and Muir 2022), abandonment, and (spatiotemporal) entrapment (Jansen 2015). Those are the result of losing a sense of normal life, a "peaceful, secure, comfortable, relaxed and predictably improving trajectories gridded in a state-ensured system," as Stef Jansen writes about his interlocutors in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019).

A loss of the sense of future derives from "the actually existing and lived experience of the death of utopia" (Greenberg 2016, 25), which resulted in the fact that the chaos/normality binary dominated the narratives of not only the people living in the region but also the ones who left the country, as in the case of Serbia, writes Marko Živković (2000) and as Marina Simić reflects upon in her chapter. Jessica Greenberg, however, observed that the frustration with the political and social worlds in which post-Yugoslavs found themselves does not place hope and disappointment as a binary but instead places the disappointment in the center of the affective structure of democracy (2016, 35). Ivan Rajković similarly engages with a deficit of structural agency of the post-socialist factory workers, which he defines as "demoralization." He reveals how the affective mix of enjoyment and failure, ridicule and shame "became an affective register through which people recognized how larger state shifts have incapacitated them: not simply by devaluing their labor and expelling them from the welfare state, but by still partially encompassing their position and yet rendering it illegitimate, and reminding them of the creative selves they had to abandon" (2018, 49). In a similar vein, Danijela Majstorović recently explored how structural injustice, economic inequality, and struggles for equality are deeply visceral—they were "tattooed on the bodies"—and are constitutive to the process of subjectivization of "peripheral selves" in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021, 7).

Simultaneously, nostalgia, a past-oriented emotion closely related to the affects of loss and longing (Jansen 2005), has had a long-standing interpretative currency in scholarly attempts to explain the relationship to the Yugoslav past and has probably been the most explored affective state in the

region. Andrew Gilbert points to this disproportionate focus on nostalgia and argues for "a need to go beyond nostalgia in order to identify and analyze a broader range of meaning and action in the creation and deployment of representations of the past" (2019, 295). The critique of nostalgia as an analytical concept has come from other scholars as well: for example, Maja Breznik and Rastko Močnik argue that the heterogeneity of phenomena subsumed under the label of (Yugo)nostalgia "makes it impossible to fix nostalgia as a scientific concept" (2022, 1061), while Reana Senjković (2021) is critical of labeling memories of life and work in socialism as nostalgic because it diminishes the legitimacy of these memories. Senjković's argument points not only to the widespread negative societal but also to scholarly assessments of nostalgia as an unproductive, passive, and paralyzing feeling, a "pining for social safety that never really existed" (Scribner 2003, 11), as the banal commodification of socialist objects and symbols (and, as Nadkarny and Shevchenko lucidly note, as the triumph of capitalism), or proof of dangerous, atavistic cultural attachments (2014, 63), false consciousness (Gille 2010, 283), and malady (Todorova 2010, 2). Such views point to the broader power relations in which "nostalgia talk participates in a civilizational discourse of the *longue durée* that offers the solid lump of Eastern European pastness as the base point from which Western Europe charts its lightness, its futurity, indeed its very "Europeanness" (Boyer 2010, 22; see also Lankauskas 2014). They also point to a class-based affective economy that has to do with the essential question of who can have the power to be affected by nostalgia (Petrović 2020; 2022). In relation to this question, Tanja Petrović offers a reading of Yugonostalgia in this volume that highlights it not only as an affective attachment to particular politics of belonging, but also as a way of regaining an agency through an ability to be affected by the utopian dispositions of socialist past.

"The Unspeakable Character of Reality" [11]

Chapters in this book tend to deal less with the particular types of unsettling, "ugly feelings" that constitute subjectivities in the context of profound post-socialist political and economic changes. They draw from the assumption that affects are not positive and negative "per se" but rather "neutral" (Gilbert 2004) and that our analytical attempts to give them socio-political meaning depend on the various factors. In other words, while we do not neglect the existence of specific types of affects that mark the post-socialist realities, we are more interested in the continuities that do not easily ally with the accepted temporalizations of pre/post or "old"/"new" realities. The processual, *longue durée* perspective reveals affective attachments as they unfold in historically specific contexts and constantly get new shapes and meanings in different historical moments, contexts, and for different (groups of) people. We, therefore, join a relatively small number of texts that consider affect in its historical modalities.[12]

The hope, disappointment, yearning, and longing, while attached and explored in relation to the particular moment of Yugoslav dissolution, have a much longer presence and have shaped the social lives in the region throughout different historical times. The expressive field proves such a presence and raises the question of the "direct" connections between particular feelings and the socio-political condition when we, as scholars, tend to theorize life intensities that are difficult to grasp or verbalize. Does the analytical reflection of to transformative socio-political moments as imbued by affective intensities allow us to attach particular meanings to the more static categories of "identity," "power," "nation," and "state"?

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11   A quote from Mattijs van de Port's book *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (1998, 202).

12   The volume draws on the works that call for the historicization of affect (see Gray 2013; Hunt 2014; Jansen 2015; 2016; Arunima et al. 2021) and the studies that address the topic of affect/emotion/senses from the perspective of the post-socialist world, primarily, the volumes *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* by Steinberg and Sobol (2011) and *Sensitive Objects: Affect and Material Culture* by Frykman and Povrzanović Frykman (2016).

This question is particularly relevant in the post-Yugoslav context, where the explorations of the recent past were based on the discourses of division, rupture, and devastation, as we elaborated in the previous section. This also means that affect is employed in understanding the incomprehensible behaviors and social-political state of confusion, dismay, and the ethno-national (and recently ethno-racial) relations, divisions, and hierarchies. While we wholly recognize a necessity to understand the works of affect within the contexts/ factors that "determinate" them (Jansen 2019), we argue for caution when using the situational, fleeting nature of affective dynamics to "prove" the socio-political volatility, instability or fracture or the marginalized and suppressed individuals or groups.

As a starting point for this scholarly endeavor, we revisit a study published 25 years ago that engaged with the issues of ethnicity, race, and affect in the (post-) Yugoslav context, Mattijs van de Port's book *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (1998). We found this book to be one of the first attempts to ethnographically capture how affective regimes, produced by and through music, (re)constitute the Yugoslav region's social realities. This book opens the questions related to affect/senses/body/emotions, which are being raised almost two decades later within the "affective turn." For van de Port, conducting fieldwork in the wake of the Yugoslav wars posed a necessity for dealing with the question of analytical limits when capturing the elusive and incomprehensible aspects of social realities. "Retrospective rationalization" (1998, 12), he writes, does not apply to the "drama" of war-torn societies. It demands going beyond the usual explanatory models and going to the "uncharted territories," which enables understanding the role of affect or what he calls the "unreason" in the dramatic events in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The key question for him is how to articulate such "raw reality" in an academic interpretation, escaping the very explicability (1998, 26), sensing the truth as something beyond reason and beyond verbalization or, in his words, "outside the world of the stories" (1998, 211). "Chaos" that escapes rationalization of classification, in his view, demands embracing "a path of the body" (1998, 208) or a true reality beyond representation (1998, 215). Thus, on the theoretical level, van de Port's

employment of the vocabulary of precultural, irrational, non-verbal, and formless (1998, 211) offers a unique opportunity for revisiting the conceptual potential of affect and reflecting on the limits of its epistemological employments.

For authors in this volume, van de Port's book serves as a starting point for a critical discussion of the presumptions, logics, and consequences of employing analytical lenses of affect in the concrete (post-)Yugoslav spatiotemporality. It is also one of the first publications to explore the aesthetic experiences (performing and listening to music in Gypsy bars— *kafana*[13]) as a way to understand the broader socio-political context in its affective intensity and elusiveness. At the same time, van de Port's book exposed the limits of the approach that employed affect as tightly bound to ethno-racial identity and linked it to larger, teleological narratives that essentialized the difference of the Balkans vis-à-vis European modernity. For this reason, van de Port's book serves as a good ground for unsettling the presumptions and logics behind the conceptual intersection between affect and the social in the (post-)Yugoslav space. The chapters collected here thus aim to reconnect debates on affect, ethnicity, race, gender, and other identitarian categories in the former Yugoslavia with discrete genealogies of these concepts as they unfold in and about the region itself and in relation to its specific histories, as well as to concrete material, economic, and social conditions marking particular points in time within these histories.

Affect and the Politics of Othering

The focus on ethno-national identities has dominated the scholarly discourses about the region in the last thirty years. The ethnic identification, as shaped in

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13   While he refers to *kafana* as a Gypsy bar, we stick with the original term for its contextual notion that is not particularly attached to any ethnic group or identity but denotes a space (a bar, a pub, a tavern) that has historically been a ubiquitous environment for socializing in the eastern part of Yugoslavia that includes drinking, eating, and listening to music. It is also a key space for professional music-making, see Đorđević (2011) and Hofman (2015). We use the term Gypsy when discuss the discourses and imaginations attached to Roma people.

opposition to an ethnic "Other," was the central preoccupation of the literature engaged with nation-building after the breakup of Yugoslavia, particularly in the Western academia (see Halpern and Kideckel 2000; Wilmer 2002; Kolsto 2009). The fact that the region went through ethnic wars resulted in the scholarly focus on ethnic relations, nationalism, and conflict, which presumably overshadowed the previous politics of brotherhood and unity.

These approaches (re)opened the debate of the imperial legacies and the discourses of Balkanism and Orientalism as (still) being the primary mechanism that constitutes the social formations in the region.[14] The debates concentrated on the ambiguous position of the area of former Yugoslavia, as simultaneously the subject of a European gaze and an entity reproducing that Eurocentric gaze either on internal (Roma, Albanians) or external others (e.g., Africans). Lately, there has been a surge of new interest in (post-)Yugoslav manifestations of ethno-racial inequality, greatly influenced by the globalized discourse of race and the decolonial paradigm.

The voices critical to this rapidly growing scholarship call for historical accuracy and warn that an epistemological operation that takes the current global condition as postcolonial, regardless of the distinct historical and socio-political trajectories, not only obscures the complexities of the construction of Otherness and practices of Othering in their own spatiotemporal specificities but also subjects discrete history of Yugoslavia to teleological narratives and the logic of historical inevitability (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2016). It seems that Yugoslav socialism, its self-management, and the international politics of non-alignment are particularly prone to such subjection; they are primarily observed through the prism of eventual (and inevitable) failure, with a gaze narrowed to recognize

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14   According to Todorova, Orient is an unquestionable Other to Europe, while the Balkans is its part and therefore a European internal or semi-Other. Orientalism and Balkanism also presuppose a different level/type of "Othering": since Orient is more distant, it is imagined in elusive terms as a place of freedom and wealth, civilization, and mystical power, while the Balkans is less imaginative, more real, concrete, savage, and deprived of wealth (1997). "Othering," as many studies show, does not simply presume an oppositional but a relational relationship, as Other is always a constitutive part of the "Self."

racial differences, pervasive colonial styles and conventions, and tropes of white dominance, ignorance, and profit extraction,[15] while rendering invisible the future-oriented imaginaries and promises, as well as past decolonial practices that were intrinsic to the history of the 20th century alternatives and practices of solidarity (Petrović 2021; Spaskovska 2021).

Another problem with the approaches that place the identity dynamics in (the former) Yugoslavia into global frameworks of racial difference, colonialism, and decoloniality is that they are mainly blind for or uninterested in the internal logic of othering and its political and economic ramifications. Katarina Peović shows how this blind spot is not solely a characteristic of academic discourses: firmly situating her analysis of Croatian anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourses within the context of economic relations, she points to the fact that while Croatian politicians and media perpetuate xenophobic narratives, they persistently omit the economic deprivation of Croatian citizens within the EU context as an important factor shaping these discourses (2022). In other words, analyzing the practices of Othering exclusively at the level of ethno-national and ethno-racial identities, the dominant views often exclude other forms of inequalities, particularly the ones based on economy and class.

Affect, we suggest, is a fruitful terrain for nuanced theorization that reveals the blank spots in the dominant orientation toward ethnicity and race in exploring social relations and inequalities in the region. It reveals how the discourses of Balkanism/Orientalism, when attached to the contemporary explanatory frameworks of the politics of difference, focusing on subordination, exclusion, and marginalization, are less invested in exploring the solidarities, commonalities, and connections. Simultaneously, the affect-oriented view we offer challenges an exclusive focus on "identity" (ethno-national, racial) when discussing the social inequalities and hierarchies that diminish the broader mechanisms of political economy and structures of inequality based on profit and capital.

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15   See Sretenovic 2004; Krstić 2010; Kilibarda 2010; Vučetić 2017; Baker 2018; Subotic and Vucetic 2019 and Rexhepi 2022.

Sevdah and Other Instances of the Irrational

Sevdah, *merak*, *dert*, or *čaga*—explored in several chapters in this book—are terms that have been used to describe the contextually specific and highly ambiguous affective dynamics, predominantly but not exclusively through music listening and performing.[16] As categories used to denote contextually-specific affects, and affective states, they are proof of the long-lasting existence of local vocabulary used to capture non-verbal, embodied, and sensorial dimensions of social worlds.

While writing about people's evocation of the "normal lives" in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stef Jansen made an essential distinction between "hoping for normal lives" and longing to hope for them (2019), examining the latter through the affect of yearning (*čežnja*). He writes: "As a disposition or affect, yearning has much in common with hope. But the term emphasizes duration: yearning is more persistent, continuous, prolonged" (2019). For him, yearning resonates with *sevdah*, a profoundly ambiguous affect mostly associated with the particular musical genre and experience deriving from it (Jansen 2019).

Sevdah and its music counterpart *sevdalinka*[17] testify how the work of affect has been historically ingrained in the processes of identification, politics of belonging, and political projects in the region. Those categories and affective dispositions attached to them are proof of the subtle historical mechanisms of constructing the Other and the struggles over self-positioning and political belonging in the East and West, Europe, Balkan, and Orient.[18] The continuous inscription of different layers of meaning over those terms, which are highly

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16 In contrast to *sevdah*, which also denotes the particular musical genre, other terms are used to denote mixed feelings of longing, yearning, pain, and pleasure—a direct realization of affect in its messy experiential notion.

17 Both terms may refer to the musical genre, but *sevdalinka* is exclusively attached to the musical genre, a song. For a more detailed overview of the history of the genre, see Imamović (2016).

18 In the words of Iva Nenić, those terms are highly relational and changeable but "successfully combine and alter the idioms of 'Oriental,' 'Occidental' and 'ours' in different sociocultural formations" (2015, 266).

relational and changeable, is well documented by the number of scholars who explored *sevdalinka* in the light of complex historical processes in the region. With its particular association with the Ottoman legacy, *sevdalinka* is the terrain for both inscribing and destabilizing the dominance of the European notion of modernity or civilization. In its messy affective disposition, sentimentalism, joy, melancholia, *sevdah* can be felt by the people culturally equipped to experience it but is not out of the reach of others since it produces a universal feeling (Kozorog and Bartulović 2016, 172) that you "fall into" or "it inhabits you," beyond "straightforward willful human intervention" (Jansen 2019). For this reason, it has been simultaneously instrumentalized for nation-building projects (the Muslim identity and ethnic belonging) and the transnational solidarities and connections in the region.

Our examination of *sevdah*, *merak*, *dert*, or *čaga* opens a perspective on how the very (in)capacity to affect and be affected has been used in the contingent reconstituting of the social relations, which cannot be reduced to discourses of Balkanism/Orientalism. The chapters' engagement with the work of affect complicates the processes of identification based on ethnic-national-racial differences. By offering a close reading of the work of philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković, the opening chapter by Alenka Bartulović shows that *sevdah*, as "the politics of soul," played an important role in constituting the foundation for common Yugoslav identity in the first Yugoslavia. Soulfulness—as an ability to experience and express "raw" emotion—has not been simply attached to the stereotypical/Western-centric view of the Balkan's Otherness but was crucial for building a sense of a new national community by transgressing the internal division based on separate (Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) imperial legacies. Affectivity attached to performing and listening to *sevdalinka*, primarily expressed as melancholy that makes Yugoslavs "different" from their "more European" neighbors, Bartulović further examines, in the course of the dissolution of Yugoslavia gained another layer of interpretation. *Sevdalinka* performances by Bosnian refugees in the post-Yugoslav Slovenia, contrary to expectations, were not "ethnically marked" but recalled the new sense of shared post-Yugoslav vulnerability, defined by the loss of the common cultural space.

The interaction between refugee music groups and the Slovenian audience fostered social bonding as a collective sense of "home-making" that transcended newly-established national and cultural boundaries and could not be "fully colonized" by the mainstream discourses of nationalism and separation.

Such unexpected affective attunements bring more nuances to the existent interpretations of the social atmosphere of Yugoslav dissolution in its highly affective intensity. Almost exclusively, the work of affect has been used to explain/rationalize the ethnic wars through the prism of "passionate" nation-building. The presumed irrationality of this historical moment is also prominent in van de Port's book, for whom a willful surrender to irrationality in the space of *kafana* has a concrete socio-political analogy in the irrationality of war. The hidden and unexpected connection between the two worlds of experience—war and *kafana* is in the capacity to violate the rules, civilized behavior, and taboos (1998, 16). The ability of people to invest their affective attachments of listening to Gypsy musicians to "transgress" civilized behavior is, in his view, proof of a more "general" ability to transgress into uncivilized behavior in everyday life, which opens a possibility for war. However, the celebration of wildness, van de Port asserts, is not some "naturalized behavior" but is a result of embracing the Balkanist discourses of "civilized" Europe. In other words, Serbs take an active role in the processes of Othering and willingly accept the Balkan barbarism and wildness, the role assigned to them by the European center.

Such an interpretation makes a clear connection between affect and irrationality and grants agency to the "Balkan" subject only if positioned "on the other side" of the "rational politics" and the universal values of humanism, civilization, and reason (van de Port 1998, 18). To surrender to affect means to act and be placed beyond a "rational and reflexive democratic subject," which does not just reproduce the civilized Europe and wild Balkans binary, but also denies the work of affect as essential to politics, ideologies, and institutions, more generally, perpetuating a long-standing liberal understanding of politics as distinctively rational.

In their chapters, Martin Pogačar and Tanja Petrović question the binaries of reason/political and sentiment/apolitical, joining the number of affect

theory scholars who claim that, for too long, affect was relegated to the margins of political theory because the rational reflection was seen as the driving force of political action (Papacharissi 2014, 10). They also explore how affect's ability to transcend the boundaries between personal and interpersonal has been strategically used, dismissed, nurtured, or suppressed by the actors in power. Pogačar sheds light on the affective constellations of Slovenian nationalism in the 1980s and shows how not all people embraced nationalism through the "passionate" ethno-national mythologies but that nationalism instead felt "ordinary." Nationalist sentiment was channeled through pop songs' "banal" content about ordinariness, nature, and everyday consumption patterns. It drove on the shared affective attachments to the ironic referencing of ethno-oddities, drinking, love of nature, and firefighters, which were used in supporting the independence project. Petrović, on the other hand, insists in her chapter on the political character of joy that results from immersing into untrue/non-factual narratives of the socialist past. She argues that this politicality of joy can only be fully understood if one considers the limitations set by the post-socialist condition in which sentiments towards the Yugoslav past are interpreted almost exclusively as an unproductive nostalgia that makes post-socialist subjects' naïve, ideologically blind, or unable to separate the truth from the fake. Such interpretations deny these subjects the agency and power to be affected, a power that would make them capable of questioning the givenness of the present-day conjuncture of ethno-nationalism and predatory capitalism.

Affect, Class, and Labor

To offer an historicized and contextualized view, chapters in this volume question the very recognition/legitimization of affect: whose feelings are legitimized, and how do we privilege or politicize the work of affect? In responding to this question, several chapters engage with the prominence of the figure of Gypsy and the position of Roma, particularly Romani musicians, in the constituting and unsettling of the (post-)Yugoslav social lives. Marina Simić shows that ethno-national

becomings are not singular processes and highlights how affect is the productive ground for exposing an uncritical usage of Balkanist/Orientalist discourses. She calls for "taking seriously" the experience of *kafana* as an affective transformation that embodies social and power relations but that "may also be prone to failure and impossibility of transformation due to that very embodiment." For Simić, carousing (*šenlučenje*) with Gypsy musicians in its affective relationality brings together various "Others" ("white Vojvodinians," Western others, Vojvodina Roma), who cannot be reduced to any particular ethnicity.

As the chapter by Dijana Jelača shows, the complexity of the processes of Othering, however, does not subvert the reality of inequality based on racialization. In the internationally acclaimed (post-)Yugoslav films, authors portray the affective "excess"—in particular through uncontrolled emotions channelized and expressed through music—stereotypically attached to Roma, what she sees as an exercise of self-Balkanism, where Roma are a stand-in for the entirety of the Balkans for the Western gaze. She argues that affective expressions of Roma are used for the "affective *jouissance* or catharsis of and for the dominant group, one which simultaneously systematically continues to otherwise discriminate against the Roma population" (Jelača, this volume).

In that sense, the affective dispositions attached to the figure of Gypsy remain unquestioned, deeply ingrained in the historical image of Romani musicians as associated with emotion (Silverman 2011; Lie 2020). Van de Port writes that *lumpovanje* (carousing) in *kafana* (1998, 8) makes all people involved closer "to the basic form of Being" (1998, 203). In other words, for certain groups of people (like Romani musicians), wider socio-political changes, breaks, and ruptures hardly bring any change in power relations and, even more important, in their everyday realities.

Affect, in our view, adds a perspective that reveals the cracks in analyzing Romani marginalization as the result of the dominant Eurocentric gaze and brings to the fore the reality of the everyday struggles of Roma people. To put it differently, it exposes that for *kafana* musicians, the affective encounter with bare life is not some metaphorical or intellectual category, as to affect and be affected is not simply a matter of identification but that of economic survival.

Mattijs van de Port also acknowledged (albeit not developed) how Romani musicians supply a music product that is recognized as "Gypsy" and "that enables the audience to identify with the 'Gypsy spirit'" (1998, 182). The musically-imbued affective encounters in the peculiar context of *kafana* that are perceived "as an excess" reveal exoticized (intellectual) readings that tend to ignore the everyday reality of people for whom everyday survival is deeply delimited by an ability to affect and be affected. In other words, in interpreting the *kafana* experience as a "festive event," the work of affect is explored only as shaping the social encounters among different ethno-racial groups, while *kafana* as a place of labor is neglected. Reduced to their ethnicity, Gypsy musicians are denied agency as workers, and more generally, class and other social inequalities (and possible solidarities) get obscured.

Attention to this obscuration helps reveal another aspect of the class-defined work of affect, informed by the high-culture-centered gaze on the "less-cultured" (Simić in this chapter) and "low" entertainment of the *kafana* experience. The dominance of such a gaze does not allow for "serious" engagement with the musicians' everyday and labor struggles in their historical trajectories. As Mišo Kapetanović in his chapter asserts, "the region's working class and working-class cultures remained hidden in interaction with other parts of the society, and they were adopted to fit the general post-Yugoslav and post-socialist paradigms." Going against that grain, in exploring affective regimes of the interaction of the post-Yugoslav labor migrants in the *gastarbajteri* buses, he challenges the potential biases coming from the class position of researchers in understanding new post-Yugoslav realities. While the Yugoslav wars and ethno-nationalism burden labor migrants' interactions, the everyday life and labor struggles they share go beyond divisions based on ethnicity.

In response, the authors in this volume engage with the political economy and class as the key categories to understand social dynamics and the shared forms of inequalities during and after Yugoslavia.[19] We argue that the domain

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19   See Archer et al. 2016; Petrović and Hofman 2017; Musić 2021.

of artistic expression helps track the productive encounter between affect, labor, and the material conditions that challenge the focus on power hierarchies exclusively based on ethnic-national-racial differences. Jelača in her chapter explains that the affective "excess" of Romani female singers is commodified for the gaze of the international audience, the men's visual and aural pleasure. A *kafana* singer on the screen is not performing for her own affect, but for patrons or viewers and their *merak*, which circulates as the social good. In his historical review of how class relations constitute particular affective attachments, Rajko Muršič shows how popular music's affectivity—*čaga* is attached to the rise of the new Yugoslav working class after World War II. He reflects on the political economy of the musical genres (in particular pop-folk) and how class self-awareness shaped the listening practices among Yugoslavs and post-Yugoslavs. The attention to the historical and genre-based aspects of the development of popular music in socialist Yugoslavia, he argues, reveals a noticeable correspondence between the consumption of particular music genres and social stratification.

The turn to affect, as Ben Anderson claims, is "timely as it provides a way of understanding and engaging with a set of broader changes in societal (re) production in the context of mutations in capitalism" (2010, 165). The class view on affective dispositions in the region is widened in this volume to encompass what shapes the social worlds of post-Yugoslavs in the contemporary socioeconomic context: the shared patterns of exploitation (low salaries, unemployment, precarity, see Kapetanović) and commodification in all aspects of life (see Hofman and Kovačič). These chapters acknowledge the work of affect not as detached from capitalist accumulation but quite the opposite; their authors explore how the realm of intimate, embodied, and sensorial circulates as the commodified good. Hofman and Kovačič discuss how unequal power relations based on racialized logic cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the financial logic that has entirely overtaken the governance of post-Yugoslav lives after the collapse of socialism. Exploring the working patterns of brass band musicians, they show how these performers are caught in selling *čaga* as an object for commodity exchange and a tool for channeling the audience's desires

and aspirations. Their chapter acknowledges the affective dispositions of the market economy and expansion of financialization to every aspect of life, which has also been explored by the affect theorists who focus on the affective regimes of contemporary global neoliberalism.[20]

To conclude, affect is a fertile ground to raise more general questions about the social relations and production of difference. We show in this volume that what is lost with the uncritical application of affect and race as transhistorical categories are more discrete, contextualized, and situated inequalities that in the region of former Yugoslavia have had specific configurations related to the historical experience of state-socialism, the subsequent ethnic wars and the aggressive restoration of capitalism. Moreover, the focus on the production of ethno-racial differences as a part of decolonization discourses undermines other inequalities that are too quickly subsumed under the discourses of racialization. The chapters in this volume point to the necessity to adhere to epistemic practices, which do not reduce class to another category of identity but see it as the basic mechanisms of capitalist exploitation. As Reed (2020) and Michaels (2020) argue, the project of privileging marginalized differences completely overlooks the question of class inequalities at the core of capitalist production. Therefore, even when the analysis of racial relations is presented as a counter-response to the capitalist production of inequalities, it remains separated from political economy and class questions (Reed 2020). In the ongoing crisis of global neoliberalism, affect does not provide insight into subtle, intimate dynamics of social relations in their "micro" forms. Quite the opposite: it helps us demask the mechanisms that link micro and macro socio-political and economic forces and understand their powerful impact on our social lives.

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20   See the work on political economy and affect by Patricia Clough (2008).

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United in *Sevdalinka*?
Affective Aspirations for the Yugoslav Space

Alenka Bartulović

Introduction

Despite the considerable body of literature on the political process of "making and breaking" Yugoslavia (see Wachtel 1998; Allcock 2000; Jezernik 2018; Erdei et al. 2019), little consideration is given to the affective encounters in the construction and de-construction of future (political) scenarios in the Yugoslav space. Therefore, this article[1] examines the role of music in the process of "collective becoming" and the imaginations of political communities and futures in two periods of intensive social transformation in Southeastern Europe, namely, in the first decades of the Yugoslav post-imperial existence, during the South-Slavic unification at the beginning of the 20th century and in the aftermath of the Yugoslav dissolution in the 1990s. By investigating the affective potential of a specific musical genre, *sevdalinka*, which in different ways managed to organize "conventions about what might be hoped for, explicitly or secretly" (Duschinsky and Wilson 2015, 179), I seek to show how the sound affect related to this specific genre unfolds in spatiotemporality. I will trace the specific tensions evident in the affective working of *sevdalinka* in the Yugoslav space during the "historical ruptures." I engage with affect as both a cultural value that structures communities politically and as an experience—an intensity that can activate memory and hope as a resource for re-imagining political life and alternative futures. I place particular emphasis on affect as a boundary-making

tool that introduces specific types of temporal, sometimes even enduring, hierarchies in the (post-)Yugoslav space.

Sevdalinka is a traditional music genre that gradually developed during the Ottoman era in parts of the Balkan Peninsula (see Karača Beljak 2005; Hajdarpašić 2008; Pennanen 2010; Samson 2013; Toska 2015; Imamović 2016). Often characterized by the Turkish-derived vocabulary that usually praises the melancholy of love, loss, and sorrow, the *sevdah,* or yearning for love, after which the genre is named, has several meanings, including love, passion, melancholy, intense longing, and black bile. While these feelings dominate, the songs are also associated with other emotional states, namely *ćeif* and *merak*, which stand for good mood, enjoyment, and pleasure.[2] As "a form of aesthetic expectation with porous boundaries allowing complex audience identifications" (Berlant 2008a, 4), this genre has been "stretched" and constantly redefined since its appearance in the Ottoman Balkans (see Samson 2013, 298).[3] *Sevdalinka* retained almost impossible contradictions. While it is all about yearning and nostalgia, it actually "reaches backward and forward" (Jansen 2019). Thus, it has the potential to express not only longing, loss, and disappointment but also aspirations, ambitions, and (political) desires. As a genre of affective intensities, it has been an important battlefield for ideological conflicts and contradictory interpretations in recent decades, especially, but not exclusively, in war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With the genre's relative success on the international world music scene and a complex heritagization process that includes efforts to declare the *sevdalinka*

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2   So, while *sevdalinka* songs are not "unambiguously melancholic" (Pennanen 2010, 79), they are nevertheless still associated with longing, unattainability, yearning, but also pleasurable melancholy.

3   It must be noted that there are different definitions and understandings of the genre, and the use of the term *sevdalinka* is nowadays much more permissive. For more on the use and transformation of the genre from intimate song accompanied by *saz* (long-neck lute played in the areas of former Ottoman Empire, popular also among people in Bosnia and Herzegovina) to a sound associated with an accordion-based ensemble and beyond, see Samson 2013.

intangible cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina,[4] political projects in the post-Yugoslav space have often reflected various readings of the genre. Through diverse actors and especially after the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia, it was variously proclaimed as Bosniak (i.e., ethnonational), Bosnian-Herzegovinian (i.e., national), and regional heritage (i.e., a common heritage of the larger Balkan region) (see Kozorog and Bartulović 2016, 169–170). This perception was especially cultivated from the 19th century onwards when *sevdalinka* was slowly redefined as a distinct South Slavic genre and as a hybrid product of entanglements of deep Slavic sentimentality or melancholy and oriental erotic charge (Hajdarpašić 2008, 726; Kadragić 1933, 6). It was already evident in the 1930s that *sevdalinka* merged and harbored various influences (Turkish, Slavic, Arabic, Persian, Sephardic). Its hybrid nature was even more convenient for appropriation in different political registers.

Sevdalinka's affective capacity already served some Yugoslav thinkers at the beginning of the 20th century when it proved to be an essential part of the political discourse of Yugoslavism. The substantial first part of this article is devoted to a review of the work on *sevdalinka* by Vladimir Dvorniković, who discussed the genre's affective potential as early as the 1920s. While Dvorniković promoted *sevdalinka*'s affect as a cultural value, he was able to contribute to the distinct but enduring "affective cartography" in which *sevdalinka* functioned as a marker of soulfulness and a metaphor for Yugoslav (internally fragmented) identity, which—nonetheless—contains the promise of a somehow turbulent, yet shared, common Yugoslav future. Despite the tragic end of the political dream of Dvorniković and many other Yugoslavs, I argue that the *sevdalinka*-related affect retained the ability to point to alternative futures even in a completely different temporal context, namely during the painful dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Therefore, the second part of the article follows the practices of listening to *sevdalinka* songs and offers an ethnographic account

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4   In 2017, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted a nomination for *sevdalinka* to be inscribed in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The outcome of the nomination is still pending.

of the young audience's musical experiences in post-Yugoslav Slovenia in the 1990s. It focuses on the transformation of listening experiences, on "affective atmospheres" (Brennan 2004), and traces the connections created by the "pleasurable melancholy" of *sevdalinka* in the aftermath of socialist Yugoslavia. It points to affect as an intense experience that connects former Yugoslav brothers and sisters beyond imposed national borders of the newly founded states of former Yugoslavia. It also shows how this affect is generated from existing social and historically anchored meanings. This part of the article—which builds upon interviews conducted with fans of one of the most famous refugee musical groups in Slovenia, known as Dertum[5]—investigates how intimacy (see Berlant 1998) operates in the context of musical innovation in independent Slovenia. It also shows that the power of *sevdalinka* in Slovenia is embedded in the atmosphere of uncertainties of Slovenian independence, as well as in the personal crises of youth that generated sentimental worlds and, in many ways, enabled "musical bonding" (Guilbault 2017). This specific kind of attachment emerging through enjoyment in music and sentimentality (see Stokes 2010) in many respects reflected the need to understand, or at least in some way experience, the Yugoslav legacy after the country's bloody collapse as part of the process of navigating the future—something that at least part of the Slovenian public considered impossible without the (former) Yugoslav (Br)Others.

Affective Cartography of the Yugoslav Periphery: Dvorniković's *Sevdalinka* and Visions of an Anti-imperialist Future

Several scholarly works exposed the fact that the inhabitants of the Yugoslav space at the beginning of the 20th century imagined their political unity along

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5   Although part of the ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between 2014 and 2016 in cooperation with Miha Kozorog, most of the ethnographic material included in this article is the result of individual ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2018 and 2020.

very different lines (see Wachtel 1998; Longinović 2000, 622; Jezernik 2018). Music was an important element in these projections (see Longinović 2000, 622–623). In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, born in 1918 from the ashes of World War I, *sevdalinka* appeared as a decisive building block of the new Yugoslavism in the writings of one of the most productive scholars and publicists of the interwar period, philosopher, psychologist, and short-term professor at the University of Zagreb, Vladimir Dvorniković (1888–1956) (cf. Osolnik 1995, 73). As Edin Hajdarpašić notes, he "found his intellectual calling in the burgeoning field of psychology and his political inspiration in the Yugoslav movement that sought to unite all South Slavs in one state" (2008, 726). Dvorniković was born in Croatia, in a small town near the Slovenian border (Severin na Kupi, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), studied in Vienna (where, according to some sources, he even attended Freud's lectures), and worked in various corners of Yugoslavia. During World War I, Dvorniković was deported to Bihać in Bosnia and Herzegovina because of his pro-Yugoslav orientation. However, he was not a stranger to Bosnia, as he had lived in Sarajevo as a child. In interwar Yugoslavia, his career was often interrupted, and he was regularly forced to move between the cities of the emerging state. After teaching at Bosnian grammar schools (Sarajevo, Bihać), he almost reached the position of full professor of philosophy at the University of Zagreb. But because of his political advocacy of "integral Yugoslavism," promoted by the Serbian royal dynasty, Dvorniković was forced into retirement in 1926, after which he moved to Belgrade and continued his work mostly without institutional support. Furthermore, due to his political stance, he was considered unworthy of public and scholarly attention (see Osolnik 1995; Longinović 2000).[6]

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6   As Osolnik claims, there is only one comprehensive scholarly study of Dvorniković's work, a book by Croatian philosopher Branko Despot, entitled *Filozofiranje Vladimira Dvornikovića* (The Philosophizing of Vladimir Dvorniković, 1975). Indifference toward his work was obvious, for example, Osolnik discovered that, in 50 years, Dvorniković's most known tome *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (The Characterology of the Yugoslavs) was never borrowed from one of the main Slovenian libraries. Hence he had to "cut many pages in order to read it" (1995, 74).

Thus, until nowadays, he has remained a relatively unknown figure in the highly nationalized context of the independent states of former Yugoslavia. The rare scholars who have noticed his contribution are often highly critical of his ambitious work. In general, they problematize Dvorniković's racism[7] and specific version of Yugoslavism (see Wachtel 1998; Longinović 2000) and claim that Dvorniković was unoriginal.[8] Without denying some of the problematic aspects of his writings, my aim here is to foreground the value and importance of Dvorniković's work for the "theory of affect" (see Ahmed 2004; Clough and Halley 2007; Mazzarella 2009; Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Massumi 2015). I also aim to re-evaluate the narrow interpretations of his attitudes toward *sevdalinka*, which are often reduced to an expression of "collective suffering" and self-victimization of Yugoslavs (see Longinović 2000). Most of all, it is important to highlight how the "peculiar historical fusion" of Ottoman and Slavic influences reflected in *sevdalinka* enabled Dvorniković to "recast the 'native and foreigner dichotomy'" on the Yugoslav territory (see Hajdarpašić 2008, 727), narrow the gap between Muslims and other nations, and reconcile the past with the Yugoslav future.

In addition to publishing in 1939 one of the most elaborated works on the "ethnopsychology" of the newly founded nation, Dvorniković became one of the most prominent writers on *sevdalinka* between the two world wars. Comprising more than a thousand pages and an impressive bibliography that reflected

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7   It should be noted that Dvorniković's concept of race is complex and refers to the cultural rather than racial unity of Yugoslavs. According to Longinović, his Yugoslavism was based on the concept of race "as a common historical destiny" (2000, 625). Although inspired to some extent by the intellectual racism of his time, he rejected racial hierarchies and relied on the concept of the Dinaric type in response to ideas about Northern racial supremacy and Nazism. For a discussion of Dvorniković's ideas about race, see Bartulović 2022.

8   For example, Andrew Baruch Wachtel argues, "Although his thousand-page tome pretends to originality, it is, in fact, nothing more than an amplification of Cvijić's theses. Still, it is valuable as a eulogy for an encyclopedia of interwar unitarist anthropological and cultural Yugoslav mythology" (1998, 93). In fact, this is an extremely inaccurate reading of Dvorniković's work that denies the critical stances of Dvorniković toward Jovan Cvijić. It is important to emphasize that there are some rare opposing evaluations of Dvorniković's contributions (see Osolnik 1995, 75).

the period in which it was written, his book *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (The Characterology of the Yugoslavs) contained a long chapter on the "national melos," which allegedly reflected the common "national psyche" and "collective temperament" (2000 (1939), 358) of Yugoslavs, mirroring "the whole symphony of the soul" (2000 (1939), 357).[9] However, most of his views on *sevdalinka* were summarized in his short book, *Psiha jugoslovenske melanholije* (Psyche of Yugoslav Melancholy), published as early as 1925. Influenced by the then-popular theories of "racial types," characterology, and German romantic philosophy, Dvorniković searched for the true national character in the musical expressions of the Yugoslavs. Similarly, as in countless European nation-building projects, he sensed, "A nation with this kind of song and such an emotionally deep soul [...] must also have some kind of cultural future" (1925, 63).

In his interpretations, the primary musical genre that can truly explain the main Yugoslav characterological trait—melancholy, has been produced in the Yugoslav-Ottoman convergence—and thus in the area under the oriental influence for centuries.[10] Dvorniković writes that this specific Slavic musical genre—*sevdalinka*—represents the essence of "our unhappy melancholy and nostalgia" (1925, 5). A special kind of tormented soul is a prerequisite to genuinely experiencing this melancholic song, which "demands one to become sad to become happy; it demands crying to sing" (1925, 15). As Longinović (2000, 628) notes, Dvorniković describes *sevdalinka* as a collective "unburdening" of the Yugoslav soul. Yet, in these songs sung on the European periphery, the pain becomes pleasure; people's intention to get rid of the pain leads to even more pain, which becomes pleasurable pain. Dvorniković writes that this song torments the listener with its caresses (1925, 16) and provokes the body to react. Despite the general investment in this music as a potential binding force of the

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9   All the translations of non-English sources are mine.

10 As Risto Pekka Pennanen notes, Dvorniković's ideas about *sevdalinka* as a melancholic genre could be interpreted as an appropriation of Orientalist discourses since "the melancholic airs of the East were a common notion in musical scholarship until the First World War, and in travel writing up to the Second World War and even later" (2010, 77).

Yugoslavs and the return to the pre-imperialist medieval South-Slavic Golden Age (see also Pennanen 2010, 83), in his opinion, this melancholic affect was still reserved for the people with an "inner ear."

Although Dvorniković thus uses the genre as the central building block of Yugoslav identity and the common Yugoslav future, he succeeds, at least in his early works, in presenting it—unintentionally—as a boundary-making mechanism that keeps the imperial legacies alive. For he emphasizes the persistence of the boundary between the two territories controlled by two dominant empires—the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian—which influenced the emotional worlds, creativity, and mentality of their inhabitants. Already in the first paragraph, he notes that there is a character difference between "Eastern" and "Western" Slavs: "Towards the East, this Yugoslav [melancholic] sentiment becomes heavier and darker, while in the West and North it is thinner and paler" (1925, 5).[11] In this respect, his thinking resonates with the dominant center-periphery model of the geography of the "emotional excess" (see Karush 2012), which also enabled internal othering in South-Eastern Europe and beyond.[12]

The Balkans have been shaped as Europe's internal Other (see Jezernik 2004; Petrović 2009; Todorova 2009) and regarded as an important in-between place, a space of uninhibited pleasures and affective subjects with the ability to express raw emotions and a particular kind of soulfulness (Matošević and Škokić 2014, 61; see also van de Port 1999). Often positive connotations are woven into this aspect of Balkanism, presenting it as a territory containing something vital that the West has lost (see Živković 2011, 66). In the prevailing scheme, the excess of sentimentality and melancholy was attributed to the "true

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11   Dvorniković ascribes this to the process of the Orientalization of the already orientally inclined Slavs, which had become severely melancholic during the Byzantine and Ottoman reigns (1925, 40–41).

12   The concept of "nesting orientalism" has often been applied to understand internal Othering in the territory of former Yugoslavia (see Bakić-Hayden 1995). Despite some problematic aspects and, most of all, the absence of supporting ethnography that would justify a linear axis of Orientalizing one's own neighbors, the concept has avoided almost any criticism. For a close analysis of the concept, see Baskar 2010.

core of the Balkans," portrayed as a feeling-filled, though economically stagnant and irrational, part of the peripheral world. Therefore, like the European South (Gray 2013, 107), insiders and outsiders see the Balkans as a European "bank of spirit." Accepting its own "soulfulness" is one of the numerous ways of responding to the Balkanistic stigma (Živković 2011, 67), which already burdened the area before Dvorniković's era. Thus, unsurprisingly, he repeats these attitudes, juxtaposes them with his personal experiences, and enhances the existing affective cartographies. However, he does this with a specific goal, thus describing the "aesthetic of emotional excess" (see Karush 2012) as a particularly sweet curse. This curse provides essential fuel for the common Yugoslav, anti-imperial future. Interestingly and paradoxically, Dvorniković's affective reactions to *sevdalinka* prompted him to choose a song that belonged to the legacy of the imperial Ottoman past.[13]

The particularities of the song required not only the "right ear"—a culturally-tuned capacity to listen and hear the music and be affected by the song—but also a so-called genre-normative listening situation. The fact is that the space in which one listens to music also conditions the genres and their reception (Stockfelt 2006). So he identified certain places that enabled so-called "adequate listening" of *sevdalinka*.[14] Thus, he noted that *sevdalinka* demands and creates a specific kind of "affective atmosphere" (Brennan 2004) and has its place in a "sooty tavern" (*mehana*) and not in the chic salons that were introduced in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the imperial Austro-Hungarian rule (see also Talam and Paćuka 2018).[15] Anti-imperialist attitudes were, therefore, mainly directed against the Austro-Hungarian reign, which promoted various musical genres

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13   Dvorniković's attitudes toward the Ottoman heritage and legacy were extremely ambivalent (see Hajdarpašić 2008), it seems that he reconsidered the importance of the Ottoman imperial legacy precisely because of his affective experiences and his new interpretation that pointed to similarities between South-Slavs and Ottomans.

14   Ola Stockfelt writes that "adequate listening" is always "in the broadest sense ideological" (2006, 92).

15   In 1878, Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia in keeping with the agreement of the Congress of Berlin.

and tastes. Different aesthetics testified, according to Dvorniković's ambitions, that the empire had no political future in the Balkans.[16] Although the author embraced the idea that *sevdalinka* is a hybrid genre, he nevertheless argued that it is—at least in its "original and raw form"—not suitable for "export" (2000, 377–378). In many aspects, the particular limited self-balkanization evident in his approach to *sevdalinka* had contradictory effects; they also unintentionally enhanced the boundaries between the Yugoslav "soulful" Southeast and "soulless" Northwest.

Sevdalinka in the Yugoslav Northwest

In Dvorniković's persistent affective cartography, the sweet pleasure of pain was thus ascribed to the real heart of the Balkans (Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and southern Serbia). Hence, parts of the Yugoslav national body apparently did not have the (same) capacity to experience the genre and let the song adequately affect them. *Sevdalinka*, therefore, functioned as a mechanism for fostering affective bonding for a select part of Yugoslavs. Dvorniković did not "deny the existence of differences among the people inhabiting Yugoslavia." Instead, he claimed that "these differences are contingent and temporary and that they mask a deeper and more profound racial unity" (Wachtel 1998, 93). In *The Characterology of the Yugoslavs*, he worked harder to connect Yugoslavs divided by former imperial borders. According to him, the affect produced by the song could be an answer to the burning Yugoslav problems. *Sevdalinka* had the potential to eventually seduce

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16 Dvorniković writes that the Austrian government despised the sound of Bosnian music and considered it "Bosnian howling." According to him, the rulers even forbade the performance of the songs and avoided places where music was played (2000, 378). In fact, there are some sources that confirm his claims, for example, Saks writes that some visitors argued that it is not possible to hear "lovable melodies" in Bosnia and that a particular technique of nasal singing is omnipresent, stating that "people would rather run away from this singing than search for it." It seemed that this singing originated not only from the wrong part of the world but also from the parts of bodies that are not designed to produce pleasant sounds, as he writes, the songs "originate from neck, not chest" (Saks 1889, 51).

all peoples of Slavic background to "fall into it," or fall into a common (political) dream, but also to reconcile imperial legacies with the Yugoslav future.[17] Overwhelmed by excitement, Dvorniković testified with his own example:

When I walked through Sarajevo's *čaršija*[18] as a child, I often listened to the endlessly extended tones heard from afar, which resembled more the sound of howling wolves than singing—these are the same songs that are being sung nowadays, although well combed and decorated in salons and studios of Belgrade's radio stations [...] Admittedly, as a grammar school student, I felt that these songs seemed a bit creepy, especially those from the real "sooty taverns" [*čađavih mehana*]. They gave me chills, and as a boy, I was disgusted when their doors suddenly opened, and a drunken porter stumbled outside, red faces with burning eyes peeping from the smoky atmosphere [...] These people seemed wild, dreadful, mad ... But after becoming an adult, my relationship with this type of song and folk music in general changed fundamentally. After a long "incubation," "infection" broke out. Although my ancestors were not Bosnian, *bacillus bosnensis* entered my blood. From the bottom of my soul, somewhere from its most atavistic depths, a string emerged that vibrated upon hearing the most primitive song of the porters. I suddenly discovered that this is not "howling" or wailing but that this mode of singing hides very profound and complicated melodic lines [...] I felt that these were not "primitive" but, in fact, extremely "heavy songs" [...] In my twenties, I discovered two musical personalities inside me: the first one, schooled in western singing lessons, concerts, and operas, and the second one, which not only listened to the voices from a sooty tavern but trembled when faced with the opening tones of the *sevdalije* [sevdalinka performers] [...] Two worlds collided inside me: the Slavic East and the European West [...] and I know that a

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17   In the big part of former Yugoslavia there is an expression *pasti u sevdah* ("fall into *sevdah*"), which means that the subject is pulled into a specific, often melancholic emotional state.

18   Ottoman-era market district.

lot of our people experienced the same [...] The Bosnian song sobbed and moaned from the depth, flowed through the veins and nerves, and brought blood into the heart. It also had something of a physiological elementality in it. (2000 (1939), 376–377)

By articulating a subjective experience as a sincere confession, Dvorniković testified to the power of *sevdalinka*. The change in his listening abilities, in which *sevdalinka* underwent a radical transformation from a non-human sound to a deeply emotionally-charged song, also testified to his rejection of his "enlightened" educated musical tastes, which he began to see as an imposed imperial legacy of the "civilized West." But not everyone was blessed with this melancholic "contagion" as he concluded, many people could not be affected by the song (at least not in the same way), despite their prolonged exposure to the sound of the common Yugoslav future, as he noted with disappointment:[19]

There are Yugoslavs, especially from the northwestern parts, who simply cannot stand this song. It drives them into an unpleasant, depressive state of mind, or they find it—boring. They do not know "what to do with it," and they run away from it in horror [...] In Bosnia, there were many new officials, not only Austrians, but also our people, who lived in Bosnia for thirty years, but because they came too late (after a certain age), they could not let themselves be "infected" by the song. (Dvorniković 2000, 378)

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19 Longinović writes that *sevdalinka* for Dvorniković was mostly connected with manhood (2000, 625), which might be an echo of the scholarly legacy of the former anthropological interpretation of *sevdalinka* as a prime stage for the expression of the intensity of the "Yugoslav variant of machismo" (Simić 1969). However, I argue that Dvorniković's affective description of the genre offers a more complex picture and testifies to the profound impact of *sevdalinka*. The genre seduced him to feel an attachment to different places in Yugoslavia and, through affective power, raised questions about self-identification and the Yugoslav future. The change in his musical taste also made a promise for the new state.

In particular, he regretted that some of the officials of the Austro-Hungarian empire serving in Bosnia, who originated from Slovenian Styria, despised *sevdalinka* in the same way as the Austrians (Dvorniković 2000, 378).[20] According to him, this was a reflection of different political aspirations and an expression of nostalgia for imperial rule.[21]

After World War II and the establishment of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, Dvorniković's ideas of Yugoslavism built up through musical sentimentalism deemed unsuitable for the new ideology. His "'integralist' theory was seen as unitarian and reactionary" (Longinović 2000, 632). Moreover, his attitude toward the Ottoman legacy, which was perceived as regressive, conservative, and non-modern in the new atheist state that extolled socialist modernization, did not fit with the socialist aspirations for the Yugoslav future.

Therefore, the theories of the South Slavic melancholy were replaced by "socialist narratives stressing class struggle, industrial progress, and the 'brotherhood and unity' of Yugoslav peoples" (Hajdarpašić 2008, 727). In the new ideological imagination of brotherhood and unity amongst different Yugoslav nations and nationalities, it became commonplace to divide the Yugoslavs' national traditions and to present Yugoslavia as a state blessed with multiculturalism and enriching cultural traditions.[22] *Sevdalinka* has been associated mainly with Bosnia and Herzegovina and especially—but not exclusively—with Bosnian Muslims. In this process of the ethnicization of music,

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20 The dominant cluster of images of Slovenians in the former Yugoslav space often depicts Slovenians as a nation closer to Germans than other Yugoslavs. Because of their geographical vicinity to the West, Slovenians were considered more economically successful, rational, but also "heartless." Rigidity was also ascribed to Slovenian music and art. This othering of the more economically successful nations is often explained as a reaction to or compensation for feelings of inferiority (see Živković 2011, 60).

21 Austronostalgia—was relatively subtle in the first years after the dissolution of the empire, but it became more pronounced in the late 1990s in the context of uncertainties of the period of Yugoslav wars and the economic and political unrest (see Bartulović 2018; Baskar 2007; Rexhepi 2018).

22 At the same time, fears that folk songs could act as separatist instruments increased political control over folkloric performances, which were financially supported with the aim of promoting multiculturality, brotherhood and unity, and Yugoslav folklore (Longinović 2000, 633; see also Hofman 2012).

the idea that some people just do not have the "right" ear or soul to perform or hear the true essence of *sevdalinka* and to be seduced by it became even more evident. As Marko Živković remarks, the ideas about the gradation of sadness perceived as "soulfulness" persisted and became even louder than in the days of Dvorniković. We can even observe a kind of "ethnicization" of affect: "Slovenes had merry polkas, Macedonians painfully sad, slow, slow laments. As folk sociology had it, the merrier the music—the 'shallower' the soul [...]" (Živković 2011, 57). Both the audience and the performers on the northwest-southeast diagonal claimed that as a specific genre, *sevdalinka* not only demands training, which, with the rise of the music industry and "professionalization" of music, was available and necessary during the Yugoslav socialist era but, above all—as singer Emina Zečaj explained in one of her interviews with ethnomusicologist Amra Toska, who shared this with me—*honest heart, sincerity, and soulfulness* (2017, 10 April). So a real *sevdalinka* performer can only be a person with real or even tragic life experience[23] who can transform their feelings and pass them on to the audience (see also Samson 2013, 300). The genre was described as a pure "expression of the soul," which was in many ways territorialized, essentially unlearnable and, therefore, exclusive. Sentimentalism, embedded in the musical genre, thus guaranteed public intimacy—again only—just to a limited cross-section of Yugoslavs. According to Simić, "to fall into sevdah, an ecstatic trance-like state with erotic overtones," which he simply read as a "display of machismo," was "a prime example of the depth and intensity of the Bosnian temperament" (1969, 93). He also noted that—at least at the time of his fieldwork in Yugoslavia—it was a widespread phenomenon in Montenegro and Serbia, possibly also in Macedonia, and "to a lesser degree in Croatia" (Simić 1969, 92).[24] Slovenia was excluded from this circle of *sevdah* ecstasy and the essentialization

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23   These ideas are, of course, not specific. The same focus on life experiences, multiple forms of suffering, and endured hardship are crucial for the successful and affective performances of *tango* (see Asaba 2019), *fado* (Gray 2013), *Turkish pop* (Stokes 2010), etc.

24   It is important to note that Simić's (1969) definitions of *sevdalinka* are very open and flexible.

of the true Yugoslav soul. Despite numerous attempts to reintroduce various traditional musical genres throughout the Yugoslav region (also through different interpretations and appropriations),[25] *sevdalinka* did not experience the same popularity throughout the Yugoslav territory. It especially remained popular in the republics once part of the Ottoman Empire. Although the genre was systematically cultivated and adapted to the new taste in parts of socialist Yugoslavia from the 1950s onwards (see Kozorog and Bartulović 2016), with some notable exceptions, its fame and appeal did not spread with the same intensity in the northwestern part of the country (see Bartulović 2016; Ceribašić et al. 2019).[26]

The idea that Slovenians are more resistant to the call of "Bosnian melancholy" with a distinctly oriental feel was reflected in the relative unpopularity in Slovenia of Yugoslav *sevdalinka* stars. They performed in the Slovenian territory only sporadically and mostly for members of the Yugoslav National Army or for large communities of workers from the other republics of the common state who found (temporary) homes in the Yugoslav northwest. The rare news reports about the concerts of the *sevdalinka* celebrities on Slovenian territory are boring descriptions without any traces of affective reactions to the music.

In our earlier work (Bartulović and Kozorog 2019, 163), we have already pointed out that the musical worlds of the former Yugoslavs, coming from different republics, regions, and social backgrounds, were very different—especially as far as traditional music was concerned. We have also shown that Slovenians often perceived Bosnian *sevdalinka* as odd and "not merely as belonging

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25 A special role was played here by the cultural and artistic associations (*kulturno umjetničko društvo, KUD*), which operated throughout Yugoslavia with the intention of promoting brotherhood and unity through song and dance.

26 Naila Ceribašić et al. (2019) give a detailed overview of the attitude toward *sevdalinka* in Croatia. Although *sevdalinka* was much more popular in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the authors testify that the genre was also an important part of the Croatian musical culture and cultural imaginary. Croatia had also played a significant role in the distribution of *sevdalinka* through the music record industry, which began already in the first decade of the 20th century and culminated with the Zagreb-based record label Jugoton.

to a different culture, but to the culture of the semi-rural Others, who came to Slovenia as economic migrants during the successful Yugoslav years" (see also Bartulović 2021). Therefore, both *sevdalinka* and the so-called newly-composed folk music were considered the music of working-class migrants. Unsurprisingly, in Slovenia, they were primarily found in isolated diasporic communities, far from the general public (see Bartulović and Kozorog 2019). The affectivity of traditional and folk music, combined with its cultural connotations, produced more distance between Yugoslav brothers than feelings of Yugoslav commonality. As they remembered, for the "unaccustomed ear," the music provoked "suffering," but not pleasurable suffering. The enjoyment of *sevdalinka*, of sentimentalism and the inexplicable ecstasy, seemed exotic; but above all, the melancholic song indicated that we, as Yugoslavs, "were so different." As one of the fans of the band that I address in the following section admitted in an interview, he believed that he would never be able to listen to these songs, let alone enjoy them: *At that time, I could not imagine that I would ever fall as much as my neighbors [from former Yugoslavia]. For me at that time, it was a strange sound, [...] I am not sure what happened to me in the 1990s, but something obviously did* (J. M., 2019, July 11).[27] It seems that the "*sevdah* infection" described by Dvorniković slowly started to spread to the northwestern parts of the soon-to-be former Yugoslavia. The country's dissolution and the wars provoked a rupture that allowed feelings of self-estrangement or defamiliarization and made the new *sevdalinka* audience "capable of a new kind of recognition, interest, and analysis" (Flatley 2008, 80).

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27   A similar attitude could be observed in Serbia in the 1990s when people suddenly admitted that they no longer despise turbo-folk and folk as much as in the decades before (Tanja Petrović, 2020, June 3).

The Era of Emotional Excess in Slovenia: Building an Affective Community in the Aftermath of Yugoslavia's Dissolution

The change in attitudes towards *sevdalinka* in the northwestern parts of Yugoslavia was already noticeable in the late 1970s when the political atmosphere in the country revealed many internal conflicts, different nationally driven political aspirations, and various imagined visions of the Yugoslav future. The emergence of nationalism demonstrated that brotherhood and unity had an uncertain perspective. However, the tense political atmosphere, marked by fear and skepticism, also encouraged the birth of the Balkan Sevdah Band, later Azra, in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. The band successfully merged rock and traditional music from the southeastern parts of the common state and was responsible for bringing *sevdalinka* closer to the Yugoslav rock audience (see also Živković 2011). However, the actual popularization of *sevdalinka* in Slovenia coincided with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the new sentimentality inscribed into those painful years. The sounds of the genre of melancholia affected a segment of the Slovenian public only in the early 1990s when around 30,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina found temporary protection from the raging war in Slovenia. In this painful era, *sevdalinka* slowly transformed its status for Slovenian listeners, mainly with the help of refugee bands. I argue that this process of genre transformation and the feelings attached to it cannot be understood without acknowledging the context of the Yugoslav dissolution. It seems that "ugly feelings" (Ngai 2005) enabled *sevdalinka* to truly flourish amongst Slovenia's youth.

As we have argued elsewhere (Bartulović and Kozorog 2019), musical dialogues between refugee music groups and the audience were a form of home-making both for refugees who were driven from their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for many Slovenians who had vivid memories of the Yugoslav community and tried to maintain some form of continuity during the turbulent years. As I mentioned earlier, I am focusing here specifically on the younger audience, who were in their late teens in the first half of the 1990s, and vaguely remembered Yugoslavia as a pleasant background for their childhood

memories.[28] Older fans of the refugee music group Dertum[29] were often able to rationalize their attachments to *sevdalinka* and combine the genre with their personal experiences of life in Yugoslavia. In contrast, among the younger generations, "musical bonding" (see Guilbault 2017) became a crucial part of their identity in formation, which developed precisely through enjoyment, shared vulnerability, and affective sociality.

Since concerts and public performances are spaces that invite people to emotionally engage and participate, I would like to turn my attention to the event that most clearly testifies to different investments into the affective potential of *sevdalinka* in Slovenia. When they talked about their experience of listening to *sevdalinka* at Dertum's concerts, most fans especially remembered the refugee group's first public performance, often referred to as the "unforgettable" or "legendary concert," at the alternative youth cultural center KUD France Prešeren in Ljubljana in 1995.[30] The recordings were later published on a CD, which is still regularly played in a few cafés in Ljubljana and Sarajevo. Fans who attended the concert often recollected the event with tears in their eyes, while those who could not attend described their absence as one of "the greatest regrets" in their lives.[31] Most of them preferred to listen to the band's first

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28 It is usually argued that the younger generations and their sentimentalism toward Yugoslavia or the past is just a fad. Many have already questioned the relevance of this distinction "between lived and non-lived experience of the Yugoslav past" for the affectivity of music to bring new communities into being and navigate future aspirations (Hofman 2015, 160).

29 The band was spontaneously formed in the room of a refugee center in Ljubljana and performed traditional songs from various Yugoslav regions with a special focus on *sevdalinka*. However, they successfully adapted traditional music to the genres of rock and jazz. With their unique approach to *sevdalinka* they gradually attained cult status in the Slovenian "underground" scene and attracted a number of fans who, like the band members, were in their teens in the 1990s.

30 Although some of the fans testified that their concerts were always special, in this segment, I am focusing on the experiences of this particular concert, which proved to be extremely affective, not only because it was the first but also because of the recordings that enabled the further "transmission of the affect" (Brennan 2004).

31 Of course, the same musical moments can often point to different feelings and sensations among the listeners (see Gray 2013), but here I am particularly interested in the shared memories and the affective attunement.

CD rather than their second, musically advanced and more polished album, recorded in 1998. Live recordings, they claim, were more affective in evoking memories of an era and part of their youth and, therefore, clearly testify to an atmosphere that could not be reproduced. For many, there was something unique about that moment when intimate feelings found a kind of resonance in the emotional worlds of others. This event, similar to other concerts, not only allowed but actively encouraged sentimentalism after the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia. As a fan of the band argued, the intense feelings that the music and emerging community provoked at this special moment were ambivalent and difficult to articulate. The affects were rationalized and translated into words more than two decades after the legendary concert. He was confused in many ways about the power of his ambivalent feelings (see Ngai 2005, 14) toward the Yugoslav space. In fact, he was certain that the separation between positive and negative affects did not do justice to his emotional reactions (see Cvetkovich 2012, 6). Precisely the oscillation between pleasure and pain, between happiness and sadness, brought him closer to the others and enabled an affective attunement:

> I felt a euphoria caused by the crowd—with the shouting of friends, with the support for the band, because we knew all the band members. And also, a kind of excitement [...] I felt a feeling of a powerful connection, euphoria, but also a kind of melancholy, which came more from the music itself than from the lyrics. I could have laughed. I could have cried. I could have screamed. I felt physically like embracing the whole wide world. (P. P., 2019, July 8)

As Denise Gill notes, "in melancholy—and in loss, suffering, pain, separation, joy, and ecstasy—our bodily boundaries are made porous and opened to others," for "tears are an invitation to intimacy" (2017, 148). Similar euphoric outbursts of mixed emotions dominate the recordings. Thus, the waves of clapping, gasping, and screaming with excitement and ecstasy are audible on the live album. Yet, the accompanying singing of the audience can hardly be heard—unsurprisingly, since most people at the concert were

hearing the songs for the first time and even struggled to understand the lyrics. The majority of the young audience came to the concert because they were friends with some of the band members and wanted to support them in their first big stage performance, *it felt important and seemed right to be there* (P. P., 2019, July 8). Most had no significant or strong connection to the former Yugoslav territory.[32] As one of the band's singers recalls, they were mostly *real Slovenians, more supporters than fans, who followed us wherever we played* (M. Dž., 2014, February 2). Their younger audience also lacked knowledge of Yugoslav musical traditions in many ways. However, most were more familiar with pop-rock groups from the other Yugoslav republics, including the aforementioned *Azra*. Nevertheless, they were surprised by the "power" of *sevdalinka* and openly admitted that listening to Dertum was, in many ways, an affective learning experience, part of the vital process of "broadening musical horizons." In fans' opinions, the band managed to present the musical tradition of the former Yugoslav area in a way that, as one fan recalls, *touched you in the right place* (J. M., 2019, July 11).[33]

Moreover, sociality provided a decisive motivation to discover the "lost" multicultural traditions of their former homeland. Collective listening was privileged and more affective. Dertum's music offered the perfect setting for musical bonding that transcended national and cultural boundaries, which at the time were aggressively enforced by the discourse of nationalism and separation. The enjoyment, filled with inexplicable sadness, enabled self-reflection. As one interlocutor claimed: *Through these repetitions, you hear the music many times, and you become aware that this is part of your cultural pool* (P. P., 2019, July 8). The affective intensities of the performance of *sevdalinka* and other traditional songs from the former Yugoslav territories were not fully colonized by

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32 Of course, there were some exceptions. For example, part of the audience consisted of Bosnian refugees and people whose parents originated from the former Yugoslav territory.

33 The specific reinterpretations of traditional genres were decisive for the euphoria that many felt at their concerts, as this *could be another boring traditional song, but it was not* (P. P., 2019, July 8). The music was transformed to suit the taste of the young Yugoslav rock generation.

the official discourse at the time. And while many fans claimed that they were quite apolitical at the time, later, it was precisely the experience of particular affective atmospheres that gained political significance (see also Hofman 2015, 151). Fans of Dertum began to reflect official interpretations of the (Yugoslav) past through their experiences of affective sociality:

> *We had this awareness that we as a nation [...] were doing something that is perhaps not best for us because in the past [in Yugoslavia], there was much more connection between different cultures, and this is something much closer to younger people than sealing themselves off from others. At least in my circle of friends, this was the case. My intimate feeling was that we had been manip-ulated with simple nonsense [...] When I listened to this argument, I did not know any regions and even fewer people. But I was aware that Yugoslavia was very diverse geographically and culturally and that we are throwing that away because of some really far-fetched arguments. It may be that our fascination for music was shaped by our conviction that we do not want to part from all these really good things, and it was good that we experienced them, at least in music and in friendships.* (P. P., 2019, July 8)

To describe the promising echoes of the past as a possibility for future openness towards Others does not necessarily mean that these attitudes can be described as a clear expression of Yugonostalgia. As Ana Hofman (2015) notes, this interpretative framework blurs and simplifies many aspects of the post-Yugoslav musical world. My interlocutors never used the concept to describe their own feelings and experiences. Although they did not claim any first-hand or "real" knowledge about life in Yugoslavia and demanded a return to the Yugoslav past, the affectivity of the music generated a discourse of curiosity that challenged the official narratives of the nation-state and raised countless questions. The majority admitted that they were too young to know what Yugoslavia was and how it functioned. Importantly, their thoughts about Yugoslavia's past were accompanied by pervasive doubts. However, these uncertainties and lack of knowledge made it easier for *sevdalinka* to seduce them. Therefore, "public

intimacy" in this case did not emerge from rational decisions or political goals. Instead, it emerged "out of the affective reaction" (see Guilbault 2017, 101) to the music, the performers, the affective atmosphere, the historical moment, and especially from unexpected musical attunement, which not only created new social connections but also provoked a renewed confrontation with the official political discourses and imposed versions of the Slovenian future. As in other post-Yugoslav contexts, it became clear that "non-reflexive 'mere enjoyment' in music [...] can be very much a politically engaged pleasurable experience of sociality, which goes beyond prescribed ideological patterns and politics of belonging" (Hofman 2015, 156).

Conclusion

Dertum began to play in exile due to the specific precarious living conditions. Still, in many respects, their music awakened the need to reconnect with the "lost" Yugoslav multicultural connections in Slovenia, which, as already mentioned, the young audience did not have the opportunity to experience for themselves. Motivated by an inexplicable feeling of loss, listening to Dertum was seen as the last chance to be part of a parting world that praised brotherhood and unity. While the band's fans usually considered themselves apolitical, it was apparent that mixed feelings enabled them to gain oppositional agency, express their vulnerability through "musical bonding," and reassess the official narratives of the past, present, and future of the Slovenian nation-state. Moreover, participation in an "affective community" restored a sense of stability. As one interlocutor remarked:

> *The music made you happy [...] it brought back something you had lost at that very moment. Without it, we would have been robbed much more [...] This conceptual understanding of* sevdah *came much later ... the awareness that this is a form of nostalgia, melancholy, yearning, sadness. At that time, this was more a form of unification and a process of exploring the cultural world, a*

world connected to the world that was falling apart. It acted as a kind of dock to which one could tie oneself so as not to lose yourself and something valuable that floated away. (P. P., 2019, July 8)

Although strange and at first even funny to some people, *sevdalinka* created an "affective scene of identification amongst strangers" (Berlant 2008a, vi). The power of Dertum's performances was decisive in the process of shaping the listeners' social imaginaries about the anticipated future. Sociality and sentimental worlds emerging through enjoyment in music managed to convey a sense of togetherness, intimacy, and hope, despite or perhaps because of the calls for fragmentation, exclusion, and separation that dominated newly independent Slovenia. Lauren Berlant sees public intimacy as aspirational; it is "an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (1998, 281). In many ways, it is a "promise of happiness" nourished by particular forms of relationships. The intimacy thus built worlds, and Dertum's *sevdalinka* guaranteed intimate feelings of happiness in sadness but also promised a kind of eternity of something that was evidently disappearing forever. *Bacillus bosnensis*, diagnosed by Dvorniković already at the beginning of the 20th century, inhabited the body of Slovenian youth and shaped them as individuals and as political beings. As one interlocutor confessed, the genre reflected an affective economy of care: *Through music, I began to care about the world. It was not only about me; it was about ... refugees, who also became my friends, my other friends, all of us* (J. M., 2019, July 11).

Jonathan Flatley claims that melancholy can function "as the very mechanism through which one may be interested in the world" (2008, 1), and it can be an affective political resource (Cvetkovich 2012, 109). Embracing sentimentalism can be a way back to contact with lost spatiotemporalities. It can also lead people to rethink their relationship with the world around them, as in the case of *sevdalinka* in Slovenia. Renewed investment in *sevdalinka* produced pleasurable melancholy, which enabled Slovenian youth to take care of their future in a more pleasant way. But, as Berlant argues, this is always possible

only by the "body's active presence to the intensities of the present" (2008b, 845–846) in the critical historical moment when the past and the promoted vision of the future were brought into severe tensions. Similar tensions characterized this region during the founding of the first Yugoslav state, and, as the writings of Dvorniković confirm, they were also addressed by the affective power of music.

Nonetheless, these two analyzed cases also point to differences in community building through affect, which additionally brings to the fore some tensions that become apparent in the theorization of affect. Therefore, the article also points to the need to be especially tentative about the affective components of auditory experiences in specific spatiotemporal contexts. It highlights the functioning and understanding of affect in two different, though not mutually exclusive, ways: as a "cultural value" that structures communities politically and as an intensity. Although Dvorniković's political goals were clear from the beginning of the 20th century, his understanding of affect as a cultural value contributed to the structuring of the boundaries and power relations, also making some nations "more" Yugoslav than others. He also confirmed that the affect associated with *sevdalinka* was outside his will or that of other political subjects, as made clear by his own intense experiences. It seems that even calculated imaginings of the future are sutured with affect as an intensity.

On the other hand, the politicization of *sevdalinka* amongst Dertum's audience can be understood as an unintended "side effect" of affective sociality. Still, we can also observe that articulating the affective capacity of the genre made it into a "cultural value." *Sevdalinka* and "soulful listening" created the intimate musical language that drew a boundary between those who "understand" and those who "do not understand"—not only the music and the emotions associated with the melancholy but also the importance of preserving commonality or multiculturality even after the country's dissolution. With this shift, *sevdalinka* also contributed, at least partially, to rewriting existing affective cartographies in the post-Yugoslav space. Nevertheless, both cases testify to *sevdalinka*'s affective power to generate personal and societal transformation,

which led to complex processes of "collective becoming" and created an intimacy that opened horizons of possibilities. For many, *sevdalinka* was a hopeful genre. For a few, it was a revolutionary song. S*evdalinka*'s "boundless intensity" (Dvorniković 2000 (1939)) thus not only explains how people reacted to social changes and coped with the fears of "in-betweenness" on the European periphery but also encapsulates the genre's manifold entanglements with turbulent historical moments.

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E/Affect Agropop:

How Pop and Joke Made People Resonate in the 1980s

Martin Pogačar

Introduction

During what is often called the democratization period of the 1980s in Yugoslavia, punk rock and new wave music, as well as critical scholarship and the arts, are seen to have played a key role.[1] These cultural practices, discourses, styles, and approaches are often understood in Slovenian context as the cultural and political opposition or "the alternative"[2] and are attributed an essential role in the processes that led to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the formation of independent Slovenia. However, the focus on the "alternative," also designating youth cultural production and various socio-political initiatives, tends to sidetrack the implications of mainstream/pop developments and the mechanisms of appropriating these initiatives and endeavors into the everyday political and media discourses of the late 1980s. Thus, it fails to grasp the effects and affects of the "translation" of themes and topics understood as a social critique (and the emergence of the peace movement, anti-militarism, environmentalism, and striving for gay and lesbian rights; see Spaskovska 2017) into the mainstream. Moreover, it obscures the wider mechanisms that allowed these topics to become interpreted and understood in the context of the collapse of socialism and Yugoslavia. The chapter intervenes at this very spot aiming to uncover the affective mechanisms behind the translation of fringe social, cultural, and political practices (often provocative but devoid of clear ambition to dismantle

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1   This chapter is a result of the research conducted in the framework of the projects "Music and Politics in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Toward a New Paradigm of Politics of Music in the 21st Century" (J6-9365) and "The formation of new cultural field in 1980s Slovenia: Civil society between nationalist politics and intercultural cooperation" (J6-2576).

2   When referring to alternative in this sense, I use quotation marks.

socialism) into an affective "object of mass consumption," epitomized by the mundanity of pop music, that participated in ascribing the period a teleological transformative mission.

To do so, I analyze the phenomenon of the pop band Agropop, which played with "fun and serious" ambiguity that unfolded, as I explain below, in playing with music genres and perverting socialist ideology. It thus gave the re-emergent Slovenian nationalism an affective voice and form, making it ordinary and banal (Billig 1995). I primarily focus on the band's 1987 song "Samo milijon nas še živi" (Only a Million of Us Are Still Alive) from the album *Za domovino z Agropopom naprej!* (For the Homeland, with Agropop – Forwards!, Agropop 1987) and argue that the band rode the wave of rhetoric and content started by "the alternative" social critique. The later was in many ways also the result of youthful provocation rather than political agenda, but gave the critique a specific impetus translating it into the banal quotidian. Essentially, I argue that the band's iconography and musical form catered to the emergence of affective resonance as a force that drove and nurtured Slovenian nationalist sentiment.

The main part of the chapter rests on discourse analysis of the "Only a Million" and its popular reception in newspapers and (social) media and video excerpts from the period found on YouTube. In the last section, I analyze the 2021 remake of the song (made to mark the 30th anniversary of independent Slovenia) to provide a historical-comparative perspective on the genealogy of the e/affect of Agropop. The focus on the transformation of the original's ambiguity and symbolic parody into nondescript pop facilitates insight into the dynamics of the emergence of the late 1980s nationalism as well as into the music-related genealogy of the formation and transformation of Slovenian national/ist mythology, and elucidates the issue of historicization of affect.

Theoretically, the analysis builds on recent debates on affect, politics, and music (Guilbault 2010; Hofman 2015, 2020; Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020) that primarily emphasize music's ability "to operate at the level of embodied intensity in ways that sometimes seem to bypass a cognizable sense of 'the mind' or even the self" and recognize that it "emerges fundamentally from social relationships and a socially configured sensorium"

(Desai-Stephens and Reisnour 2020, 102). In addition, the discussion foregrounds how "different media engage senses and affects (emotions, feeling, passions) and, hence, have effects," that is, how affects "pose questions about the links between the subjective and the cultural, individual and social, self and other, inside and outside" (Koivunen in Hillis et al. 2015, 3), but also between now and then. Specifically, I seek to discuss what Ana Hofman terms "the politics of the apolitical [theorizing] sensorial aspects of the experience of music and sound that are usually dismissed as invisible, mundane or hidden, yet which are able to make a rupture or open a possibility for new forms of political belonging and identifications" (2020, 304). The paper thus engages with popular music's power that may appear apolitical and transient in its inducing of affective resonance (Mühlhoff 2015; Slaby 2016) yet, nevertheless, acts as a socio-political force.

Raw and Dirty? Pretty and Empty?

Yugoslavia of the 1980s saw the further diversification of youth and popular culture in terms of genres and subculture styles (music, fashion, cinema) through a combination of increasingly dominant Western consumerist popular culture and styles that were appropriated in the lively domestic music scene (Rasmussen 1995; Petrov 2016; see also *Punk pod Slovenci* 1985). The latter was grafted on a well-established popular music infrastructure that included "recording facilities, music festivals, broadcast media and press [that] yielded remarkably rich and diverse music scenes in the late 1970s and 1980s" (Beard and Rasmussen 2020, 2) along with institutional and material conditions (see *Punk pod Slovenci* 1985; Spaskovska 2017; Beard and Rasmussen 2020). This infrastructure proved crucial for the developing labels and producing records, festivals, and concerts. Importantly, it supported the proliferation and diversification of subcultures, initiatives, and genres (punk rock, new wave, fanzines, pamphlets, art) that thrived and survived not only in opposition to but also in cohabitation and overlap with the mainstream.

The 1980s are thus often seen as a dynamic and contradictory period. It rearticulates, on the one hand, the legacy of the 1968/71 liberalization and the party backlash and, on the other, the economic crisis of the late 1970s in the context of foregrounding nationalism that chipped at the symbolic structure and affected the country's politico-ideological edifice. The period saw the formation of various social movements and initiatives (Spaskovska 2017, 125) as well as the birth of Yugoslav punk in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a loud sonic outburst that redefined previous forms of nonconformity: "Rock musicians, who were once the symbol of the youth's nonconformity, suddenly became 'old rock farts' and a radically new criterion for evaluating music appeared out of the blue. If the quality of songs and performance used to be the decisive criterion in rock, punk cared more about social engagement, message and novelty" (Stanković 2014, 301). The music of a generation—which Laibach ambiguously described as "We're the children of the spirit and the brothers of strength/ whose promises are not fulfilled. We are the black ghosts of this world / we sing the mad image of woe. We are the first television generation" (LaibachKunst 2009a, 5:44)[3]— (re)articulated the societal, economic, ethnonational, and class fissures through provocation and revolt. For its performative excess, punk was ousted from the field of popular music at the time (Vidmar 1985 (1984), 191), although as Laibach member Srečko Bajda recalls in an interview, it was also perceived as "engaged entertainment" (2021, August 12). For this reason, also, it was scholarly thematized for its potential to voice and drive socio-political critique.

Later, punk (along with "the alternative") was fetishized as the critical driver of change, at that, obscuring the role and power of mainstream popular music (pop). What is more, in the said processes of socio-political instability in Yugoslavia, as I discuss below, it is often neglected that pop referenced and utilized the rough sounds/images/fashion of the fringes and translated it into a more "palatable" and more widely a/effective expression that tapped into the antagonisms

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3   *Otroci duha smo in bratje moči/ katere obljuba se ne izvrši/ Smo črni duhovi od tega sveta/ opeva-mo noro podobo gorja/ Mi smo prva televizijska generacija* (unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the Slovenian are mine).

of the 1980s socio-political context. The so-called "alternative" musical genres at the time (*Punk pod Slovenci* 1985; Lovšin et al. 2002) and throughout the post-1991 period (Tomc 2020; Stanković 2013; Pogačar 2008; Mišina 2010; Janjatović 1993; Kostelnik 2004) were thus often seen as an expression and manifestation of ideological transgression and openness, an energetic social and political critique (Stanković 2014, 301; Muršič 1995; Tomc 2002; Gržinić 2002).

Slovenian 1980s pop, on the other hand, bar few interventions (see Barber-Kersovan 2002; Velikonja 2014; Stanković 2013; Valetič 2018; Bobnič et al. 2022), remains understudied in the context of the period's socio-political changes. At the same time, Yugoslav popular music studies have been a growing field diversifying conceptual and theoretical approaches to popular music: engaging with the histories of popular music and genres (Vuletić 2008; Beard and Rasmussen 2020; Petrov 2020), historiographic analysis of music and nationalism in the context of Yugoslav wars (Baker 2015), the analyses of production and recording industry, which was one of the strongest in 1980s Southeast Europe (Beard and Rasmussen 2020; Kostelnik 2020), as well as music labor (Hofman 2015) and technology (Pogačar 2015; see also 2022).

To approach the complexities of the 1980s Slovenian music scene, we ask: How to study music (genres) that instrumentalized and popularized "the alternative" and affectively engaged topics of nation, victim, cultural and economic superiority, exceptionalism, and the other? Looking at Agropop, I ask: How did the band's music and iconography employ the affective power of political instability, and did it encode and amplify it in the lyrics, symbol-play, and live gigs? How, then, did the music and history in the 1980s intersect to create affective resonance in a time of political instability and rising nationalism? To approach these questions, I take a look beyond the perimeter of the engaged "alternative (music) scene" to investigate how Agropop—combining the antagonisms of the historical moment in a seemingly banal and naïve way—participated in the formation of affective resonance and how this resonance featured in nationalist, transformation-to-capitalism propagating, emerging socio-political processes of the 1980s.

Riding the Wave

The changing political climate of the early 1980s necessitated the formation or reformation of numerous cultural and media institutions. For example, Radio Študent and the magazine *Mladina* reshifted their focus and became increasingly perceived as critical or "alternative" media outlets. In addition, several venues became known as spaces for music gigs, new art forms experimenting and exhibition, such as the student cultural and artistic center known as ŠKUC, or Disko FV, which "combined fun, culture, and politics" (see nevenkorda 2010). These mostly youth venues, some with long histories (ŠKUC was formed in 1972 while *Mladina* traces its continuity since World War II), formed a broader platform that, in the context of the stalemate political and economic situation, hosted the production of new theoretical, artistic initiatives, ideas, practices (foregrounded by the peace movement, feminism, ecological initiatives, etc.).[4]

At the same time, as documented by Valetič (2020), a lively pop scene was developing, appropriating influences from abroad, including the well-established Western pop-rock tradition. It also sought links with domestic folk/ethno (singer-songwriters), *popevka* (equivalent to chanson, Italian *canzona*, or German *schlager*), as well *narodnozabavna* or folk-pop (see Stanković 2021; Bobnič et al. 2022). During the 1980s, particularly the latter became accepted as a national and traditional sound combining "rural linguistic, visual and sonic reference points and its essentially urban, studio-based production context" (Bobnič et al. 2022; see also Stanković 2021). Folk-pop, Bobnič et al. argue (2022), was indeed an invented tradition that was used to emphasize the distinction from other Yugoslavs, but was at the same time in Slovenia considered a lowly music thus emphasizing the urban/rural distinction and specifically playing into the emerging divisions between progressive urbanity and alleged backwardness of the countryside. This played an important role also in the reception of Agropop and in their self-promotion.

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4   For a feeling of stalemateness, see Zemira Alajbegović's short film "Tereza" from 1983.

The pop music scene at the time sourced from new genres (new wave, electro, industrial) and increasingly capitalized on employing socio-political emphases foregrounded by the alternative, "questioning some of the values embodied in contemporary politics and culture, but above all in an older generation which was seen to perpetuate inherited rituals and rhetoric without being able to respond to the contemporary challenges and crises" (Spaskovska 2017, 89).

And it was in such context that Agropop entered the scene. The band was formed in 1984 by Aleš Klinar (previously a member of the rock band Martin Krpan), Polde Poljanšek, Simon Pavlica, Urban Centa, Dragan Trivič, and Barbara Šerbec-Šerbi. In its career, the band recorded 15 albums before disintegrating in 2000. Agropop meshed rock and pop, made fun of some "national traits," and managed to balance fun and transgression (political, sexual) with a feeling of ethno-exceptionalism and victimhood. As Mitja Velikonja notes, they "took on the role of alarm-bells and sang about the tragic fate of the Slovenian nation and the danger of its extinction; at that time, too, this discourse included self-victimization, self-pity and the necessity of resistance" (2014, 82).

At first, Igor Vidmar notes, Agropop was a parody of "folk-pop form, of cliché music and cheesy texts" (in Menart 2012). Singing about "firefighters and farmers," they were considered amusing for making fun of Slovenianness (inadvertently (re)constructing it along the way). The band played with musical and genre eclecticism, moving between polka and rock, ethno and pop, and between fun and serious. For example, a 1987 review in *Glasbena mladina* notes: "Agropop are not only making fun, they just take anything they get their hands on—be it a children's song, a song they stole from the Sex Pistols and signed as their own, Slovenian folk-pop (*narodnozabavna*) music or something else. Of course, Agropop are eclectics, stealing the riffs and bits of melodies or entire songs like crazy. Despite this, they manage to give the songs a distinctly Agropopian, derogatory, cheeky feel" (Krokar 1987, 24). Several reviews from the time emphasize the band's inventiveness and quality in musical (re)arrangements. A review of their 1987 album *Pesmi s Triglava* (Songs from the Triglav Mountain) notes: "Perhaps they also [as they did *narodnozabavna*] subvert and parody pop, but despite the cover art and some titles [...], despite their wittiness,

inventiveness and fun, the new record can hardly be seen as much more than a product aimed at a *typical Slovenian* [added emphasis] consumer of folk-pop music reading *Nedeljski dnevnik* [a Sunday newspaper bringing easy topics]" (Krokar 1987, 24).

The band developed their eclectic musical style built on "melodies to which one could dance to as well as texts and topics that set against the 'No Future' philosophy of the early eighties, [to express] the joy and [...] positive feelings" (Barber-Kersovan 2002; for a discussion on "no future" see also Berardi 2011). The desperate "no future" sentiment—expressed in the eponymous 1977 Sex Pistols' number, or a similar disaffection expressed by the band Lublanski psi: "I still have hope, but I shit on it"[5]—can be read in stark opposition to the seemingly joyful, reckless-oblivion pop, sporting images of dancing, children's voices, and uplifting accordion. Nevertheless, constituted through distancing from the fringe noise of punk and taking the "safe" mainstream position, Agropop developed their ideological subversiveness in clear resonance with the topics first, and in a much more precarious manner, addressed at the "alternative," spiraling the question of freedom into questions of national belonging, exclusivity/superiority, nature/countryside. Thus, their music tapped into the unease, futileness, and desperation detected and expressed by punkers. Yet unlike punk and the "alternative," it managed, as I discuss below, to instrumentalize and channel these affects on a much different scale.

Agropop music was widely seen as valueless and cliché, made for "the uneducated masses," and even horrible, as noted by Anja Rupel, the frontman's partner and the former frontwoman of the electro band Videosex (Klinc 2019). As such, it also provided the terrain to articulate and establish a class or social boundary between the masses and the elites, between dignity and profanity. But who was who? Both in their music and the responses in newspapers of the time, we can detect several divisions. For example, between urban and rural; educated and uneducated; working class and peasants; elites and working class

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5   "Upanje še mam, a se poserjem nanj."

and peasants; old and young; critical and conformist; alternative and mainstream. This interferes with clear-cut identifications or allegiances that *ex-post* might want to present as set and teleological, emphasizing the malleability and openness of the historical process instead.

In an increasingly mediatized culture of the 1980s, popular music aired on the radio (also car radios) as well as TV (now also in color, and seen by Laibach as the medium that "within the consciousness industry, in addition to the education system, [is] the prime designer of unified thinking" LaibachKunst 2009b, 5:43). It permeated the mundane as its "silent companion." Thus, the mediated sounds and images contributed to the formation of a more unstructured, random and accidental listening/consumption of music that structured the space of commonality by employing the gaps in between the apparent choices of different genres, lyrics, fashions/styles as aired on TV and in live performances. The phenomenon of Agropop seems to have been able to thrive at this precise point.

In such mediated landscape, Agropop, or "newly-composed national pop," was seen as a "reaction to the nihilistic noise of Punk, New Wave and Industrial Rock which touched with their sophisticated sound experiments the artistic vanguard on one side, and threatened to destroy the music as a branch of aesthetics on the other" (Barber-Kersovan 2002). Thus it was able to carve out its social relevance and popularity as funny, cheeky and innocent, managing to transgress and instrumentalize several of the divisions mentioned above. The mainstream or "consumerist masses," despised by the loud and noisy and provocative social fringes, i.e., the "alternative," were thus nevertheless exposed to the ideas of an "alternative" to the existing world order, if decidedly reshaped in the process of the translation into the banal and mundane ethno/nationalism.

Initially, however, Barber-Kersovan notes, Agropop lacked explicit expression of cultural identity, but as "stronger than the general orientation towards the homely tradition became, the more their own cultural heritage was taken into account, heaving 'the Slovenian' into an inexhaustible source of new (musical) impulses" (2002). Riding on ambiguity, the band was also considered at least somewhat provocative by the outlet for alternative musical genres such as Radio Študent. Leon Magdalenc, involved at the time with the radio, recounts

that the editorial board, hoping to withhold radio's "alternative" status, debated whether to air the band or not until "Someone said, 'Look, they're taking the piss out of it,' and then we aired two Agropop songs" (in Menart 2012). This shows an "alternative" outlet unsure of the band's positioning between irony, alternative, rock and pop, urbanity and countryside, not least that they regularly played gigs and sold record numbers of records (Matoz 2013). This ambiguous position for Radio Študent reveals the desire to keep up the image of an "alternative" outlet by justifying the airing of Agropop by the band's ironic approach. Airing the band, in the end, effectively contributed to its wider social legitimation and thus to a gradual normalization of nationalist, or rather, affective ethnonational discourse.

Who's in a Million

The band reached a milestone in 1987 with the hit "Only a Million of Us are Still Alive". The song repurposed the title of Partisan poet Karel Destovnik Kajuh's poem, "Slovenska pesem" (A Slovenian Poem), written in the time of the Nazi-Fascist occupation and published in 1944.[6] In the poem, Kajuh also took issue with the long history of German political, economic, and cultural domination in pre-war Yugoslavia in the context of Slovenian/Yugoslav anti-Fascist resistance.[7] He encoded the force of resistance, the corporeal endurance and symbolic perseverance of Slovenian people in the face of imminent cultural and physical eradication by the occupying forces; during and after World War II,

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6   Kajuh's poem: There are only one million of us,/ a million, with our death close by among the corpses,/ a million, with the gendarmes drinking our blood,/ just one single million,/ hard-pressed by tribulation,/ but never exterminated.// Never, no chance of that!// We are not feeble straws, that wither in the hale,/ we are not mere numbers,/ we are people! (translation of Destovnik Kajuh in Cox 2005, 47; second stanza my translation.

7   The People's Liberation Struggle (NOB) in Slovenia was, from the start, framed in national terms, also due to the years of Italian rule following the end of World War I; see Godeša 2012, 2020; Mally et al. 2011.

this translated into ideologically and affectively potent emancipatory and victorious official narratives.

Agropop took the first line, "Only a Million of Us Are Still Alive"—and the poem's historical charge with it—and musically and lyrically refurbished it into a different form in a different historical context. Musically, Agropop's song starts slowly and develops a faster pace as it unfolds to support the song evolving into a powerful refrain, allowing, especially in live performances, a loud sing-and-jump-along. The lyrics affectively emphasize the land and the people, modesty and honesty: "That's us!" Much like Kajuh, Agropop drew on the long history of perseverance, alluding to the struggle via the metaphor of the storm. However, unlike the poet's head-up-high attitude that refutes the discourse of smallness ("Only serfs squeak meekly like dogs,/ and bark that we're outnumbered, that we'd perish all rebelling"), Agropop brings in a feeling of self-victimization. The words implicitly invoke feelings of subordination and political-systemic ineptitude, presaging the nationalist superiority discourse that prevailed during the post-socialist transformation, also noted by Velikonja (2014, 82). To foreground the lyrics in full:

> "I walked through our land,
>   I met good people,
>   humble, small, but honest,
>   That's us.
>   We have lived here for centuries,
>   we fought the storms,
>   brothers, sisters,
>   we mustn't disappear.
>   Only a million of us
>   are still live on our land,
>   only a million of us know well
>   that we are good people.
>   A small nation is always guilty,
>   whoever is small is always to blame.

If you are small, be happy,
that you are alive.
Brothers and sisters,
now let's shake hands.
Let's prove how great we are.
Only a million, only a million,
only a million, only a million,
only a million, of us know
that we are good people."

"Only a Million" was first performed just before the end of 1987 in Ljubljana, and a series of concerts followed later across Slovenia. A local newspaper reported about the gig in a small town outside Ljubljana:

First, they played several older hits. The enthusiastic audience applauded, screamed and sang with the band so loudly that it was a sight to see, both of them. An older person might say it was a madhouse [*norišnica*]. The band introduced their songs, made jokes and were constantly taking the piss out of the crowd. Šerbi [the singer] said: "Well, people of Domžale, do you know how many there are of us in the hall?" We all shouted: "A million!" And they played their new song, which is now topping the charts. [...] At the end, we greeted Šerbi with a new slogan that—lest it be forgotten—is also the title of their new record: For the Homeland, with Agropop - Forwards!. (Sivec and Rems 1987)

This written account transmits the affectivity of Agropop's live performance, fueled and powered by the audience singing and chanting as a collective body; it, in fact, shows, following Hofman, not only what music means to them but what it does to them (Hofman 2020, 5–6). This is crucial in mobilizing bodies as individuals into a collective (Waitt et al. in Hofman 2020, 7). The text reconstructs a shared space of commonality that emerges through an indiscriminately mixed union of words and voices. At the same time, visually, it is structured

by the band jumping on the stage to create interpretatively open "symbolic in-between-ness": red T-shirts with the hammer and sickle, the red star, and a "proletariat flag" with the image of Lenin.

Immersed in the song's rhythm, riffs and beats, the attending public (we are invited to imagine) partook in affective encounters between the band, audience, sound, lyrics, and historical moment. For it is, Alison Stone notes, the "rhythm [that] figures importantly in [...] how musical elements interlock, while also giving popular songs their highly rhythmic and energetic character such that they appeal to human bodies" (2016, 205). Moreover, it is music in general that facilitates affective resonance that Rainer Mühlhoff uses "to describe relational and processual aspects of emotional experience [...] processes of social interaction whose progression is dynamically shaped in an entanglement of moving and being-moved, affecting and being affected" (2015, 1001). Although this is most expressed in live settings, music also affects solitary listeners by inviting them into the imagined commonality of listeners, which can also be quite visceral, conveyed by and emerging from the combination of personal experience and visual stimuli permeating the performance.

The moment that generates resonance and intensity, however, is the intro to the song, with the singer managing to get the crowd (and it was a dense crowd) to shout in unison the song's title and main verse: "Only a million of us are still alive!" This kickstarts both the formation of relational affect—which, Jan Slaby notes, does not mean "individual feeling states but affective interactions in relational scenes, either between two or more interactants or between an agent and aspects of her material environment"—and the process of its translation into affective resonance (2016, 15). In this, the metaphor of the *norišnica* (madhouse, mental hospital) functions as a descriptor of the feel of the event (dancing, shouting, drinking, sweat, heat) and a generational marker that further differentiates the new generations from the old. It alludes to the latter being unable to understand the band's message or the new sentiment and co-structures the field for the reception in the precarious context of socio-political uncertainty.

Performed live, listened and danced to in public, the lyrics were clearly not read as a poem (as you and I do now) but were rather viscerally experienced

during the singing, shouting, and dancing at the gig. The singing and rhythmically moving bodies in a sweat-and-cigarette-smoke-intense environment further opened up an affective field for the song's words, particularly the refrain that stuck and structured the immediate space of experience. Through affective spillover, this contributes to the structuring of socio-political space as a field of expectation and open future (on the field of experience and expectation, see Koselleck 2004). At the same time, this was a field also defined by uncertainty in which the "one million" line interlocked the feeling/fears of national endangerment with a prospect of nationalized future (Slovenia had/has about two million inhabitants, the song implied only one million of them are "true" Slovenians). Chanting in an ad hoc collective, the audience was engulfed by the power of affective resonance induced by the relationality emerging out of the song, the historical context (marked by the inter-republican/nationalist conflicts, inflation and layoffs), as well as each individual's previous affective baggage (see Slaby 2016). The collective anticipation of a reversed hero-narrative could be grafted onto this, structurally re-coding "victim discourse" beyond "fun or serious."

The band, in their song, as well as the audience, clearly played with socialist and World War II iconography, the dominant referential and interpretative frameworks at the time, driving the public to accept the jocular narrative of endangered Slovenes within such a framework. For example, to mark the "arrival of new times," the old socialist Yugoslav salute: "For the homeland, with Tito – Forwards!" was refurbished into: "For the homeland, with Agropop – Forwards!" On the background of Laibach and their artistic interventions—resting on the maxim that "All art is subject to political manipulation (indirectly—consciousness; directly), except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation" (Laibach, "10 Items of the Covenant")—this could be seen as benign and even alleviating. Yet, precisely the space in the wake of Laibach's interventions might have given further impetus to ambiguous symbolic positions and enabled the audience to reframe their identity positions. Sociopolitical volatility of the moment thus "accepted" the play with relatable, well-known concepts by way of apparent over-identification with such concepts: this

allows to officially act out-of-system to define and target "new enemies," be it in the existing political system, the army, and/or the "southerners" or *čefurji* (a derogatory term used for people from other Yugoslav republics, mainly for Bosnians, as well as Serbs and Croats). Such double-speak in the context of a live performance contributed to the structuring of affect by fueling ambiguity in ethnonational feelings of subjugation and superiority. Masked as jokes and fun, these nevertheless emphasized the politicization of the distinction between the westernmost Republic of Slovenia, the most economically advanced part of Yugoslavia, and the less-developed "south" of the country.

This discursive playfulness gave room to the existing ethno-exceptionalism: "We were sure we were special, that we were a few steps ahead, that we know what the west is," commented Marcel Štefančič (in Menart 2012). The process of carving out a "new we," based on the growing dissatisfaction with the state of things and the ambiguous discursive construction of superiority and victimhood, was also emphasized through the discursive and symbolic popularization of ecology and nature (the countryside, the Alps, mountaineering, skiing). In combination with pop music, this contributed to providing an environ-mental map of the social and political changes in the late 1980s.

The entrenchment of the ethno-exclusivity apparent also in Agropop music was fueled by the ordinary and banal innocence of joking, the ironic referencing of ethno-oddities, drinking, and firefighters that over several years transformed from a joke to a more widely effective affective resonance that could be harnessed in garnering support for the independence project as well as later on contributed to or legitimated a number of events and processes in post-1991 Slovenia.

Ambiguity and Affective Resonance

While the song can be read as a positive uniting mechanism, the focus on victimhood also revealed an ethnomythic, historical and political rupture in the society. Employing a mythistorical view of intrinsic goodness and perseverance

in the implied virtue of ethno:natural, guarded and symbolized by rivers and mountains, the rupture is constituted on the innocent, jocular music and lyrics: these serve as narrative and "affectively resonating" mechanism that delineates a collectivity, establishes and empowers the in-group of "sufferers," and structures the slot for extra-national "perpetrators." The song thus functions as a musical, discursive, and affective apparatus in which Kajuh's Nazi-Fascist enemy is gradually repositioned as resentment towards, at the time still indistinct extra-national other: compatriots, the political system, and the Yugoslav army.

The latent military component may be read on the cover of the album *For the Homeland, with Agropop – Forwards!* It features a Ramboesque pig to denote a group of "small," "fat," "dirty," and "peasanty anti-celebrities" (Barber-Kersovan 2002). A reference to Rambo, the global undefeatable pop-culture warrior icon,[8] the Rambo-Pig, with a hammer and sickle tattoo on its chest, is thus not only a nod to the global pop culture but also an image of comedic belligerence aimed against the socio-political context of the 1980s that is driving "the 'pigs' alias normal citizens 'to lose their nerves'" (Barber-Kersovan 2002).

Another song from the album, "Prašičem popuščajo živci" (The Pigs are Losing Their Nerves, Agropop 1987), identifies the enemy in capitalists, fascists, and terrorists, which opens up sometimes mutually exclusive identity positions and hence a "free" selection of appropriate enemies.[9] While the "terrorists" might have been a matter of rhyme, both capitalists and fascists affectively resonate with Yugoslav World War II and post-war history. In the context of the remake of several well-known partisan songs on the album, the bond to the socialist regime appears intact. However, in the case of Agropop in general and "Only a Million" and its public performance and reception in particular, it can be argued that in their ambiguity, both songs were plucking the affective nationalist strings.

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8   The Rambo films appeared in 1982, 1985, and 1988.

9   All enemies of the people,/ capitalists, fascists, terrorists!/ We've had it with your lies,/ enough of your promises,/ your time is over,/ it's people's turn to be drinking wine.// The pigs are losing their nerves.// … // We've had it with your lies,/ enough of your promises,/ now we clench our fists,/ if wine is flowing, so should blood ("Prašičem popuščajo živci," 1988).

Ambiguity as a tactic for stretching the boundaries of ideological recalcitrance thus incites further distinction: fun, mock, and ridicule, which brings them close to the "punk attitude" but in a different manner. Punk, although not necessarily always taking things seriously, was marked in the popular imagination as rogue and transgressive, which disallowed much wider public adoption: the fashion and appearance and the loud and rough sounds, voices, drums, guitars, as well as confrontation with the law and the police (see *Punk pod Slovenci* 1985) did not make for a widely desirable everyday companion. Pop and Agropop, on the other hand, managed to posit things as easy-going entertaining fun. Something to which the reviewer in *Primorski dnevnik* ascribed the band's success: "Their songs, as they say themselves, are a bit for fun, and a bit serious. Precisely due to their wide repertoire and cheerful atmosphere that their songs create, Agropop has made it to the very top of the Slovenian music scene" (Dam 1988, 4).

The fine line between fun and serious is crucial in the production of the conditions of affective resonance as it opens up a field of identification on the fly (e.g., at a concert: the crowd, bodily proximity, warmth, loudness, scents, alcohol) and conditions the emergence of an unstable space of transgression. Understood as an entanglement of relational forces, Mühlhoff notes, affective resonance brings about the processuality and, in turn, gives rise to relatedness (2015, 1010, 1017). In this context, Agropop's performances can be seen as a space and practice where a listening or dancing subject is always positioned in relation to existing political and mediated infrastructures, or, as Jan Slaby notes, as a domain "in which affect works as an ongoing forceful dynamic that draws-in, captures, enthralls and binds together a number of interactants" (2016, 18). Unstructured listening over the radio or at a gig, for example, provides an opportunity for symbolic in-betweenness and indeterminacy. In its elusiveness, this mobilizes affective resonance by referring to the World War II resistance, a historically and symbolically powerful element used in playful transgression to frame a different narrative. What is more, when music is played back on stereo or record player, and even more so when aired over the radio, it becomes a banal part of the everyday: the joke, the transgression, the affect become part

of everyday soundscapes, permeating lives and minds of listeners (who may just hum along a tune, learn the lyrics, and internalize content).

Interpretative indeterminacy, or an open process "shaped by potentials arising continuously within the relational configuration itself" (Mühlhoff 2015, 1002), is further enhanced by the very act of the listener's knowing-not-knowing what the "true" performer's position is: fun or serious. This is constituted what Rajko Muršič calls a double feedback loop of presumptions: "The musicians are presuming that the music they play is the music that the audience wants to listen to, and the members of the audience presume that the musicians will express their own attitudes, which individuals in the audience cannot express themselves" (1995, 278). "Mutually reinforcing expectations" at live performances enhance affective resonance and open up the field for the inscription of on-the-fly identification via "planned (mis)interpretation." In this case, the experiential space is constituted first through relational affect, which according to Jan Slaby, "is a matter of socially implemented patterns of intra-actional dynamics within practical domains [...] regardless of—or even contrary to—what individuals would deem significant for themselves or what they would feel if left on their own or within other such normative domains" (2016, 15), and has wider societal consequences.

Affective resonance thus envelopes non-binding, on/off identification that does not prevent one from singing along and participating in an audience that collectively sings verses that make fun of them. The fine line that Agropop was treading appealed across class and aesthetic boundaries to an increasingly ethno-nationally structured community, disaffected from the community of brethren. As another review from 1987 states: "Agropop is making fun of people's naivete and thickheadedness [and] the record lacks any identity [...] Agropop is a band of spectacle, mass entertainment and occasional ingenious parodying. But taken seriously, it is a bland contemporary variant of subalpine hiking-boot music" (MAO 1987-1988, 24). This response further explicates the band's elusive positioning between fun (parody) and seriousness, reinforcing the class distinction between proverbial masses and elites: the boundary "became blurred. We'd play at *veselice* [local community celebrations], and we'd

be taking the piss out of people, and folk-pop [*narodnozabavni*] bands would play after us. But they [the audience] weren't thinking about that ... if we sang 'polka is the queen, waltz is our king' for fun, they'd take it at face value, and then this'd be a total mental leap for us" (Klinar in Menart 2012).

The jocular space of identification, constituted through parodying the countryside and rurality, as well as socialist symbols, was thus contextually re-inforced for the articulation of and identification with Slovenian nationalism ("It's nothing serious, I'm just kidding"). Such an approach to the parodic performance of patriotism-as-fun enabled more unreflected acceptance and, later, the introduction of ethnonational othering. Nevertheless, another review in *Glasbena mladina* states: "Instead of new partisans,[10] we can see here Slovenian patriotism, sneering at immigrants from other [Yugoslav] republics, and also ideas that are getting close to extreme patriotism—and we know what that means" (Krokar 1987, 24). Agropop was thus not just a reaction to the alternative no-future-sentiment, but it readily seized the opportunity in mainstream and political reaction to punk and the "alternative": while punk foregrounded social critique and creative expression at least for fringe social and artistic individuals and movements, Agropop vulgarized it and tuned it to the ethnonational sentiment by offering an ethno-nationalist imaginary of fun and easy-going sing-alongs.

FFWD_30yrs: From Ambiguous to Odd

In this section, I shift the temporal perspective by some 30 years to investigate the remake of "Samo milijon," the "making of" documentary, and YouTube comments to trace the resonances of the affectively charged 1980s in the present. The remake was made in early 2021 by a group of older and younger Slovenian

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10   New partisans was a short-lived musical trend that amidst punk and nationalising pop aimed at reviving the partisan legacy as a critique of the then socialism (Mišina 2010).

musicians and singers led by Agropop's former frontman Aleš Klinar.[11] They formed an ad hoc band Slo Band Aid, like the charity/awareness performance form popularized by Bob Geldof's Band Aid at the end of the 1980s and the Yugoslav contribution to the Live Aid, the band Yu Rock misija, in 1985.[12]

The "Only a Million" remake copied the 1980s Band Aid format and implied references to solidarity and empathy. It thus attempted to form a symbolic link with the period and reconstruct the collectiveness or the spirit of the times. This intention is made clear by the rather anachronistic—in terms of musical and the suggested understanding of the historical and political changes—remake itself that failed, as I discuss below, to "re-empower" the original's affective resonance. The 2021 remake was introduced by a "making of" documentary in which Aleš Klinar notes: "Slovenians [females and males addressed specifically], we have made for you a new, totally fresh, version of the legendary 'waking-up' song that has *always* raised Slovenian consciousness and our identity/independence" (Partyzani Bunker 2021, 0:07; added emphasis). This retrospective assessment overwrites history with the teleological "we've always known" and obscures the fact that the 1980s—despite Yugoslavia's structural and politico-economic problems—were ripe with ambiguity and contradiction. What is more, such statements diverge from the Agropop fun approach. Still, in 2013, Klinar noted: "After the fun, which was *always* a constitutive part of Agropop, came a period of the awakening of national consciousness. We never planned what happened after the "Samo milijon." It was unthinkable that an ironic band could importantly contribute to popularizing independence" (Matoz 2013, added emphasis).

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11   The initiative was a clear homage to the Slovenski Band Aid and their recording of "Svobodno sonce / Freedom Sun" (which the same crew also re-made), co-written by Agropop's Klinar and Dušan Velkaverh, one of the prominent Slovenian composers of *popevka*. Recorded in 1991, this song had a pronounced anti-war message but was in the context of the wars after the collapse of Yugoslavia, nevertheless seen in nationalist terms. At the time, there were several similar interventions in the former republics of Yugoslavia in the aftermath of its dissolution (see Hamer 2017).

12   For a look and feel, see Live Aid 2020.

Having in mind the original's playfulness, this begs the question: how can fun and joke, as well as making money and fame, be interpreted as *always* nationally aware or rather, how can a national element be uncritically inscribed into the fun and joke as *always* there? Klinar aims to constitute the song's nationalizing effect as an *always-there* teleological historical fact. Although clearly serving promotional ambitions, in consolidating and making teleological the past events, the statement attenuates the original's ambiguity, deemphasizing the element of fun and unexpected future that permeated Agropop in the late 1980s.

True, the remake was made in a radically different time: Slovenia has been an independent country for over 30 years, and Yugoslavia has been gone for the same amount of time, at least politically, if not emotionally, symbolically, and culturally. Slovenian geopolitical standing has changed from the north-westernmost, popularly seen as the most developed Yugoslav republic, to one of the smallest, southern-to-eastern, economically peripheralized, diplomatically disoriented, and culturally insignificant EU countries. One user commented below the remake video: "Encouraging! Well done, all of you who took part! Particularly at a time when we have stalls seats" (lidija dolenec, 2022), which can be read as an ironic description of the Slovenian geopolitical situation after independence. This is one crucial differential aspect: a shift in geopolitical, ethnonational/ist sentiment and perspective that affects, as I discuss below, the context of the remake's reception and effect.

As shown in the discussion on the emergence of affective resonance above, the song's affective power and its role in the ethnonationalist processes could not have been anticipated at the time. Neither could the development of Slovenian nationalism nor its growing political currency have been anticipated when the song was first made. One user retrospectively commented below the "making of" documentary: "Yes, back then Slovenian nationalism was not related to skinheads, hervards [a nationalist association], voters of SLS and SNS [nationalist conservative parties]" (Aschmodei 2009) showing that the country has changed in the meantime. In retrospect, the seemingly innocent and jocular Agropopian 1980s ethnonationalism seems benign in the face of organized, right-wing nationalist and racist, even neo-Nazi movements flourishing in the

past 30 years (Valenčič 2014). Have the jokes about the good and hard-working Slovenian nation and other Yugoslavs misfired, or were they merely shot too far?

The original arguably co-structured the national sentiment by playing the "funserious" ambiguity-seeking effect that resulted in affective resonance. In the remake and contemporary reception of the original, however, affect and ambiguity run somewhat differently. For example, some comments on the video of the remake express nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, "Slovenia to the Slovenes!! Foreigners out! Love it or leave it!! SLOVENIA 4.EVER" (Tadei17 2010). Some commentators appear to be very serious in expressing national allegiance, referencing the red star (both a symbol of "communist Yugoslavia" and anti-Fascist resistance) that lost its 1980s Agropopian ambiguity, evolving into a polarizing symbol in contemporary media and political discourses. The 2021 remake reverses the ambiguity ambition: if the original's unplanned consequence was the nationalist waking up, the remake and nationalist responses demonstrate the desire for "taking it seriously," for the remake to have intended national/ist consequence. In other words, if the band of the 1980s used jokes and fun and irony and subversion that, looking in retrospect, led to serious effects, the remake, on the other hand, appears radically disconnected not only from the past and its complex legacies, but—in "taking things seriously"—also from the present and its dissonances.

To illustrate, the remake and its "making of" story offer several interesting interpretative aspects. The "Making of" video is introduced by Aleš Klinar, his wife Anja Rupel and their daughter Karmen Klinc, whose words, voices, and gestures appear overacted, unnatural, and lacking spontaneity; this is only reinforced against the backdrop of the VHS recording of Agropop TV performance from the late 1980s. Behind the veil of 30 years of media history, with overlays of meanings, memories, and interpretations, the power of the old over the new (always pluripotential) is revealed. This discrepancy is enhanced by the fact that the remake was recorded *per partes*, i.e., the musicians recorded their parts separately, and the singers sang "solo" to pre-recorded music. Not only does playing separately prevent randomness and intuitive leaps, but it also takes away the spontaneity and the element of fun that can be seen in the old

recording; it prevents the conditions for relational affect from emerging. The absence of connection between the musicians in the present and the lost opportunity to encourage their reflection on the song and (its) history thus emphasizes the symbolic rift between the present and the past.

The listeners' responses to the 2021 remake show a variation in topics ranging from nationalism to cultural openness, in addition to the appreciation of the song and assessments of its quality. The comments—as an instance of "public sphere [that] has disintegrated into public sphericules, and 'the audience' into differentiated individual strata of preferences" (Lagerkvist 2014, 206)—suggest that the homogeneity often implied in popular assessments of the past (also seen above) needs to be read as fragmented: due to technological affordances and the often fleeting engagement with content online, such interventions do not contribute to the formation of a coherent narrative, nor relational affect, but rather point out or emphasize the very instability, openness, indeed un-totalizing presentness of the engagement with content and the emerging sphericules of communication.

Some people thus report goosebumps, while others think the song "sounds quite good on mute" (Blood Borne 2022). Some express the need for the song's remake and a desire for apparently lost national unity or homogeneity: "Slovenia is lacking patriotism. So we needed this [song]. And we still do" (Tilen # 2022). Some also take issue with nationalist comments: "Some comments are appalling. Guys, this song is about patriotism and solidarity and equality. It is a song in which Slovenes can read our pride and respect for other nations. Never underestimate and denigrate others, but be aware of our own value" (wajdowc333 2012). These comments reverberate the ethnomyth of the "good Slovenian" that was professed alongside the jocular, drink-loving hedonists of the 1980s.

More importantly, the media lives of the song today show lines of fissure in the imagined community. Despite Slo Band Aid's expectations about the uniting effect of the remake, the comments show a great deal of division and little fun. In the contemporary context of increasing toleration of neo-Nazism and historical revisionism, fun and banal nationalism are no longer at stake. Instead, neighborly animosity depicts a departure from the positive ethnomyth of

benign Subalpines towards a disappointment with the present state of things, marked by media-amplified polarization: "Do they think they're reds? Lefties? Partisans? Hasn't this time already passed? No song of the old guard with such thematic fits into today. Fckit! As a BAND-AID, keep to the center, no less. But anyway, what do I care" (o O 2022).

This illustrates present-day contradictions in understanding the Slovenian 1980s in the context of substantial changes in geopolitical, socio-historical, and media contexts. It also foregrounds the paradox of a totalizing, medially conflated (see Pogačar 2020) understanding of the past, despite and because of the affective aspects of digitally mediated communication. The comparison here is useful as it foregrounds a conflating of the past and then conforming that past to the present, leaving little room to understand the complexity and inherent contradictoriness of the past, its indeterminacy and the pluripotentiality of the futures it harbors. It could be said that this is the effect of the ossification of affective resonance, which, having lost its openness to the progress of time (as apparent in the remake's story), questions the mythistorical gaze that sees the past as a uniform, always already predetermined harbinger of a predetermined future. In such view, the past will always lose its inherent contradictority and ambiguity to the (present) political and practical need to totalize it into a coherent narrative. In turn, such desire aims to eliminate the inherent inability to know in the present how things (serious or fun) will turn out in the future.

And it seems that things are serious enough today. Matjaž Zupan states in the "Making of" video: "Thirty years ago, this song apparently did not do what it should have. If we must bring it back to life, it means we are not fully aware that there's only a million of us left" (Partyzani Bunker 2021, 9:45). Here the past seems to have held a promise that the future failed to deliver. In a newspaper interview, Klinar stated: "We're living in a time when freedom and democratic society are again endangered, so we wanted to remind Slovenes of what we can achieve if we're united, tolerant, solidary and seek what binds us and not what divides us" (in Tušek 2021). His words provide another line of distinction between the interplay of serious and fun: admitting to the gravity of the times runs against Agropop's approach and conduct in the 1980s: each

present disallows in its indeterminacy the "we always knew," which necessarily only gains traction in retrospect. However, as alluded to above, there is a significant difference between then and now, demonstrating memory's malleability. It shows how easily the past conforms to its future needs: the 1980s Agropop's affective resonance was the matter of having fun in serious times (with unpremeditated consequences), and it emerged out of relational affect that formed at live performances, gigs, and parties. Today the likewise serious times solicit "merely" serious responses.

In addition, the relation between the original and the remake, and the comparison of historical periods that both songs invite, expose the problem of making affective resonance historically reproducible. The failure to re-energize or harness the playfulness, the potentiality of open-ended possibilities and non-teleological "now" demonstrates that affect cannot be programmed or ordered. In its uncontrollability (historical or individual or collective), it needs to be largely a matter of chance and randomness, unplanned and unpremeditated action.

Conclusion

This excursion into the past and present lives of the song—now available simultaneously in original and remake, on YouTube and elsewhere—shows that Agropop and their song played a part in the formation of the relational affect in the 1980s. This space-time section of Slovenian history saw Yugoslav, socialist and anti-Fascist iconography and narratives slowly debased until they were politically dismissed as obsolete, yet often used in daily politics throughout the past 30 years. The present attempt, however, is only a scratch on the complexity of the process of the formation of affective resonance in pop music, yet it nevertheless shows the power that the multi-layered repurposing of the past (Kajuh>Agropop>remake) can have in music. It shows how relational affect (as a precursor to affective resonance) was constitutive of collective sentiment and how it contributed to directing the openness of the moment towards fleshing

out ethnonational identification by relegating the other from one historical context (World War II) into another (post-Yugoslav).

Operating through music as the pervasive mediated cultural phenomenon, affective resonance is critically powered by contextual, even if contradictory socio-historical forces, phenomena, events, and expectations. In addition, these are constituted by the interactions between co-present people and their affects and emotions, histories and expectations. However, while open in the moment of engagement, affective resonance often evaporates in the totalizing retro-gaze, which does not mean it is devoid of socio-political or historical consequences. In this case, the dominant view of the "alternative" as the most radically and loudly cutting through the stalemate social and political climate should be complemented by the impetus it gave, collaterally, to mainstream musical interventions, as well as to other cultural and political appropriations. In this respect, it could be said that Agropop amplified the ripples of the opening up of social space to the affective resonance of nationalist identification employed later in the process of independence. If we say that "affective encounters are given the capacity of making a rupture in traditional political communities and opening new forms of connections / socialities / collectives that bring alternative social relations to life" (Hofman 2020, 306), it is then clear how Agropop and "Only a Million" channeled a particular sentiment of the late 1980s into creating and revealing a rupture in the symbolic make-up.

At the same time, then, it can be said that affective resonance played a part in the empowering of Slovenian nationalism, and that over time it has become ossified or rather worn out, as the analysis of the remake and the responses on social media make clear. This futile feat to repurpose and re-presence affective resonance demonstrates that affect can only be of its time; it is uncontrollable and historically unsustainable. It can only ever be reinvented with different means and for different ends. Its conditions, the context, the people, the geopolitics, and social structures have changed and must always be affected anew.

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Slovenian *Trubači*:

The Economies of Affect within and beyond Ethno-Racialized Difference

Ana Hofman
and Mojca Kovačič

We offer a little more than others. I think that we are the only ones who have a singer. We even have two singers [...] Basically, it's like I can offer everything: from Avsenik,[1] Plestenjak,[2] to hardcore Serbian pieces for an hour ... I have such a wide range. Basically, we do it for the finances, but also because we love it, M. Š., the trumpet player and manager of the brass band Čaga Boys from the Slovenian town of Velenje, explained to us what makes the band popular in Slovenia (2021, June 18).[3] In our conversation over Zoom, he extensively described his strategies for online promotion of the band at the website *trubaci.si* (*Trubači Slovenija*) and the social media platforms of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, which significantly contributed to their success.

Having a close look at the Čaga Boys' digital presence, we discovered that phrases such as "the best offer," "the most adjustable repertoire," or "fast and reliable execution of the performance" are used to offer the band's performing services to potential clients.[4] Moreover, a quick internet search on the keyword *slovenski trubači*[5] led us to several other websites whose content

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1   *Ansambel bratov Avsenik* (The Avsenik Brothers Ensemble), active from 1953 to 1990, is the most recognizable Slovenian folk-pop (*narodnozabavna*) ensemble.

2   Jan Plestenjak is one of Slovenia's most popular pop singers and has been active on the music scene since 1994.

3   The translations of the interviews, lyrics and website content that are in Slovenian or Serbo-Croatian are by the authors.

4   See Čaga Boys' on YouTube ("Čaga Boys - Velenjski Trubači" n.d.), Facebook page ("Čaga Boys - Velenjski Trubači" n.d.), and Instagram account ("Čaga Boys" n.d.) for further information.

5   Roughly, Slovenian Balkan brass band. The etymology of the term *trubači* comes from *truba*—a trumpet, meaning players of Balkan brass music. A more detailed explanation of the usage of this term by musicians in Slovenia and in the popular and media discourses follows in the next section.

combines banners announcing "the best Slovenian *trubači*," "best *trubači* for weddings and celebrations," "best Guča," "real prices" with photos of Balkan brass bands playing live.[6] The websites invite interested parties to contact the bands by e-mail, phone, Viber, and WhatsApp, to which the bands will "respond fast," "come immediately," and "play the best music." However, we soon realized that websites dedicated to *Slovenski trubači* are used by the Romani bands based in Serbia to advertise their services in various cities in Slovenia.[7] The textual context of the website proved a poor translation (probably by Google Translate) of the original Serbo-Croatian text into Slovenian, with numerous non-understandable sentences written, a mix of both languages, and grammatical mistakes. Does this testify that "Slovenian" does not denote an actual ethnic belonging but is added to *trubači* as a marketing strategy to attract potential customers? Or?

In this chapter, we explore how the label of *slovenski trubači* circulates as a commercial good in the music market in Slovenia. We focus our analysis on how musicians draw on the discourses and sonic imaginations attached to *trubači*—as the genre able to generate the highest intensity of affective encounters—to ensure a better position in the market. The ways musicians cultivate and curate affect to produce and modify the emotional states of the audience have recently gained scholars' attention. In the case of professional musicianship, scholars testify to the key importance of embodied labor with affect as a key to labor practice.[8] By examining affective encounters between musicians

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6   See "Trubači Slovenija: Najboljši trobentači za svadbe i veselja" (n.d.), "Trubači Slovenija. Trubaci Milana Petrovića." (n.d), "Trubači Ljubljana" (n.d.), "Trubači Slovenija 071/240-284" (n.d.).

7   At the time of writing this chapter, they also used the names of those cities—Trubači Slovenska Bistrica, Trubači Nova Gorica, Trubači Celje, Trubači Velenje, etc. at the website "Trubači Slovenija. Trubaci Milana Petrovića" (n.d.). However, this website is not active anymore, but the content migrated to the new webpage "Trubači Slovenija. Povoljni trubači" (n.d.). The same marketing strategy is taken by the same bands in other western European countries, such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, France, etc. See "Trubaci Nemacka" (n.d.), "Trubači Holandija" (n.d.).

8   See the works of Tatro (2014), Hofman (2015),Tocka (2017), Kölbl (2020), and Desai-Stephens (2020). For the practice of curating affect by musicians, see Conte (2021).

and the audience through the lens of capitalist productive relations, several studies further examine affect as an object for commodity exchange or cultural value (Gill 2017; MacMillen 2019) and as a tool for channeling desires and aspirations of a neoliberal subjectivity (Desai-Stephens 2020).

Drawing on those works, we focus on the mechanisms of the neoliberal market and the utilization of the presumed ability of *trubači* sound to generate intense embodied and sensorial engagement by musicians to capitalize on the post-Yugoslav listeners' imaginations, aspirations, and expectations. In examining the case study of the band Čaga Boys, we explore how musicians do not simply utilize the existent ethno-racial imaginations and Slovenian, Romani, Serbian, Balkan, or Yugoslav identity. Instead, those categories circulate as labels that are constantly reconstituted by the neoliberal market and filled with different sounds, performance practices, and meanings.

Our approach concentrates on the neoliberal demands for flexibility and adaptability and the entrepreneurial ethos that has been aggressively introduced in the area of former Yugoslavia after its dissolution as the crucial channel of subjectivation in professional and private lives. Consequently, we situate our discussion of affect in the context of post-socialist socioeconomic "reforms" that brought about not just privatization and dispossession of the socially-owned infrastructure and increased social inequalities but also "the destruction of the non-market-driven lifeworlds" (Atanasoski and McElroy 2018, 293). For this reason, we employ the analytical framework of Richard and Rudnyckyj's economies of affect, which concentrates on the connection between neoliberal economic transformation and affective transactions (2009, 58).

The questions we pose are: How does the label *trubači* circulate in the national market in Slovenia? What strategies do bands use to target "the ordinary listener" and to attract the broadest possible audience? How, in the constant adjustment to clients' needs and their demands for "the best party," do bands utilize the discourses of ethno-racial difference?

Trubači in Slovenia

In the first decade of the new millennium, bands using *trubači* to define their musical style and performances[9] started to emerge in the Slovenian music scenes as a result of the global "Balkan fever." Balkan music saw an international market breakthrough in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, fostered by the worldwide popularity of Emir Kusturica's movies, which used Goran Bregović's arrangements of Romani brass music from Serbia, Macedonia, and Kosovo as an integral part of their soundtracks.[10] The so-called Gipsy Brass, Balkan Brass, Balkan Beat, or Balkan Music became a globally recognized genre in the world music scene, with leading musical icons such as Bregović, Boban Marković, and Fead Sejdić. Their music was presented to the Western audience as the "new old European sound" (Kaminsky 2015) coming from the "unexplored fields" behind the iron curtain and post-socialist Eastern Europe.[11] This phenomenon has already been widely studied in the light of the exoticization, commodification, and appropriation of Romani music by the Global North (Silverman 2007, 2011a, 2013; Marković 2009, 2013; Marković 2015; Gligorijević 2020) and in terms of how the global circulation of the genre affects the musical scene in the region (Pettan 2002; Marković 2012; Hofman 2014). These studies confirm that the popularity of Balkan brass bands relies on the internalized discourse of the Balkan as a European internal Other (Todorova 1997, Buchanan 2007) and the figure of the Roma as an embodiment of this ambiguous position. The world music market grossly exploits the racialized imagination of the Roma, where Gypsiness and

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9   Members of the bands rather occasionally use *trubači* (Balkan brass bands) to define their musical style and performances. Still, this term predominantly appears when advertising their performances and in the media discourses.

10 On Bregović's work of appropriating the Romani brass music, see Aleksandra Marković (2013); for more on the popularity of Balkan music or what she calls "Balkan fascination," see Laušević (2015). For more on Kusturica's movies, also see Dijana Jelača's chapter in this book.

11 For Kaminsky, it is a term that denotes a "bricolage of Romani, klezmer and Balkan styles" (2015, 143).

Balkan culture have become conflated in the media and public discourses (Marković 2015, 266). In turn, Romani brass musicians strategically navigate the expectations of Western audiences by enacting a "proper Gypsiness"—sufficiently primitive and exotic yet cosmopolitan—as this enables them to position themselves and earn more in the music market.[12]

The Slovenian *trubači* scene consisted of at least nine bands that drew upon the repertoire and performance style of what they call the Serbian, Balkan, or Romani *trubači* tradition.[13] According to research done in 2007 by Mojca Kovačič (2009) and Urša Šivic (2013), the band members, who identify themselves as "real Slovenians," became familiar with this genre through listening to the prominent performers or by watching Kusturica's movies. To be more proficient in performing Balkan brass music, they learned as much as possible about this style by listening to the bands that gained visibility at the most popular international brass bands festival organized in southwest Serbia—the Guča Festival (*Dragačevski sabor trubača u Guči*),[14] as well visiting the festival themselves. However, band members were not totally inexperienced in playing brass music as almost all played in local wind orchestras (*pihalni orkestri*)[15] and had at least a primary musical education; some also had a university degree in music. As a reason to shift to *trubači* style and form the band, the musicians granted the enthusiastic reaction of the audience when they first informally performed a few popular pieces of "Balkan music."

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12   About a similar debate, see also the study of Siv B. Lie (2020).

13   The interlocutors use the terms Balkan, Gypsy, or Serbian *trubači* interchangeably.

14   For a more extensive examination of the Guča Festival, see Timotijević (2005), Tadić et al. (2010), and Gligorijević (2020). For the "Guča na Krasu" festival, the peculiar "little Guča" organized in the border zone between Slovenia and Italy, see Hofman (2014).

15   From the 19th century until today, wind orchestras (*pihalni orkestri*), or wind ensembles, have represented a strong segment of community music activities in Slovenia (along with choirs). They often involve different generations of players (from school children attending public music schools), including amateur, professional, and veteran musicians. Today, many of the wind ensembles have an important role in local musical life, playing at funerals, weddings, and other occasions.

Romani brass bands from Serbia also recognized the audience's increased interest in *trubači*. According to Alexander Marković (2015), they could earn a much better income for performing in Slovenian clubs and restaurants than for the same gigs in their towns. Examining the local brass band scenes in Vranje, Serbia, in 2011/2012, Marković writes that Romani musicians strategically adjusted their appearances and performances to the clients in Slovenia, whom they primarily considered "foreign" or "incontrovertibly part of the 'West'" (2015, 273).[16] Regardless of how tactical, their performances continue to carry a premise of "authenticity" and "direct experience," something the members of the Slovenian *trubači* scene aspire to but are clearly not able to achieve due to the presumed lack of "inherent knowledge" available only to Romani (or Balkan and Serbian) musicians. The usual way of analyzing such positionalities and aspirations includes the interpretative framework of nesting Orientalisms in Yugoslavia and cultural stereotyping of the "Eastern nations" (Bakić-Hayden 1995), which draws on the long-standing imaginaries of the Balkans as not only "wild" and "uncivilized," but also irrational and a hedonist place of joy, with the emblematic figure of Gypsy at the center of this imagination (see van de Port 1998, 7–9; Silverman 2011b, 20; Silverman 2015, 8; Marković 2015, 266).[17]

Slovenian *trubači*, however, cannot be simply analyzed from the perspective of the "West/Balkans" binary, which does not consider the shared historical project of socialist Yugoslavia and the post-socialist radical political and economic transformation. As we will demonstrate in the following section, opting for the label Slovenian *trubači* is not just a result of the need to ethnically (self-)position and symbolically detach from the Balkans. While the ethno-racialized imaginations and stereotypes associated with Balkan brass

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16 In their studies, Siv B. Lie (2020) and Carol Silverman (1988) also show how musicians use and manipulate the notion of being "different" as an economic opportunity.

17 Mattijs van de Port (1998, 178–206) and Alexander Marković (2015, 260–285) write about the relationship between the audience's fantasies and the strategic adoption of essentialized image of Gypsy among the Roma themselves.

music are certainly a significant part of it, we argue that the discourses of Orientalism/Balkanism cannot capture the complex labor realities behind a market presence of *trubači* in Slovenia. For this reason, we stand for the analytical framework that is less focused on the identity and the politics of belonging constituted through the sound of *trubači* and its affectivity. Instead of pre-figured categories filled with different notions (and sounds), we are interested in their ongoing constitution and circulation mechanisms that do not happen in limbo but within the realm of capitalist productive relations.

Velenje Trubači, Party Trubači, Classy Trubači, or the Čaga Boys

In the last decade, the popularity of the Slovenian *trubači* has gradually declined. Only one band formed around the turn of the millennium is still active, Dej še'n litro.[18] Two new bands were also founded—Pivo in čevapi from the town of Postojna (active since 2011) and the Čaga Boys from Velenje (active since 2017). The latter is our primary case study in this chapter.[19] We conducted semi-structured interviews with the band's manager and clients who hired the band, along with online ethnography, participant observation at gigs and concerts, and an online survey with the band's fans.[20] The band uses

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18   The band was officially formed in 1999 in a student dormitory in Ljubljana. The musicians come from various places in the region of Primorska, but most of them were members of a wind ensemble from the town of Koper. Over the years, they have developed their own original style, also combining elements of New Orleans jazz and Balkan brass music.

19   The Balkan Boys, who initially referred to similar *trubači* music as the aforementioned bands, have started mixing "Balkan" with other genres and began to write their own music, which is now a central part of their repertoire. The band's leader is also the trumpeter of the band Dej še'n litro. Since they make original music based on mixing the brass band sound with other genres, they are not (self-)identified as a *trubači* band.

20   We conducted our research in the course of 2021/2022. In April 2022, we conducted a short survey with 68 members of a Facebook group of *trubači* fans (listeners of the Čaga Boys, Dej še'n litro and Pivo in čevapi) and gained some insights into their experiences.

various names to (re)present itself in media, such as Slovenski trubači ("Slovenian *trubači*"), Velenjski trubači ("Velenje *trubači*"), Party trubači, Classy trubači, and the Čaga Boys. We learned that using various names primarily stems from an attempt to build a market image of the already existing locally and regionally recognized *trubači* bands. Namely, the band inherited a great deal of the audience, repertoire, and music style from the local Fešta Band from Velenje, active from 2006 to 2016 and also known as Velenjski trubači. When deciding on the band's name, the Čaga Boys members followed the same strategy by addressing the local audience through the "domestication" of a band name. Instead of *fešta*, they opted for *čaga*, the word with the same meaning of "party" or "entertainment" in the local Styrian slang.[21] At the same time, they did not abandon the name Velenjski trubači, which already has an established meaning and value as a trademark in the Slovenian music scene.[22] This naming is also a key to their market promotion and the decision to use the web domain *trubaci.si*: *It seemed a little unnecessary to me; why would I then explain to him [the client] on the website, in the short time he's looking at it, that we are the Čaga Boys? It seemed a bit pointless to me. Let him believe that we are* trubači. *After all, he does not really care what our name is, does he?* (M. Š., 2022, January 16).

Unlike the majority of Slovenian *trubači* in the 2000s, which invested their efforts in tentatively listening to the best quality bands, analyzing their performances, and striving to meet the aesthetic standards set by the world-renowned Balkan brass bands, the members of the Čaga Boys are not particularly concerned with the quality of the sound. The band's website lists the title

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21 *Fešta* is used more widely in Slovenia slang, while *čaga* is more commonly used in the Styrian region. For the meaning of the word *čaga* and its usage by the people in the Styrian region and how *čaga* is used as a synonym for affect of a "best fun" or a "complete entertainment," see also the chapter by Rajko Muršič in this book.

22 Similarly to other Slovenian *trubači* active today that employ terminology typically associated with hedonism and more or less directly with the Balkans: Pivo in čevapi (Beer and *ćevapi*), Balkan Boys, Dej še'n litro (Give me one more liter).

of Golden Trumpet of Slovenia for 2017/2018.[23] It indicates that the members have visited Guča, which is supposed to prove their "competence." However, despite all being musically trained and educated musicians, the band members are less driven by the goal to meet the "most original" *trubači* performance but to satisfy the audiences' demands and the "pleasure of performing *trubači* music." M. Š. confirmed this by saying that the key to acquiring a new gig is a *loud, affective brass sound* since *the audience does not demand or recognize more technically accomplished music* (2022, January 16). He added that this had already been proved by several failed attempts from the academically trained band members, who tend to present more technically demanding and complex solos, which have been less well-received by the audience.

For this reason, the Čaga Boys invest more time and energy in branding the band and developing marketing strategies and media representation. *We've worked a lot on the logo because I think it's very important. Everything here is very well thought out and fully centered on the audience we want to reach*, explained M. Š. with pride and asserted that his management skills were essential to the band's success (2022, January 16). He granted that the well-envisioned presence on digital media platforms plays a key role in the band's visibility beyond the regional context of Velenje and Styria. The band's digital presence is based on the image of highly flexible performances that can adapt to various audiences, places, and regions, including family celebrations (weddings, birthdays) and company parties.

If one takes a closer look at the band's website and social media, the potential clients of the Čaga Boys can expect the best of *trubači* performance, which

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23   This probably refers to receiving the Golden Plaque, awarded by the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities (JSKD). Since 2008, many *trubači* bands have regularly or occasionally participated in this national competition that serves as the pre-selection for the group that will represent Slovenia in Guča Trumpet Festival. The Municipality of Lučani in Serbia, which includes the town of Guča, and the Municipality of Dravograd are partner municipalities from Yugoslav times and have renewed their relations in the sports, cultural, and humanitarian fields after the breakup of Yugoslavia. In the Guča Festival, brass bands compete for the First Trumpet of the festival for a particular year. Along with this award—the most prestigious one—there are also other awards, such as the Second Trumpet, Best Orchestra, and Golden Trumpet, and awards given by a prominent jury of journalists (see Guča Festival n.d.).

is divided into two types of service—Party *trubači* and Classy *trubači*. The distinction between these two offers is made to fit two types of listeners. As M. Š. explained, one is *the villagers who don't care how they're dressed* and *for whom they [the Čaga Boys] play mainly at local traditional events* as Party *trubači*. The other group, for whom they made the Classy *trubači* offer, are people with *higher demands who live primarily in or near the bigger cities (Maribor, Ljubljana)*. Classy performances are reserved for high-end venues where *you can't be without a tuxedo, you can't be without (the right) attitude* (M. Š., 2022, January 16). On the website, Party *trubači* portrays band members performing on the stage for a mass audience. At the same time, in their classy iterations, they are dressed in tuxedos, depicting a more "cultured," "high-class" performance. In providing additional information for website visitors, the website indicates that Classy *trubači* targets companies and assures potential clients a customized repertoire, performance tactics, and interaction with the audience: "A high level of formality and professionalism. Suitable for high-end, elite, and classy celebrations, classy surprises, classy group endings, highly professional and classy, but still a strong, loud, interesting, and bouncy surprise" ("Trubači Slovenija" n.d.).

When comparing the two offers, we notice that "classy" differs from "party" *trubači* in a higher price and the discourse of "limited, more exclusive gigs" for the companies or people with "deeper pockets." In other words, the market strategy behind the classy performance is to offer a sense of "special treatment" for clients ready to pay more for a more professional and sophisticated performance that assures the best party atmosphere tailored to the audience's demands.[24] The "extra" offer optionally includes using additional tools—such as the scare gun—that contribute to the extraordinary *trubači* experience. As M. Š. told us, the gun is usually used during the performance of Bregović's popular piece "Kalašnjikov" (Kalashnikov, an automatic rifle) to foster "euphoria"

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24   Playing gigs at posh urban clubs or for closed parties is not unknown to the internationally touring brass bands: Alexander Marković writes about Romani bands' gigs in Dubai or Beirut as a common practice (2015, 268).

and bring the heated atmosphere to culmination. They took this idea from the Fešta Band, whose performance with the scare gun was extremely well-received by the audience.

Picture 1: Musical offer at the webpage https://trubaci.si/.

Creating two offers is informed by the imperative to assure the clients that the Čaga Boys can provide the best party for any type of audience in Slovenia. It is also motivated by the capitalist promotion logic that presupposes targeting the broadest possible market while still sustaining a product's market value by offering a more special, more worthy performance. M. Š. explained that the price of 600–700 EUR per gig allows them to acquire enough clients yet still be able to make a selection and avoid overburden (2022, January 16). For him, it is important to keep an image of the band as able to play in different contexts and for different occasions and audiences without having to accept every single

gig, like the "street" Romani *trubači* who come to Slovenia in search of gigs and play for very modest reward or for tips, which we address in the final section of the chapter.

Trubači as an Empty Signifier: Yugo-Rock *Čaga*

The marketing tactics of the Čaga Boys are based on the promise of professionalism, efficiency, and adaptability, which is best summarized in the promotional slogans of "offering more," "the fastest," "the best," "the performance adjusted to the widest possible audience." In the everyday practice of music labor, fulfilling this promise means constantly adjusting the sound, repertoire, and performance tactics. As their market strength is the ability to adapt to different audiences, including those who do not typically listen to *trubači*, the band members adjust their performances to different musical genres, such as pop, rock, and pop-folk. This performance adjusting is done through the combination of instruments and by including additional instruments to the usual brass band ensemble consisting of baritone, tuba, drums, clarinet, and saxophone. The Čaga Boys have enriched their ensemble with a piano accordion—an instrument that is "indispensable in Slovenia"—and two male vocals that are, in their words, "typical of 'Yugo rock' and 'Serbian folk' music" ("Trubači Slovenija" n.d.). Such a large ensemble allows accepting a gig even if someone is missing, as only the tuba playing the bass line and a singer are indispensable. The two singers alternate according to the repertoire—one performs "only Serbian songs [...] and the other Yugo rock and Slovenian songs" (M. Š., 2021, June 18). Consequently, their singing styles are adjusted to different repertoires. For example, a lower voice with melismatic ornaments suits the Balkan pop-folk style, while a higher voice suits Slovenian folk-pop, rock, and pop.

The core of the band's cross-genre repertoire comprises songs from different times and genres that were popular during the Yugoslav era, as well as the new hits popular in the region. The priority is to deliver what "an average

listener" wants to hear,[25] what the band members in their accounts identify as Yugo-rock, Croatian-Dalmatian,[26] folk-pop, pop, and commercial genres popular in Slovenia. A key to a successful gig, according to M. Š., is to start with the well-known pieces people like, as they are usually not particularly familiar with the typical Balkan brass repertoire. Regardless of the genre, the most important is to deliver a performance that "feels" like *trubači*, which assures that the audience is offered the high-intensity affective experience as a key to the best party. It is not an especially difficult task, as for ordinary listeners in Slovenia, the sound of *trubači* immediately recalls the notion of wild partying: *When we hear trubači, wow, we all already imagine Guča and everything that goes with it, a huge party. If that's what people expect, that's what they get* (M. Š., 2021, June 18).

During the fieldwork we conducted from June 2021 to April 2022, we attended a gig at the café of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana organized by the Association of Defense Studies Students and *Tigri* Student Club. Interestingly, the event was not promoted as a *trubači* or Slovenian *trubači* performance but as a Yugo rock party. The organizer also announced the Čaga Boys as a Yugo rock band. However, the band hardly performed a Yugo rock repertoire. They started with Yugoslav pop hits from the late 1980s (the Eurovision songs "Hajde da ludujemo" by Tajči and "Ja sam za ples" by Novi fosili) and "Sanjao sam moju ružicu," a popular song from the mid-1990s by the Croatian pop band Leteći odred. As the student audience was not overwhelmingly enthused, the band started warming up the atmosphere by swiftly shifting from one genre to another. The first singer was replaced by the second, who specializes in Balkan pop-folk and tried to animate the audience with Balkan pop-folk hits such as Mile Kitić's "Šampanjac," Yugoslav rock band Bijelo dugme's cover of the Romani song "Đurđevdan" and their well-known piece

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25 Alexander Marković (2015, 270) portrays the same situation. His interlocutors from Romani brass bands in Vranje reported that they could please the majority of Western audiences by playing just three pieces: "Kalašnjikov," "Đurđevdan," and "Mesečina" (the ultimate brass band hits, popularized by Bregović).

26 On the popularity of "Dalmatian melos" and the emergence of *klapa* singing groups in Slovenia after 2000, see Šivic (2009).

"Hajdemo u planine," inviting listeners in a combination of Serbian and Slovenian to start dancing: "Come on, let's go, folks, where are your hands, let's go, hop hop hop" (*ajde gremo društvo, gde so ruke, idemo, hop hop hop*). As a last attempt to engage the audience, the first singer re-entered the stage while the band shifted to the cheerful rhythms of polka and Slovenian folk-pop with a block of songs by the popular ensembles Kingston and Modrijani, which finally drew the audience's attention, and people started chanting and dancing.

Picture 2: Yugo rock party in Ljubljana, June 2022

Later, we learned that advertising the gig as "Yugo rock" and using the label "Yugoslav" were done to make the event more attractive to the audience in Ljubljana, to whom the Čaga Boys are relatively unknown. The organizers and the band manager thought that including Yugoslav rock in their announcements would be a good way to attract younger generations who come from different regions of Slovenia and former Yugoslavia. The Styrian term *čaga* obviously did

not have enough marketing potential neither did simply using the label *trubači*. For this reason, the organizers emphasized the shared cultural space as something that would be widely recognized and recall the experience as the best party. In the words of M. Š., although students did not belong to the group that had a personal experience of living in Yugoslavia, its notion recalls the time when *we were all friends regardless of what you are or where you are* and engenders the specific senses of (be)longing to the Yugoslav cultural spacetime. In our conversations, he uses the expression "Yugoslav euphoria" to describe the affect that mobilizes peoples' bodies as a result of their emotionally-charged attachment to the shared Yugoslav experience: *[...] in my opinion, that leap, for an average Slovenian, an older one who was part of that Yugoslav story, it takes a leap for him to feel that euphoria* (2021, June 18). Even if listeners are unfamiliar with the *trubači* genre or repertoire, Yugoslav rock or any music in the Serbo-Croatian language might endorse "Yugoslav euphoria."

In that sense, we can say that using Yugo rock to advertise the concert draws on the established meanings, stereotypes, imaginations, and expectations attached to the memories of Yugoslavia in Slovenia.[27] However, both Yugoslavia and Balkan are primarily used to indicate the specific economies of affect and the best party experience. M. Š. explained this by saying that what guides the usage of Yugoslav or Balkan in framing their gigs are the mechanisms of supply and demand in the contemporary consumer culture in which we live. In his opinion, market success is ultimately about quickly satisfying the audience's needs: *In the past, people were used to a musician coming on stage and playing his songs. Now, the audience can demand the songs; they no longer have to wait. The modern age is like that: we [the audience] have become kings: what we want at a certain moment, we have to get* (M. Š., 2022, January 16).

Therefore, meeting clients' needs means the usage of *trubači* as the trademark while constantly tailoring its notions and sounds. As written on the

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27   Mitja Velikonja asserts that the notions of the Balkans and Yugoslavia are often used as synonyms and that talking about Yugoslavia in Slovenia inevitably includes the discourses of Balkanism (2013, 10).

website: "If you wish, we can base your repertoire solely on Serbian-brass music or completely the opposite," meaning that one can simply choose which pieces "one likes to listen to" ("Trubači Slovenija" n.d.). In providing instant satisfaction, the Čaga Boys rely on the audience's feelings, appraisals, and "making sense [...] of sound" (Lie 2020, 385) of *trubači* by putting intensive embodied and affective encounters at the center regardless of the given identity categories or particular musical genre. By strategically navigating the audience's fantasies to ensure a high intensity of affective exchange,[28] the primary "product" of the Čaga Boys is delivering the best party experience.[29]

What Matters the Most is a (Wild) Party

The key to Slovenian *trubači*'s market potential is the expectations behind what this performance does. In the words of affect theory, it means the degree to which *trubači* sound affects listeners' bodies and increases the capacity of bodies to affect other bodies. This means how the representations and imaginaries attached to *trubači* that we have analyzed in the previous section are curated in "the concrete and physical world of action and experience" (van de Port 1998, 188). While the vocabulary of affect often tends to be seen as escaping the mechanisms of market calculation, the embodied labor practices of professional musicians are deeply shaped by the logic of profit, as several studies show.[30] Simultaneously, the pragmatic approach does not presuppose affective encounters between musicians and the listeners being less authentic or fake. For the Čaga Boys, the *trubači* affective impact on bodies comes to the fore,

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28 About the commercial potential of Yugonostalgia in music see Velikonja (2002), Muršič (2007), and Kovačič (2009).

29 About the notion of music as affective labor, see Hofman (2015).

30 Anaar Desai-Stephens, for example, writes how in the singing school in India, pupils lear to sing with "feelfully," as producing affect is something that brings a bigger success and eventually also financial reward (2020)

particularly at private parties such as weddings and birthdays, where the band is usually hired as a "gift" to the person who is celebrating or as a surprise for the guests.[31] The band promotes its services as "the best surprise," which includes a very loud, fast-tempo performance style—in the words of band members, *tutta forza* (*udarni špil*).[32] Exemplified in Bregović's "Kalašnjikov," a surprise performance guarantees clients an atmosphere of euphoria. The status of being a special guest pays off, as the audience is already "warmed up" by the regular band (if it plays), already drunk and excited, and therefore fully prepared to get crazy, M. Š. explained. This status provides the musicians with a good source of income for actually less working time (they usually play two rounds of 45 minutes each): *The less you play, the best party you dive into, because you don't have to worry about whether it's going to be a party or not, because you always know it's going to be a party, don't you?* (2021, June 18).

Playing at private parties brings other advantages for "curating" affect and getting listeners faster to a state of euphoria: without a stage, the usual hierarchical relationships between the performers and the audience are challenged, and the performance is much more interactive. In such settings, band members are directed more toward *approaching people, jumping on a table, standing between people, standing behind someone, playing music "by ear"* (M. Š., 2021, June 18) or playing around a dancing person.[33] Physical closeness also captured them in the affective atmosphere, making their labor less tiring and the time spent playing "go faster."

> *That you basically connect with them in this way. You're basically a complete stranger, but at the same time, you're there, let's say, hugging someone, and we are partying together. And he also feels that closeness and is drawn in. He*

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31   The Čaga Boys have around 80 such gigs per year (they also had the same quantity of gigs during the COVID-19 pandemic).

32   Alexander Marković also notes that due to prioritizing "fast pieces," speed, and staccato playing to adjust to the audience's demands, the "slower repertoire" remains rather abandoned (2015, 274).

33   About the direct engagement of the audience/patrons with the brass bands musicians' bodies by tipping them on the parts of the body, see Alexander Marković (2013).

perceives you very differently. He doesn't perceive you as an outsider who's come to perform, but you are actually partying with him, he understands that, he then has to relax. (M. Š., 2021, June 18)

The Čaga Boys clearly capitalize on the presumed capacity of a *trubači* performance to generate an extraordinary affective experience, usually referred to as a "wild party" (*hud žur*), "crazy atmosphere" (*noro vzdušje*), "total debauchery" (*totalni razvrat*). The atmosphere of total wildness or madness[34] indicates that listeners immerse themselves in the "extreme" of their embodied and emotional capacities.

The statements of the fans of the Čaga Boys and Pivo in čevapi we collected through the online survey confirm the sense of intimacy and sociability *trubači* sound engenders. Survey participants report the intense sensory and embodied interaction, which they articulate as a "high energy" that suddenly overwhelms them, so they start "dancing and jumping:" *I am going wild [...] the fast and bouncy tempo raises my energy to new heights, I'm singing like a lunatic and enjoying myself to the full*, one of the fans wrote. Their experiences fully illustrate the "impact of vibration—as well as its amplification or absorption in the body" that "can be registered as movement, force, energy, pain, texture, sound, music, emotion, pleasure, and so on," as Luis-Manuel Garcia writes (2015, 72). In exploring affective encounters in the context of electronic dance music parties, he concludes that affect becomes haptically manifested as force and movement (Garcia 2020, 26). Another participant in the survey describes the experience of being "touched by sound" as *when a good song starts, you feel like you're inside a laundromat because everyone around you is going crazy and jumping around!*

Listeners experience the high, wild energy associated with a *trubači* performance as bringing them into a state beyond rationality, even into a state beyond the body or beyond human. For example, M. Š. identifies crazy dancing,

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34 As van de Port asserts, the figure of the Gypsy enables an "insight into the irrational, wild human being," which is associated with the presumed deep emotionality that they are able to convey through music (1998, 306).

drinking, the breaking of glasses, and the ripping of shirts as an "animal feeling" that people embrace, often claiming that this comes unwillingly. In his opinion, getting wild at a *trubači* performance reveals something listeners actually long for but do not want to openly admit—to fully surrender to the affective power of the sound. In his opinion, the reason for this seemingly "irrational surrender" lies in a "different way of partying," which is not usual for "typical" Slovenian celebrations where the music (usually the Slovenian folk-pop) or dances (of polka or waltz) do not easily allow such a wild behavior.

M. Š.'s reflection recalls what, in other contexts, scholars identify as the specific "Balkan brass party atmosphere" (Marković 2015, 266). It generates the sense of a "totalizing affect," mobilizing the racialized discourses attached to *trubači* that draw on the long-standing imaginations of the Balkans not only as the wild place of joy but also irrationality and wildness, centered around the figure of Gypsy, as the ultimate "Other" in the Balkans. Mattijs van de Port argues that Gypsy music allows *kafana* patrons to step into a different reality, different space and body, as a way of "re-inject[ing] the self with otherness" (1998, 306). In the context of brass band music, as several research shows, this often presupposes the embodied practices of being dressed as Gypsies or dancing in the Gypsy way (Hofman 2014, 82), which musicians skillfully and strategically exploit.[35] This fully corresponds with the claims of Carol Silverman and Aleksandra Marković that the label of Gypsy music "has become such a powerful trademark in itself, both commercially and symbolically, that it no longer requires any references to actual Romani music, nor any involvement of actual Romani musicians" (in Gligorijević 2020, 16).

The Čaga Boys clearly capitalize on the ethno-racial stereotypes that infuse the sound of *trubači*. However, their task is to sell their sound in a way that ensures a proper experience of euphoria for listeners in Slovenia. The presumed "rawness" or "wildness" of *trubači* is strategically dosed for different clients. We learned that M. Š. invests time into getting information about the band's

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35   About the strategies of Slovenian *trubači* for embodying Gypsiness, see Kovačič (2009; 2021).

potential clients, which helps the members best respond to the clients' needs. In preparation for each gig and customizing the repertoire, he tries to learn as much as possible about the occasion and venue and particularly about the background of the audience in terms of age and ethnicity:

> *The first aspect is that I talk to every person who calls me for a very long time, at least 20 minutes or half an hour, so I really understand why they want, why they called us, where it will be, what kind of people there will be, what do they expect, what nationality they are, where do they hang out, and whether there will be other nationalities there or only Slovenians. If you understand all this, it is easier to approach it.* (M. Š. 2021, June 18)

This quote shows that identity belonging nevertheless plays a role in commodifying affective experience and guides the "professional" execution and "efficient" product placement in the market. However, to what extent are we talking here about the ethno-racial difference?

"We tell everyone that we are Slovenians"

The Čaga Boys utilize the adjective "Slovenian" to establish a specific position and promote their services in the national music market. However, as we showed in the opening vignette, the fact that non-Slovenians—the Romani bands—also use this term for advertising their gigs makes it difficult for the Čaga Boys to sustain their peculiar market presence. To deal with this, M. Š. shared with us that he often sends future clients the link to the YouTube video of a Čaga Boys performance, so clients can not only check the appropriateness and quality of the performances but also "verify" that the band members are not "black." In responding to our question about the necessity of this type of check, he explained that while the most popular Romani brass bands are praised for their musical quality, there are many street brass bands, *the ones who walk up and down the Ljubljanica River [in the city of Ljubljana]* (M. Š., 2022, January

16), whom he qualified as "less-worthy," "begging musicians" who can endanger the status of the whole genre of *trubači*. It also shows that although "Slovenian," "Balkan," and "Gypsy" are tokens that allow musicians to strategically navigate through the music market (and cover the broadest possible audience and their demands), the very presence of "other bodies"—musicians who look like Roma (or non-Slovenian)—is seen as potentially harmful to the market value of Slovenian *trubači*.

Such a statement attests to the long-standing racialized discourses, where the musicians highly capitalize on the appropriation of stereotypes about Romani musical exceptionality and their extraordinary ability to affectively mobilize listeners while simultaneously ignoring/silencing "the realities of Romani musical practices, aesthetic tastes and professional status" (Marković 2015, 282).[36] Yet, the argument of an ethno-racial difference, we argue, cannot offer a complete understanding of the Slovenian *trubači* phenomenon if detached from the mechanisms of capitalist productive relations and the reality of musicians' labor regimes. The key to the Čaga Boys' success is flexibility and adaptability, on which the band builds its market presence. Caught in the mechanisms of the neoliberal market that dictates the constant effort to reach more clients, the Čaga Boys are aware that they must provide the best party to the clients and sustain Slovenian *trubači* as a recognizable trademark that promises multiple choices not only in terms of sound, repertoire, and musical genres but also performance style and venues.

For the Čaga Boys, Romani musicians' ethno-racial belonging is not harmful per se. The main anxiety for them is the devaluation of Slovenian *trubači* as a trademark through the image of a *trubači* performance as a "low level," "begging" activity. In the ongoing market struggles, street playing, which means playing for tips, testifies to "low-class" labor that potentially diminishes the total value of a *trubači* performance. In that sense, they do not distance from the

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36   For the discourses of "Romani difference" and Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav antiziganism as a type of racism directed toward Romani people, see Sardelić (2014).

particular racialized subjectivity but from the racialized labor practices based on a loss of dignity and economic (self-)exploitation. A sense of dignity here is directly conditioned by an ability to sell the service for the highest possible reward. In other words, labor that does not bring substantial financial remuneration can potentially diminish the value of the *trubači* trademark, which the Čaga Boys have carefully cultivated for the Slovenian market.

The example of Čaga Boys demasks the broader mechanisms of the neoliberal market that exploit the ethno-racial identity formations and further radicalizes inequalities between "different classes" of musicians according to their (in)ability to earn. Regardless of the identity or geographical location, bands that want to survive in the market have to sell their service as the "best," "most efficient," and "the fastest and most reliable." Only if they constantly prove the market value of their service can musicians live from their labor, which includes promising everything (and more) to beat the competition.

To summarize, an easy application of ethno-racial difference that is recently the dominant framework for examining Romani musicians' activities can neglect other forms of inequalities. In the post-Yugoslav context, an entrepreneurial spirit has been historically an inherent part of the musical craft in the popular music genres, which largely operated within unregulated and highly precarious labor conditions (Hofman 2020b). After the breakup of Yugoslavia, however, entrepreneurship has become the main mantra of the restoration of capitalism. It is at the core of (successful) neoliberal subjectivity. The imperative to adequately place the product and please the consumers is a key to professional survival, as anthropologist Carla Freeman points out: "Few if any spheres of life appear exempt from the neoliberal demands for flexibility, from the structures of economic markets to the nuances of individuals' subjectivities as citizens, producers, consumers, migrants, tourists, members of families, and so on (in Moore 2016, 36).

Capitalizing on the presumed ability of *trubači* sound to endorse affect, the Čaga Boys sell the best party experience to their clients. Their marketing strategies and type of service are based on flexibility and adaptability: on the one hand, they provide the broader possible offer that would attract an

"ordinary listener" and prove an ability to swiftly shift the sound, repertoire, and performance style to meet the individual preferences, on the other. In doing that, *trubači* is utilized as an empty signifier; it serves as a point of (self-) identification only to the extent that it can be profitable or helpful in navigating the market.

Therefore, instead of understanding the existence of Slovenian *trubači* in the music market as an ultimate proof of the racialized difference, we look at the politics of difference as subsumed to the logic of profit, imposed flexibility, and competition. One's money-making (and spending) abilities and entrepreneurial mindset drive not only economic but also social positionings and dominate all aspects of social life.

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Labor Pains:

The Affective Lives and Times of the Roma in (Post-)Yugoslav Film

Dijana Jelača

"I have been unfortunate since birth
  I sing songs because of my sorrow
  I wish, my dear mother
  That all this was just a dream."
  —The Roma singers in *Who's Singing Over There?*

Every time the two Roma travelers step from the background into the foreground
of Slobodan Šijan's legendary Yugoslav comedy *Ko to tamo peva* (Who's Singing
Over There?, 1980) in order to perform a song that breaks the fourth wall, they
offer the viewer a respite from the film's torturous-yet-humorous road trip and a
running commentary on the events at hand. Their song opens and closes the film,
and they act as the de facto masters of the ceremony of the film itself.[1] Moreover,
once the bus trip reaches its tragic destination and literal end (the bus arrives in
Belgrade just as the obliterating German air assault on the city commences in
1941), the Roma musicians/raconteurs appear to miraculously be the only sur-
vivors. They yet again sing directly to the camera and offer concluding remarks
on the story that has transpired while also eerily foreshadowing the suffering yet
to come in the war that has just started. Throughout the film, their accordion-
accompanied song—with a mixture of repeating and newly introduced lyrics—is
prophetic, analytic, humorous, cynical, soulful, and absurd at once.

In the Yugoslav (and post-Yugoslav) dominant cultural imagination, the figure
of the "Gypsy," or *Cigan* in the local language (as members of the Roma population

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1   Vladislav Mijić (2003) has referred to them as witnesses and commentators.

are still predominantly referred to in the region), has occupied a complex, multifold, and fluid position marked by representations that perpetually highlight seemingly contradictory forms of affect. On the one hand, the Roma are treated as a decidedly racialized ethnic group that is looked down upon and disproportionately discriminated against, a distinctly undesirable social presence. On the other hand, the Roma continue to be a mainstay of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav popular culture, in music and film in particular, with iconic musicians such as Esma Redžepova or Šaban Bajramović and classic films such as Aleksandar Petrović's *Skupljači perja* (I Even Met Happy Gypsies, 1967) and Emir Kusturica's oeuvre.[2] It should be noted, too, that the Roma gained significant ground in emancipation during socialist Yugoslavia, mainly due to the systemic efforts to integrate them into the state's schooling and literacy programs. However, these gains did not entirely erase the prejudices held by the dominant groups, which arguably became even more pronounced after the end of socialism and the ensuing precarity of the post-socialist neoliberal transition. The Roma continue to be systematically socially discriminated against, often treated as the "untouchables" and as individuals and communities who are outside society's normative conceptions of temporality and spatiality. At the same time, they have traditionally been fetishized and exoticized in the cultural sphere and celebrated as carriers of a seemingly greater affective authenticity, soulfulness, pathos, and even supernatural transcendence. For instance, consider the above-mentioned miraculous survival of the Roma singers at the end of *Who's Singing Over There?* or Emir Kusturica's work, which I discuss in a later section of this chapter, and which perpetuates the trope of said supernatural transcendence by embracing the cinematic style and aesthetics of magical realism.

This essay explores how this simultaneous, contradictory, yet not mutually-exclusive existence of abjection and worship informs several prominent cinematic depictions of the Roma experience by prominent non-Roma, male Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film directors and how these depictions also testify

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2   Nevena Daković has suggested that the films about Roma, frequent and prominent in Yugoslav cultural production, could well constitute a genre onto itself, with Petrović's 1967 film being a key "ancestor" for the films that come after it (2003).

to the changing lives and times of the region more broadly. In later parts, I focus on the Roma woman in particular, in the films such as Emir Kusturica's much-lauded *Dom za vešanje* (Time of the Gypsies, 1988) and more recently, Danis Tanović's internationally renowned docudrama, *Epizoda u životu berača željeza* (An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker, 2013). How do these male directors cast a privileged gaze onto the precarity of the Romani woman and suggest that the affective investment in her life is liquid, fleeting, if not altogether contingent upon her standing in for something other than herself? Thus her story is emptied of its specificity in order to become a metaphor for the late Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav collectivity, respectively. What is being eschewed is a specificity that is decidedly intersectional, because a Roma woman's lived experience of precarity is racialized, gendered, and classed in equal measure. Through the obfuscation of these intersecting causes of her oppression, the Roma woman becomes a conduit of affective transference—a stand-in for the broader populace and its discontents. As a result, the possibility of a Roma woman's agency as a social actor is eschewed altogether.

Nearly all the key elements of these broader and (only seemingly) contradictory tendencies in the treatment and representation of the Roma in Yugoslav popular cultural discourses are evident in *Who's Singing Over There?* (whose screenplay was written by the renowned playwright Dušan Kovačević). The comedy's inevitably humorous road trip is at the same time eerily volatile, its affective atmosphere liquid, always on the verge of spilling into chaos and violence. At the start of the bus ride, one passenger protests with indignation: "We are *actually* going to ride with Gypsies?" to which the conductor answers: "Anyone who pays for a ticket rides." Most of the bus passengers behave as if their (nameless) Romani co-travelers—a young man and a boy, perhaps brothers—do not exist, and in the film's final act, they are falsely accused of theft and violently assaulted (prompting the film's only female character to yell out "Stop hitting a child!"). That brutal assault is interrupted only by the air raid sirens and the subsequent bombing that historically marks the beginning of World War II in Yugoslavia.

Perhaps this was the film's inadvertent gesture, but it is worth remembering that the Roma were one of the groups systematically targeted during the Fascist

genocidal terror of the ensuing war. In an ironic twist, the Nazi German bombs that kill everyone else miraculously spare the two Roma characters from the assault by other passengers, and to double the irony, they become the only survivors of the bombing itself. While snubbed or abused by most other passengers and sidelined mainly by the film's central narrative arc, the Roma singers also appear to be of pivotal importance as the film's framing narrators—or commentators—and, ultimately, its only survivors. It is of significant note here that they express themselves predominantly and most meaningfully through song. This trope frequently appears in the cultural discourses about the Roma in Yugoslav culture: their "musicality" is overdetermined, naturalized as inherent, and fetishized as something borderline supernatural in its soulfulness and affective impact (see Silverman 2011a). Moreover, the Romani supernatural transcendence is signaled in the film by their very survival in the bombing that kills all other bus passengers. The Roma, marked as carriers of affective profundity, are a contradictory, fluid, and also apparently indestructible presence. I describe them as having a fluid presence because they appear *simultaneously subhuman and superhuman*, and this is precisely the crux of their liquid affective appeal in Yugoslav popular culture.

I use the term "liquid" here to designate an affective process in constant flux and to avoid fixed categorizations to which the discussions of affect more generally need to be resistant. Affect is experienced as a perpetual movement rather than a stationary positioning, a verb rather than a noun, and subsequently must be theorized with fluidity rather than fixity. This is one reason why affect theorists such as Sara Ahmed prefer "affective economies" to demarcate the transactional, relational processes and exchanges that produce affective responses and acknowledge their political, social, and cultural implications (2004). Through affective economies, claims Ahmed, "emotions *do things*, and they align the individual with communities—or bodily space with social space" (2004, 119, emphasis in the text). She continues: "Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (2004, 119). In *Who's Singing Over There?*, the affective economy at play often renders the Roma deliberately "unseen" by their fellow passengers. However,

while unseen, they are most definitely heard, and in that aural encounter, contradictory forms of affective economies emerge—disgust and enjoyment form a curious combination. This dynamic illustrates a clear demarcation between the refusal to acknowledge a subaltern group's physical presence while simultaneously making affective use of their artistry and cultural production. While affect always circulates within specific histories and regimes of knowledge/power, it defies fixity and finite categorizations. What is clear is that affect is not about fixities but about *becomings* and *unbecomings*, assemblages and processes which are in perpetual—alternatively predictable and unpredictable—flux.

At the end of *Who's Singing Over There?*, the Roma characters perform their song straight to the camera, breaking the fourth wall one last time. The refrain of their song, which is quoted at the beginning of this essay (and is also the only part of the song that stays the same throughout), now becomes emptied of its direct link to Romani precarity. It is instead co-opted into an expression of collective national sorrow and suffering of the people under the imminent Fascist invasion. In a nutshell, this is the process (or the cycle) seen time and again in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film, whereby the affective expressions specific to Roma life and experience (most often conveyed through music) become co-opted by the dominant culture and turned into an experience of affective *jouissance* or catharsis of and for the dominant group, one which simultaneously systematically continues to otherwise discriminate against the Roma population. Nevertheless, I do not see this process as a discursively convenient channel for the general population to "embrace unreason," as van de Port (1998) stipulates in his frequently cited work on the region's dominant population's appropriation of the "Gypsies" and "unreason" during wars. To do so would be to assume/conceptualize an overly generalized, simplified Yugoslav collectivity that is acting "unreasonably" in unison, which could, in turn, become a way to discard the complex political histories of the region and replace them with a Balkanizing framework that relinquishes individual accountability and the surrounding geopolitical context grounded in lived experiences.

Moreover, in van de Port's study of the role of the Roma in the cultural and political discourses around the Yugoslav wars, the Roma are positioned as a

homogenous group in their own right (1998). Needless to say, they are far from that, as any collectivity is. What if we introduce sexual difference, gender, and class into the mix, as I propose to do here? While the two Roma musicians in *Who's Singing Over There?* are male, significant portions of this essay are particularly interested in the cinematic representations of the Roma woman because she embodies an even more complicated circulation of affect and an intersectional form of precarity—both as a Roma person and as a woman. What additional affective layers and political, discursive implications circulate around and through the cinematic representations of the Roma woman in particular?

Regarding "Happy Gypsies:" Romani Woman's Double Erasure

One of the most influential filmmakers of the New Yugoslav Film (a movement often also referred to as *the Black Wave*), Aleksandar Petrović, wrote and directed one of his most lauded films, *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, in 1967. He centered it around a Roma community in Vojvodina, an ethnically diverse region of Serbia. While the film's key protagonists/antagonists are men, female Roma characters are carriers of significant affective catharsis. Tisa (played by Gordana Jovanović in her screen debut) and Lenče (Olivera Katarina, credited here as Olivera Vučo) may at first appear to be the opposites of one another—the former is a virginal, inexperienced young woman, the latter an experienced performer.[3] Yet the film brings their stories together with an arc of

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3   It should be noted that, in Yugoslav film, Roma characters are often played by non-Roma actors. In *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, they include famed actors Bekim Fehmiu and Velimir Bata Živojinović playing Roma men and the film's central rivals. The film also switches back and forth between Serbo-Croatian and Romani languages. Emir Kusturica's typical approach has been to have Roma non-professional actors play supporting roles, while non-Roma actors play the lead Roma characters. In *Who's Singing Out There?*, the Roma characters are played by Romani performers who are non-professional actors.

female solidarity in the face of precarity. The *kafana*,[4] which denotes the film's affectively central mise-en-scène, is traditionally coded as a site of significant social, cultural, political, and affective economies in the regional culture (van de Port 1998). Moreover, the female *kafana* singer is simultaneously marked as a carrier of low cultural capital and affective excesses—emotional, bodily, sexual—that sometimes precipitously border on violence and/or self-destruction.[5] In fact, the female *kafana* singer is perpetually tasked with performing affective labor that is often not even recognized as such due to the complicated gendered dynamics of what is considered labor to begin with (Hofman 2015). The first thing Lenče does when she appears on screen is down a drink and slam the empty glass on the table, shattering it into pieces. *Merak*, a word borrowed from Turkish into Serbo-Croatian,[6] designates enjoyment, pleasure, or food for the soul and is perhaps close to the French term *jouissance* because it also implies a level of affective excess that eludes finite definitions. *Meraklije* (persons who indulge in such pleasures) are evoked in Olivera Katarina's very first song, a version of the *kafana* classic "Niška banja," in which the lyrics are changed from "We, Nišlije (residents of the city of Niš)" to "We Gypsies, *meraklije*, can't live without *rakija* (fruit brandy)."[7] While the "we" in her lyrics is here specifically identified as the Roma population, this song and its exuberant affect have been endlessly re-appropriated by the dominant, non-Roma collectivity, especially in the *kafana* setting (the song is traditionally performed partially in Roma, partially in Serbo-Croatian).

As is the case in most scenes in the film, especially those filmed in interior spaces, and owing to Aleksandar Petrović's embrace of the *new wave* film aesthetics that defy the norms of classical film language, Olivera Katarina's opening song number is filmed entirely in a series of close-ups—of the singer and her

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4   Serbian tavern. About this term, see the Introduction to this book.

5   For more on the figure of the female *kafana* singer, see Petrović and Hofman (2017).

6   In Turkish *merak* means interest or curiosity in terms of an intrinsic wish to explore, understand or comprehend the essence of something.

7   For the video of performance, see Aristandar (2010).

meraklije male audience. This stylistic approach emphasizes not only an air of affective intensity but also of volatile tension and—as the film progresses—uneasy claustrophobia. There are no establishing shots of the *kafana* interior since it is cinematically coded as a space of intensely public-yet-intimate, liquid, and ever-increasing affective intensity. The film abruptly cuts from a close-up of a saint painted on a church wall in the previous scene to a close-up of the male protagonist who is now in the tavern—that abrupt switch is very telling, as it calls attention to the extreme juxtaposition of the two spaces (the church and the tavern) and the men presiding over each of them (the white Christian saint and the Roma petty criminal, respectively).

In another *kafana* scene, Lenče sings, in Romani, the song that contains the lyrics "I am a small, dark, black Gypsy girl of yours" while her audience exuberantly smashes glasses. Another iconic Romani song, "Đelem, đelem," may well be the film's affective epicenter. The song is a mournful response to the Nazi genocide against the Roma, who were systemically persecuted and killed in Fascist concentration camps in World War II in staggering numbers. It was initially composed by a Serbian Romani musician Žarko Jovanović, who wrote the song after surviving the concentration camps and having had most of his family in the Nazi genocide against the Roma people. The song's lyrics include lines that state, "I once had a great family/The Black Legion murdered them." It is a song about mourning and resilience: "For the Roma/Roads have opened/Now is the time/Rise up Roma now/We will rise high if we act" (Jovanović himself joined the Yugoslav partisans' anti-fascist fight after surviving the camps). The English language title of the film comes from a line in the song that states, "I *even* met happy Gypsies" while the original Serbo-Croatian title of the film *Skupljači perja* roughly translates to "The Feather Collectors." In this line from the song, which made it into the film's official English language title, the *possibility* of meeting *even happy* Gypsies is emphasized—signaling that this may be a rare occurrence to behold but not an implausible one. In her work in *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed describes happiness as an encounter, as "a happening, as involving affect (to be happy is to be affected by something)" (2010, 21). Furthermore, she explores how "happiness functions as a promise

that directs us towards certain objects, which then circulate as social goods" (Ahmed 2010, 21). While elsewhere often depicted as *meraklije*, as excessively joyful, the Roma are here positioned as being rarely provided an encounter with something or someone that would produce a feeling of happiness. It speaks to the general tendency of perceiving Roma as conduits of extreme affective states: sheer *merak/jouissance* on the one hand, and sheer despair on the other. Rather than a contradiction, this appears to be the essence of how the notions about the Roma affectively circulate in the dominant culture.

The trope of the Roma's excessive joyfulness circulates in the dominant popular culture as a social good that brings about happiness for those who encounter the Roma through film and other forms of cultural expression, such as music. The Roma circulate as "happy objects" in mainstream cultural representation (film, music), as sources of a pleasurable affective encounter *for* the dominant culture. At the same time, their own suffering becomes co-opted as a stand-in, a conduit for the existential sorrows of the broader population. What is erased in the process is the fact that, in the materialist realities of their historicized experience, the Roma continue to be ostracized as undesirable social elements that are systemically discriminated against, which the Nazi genocide against them, about which the song "Đelem, đelem" is about, makes evident in the most harrowing way. We could view this erasure as a curious form of *dis*identification, where, as van de Port suggested with regards to the Serbs in particular, "Gypsies are strange and recognizable at the same time, […] they are just like Serbs *and* not at all like Serbs" (1998, 171). Contradiction is at the very heart of the affective economies that circulate around the Roma and their role in popular culture.

In the same *kafana* scene in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Bora first asks the young Tisa to sing, and she replies that she "doesn't know how." He rejects this as utterly implausible—the implication being that a Roma who does not know how to sing is an impossibility—pours her a glass of wine, and after she takes a sip, she indeed starts to give a moving a cappella rendition of the song. This brief exchange reinforces the exoticized notion that transcendent musicality is somehow inherent to a Roma person, particularly a Roma woman, whether

she knows it or not.[8] Tisa is abruptly interrupted by her stepfather Mirta, who orders her to go home, signaling that she is defiling herself by not only being in a *kafana* but also singing in it. His response again reinforces the low cultural capital—even shame—of being identified as a female *kafana* singer. Shortly after that, the song is picked up by the actual *kafana* singer, Lenče, and this scene perhaps most clearly highlights the affective excess of *merak* in the film. Bora reacts to the song by smashing his hands on the glass he had just broken and proceeding to laugh as his palms bleed. The woman is there for the men's visual and aural pleasure; she sings here *to and of their affect, not her own*. She is a pleasurable, even existentially needed presence, an encounter with whom evokes *merak* in the male *kafana* attendees.

In the film, violence against women is a regular, borderline routine spectacle. The film does not overtly cast a judgmental gaze against such violence as much as it treats it as an almost naturalized part of the Roma community's daily routine. The film's cold observational approach contributes to a problematic essentializing of a socially marginalized group frequently depicted as inferior by the dominant culture, apparently incapable of not descending into violent outbursts. The film does not explore the social, economic, and other sources of violent and antisocial behavior; one simply *is* violent rather than *becomes* violent. The film's spectators may understand the underlying causes of the violence through the contextual, extra-cinematic knowledge they bring to the film. However, the film does not appear interested in exploring the socioeconomic and ideological conditions that may trigger violence and other forms of antisocial and self-destructive behavior in groups subject to systemic discrimination. Nevertheless, violence towards women is omnipresent in the film, treated as if occurring in a vacuum, outside a specific time and place. It is timeless, and it is everywhere. After Bora's wife yells at him for losing their money on gambling, he takes a small child out of her arms and brutally assaults her (while

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8   For more on the politics around the appropriations of traditional Romani music, see Silverman (2011b).

the children cry and yell out "mama"). In fact, he is seen assaulting his wife often. Tisa's own stepfather attempts to rape her, after which she flees to another woman, Lenče, for help. Lenče suggests that Tisa go to Belgrade and stay with Lenče's son, which she eventually does. Subsequently, Lenče is violently assaulted by Bora, too, when she refuses to disclose Tisa's whereabouts.

In Belgrade, Tisa discovers that, to make ends meet, she has two options: to sing or to work as a garbage collector. These two options yet again highlight the two ends of the spectrum a Roma person occupies as a member of a marginalized, racialized, and socially ostracized group: be a source of a *jouissance/merak* and a conduit of an affective catharsis for her audience on the one end (either as a *kafana* or as a street singer), or a performer of one of the socially most undesirable jobs at the bottom of the labor hierarchies (garbage collector) on the other. Disillusioned with the big city, Tisa hitches a ride back to her hometown and is subjected to sexual assault by a white truck driver. When she fights back, he brutally beats her. After his fellow traveler meekly objects to him assaulting the girl, the driver angrily retorts: "She is not a girl. She is an *animal*." To the white man, the Roma girl is nonhuman, and her being branded an animal is steeped in the anthropocentric view of animals as lesser beings than humans—a point that is further driven home when he stuffs Tisa in the back of the refrigerator truck together with the meat that he is transporting.

In her analysis of the film, Radmila Mladenova (2016) has written how the imaginary, mythical "Gypsy" becomes rendered as an authentic, ethnographic object. One can add that the film's omnipresent, brutal acts of violence enacted against the female characters by family, friends, and strangers alike problematically suggest the authenticity of representation, too, as women are cast as almost-naturalized targets towards which the male affective rage is most frequently directed. Violence appears inevitable and inescapable, as the Roma woman is in a doubly-precarious position: as a woman, and a member of the Roma population. This positioning happens precisely through the film's gritty, almost neorealist style and form, which in turn works to disguise the workings of the ideology of white privilege and the problematic casting of the white gaze onto the imaginary subjects presented as real. Furthermore, when it comes to

the Romani woman, the workings of the patriarchal ideology become an additional factor disguised through the seemingly objective, realistic directorial gaze. In the process, the patriarchy and its violence against the Romani woman become naturalized, too; the specificity of her experience emptied of socioeconomic and historical context. With these erasures, she becomes reduced to a source of liquid, excessive affect (usually of *merak*, as well as sexual pleasure, but also violent sadism) for the Roma men in her life and, in the Yugoslav context, the predominantly white audiences of the movies in which she appears.

The Time of Their Lives: The Roma's Cycle of Inevitability in Late Yugoslav Film

Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* is positioned within a similar social milieu as *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, a semi-urban area populated by the Roma, with geese and mud prominently featured. However, Kusturica's film's cultural and political context is starkly different from its predecessor's. This film—released two crucial decades after the peak of the New Yugoslav Film in the 1960s and early 1970s—was released during a fever pitch of rising ethno-nationalist fervor, in a time precariously close to the country's violent end (interestingly, for both these films, the English language titles contains the word "Gypsies" where the original Serbo-Croatian titles do not). *Time of the Gypsies* contains dialogue that is almost entirely in the Roma language, as opposed to the frequent code-switching seen in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*. While Kusturica's film can be seen as a logical follow-up to Petrović's film and its themes, it is also quite telling that in Kusturica's version, the Roma are even more isolated from the dominant society, appearing to comprise an enclosed universe unto their own. Where Petrović's film saw the Roma community exist on the sidelines, as well as interact and trade with their non-Roma counterparts, *Time of the Gypsies* depicts an almost hermeneutically sealed-off chronotope of Roma existence in late Yugoslavia that appears entirely isolated from the rest of the country or socio-historical, geopolitical situatedness. The titular "time" of the "Gypsies"

is, in fact, an existence outside a concrete time and place alike. At this point in his career, Kusturica was both a Palme d'Or winner with *Otac na službenom putu* (When Father Was Away on Business, 1985) and a Silver Lion winner for first work with *Sjećaš li se Dolly Bell?* (Do You Remember Dolly Bell?, 1981). The director was by now an established voice of world cinema and what could be described as "a Balkan auteur." It became clear that with each new film, he was increasingly addressing an audience well beyond Yugoslavia and the Balkans, and, through his growing auteur status, he started to be perceived as *speaking for* Yugoslavia and/or the Balkans to the audiences outside of the region. His decision, then, to create a hermeneutically sealed *timeless* time of the Gypsies suggested an impulse to equate the enclosed, circular logic of the Roma experience depicted in the film with the very essence of what it means to be from the Balkans, or more accurately, from late socialist Yugoslavia. Since Kusturica became an internationally renowned filmmaker—his second Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or was awarded for *Underground* (1995), while at the same festival, he won an award for Best Director for *Time of the Gypsies*—his frequent focus on the stereotypical, "magical" Roma who embodies affective excesses is received as a stand-in for the entirety of the Balkans for the filmmaker's widespread international audiences.

The Roma lives and times are depicted in *Time of the Gypsies* as a chaotic landscape of perpetually heightened, liquid affective states: from tears and laughter, music and dance, to anger, violence, and aggression, all often mixed beyond recognition. The screen is populated by excesses—affective and aesthetic—in almost every frame. Kusturica stylistically and formally eschews total immersion in gritty neorealism and permeates the film with magical realism instead. The protagonist of the film, a young man called Perhan, further solidifies the dominant cultural exoticization of the Roma quite overtly in that he appears gifted with supernatural, telekinetic powers—he can move physical objects with his mind, as well as communicate with his beloved pet turkey. He is also musically gifted, reiterating the previously mentioned stereotypical trope about the Roma as simultaneous carriers of the lowest cultural capital and supernatural, otherworldly gifts. Perhan frequently cheers up his

grandmother and ailing younger sister with his accordion. And even though Perhan is the protagonist, women are central to his life and, therefore, to the plot: his grandmother and caretaker, Khatidza is an essential force in his life and the person he inherited his supernatural gifts from (she is a healer); his deep sense of responsibility to protect his little sister, Daca, drives his character arc; his love for a young woman called Azra brings the film to its dramatic climax. There is also the crucial absence of a woman—Perhan's mother—who died shortly after giving birth to Daca. Her passing leaves an unsurmountable void at the center of the family, as Perhan's father was never a part of his life and is identified by the grandmother as "a Slovenian," someone who was not a part of the community and is, by implication, not a Roma person. When Daca leaves, accompanied by Perhan, to travel to a hospital in Ljubljana, during the trip, their mother appears to Daca as a vision in a white wedding gown, hovering above the car that is transporting the siblings. "Is she beautiful?" asks Perhan, to which Daca nods.

Perhan's telekinetic powers dovetail with the film's broader utilization of magical realism, a cinematic style that Kusturica treats as a self-evident match for representing the community that is discursively typified as always already somewhat "magical" and "mystical." In a famed dream sequence, Perhan levitates above a scene of ritualistic celebration of the rites of spring while the traditional Roma folk song "Ederlezi" plays in the background.[9] In the dream sequence, Perhan descends to the water and encounters Azra, naked from the waist up, as the camera and Perhan's gaze linger on her. For him, Azra's beauty is dreamlike transcendental, a pure object of visual pleasure, and the film itself embraces that objectifying position. Violence is always just under the surface, yet again particularly enacted upon female bodies. When Perhan and Daca get

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9   The film's soundtrack was handled by Goran Bregović, a globally popular musician known for frequently "poaching" original Romani songs and reinterpreting them, often without proper credit. For more on the ethics and politics of Bregović's musical appropriations, see Aleksandra Marković's doctoral dissertation *Sounding Stereotypes* (2013), as well as her essay "Sampling Artists: Gypsy Images in Goran Bregović's Music" (2009).

forcibly separated, and he ends up in Italy working for Ahmed, who runs a network of baby trafficking, pickpockets, and children made to work as street beggars, Perhan witnesses a gang rape of a young woman who is likely going to be forced into prostitution. Hardened by the difficult experiences, he eventually becomes the ringleader of the operation, and when he returns home with the money he made, determined to marry Azra, he discovers that she is in the advanced stages of pregnancy. The discovery sends Perhan into a tailspin of self-destruction which is yet again placed within the mythical space of *kafana* as a site of affective excess. Perhan is seen breaking objects and wildly dancing in a state of severe intoxication. *Merak*, as a fluid, liquid affective state, becomes a mixture of excessive pleasure and pain, *pleasure in pain*, just as for Bora in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*.

In the same way that Azra is an object of pleasurable *jouissance* at first, she subsequently becomes a source of abjection for Perhan, who is convinced that the child she is carrying is not his own, despite her claims to the contrary. Thus she completes the well-established cycle from Madonna to whore, first adored and then inevitably reviled. Upon marrying her, Perhan declares his intent to sell the baby once it is born so that they can "subsequently have our own," much to Azra's horror and protestation. When Azra goes into labor, still wearing her white wedding gown, her appearance visually echoes that earlier apparition of Perhan's dead mother, creating an overt visual link between the two women. That connection is sealed when Azra, after going through labor next to a passing train and being magically lifted off the ground (while the film's central musical leitmotif, "Ederlezi," dramatically returns), dies after giving birth to a boy—just like Perhan's mother died after giving birth to Daca. Azra's veil flies away into the night, just like Perhan's mother's veil. Childbirth is positioned as a site of miraculous wonder and a source of a Romani woman's untimely demise. The cycle is completed and closed—both Perhan's mother and the mother of his child die the same way; his newborn son will now face the same motherless life as Perhan faced. For the birthing women, the cycle entails the inevitable interlocking of life and death, with her death taking place almost simultaneously as she *gives* life—an annihilation between a firm boundary between

the life/death polarities, since for the Roma woman, they appear as one and the same. They become liquid affective experiences seeping into one another, impossible without one another. The closed cycle of inescapability, circular motions of time-space continuums (motifs that frequently recur in Kusturica's films) are reiterated when Perhan unexpectedly encounters his son after three years of searching for his sister, Daca—it turns out that Daca had been made to work as a street beggar and has been taking care of the boy, whose name, upon Perhan's inquiry, turns out to be: Perhan. Just like Azra had her mirror in Perhan's dead mother, the older Perhan now faces his own mirror image in the younger Perhan. As Gregg and Seigworth state in theorizing affect, "Affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*. (…) At once intimate and impersonal, affect accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between 'bodies'" (2010, 2, emphasis in the text). When Perhan encounters his son, who is simultaneously his younger and his future self, the forces of the affective encounter amount to the ultimate uncanny: meeting one's doppelgänger, as it were, one who declares to his older "self": "You will not return."

In the final act of the film, the liquid permeability between life and death is sealed when weddings reconfigure themselves into funerals: Azra dies in childbirth shortly after getting married, and upon finding his sister and son, Perhan decides to exact revenge upon Ahmed at Ahmed's wedding to a new, very young wife. Perhan uses his telekinetic powers to send a fork into Ahmed's neck amidst the jubilant wedding celebration. Subsequently, he is fatally shot by Ahmed's wife-to-be, another bride in a white wedding gown. This final bride becomes a source of Perhan's ultimate demise, as she exacts revenge on him because he prevented her marriage from taking place by killing her husband-to-be. In the film's final moments, Perhan's funeral back in the grandmother's house, with Daca and young Perhan in attendance, closes the final, seemingly unavoidable loop. We are right back where we started—a young Perhan, parentless, is about to be raised by his (great)grandmother, the cycle of inescapability unbroken and untouched.

That inescapability's de-centered yet unambiguously present subtext is the suffering of women. The violence enacted against them is not a story in itself. Instead, time and again, it is used as a plot device to propel Perhan's character arc rather than call attention to the women's stories. From mother and grandmother to sister and wife to the final bride who kills Perhan, all the women in the film seem to matter only to the extent to which they serve a role in Perhan's life rather than the other way around. This way, instead of critically illuminating the annihilating violence against Roma women, *Time of the Gypsies* treats it as an inescapable part of the necessary cycle for a male character's affective "growth," change, and, eventually, downfall. Romani women's stories of suffering under patriarchal violence are once again rendered not their own—instead, their stories are co-opted and repurposed in the service of a male character's arc. Moreover, the film audience's cathartic affective *jouissance* is brought about through the spectacle of the "inescapable," cyclical entanglements between unrestrained pleasures and pain embodied by the Roma, which positions the Roma women's suffering as both an essential ingredient of the cycle, and simultaneously not her own.

Precarity's Double Erasures after Yugoslavia

If *Time of the Gypsies* punctuated the end of the Roma's screen life in socialist Yugoslav cinema, *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* by Oscar-winning director Danis Tanović[10] can be seen as a defining cinematic text about the Roma lives and times in the age of neoliberal capitalist precarity after Yugoslavia. Long gone is any form or even hint of *merak*. It is instead replaced by the gloom and doom of crushing dispossession and existential uncertainty. The film acts as a multifold performance: a *docudrama* in which a Roma family reenacts the

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10 His 2001 film *No Man's Land* won Best Foreign Language Oscar—Bosnia and Herzegovina's first and, as of this writing, only Academy Award.

events that had previously transpired in their lives and which the director first read about in a newspaper. It is also a performance of a director's belief in his own altruism. Tanović's directorial choices betray a conviction that he is doing right by the Roma family, whose traumatic story he makes them reenact while making his film. Finally, I posit that the film is a performance of what Lauren Berlant has called cruel optimism. According to Berlant, "Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of its loss" (2006, 21, emphasis in the text). The attachment in question is here the director's and the camera's presence in the Roma family's life, suggesting to the family an engaged and sustained visibility from an Oscar winner and, once the film is completed, from the broader public. Unspoken in this dynamic is the optimistic promise that the family's woes will finally be witnessed and resolved. It is an optimism that is cruel since, indeed, it turns out to be "an attachment to a problematic object *in advance* of its loss." After the film's release, aside from the brief "fame" that the family's father enjoyed on the international festival circuit, nothing in the Roma family's life changed, and they returned to living in obscurity and abject poverty. During the making of the film, and as we watch the family on the screen in the process of participating in the film, the family does not yet know about the outcome, and therefore, they continue to attach themselves to a problematic object (a promise of positive change) in advance of its loss.

The film is also a performance of a double displacement of the Roma woman, Senada Alimanović, and her story—by the director's questionable ethics when it comes to his relationship with the film's subjects during and after filming and by the film's centering the story on her husband, Nazif Mujić. The film's sustained focus is on Nazif, even though the events that led to the newspaper reports, which initially drew the director's attention to the story, were about Senada's life-threatening pregnancy that required an abortion for which the family had no health coverage nor the financial means to pay for out of pocket. The cost, they are informed, is 980 convertible Bosnian marks, which is roughly 500 euros, a sum near-impossible to obtain for a family in such a dire socioeconomic situation. Nazif is even in the film's title—the titular "iron picker"—or

instead, he is the only person acknowledged in the title. This is an episode from *his* life, even though the drama revolves around *her* life being in danger. Once again, we see the co-optation of the Roma woman's precarity for the purpose of centering the story almost exclusively on a Roma man's struggle instead, which effectively renders her pain not her own but, rather, yet another vehicle for accentuating how and why life is hard for a man. Moreover, what is being co-opted is the story of the Roma woman's reproductive health and, by withholding her the right to a safe abortion, the story of the system's denial of proper health care coverage that would save her life. Incidentally (or perhaps not?), there is an intertextual connection here between the fictional Azra in *Time of the Gypsies*, as her story ends with her dying in childbirth, and the story of the real-life Senada in *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*, whose life hangs by a thread because her unborn baby has died in utero and Senada is denied a life-saving procedure. The precarity of the Roma woman through a frequent emphasis on her reproductive labor as somehow *inevitably* life-threatening is a trend that needs further dissecting. While there is no doubt that Roma women are burdened with many overlapping forms of discrimination and precarity, including the systemic lack of healthcare coverage, the precarity of their reproductive lives seems to be overrepresented (and ideologically overdetermined) by white male film directors in a way that eschews other forms of precarity that Roma women live through and with.

Senada's medical crisis is eventually resolved when she passes as her sister-in-law, Munevera, and uses her sister-in-law's health insurance ID card to finally get the procedure she desperately needs. However, even this touching (and risky) illustration of familial solidarity is depicted as solely Nazif's doing. He is shown contacting the family and discussing the logistics of Munevera lending Senada her health insurance card, as it is implied by the film that Senada had no active role in arriving at the resolution of this difficult situation with her own family. She seems to have no agency of her own and is framed as a figure whose dire position is an invitation to impose onto her the husband's affective states, as well as the spectator's. She becomes a mere conduit for the precariousness of others. The film's international festival life

further amplifies the centering of the story squarely on Nazif. The film's successful run at prestigious film festivals was punctuated by Nazif's growing stardom on the festival circuit, culminating in him being bestowed the Silver Bear for Best Actor at the Berlin Film Festival (the film itself was awarded the Jury Grand Prix). Ironically, Nazif was found to be the best actor while not exactly acting—instead, he and his family shared their actual precarious life with the director, the director's camera and, subsequently, with the adoring festival audiences who appear to have found said story a moving affective experience and a performance worthy of praise and awards. Subsequently, after the novelty of the film wore off and the film's festival and theatrical run ended, Nazif's newfound "fame," as well as the seeming "care" about the family's well-being that the film appeared to temporarily spearhead, proved to be fickle and quickly fizzled out, suggesting it may have been another performance—of affective solidarity and care with a limited period of empathy, solidarity, or attention. The Mujić family and the precarious position of the Roma population that their story illustrated were quickly forgotten, and the family was eventually forced to sell the Silver Bear award statue because they needed the money it was worth to make ends meet (Nazif died in 2018, at the age of 48). Additionally, the story of the specifically Romani post-socialist neoliberal precarity was taken to stand in for the post-socialist precarity more broadly. Thereby, the specificity of the Roma story vacated, not their own, but rather an affective stand-in for the post-socialist neoliberal precarity of the non-Roma majority who project themselves and their challenges into the story of the systemic lack of healthcare coverage or the financial troubles that threaten their basic livelihood. In an affective encounter with a Roma family's precarity, general audiences read themselves into the story.

The film extensively focuses on Nazif's seemingly never-ending physical labor—the iron picking that is the primary source of the family's income—while Senada's own domestic labor, which includes childcare (they have two young daughters), is used as a set-up which will lead to the reenactments of the events triggered by Senada suddenly feeling a sharp pain in her stomach. She is asked to reenact a traumatic period of her life, punctured by the loss

of her unborn child and fear for her own life. Nevertheless, her emotions and internal struggles do not appear to interest the director. Unlike the films of Želimir Žilnik, for example, where non-professional actors often play some version of themselves and are at the same time given the freedom to play out fictional storylines, Tanović here insists on a documentary, *vérite*-style reenactment veracity that gives Senada no leeway but to re-experience her trauma anew.[11] Her traumatized affective state is repurposed for the film's ethically questionable self-stylizing as a fly-on-the-wall observational documentary when in fact, it is anything but—in actuality, the director and his "camera-eye" intervene by demanding "authentic" reenactments of deeply traumatic events without the possibility for the actors to re-appropriate the script into a story that might offer them, especially Senada, more agency, even a sense of healing through the feeling of being able to control the narrative the second time around. Likewise, at no point does Tanović acknowledge his directorial presence and role in the making of the film, although his presence is, in fact, central due to its privileged gaze from outside of the precarious world of the Roma in a post-socialist, neoliberal landscape. He can leave as soon as the film is over, never to return (and he did not return), while the family stays stuck in the systemic and systematic foreclosure of options for a better life. Tanović chooses to stylize the film as an example of *direct cinema* (a tradition in documentary filmmaking that insists on a non-interventionist, fly-on-the-wall approach), as if the events we see here are transpiring for the first time, and Tanović's camera is capturing them in real-time. However, the temporal relations are far more complicated, revealing a complex web of temporary, fleeting affective investments which illustrate the workings of cruel optimism for the Roman family—a cluster of promises that were never

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11   See, for example, Žilnik's participatory docudrama work on the forceful Roma displacements in *Kenedi Goes Back Home* (2003), as well as the follow-up, *Kenedi Is Getting Married* (2007). In these films, the stories specific to the Roma population are not co-opted as stand-ins for the broader social precarity. They remain firmly rooted in their own specific, geo-political and socio-cultural contexts, and their participants are encouraged to embrace fictionalized performances of themselves.

going to be fulfilled. The cruelty lies in the fact that in the film, we watch a family that harbors hope for a better tomorrow (one which, outside the film's frames, never materializes).

In Lieu of Conclusions

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, the Roma—and Roma women, in particular—are perpetually positioned as symbolic carriers of collective affective fluidity of both existential struggle and uncertainty (precarity) and existential joy (*merak*, *jouissance*), a liquid process which on occasion invites solidarity or a fleeting alliance with the Roma, and yet typically also works to obfuscate the specificities of the systematic precarity of the Roma population's own socio-economic and racialized position as such, since that specificity is substituted with a sense of a figurative, albeit fleeting collectivity.

In the broader society, the Roma, as the subaltern, cannot speak, or perhaps can only be heard temporarily, when their experiences become translated for the dominant culture into intelligibility through, for instance, the lens of a Palme d'Or winner, or an Oscar-winning director, the latter conveyed in a *cinéma vérite* film language accessible to the non-Roma majority, one which promptly co-opts the Roma story as a metaphor for their own. As we have seen time and again, the Roma woman is here persistently rendered doubly erased—as a Roma and as a woman. Her precarity is overdetermined and always already locked inside a cycle of inevitability that deprives her of agency and depicts her as a victim of both Roma men and the broader society. Placed within this cycle of the affective economy, she is never fully human as herself but rather a conduit for the affective experiences of others—an objectified channel of affective transference and co-optation. When the Roma's struggle is presented as a trigger for the affective engagement of the director and the film's audience, it is the Roma man with whom we are primarily invited to identify and whom the directors typically position as the story's protagonist. In *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*, for instance, the Roma woman is silenced by the repositioning

of the story of her bodily and existential autonomy as a narrative arc of her husband's, as an episode in his life, as the director renders her as a body without a voice, a necessary presence whose precarity is not her own to claim, speak, or resolve. In the subsequent cultural life of a movie nominally about them, the Roma become carriers of an affective surplus which can then be poached by the dominant majority until the Roma family ultimately becomes supporting players in their own story.

We have seen the workings of such affective poaching circulate in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinema time and again, albeit each time firmly rooted in their own historical contexts: from the tectonic cultural and political shifts in the 1960s Yugoslavia, as evidenced in the so-called New Yugoslav Film/the Black Wave (*I Even Met Happy Gypsies*), to the country's late socialist period and its violent demise, which Kusturica punctuated with his "Gypsy-themed" films (next to *Time of the Gypsies*, there is also his 1998 *Black Cat, White Cat*). Currently, the workings of said affective poaching are rooted in the ongoing post-socialist neoliberal landscape of precarity, for which the Roma appear to present a very suitable affective subject whose story all too quickly becomes poached as an experience of every Yugoslav after Yugoslavia. What changes is the historical context; what stays the same is the taking for granted of an affective encounter with the most discriminated-against minority group in the region. In the current landscape of precarity, however, *merak* and *jouissance* are increasingly replaced with a growing identification of the majority group with the Roma's affective experiences of—or perhaps we should refer to it as stuckness in—the seemingly permanent states of dispossession and invisibility.

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Alternative Cinematic and Literary Histories of Yugoslavia and the "Power to Be Affected"

Tanja Petrović

This chapter discusses two recent artworks that come from the (post-)Yugoslav space and address its socialist past: the film *Houston, We Have a Problem!* by Slovenian director Žiga Virc (2016) and the novel *E baš vam hvala: Smrt bandi, sloboda Jugoslaviji* (Thanks a Lot: Death to the Gang, Freedom to Yugoslavia) by Serbian writer Marko Vidojković (2017).[1] The common aspect of these two cultural texts, which attracted significant attention and enjoyed high popularity, is that they replace the actual historical events with fictitious ones: the film provides an alternative scenario of the Yugoslav socialist past, while the novel uses fictitious events to pave the path for an alternative scenario for Yugoslavia's future. In this chapter, I take seriously the capacity of untrue events, such as those in the film's and the novel's plots, to produce real affects and mobilize political imagination. Thus, I address the following questions: How does the unrealness of the two narratives relate to the affective potential of these two cultural texts and, particularly, to the joy they offer readers and spectators? What are the political meaning and potential of this joy that results from immersing into untrue/non-factual narratives of the past? What does it tell us about post-socialist political subjectivities and conditions in which they exist?

To answer these questions, I lean on the long-lasting history of thought that recognizes the political character of affect. The claims that "our ethical

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and political projects must be formulated and conducted as the terrain of the affects" (Hardt 2015, 215) span the centuries, from Baruch Spinoza to Lauren Berlant. At the heart of these projects, as Michael Hardt argues, is the necessity to understand our power to be affected "not as a weakness, but a strength" (2015, 215). This line of thought, promulgated also by many scholars belonging to the "affective turn" in humanities—along with Hardt's insistence on the Deleuzean concept of "the power to be affected" and his understanding that the joy is "the increase of our power to think and act, and sadness is the decrease" (Hardt 2015, 219)—add a valuable perspective to the ways we can think of the political projects of our time and the role affect plays in them. "The power to be affected" resonates particularly strongly with the post-socialist condition—the same condition that provides a semantic framework for the two cultural texts I am concerned with here. As I focus on the reception and affective potential of *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, I observe them as cultural texts, following Ann Cvetkovich, who understands cultural texts "as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (2003, 7).

Houston, We Have a Problem! tells the story of a secret space program launched in socialist Yugoslavia that drew on revolutionary ideas about space travel developed by the Slovenian scientist Herman Potočnik Noordung (1892–1929). In the heyday of the Cold War, Yugoslavs sold the program to the United States, which was desperate to catch up with the Soviets in the Space Race. However, once in US hands, it was discovered soon that the program did not work. This enraged John F. Kennedy and his administration and posed serious problems for Josip Broz Tito and, indeed, for Yugoslav foreign policy in general. The film also follows the destiny of Ivan Pavić, an elderly NASA scientist of Yugoslav origin, who returns to Croatia from the United States to meet his daughter for the first time. Ostensibly, he had been forced to leave his pregnant wife in 1957 when the Yugoslav space program was sold to the Americans. Together with 25 scientists, he had been compelled to move to the United States to try and fix the expensive but non-functioning space program. Had he refused,

he would have ended up on Goli Otok, a Yugoslav camp for political prisoners. A car accident was staged on his native island of Pag so that his family would believe he had perished.[2]

Thanks a Lot tells of two parallel realities: one in which a Boeing 737 headed to Dubrovnik crashed in June of 1989, wiping out the entire cabinet and the presidents of Yugoslavia's republics, and another in which the crash did not happen. In the first reality, the multiethnic socialist country survives and prospers. In the second, it falls apart in a bloody civil war and is now a ruined post-apocalyptic place where nationalism and corruption flourish. The novel's plot takes place in 2017, in a sci-fi-like reality of the socialist Yugoslavia that survived, at a moment when the country's prosperity is jeopardized because a portal between the two realities has opened, causing their strange intertwinement. The novel's main character, Mirko Šipka, a researcher in the Federal Secretariat of the Interior Affairs' Office for Inexplicable Phenomena, is in charge of getting to the bottom of these disturbing intertwinements.[3]

Despite genre-related differences and different temporal orientations, these two artworks have much in common. They are both fictitious yet heavily draw upon the actual history of Yugoslavia, chunks of its everyday and popular culture, national mythology, and discrete experiences of living in socialism. *Houston, We Have a Problem!* is abundant with archival footage, both highly recognizable and lesser-known images from Yugoslav and world history from the second half of the 20th century, all of which are skillfully intertwined with the fantastic story of Yugoslavia being "the forgotten third player in the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union" (Kern 2016).

In *Thanks a Lot,* on the other hand, a recognizable language, references to rigid hierarchies of the party, and the atmosphere recalling the popular TV

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2   For more details about the plot of *Houston, We Have a Problem!,* see ("Houston, We Have a Problem – Yugoslav Space Program: Myth or Reality?" n.d.), ("Houston, We Have a Problem" n.d.), Kern (2016), and Mochiach (2016).

3   For more details about *Thanks a Lot*, see Miljački (2018) and Sabljaković (2017).

series *Povratak otpisanih* (The Return of the Written-Off) make the reality of the fictitious "super Yugoslavia" from the future feel very familiar to former Yugoslavs.

For both the novel and the film, articulating what was possible/imaginable in the past and what could be possible in the future must be understood within the context of the global modernist orientation toward the future that marked the second half of the 20th century. In David Scott's words, it was a period when the future was "not merely possible but imminent; not only imminent, but possible" (2014, 4). Even more importantly, it is the distinctive Yugoslav socialist modernity and its promises that define the horizons of possibility and probability in the reception of these two cultural texts. Mari Žanin Čalić emphasizes that the Yugoslav society experienced the fastest urbanization in Europe after World War II and a "deep industrial transformation of social relations" (2013, 257). Rapid urbanization and industrialization were parts of the wider modernization process aimed at collective and individual emancipation in all domains of life (see Petrović 2014; 2021) and inscribed in the country's "self-management in domestic and non-alignment in international politics" as well as the "internal internationalism" (Jakovljević 2016, 8, 178).

As Harm Rudolf Kern points out, "the history of Yugoslavia in the 1960s perfectly suits [... the] creative narrative" of *Houston, We Have a Problem!* (2016). "Yugoslavia had a unique non-aligned position between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The balancing act between East and West even had certain implications for Yugoslavia's attitude toward the Space Race. Achievements in space were omnipresent in the Yugoslav media, and the 1969 moon landing inspired a cosmic *sevdah* tribute to the Apollo 11 crew" (Kern 2016).[4] The narrative of Yugoslav excellence in science and technology is grounded in reality as well: as Mićo Tatalović and Nenad Jarić Dauenhauer

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4   Kern refers here to a jazz-style remake of the *sevdalinka* song "Mujo kuje konja po mjesecu" (Mujo is Shoeing a Horse by Moonlight/on the Moon) from 1969, performed by the popular singer Safet Isović, in which space sounds are integrated to celebrate the Apollo 11 Moon landing (Branković 2009).

wrote in *Physics Today*, "It was under socialism that Yugoslavia rose during the Cold War from poverty and insignificance to become a potent political, diplomatic, and military force. The period also saw the rise in the status of science, which Tito considered a tool for realizing his dream of worldwide socialism" (2019, 31). Several elite physics institutes were established and given significant funding. In relation to *Houston, We Have a Problem!,* Tatalović and Jarić Dauenhauer emphasize:

> Yugoslavia did have an active rocket program. Slovenian astronautics pioneer Herman Potočnik Noordung published ideas in 1928 that were ahead of his time. And Tito once reportedly asked Mike Vučelić, a Yugoslav NASA engineer who worked on the Apollo program, to bring space travel "back home." The media and scientists have since debunked most of *Houston, We Have a Problem!*, but what stood out is that it needed debunking in the first place. (2019, 31)

Readers' comments left under media articles discussing *Houston, We Have a Problem!*, confirm the perception of Yugoslavia's modernity, even when they express an awareness that a serious space program was unlikely a part of that modernity:

> *I am sure that the film will be a success because people like to believe in the progressivity of the former system. I think this space program is a made-up story, but the former state was much better in the domain of social care and welfare (health protection, education, housing).* (el CARTEL, 2016, March 4)[5]

> *We were probably quite far from a space program, but we (Yugoslavia) were producing airplanes (Orao 2) 45 years ago. Today, they would be world-class aircraft compared to these pathetic Pilatuses.* (luckyss, 2016, March 4)

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5   All translations of non-English texts are by the author.

Thanks a Lot also provides numerous references to Yugoslav modernity. It offers a window to a world that would exist had the rupture caused by the violent end of Yugoslavia, the global defeat of state-socialist projects, and dramatic changes in regimes of production not happened: Yugoslav citizens use tablets and cell phones produced by EI in Niš, Gorenje, and Obod, the main character drives a Zastava 1001, a hyper-modern sequel of Yugoslav cars produced in Kragujevac, and takes for business travel "the high-speed, ultra-modern, electro-magnetic train between Skopje and Ljubljana" by Jugoslovenske železnice (Yugoslav Railroads) (Miljački 2018, 1).

Reading Against the Grain

The two cultural texts use the strategy of adding fictional twists to known historical events and developments and may thus be read as instances of alternative, virtual, or counterfactual history (see "Virtualna istorija: Da se dogodilo drugačije," 2014). Writing alternative, counterfactual histories is a genre that has a long-lasting tradition. The post-Yugoslav space has seen some of these as well. Perhaps most notable is the book *Alternativna istorija Srbije* (Alternative History of Serbia) by two Serbian historians and public figures, Predrag Marković and Čedomir Antić. It consists of short, dialogic chapters that offer alternative histories of different periods of Serbian history, spanning from the distant past and the time of Saint Sava, the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church who lived in the 12th–13th centuries, to the far-away future of the year 2115, for which the authors dwell upon the question of how Serbian society would look at that moment (Marković and Antić 2016). This book is a representative of the so-called big (alternative) history, based on an essentialist, homogenizing understanding of nations that, as Jelena Lalatović argues, "results in the naturalization, and not demystification of armed conflicts and violence" (2016).

Historiography has traditionally been suspicious and condescending towards the narrations of counterfactual histories. As Ferguson (2014, 6) points

out, generations of historians treated counterfactual history as a mere entertaining game and diversion (see also Carr 2018). Having such an attitude of professional historians in mind, it comes as little surprise that alternative or counterfactual histories were more often a subject of literature, film, and popular culture in general.

The novelist Marko Vidojković and film director Žiga Virc did not, however, aim to provide an alternative history of socialist Yugoslavia that would feed the mythological imagination or foster affective mobilization as the art and popular culture that takes on counterfactual histories usually do, or at least that is not what they single out as the main ambition of their artworks. On the contrary—both authors took a position meant to prevent this. As Virc revealed in several interviews, he saw his film's "mission" as largely pedagogical and aiming at warning and educating the spectatorship about fake news, the fabrication of facts, and the misuse of historical images and facts and at exposing the mechanisms of manipulation of the truth engaged in by politicians and the media (see Bernik 2016; Saito 2016; Schapira 2016; Struna 2016). To do this, the director combined typical truth-telling visual techniques—such as archival material, testimonies, and visits to the abandoned facilities of the space program at the Yugoslav airbase in Željava, Croatia—with the fictional plot about the Yugoslav space program. His aim was also to critically address (the uncritical) Yugonostalgia and prevent its outburst among his film's audience. As he stated in an interview:

> When combining all these stories together, we wanted to cover all sides of the Yugoslavia regime at that time, [including] the personal stories that told what the system was doing. Ivan's story fits into that in a more symbolic way because you have a lot of people who are very nostalgic and [who think] Yugoslavia was great, everybody had jobs, social security, everything. On the other hand, there was this prison camp where you could go if you were just a little bit too much against the system, so we wanted to cover that with Ivan's story. (Virc in Saito 2016)

Similarly, Marko Vidojković was careful to add a significant dose of satire to his text and distance himself emotionally from the country his novel was reviving. In a newspaper interview, he stated:

> [Yugoslavia] was simply not capable of dealing with historical challenges. When it was supposed to transform into a democratic and civic society, it disintegrated in the bloody civil war. In addition, let us not forget that many of those who participated in the country's disintegration and readily took nationalist clothes on are still among us. Because of that, I do not nurture any Yugonostalgia and see it as Yugo-hypocrisy. (Sabljaković 2017)

Both the film and the novel emphasize the oppressive aspects of Yugoslav socialism. *Houston, We Have a Problem!* does it with the personal story of Ivan Pavić's destiny, which, by "portraying the human face of the broad-sweep decisions of politicians like Tito, who 'disappeared' many of his citizens, imbues the archival footage with real emotion, and makes an apt juxtaposition to old film of Tito living like a prince and juggling the fate of his countrymen who were, to him, pawns" (Charney 2016). In *Thanks a Lot,* modernity and technological advancement of "super" Yugoslavia are combined with "unmistakable elements of autocracy, violence, and nationalism" (Miljački 2018, 1; see also Puljarević 2022, 78).

Despite their authors' somewhat distant, disengaged, critical, pedagogical, or satirical stance, these two cultural texts have been met with immense interest and very positive reactions by their audiences in the former Yugoslav societies. *Thanks a Lot* has had several editions since it was published for the first time in Serbia in September 2017. It was simultaneously published in Croatia and was one of the country's best-selling books in the autumn of that year. The book's Slovenian translation, *Res vam hvala: Smrt bandi, svoboda Jugoslaviji* (Thanks a Lot: Death to the Gang, Freedom to Yugoslavia), was published in 2019 by the V.B.Z. publishing house. Serbian film director Srđan Dragojević wrote a scenario for TV series based on Vidojković's novel. Long before its first screening, *Houston, We Have a Problem!* attracted enormous

attention—its first trailer was seen by almost a million viewers in less than a week (Kern 2016). The film premiered in 2016 at the Tribeca Film Festival and was later screened in cinemas across former Yugoslavia and in more than 60 festivals. It was the first Slovenian film available on the Netflix platform and was nominated as the Slovenian candidate for the Oscar for Best Foreign-Language Film. It received several awards, including the Vesna Award for Best Feature Film at the 2016 Festival of Slovenian Film and the Audience Award at the Mediterranean Film Festival. While the film attracted large numbers of spectators, it also triggered some negative reactions—such as a petition to forbid "all cultural, artistic, and political venerations and glorifications of the criminal Tito and his system," among which is *Houston, We Have a Problem!*. The authors of the petition state that the film's premiere is on "the despot's birthday" and anticipate considerable media support and forging historical facts ("Proti Titu in Titovi kulturi" 2016). Negative comments also frequently appeared under media texts dedicated to this movie. Here are some exemplary ones:

> *I have not seen the movie and do not intend to see it. It is for failed Yugonostalgics, who nurture abnormal narcissism and like imagining that Yugoslavia used to matter on the world map while ignoring everything related to bankruptcy and the company of the "non-aligned," a.k.a. the most backward societies [...] It is for losers, and today, it is modern to revive yugonostalgia and thus extract money ... Sad.* (Kingstone, 2017, April 20)

> *I would not criticize the film before I see it, but I am afraid it is yet another stupid and more or less concealed advertisement of the previous regime and Yugonostalgia successfully propagated by the lefties [...].* (Slovenec5, 2016, May 5)

As these comments illustrate, both positive and negative reactions to the film and the novel point to their potential to produce affect and emotional mobilization, even though they are based on fictitious events.

Yugoslav popular culture has long been understood as the most propulsive generator of nostalgic sentiments among former Yugoslavs. This Yugo-nostalgia is usually seen as superficial, non-reflected, and a politically unproductive escape to an idealized past (Scribner 2003, Dimitrijević 2017). While categories of the real, the true, and the factual have mobilizing power and an important role in the debates over the nature of socialism, these categories do not apply to the two cultural texts I discuss here because these texts are overtly based on fake, imagined, and fictitious events. As we can see above, this fact did not diminish their affective capacity nor prevent their attachment to the familiar category of Yugo-nostalgia.

The affective capacity of *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, despite their clearly counterfactual foundations and their authors' critical stance towards Yugoslav socialism, points to the uncontrolled—and uncontrollable— elements inherent to each cultural text. Walter Benjamin referred to such elements in historiographic texts and historical testimonies as reading against the grain—"against the intentions of the person or persons producing them," as Ginzburg put it (2012, 4). Carlo Ginzburg further points out that the same is true for "literary texts that strive to present an autonomous reality" (2012, 4) and, we may add, any artistic narrative that presents a reality, being it true or untrue.

The Untrue and the Real

The obvious discrepancy between the historical facts and the histories told in *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot* should have made these two cultural texts clearly detached from the historical, generational, and personal experiences of socialism in Yugoslavia—something that did not/could not happen cannot be bound to reality and causality but to their opposites. As such, it is a product of the imagination outside historical time and its laws and often comes in shapes of a futurist techno-utopia, paranormal phenomena, or even conspiracy theories. The main protagonist of *Thanks a Lot*, Mirko Šipka, resembles Fox Mulder from *The X-Files* (Miljački 2018), while conspiracy theories

and references to them feature prominently in *Houston, We Have a Problem!*. As Harm Rudolf Kern describes,

> The conspiracy is so classic that the movie even explains how Kennedy was assassinated by the Yugoslav secret service. After the sale of the non-functioning Yugoslav space program, relations between Tito and Kennedy deteriorate. Tito visits Washington to smoothen things out but is almost assassinated. In a follow-up phone call, Tito invites the US president to visit Yugoslavia. This invitation was in vain since the attempt on Kennedy's life only one month later did succeed. When historian Roger McMillan, the main narrator in *Houston, We Have a Problem!,* is asked about the connection between these events, he answers with a grin, an uncomfortable silence, and a suggestive "no comment." (2016)

In the perception of these two cultural texts, the categories of the *true* and the *untrue* do not correspond with the categories of the *real* and the *unreal*. Slavoj Žižek, who makes a star appearance in *Houston, We Have a Problem!*, says at the film's end: "Even if it didn't happen, it's true" (see Mochiach 2016; Kern 2016). This discrepancy can easily be subscribed to the spectators' inability to distinguish between the fake and the truth, their taking the fiction for history, and their propensity for conspiracy theories. These qualifications politically translate to the tropes of irrationality and naivety of the post-social subjects (see Dimitrijević 2017) but such interpretation would be too narrow and inaccurate. There are at least two important reasons for that.

First, several instances suggest that in our socio-political present, the non-factual often captures reality better and *truer* than what claims to be objective and true. Think, for example, of the notable spate of comedian–politicians and carnivalesque political parties that have experienced unexpected and remarkable success during the last decade (see Molé 2013; Klumbytė 2014; Petrović 2018) or of the parodic, alternative news outlets that mushroomed all around the globe during the last decade, which citizens treat as a truer, more sincere, and more serious source of information than mainstream, corporate

media (see Kavaliauskaitė 2009; Haugerud et al. 2012; Petrović 2015). Because of this quality of alternative news outlets, Baym (2005) argues that "oppositional" would be a more appropriate name than "fake" for such news.[6] Similarly, in her essay on *Houston, We Have a Problem!*, Iva Kosmos (2016) writes about the complex and not necessarily mutually exclusive relationship between history and counterfactuality. She argues for opening history to stories that are not necessarily based on the factual and, through that, for rehabilitating the notion of alternative history, usually dismissed as untrue and not based on facts. She points out, "Despite the decision to reject the quest for the truth, *Houston, We Have a Problem!* is not as far away from history as it may seem." She refers to British historian Alun Munslow, who "points to the difference between the past and history—the past is everything that happened before the current moment, while history is a story, a narrative about that past. The mistake of the traditional historiographical discourse is that it equates the past and history. The past is not accessible; all we have are stories about it" (in Kosmos 2016). According to Kosmos, Žiga Virc takes archival material, interprets it, and creates a story about the past: "Although he clearly says that it is not (about) the truth, what he does is not so radically different from what historians do" (2016). Kosmos's views on the work of historians resonate with the insights of one of the finest historians of our time, Carlo Ginzburg. He is critical of "the tendency of postmodern skepticism to blur the borders between fictional and historical narrations" but "in the name of constructive element they share," he proposes "a view of the relation between the two as a competition for the representation of reality" (2012, 2). This competition, Ginzburg stresses, is "a conflict made of challenges and reciprocal, hybrid borrowings" (2012, 2).

Second, the realness of the two cultural texts I deal with in this chapter is defined less through the categories of the cognitive and factual and more through the category of the affective. It is not that readers and spectators are unable to

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6   This is even truer when we have in mind the totally new meanings that fake news acquired during the 2016 US presidential election campaign and during its aftermath. They pose another good reason to think of an alternative name for parodies of the news.

differentiate the fake from the truth and understand the hoax, but separating the truth from the fiction is not their primary concern. Taking the untruthfulness of the film's and the novel's narratives as an unquestionable fact, the viewer and the reader may allow succumbing to joy in seeing, listening, reading, and imagining what they know from their past and what could be possible histories, or futures, of Yugoslavia. That is how many spectators approached *Houston, We Have a Problem!*. Their comments reveal that the untruthfulness of its basic plot is by no means an obstacle for enjoying it and engaging, emotionally and intellectually, with the ideas and imagery it offers: *The film is, of course, totally made-up, but it is nevertheless so interesting that it must be seen in one breath* (Hallenbeck, 2017, July 12); *I saw the film, and it is really excellent. A story that makes you think. Although it is fiction* (malikaliber, 2017, July 12).

The Politics of Joy

An entire cultural industry provides the former Yugoslavs with media for expressing and nurturing their emotional relationship with the past. Songs, films, and products from the Yugoslav times are consumed, circulated, and refashioned; many new ones are produced to feed consumers' emotions for the past, usually referred to as (Yugo)nostalgia—a recipe promising good sales and profit generation.[7] As already pointed out, the authors of *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, were careful to distance their narratives from Yugonostalgia. Despite that, nostalgia is frequently mentioned in media texts discussing these works: Slovenian journalist Vesna Milek wrote that Virc's film could "lead to feeling such a strong Yugonostalgia that one feels a bit embarrassed" (2016). Vidojković's book was characterized in the media as bringing "a new type of Yugonostalgia" and "uniting Yugoslav readers" (Sabljaković 2017).

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7   For a discussion about the potential of music to shed a new light on memory politics and practices in the post-Yugoslav context, see Hofman (2015b) and the special issue of *Southeastern Europe* 2015 (Hofman 2015a).

Yugonostalgia is typically understood as a positive emotional expression of one's private, intimate, and personal attachment to the past.[8] In most interviews related to *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, their authors talk about their childhood memories when addressing the issue of Yugonostalgia. Moreover, (the lack of) personal memories serve as an argument for neglecting Yugonostalgia as a driving force behind these cultural texts:

> Žiga Virc, of course, does not remember Tito's death. He was four when Yugoslavia disintegrated. No symbol of that country remained in his memory, neither a red scarf nor songs. All he remembers is a siren sound and running into the shelter during the ten-day war. He remembers that and the terrified look of the Territorial defense member, who was with him in the shelter, very well. As he ironically states, these are the only imprints of real Yugonostalgia that remained in his childhood memories as a four-year-old boy. (Milek 2016)

Vidojković, on the other hand, describes his childhood as a source of affection for Yugoslavia, simultaneously maintaining the view that this country was deeply wrong and troubled, which is proven by how it disintegrated.

> My childhood was the nicest part of my life; I spent it in a country for little kids. Everything was idyllic. Adults hid from us that something was wrong, the school properly educated us, everything was as it was supposed to be, the music was great, movies and sports were as well, the army was strong, and everything was cool. However, in 1989, when I started masturbating and when my childhood ended, Yugoslavia started falling apart. This made my childhood memories even nicer. (Vidojković in Borković 2018)

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8   For discussions of the meanings and potentials of nostalgia in the aftermath of socialism and Yugoslavia, see Kojanic (2015), Petrović (2010a; 2010b; 2014; 2016), Slavković and Đorgović (2017), and Velikonja (2008).

In another interview, Vidojković said he has "very warm feelings for his own child-hood, and it would be nice if childhood had evolved into a nice socialist youth and then into a socialist middle age, but it did not happen" (Sabljaković 2017).

Despite their authors' insistence on personal memories in describing their feelings for Yugoslavia, these two cultural texts offer a different script for emotional engagement—the one that points to the public and the collective agency and political imagination and thus cannot be reduced to typical tropes of longing from the time of one's youth or having positive memories of one's childhood. They address collective dreams through recognizable mythologized narratives of the nation's greatness, victories and successes. Žiga Virc hints at the collective dream of "being something in the world" in an interview, empha-sizing that

> Yugoslavia has always had this weird, special position in a way in the minds of people here, this position of being a global player at that time because when Yugoslavia fell apart, all the republics became just classical normal countries. [...] I think that's why people are so nostalgic about it. It could be just the propaganda that made it appear bigger, but certainly, Nixon came to Yugoslavia to discuss his thoughts on the relationship between South-east Asia with Tito, or the Gulf countries at that time. Tito was Christ to everybody. One day he would go to North Korea, the next day he went to visit Poland. (Saito 2016)

The fateful plane crash in 1989 that alters the direction of history in *Thanks a Lot* is what enables a collective imagination of a different future. As Ana Mil-jački writes,

> By eliminating the cabinet's greedy political ambitions and jockeying for power in the aftermath of Tito's death—which was historically followed by a dervish dance of comparatively merely life-size presidents rotating in from each of Yugoslavia's six republics—Vidojković's plane crash also in-vites readers to imagine the world cleared of the effects of some of the key

voices that historically fueled nationalisms from the highest governmental stages. (2018, 3)

This possibility to imagine the lost future as an alternative to the post-socialist present results in the joy the former Yugoslavs could immerse in through the immediate engagement with the film and the novel. This joy could emerge because of the non-factuality of the two narratives, as they could enjoy them unrestricted by the constraints usually imposed on them when expressing their emotional relationship with the socialist past. The non-factuality made them exempt from justifying their attachment to that history and allowed them to enjoy consuming it without engaging in a dialogue with hegemonic, normative, and often revisionist dominant interpretations of Yugoslavia's history in the public discourse of former Yugoslav societies, overshadowed by the country's disastrous end and by the global defeat of the political project of state socialism; they are also liberated from the self-justification and self-censorship such engagement usually implies.[9]

In line with prevalent negative assessments of Yugonostalgia, some researchers are prone to see this avoidance of confrontation with dominant interpretations of Yugoslav history as problematic and unproductive. For example, Maja Breznik and Rastko Močnik understand it as "shifting away from official interpretations without challenging it" (2022, 1062). There are, however, two aspects of the joy produced by the engagement with alternative histories of Yugoslavia that reveal joy as politically potent and relevant affective engagement that actually challenges the givenness of the post-socialist aftermath. The first aspect is closely related to the complicated relationship between the true and the real that I discussed earlier; the other concerns the political potential of joy and generally affective engagement with the possibility of a different end of the Yugoslav socialist project.

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9   As I have written in my previous works, attempts to approach the Yugoslav socialist past positively (or even neutrally) in the public sphere are almost always followed by a rejection of Yugo-nostalgia and a self-defensive introductory phrase "I am/we are not nostalgic…" (Petrović 2013).

Countering the Normative Gaze

The possibility of leaving the dichotomy of truthful vs. fake outside the picture offered by *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot* enabled former Yugoslavs not to shy away from the dominant narratives of the past but to actively oppose the normative, hegemonic regimes of remembering and legitimation. Enjoying alternative histories of socialist Yugoslavia as *possible* and *real*, they point to the necessity to open a space for the diversification of (hi)stories of Yugoslavia (see Petrović 2016), a space situated outside the teleological understanding of history (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2017), which in the case of socialist Yugoslavia (and state socialism in general) inevitably led to the end, defeat and demise and consequent "normalization" of European socialist societies, or they "come back home" to Europe, which is the metaphor frequently encountered in political discourses. With the global defeat of the state socialist projects, the "western myth of the inevitability of the victory over monolithic and oppressive communism" prevailed (Almond 2014, 113). One of the comments under a text about *Houston, We Have a Problem!* points to the mechanisms of erasure that enable this victorious narrative: *Whatever is true, it is apparent that mocking YU technology and economic power becomes stronger with the passage of time. In a hundred years, when there will be no live witnesses left, the common belief will be that there was no electricity in Yugoslavia and, of course, no planes. Everybody will happily "applaud the new world" in their blissful ignorance* (1984, 2016, March 4).

In the Yugoslav context, strongly marked by disastrous ethnic conflicts in which the country fell apart, the Yugoslav socialist past is not to be seen in any other way than as a prelude to the conflicts in the 1990s. In contrast, the present is seen exclusively as their aftermath. In the case of postcolonial societies, Nancy Rose Hunt identifies the same epistemic narrowing that catches these societies in the event-aftermath straightjacket (2016, 5). This narrow, reductionist gaze defines how the past can be viewed and regulates what is possible and acceptable in the present.

Insisting on factuality and truthfulness is not the way to challenge or alter such a normative and reductionist gaze. It became particularly apparent

in the reactions to *Houston, We Have a Problem!* of those commentators and reviewers who, differently from the majority of former Yugoslavs, took the dichotomy between the true and the fake as the most important one. Their quest to resolve the question of whether "Communist Yugoslavia Played a Secret Role in Putting a Man On The Moon" (Taylor 2012; Charney 2016) usually resorts to the classical Cold-War imagery of Yugoslavia (and socialist societies in general) as being under totalitarian rule and unable to produce anything that would compete with the West or have any significant role in the global arena. As a viewer of the film's trailer wrote, "In 1961, Yugoslavia could not even produce a decent harvest" (Solash 2012); another internet commentator similarly pointed out that *Yugoslavs did not even have enough money for coffee and bananas* (ViskokTlak, 2016, May 5). Noah Charney, "an American historian living in former Yugoslavia" (as he describes himself in the text), similarly asserted

> Yugoslavia never had the cash to really invest heavily into research, as much as the country's longtime dictator Josip Broz Tito might have liked to outdo his Soviet arch-rival, Joseph Stalin. Yugoslavia struggled to sustain itself at all, and could have been considered a third-world country during the early days of the space race, relying heavily on loans from foreign powers, including the US. The idea that Yugoslavia could launch a space mission, when the country could barely feed its citizens, was pie-in-the-sky to begin with. (2016)

Such discourses on Yugoslavia as economically inefficient and incapable and a politically insignificant country led by a dictator expose the emotional attitudes towards the Yugoslav past as a sign of political immaturity, proof of dangerous, atavistic cultural attachments, false consciousness, and malady—strongly resonating with dominant readings of post-socialist nostalgia in general (see Gille 2010, 283; Todorova 2010, 2; Nadkarny and Shevchenko 2014, 63).

Conclusion: The Power to Be Affected

Within the post-socialist context of the former Yugoslav societies, emotional attachments to the socialist past are also predominantly interpreted through these familiar registers of melancholia and nostalgia and are seen as politically unproductive and blocking any possibility for post-socialist subjects' agency. Branislav Dimitrijević describes the nostalgic post-socialist subject as longing "for the never-happened." But this "never-happened," writes Dimitrijević, "is not structured as some imagined future that is still-never-happened, but as an actual never-happening. This is why this subject is ideal for the current ideological conjuncture as s/he is neither the subject who remembers the past nor the subject who imagines the future" (Dimitrijević 2017, 39).

Contrary to Dimitrijević's assertion, as we could see in the case of the reception of *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, the "never-happening" can be constitutive of nostalgia and affective engagement also in situations in which these feelings do not result from post-socialist subjects' naivety, ideological blindness, or inability to separate the truth from the fake. Such views on post-socialist subjects, moreover, ignore not only the long-lasting history of thought about the political power of being affected Michael Hardt writes about (2015) but also the fact that this current ideological conjuncture overtly denies the post-socialist subjects the power to be affected and empowered, by their own socialist past, and more specifically by the most politically relevant aspects of that past, such as modernization, vertical mobility, the available education, healthcare, and social security. The consequence of this denial, as Boris Buden points out, is that the "social contradictions of post-communism, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the dismantling of all forms of social solidarity, enormous social injustices and widespread suffering—they all remain affectively unoccupied [...] This social anesthesia is one of the most salient symptoms of post-communist transformation" (2012, 78).

Through the joy that results from immersing in the narratives about the past that never happened and the future that will not be happening but are nevertheless real in *Houston, We Have a Problem!* and *Thanks a Lot*, former

Yugoslavs recall—and are able to feel—the power to be affected by the promises of the collective socialist project. This joy offers them the agency to oppose the givenness of the current ideological conjuncture since enjoying an alternative past and future makes it possible to sense that a different present could also be possible.

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The Noise Dissolves at the Border:

Affect and Mobilities in *Gastarbajteri* Buses

Mišo Kapetanović

Introduction

We were preparing to board a bus from Zurich to Croatia one evening in early spring 2021. I had previously left my luggage and occupied a seat before enjoying a final cigarette and a conversation with other smokers. The group was worried about the most recent set of COVID-19 restrictions and differences in the lockdown regimes and the numbers of those infected between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. The Zurich bus station is a simple parking lot near the central train station that serves as the departure point for various bus companies, including those heading to the Western Balkans. During our conversation, we were interrupted by a woman in distress, struggling with an overstuffed, duck-taped shopping trolley bag. She sought help from the drivers to transport her bag to Eastern Croatia without her, explaining that she had accidentally chosen the bus to Bosnia, which had no room for her luggage. Initially, the drivers refused, but they relented after she offered to pay the fee and established herself as a regular passenger claiming it was simply a coincidence that she chose the bus that goes to Bosnia. Her problem was that the Bosnians[1] took too many deliveries not leaving enough room for bags of the regular passengers. The situation was resolved with an exchange of contact information and instructions for tracking the arrival. From the outside, this situation could appear unusual. How can passengers of a bus bound for

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1   In this text, the term "Bosnians" refers to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while "Bosniaks" denote the South Slavic ethnic group that makes up one of the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with members also residing in Croatia, Serbia, and beyond. Similarly, "Croats" and "Serbs" refer to the other two constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other post-Yugoslav countries. In contrast, "Croatians" and "Serbians" are used to describe the citizens of Croatia and Serbia, respectively.

one country simply walk over to a bus heading to another and use it to transport their luggage? In the world of post-Yugoslav *gastarbajteri* buses, this was a common occurrence. After the matter was settled, the woman revealed that she was from a town in Northern Bosnia near a town in Eastern Croatia where this line runs. The drivers jokingly commented that it was not a coincidence that the Bosnian bus charges less, even though, in my experience, the difference was not that significant (around 100 CHF in both cases). This was not an isolated incident; similar situations had occurred on other trips to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia.

This chapter delves into the rhythms and dynamics (Lefebvre 2013) of the sensory environment experienced on *gastarbajteri* buses operating between Switzerland and Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. As social spaces, buses are sites of old friends' encounters, new acquaintanceships, long-held grudges, flirting, debates, singing, and a general good time mixed with sadness about split lives, border-crossing anxiety, the tension due to omnipresent small-scale smuggling, insecurity about the future, and the hope that migration will make sense in the long run. By examining the intersection of the affective turn and the mobilities paradigm in post-Yugoslav studies, this chapter aims to explore how space and affect correlate on these buses. Furthermore, it investigates the labor geographies (Herod 2001) of *gastarbajteri*[2] and the ways they evolve as individuals traverse different locations.

In exploring these dynamics, the chapter departs from another place that constituted Yugoslav affect, *kafana* (van de Port 1998; Hofman 2010, 143), or in its Western Yugoslav iteration, *birtija* (Opačić 2005, 19), and uses it to

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2   The term *Gastarbeiter* (German for "guest worker"), initially coined in the 1950s, has been abandoned in German due to its association with racist politics. In Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS), the term was adopted, albeit not without hegemonic implications, and is used to identify the demographics and culture associated with labor migration. For more on racialization and the choice to use the BCS term instead of the German term, see Kapetanović (2022, 87). I refer to BCS as a polycentric language based on the Shtokavian dialect of South Slavic; however, in instances where my sources use specific standards, I refer to the language as Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, or Serbian only.

understand buses as a transitory space with similar qualities but different setting. Since the mid-1980s, small bus companies have been transporting labor migrants, *gastarbajteri* (Le Normand 2016, 50–69) between the (post-)Yugoslav region and Western Europe. Buses remain essential for the cross-border labor movement because they easily adjusted to changes in regional politics and fragmenting European transport regimes in the 1990s. Initially founded by local municipalities in the 1980s, these bus companies were privatized during and after the Yugoslav wars (1991–2001) and today are family-owned businesses. They continue serving local communities with capillary routes that reach smaller towns and rural areas. Long-time and recent migrants alike rely on these affordable and convenient buses for transportation between sending and receiving communities, although the latter insist on viewing them as temporary solutions before acquiring their own cars or using air travel. Because conventional buses lack the ticket classes found on airlines and trains, they are inexpensive and democratically uncomfortable. Those who ride buses are more likely to be working class, rural, and informal passengers navigating social systems from marginal positions. Even though some of these companies serve tourist destinations such as the Croatian coast or post-Yugoslav capitals, non-migrants and migrants from other regions seldom use them.

Examining the affective regimes in labor migrant buses helps to bridge the gap between identities and social practices in communities that transcend the nation-state. Building on Mankekar and Gupta's study (2016) of affective regimes in call centers, I define them as systems of relationships and intensities shaped by the space, labor practices, or economic exchanges that give rise to specific behaviors, attitudes, and performances. Through this lens, I aim to provide a fresh conceptualization of post-Yugoslav social life. Here I offer the concept of an "accidental Yugosphere," drawing inspiration from Tim Judah's term (2009), but reframing it beyond the complex and contradictory grid of identity politics and its attributed blind allies of shared politics, history, identities, or language. The chapter contrasts these debates by looking into the daily realities that labor migrants face when attempting to connect their places of origin and settlement. I do so by exploring the questions of senses, emotions, and affect

within the buses to develop a notion of post-Yugoslav commonality as shared collectivity or practice.

The fieldwork research comprised eleven return bus journeys from January to September 2021, with individual legs of the bus trips taking from 13 to 27 hours to complete.[3] Each trip began in either a country of settlement or origin and excluded regular bus stops in intermediate countries, except for rest stops at gas stations. During fieldwork, I engaged in unobtrusive behavior, interacting with passengers, staff members, border police, and service personnel at the rest stops, only when invited. To maintain a low profile, data collection consisted solely of textual, ethnographic notes recorded in a messenger app on my phone (Instagram). These notes encompassed personal observations, experiences, and comments from other bus passengers addressed to the entire bus or myself, without collecting any personal data (three connected data or more in accordance with the GDPR[4] pseudonymization/anonymization rules[5]). For example, when interacting with individual passengers or drivers, I documented the dialogue without gathering personal information to protect their identities. While I did not immediately advertise my research, I maintained transparency about my role if someone inquired about my presence on the bus or my occupation.

The original research primarily focused on buses as sensory environments and affective regimes as a means of building post-Yugoslav connections. Nonetheless, close contact with human subjects in such settings inevitably involves

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3   Research Project "The Politics of Migration and Identity in an Era of Rising Mobilities – Post-Yugoslav Communities in Switzerland" supported by the Basic Research Fund (GFF) at the University of St. Gallen, implemented from September 2019 to March 2022.

4   General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)—EU Regulation 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC.

5   As defined in Article 4 of the GDPR, no more than three data were recorded in interaction with one person. Data most usually recorded included locations. In cases where other data were recorded (age, sex, or proclaimed ethnic identity), locations (toponyms) were immediately changed to regions to illustrate the movement yet retain anonymity.

some form of testimony involving personal stories and traumas.[6] In these cases, I remained highly conscious of my co-passengers' personal data protection and ability to give consent, anonymizing any potential personal information by automatically changing toponyms and names.

An exception was made for a passenger from Srebrenica, as striking a balance between privacy protection and acknowledging and remembering the genocide felt necessary. In this instance, I altered the majority of other data related to the specific interlocutor to protect their privacy. While modifying other data, I endeavored to maintain similarities with related or relevant data (professions, toponyms, experiences), but this remains subjective. As such, readers should interpret this chapter as an account of personal experiences rather than an exercise in positivist science.

As I originate from Bosanski Novi/Novi Grad, a border town in northwest Bosnia with a high migration rate to German-speaking countries, blending into a labor migrant bus was not unusual for me. Throughout my childhood, I accompanied my mother on bus trips to Serbia to obtain merchandise (textiles, toys, and gas) that she resold at our local market. My younger brother works as a caregiver in Düsseldorf, and during our early years, we both exclusively traveled by bus to Austria and Germany. In addition, most of my elementary and secondary school classmates now reside in Germany and Switzerland. Although I did not find the extent of journeys and small-scale smuggling unusual and my identities remain relational and fluid, my privileges have not disappeared

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6   The concept of testimony I am referring to here is a specific practice and methodology developed by Noa Treister through the project "Testimony – Truth or Politics: The Concept of Testimony in the Commemoration of the Yugoslav Wars," implemented by the Center for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade (2017–2018). Drawing on the methodology introduced by Sylvain Lazarus, Treister uses testimony (involving forgotten war veterans, factory workers, labor migrants, and minorities, as several days long, in-depth interviews and continuous relationships with her subjects spanning from the 2000s to today) to reveal the stories of those who were unwilling to justify the positions of the post-war and post-socialist regimes. These individuals were silenced through direct political repression and through systematic erasure of the frame of reference connecting these testimonies to the reality they purport to represent. Methodology and more information are available at the project website (https://svedocanstvo-imenovatitoratom.org).

during this experience. While I felt like an insider on the buses, I recognized that this mode of transportation was a choice for me but a necessity for my fellow passengers. This difference in our positions highlights why, despite feeling close to these individuals and sharing a working-class background, I see the privilege of the middle-class salariat I inhabit as distancing me from claiming the label of a labor migrant.

Gastarbajteri Buses as a System: A Theoretical Framework

The *gastarbajteri* buses are practically transnational spaces, connecting developed regions of the European Economic Core (Hospers 2003; Netrdová and Nosek 2016) with sending communities in the former Yugoslav space, yet they remain unapologetically liminal and provincial. Regular commutes overflow with sensory experiences, such as quiet or loud conversations between acquaintances and strangers, confessions, jokes, small talk, blaring music, videos playing on mobile phones and tablets, smells of food, perfume, body odor, physical contacts and its avoidance, irritation, happiness, boredom, sadness, and ignoring. These spaces allow migrants from different ethnicities and regional backgrounds to engage with each other as a means to pass the time on the bus, traversing serious and mundane topics such as life in their home communities and Switzerland, work, seasons, the past, and politics. The ephemerality of the space provides an illusion of freedom, while the physical proximity of familiar Others facilitates interactions among post-Yugoslavs.

Compared to the general demographics of migrants living in Switzerland, bus passengers tend to be less socially mobile, belong to lower social classes, have lower levels of education, and hold lower-paying jobs. The age dynamics and incomplete family networks reflect these demographics. Although bus users' years of age vary greatly, there is a clear distinction between middle-aged and older passengers who see buses as a convenient mode of transportation and those in their twenties who view it as a necessary evil while striving for more

ambitious jobs. Older passengers, whose children live in Switzerland, reported that their children have had transitioned to other modes of transportation and were no longer interested in taking buses. Meanwhile, younger passengers are almost exclusively first-generation migrants with limited experience traveling between Switzerland and the Balkans.

Debates on the post-Yugoslav connections regularly focus on issues relevant to top-down analyses of past and present social realities, such as relationships between states and their respective societies (Jović 2009; Bieber et al. 2014). These discussions also bring up the gridlocks of identity politics (Bieber 2015; Štiks 2015a), language (Greenberg 2008; Bugarski 2012), and the revalorization of Yugoslav heritage (Mrduljaš and Kulić 2012; Petrović 2013), among other topics. However, in the aftermath of the traumatic dissolution of the joint state and subsequent disappointing realities, the region's working-class and working-class cultures have remained hidden in their interactions with other parts of society, adapting to fit general post-Yugoslav and post-socialist paradigms. Post-Yugoslav labor migrants exemplify this issue. Originating predominantly from underdeveloped rural areas of Yugoslavia, these migrants began settling in industrial centers across Western and Northern Europe from 1960 onwards. This migration served as a compromise between addressing Yugoslav unemployment concerns and meeting Western labor demands.[7] Over the course of more than 50 years and with several generations now residing in host countries, these groups have significantly improved their social standing and economic circumstances (Bernard 2019). As the Yugoslav state disintegrated, so too did the labor migrants' sense of community and belonging. Alliances shifted from the federal level to now nation-states, with migrants seeking respect by emphasizing their support for their respective nations. Despite the enhanced social position and growing economic power of the labor migrants in their host countries, they still face relatively low cultural capital in their countries and communities of origin.

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7   On Yugoslav labor migration, see Vladimir Ivanović (2012) and Brigitte Le Normand (2021).

As a result, labor migrants present a fitting case for examining working classes and working-class culture, both of which have been underexplored in the (post-)Yugoslav context. Working classes in Yugoslav history were defined by participation in the economy through labor and the inability to utilize state resources (Archer et al. 2016; Petrović and Hofman 2017). In contrast, socialist Yugoslav society viewed the working classes as both a revolutionary subject and an object of modernization (Musić 2021; Dobrivojević Tomić 2022). This distinction is crucial when comparing the working classes of Yugoslavia to those in Western Europe, particularly postwar Britain's working class (Hoggart and Williams 1960; Hebdige 2012; Thompson 2013).[8] Despite differences in political affiliation, similarities in working-class culture still exist, operating within comparable frameworks, such as mass consumerism of low-privilege cultural forms, and rural-urban social sentiments.

In contrast to the working classes themselves, Yugoslav working-class culture was much more similar to British definitions, characterized by iconic language, low privilege, and mass entertainment. A striking example of class difference in Yugoslav socialism was epitomized by popular music (Petrović and Hofman 2017, 71–72). Treating the working class as a process rather than a structure (Thompson 2013) necessitates maintaining an awareness of working-class culture, regardless of one's approach to the class itself.

By exploring the post-Yugoslav affective regimes within its mobile, yet marginalized demographics of labor migrants, this chapter challenges potential biases stemming from the class position of researchers and the research in understanding new post-Yugoslav realities. The chapter operates with the assumption of working-class culture as an autonomous cultural framework, characterized by a specific technology and typology of language, favoring orality over written language (Ong 2012) and iconic over symbolic signification. This

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8   Working class bias in post-Yugoslav societies and social sciences was already explored in regional social studies, including several contributors of this volume. For example, Goran Musić demonstrates how in early post-socialist Serbia, working classes were coopted by the ruling nationalistic elites of Slobodan Milošević and directed against the outside enemies (2021).

specificity implies that when they speak BCS to each other, the individuals who use buses and those who travel by planes do not speak the same language.

The focus on mobilities, such as transportation systems and regiments for the movement of people, information, and goods (Sheller and Urry 2006), aids in understanding this distinction by exposing practices and growing disparities between those who choose when and how to move, those who must move to survive (the subject of this chapter), and those who remain mobile only through their electronic devices (Sheller 2018). In *gastarbajteri* buses, bodies congregate in movement and constitute a specific affect, which I refer to as the accidental Yugosphere. Drawing on Tim Judah's definition, I move beyond the Yugosphere as a rapprochement between the post-Yugoslav states, political and other elites, and the essentially growing integration of free markets, to see the accidental Yugosphere as a specific post-Yugoslav form of commonality without communality. The post-Yugoslav commonality is connected to shared expectations or disappointments arising from the realities of unfulfilled promises of security and economic distribution within the context of nation-states' independence and post-socialist transition, which results in asymmetric benefits. It is a feeling that people from the region have something in common, akin to previously mentioned history, languages, or cultural intimacy. In contrast to Judah's concept, this commonality continued developing even after the clashes between nationalist governments following the political turn to the right in Croatia and Serbia during the 2010s. On the other hand, the term "communality" encompasses shared identity politics, claims to a joint future, political projects, and a joint state—essentially the elements that differentiate Yugoslavia from the Yugosphere. In a sense, communality brings together those aspects of social and political life that formed a political community. While Yugoslavia embodied both commonality and communality for its citizens, the Yugosphere only entails commonality.

The absence of communality is underscored by the uncertainty in naming the region. Following the dissolution of the joint state, the prefix Yugo- struggles to find an appropriate suffix and is habitually replaced with euphemisms such as Balkan, the region (BCS: *regija*, *region*), or the vague but safe term

"ours" (BCS: *naš*). Nonetheless, the lexical element "Yugo" (BCS: *Jugo*) continues to function in the oral language used among post-Yugoslav migrants, albeit infrequently and occasionally as a slur by the majority population. The accidental Yugosphere, therefore, is not necessarily connected to Yugoslavia or Yugonostalgia. It exists in the space between identities reshaped by nation-states and practices that transcend them. This is most evident among labor migrants, who have primarily constituted the core passengers on these buses for the last 40 years. Labor migrants from various post-Yugoslav communities share spaces, expectations, and affective regimes in the industrial centers of their host countries, despite being accused of hatred and extreme nationalism in the media. In this sense, I see the accidental Yugosphere as a framework of commonality that does not require communality.

The Drive and Perceptive Systems

On the bus, one becomes acutely aware of their physical presence rather quickly. The modest seat size and the restricted space between them create congestion in the shared area. This congestion serves as both an inconvenience and a catalyst for interaction, as passengers engage with one another to compensate for the potential friction of being in each other's personal spaces. Touching, as a form of physical or emotional contact, becomes more prominent in these interactions. During the rides, both men and women touched me as part of polite conversation, joking, proving their point or filling the gaps in their thoughts. Such touching is something I forgot how to do while living in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, where this practice is less prevalent outside of the migrant population, and it was additionally marginalized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, after exchanging names and personal stories and building some rapport on the buses, it came easily.

Conversations, laughter, singing, and the whole mood on the buses reminded me more of a busy night at a tavern or *kafana* than of public transportation. This is a considerable departure from my previous experiences on

buses operated by large European firms such as Flixbus. The atmosphere on the *gastarbajteri* buses was more akin to a small-town gathering where, despite perceived differences, travelers were not strangers to one another. Buses are places where post-Yugoslav migrants connect, engage, and form an in-between, transitory, liminal post-Yugoslav space. These experiences underscore the distinctions between migrant buses and other modes of transportation, such as planes or trains.

The sensory experience of passengers is influenced by the quality, frequency, and structure of bus routes. Based on the work structure of the communities of settlement, the companies plan the routes to maximize the amount of free time available in the communities of origin. The busiest day for rides from Switzerland to the Balkans is Friday, and Sundays are the busiest days for return trips. The buses leave Switzerland in the early afternoon on Fridays, just after the end of the workday, and travel overnight to arrive at their destination the next morning. The return ride on Sunday departs early in the morning and arrives in Switzerland late in the evening or early the next morning, allowing the younger and more physically fit passengers to go straight to work. By traveling overnight, buses allow passengers to spend more time in their hometowns, but at the expense of comfort and sleep. Due to decreased movement during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020–2021, companies reduced their daily services to multiple times per week.

A typical ride for me started in St. Gallen. Like in Zurich, the St. Gallen bus station is an inconspicuous parking lot behind the central train station. At this location, I was picked up by either the main buses (those traveling to Serbia) or the support vehicles, personal automobiles for the lines operating to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These vehicles would transport the few passengers to Zurich. In Zurich, we would board a van or a larger bus, depending on whether Zurich, Zug, or Lucerne was the main distribution node in Switzerland. Once the buses reached the distribution node in the destination countries, passengers were again divided into smaller groups and transferred to other vehicles heading to their final destinations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main points were towns in the north, such as Bosanski Šamac. Here,

the Bosnian lines split into three directions covering the east (Tuzla, Živinice, Kalesija, Srebrenica), the west (Doboj, Banja Luka, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Bihać) or the center of the country (Zenica, Sarajevo). In Croatia, the principal distribution node is Rijeka, where the lines divide towards the east (Zagreb and Slavonia) and the south (Dalmatia). Meanwhile, in Serbia, the main connection point is Belgrade.

Route flexibility is not uncommon for larger European operators such as BlaBlaBus, Eurolines, or Flixbus. In comparison, large corporations operate this way to reduce expenses, boost profit margins, and gain market dominance. The *gastarbajteri* bus companies are similarly profit-driven, but they use this route arrangement to reach the marginal and isolated chain migration communities. By specializing in transporting labor migrants and providing services to their communities, these buses reconfigure the locations, languages, and forms of engagement between the sending and receiving societies in the migration process. Due to licensing restrictions, bus operators do not take on new passengers or drop them off in the countries between (Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Hungary). Individual passengers move between these capillary lines and across the borders of the post-Yugoslav states to optimize their arrival or departure times and other journey conditions. As a result, within the buses, there are never exclusively Croats, Bosniaks or Serbs on board; instead, there is always an indeterminable presence of the post-Yugoslav Other.

Upon boarding, passengers are immersed in a variety of visual and auditory stimuli, scents, tastes, and bodily experiences. The drivers check and charge tickets, provide initial instructions and coordinate assistance with border crossing and other duties, but they do not control the rides. When not asleep, passengers engage with one another in conversation, use their media gadgets to watch Netflix or interact with social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok or participate in private conversations through Viber and WhatsApp calls, often without using headphones. Once a symbol of luxury in the 1990s, the bus television sets are still extant but rarely used. These interactions predominantly occur in BCS, whether human-generated or emanating from media devices, defining the soundscape of the journey.

As repeatedly pointed out by my fellow passengers, buses are considered less privileged compared to trains, cars, and airplanes precisely due to the discomfort and length of their journeys. This distinction in privilege is reflected in the lower ticket prices compared to flights and railroads. Having a taller and bulkier body has made me acutely aware of the limited ways in which I may sit or move to improve my comfort. Lighting, aromas, and sounds can make it challenging to fall asleep, and fatigue can swiftly alter one's perception and mood. After a twelve-hour bus journey, one gains new insight into Brian Massumi's postulate regarding how the body endeavors to escape the conceptual framework imposed by construction and prescription (2002, 4).

Olfactory, gustatory, and tactile experiences are included in the universal submission to sensory experience. Buses are filled with a range of odors, from neutral to aggressive smells. These include the scents of fabric detergents used for cleaning between rides, perfumes on passengers, foodstuffs, beer in cans, the smell of the bus restroom, and the ever-present aroma of cigarettes, which some passengers continue to smoke in the bus restroom despite the ban. These experiences, frequently restricted in other public contexts, are more potent and intermittent. Long bus journeys affect perception and emotional charge, resulting in a positive or negative atmosphere that is mirrored in the passengers' dispositions. Some journeys were joyful, light, and optimistic about the future. The passengers clustered their talks with jokes, witty remarks, and entertaining anecdotes. Tales of past and present hardships weighed down other rides, with frequent topics being probable dangers on the trip (overzealous customs agents, border police asking for additional documents—usually COVID-19 passes). During the holiday season and lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ambiance on the buses was even more perceptible.

The fullness of stimulation, perception, emotion, and affect is best exemplified by the soundscape. The sounds on the bus emerge and fade in predictable patterns, following the routines of the journey, boarding, and disembarkation of passengers. Unlike the event from this chapter's introduction, typical journeys start pretty quietly. During the initial leg of a trip, passengers maintain silence or have brief conversations with the drivers. The situation changes when

the vehicle reaches the main distribution node and fills with more commuters. On capillary lines, seat sales are maximized, so passengers rarely remain alone. Long distances and agreeable company encourage conversation. On the rides back to Switzerland, the drivers or passengers actively establish familiarity by coordinating small-scale cigarette smuggling. They ask directly other passengers if they smoke and how many cigarettes they are carrying in order to distribute excessive quantities of cigarettes that would be confiscated if discovered with only one individual (a maximum of 200 cigarettes per person). On Friday rides to the Balkans, it was not uncommon for middle-aged men to be inebriated. As they celebrate the beginning of the weekend and the impending reunion with their loved ones, they serve as entertainers or agitators on the bus, altering the ambiance and volume of conversation.

The sounds of human communication and non-human-generated noises blend and compete within the soundscape. The bus diesel engines provide a continuous hum as a base of the background noise, supplemented by the sounds of highway traffic and air-conditioning. This tonal palette is further built by non-vocal human sounds, such as movement, eating, drinking, coughing, and sounds of media devices. During the packed trips, crowds easily overpower mechanical noises changing the soundscape to a clamor. In these situations, only during border inspections do the sounds disappear entirely. At these locations, drivers stop their vehicles, and passengers disembark to form a line leading to the checkpoint. Conversations either terminate abruptly or become faint and nearly whisper-like. The exceptions are the individual voices of the passengers who approach the checkpoint and answer indeterminable questions from the border police sitting inside. The protracted silence continues until each passenger has passed through the checkpoint and is waiting for the bus in the designated smoking area. The commotion returns and reaches its peak as the bus enters the destination country and allows the passengers back on board.

Changes in noise levels before, during, and after the border are the consequence of human behavior that has been carefully orchestrated. The drivers instruct passengers on what to do during bus rides, such as when to board, recline, stand, or take a break, as well as how to navigate border checkpoints.

Voices and mechanical noises, such as a bus engine, siren, or loudspeakers, are used by drivers to indicate changes in choreography. These choreographies are also the result of individual behavior repertoires, group dynamics, and physical constraints that define the space. Individuals engage with, utilize, or disregard these choreographies, just as they do with the soundscape. Buses, as a social context, are filled with sensations that communicate and demonstrate affective changes.

A Game between the Insiders and the Outsiders of "Ours"

The accidental Yugosphere as a system is framed by shared commonality (mutual intelligibility of the BCS language, history, culture, entertainment, everyday life, and social realities) and absent communality (separate identity politics, modes of political organizing, ideas of future). This system of post-Yugoslav commonality without communality enables individuals that engage in it to have shared expectations even in the absence of prior experience. The condition is based on a concrete historical experience of the former Yugoslavia as a political project and the material reality in which the affective regimes were founded. The affective regimes succeeded after Yugoslavia fell apart and each of the seven republics gained independence and redefined their political projects. Thus, labor migrants' bus rides disclose the Yugosphere as a virtual category, as defined by Gilles Deleuze as "real but abstract,"[9] and by Brian Massumi as "inaccessible to the senses" but felt in its affects (2002, 133). The accidental Yugosphere is an affective regime constituted by this system of expectations.

Even though various intellectual, political, and literary projects explore post-Yugoslav communalities (Gilbert et al. 2008, 10–11; Mazzucchelli 2012;

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9   Deleuze here paraphrased Proust's formula: "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (1991, 96).

Bilić 2016; Goldstein 2017; Matijević 2020) and, explicitly, solidarities (Kirn 2014; Štiks 2015b; Hofman 2021), they remain limited to the left or liberal-leaning elites and their supporters. Due to the type of language and forms of medialization (theatre, literature, conferences, roundtables) they use, these projects have a limited reach to those that do not take part in the public life mediated by written language, working classes of the post-Yugoslav spaces and those with this background elsewhere. This chapter argues that working-class individuals (including labor migrants) are not excluded from this process, and that working-class culture mediates this condition. Individuals from the working class make their own connections and political statements. The example of an encounter that follows delineates the traces of this condition.

I met Zaim[10] in early 2021 on the bus from Switzerland to Bosnia. This particular ride was one of the busiest, as it took place during the lockdown of winter of 2020–2021. Buses are regularly without enumerated seats, and in this situation, drivers either leave it for passengers to find a free spot on their own or match passengers based on gender and age in order to avoid conflicts. The driver instructed us to wait for allocated seats because of the large number of passengers, and as the passengers in front of me were moving on to the back of the bus, I was happy to have a seat secured when a driver asked me to sit next to a man fashioning a long beard. Once seated by the window, I observed that he had tucked several volumes into the pocket in front of him. The book covers featured Arabic script. I wondered if he had placed the books there to peruse during the trip and to demonstrate his religious interest. The combination of his lengthy beard and the books led me to believe he was religious, possibly a Wahhabi adherent, despite the fact that I was aware that these assumptions may be overly general. This observation brought to mind everything I already knew about this religious group.

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10 Zaim is a pseudonym used to protect the individual's anonymity. In accordance with GDPR rules on anonymization and pseudonymization, which differ based on the number of personal data collected (less than three for anonymization, more than three for pseudonymization with informed consent), the information presented here has been modified to preserve anonymity.

I first learned about Wahhabis in Sarajevo in the early 2000s when a child-hood friend studying there told me that there were these folks who gave scholar-ships to prudish young people. She was interested in getting the scholarship, but she was concerned that they might learn she also liked rave music and not appreciate her choice of spending free time. Coming from a Serbian Orthodox community and being a newly self-discovered atheist at the age of nineteen, this amused me. It was something new and strange. Later, I had my own experien-ces with Wahhabi shop owners, people on the street, protesters against Saraje-vo Pride, and former Wahhabis in the Bosnian peace movement who became my friends. My idea of Wahhabis was superficial but old, making me both in-trigued and uneasy. These were my automatisms that added to the atmosphere. I casually observed a fellow passenger as he conversed with other passengers, the majority of whom were males, wondering if he would approach the women in the group. I saw how he talked to them, when and how he answered.

I am sure I looked different to him, too. I became aware of his perception of me for the first time during data collection for the border patrol. During this procedure, drivers send a list to collect our personal information, including our names, passport numbers, places of birth, and current Swiss residence. Al-though a serious privacy breach, this practice is convenient for law enforcement and widespread among passengers. My full first name, Milorad, indicates my Serbian background, and while I go by my nickname, Mišo, as this is the name I grew up with and I prefer, I noticed that he repeatedly referred to me by my full name.

Cultural assumptions about my sexuality also arose. I am comfortable with my sexuality, gender, and body as a cis gay male. In the post-Yugoslav context, this involves employing a variety of strategies in everyday experiences. People sometimes express astonishment when I mention my partner and praise my "straight acting" demeanor without realizing the implication of their praise. But people also frequently indicate their awareness of my sexuality by comment-ing on my manner of speech, approving its "cultural" quality or offering unso-licited compliments on my dancing and singing skills. Although I cannot be certain that Zaim understood or even considered my orientation, his repeated

comments about my accent and speech patterns gave me the impression that he did. He never inquired about my marital status and only inquired about my children. When he asked what I was doing in Switzerland, I explained my endeavor and how these trips served as research for my forthcoming book. Our interaction was rooted in our respective networks of automatisms.

My fellow passenger was, like myself, a large person. At the start of the journey, this meant apologizing for every intrusion into personal space while sharing the armrest and legroom in carefully choreographed dances. Our initial conversations consisted predominantly of tuning in and out of other passengers' conversations. These conversations followed a predetermined script and included performative utterances expressing automated opinions on Switzerland, COVID-19, the responses of Balkan states, and other current topics. As the night progressed, we simply had to accept that we would be in each other's space. Gradually, as we diverged from communal topics, a personal dialogue developed, and the two of us shared what had been discussed in the larger group on the bus, but followed the same script.

Unpredictably, he brought up Srebrenica. He mentioned it when I asked where he was from. Coincidentally, he was from a village adjacent to Srebrenica that I had visited by chance. He continued to tell me that he was present in the enclave during the genocide after noticing my silence. This turn in the discourse surprised me, but I indicated my acceptance and encouraged him to continue. Then, he described how he got there, who accompanied him, and what happened to him and his family.

This was a spontaneous testimony, but I accepted it because I recognized its significance for him and that he wanted to share it. Furthermore, I understood that my role was to remain seated and listen. Since moving away from Bosnia, I found it increasingly difficult to discuss the war. I viewed the outside interest as insensitive or dishonest. Though I had my share of war experiences, I was unwilling to volunteer them on demand. Studying and working in Southeast European Studies departments required me to constantly revise and relearn my conceptions of the war and, more often than not, to perform the post-war Bosnian through these questions to their students and well-intended Western

colleagues. People from outside the former Yugoslavia inquired about my war experiences after just meeting or between mundane conversations about up-coming vacations or picking up furniture. Such performances gave me a strong feeling of inauthenticity, so I avoided discussing the war with strangers. For this reason, as soon as possible, I chose to write about the post-Yugoslav region outside of its traumatic past, focusing on everyday life and hope.

He then detailed his life during and after the enclave, that summer in Sre-brenica, and his flight prior to the atrocities. He recounted how, as a fifteen-year-old, he trekked for three days to Tuzla, unsure of the fate of his family and overcome with concern for those who remained behind while he was alone. He described his arrival in Switzerland as a refugee, meeting his wife's family, and establishing an existence there. Throughout this time, he was unaware of what happened to his family members, and his "normal" life was disrupted by returns for the arduous process of identifying the murdered family members and planning the funeral.

During the time he spoke, we were interrupted twice. The first time, the wife of a drunk man got into a fight with a few other men who were making fun of her husband. Zaim participated in the general commotion by shouting his piece on drinking and alcohol and its detrimental effects. The second time we were interrupted, a woman sitting behind us fainted, leading other passengers (mostly women) to provide her with space, air, and water. The drivers refused to stop when a few passengers repeatedly asked them to, explaining that we were in Italy and claiming that the Italians would hold them for too long as they would likely call the police. They insisted on driving us to Slovenia, where they could leave the woman at the gas station, and she would be cared for while we moved on. Many passengers, myself included, opposed the idea of leaving her unconscious and alone. My interpretation was that the drivers did not feel com-petent to seek assistance in Italy, and Slovenia felt closer and easier to manage. Thankfully, the woman recovered some moments later. Though still poorly, she asked to be driven to Bosnia. After both episodes, Zaim returned to his life story while I considered whether I should leave, whether this was ethical at all, and what to do.

Zaim discussed his religious experience in a distinct instance. He became religious in Switzerland and believed religion was a positive force that kept him in check. He clarified that he was not a Wahhabi; he merely had a long beard but valued his daughter's education immensely. His father-in-law was a significant factor in his religious development. The religion books he carried and kept tucked in the pocket of the seat in front of him were for reading, but he never had the time. As a result, he ended up dragging them around and feeling guilty for not reading them. I shared this experience and mentioned the two books in my bag that I hadn't found time to read either.

Zaim then proceeded to describe his life in Switzerland. He described the challenges he faced in learning the local language and the pride he felt in speaking it fluently. He talked about how intelligent and successful his children were. When he asked if I had any children and I said no, we learned that I was only a few years younger than him, but that our lives had taken divergent paths. He then explained that he only traveled by bus when he was alone and that they used the family car when his family traveled with him. There were other "Yugos" living in his building, where he also served as the maintenance man in exchange for reduced rent. He recalled the obstacles he had had to overcome to establish a life there and how "our people" (BCS: *naši ljudi*) would lend a hand from time to time.

Without my prompting, Zaim brought up the topic of ex-Yugoslavs abroad, which is the focus of my project but seemed trivial and irrelevant at that moment. He was not sure how to properly refer to ex-Yugoslavs, "our people," thinking of Croats or Serbs. He never asked me what I had meant when I said "our people," giving me the impression that this was also an actual category for him. Nonetheless, Zaim did identify with fellow Bosniaks residing there, conveying to me a dual-layered concept of *naš* ("our people") in which Bosniaks constituted the inner core, while the wider post-Yugoslav community encompassed the outer layer. Due to their shared ethnic identity, he felt closer to the Bosniaks.

When Zaim spoke about other post-Yugoslavs in his life, he described the difficulties in reconstructing these relationships after the war and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, as well as how natural and effortless these relationships now

felt. My sense of inauthenticity returned as I suspected that he might perceive me differently and perform to satisfy my expectations and interests. Regardless, he continued to discuss his post-Yugoslav connections, even after I had inquired about his Colombian or Turkish neighbors, whom he only briefly mentioned in a maintenance-related anecdote.

I listened while Zaim spoke. He was a fellow man, a fellow Bosnian, a fellow Yugo, confiding his experience to me, and listening was the best I could do. Despite my initial reservations about discussing the war with strangers or reducing the post-Yugoslav identity to our violent past, Zaim's sincerity and openness helped dispel my cynicism. His desire to share his experiences and my willingness to listen made the intense emotions surrounding the war and personal memories seem fitting within the confines of the bus because this is a space where one meets and confides in strangers. This testimony was probably triggered by the fact that my name is Milorad, yet a pre-script made this situation possible, and this pre-script is the bus. I am not sure this experience would have happened if we had met elsewhere. The fact that we were both cramped in the small seats of a packed bus carrying labor migrants from Switzerland back home, and we were in this situation for 14 hours, opened the possibility. On the *gastarbajteri* bus, there is an implicit understanding that passengers casually exchange personal narratives with one another. It is expected that these meetings do not have the same weight outside this particular setting, ultimately transforming the bus into an accidental Yugosphere.

Conclusion

The passengers of *gastarbajteri* buses typically fall into two categories: those who can manage the lengthy rides and those who easily get sick of them. Experience with driving, crossing borders, concern over having the proper documentation, and proximity to illegal activities such as small-scale smuggling, all result in intense discomfort and conflicting reactions. Frequent bus riders either anticipate it or accept it as an inevitability, whereas less frequent passengers may

display irritation or ennui. Sharing personal stories and connecting with fellow passengers may be a remedy for the discomfort of the experience. The atmosphere on the buses is characterized by a dynamic interplay between these two groups, whose emotional expressions and contributions range from uplifting energy, spirited commotion, singing, humor, and general happiness to tedium, irritation, and frustration. Because they share a mutually understandable language (or languages) and cultural intimacy, these individuals engage in a deeper level of mediation and automatisms—the affect.

Buses serve as a bridge between our space and theirs, embodying the familiar, nostalgic, and well-known characteristics of the other space, whether it is a sovereign Balkan realm in Switzerland or a Swiss domain in the Balkans. The previously mentioned branching of routes and multiple physical vehicles and drivers during individual journeys, create a situation where everyone travels together from a distribution node in Switzerland to a distribution node in the Balkans. This practice incorporates local and regional dynamics, stimulating interaction among post-Yugoslav migrants, as buses from the Podrinje region in eastern Bosnia, or Slavonia in Croatia, frequently transport individuals from northwest Serbia, while buses operating in eastern Croatia and northern Bosnia may share passengers. Transitioning between local, national, and international lines, passengers move through various vehicles during distinct segments of the journey, drawing migrants from diverse communities and sometimes different ethnic groups into proximity. However, this exchange remains limited in terms of class affiliation. The close interaction occurs simply because different labor migrants occupy neighboring seats and spend extended periods in tight spaces.

The experiences on the buses led me through a series of affective states, alternating between conscious and unconscious articulation. These feelings included anxiety, panic, paranoia, nausea, an unpleasant taste in my mouth, and a racing pulse. Even though my documents were always in order and I never carried anything more suspicious than a cigarette carton for other passengers, I was not immune to the experiences shared on the bus.

Affect permeates and spreads throughout shared environments, generating a social atmosphere that influences individual states. The impact of the

environment is reflected and navigated. The feedback loop between sensing and creating the atmosphere is particularly complicated in light of post-Yugoslav connections and affective regimes. Post-Yugoslav migrants have shared a history of conflicting identity politics and the heritage of the Yugoslav wars. Moreover, as working-class members in their settlement societies, they have shared experiences of marginalization, as well as practical proximity to members of other post-Yugoslav religious and ethnic groups who bear a tremendous emotional burden. Post-Yugoslav affective regimes are visible in instances where people declare their tolerance for another country out of nowhere or abruptly condemn war and atrocities. These regimes are also evident in the unsolicited testimonies and experiences shared in semi-private conversations or jokes that indicate belonging or otherness. Affective regimes are accomplished by signaling openness and closeness in conversations, speaking in a manner that allows others outside the conversation to overhear, and signaling virtues or vices.

Individuals who participate in the affective regimes of the Yugosphere may express opinions, reiterate opinions heard elsewhere, challenge established attitudes, share life lessons learned, broach taboo topics or engage in superficial and light conversations. As an affective regime, the Yugosphere permits the practice of difference and the exploration of distance within a shared commonality, intensifying affect. The subjects of these interactions are not limited to mutual differences or similarities; they also include personal and sensitive topics such as low wages, idle factory lines, unemployment, and insecurity in the Balkans, as well as alienation in Switzerland, the warmth of Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia, comfort in Switzerland, coexistence with other ethnic groups, and the inherent good and evil of humanity. Passengers practice the difference and investigate distances during these rides, tapping into their affect and responding with either interest or resentment.

The Yugosphere's affective regime that operates in *gastarbajteri* buses, capitalizing on the commonality, is enabled by the working-class culture shared across the region. This culture primarily emerges from the intelligibility of language, distinct language usage, shared enjoyment of cultural products like music, and the powerful memories and personal ethics that evoke the intimacy of a familiar

other. However, it does not necessarily oppose new solidarity social movements emerging in the post-socialist context across the region, which draw on the Yugoslav experience as a legacy for new leftist politics. As spaces where post-Yugoslavs interact, the *gastarbajteri* buses can be compared to workplaces, sporting events, pubs, and cafés in their countries of origin and settlement. Although proximity is chosen at these locations, bus passengers are forced to stand near together by design. Therefore, I contend that the accidental Yugosphere is not rooted in a shared socialist heritage or politics, even if they are not necessarily excluded. As an affective regime, the accidental Yugosphere is a shared expectations framework.

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Popular Music in the Everyday Life of Working-Class People during and after Socialist Yugoslavia:

The Endurance of *Čaga*

Rajko Muršič

Since I have been long fascinated by Bakhtin's thesis of declination and the resistance of folk (traditional) culture from the Middle Ages to the culture of the elite, I am confident that this resistance is a permanent strategy of those social strata and individuals, who do not have social power. I think this strategy is not only an issue of the medieval past but is also being used today. (Rihtman-Auguštin 2001, 236)

This chapter will present a brief overview of experiencing popular music in local music and dance venues during and after socialist Yugoslavia. After a discussion about the development of *čaga*, a vernacular term used to mark the affect of great entertainment, the chapter will discuss historically relevant layers in the development of Yugoslav popular music at the intersection of everyday life, political economy, and class in the specific sociocultural and economic context of the industrial city of Maribor and its surroundings in the northeast of Slovenia. From the historical perspective of consecutive developments of affective atmospheres, it will consider generational gaps and internal migration. It will show how, in the longer timeframe, affective atmospheres mix sounds of live music, media, people, and venues, being private, communal, or public.

If we understand atmospheres "as collective affects that are simultaneously indeterminate and determinate," they provide "the shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge" (Anderson 2009, 77). In their indeterminate nature, atmospheres "are resources that become elements within sense experience" (Anderson 2009, 80). In this context, we must differentiate emotions and affect: emotions are narrative and semiotic, while affects are nonnarrative and asignifying, as Sianne Ngai argues (in

Anderson 2009, 80). Atmospheres "mix together narrative and signifying elements and nonnarrative and asignifying elements" (Anderson 2009, 80). They reveal the long history of social transformations related to sweating bodies in dance halls and bodies penetrated with ever-emerging new musical sounds.

Affective participation in dance is an essential part of human socialization. New realities emerge when musical sounds touch us and penetrate our bodies (see Garcia 2015). In a quite literal sense, music and dance parties are territorialized. As DeLanda suggests, they are "processes that define or sharpen the spatial boundaries of actual territories" (2006, 13). At the same time, they also refer "to nonspatial processes which increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage" (DeLanda 2006, 13). On the horizontal axis, such assemblage comprises content and expression. On the one hand, "it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 88, emphasis in original).

In the following sections, I will examine the importance of music and dance venues for shaping social relationships in the changing socioeconomic times of industrialization at the beginning of the 1960s in the area near Maribor. Then, I will present the relationship between class and the development of Yugoslav popular music. Finally, I will return to Maribor, the important industrial center, to show the shifts in affective atmospheres in such venues.

Popular Music and Dance in Maribor and Its Surrounding

If you meet a person in Maribor after attending a concert, dance party, or any public or private celebration, he or she will define his or her excitement by the intensity of *čaga* by saying: "It was a damn good *čaga*" (*Bla je huda čaga*).[1] Alternatively:

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1   All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

"There was no *čaga* at all" (*Nobene čage ni blo*). Everybody will understand the single word *čaga*, which literally means "a party" (Razvezani jezik n.d.) and "entertainment." Its origin is unclear. It was taken from a slang word used in Croatia meaning "to party" that was most likely taken from Bosnia and might have Turkish origin (Klemenčič 2017). As a notion of excitement and enjoyment, *čaga* means not only party or partying but also the quality of partying and its affectivity, and it is not only related to music. Generally, it denotes atmosphere, that is, affective atmosphere (Anderson 2009). Historically, the excitement of *čaga* was related to various kinds of entertainment experienced in dance venues from socialist times until today. In the 1950s, Yugoslav cities and countryside areas built and hosted venues for youth socialization, where despite the repression against jazz and negative attitude towards some modern forms of dance, like boogie-woogie, various dance parties took place (Tomc 1989; Krstić 2010, 184–186; Kajzer 2011; Koter 2013, 13).

A typical example was a mansion known as Lepi dol, 10 km from Maribor, where younger people regularly organized dance parties. A rather typical rural mansion, Lepi dol was built in the 19th century by the citizens of Maribor. In the 1950s, after being nationalized, it became a meeting place for the local youth and a rural dancehall. They used to play music from records and the radio, but local musicians would perform for dance parties. The musicians' repertoire was mixed: they mostly played popular songs from the time, especially *domača glasba*, the "domestic" music (Sivec 1998), which was the first variant of Slovenian ethno-pop,[2] later known as *narodnozabavna glasba* (folk-pop music).

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2   I do not use the term "ethno-pop" for a genre of music but as a wider and general denomination of popular music with any use of certain traditional musical elements. English translations of local terms for music genres are rather difficult and provisional, as they have various meanings already in the field. Slovenian audiences still use the initial term for *narodnozabavna glasba*, which was *domača glasba* ("domestic" music). With the terminological differentiation of *narod* (ethnic nation) and *ljudstvo* (people, folk) in the Slovenian language, the term *narodnozabavna glasba* should be literally translated as "national-entertainment music," but this term nevertheless inherited the meaning of *narod* as *ljudstvo* (which is the case in Serbian and Croatian language without such a differentiation). Therefore, it may be translated as "folk-entertainment music" or "folk-pop." At the same time, traditional dance music was very different from *zabavna muzika* ("entertainment music"), the label used at the national radio station, although it adopted polka and accordion at the end of the 19th century (see Kumer 1972).

However, an essential part of the repertoire were evergreen and pop songs of the time, especially Italian *canzona* from the San Remo Festival, and various kinds of dance music, from swing to boogie-woogie and early rock 'n' roll (especially Elvis Presley).

The most important music source was Radio Ljubljana. Established in 1928, it played a significant role in the post-World War I modernization processes. Perhaps the most important channel to spread the most common music trends and influence dance parties was the radio show entitled "Kar želite, to dobite!" (Listeners' Choice) that had already started in the prewar period, around 1932 or 1933. In this show, urban and rural listeners from higher and lower strata defined their musical preferences. Listening to the show was a communal act, especially when the show incorporated a specific music request with an accompanying message for the person or greeted a community, often during a joint meeting in the local pub or a public venue like Lepi dol.

To get an impression of radio transmission in the 1930s, let us check the Radio Ljubljana broadcast. Besides two radio bands, one string and another jazz, musicians from Ljubljana and the vicinity were invited to perform. Among those bands was the Magistrov trio (Magister Trio) from Šmartno, some 10 km from Ljubljana. They were announced in the program guide for May 14, 1935, as Godci izpod Šmarne gore (Ensemble from the foot of Šmarna gora) ("Utorak, 14 maja" 1935, 17). Occasionally, they were announced as a *kmečka godba* (peasant ensemble) that provides a *domača zabava* ("home party"), for example, on January 30, 1938 (see "Ljubljana. Nedelja, 30. januarja" 1938, 1). Their repertoire was thus "domestic," mainly polka and some waltz played by accordion, clarinet, and double bass or tuba. However, the same musicians would perform as a violin, viola, piano/accordion, and clarinet ensemble and call themselves the Šramel kvartet (a Slovenization of the *Schrammelmusik* quartets[3]). On April 29,

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3   *Schrammelmusik* was a violin, viola, piano/accordion, and clarinet ensemble, typical in Vienna at the end of the 19th century. The term denotes a Viennese popular/entertainment music genre that transcended local popularity. Musical ensembles most often performed as a quartet consisting of two violins, a clarinet or an accordion, and a guitar.

1936, for example, the Magister Trio was announced as the "Magistrov šramel kvartet" ("Tedenski sporedi. Radio Ljubljana. Nedelja, 26. aprila" 1936, ii).

These various ways of announcing performances clearly relativized the classical distinction between rural and urban music. At least from the 1930s, the difference between "peasant" and "urban" music was blurred, and the same audience would listen and dance to both kinds of music. It remained so after the war, and it is so even today. Despite the claims of "urban" vs. "rural" in scholarship (see Sivec 1998, 1999; Stanković et al. 1999; Stanković 2021), one can find the same music played and attended in rural and urban music venues, not only in the so-called grassroots venues for alternative music acts in the countryside (Muršič 2011; Muršič et al. 2012).

To illustrate this point, let us return to the youth venue Lepi dol in the early 1960s. It was the place where my parents met. I could reconstruct their musical taste from the records in their small collection preserved in my home. There were seven single records of folk-pop music. However, they were not the dominant part of the collection. In the collection, there were more pop songs from festivals, mostly *popevka* (pop song) festivals from Split, Ljubljana, and Opatija, altogether 13. To my surprise, there were also three records of jazz acts and, not so surprisingly, three records of rock 'n' roll and twist. Surprisingly, among the most important and numerous records were Mexican: 13 altogether! The exceptions to the rule were opera and parody with one single-play record. Their record collection was similar to those of residents from their generation I observed during my 1990s fieldwork in the village of Trate, some 30 km from Maribor. What might an individual record collection tell us about the music taste of younger village residents between the late 1950s and early 1970s? What kind of *čaga* did these postwar generations experience in their venues?

Social Dimensions, Historical Shifts, and Affectivity of Dance Halls and Other Music Venues

In the post-World War II recovery, jazz became suspicious and oppressed until 1952, when the Communist Party became the more democratically designed League of Communists. In the mid-1950s, the latter not only accepted jazz and Western popular music and its various genres —especially Italian *canzona* and German *schlager*—but also actively supported the development of domestic pop in the form of *schlager* (in Slovenia the invented term was *popevka*). In Slovenia, the initial "domestic music" or later established folk-pop music developed from polka.[4] In contrast, Serbian derivations of *starogradska* (old urban music) developed into the form of *novokomponovana* (newly-composed folk music)[5] as the pillars of domestic popular music.

It was also the period following the postwar reconstruction and early electrification—the two most important projects of the socialist state that emerged from World War II. These developments affected rapid migration from the nearby countryside to the newly established industrial centers around the country.[6] Typically, workers became employed in their late teens, when they were approximately 16 years old. They earned their own money and were able to spend some on partying. And, according to my fieldwork data from the countryside, no later than in the mid-1960s, they could buy themselves radio receivers with a gramophone and some records.

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4   As I explained briefly in footnote number three, folk-pop is a Slovenian variant of music developed from "domestic music" played at weddings and festivities (as classified in early recordings; see Kumer 1972; Muršič 1999; Kunej and Kunej 2016) in relation to similar polka-based genres in the Alpine and Central-European regions after World War II (e.g., *volkstümliche musik* in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria).

5   About this genre, see the work of Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen (2002).

6   Throughout the rapid industrialization, more and more industrial workers moved from the country to the industrial centers, although many former farmers would still have two jobs. Some estimations were that one-fifth of all arable land "was owned by peasant-workers" (Simon in Radenković and Solar 2018, 160).

In towns like Maribor,[7] youth searched for places to gather, socialize, and party. Therefore, many public venues in the city's growing neighborhoods were used as dance halls. At the beginning of the 1960s, music bands were electrified to be able to play the current popular music. In 1962, Maribor hosted dozens of such electrified bands (Rudolf 1962) and many small dance venues to enjoy twist, beat, and pop. Although the city music venues in Maribor were much more inclined to jazz (Muršič 2000b) and early rock (Muršič 1995), it is important to stress that music taste has never been too narrow. Most people would always move among very different kinds of music and music genres.

Since the initial influence of radio on the music played at parties in the first part of the 20th century, many styles of dance marked the parties in the postwar period. All around Yugoslavia, youth danced in smaller or larger dance halls. In Zagreb, there were 96 dance halls—*plesnjaci* (Petrović and Hrvoj 2012, 40). About a dozen venues spread over city neighborhoods in Maribor and its surroundings, primarily restaurants, workers' clubs, and similar public venues.

Throughout the development of popular music, youth was its main protagonist, searching for new sounds and forming new audiences. Such was the case in the village of Trate, where I conducted historical-ethnographic research on the well-established music venue Mladinski klub Trate (Trate Youth Club), active from 1979 to 1994 (see Muršič 2000a). Around 1947, young members of the village women's organization *Protifašistična fronta žensk* (Antifascist Women Front) voluntarily readapted the mansion Novi Kinek into a village communal center. They organized various activities in the venue, from education to

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7   Established as a small medieval border town in the 12th century, Maribor developed into a local hub only after the construction of the railroad Vienna–Trieste in the late 1840s. After the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, Maribor first got textile factories, and after World War II, it became an industrialized center. In the 1960s, it became one of the leading industrial towns in Yugoslavia. It attracted the nearby rural population to move, especially the younger working force. At the end of the 1970s, Maribor was in many ways a city of young people, especially those employed in industry, and much less a city of young intellectuals. Just before entering the 1980s, the share of younger employees in the country was as high as 29% of the active population, but already in 1981, it began to decline (Mladi Jugoslavije 1982, 11, 45).

communal radio listening and, of course, dance parties. Ten years later, a new generation of local youth danced to then-emerged folk-pop music and formed several local ethno-pop bands. The same musicians continued to play and gradually switched to electric guitar, bass, drums, and organ.

At the end of the 1960s, a new generation, represented by a youth organization this time, occupied the venue. They played records by British and American rock bands of the time. A couple of electrified music groups—called beat bands—formed in the area in the mid-1960s. In 1979, another new generation occupied the venue and established an underground youth club. After a year or two, they moved to another historical building in the village, the deserted part of the mill, and adapted it. Then they held concerts and dance parties and had rehearsals for a couple of local punk bands, especially the internationally successful Center za dehumanizacijo (which translates as "center for dehumanization") (Muršič 1995).

In 1994, when I became interested in the local scene, the mill was "de-nationalized"—that is, privatized—and given back to the heirs of the prewar owner. For almost 20 years, the mill, being declared a cultural property, was deserted. Several years ago, some Russian entrepreneurs bought the property and soon demolished the mill's extension where the Trate Youth Club operated. Nothing was left there. New concrete now announces the building of a small swimming pool.

This story is rather typical of grassroots music venues and youth clubs in Slovenia, both in urban and rural areas. In the 1960s, authorities started establishing youth clubs in the frame of the *Zveza mladine* (Union of Youth). It was an organization later renamed the *Zveza socialistične mladine* (Union of Socialist Youth) with compulsory membership for everybody aged 14 to 28. Music of that time was further modernized: rock and pop.

In the late 1970s, when forming my first experimental teenage band in Maribor, we had to find a place for rehearsals. With knowledge of the authorities, we occupied the basement of a former nursery school, which was at that time adapted into the municipality's local neighborhood office. It did not last long: after a couple of years, the place was pulled down, and a new bypass road was built. Nevertheless, at least for a while, the venue hosted some music events,

including my first public music performance. At that time, I did not know this was a typical destiny of such places.

In the 1980s, local youth cultural centers incorporated pop, rock, and some alternative streams of then-popular music, especially punk rock. After 1991, the Urad RS za mladino (Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth) and Študentska organizacija Slovenije (Student Organization of Slovenia) were established to support the local youth clubs and music venues. However, in the 1990s, youth clubs gradually lost the need to organize music events, so most state-sponsored youth centers nowadays do not have a stage. Therefore, non-governmental grassroots venues still organize music events (Muršič et al. 2012).

To summarize, the overview of everyday exposure to popular music shows dynamic transformations of music genres and their audiences, especially regarding issues of class, age, and gender, performed in various music venues and dance halls (see Muršič 2000a; 2000b). Emotionally and in relation to the sensation of sound, the consecutive generations formed their affective atmospheres in jazz dance halls and other music venues with polka and other kinds of "domestic" music (1940s–1960s); in larger dance halls, festival places, and venues with pop and rock music (1950s–1980s); in youth clubs and disco clubs with rock and disco music (1960s–1990s); and underground venues, squats, and modern commercial music venues with a variety of recent popular music genres, including the recent revival of folk-pop music (1990s–2010s). Music venues, especially youth clubs, continuously operate at the intersection of generation gaps, changing gender roles, and the interchange of the local and domestic (Yugoslav and later Slovenian) music production of the time (see Muršič 2011; Muršič et al. 2012).

In post-socialist Slovenia, people again joined forces in self-organization. The most innovative and productive were massive culturally oriented squats, occupying former barracks in Ljubljana (Avtonomni kulturni center Metelkova mesto, occupied in 1993) and Maribor (Kulturni center Pekarna, occupied in 1994).[8] At the same time, former youth centers merged with other municipal

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8   In English translation, Metelkova Autonomous Cultural Zone and Pekarna Cultural Centre.

public services (e.g., for tourism, sport, culture, and youth) or became municipality establishments (as non-profit public services) or a part of student organizations. Fortunately, some (re-)established themselves as associations or clubs (Muršič et al. 2012).

In times of transition, these places acted as a kind of "liberated territories," which means liberated from the pressure of capital and new "democratic" rule. During the 1990s, they had a reputation and public support, but only Radio Študent and some independent media still supported them after the privatization of the media.

In the past two decades, only a couple of those venues remained self-organized, typically as loosely ruled associations. Together with some newly emerged venues, typically squats, these self-organized venues formed the *Ustanova nevladnih mladinskega polja Pohorski bataljon*, UPB,[9] which supports non-governmental grassroots venues. In 2011, under the commission of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, the leaders of the UPB invited me to coordinate the research of those venues (see Muršič 2011, Muršič et al. 2012). The monograph *On Solid Ground: Analysis of Grassroots Venues and Youth Non-Governmental Field in Slovenia* (Muršič et al. 2012) was an example of a participatory study and presented the most challenging examples of self-organization across Slovenia.

Membership of the foundation comprises various clubs, associations, informal initiatives, and squats, as well as formally established cultural centers that provide space for various cultural events. The most important common denominator of the foundation's members is music: it is put forward as an absolute priority. Well, it is not just any music that would matter for the locals to engage in primarily voluntary activities, but these types of music that are not commercial. As there is no other alternative for survival, the music in question is, of course, incorporated into the music market. However, its players and supporters cannot survive easily with the income they can generate. Furthermore, not only because of aesthetic reasons, activities in such venues, especially in squats, are under

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9   In English translation Foundation of NGOs in the Field of Youth Pohorje Battalion.

constant pressure from the authorities and capital. Therefore, the main question is if these "free territories," under the constant pressure of neoliberal state and capital, have any future. From my perspective, the answer is clear: these places are the commons of the present, which is why they not only have a future but are also constantly emerging beyond the reach of the neoliberal state and capital.

All this development would not be possible without previous developments in the Yugoslav frame. It is impossible to distinguish the rise of Yugoslav popular music in the postwar period and the rise and unique positioning of the working class, the utmost carrier of specific affective atmospheres related to local music production and, at the same time, its main consumer. In the next part of the chapter, I explore the relationship between the working class and popular music.

The Rise of the Yugoslav Working Class and Yugoslav Popular Music: Peasants/Workers Affectivity

Yugoslav popular music developed in the triangle of political pressures and stimulations, the socialist market, and its various audiences in the republics. The only common feature of those audiences was the rising purchasing power of the working class, with one foot in its mostly rural origins and another in rapidly developing industrial towns. In the 1940s, Socialist Yugoslavia started as a typical agricultural economy, and in 1991 fell apart as structurally industrialized land with elements of post-industrialization, especially in information technologies. In these less than five decades, its music production was constantly anticipating social developments: regional ethno-pop in the 1950s was quite well developed even before the rise of the market for its sale on records, even though the first and most significant records company, Jugoton, was established already in 1947 (Franulić et al. 2014; Škarica 2017).

Similarly, pop and rock developed as live music practices before the music industry was ready. It was thus expected that traditional styles of music, perhaps with modern adaptations and the introduction of new instruments, would prevail

in everyday life. However, despite the slow rise of folk-pop already in the 1950s and 1960s, it became a giant success only in the late 1980s with the rise of newly-composed folk music stars like Lepa Brena.[10] Music for dancing, which dominated Yugoslav popular music in the first two decades (at weddings, public celebrations, and dancehall events), was under the considerable influence of the imperial history of parts of Yugoslavia. While the western part of the country inherited Central-European music styles and dances (polka and waltz), the eastern part inherited Ottoman influences. Nevertheless, the dance music played was predominantly Western, with dance styles from the past and present.

Local traditional music survived in rural areas throughout the 20th century, especially in communal singing and informal dance events. If we consider peasants a separate class of "working people" (although they had never been any kind of homogenous group) and the remains of urban middle-class "petty bourgeoise" from the prewar period, who later, during socialism, transformed into urban higher strata, it was industrial workers who were the most important consumers of popular music. Nevertheless, should we consider popular music as the music of the rising working class during the rapid process of industrialization? Well, yes, but with some restrictions.

It is namely essential to understand that popular culture, especially in its variously domesticated versions, became not only a characteristic of Yugoslav market socialism but was at the same time an independent sphere in which the working class, with all its unrecognized and conflicting and complex variety in regional, urban, rural, and other social layering dimensions, finally got a sphere at least to resonate as the working class. Its culture was indeed contemporary popular culture as an advanced alternative to traditional cultures from times before modernization, as Slovenian ethnologists would define the distinction between traditional and contemporary "mass" culture (cf. Kremenšek 1978; Baš 1978). Indefinable peasant "folk culture" was lost, as much as traditional rural "folk" (commoners) disappeared more than a century ago, while the newly

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10   About her music and public persona, see more in Hofman (2012).

emerged industrial working class—urban, semi-urban, and rural—adopted and domesticated popular culture from the West, or "mass" culture (Kremenšek 1983, 127). Contemporary popular culture thus met the expectations of the country's most numerous and characteristic cultural strata.

From a historical and genre-based view of the development of popular music in socialist Yugoslavia, we can deduce that there was noticeable correspondence between music genres—even the kinds of music played and consumed—and social stratification. If the rural areas still preserved some older music practices, and ethnologists and ethnomusicologists still enthusiastically studied the so-called traditional music (*ljudska glasba*; see Kumer 1972), and, at the same time, the remains of "townspeople" and petty bourgeoise, together with educated strata and the ruling class, would still cultivate classical (art) music or jazz, the emerging and gradually dominating working class expressed the urgent need for its own kinds of music. That meant *popevka* songs—locally translated and adopted pop songs (evergreens, *chanson*, *canzona*, and *schlager*)—various newly emerged versions of ethno-pop, and emerging genres of popular music, especially rock.

In order to give an illustration of that process, let me shortly describe the ascent of Slovenian folk-pop music, which was actually the first such genre that appeared in Yugoslav popular music. At Radio Ljubljana, after the audience requested its playing for the desired public greetings, this accordion-dominated polka-style music with elements of jazz arrangements was aesthetically compromised: the redactors established a special board to check its "suitability," especially regarding lyrics and pieces as the whole. It does not mean that it was censored but at least unwanted. The issue was not political but predominantly aesthetic, following the task of a national radio to educate public music taste.[11]

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11 One of the first radio redactors for this kind of music at Radio Ljubljana, Janez Bitenc, remembers that it was 1955 when the first such board was established. It rejected many songs for many different reasons. Among the criteria of having "good" lyrics and music, there were also criteria of not being rude or offensive and not containing swearing or public morality, etc. Sometimes, this commission rejected even 90% of all the current production (see Sivec 1998, 367; 1999, 40). Ivan Sivec, one of the songwriters for those "ensembles" and radio redactors, claimed that only every sixth or seventh ensemble deserved to be played on the radio (1999, 41).

Popular music with elements of traditional music was primarily considered low-brow, which means, it was supposed to express the taste of the lowest strata in society, not necessarily the working class, although it was precisely the strata that carried on ethno-pop. Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen thus wrote about Serbian newly-composed folk music:

> Devaluated musical styles variously associated with the local notions of "Eastern," "Islamic," "ethnic," and "foreign" stand for marginal groups within the national hierarchies of the culturally representative. Their aesthetic inferiority, further denoted by technological qualification—cassette music—and the subcultural notion of "informal" thriving in communal, ritualistic, and club settings, supports the equation between the popular, the socially marginal, and the culturally illegitimate. (1996, 109)

These kinds of music, not only newly-composed folk, were music genres "that had emerged in the 1950s as a consequence of major changes in Yugoslav society, including its modernization, urbanization and hybridization, in order to feed the cultural needs of the emerging working class and other cultural 'mongrels,' who represented the largest part of the population" (Petrović 2017, 100). Famous Serbian singer-songwriter Đorđe Balašević described singers of newly-composed folk music—*narodnjaci* ("folkies"), as "a hybrid class halfway on the road from the village to the city" (Gordy 1999, 107). Being largely ignored among "dominant post-Yugoslav interpretations" of Yugoslav popular music (Petrović and Hofman 2017, 71), newly-composed folk music "with its roots in traditional folk music [...] was a reflection *par excellence* of the socialist transformation from rural to modern industrial society" (Hofman 2013, 293). It addressed masses of working people throughout the decades, but "precisely this 'working-classiness' was considered its major deficiency" (Kolanović in Petrović and Hofman 2017, 71).

Nevertheless, the class situation in the field was not clearly defined. Individuals and groups from various strata would overlap territorially and regarding their social mobility, meaning neither countryside nor urban centers were

culturally homogenous. They all hosted mainstream and alternative, local and regional ethno-pop and avant-garde projects. Therefore, despite the consensus in the press that popular music genres using traditional musical expressions were the result of recent migrations from villages to urban centers and that the new Yugoslav working class was still supposed to be more villagers than "civilized," we must understand that the coexistence and intertwinement of urban and rural phenomena characterized their lives.

First Generations of the Urban Proletariat: Emergence of Ethno-pop Čaga

As Aidan Southall said, "the great city still exerts magnetic attraction" (2000, 408). Due to the post-World War II rapid industrialization, it was impossible to distinguish between the industrial and rural proletariat. Their ways of life were specific, as well as their music preferences. The abovementioned ethno-pop genres were the main kinds of popular music listened to by rural-urban workers who recently moved to industrial centers, typically living in recently built block settlements, though not exclusively. Even though they found this music the most appealing, there were considerable differences in musical preferences among workers from different regions. Most industrial workers in Slovenia initially moved from the Slovenian countryside. However, after the 1960s, the workforce predominantly came from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later from Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo. Those workers came to quite a different cultural environment, thus having even more need to follow their "own" music. Here is where music tastes and preferences of the working class, especially in the northern parts of Yugoslavia, reflected the same structural logic, but in terms of music admired, it differed profoundly.

To understand this complexity, we must move far back in the past. Before its first historical appearance in 1918, and before the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro became independent, the Yugoslav territory belonged to two empires, Habsburg and Ottoman. It is fundamental for understanding Yugoslav ethno-pop and popular music in general. Throughout the 19th century, in all parts of Yugoslavia, the nationalist bourgeoisie worked hard to introduce and

impose Central European classical music as a standard in music education. At the same time, urban music styles and music played at dance parties and in the inns, taverns, hotels, and other entertainment places were derived from local adaptations of popular songs from the imperial centers, which means music from Vienna and Budapest in Slovenia and Croatia, and music from Istanbul in the rest of Yugoslavia. Good examples of such remnants were the quartets that played *Schrammelmusik* at the beginning of the 1920s in Slovenia and the Kociprova banda (Kociper Brothers Band) from Beltinci, Prekmurje, playing popular songs of the time from Budapest. This chapter is not the place to deeply analyze the influences of imperial legacies in music. However, in ethno-pop music genres, they became apparent, leading to accusations of those styles as Alpine, that is, Austrian/German for Slovenian polka-based folk-pop music, as well as melismatic and rhythmically rich newly-composed folk music as Oriental.

Those genres were musically very different, and its audience was initially practically exclusive: folk-pop music was limited to Slovenia and parts of Croatia, and newly-composed folk music to Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and some parts of Croatia. To add to the complexity of the development of Yugoslav popular music, there were other variants of local popular music already well-developed before World War II: old urban music, mainly in Serbia, *sevdalinka* in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Sandžak and partly in Kosovo, and, finally, Romani music in the southern part of Yugoslavia in various musical styles, predominantly brass bands. When we put together early *schlager* style, derived partly from pre-World War II *starogradska* and *kafana* (bar) singing and adaptations of popular songs from Central and Western Europe for radio performances, with dance parties, we can find a vivid music life far before it reached radio transmission and the recording industry. Already in the late 1940s, these genres of early popular music were acceptable for all strata of society, not only for the working class but with a clear regional range.

When the first generation of socialist workers in the late 1950s and early 1960s earned enough to purchase radios and gramophones, they would buy the hit records of the time. The sale of records produced by the Jugoton record company rose in accordance with the sales of the up-to-date music of the time. It was

these new sounds that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s, that is, electrified and rhythmically expressive evergreen pop, jazz, and early rock, which became the first genres of popular music produced and sold to both working-class and middle-class consumers, who bought records before the working-class (especially jazz). It changed enormously in the 1970s and 1980s when some albums sold 300,000 or up to 500,000 copies, which was quite a number for a country of 20 million inhabitants (Franulić et al. 2014, 12).

However, the emerging ethno-pop music genres of folk-pop music and newly-composed folk music (or, much later, turbo-folk[12]) became the characteristic music admired by the first generation of the Yugoslav postwar "working class." The paradox of this music production was that it was not properly Yugoslav: what was admired in Slovenia with the Alpski kvintet (Alpine Quintet), established in 1953, was not more than a strange curiosity for the Serbian audience, while the initial stars of Serbian newly-composed folk music, e.g., Lepa Lukić or Predrag Živković Tozovac, were no more than curiosities for the Slovenian audience.

The empty space for the general audience in Yugoslavia, especially the working class, thus became local versions of pop songs (*schlager*) and the early adoption of rock. Nevertheless, the production of pop songs—*popevka* (Slovenia), *pjesma* (Croatia), *šlager* (Serbia), and pop song in Macedonia (*поп-музика*, *забавната музика*) varied, so the production of pop songs in different parts of Yugoslavia differed considerably and was driven by solid competition (see testimonies in Luković 1989). Singers who were big in Croatia were not as big in Serbia. However, the leading figures had enormous national appeal (e.g., famous stars such as Ivo Robić, Đorđe Marjanović, etc.).

The Second Generation: Rock 'n' Roll Čaga

In the late 1960s, working-class people born in towns became the dominant part of the working people in socialist Yugoslavia. Younger generations were

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12   About the genre of turbo-folk, see Ivana Kronja (2004) and Rory Archer (2012).

born with access to electronic media and the music industry, so their initial music environment was oriented toward emerging pop and rock music. Despite their upward social mobility with prolonged education and eventual promotion to the middle class, their social environment paved the way for Yugo rock as we historically know it. Its roots are various electrified bands from the early 1960s and the famous "pop" bands from the second part of the 1960s, like Siluete (Belgrade), Bijele strijele (Zagreb), Kameleoni (Koper), and Indexi (Sarajevo). The next generation brought famous Yu grupa (Belgrade), Smak (Kragujevac), Bijelo dugme (Sarajevo), Parni valjak (Zagreb), and Buldožer (Ljubljana). The last Yugoslav generations coming to the age in the 1980s brought Pankrti (Ljubljana), Prljavo kazalište, Film, Haustor (Zagreb), Električni orgazam, Ekaterina Velika, Disciplina kičme, Partibrejkers (Belgrade), Zabranjeno pušenje, Plavi orkestar (Sarajevo), as the most popular among many other bands. Although it is impossible to define their class origin (having some music education, many musicians were recruited from middle-class families), it is clear that their main audience was primarily the working class.

Some rock groups from the 1970s would explicitly target working-class people with their names, e.g., Teška industrija from the Bosnian industrial town Zenica. Although the early punk, especially in Ljubljana and Zagreb, was much more played by middle-class people, there were some exceptions to the rule, expressing characteristic working-class sentiments. These exceptions were much more obvious in provincial towns and, in some cases, in Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade. With their unique sensibility to issues related to "ordinary" people, Ljubljana's new-wave punk band Otroci socializma (The Children of Socialism), with its lead singer and poet Brane Bitenc, sang about death, military life, and other issues of everyday life. The famous lyrics by the Belgrade group Šarlo akrobata talked about an "ordinary person" who wants to cross the line but is not allowed to, using the ambiguous meaning of the term *ne sme,* meaning "he is not allowed to" and "he does not dare to."

Nevertheless, the most famous example of a song dedicated to the working class was "Radnička klasa odlazi u raj" (The Working Class is Ascending to Heaven) by Croatian new-wave band Haustor. Paradoxically, those in

charge at the label Jugoton did not dare to include the song in the first album by the group released in 1981, presumably because of its ironic statement that the working class is dead. It was released on the album *Treći svijet* (The Third World) three years later without any problem. At that time, Yugoslavia's dramatic and severe problems were apparent: austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, resulting in the collapse of Yugoslav industry, an increase in unemployment, a soaring inflation rate, and finally, the violent dissolution of the state. The song speaks about a typical early morning at the train station with workers having a cognac before heading to work. However, the working class has lost its role in history; the black devil invites them to stay until they eventually leave with their families for the weekend. To additionally identify with workers, the lyrics were written in a typical dialect of workers-peasants from the Zagreb hinterland.

The bands that belong to the music movement *new primitivism* presented views of marginal people and ordinary townspeople from Sarajevo (the so-called *raja*).[13] However, it would be exaggerated to say that this genre was truly working-class. Partly it was indeed, as it emerged ten years before the rock craze provoked by the band Bijelo dugme. Nevertheless, it was an urban phenomenon and expression of mostly middle-class kids. The movement incorporating Zabranjeno pušenje, Elvis J. Kurtović and His Meteors, and some other bands touched the sentiments of younger generations in times of economic collapse, expressing dissatisfaction with the situation in the country. The working class at that time was indeed becoming obsolete. Middle-class urbanity was replacing it.

Therefore, in Yugoslavia and its successor independent states, the ideology of "urbanity" became a tool of distinction between "civilized" urban people and "savage" peasants. In his foreword to a compilation of interviews with protagonists of the rock scene from former Yugoslavia, Croatian writer on popular culture Branko Kostelnik hopes that his volume will contribute to the "fight for urbanity, freedom, and equality" (2004, 8).

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13 More about this genre and its bands, see Hofman and Pogačar (2017).

Middle-Class Affectivity: From Jazz **Čaga** *to Pop and, Again, Rock 'n' Roll*

Despite the nationalization of property in the 1940s, the prewar middle class largely survived. From big owners, they became small owners, forming a palimpsest of the Yugoslav petty bourgeoisie. An essential characteristic of those townspeople was their cultural affinity to classical art. In music, it was opera and symphonic music. Throughout the development of socialist Yugoslavia, these strata became more and more dispersed. In the 1960s, many newly educated people got positions in management and social services, forming the new "technocracy," which became a threat to the leading party; a couple of years after 1971, the party fell into disgrace.

Since the prewar times, jazz has been the music of students and urban middle-class youth. Perhaps partly for this reason, the authorities had a repressive attitude toward jazz in the 1940s and early 1950s. Too many Yugoslav communists would perhaps agree with the Soviet authorities that those who play jazz today will betray their homeland tomorrow (Barber-Keršovan 2005, 30). However, this was not the only reason that jazz, except its most basic dance forms, had never become a "working class" culture.

Rock 'n' roll was different. Although, like jazz, it attracted students and youth, the new sounds for dancing around 1960 were different. Hence, the dance halls, including *plesnjaci*, which I wrote about in the first part of the chapter, attracted many more working-class youths than jazz a couple of years before. Although it started with dance and jazz arrangements of modern music, throughout the late 1950s, 1960, and up to the late 1980s, rock 'n' roll represented freedom and liberation (see Žikić 1999, 17) from the state socialism or its Yugoslav self-management variant. Slovenian punk rock in the late 1970s and early 1980s was, in the views of its protagonists and observers, "the school of democracy" (Barber-Keršovan 2005, 514).[14]

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14 Alenka Barber-Keršovan, describing import of early rock 'n' roll to socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s, used Reinhold's term "recontextualization." She wrote that "only a very thin stratum of well-off youngsters whose parents possessed a radio or even a record player, at that time almost unobtainable luxury, had access to this music" (2001).

Nevertheless, we have to understand that these "well-off youngsters" were not the kids of the members of the League of Communists. Though some were, those people belonged to the higher strata: doctors, professors, and especially managers who were not necessarily party members—or if they were, they were its members more nominally than actively.[15]

It was indeed a paradox that the only class taken seriously, "working people," was largely separated and alienated from the ruling party. I was born in the 1960s into a typical working-class family in Maribor. At that time, it was becoming, for a while, the leading industrial town in the country. Assuming that my experience of the socialist working class in the 1970s and 1980s was not atypical, I can say that I did not know anybody from my working-class neighborhood, neither relatives nor the workers I knew from Maribor factories, to be a member of the League of Communists. On the contrary, since my earliest age, I remember skepticism and criticism, if not an open revolt of workers against communist rule. Many myths of the socialist working class are circling nowadays, but one thing is sure: in my experience, the Communist Party was not their party.[16]

Not only members of the League but also non-members formed the social strata that could have simply afforded more than average working-class people

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15   It is also important to understand that President Tito, and some core members of the Yugoslav League of Communists, were born as working-class kids. Josip Broz, born near the border of Slovenia and Croatia, to a Croatian father and a Slovenian mother, was trained as a mechanical locksmith, thus a typical Yugoslav working-class person, "among other hundreds of thousands" (after Matvejević 1984, 202). Nevertheless, membership in the League of Communists did not reflect this working-class based social stratification. On the contrary: it formed a kind of an elite ruling political class.

16   Although membership in the Communist Party did form a special social "avant-garde" formation, it would be too exaggerated to define them as a "class" (see Djilas 1957). After all, immediately after the war, in 1948, 49% of party members were peasants or peasant-origin, 30% were workers, and the rest were others (Suvin 2014, 113). Moving up in the party hierarchy, the ratio turned around. Working councils, the backbone of Yugoslav self-management socialism, typically cooperated with management, so, according to the study by Bilandžić in 1985, they were not exactly working class' political organs or tools but "more part of the business-managing mechanisms of the company" (in Mihaljević 2018, 37).

and peasants. Membership in the League of Communists was a ticket to climb up socially, make a career, and cross from the lower to the higher strata. The leading communist bureaucratic class was thus constantly recruited with ambitious managers and intellectuals, and working people remained where they were. They could assess positions of *apparatchiks*, but being eligible for leading positions in the real economy—especially management, public service, or other significant institutions in civil society—was outside of their reach. It led to a paradox that everybody would recognize immediately in factories: members of the League of Communists among the ordinary workers were very few, while leading management was almost all, though not entirely, "communist." If managers were mostly agreed-on members, then ordinary workers were the most consistent critics of the League.[17]

No other song expressed the alienation of the League of Communists from ordinary people better than the song "700 usnjenih torbic" (700 Leather Bags) by the abovementioned group Otroci socializma when each of the 700 delegates at the Party congress received a leather bag. Although it became a hit song among the Ljubljana alternatives and played at Radio Študent, it provoked massive anxiety in the "concerned" public. The band recorded and printed its first album, but it never reached music stores.

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17   The vertical stratification mobility available to the membership to the League of Communists is clearly discernible from the data about membership in the Trade Union. While membership in trade unions was self-understandable for every worker, only some 10–15% of trade union members were members of the League. However, coming to the leadership of the unions, 92–98% of the highest representatives of trade unions were party members (Reljanović 2018, 66). After the consolidation of market socialism, "market relations strengthened the technocratic class, a grouping made up of non-productive workers, such as directors, managers, work supervisors, the marketing sector, etc." (Pantić 2018, 207). With the rise of this social strata, "this class entered coalitions with the middle layers of the party bureaucracy" (Pantić 2018, 207). The reaction to this rise was response of party bureaucracy with strengthening state and administrative institutions (Pantić 2018, 207).

Beyond the Urban and Rural Divide: Social Outsiders and Their Music Attractions

The long story of popular music in Yugoslavia (with a focus on Slovenia) has made us reconsider the affective dimensions of social transformations related to music. In its many forms, Yugoslav punk brought more contemporary kinds of *čaga*. Not only with pogo or later developments in moshing, but it also appeared to become—socially and politically—a very impressive development, having at least some influences in the social transformations from the late 1980s and the 1990s. Since then, new kings of *čaga* have appeared: rave, hip-hop, and turbo-folk. All later developments are rooted in long-term affective practices passed down between generations in local popular music venues.

In the end, I must mention another admired kind of *čaga* from the marginal part of Yugoslav society. Despite expectations that socialism would not form any underclass, Yugoslav society had many kinds of lowest strata: the village proletariat, rural daily workers, and other people with practically no property. During socialism, there were also homeless people, especially after the introduction of the socialist market system in the late 1960s (see Želimir Žilnik's *Black Film* from 1971; Ćurčić et al. 2009). Nevertheless, the most typical "class" of Yugoslav social outsiders were the Roma.

Being cultural brokers and ritual specialists in providing music for weddings and funerals, especially in the southern part of the country, the Roma in socialist Yugoslavia were a specific people, a kind of ethnic underclass (Gypsies, *Cigani*). The Roma became praised by the films in the 1960s and later with Kusturica.[18] In music, they would oscillate between the most elementary possible music practices (in *kafana*) up to the most successful popular music icons such as Esma Redžepova and Šaban Bajramović. Nevertheless, their class position was low or very low. Success in music would be one of the possibilities for their upward social mobility. In many ways, they were music brokers (Pettan 1996),

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18   See more in the chapter by Jelača in this volume.

but as well the exemplary "Blacks" of the Balkans (Barbarič 1996, 154). In that sense, some hip-hop acts would successfully bring a creative mixture of Romani musical expression with modern and global popular music, especially among the largest Roma settlement in former Yugoslavia, Šutka (Skopje, Northern Macedonia). Other outsiders in Yugoslav society were clergy with their own ritual life and some sporadic music production. It is worth mentioning some recordings of Christian rock by Catholic priests and monks in the early 1970s. Christian pop and rock only recently marked the development of the local popular music scenes, though still on the margins.

To conclude, we cannot overlook the historical roots of the present-day interconnectedness of national, regional, and local popular music scenes in the post-Yugoslav space. The experience of *čaga* is still around. Going back to the rural area around Maribor, one can read on Facebook an exciting reflection about the rapper Leopold I.'s performance in the venue Ceršak on January 15, 2023:

> *Uau, what an evening, what a čaga it was. Leopold I. set the bar high. Uffff, lyrics, music, ambiance, and atmosphere. During the performance, we toasted more than once for the New Year, which means we were tied together. Thank you to each and every one of you, and truly thank you for rewriting the history of our "Cirbek" [Ceršak] together. Thank you, Leopold I., since yesterday, you are now our "Cirbežaner" [Ceršakian].* (Kulturno umetniško društvo Ceršak 2023)

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The "Secret Knowledge" of Carousing:
From Orientalizing Other to (Not) Becoming-Other

Marina Simić

Introduction: Affect and Emotion

Generally, there are two types of writing on affect and emotions. One concerns the view that equates emotions and affect, while the other perceives affect as "prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (Massumi 2005, xvi).[1] According to the latter, neither affect nor affection denotes a personal feeling. Deleuze and Guattari (2005) use the concept of *sentiment* derived from Spinoza's concept of *affectio* (*l'affection*) as a state signifying "an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies)" (Massumi 2005, xvi).

Based on Deleuze and Guattari's thought, Felicity J. Colman states: "affect is the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide, or come into contact" (2010, 11). Encounters between bodies thus conceived force one to think in a way that is opposed to recognition but can only be sensed (Deleuze 2001, 139).[2] Massumi develops Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of affect, claiming that affect, or "intensity," is "asocial, but not presocial" (1995, 91), which also means that it is presubjective without being presocial (Massumi 1995, 91; Massumi 2002). It is bodily and sensory, but it surpasses and "escapes the individual body" (Laszczkowski and Reeves 2018, 5). Since affect escapes language,

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2   In recognition, the sensible is "that which bears directly upon the senses," but may itself be attained by other faculties as well (Deleuze 2011, 139).

just as it escapes "cultural patterns," it can only be experienced and evoked (Jansen 2016, 59). That means that affect cannot be aligned "with any conventional conception of culture, since the whole point of affect [...] is that, unlike emotion, it is not always already semiotically mediated" (Mazzarella 2009, 291–292).[3] Thus, it is usually said that affect cannot be reduced to any study (anthropological or otherwise) that "would seek to explain affect by situating it comparatively within integrated cultural orders" (Mazzarella 2009, 293). How can we then discuss any anthropological work, ethnographic or otherwise, in terms of affect?

First, it should be noted that anthropology does not define its subject matter solely in semantic terms. The study of affect, as Mazzarella explains, moves us "into the neighborhood of a social aesthetics, if we understand by aesthetics the ancient Greek sense of *aesthesis* or sense experience" (2009, 293). In other words, the crucial question seems to be what affect does. Furthermore, phenomenological approaches in anthropology have taught us that the body affected is not a clean slate devoid of any preconceived ideas, as society is inscribed on our nervous system and in our flesh before it appears in our consciousness. This means we may see the body as a generative base of culture rather than the plate into which culture, society, and ideology inscribe their mark (Csordas 1990). The affective body "preserves the traces of past actions and encounters and brings them into the present as potentials" (Mazzarella 2009, 292). Only in that sense affect is asocial, but it is clearly not presocial—"the *trace* of past actions *including a trace of their contexts* [are] conserved in the brain and in the flesh" (Massumi in Mazzarella 2009, 292, original emphasis). Affect is thus, at the same time, embodied and impersonal (Mazzarella 2009, 292).

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3   This may pose the question about the "location" of affect and its connection with the subconscious. According to Massumi (1995, 85) affect/intensity is beside the loop of "a nonconscious, never-to-conscious autonomic remainder." However, this is not completely clear. Following Bergson and Spinoza, Massumi argues "that it is only when the idea of the affection is doubled by an idea of the idea of the affection that it attains the level of conscious reflection" (1995, 92). In other words, conscious reflection is self-recursion of the idea of affection that becomes consciously experienced when it is approached from the metalevel and on the body level.

Emotion has a role of subjectification tied to the body. For Deleuze and Guattari, as well as for Massumi, the body is not only a "local embodiment *of* ideology" (Massumi 2002, 3, emphasis in the text)—as common anthropological wisdom has it—but is related to the nexus of emotion and affect.[4] Emotion is affect/intensity that is qualified and inserted into the semantic field of culture with its function and meaning. It is a "subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal" (Massumi 1995, 88). In that way, emotion is owned and recognized (Massumi 2002, 28) only when affect becomes qualified, that is inserted into semantic and semiotic fields (or discourse) and becomes available for narratization (Massumi 1995).[5] If unqualified, affect is not subject to critique. Only when affect becomes emotion can it be subjected to academic or other kinds of critique.

Affect is inscribed with potential. It is productive and mobile. It escapes (very much like a "line of flight" in Deleuze and Guattari) the individual body keeping its vitality, or potential of interaction, alive (Massumi 2002, 35). Perception and cognition are captures of the affect of which emotion is the most intense (Massumi 2002, 35). However, as Massumi writes, something always escapes this capture, remaining inassimilable, albeit inseparable from the particular perspective, e.g., the particular emotion. This residue makes emotion

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4   Mazzarella, as the first among anthropologists who actively engages with affect theory (but see also Stewart 2007), writes that subjective life, including emotion, is a secondary effect of cultural mediation (2009). It seems to me that Mazzarella here argues that culture forms subjectivity, which appears to be an odd idea, as most affective theory rejects the sociology of the social, instead focusing on the non-human and the relationship between a human and a non-human actant in flat sociology (Latour 2005) and flat ontology (DeLanda 2002). The critique of the idea of the body and embodiment that stems from Amerindian anthropologists of the ontological turn (cf., for example, Vilaça 2012) is similar to those posed by the affective turn and focuses on a non-representational and non-anthropocentric understanding of culture. In the affective, as well as in the ontological turn, the subject is not seen as a bounded entity. Traditional concepts of society and culture are likewise called into question.

5   There is a difference between semantics and semiotics. Massumi sometimes uses them interchangeably or stresses both, while Mazzarella refers to semiotics. Semantics is usually understood as being constitutive of semiotics.

detached and alienated, almost disorienting (as being outside oneself), but also makes affect crucial for "actually existing" and opposed to "pure entropy, death" (Massumi 2002, 35).[6]

This "vitalist philosophy," as Mazzarella (2009) calls it, may have its flaws, especially regarding its insistence on immediacy or immediation—that is, the radical binarization of "conceptual mediation" and "affective immediacy" (2009, 294). It seems that it presupposes two registers: a register of affective, embodied intensity on the one hand and a register of symbolic mediation and discursive elaboration on the other.[7] Although Massumi claims that the relation between these registers is "not one of conformity or correspondence but rather of resonance or interference, amplification or dampening" (in Mazzarella 2009, 293), it still resembles an uncanny dichotomy of affect and social, emotion and ratio that most of the affect theorists are doing their best to avoid. However, if these ideas are tracked back to the initial idea of affection as being affected, we may ask what affect or emotion does (Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004) in a concrete social setting, such as carousing (*šenlučenje*) with Gypsies in Novi Sad, a town in Vojvodina. If "secret knowledge" is understood as affect (rather than simply feeling), carousing with Gypsies and "wild behavior" associated with it can be understood as affective state of relation (Seigworth and Gregg 2010) that brings together various others ("white Vojvodinians," Western others, Vojvodina Roma) in single becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 2005). In exploring this, I draw from Mattijs van de Port's book,

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6   For Massumi, affect does not only keep one alive, but also does that for the universe being responsible for general vitality.

7   For many anthropologists, historians, and sociologists there is no experience that is not semantically mediated. Instead, they use the term affect to "emphasize the physical nature of the emotion without implying that it is by necessity pre-cultural" (Belting et al. 2014, 248). In this reading, affect becomes more like Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Belting et al. 2014) or embodiment in which bodies are seen as shaped by the habits made in common surroundings and articulated as movements in the broadest possible sense. But, even in Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, we see that it is understood not as personal, but as collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (2013, 80) that we may understand as society. Habitus-formation predisposes subject and its emotional responses. In that sense, it is similar to affect understood as presubjective without being presocial (Massumi 1995).

Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilization and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town, which gives a thick ethnography of Serbs in Novi Sad based on polarities between what he describes as "European-ness" versus "Balkan-ness" further equated with "culture" (*kultura*) versus "wildness" (1998). He argues that the bourgeoisie of Novi Sad, to whom he usually refers as "nice people" (*fini ljudi*), have actually ceased to behave like the "real bourgeoisie." This shift has supposedly resulted from the fact that they genuinely belonged in the Balkans, seen as an "unruly and wild place," primarily due to the specific war-like history of the Balkans that engendered certain human experiences alien to Western researchers. Reading this book in relation to my prolonged research of music in Novi Sad, I argue that those affective becomings of various others make a "symbiotic emergent unit" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 238) in which a constant transformation produces "becoming-other" as the permanent condition of the self.

Orientalism/Balkanism and Discontent in Novi Sad

My fieldwork friends were not particularly interested in *kafana*.[8] They were urban middle-class cool people whose cultural capital and social standing depended on the knowledge of Western music and loathing of any contemporary (or other) "folklore."[9] Still, I managed to persuade a few of them to visit a wine festival in Irig called *Pudarski dani* (Pudar's Days), a small place 24 km from Novi Sad. The wine degustation ended at the local *kafana* with live music and carousing. It took us a while to find the *kafana* suggested by a local friend. After

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8   About *kafana*, a tavern in the eastern Balkans, see the Introduction.

9   For many of my informants all "non-Western" music was consider to be some sort of "folklore." However, it is important to stress that Gypsy music and *kafana* music may be of different kinds and genres, but generally carousing with Gypsies is usually more acceptable than contemporary turbo-folk or other similar music that may be played at more rural festivities (*vašari*) usually under big tents or in the less respectable *kafana* in central Serbia. Peasants, especially those "semi-urban," are not the same Others as Gypsies.

a half-hour drive and a short detour over a dusty village road, we arrived at a "proper Gypsy bar" (one in which Romani musicians are playing).[10] It quickly became full of locals and festival goers, filled with smoke and hectic tones of local musicians who played with the full band probably assembled for the festival (accordion player, violin player, and *prim tambura*, *basprim*, *čelo* and *bas*[11] players). As the night progressed, musicians played faster and louder, collecting money from the guests for the songs they wished to be played. The musicians presented their vast repertoire of songs from more the traditional, those originating from Serbia's "down south" to the more modern ones. The night became more and more intense. It ended with dancing on the table, laughing, crying, and a not-too-serious fight between friends. The participants in the fight, for example, certainly came from Novi Sad bourgeoisie. Two of them had recently gotten married. Theirs was one of the most "cultural" weddings I have attended,[12] and they certainly did not belong to those who easily surrendered to this kind of music. It seems that Gypsy music not only stirs emotion but generates specific intensity that was not easily translatable into a usual and known vocabulary. In a *kafana*, the usually nice people of Novi Sad completely lose control and behave in an uncivilized manner. It can best be described as a cathartic experience of the ecstatic *Bacchanalia* that turns our souls inside out.

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10   The use of the terms Gypsy or Roma/Romani can be a tricky one (for the discussion see Gay y Blasco 2008). I decided to use term Gypsy when I follow my informants who talk about Gypsy music, carousing with Gypsies, Gypsy bands and *kafana*, etc. I also use this term when I follow the authors who use them in a specific context (e.g. van de Port, Deleuze and Guattari). When I analyze certain discourses (academic and otherwise) I use Roma or Romani, when I want to stress various discourses at once I use Roma/Gypsy (cf. the approach by Pasqualino 2008).

11   *Prim tambura* is the smallest of *tambura*, usual used as a lead instrument. *Basprim tambura* is slightly bigger and lower type of tambura used as secondary melody tambura while *čelo* is four strings *tambura* also used as a secondary melody *tambura*. *Bas* is also known as berda, "which resembles a double bass in appearance and function" (MacMillen 2014, 76).

12   Generally, weddings were understood as occasions at which someone could clearly make his/her cultural capital manifest. In this case, it is usually called "cultural level" (*kulturni nivo*). Thus, I heard several times that certain weddings were "cultural," while others were more "peasantry." Thus, a member of a world-music band with whom I collaborated in my research told me that they were asked to play at a "cultural wedding," but they refused, as they considered their music to be artistic and inappropriate for carousing.

The idea of "something extra" that cannot be easily described in the known vocabulary figures prominently in the studies of post-socialism and the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The "integrated cultural order," together with the usual and known power structure, collapsed. At the same time, for most people, the upcoming social and political order was not order at all but simply "chaos" (cf. Simić 2014). The fall of socialism in Europe entailed a fall of socialism in Yugoslavia, too. Accompanying the country's disintegration were wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, armed conflicts in Slovenia and Macedonia, and the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in 1999. The successive wars in the former Yugoslavia did not take place on Serbian territory, apart from that in Kosovo. Serbia received many refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, who primarily settled in Vojvodina.[13] That, together with the cumulative 116 trillion % inflation during the final three months of 1993 (Lazić and Sekelj 1997), made life increasingly difficult. After the fall of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, the international isolation and the UN sanctions were lifted, and the period from 2000 onwards is usually understood as a "period of recovery" and the prolonged, never-ending "road to normality."

The initial state of turmoil was so great that the society was opaque and obsolete for both outsiders and insiders, researchers and natives (as well as for all those in-between). Marko Živković, in his study of the Serbian capital Belgrade in the mid-1990s, wrote that social reality became "opaque" not only to him but to other natives "who lived there continuously" (2000, 168). He goes on: "My own society became almost as unfamiliar to me as it might have been for an outsider. Milošević's Serbia was a place undergoing a traumatic change and experiencing what is, by any standard, a high level of general turmoil. One aspect of such an extreme situation is that a great deal of what has previously been taken for granted by the majority of people is thrown out of kilter"

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13   An estimated 650,000 refugees had come to Serbia from other former Yugoslav republics by 1995 (Blagojević 1995), while Vojvodina received by far the biggest percentage of those coming to Serbia (Tasić et al. 1997; Lukić and Nikitović 2004).

(Živković 2000, 168). Thus, it is not surprising that both chaos and normality, as its opposite, emerged as central issues in the anthropological studies of the former Yugoslavia (Simić 2014; Jansen 2015). Normality can be applied equally to people, institutions, societies, and states to refer to something ordinary in a good way: stable and predictable. Still, what counts as "normal" may vary across the post-socialist world. Sometimes, the idea of normality is conceptualized through consumption (Crowley 2000; Fehérváry 2002; Rasuing 2002), but it is not the only means through which people construct and understand it (see Yurchak 2006). This normality refers to the totality of the social fabric. Recently, "normality," understood as certain living standards, has been somewhat restored, but the yearning for normal life seems to be here to stay (Simić 2016).

Chaos and abnormality stand in opposition to the previously known—to the state, society, and order in general, which seems to be reflected in carousing in *kafana*, especially when accompanied by Romani musicians. In his study *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilization and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town,* most of van de Port's (1998) informants describe the practices of carousing in *kafana* in Novi Sad and its surroundings in the 1990s as "crossing boundaries of culture." Where culture is understood "as [the] positive pole of the balkanist discourse" (Jansen 2005, 159) and equated with good manners, civility, and civilization, in contrast, crossing those boundaries means "slipping back" into "pre-civilized" time of the Balkans.

In the former Yugoslavia, the main criterion for the differentiation between "Europe," understood as the ultimate model of "high civilization" embodied in Western European countries, and the less clearly localized and more scattered idea of "barbarity," lies in the historical demarcation between the Habsburg Empire (Western Europe) and the Ottoman Empire (the Orient). Vojvodina is usually seen as more "civilized" than the rest of

Serbia, primarily due to its Habsburg legacy.[14] Most importantly, although it has the highest agricultural production in all of Serbia, Vojvodina is seen as more urban than the rest of the country, and urbanity is understood as a clear mark of civilization (Jansen 2005; Spasić 2006). Thus, even Vojvodina's villages are seen as somehow urban since they usually consist of houses on both sides of paved roads with gardens behind them, while in the rest of Serbia, due to the hilly landscape, houses are scattered about the hills without any proper connections between them. These factors constitute the perception of Vojvodina in the eyes of many Serbs and others from former Yugoslavia as the most "European" part of Serbia, hence different from the Balkans "down south."

In popular imaginations, *Vojvođani* (Vojvodinians) are perceived as polite, moderate, mild-tempered, and gravitating toward their own homes. By contrast, a "typical" Serb is impatient and rude, spending more time in *kafana* than at home. However, Vojvodinians also appear to be slow and dispassionate. This set of stereotypes is often used to point out very different things, including the citizens of Novi Sad poised reactions to the performers at gigs and their passivity/reluctance regarding solving the town's problems. Nevertheless, these characteristics are not necessarily negative and have frequently been utilized in drawing distinctions between Serbia "down south" and Vojvodina. Thus, I was told by an informant, a musician in a local rock band:

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14   This mark of civilization, however, can be further used to divide Vojvodina into "more civilized" or "less civilized" parts. Vojvodina is usually divided into three regions called: Srem, Banat, and Bačka (Novi Sad is located in the part of Bačka where it borders Srem). Thus, a curator in the Novi Sad City Museum told me that when Serbs emigrated from southern Serbia and Kosovo (in the Ottoman Empire at that time) at the end of the 17th century to the territory of the current Vojvodina (part of the Habsburg Empire at that time), a leader of the Great Serb Migration, Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević, ordered "all roarers and noisemakers to stay in front of/on Fruška Gora," i.e., in Srem. In Novi Sad, I also learned that Srem is more Serbian, not like the "real Vojvodina." In an endless game of classification, I also heard that Srem itself could be divided into the "wine part" and the "swine part;" it was not hard to guess which one is considered to be more civilized. Many of my informants were very keen to explain these differences to me in various situations.

Novi Sad is always a different story, um, literally, um, for example, a Rambo[15] *concert in Novi Sad and in Belgrade are two completely different concerts, with no similarities. In Belgrade, you feel the energy, while here, someone will reluctantly clap and shout "bravo Rambo!" you know, like "bravo Rambo!" [he said this in a high, tiny voice] That's a strange thing about Vojvodina, and Novi Sad is especially like that.* (no name, 2005, October)

Similarly, a man from the Exit Festival organization told me that when they organized the anti-Milošević protest that later became the Exit Festival,[16] they did not think of inviting trumpet players, as he explained: *People said, it's not for us. We don't know how to carouse, like people from Belgrade.* In other words, "we are polite and moderate people," and this kind of qualification can easily lead to a further explanation of Vojvodina's "cultural superiority" that got spoiled in the 1990s and received its expression in *kafana* gatherings.

Many studies of former Yugoslavia from the early 1990s onwards concentrate on the opposition between "the West" and "the Balkans," employing a different version of Edward Said's orientalism (1979).[17] For Mattijs van de Port, Serbian refusal to allow for the possibility for foreigners to understand their behavior is based on their idea of having a "secret knowledge" that enables only natives to understand their own reality (1999). Although the people with whom van de Port was talking to reference their own "wild behavior" as

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15   Antonije Pušić Rambo is a famous rock musician.

16   Exit is a music festival that emerged out of anti-Milošević protests in 2000.

17   Goldsworthy (1998) situates the ideas of imperialism and colonialism, as analytical categories, within the analysis of Western European and North American exploitations of the "Balkan" concept in their fictional films and literature (cf., Jezernik 2004). Fleming (2000) argues for a more historically grounded implementation of Said's model, questioning the very possibility of applying "any model of Orientalism" to the Balkans. Similarly, in her influential study of the Western imaginations of "the Balkans," Todorova (1997) gives a historically grounded, explicit critique of Said's version of Orientalism, arguing that it is not appropriate for a study of the Balkans and showing how the West has stereotyped the Balkans from the early Renaissance to the present age. Bakić-Hayden (1995) and Bakić-Hayden and Hayden (1992) show how discourses about the "West" and "East" have been internalized in both locations.

something that reflects a real "Serbian mentality" or a "true Serbian behavior"—which they claim an outsider could not understand—it is questionable whether such assertions should be used for analytical, as opposed to descriptive, proposes.

"East" and "West" do not form simple binary oppositions based on a simplified and mechanistic version of Said's Orientalism but must be placed in the cultural and historical settings in which their meanings are generated. Following a similar line of argument, Sarah Green (2005) states that the idea of Orientalism is not useful for analyzing the Balkans, suggesting that the idea leads to a serious misunderstanding of the Balkan region. Green suggested that Orientalism makes the distinction between "East" and "West" too stark, arguing that the Balkans have not been perceived as problematic because they were too "Eastern" and thus too different from the "West," but rather because they have been both "Western" and "Eastern" simultaneously. To say that people argue that the next-door neighbors are "orientals" but that "we" are not reinforces the suggestion that there is, in fact, no clear distinction: the difference keeps regressing into ever smaller differences, and there is no agreement upon which side is the more or less oriental than the other side, leaving the situation unresolved (Green 2005). Furthermore, in former Yugoslavia, we may rather speak of "recursive Eurocentrism" (Jansen 2009) based on the ideas of the special Yugoslav position during the Cold War (among other things).[18] This recursive Eurocentrism became entangled with the Orientalist/Balkanist theme to produce a specific sense of exclusion that intensified in Bosnia and Serbia in the early 2000s.

In that sense, it may be useful to go beyond the binarism of the oppositions implied in (nesting)-orientalism. Instead, investigating how ideas stemming from that logic are deployed in everyday social interactions and as a frame of the analysis of carousing and othering in *kafana* where Romani musicians play could provide a more reliable basis for understanding the situation. Those ideas

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18 The "special position" includes Yugoslavia's membership in Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslav citizens' relative freedom to travel abroad and availability of Western goods.

contextualize academic analysis and define the local "secret knowledge" of carousing (van de Port 1998). However, it becomes clear upon closer investigation that this knowledge is not secret. In fact, a well-known Orientalism/Balkanism framework shapes it while preventing us from understanding the intensity that escapes it. I argue that it is better to understand "secret knowledge" and "common sense statements" about the "Serbian predicament" as "a complex semantic and affective realm that organizes our relations to the world [...]" (Grossberg and Zixu 2017, 10).

The Public Life of Becoming-Other

It is frequently argued that carousing makes people lose a sense of themselves and the world around them (everything solid melts into the air). My informants found our *kafana* gatherings not only important in terms of friendship or entertainment but also as occasions in which the everyday life of rules and conduct give way to deep feelings and a sudden burst of unknown truths, even if the participants find their cultural or artistic values questionable. Life is full of "idle stories" (van de Port 1998)—empty discourses that disguise reality which could be reached only through carousing with Gypsies who can bring the underlying madness of reality to life. They are more like the unwanted version of ourselves. Romani musicians can bring this secret knowledge to life by making people transcend their everyday life into the world of freedom and wilderness that seems more real and in tune with society's invisible reality and general discontent.

It should not be surprising that Roma are seen as the keepers of this kind of knowledge and becoming. For a long time, they have acted as the quintessential European others. In the European imaginary, Roma are pictured, narrated, and known as "the wandering, free, musical, thieving, lustful." They are "uncivilized, animal-like and predatory," and "generous and noble yet child-like" at the same time (Gay y Blasco 2008, 298). In Serbia, they are isolated from the rest of the population and perceived as poor and forced into constant movement by sheer necessity. However, the fantasies of their life also made "the Gypsy world"

an "irresistible dreamland" for the Novi Sad Serbian bourgeoisie (van de Port 1998, 7).[19]

Carol Silverman (2011), probably one of the best-known researchers of Romani music in the Balkans, used Said's concept to claim that Roma are "orientalized." This orientalization also makes them prone to balkanization, which is related to understanding music as a form of art that can help release hidden emotions. Indeed, as Silverman argues, "Roma have carved a traditional musical performance niche from their historical association with emotion" (2011, 276). Following van de Port, she further argues that "patrons need them for ritual," through which Roma bring out patrons' inner feelings (Silverman 2011, 276). Furthermore, Silverman—similarly to van de Port—argues that "some Romani performers strategically employ aspects of emotional self-stereotypification to monopolize various musical niches" (2011, 279) or simply to satisfy clients, as that is what they are doing for a living.[20] However, this is not Romani-Serbian specific, but it applies to many situations in which the exploited/discriminated accept the characteristics attached to them by the domain/ruler. Nevertheless, it is also a matter of comfort in the situation in which they are accepted and, in a way, respected for who they are and not ostracized. In this case, Gypsies are playing to give "the customer the feeling that he's understood," as a violin player explained to van de Port (1998, 182). Thus, the main task of the Romani musician is to supply a music product that can be recognized as "Gypsy" and "that enables the audience to identify with the 'Gypsy spirit'" (van de Port 1998, 182). To that end, "labels such as exotic, passionate, genetically talented, and soulful, for example, are not only found in marketers' advertisements but also sometimes defended by Romani performers" (Silverman 2011, 279). Such labeling applies both to the global political economy of performance and performances in *kafana* in the Balkans.

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19   Minority groups exist only through "becoming" never through "having" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 291). If Gypsies are indeed a minority usually understood as "wandering nomads," that makes them especially capable of resisting the "state territorial machine," as Deleuze and Guattari (2005) call it.

20   See also the chapter by Hofman and Kovačič in this book.

Carousing in *kafana* is not dissimilar to the effervescence produced by the crowd that can be controlled through rituals.[21] The affect of the *kafana* is described as having specific effervescence that helps the "re-creation of the world people experience" (van de Port 1998, 5) but cannot be discursively formulated. In typical academic narratives of public life, reason, and affect, "mass affect" (affective experience in the large group) and reason are radically incommensurable. Crowds or other forms of mass affect are usually seen as extremely suggestive and thus alien to reason and good sense. As Mazzarella explains, "in the discourse of modernity, affect appears as a social *pharmakon*,[22] at once constitutive and corrosive of life in common" (2009, 296). Similarly, although rituals may look like solidifying social practices, they are practices that allow the indeterminacy of affective life and make life livable (Massumi 2002).

Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) concept of assemblage can be devised to illuminate the perplexity of the situation. According to them, our world is made of assemblages. There are "mechanic assemblages" (physical things) and "assemblages of enunciation" (ideas). Assemblage (*agencement*) is a technical term that they developed to describe the process of arranging, connecting, fitting, and embedding that points not to the presupposed organic unity of its elements but rather to the heterogeneous characters of the phenomena (Deleuze and Guattari 2005). In that sense, it is a process—not an entity—that "emerges when a function emerges; ideally it is innovative and productive" (Livesey 2010, 19). The result of an assemblage may be a new expression, institution, realization (Livesey 2010, 19) or reterritorialization. Thus, assemblage is intended to

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21   Romani musicians' performances in *kafana* are sometimes described as rituals, since carousing, as part of many ritual practices is typical of the "liminal phase" of ritual transgressing and possession. Rituals are specific forms of cultural performance (cf. Brown 2003) that van de Port (1998, 5), following Victor Turner, understands as "free zones where the imagination is unfettered." Cultural performances of carousing in *kafana* are, of course, different from the rituals of state and organized religions that "enshrine[s] state or official deities." However, in both cases, rituals have a role of social mediation and should not be seen as opposite to institutional practices that are also a form of a performative ritual (Mazzarella 2009, 298).

22   *Pharmakon* is the term introduced to critical theory by Derrida (1983) and it can mean poison and remedy.

make new connections where you would not expect them and produce a new reality (Livesey 2010, 19). That said, if we understand feelings aroused by Gypsy music in *kafana* as affect and not simply as emotions that help "implicit social knowledge" surface, we may also be able to understand the "secret knowledge of carousing" as an attempt to disfigure the assemblage of the Serbian real that consists of both dominant discourses and things that people can only sense, but not describe.

Affect is produced through assemblage, which "generate specific forms of affect" (Hickey-Moody 2019, 45) in various forms (such as gender, ethnicity, or race). Affect is the result of interactions between bodies (of all kinds – raced, gendered, ethnic bodies), the passage from one state to another, which occurs in relation to affecting bodies (Massumi 2005, xvi). We can also understand affect as an "effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 240). If we replace the word "pack," which has a special meaning in Deleuze and Guattari and their philosophy of becoming (animal, other), with "group" or "groupness,"[23] we can say that the process of subjectification (identification) enfolds as "introjection," "whereas affect acts upon the self like an arrow (or 'projectile'), forcing us to relate to the forces of chaotic materiality that surround us, rather than suppressing their heterogeneity through identification" (Cull 2021, 192). Or, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, "affect is the active discharge of emotion, the counterattack, whereas feeling is an always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion. Affects are projectiles just like weapons; feelings are interoceptive like tools" (2005, 400).

In *kafana*, both are at work: the processes of effectuation/affectuation[24] and the production of emotions. Affect forces one to respond to the chaotic

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23   This may be a bit of a simplification of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in which the idea of the pack is firmly connected with other ideas, such as assemblage, rhizome, multiplicity, molar, and molecular. Molar is linked to the State, and molecular to micro-entities "that transpire in areas where they are rarely perceived," such as "the perception of affectivity, where beings share ineffable sensations" (Conley 2010, 176).

24   I coined the term affectuation from the word affect in analogy with effectuation.

surrounding, while feelings entail identification based on mimicry. Van de Port argues that encounters between Serbs and Gypsies in *kafana* are based on a complex game of mimicry and imitation on both sides. In the context of self-stereotypification, we may ask if the Roma's acceptance of the others' othering them, i.e., acceptance of the public image of themselves created by others and based on the others' perception of them is identification based on mimicry or the Roma's way of doing affect counteracting by mimicry. They do not become Westerners; they do it to remain who they are. Taussig calls this mimesis a situation "in which it is far from easy to say who is the imitator and who is the imitated, which is copy and which is original" (1993, 78). According to him, mimesis primarily seems to make the mimic similar to the mimed, nevertheless reproducing the difference between the two, while Serbs apparently wanted to erase this difference (1993). In *kafana*, they almost seem to be possessed by music so that the feelings and behaviors that they had attributed to others—Gypsies and Balkans in general (smashing glasses, for example)[25]—became real and became their own.

Still, it seems that mimesis leads nowhere. Serbs do not become Gypsies, nor vice versa. Discourse or signification always seems to pull them back into the whirlpool of the Orientalist/Balkanist dyad (van de Port 1998; Silverman 2011). Becoming-other is not a process of imitation and mimesis since these always inevitably fail. It is also not a return or a cycle (of a ritual)—the constant repetition is not becoming, but rather a radical act of new formation.[26] Even if the subject of becoming is imaginary (as discourse-based knowledge of *Gypsy kafana* teaches us), becoming is real, and the alterity which it results in hides in

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25 Smashing glasses is constitutive of the archetypical *kafana* behavior expressing deep passion called *dert* (for the notions of *sevdah* and *merak*, see also chapters by Bartulović and Jelača in this book), in the act of self-harming and self-sacrifice. The infamous sign on the wall in Serbian *kafana* saying, "every glass that gets broken has to be paid for" is not really a prohibition, but permission—"go ahead and do it, but you have to pay for it, the same way you pay for your drink," "just to let you know that it is part of the service."

26 Affective transformation, as such, is a process, not a result. In that sense, I avoid using the term metamorphosis as it may be more suggestive of a result, not a process.

the very meaning of the verb to become that "designates neither a predicative operation nor a transitive action" (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 160).[27]

In order to disentangle the complexity of the "*kafana* situation" and diverse instantiations of various degrees of hybridity, it should be noted that the concept of becoming describes a relationship that operates in a different register from that requires, however loosely fixed points of relaters, what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro defines as "morphological relationality of structuralism" (2014, 160). This relationality can be noticed in the simplified or uncritical use of Orientalist/Balkanist interpretation of carousing with Gypsies. Following Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of becoming, it can be argued that becoming Gypsy is not the same as "becoming-Gypsy." The former is what the Other is (not) doing, while the latter could refer to both the Gypsy and the Other. The latter implies that becoming is the present participle of the non-transitive verb used as a modifier of the word other, and the very becoming is itself other—the Other (Gypsy) is an immanent aspect of the event and not its transcendent object.[28]

The moment a Serb (or anyone else) "becomes a Gypsy," the Serb and the Gypsy are no longer there. Thus, the formula Serb/Gypsy/Balkan/European designates a specific multiplicity of becoming that is incomprehensible in structuralist logic of affect as Balkanism.[29] Instead, we should be looking for the "disjunctive synthesis of becoming" that is not based on metaphor (for example, carousing as a metaphor for war, wildness or disorder) or mimesis (Serbs imitating Gypsies) but on a movement that deterritorializes "the two terms of the relation it creates by extracting them from the relations defining them in order to link them via a new 'partial connection'" (Viveiros de Castro 2014, 160).

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27 Indeed, linguistically, becoming is rather an adjective (the present participle derived from the verb becoming). It is not about action but characteristics/description

28 The transitive verb *becoming* is probably not possible. But it does not necessarily make the non-transitive verb *becoming* less worrying or, in some instances, less beautiful.

29 Multiplicity and becoming are one and the same thing (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 249). Multiplicity is defined by the number of dimensions it has. It is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension without changing its nature. But affects are also becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 256).

These "partial connections" (Strathern 2005) are never simply dichotomous points of two things that relate but an array of relations that make a bundle (or assemblage) that cancel the initial dichotomy. Thus, if the experience of *kafana* is to be taken seriously, one should search for an affective transformation that embodies social and power relations but may also be prone to failure and impossibility of transformation due to that very embodiment.

If affect is the name that Deleuze and Guattari give to a particular kind of encounter between bodies (Cull 2021, 192), then the central question is what a body (as affect) can do (to other bodies). As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari do not understand bodies in a conventional sense of human or animal body (although bodies are also human and animal), but rather "as any whole composed of parts, where these parts stand in some definite relation to one another" (Baugh 2010, 35). Understood in this way, the body can be a human or an animal body, but also "a body of work, a social body or collectivity, a linguistic corpus, a political party, or even an idea" (Baugh 2010, 36). In carousing, the human bodies of musicians and the audience interact, as well as the bodies of ideas and everything else that participants bring in: the ideas and imaginaries of Europeanness, Balkanness, civilized, wildness, etc.

In order to understand affective encounters in *kafana*, it is helpful to reiterate Deleuze and Guattari's idea of becoming in the context of art performances. Laura Cull, for example, suggests that there "would be a difference for Deleuze, between the audience's recognition of an actor's representation of 'a familiar, easily recognizable emotion' and the 'unfamiliar affect' of a performance that unsettles but also fascinates us in its power to resist identification" (2021, 192). Following those ideas, we can say that carousing with Gypsies, things may be at the same time familiar and unfamiliar. Familiar in the sense that participants recognize the ritual in which they might or might not have participated in the past (repetition always fails), but it is never certain in which direction the carousing will go—how (if at all) they are going to be affected by it.

I will give an example from my ethnographic experience: I had friends visiting from Belgrade at Christmas who wished to go to a *kafana*. I decided to take them to a "cultural one," but after dinner, they wanted some live music, and

we went to a *kafana* where Gypsies played. The *kafana* was relatively spacious, which was not common, but the band consisted of only guitar, bass, and accordion. As the evening progressed, and the music became more frenetic, and we became drunker; a female friend became a very enthusiastic dancer, while her male partner, an amateur musician, borrowed the accordion from the player to perform a song. He wanted to join the band for more music, but the friendly and firm band leader refused. The songs were to be paid and ordered as they should be, and no amount of personal charm, male comradeship (or flirting) could do otherwise. My friends were rather disappointed, as it is well known that "the real soul of Gypsy music is only released when the musicians play for themselves and not as professional musicians" (van de Port 1998, 181), which made them want to leave and find a place where Gypsies "play for the soul." However, the rest of us were already tired and could offer them only a dramatic drive through the thick snow toward Belgrade.[30]

In other words, in the setting of *kafana*, it was mostly impossible "to become-other." The Romani musicians were the gatekeepers of the transformation. As van de Port explains, "the task of the Gypsy musician is to bring the internalized Gypsy of the Serbs to life" (1998, 182). It means that imitation is not enough. You cannot imitate Gypsy if you want to become one—you need to lose both your Serbianness and Europeanness if you want to bring your "inner Gypsy" to life. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, "imitation self-destructs, since the imitator unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with

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30   In van de Port's (1998) account, this impossibility of becoming the Other applies particularly to women, and he himself was much more critical of women who attempted such a transformation than of men. This may sound odd, as female Romani singers are seen as a typical embodiment of Gypsy *kafana* music in discursive and bodily senses. However, a *kafana* used to be seen as a place of male entertainment with female singers who performed for male clientele (as far as social status is concerned, these women were not regarded as being much different than prostitutes). Thus, it was almost impossible for women clientele to engage in the state of becoming-other by merging with their Gypsy-other within. They were tied to a double transformation that they had already made—from Serbian women to Serbian male clientele of *kafana*, from which becoming-Gypsy seemed impossible. Serbian women could not be transformed into Serbian males, as discourse keeps them with their female roles, while the Serbian men could not be transformed into the subordinated but desired Gypsies.

the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates" (2005, 304–305). However, as it was clear in the discussion of Balkan and Europe in the Orientalism/Balkanism debate, it should also be said that Gypsy is not fundamentally an ethnicity or race with certain characteristics that old ethnographers can identify and describe. Instead, a characteristic of "Gypsiness" is that Gypsies have the power to guard and use it as a force of transformation (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 239 and further). Thus, one also needs to lose the other's Gypsiness in Other to become the Other. In carousing in a *kafana*, affect reveals that the real qua continual becoming is immanent to what appears as an imitation. However, the constant nesting character of otherness simultaneously permits and blocks the transformation: European, Serbian, Gypsy that swings from the reality of the flesh to the "idle stories" of discourse.

Conclusion

Although the Orientalist/Balkanist discourse is based on the nesting principle of recursive Eurocentrism that may make the Balkans simultaneously Western and Eastern (Green 2005), it still reproduces a dichotomy that does not disappear into fractal-like indifference. Thus, as soon as orientalist discourse creeps in, the transformation becomes impossible (the question remains if it is possible at all/generally). It captures and fixes any intensity in a dialectical game of discourse and emotion/affect. Affect's work in a *kafana,* as described by van de Port and my interlocutors, exists only as the result of mediation by Western discourse. Describing it as Balkan, wild, and true, as an unmediated affect of "true self" may be possible only because it emerges as the result of the constant process of Othering. I am not simply saying that the Orientalist/Balkanist discourses produce the polarization that enables carousing to be read as wild and "more real" than the supposedly "civilized behavior" of European non-*kafana* goers. Also, contrary to the perception of some aspects of society as instances exclusively of the rational, civilized, and logical, I contend that affect is pivotal to institutions of modernity rather than being a residual (the institutions'

other) that becomes manifest in specific circumstances such as wild, wild Balkans. I argue that both intensity—non-semantically mediated affect—and a semantic qualification are needed to make any social practice possible. In that respect, and contrary "to the ideological discourse of rationalized modernity," the easily altered "terrain of affect is not, in fact, external to bureaucratic process" (Mazzarella 2009, 298). Affect is not the radical other of public order (or bureaucratic efficiency) but a necessary part of any institutional practice with an aspiration to public efficacy. In other words, any public policy that seeks to be effective must also be affective (Mazzarella 2009, 299).

This may look like an awkward concluding dialectical move to the theorists of affect who, following Deleuze and Guattari, mostly reject dialectics. However, some authors recognize a gap between affect and symbolization as a "productive gap" that needs to be addressed (Mazzarella 2009; Duclos 2018). In that sense, for Mazzarella, the condition of our becoming is a "negatively dialectical one" in which "we are always moving between immanence and qualification" (2009, 304). Immediation, imagined by some kind of pre-mediated existence, is constituted as "at once the outcome of mediation and the means of its occlusion" (Mazzarella 2009, 303). In other words, "immediation is nothing more than an illusion produced by an always already constitutive mediation" (Duclos 2018, 41). The categories that seem opposite to the vitality of affect (like social order or citizenship) become their necessary part and always make our identities inadequate.

The reference to Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics is not accidental. Some authors try rereading affect theory through the lenses of Adorno's negative dialectics (Mazzarella 2009; Rhodes 2019). For Adorno, dialectics is not based on reconciliation that leads to a positive outcome or sublimation into something greater. Similarly, mediation exposes "disjunctions and contradictions," conceived "as the process of interconnection itself, as a process of mutual implication of the subject and the object" (Duclos 2018, 41). Following a similar idea, I argue that the discursive dichotomy of Europe (civilization) and its Balkan discontent must be paired with the affect of *kafana* to make us interpellate into people of a certain kind. Nevertheless, in contrast to the arguments made

by Mazzarella (2009) and Duclos (2018), I argue that in the case in question, the only real potential for the escape lies in the rejection of the dialectical logic altogether. We are neither European (with a threat of the Balkan essences lurking from inside/within) nor Balkan. Neither are we both at the same time. Those (n)either/(n)or identities based on the opposition between articulation and affect always fail, as they are based on "two levels of impersonal generality" (Mazzarella 2009, 299). It is not only that they are too general for our personal experiences, but also that they are based on dark dialectics of civility on the one hand and, on the other, the intensity of carousing. There may be two implications for the ethnographic cases presented here. First, it may entail that the situation as mediated by Western discourses is not characterized by dichotomies, i.e., that Serbs and Gypsies cannot engage in the becoming-Other since there is no other in that game. The second implication concerns the mediation by a Western discourse that causes perceiving the situation in a certain way. Specifically, it implies the exoticization of the very participants (Serbs and Roma), thereby rendering them the Other. Then, one of the parties is further othered and remains distinct. In both cases, to become-Other as a "permanent condition of the Self," it is necessary to recognize the power of mediation that produces the dichotomy of the two and overcome it in a paradoxical affect of dialectic.

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The Affects of Wars and Gypsy Bars:

Notes on Re-reading an Old Book

Mattijs van de Port

I open my computer, type the word "affect" in the search bar and go through the files that show up in the finder window. I find hesitant writings to introduce the term in my thinking, half-hearted attempts to engage some of the literatures that brought about the "affective turn" in anthropology. There is an unpublished paper on *wudhu*, the Islamic ritual of washing the body before prayer, which references the work of Brian Massumi (2015); a summary of William Mazzarella's chapter "Affect: What is it Good for?" (2009); and there are several chapters of Anna Vos's PhD project (2020) on affective interactions between people and stones in the Roman neighborhood Testaccio. So yes, I have been looking into affect theory, but I have to admit I never really took it on. I am not sure why. I probably shied away from the learned language of Massumi and Mazzarella. In those days, my own writing was already driven by the search for a more poetic mode of engagement with the world and was less interested in the analytic mode that considers the affective dimensions of social life from a distance. Not much later, I started making essay films, reinventing my anthropology in a medium that seeks to play affects to the full.

The computer search followed the kind invitation by the editors of this volume to contribute a think-piece and consider my research with Romani musicians and their Serbian patrons in Vranje and Novi Sad as a kind of affect-research *avant-la-lettre*. Honored and moved to find my work from Novi Sad being picked up by a new generation of scholars from the former Yugoslav lands, I readily agreed to come up with something. The first thing I had to do was to go search for a copy of the book in my mother's home—my last copy was with a young Dutch-Bosnian filmmaker who had recently indicated he wanted to read it. Back on the train to Amsterdam, I opened the book. I immediately

realized I couldn't even remember the last time I had put my eyes on this text. I figured it might have been when, after some 20 years of absence, I revisited Novi Sad—an endlessly postponed return, inspired by nostalgic feelings, but more so by the desire to encounter the Vojvodinian capital for what it is, to free the city from the particular story I had made out of it. As the rainy Dutch flatlands passed by through the train window—so similar yet so different from the Pannonian plains—I started to explore my writings.

Did I write about affect, as understood in the later texts I found on my computer? I noticed that the term affect was not in the index. The term "emotions" was, as was "body." Yet, in my current understanding of things, I would say these notions were heavily undertheorized. I found none of the current thinkers associated with the affective turn in anthropology in the bibliography. I did, however, find the work of authors such as Michael Taussig (1986; 1993), Gananath Obeyesekere (1981), Jojada Verrips (1993), and H.U.E. (Bonno) Thoden van Velzen and Wilhelmina (Ineke) van Wetering (1988), who all had, in their own particular ways, addressed the importance of affect in anthropological studies. Thoden van Velzen, who was supervising my PhD project in Novi Sad, had introduced me to a literature that sought to bring psychoanalytic insights in dialogue with anthropology, which, at the time, was still very much of the structuralist kind. "Let's not go for the crystal-clear worlds structuralists make out of their fieldwork material," he kept telling me. "When you take in people's desires, collective fantasies, drives and emotions—the psychodynamics of a society—you may not arrive at a 'cultural grammar.' Your account will be a whole lot messier. But it'll probably be much closer to what is actually going on in people's lives."

Thoden van Velzen certainly guided me towards an appreciation of the emotional undertones of the Gypsy bar (*kafana*) rituals[1]—their psychodynamics, as he would call it. Yet it is only fair to say that in the Serbia of the early 1990s—a

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[1]   In this text, I use the term Romani whenever I refer to the actual people. The term "Gypsy" refers to the imaginary figure that occurs in Serbian fantasies, beliefs and practices.

society in the process of violent break-ups—one would have to be blind and tone-deaf not to perceive the emotions that tear old worlds apart and bring new worlds into being. Sure, the nationalist fever produced ample talk about purity and the need to recreate a world of clear categories—and "certainties" as to what was really going on as Yugoslavia fell apart were to be heard everywhere—but such talk could not contain the shrill emotional overtones with which these things were being said, contributing to an all-pervading sense that clarity and certainty were desperately sought, but nowhere to be found, other than in such horrors as "blood in the snow and brains splattered against the wall," as I kept quoting Aleksandar Tisma (in van de Port 1998, 30).

Going through the chapters, I can see how I struggled to articulate the one basic thing that my research in Novi Sad gave me to ponder (and which would define my research agenda up until today): the finding—which was an experience as much as a lucid understanding—that "the world does not comply with our narrations of it." The war had revealed a huge gap between what people want to make out of life and being and what the world may teach them about life and being. I sought for metaphors to express this gap. I likened the experience of war to a "reform school" where "lessons" were learned. I kept going back to the image of an old peasant woman in Slavonia, going through the rubble of her bomb-shelled home, mourning the loss of an indoor plant she'd had—which she'd seen growing over the years as if every new leaf had added to her confidence in the "new times" of Titoist Yugoslavia. And I did, of course, "read" Serbian fantasies about the life and being of Gypsies as a storage space for wartime memories, unforgettable yet unassimilable with the post-war project of "picking up the pieces and trying to move on." To grasp this finding, I had mobilized Michael Taussig's *implicit social knowledge*: "a non-discursive, essentially inarticulable and imageric knowing of social relationality and history" (in van de Port 1998, 97); a knowledge gained by experience which determines "what moves people without their knowing quite why or quite how" (Taussig in van de Port 1998, 100). I had tried out Brinkley Messick's notion of *subordinate discourse* (which never made it to the English translation of the book), a non-verbal "language" used by female Moroccan carpet-weavers, which

escaped the control of male-dominated discourses, and could thus maintain a realm of female world-making (in van de Port 1994, 144). I had sought recourse to Clifford Geertz's elaboration of the notion of *common sense*.

It took me by surprise to find that I had not yet begun my explorations of the works of Slavoj Žižek (1989), Yannis Stavrakakis (1999), and Terry Eagleton (2009), whose elaborations of the Lacanian differentiation between reality and the Real (van de Port 2011) would have greatly helped to grasp the tensions I had sought to articulate. The insight that reality is not the Real, but a social construct—a collective agreement on "what to take for real" (and what not)—which always produces a surplus of phenomena and sense-experiences that exist but need to be repressed, tabooed, denied, and kept-at-bay, was fundamental in my later understandings of my research findings from Novi Sad. Žižek's eloquent formulation of the Real wouldn't be out of place on the pages of *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild*:

> [The Real refers to] the starting point, the basis, the foundation of the process of symbolization ... which in a sense *precedes* the symbolic order and is subsequently structured by it when it gets caught in its network: this is the great Lacanian motif of symbolization as a process which mortifies, drains off, empties, carves the fullness of the Real of the living body. But the Real is at the same time the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolization and is as such produced by the symbolization itself. (Žižek 1989, 169)

Rereading my work on Serbia 30 years later revealed just how much I had been grabbing for some theoretical support—any available theoretical support, really—that would keep my observations and thoughts afloat. Yet I also think that, in the absence of decent theoretical groundings, I had to rely on ethnographic descriptions to highlight the tensions that follow from the fact that "the world does not comply with our narrations of it." It could well be that my lack produced a more interesting book and a more enticing read.

* * *

The question then becomes what affect theory would have brought to make sense of my Novi Sad findings. In that one unpublished paper on the Islamic purification ritual of *wudhu,* I find myself casting the notion of affect into the mold of the Lacanian ideas mentioned above. Or maybe I should say that I played on an elective affinity between these two perspectives: for just as the concept of the Real denotes an excess, a surplus, a leftover produced by narration (or symbolization, in Žižek's words), the concept of affect very much tries to arrive at similar understandings in the study of human emotions and affects.

Brian Massumi, for instance, seeks to differentiate between "emotions" and "affect." For him, emotions belong to the realm of semiotics: they are a culturally informed—and therefore recognizable—qualification of affect. Affect refers to the multiple experiential processes going on inside our bodies. It is a "domain of intensity, indeterminacy, and above all potentiality, which the signifying logic of culture reduces" (Massumi in Mazzarella 2009, 292). His analysis seeks to keep this multiplicity in focus, observing how it constantly plays up as an ineradicable ambiguity in all our attempts to make sense of the world and of ourselves. Massumi puts it like this:

> In cultural theory, people often talk as if the body and its situatedness on the one hand, and our emotions, thoughts and the language we use for them on the other, are totally different realities, as if there has to be something to come between them and put them into touch with each other. Theories of ideology are designed for this. Mediation, in whatever guise it appears, is the way a lot of theorists try to overcome the old Cartesian duality between mind and body, but it actually leaves it in place and just tries to build a bridge between them. (2015, 7–8, emphasis mine)

Massumi suggests we need to come to terms with the observation that there is an affect associated with every functioning of the body, every move it makes. He considers this "perpetual bodily remainder" to be *as* necessary a dimension

of human sense-making as the body that is interpellated by—and responds to—the categories of social life.

> It's like a reserve of potential or newness or creativity that is experienced alongside every actual production of meaning in language or in any performance [...]—vaguely but directly experienced, as something more, a more to come, a life overspilling as it gathers itself up to move on. (2015, 8)

And elsewhere, he states: "if there were no excess or remainder, no fade-out to infinity, the universe would be without potential, pure entropy, death" (Massumi 2002, 35). In other words, Massumi invites us to consider the thought that, in our attempts to make sense of the world, we are not only depending on the *disambiguation* that cultural orders offer but also on the essential incompleteness of that disambiguation—for it is that incompleteness that sets the work of culture in motion.

The resonance between what Lacanian thinkers argue about "reality" and "the Real," and affect theorists argue about "emotions" and "affect" is quite striking. In both instances, there is the recognition that the introduction of the (cultural, social, linguistic, symbolic) *form* requires the production of a *rest*; and both Lacanians and affect theorists advise researchers to pay attention to the tensions generated between form and rest and the dynamics that follow from these tensions.

What affect theory really helps me to think is what goes on in human-bodies-in-interaction-with-the-world. This is indeed what I explore in the paper, which brings up the case of a recent Dutch convert to Islam washing his foot before going to pray in the mosque (during the presentation, I played a video which, in a loop, kept showing a close-up of his fingers meticulously washing his foot under a stream of water coming out of a tap). Whereas the young man would probably signify this action, called *wudhu*, as a sign of his newfound identity, Massumi's thinking blocks any such singular reading of the ritual. Here is how I argue that point:

> Take the given that this young man was raised as a non-Muslim. That very fact might quite likely mean that this foot on the screen may have gone

through similar washings earlier on in its life. It may have been washed like this by someone else, the mother of this young man, for instance. Or indeed, it may have received similar treatment by the young man's own hands, but in another setting, after a bike-ride or a jogging session in the park. Or it may have been stuck in an ice-cold stream during a hike in the mountains. Such lingering bodily memories may well play up in what is now the performance of a religious requirement: adding to the experience, enriching it, or—who knows—disrupting it.

And then there is the fact that these hands and that foot belong to a body that is obviously as involved in this ritual as are the hands and the foot: a body that needs to perform a balancing act to stand on one foot while washing the other; that may have a spine that hurts when having to bend over; whose eyes or ears may be distracted by the arrival of another man in the washing room; that produces an urge to urinate due to the sound of streaming water. What I am trying to say here is that bodies are always in excess of what we want from them, religiously or otherwise. There is always an experiential surplus to the activities they engage in. Indeed, to talk about "*the* body" in unified terms—as we often do with great facility—is misleading and in denial of what goes on inside our bodies at any single moment of the day: multiple sensations and experiences, all happening at the same time.

This brief reflection on a young man washing his foot should suffice to explain what I mean with the-body-that-cannot-be-told: no matter how the body is interpellated—by discourses, rituals, sensational forms—it is always in excess of the forms such interpellations offer to the subject. The infinite number of processes going on inside the body and between the body and the world are never wholly captured. This experiential surplus of the interpellated body may be muted, but it is, therefore, not gone. On the contrary, it keeps prompting alternative awarenesses, experiences, and feelings. These may resonate harmoniously with our intentions and enrich our experience with the different colors and hues of our bodily memories. In the case of this young man, they may strengthen his religious identifications, allowing for the sensation that Islam was tailor-made for him, fits him like a glove,

and provides a welcoming shelter for "all of him." Yet the experiential surplus of the body may also produce dissonances, disturb, distract, complicate, obstruct, or inspire us to act differently. As in: "I wanted to go praying in the mosque, but the mere thought of that cold water running over my feet kept me from going." The body is an unruly given in our lives, ever in excess of what we want from it, speaking with us, speaking against us, but always introducing a level of ambiguity into our identifications. (van de Port 2012)

Clearly, this lengthy quote aptly illustrates how I sought to bring Lacanian thinking about the Real to affect theory and how these two perspectives overlap in interesting ways. I do think that in the end, the Lacanian perspective has a wider scope, as it allows one to speak about the Real of inner experience ("perverse" inclinations, "evil" drives, and tabooed feelings which threaten carefully groomed understandings of Self) as well as the Real of social formations (one might think of destructive earthquakes, spirits haunting a secular world, or horrific atrocities occurring in a world that frames itself as civilized). So, if I were to take on affect theory, I would do so as a specification of the Lacanian perspective on self- and world-making.

The editors of this volume may not share my Lacanian "upbringing"—or the lessons of "the reform school of war" which prepared me for the idea that reality is not the Real—but I do feel they, too, are concerned to reduce the worlds we study to what goes on in and between bodies, insisting we should avoid adopting the seemingly firm separation of the spheres of the affective and the socio-political. I couldn't agree more.

* * *

I think I owe it to *Het Einde van de Wereld*,[2] which is the translated name of a Gypsy Bar Na kraju sveta (roughly translated in English as "at the end

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2   As the original Dutch version of *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild* was called.

of the world"), to end with a note on the power of ethnography. I have used this essay to reflect on different theoretical perspectives, and I will always insist on the importance of theory for the anthropological project—even now that I do research in and through film, a medium that is widely considered to be "untheoretical" (van de Port 2018). Revisiting my work on Novi Sad does, however, remind me how attentive, careful descriptions—of a woman being taken over by a Gypsy song in a bar called Play Off; of the meaningless syllables, expressive of wails and laments, picked up from documents by a historian studying the Serbian exodus after the Ottoman conquest of their lands; of the sweet song celebrating the joy of the Gypsy tent, made of "smoke-stained cloth"—can do all the work of theory. That is probably what I took away from this exercise. Theory certainly helps you to see things differently, sharpen your thoughts, and even attune your senses. Yet theory is—and should remain—a tool for ethnographic storytelling. *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild* is a book about affects, but it never mentions them. Although no Lacanian terms appear on its pages, it is very much a book about reality not being the Real, and all the trouble that follows from it. I'd say there is a simple explanation for the absence of these terms. There were no "affects" in the Gypsy bar called Na Kraju Sveta in the village of Kovilj. Nor something called "the Real."

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Mattijs van de Port is an anthropologist and filmmaker, working at the University of Amsterdam and the VU University. He did fieldwork in Serbia, the Netherlands and Brazil and published three monographs: *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild: Civilisation and its Discontents in a Serbian Town* (1998), *Geliquideerd* (2001) and *Ecstatic Encounters: Bahian Candomblé and the Quest for the Really Real* (2011). In his current work he explores the affordances of film for anthropological storytelling, which has resulted in three essay films: *The Possibility of Spirits* (2016), *Knots and Holes: an Essay Film on the Life of Nets* (2018) and the award winning *The Body Won't Close: Bahian Tales of Danger and Vulnerability* (2021). Van de Port is working on a new camera-based research-project in Brazil, which seeks to understand the politics and poetics of baroque and modernist modes of world making.

Why is the talk about Yugoslavia still emotionally charged and situated in the registers of passion, pain, sentimental recollections, or nostalgia even 30 years after its violent dissolution? How is the sphere of the affective, sensory, and embodied fundamental to understanding the historical project of Yugoslavia and its afterlives? The chapters in this book address these questions and explore how the attempts to conceptually capture our social realities in their messy, fluid, and indeterminate natures contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex sociopolitical processes in the region.

This important volume enriches the discussion of affect theory from a perspective of expressive practices and arts. With its strong interdisciplinary breadth— bridging the disciplines of ethnomusicology, anthropology, film and literary studies—it offers a nuanced analysis of how affectivity, embodiment, and (im)materiality have shaped Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav social worlds.

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This volume contributes to a new understanding of the radical sociopolitical and economic changes in the post-Yugoslav region over the last 30 years. Usually understood as personal, intimate, and banal, the bodily, sensual, and affective aspects of such changes have remained largely unexplored in the scholarship. Still, they can provide significant insights into the processes of shaping new forms of solidarity or coping with the disintegration of the state and the introduction of capitalist relations of production.

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