UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

A New Peasant Question:
Confronting Epistemic and Material Dispossession in the Yugoslav Region

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Christina Novakov-Ritchey

2022

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A New Peasant Question:
Confronting Epistemic and Material
Dispossession in the Yugoslav Region

by

Christina Novakov-Ritchey
Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance
University of California, Los Angeles, 2022
Professor David Delgado Shorter, Chair

A New Peasant Question exposes how the invalidation of peasant knowledge over the past two hundred years has covered over the violent dispossession and exploitation of peasant populations in the Yugoslav region. This research builds on previous work in folklore, anthropology, and performance studies, which has problematized the colonial investments of anthropology and the racism undergirding white modern artists' infatuation with the visual cultures of colonized peoples. The dissertation extends this line of analysis to representations of Yugoslav peasants and their cultural practices (most commonly referred to as "folklore"). I consider how and why peasants in the Yugoslav region came to be widely seen as backwards, superstitious, and obstinate. To understand this process and its consequences, I examine ethnographic photography, peasant painting, nationalist folklore, performance and video art, and contemporary village healing practices. Combining visual and discourse analysis with ethnographic and archival research methods, this dissertation traces the changing representations of peasants' relationships to land in the Yugoslav region from the turn of the nineteenth century to the present. As the Yugoslav region currently witnesses some of the worst air quality in the world, an unresolved waste management crisis, and the damming of the last "wild rivers" in Europe, the enduring contradictions of nineteenth and twentieth-century responses to the Peasant Question provoke us to both think critically about the peasant's historical trajectory in the region and also find opportunities for actualizing alternative horizons.

The dissertation begins with an introduction, which sketches out the history of the Yugoslav region, the history of political and aesthetic representations of the peasant, and the convergent histories of peasant dispossession and European colonial conquest. Following the introduction, the dissertation contains five body chapters that address different structural and historical dimensions of the peasant's aesthetic and cultural role in Yugoslav political projects over the last one hundred years. The first chapter examines ethnographic village photography produced by ethnographers from Serbia and the Habsburg metropole prior to the First World War. Ethnographic photography and related Romantic discourses on Balkan peasants of this period reveal how imperialists sought to take the peasant out of time in order to invalidate their claims to land and self-determination. The second chapter pulls apart the relationship between communist fine artists and peasant artists in interwar Croatia and analyzes the significant role of self-taught peasant artists in Yugoslav socialism. An anti-Romantic contrast to the pre-war period, the communist-peasant-artist alliances of the interwar period through the early days of socialist Yugoslavia authoritatively recognize peasants as agents of political transformation. The third chapter examines the capture of folklore by Serbian nationalists during the Yugoslav Wars.

Tracing the invention of nationalist folklore back to the early-nineteenth century, I argue for the recuperation of popular traditions that have been excluded from the official oeuvre of Yugoslav folklore. The fourth chapter addresses the invocation of rural Balkan traditions by performance and video artists in the postsocialist period. The postsocialist period is characterized by contradiction, thus we see the simultaneous use of Balkan traditions as a critique of imposed austerity and the dismantling of social welfare as well as the revival of a Romantic representation of the rural subject as someone outside of time, without a political life or future. The final chapter analyzes the contemporary experiences of women and men in rural Serbia and North Macedonia, who practice ecologically-engaged forms of traditional medicine while negotiating the precarious material conditions of the village. In this chapter, I demonstrate how traditional healers' anti-essentialist vision of bodies and the natural world provides an enduring Balkan anticapitalist model for revolutionary praxis. The conclusion reflects on all previous chapters and argues for the importance of continued research on peasant knowledges and practices in our present global context of food insecurity and climate catastrophe.

The dissertation of Christina Novakov-Ritchey is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Aparna Sharma

Patrick Hyder Patterson

David Delgado Shorter, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

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Novakov-Ritchey, Christina. 2021 "Peasant Artists and Communist Praxis in Interwar Yugoslavia." *Age of Revolutions*. September 13, 2021. https://ageofrevolutions.com/2021/09/13/peasant-artists-and-communist-praxis-in-interwar-yugoslavia/

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INTRODUCTION
A Monument and a Protest

> When those who exterminated the Albanians in the region of Nish [Niš] have also wiped out my people, the simplest accurate description of their daily life will suffice to serve both as a permanent monument to their one-time existence and as an indictment of those who annihilated them.[1]

In 1914, a young Albanian man wrote these words in the opening pages of a book about his home village, Shtirovica. Anticipating the approach of war and targeted deportations, Bayazid Almaz Doda documented the daily lives of his neighbors, friends, and relatives in the village where he grew up. Along with the book, Doda also captured several photographs of Shtirovica and its residents, including some of his smiling friends. Two years after completing his monograph, Doda's village was completely destroyed by the Bulgarian army and Albanians were deported from the region *en masse*. Today only a few stones remain of the village of Shtirovica, located in western Macedonia.

I feel the uncanny presence of Doda's words in the present text, although I hope that this dissertation does not have to serve only as a monument to the dead. Overwhelmingly identified with the feudal mode of production, many claim that the peasant issue is no longer relevant in 2022. However, it remains the case that over half of the world's population are considered peasants. For hundreds of years, peasants—defined as agricultural workers whose labor is directed partly towards meeting subsistence needs and whose labor power has not been entirely captured by the wage system—have understood how to relate to the land without destroying it. They have known how to sustain themselves from the land and how to reproduce their communities.

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[1] From Bajazid Almaz Doda's *Albanisches Bauerleben im oberen Rekatal bei Dibra (Makedonien)(Albanian Peasant Life in the Upper Reka Valley near Dibra (Macedonia)),* translated by Robert Elsie.

Fannie Lou Hamer, a community organizer who worked towards abolishing sharecropping and ending the exploitation of Black workers in the U.S. agricultural industry, identified peasants' and other agricultural workers' ability to sustain themselves as one of the most vital sources of power:

> Down where we are, food is used as a political weapon. But if you have a pig in your backyard, if you have some vegetables in your garden, you can feed yourself and your family, and nobody can push you around. If we have something like pigs and some gardens and a few things like that, even if we have no jobs, we can eat and we can look after our families (Hamer quoted in White 2018, 65)

Prying people away from the land and away from subsistence practices forces people to become dependent on the market. The knowledge of subsistence, of sustaining life on one's own, in one's own community, has been a constant threat to capitalist hegemony. Even during state socialism, subsistence practices were seen as obstacles to modernization. The urban planners of socialist Belgrade, for example, were annoyed by the tendency for Yugoslavia's new urbanites (recent village emigrants) to use the green spaces adjacent to their buildings to keep pigs and chickens, rather than "nobler pursuits."[2]

Since its inception, the myth of progress has been used to justify both colonial violence and peasant dispossession. Progress in the countryside has been demonstrated through the enclosure of substantial common grazing lands, the seizure of peasant lands, coercion into waged labor, and the criminalization of peasant debtors. During this primitive accumulation process, not only are peasants' bodies accumulated as labor and peasants' land accumulated as capital, but peasants' knowledge is also subjected to processes of accumulation, appropriation, invalidation, criminalization, and/or suppression. As Rosa Luxembourg first demonstrated in 1913, primitive accumulation is a constant, not merely antecedent, process in capitalism. There was no *ur-*

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[2] See Brigitte Le Normand 2014, 78.

moment when the cut was made between which peasant knowledges should be accumulated, criminalized, etc. Rather, "peasant knowledge" became a shifting target for capitalists, frequently redefined so that more and more could be accumulated and exploited.

Ultimately, the capture and confinement of peasant knowledge precludes the authoritative voice of the peasant. Recalling the words of Gayatri Spivak, the peasant "cannot speak," because the peasant's autonomy has been utterly violated and denied by the capitalist. The peasant really has no right to land, livestock, or even their own labor anymore. Throughout my research, I have repeatedly confronted the trope that the loss of innumerable villages and peasants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was inevitable: an unfortunate but necessary sacrifice for the sake of "progress"—or else.

Alternative answers to the capitalist devastation of the countryside have been pursued since the eighteenth century. European Romantics produced a whole corpus of works of literature, philosophy, and art protesting industrialization's negative consequences on the countryside. Then, starting with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-nineteenth century, meditations on the so-called "Peasant Question" sought to explain how to effectively transform the peasant class of feudalism into a politicized proletariat. Within this discourse, peasants have frequently been represented as stubborn, obstructionist, reactionary, and acting against their own self-interest. Amongst communists, the countryside has also been viewed with suspicion as a potential hotbed for peasant capitalists—known most commonly by the Russian term "*kulaki"*—despite capitalism's close entanglement with the urban landscape. While there was obviously a lot of sympathy for the struggles of poor peasants, the dominant opinion in Europe remained that the peasantry was inevitably destined for disappearance, and thus a proactive role had to be taken to form their new capitalist (or socialist) class position and their political agenda.[3]

The present dissertation exposes how and why rural communities are represented as backward, superstitious, and obstinate. Since at least the early-fifteenth century, the English word "peasant" has held both descriptive and derogatory meanings. While my case study focuses on the former Yugoslavia in southeast Europe, the conclusions of my research reveal the global implications of denying the epistemic sovereignty of the peasantry. Engaging with scholars from Indigenous studies, Balkan studies, settler colonial studies, peasant studies, and other connected fields, my research explicitly links the marginalization of rural communities in the Yugoslav region with colonial epistemic violence against Indigenous communities.

Previous scholarship on peasants in the Yugoslav region has predominantly focused on histories of economic transformation, the role of the peasantry in theories of socialist revolution, and folklore/ethnology. These three general categories also typify peasant research beyond the Yugoslav region, with an additional focus on ethnographies of peasants' relationships to changing state power and the role of the peasantry in anti-colonial revolution. I situate my work in close relation to each of these areas of study, as I argue for the relevance of the peasant experience to theories and practices of decolonization. While the application of postcolonial theory to the Balkans did not come into vogue until the postsocialist period, authors from the region have published on colonialism and decolonization in the region since the turn of the twentieth century.

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[3] Conversely, some Latin American scholars have responded to the Peasant Question with the "permanence thesis," arguing that "peasant societies, for various reasons, do not abide by the 'laws' of industrial capitalism and that, on the contrary, peasant economies have a developmental logic of their own that results in the survival of the peasantry and its conditions of reproduction in the countryside" (Araghi 1995, 338).

By placing the peasant, the colonized subject, and the Indigenous subject in conversation, the intent is not to make these subject positions commensurable, but rather to understand how shared capitalist logics of progress and evolutionism have been perpetuated against all of these populations and to demonstrate how these shared logics have been militantly resisted through the analytic frames of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Rather than seeking out commensurabilities, I seek to practice intellectual internationalism by shedding light on how we can begin to reevaluate the epistemological, political, and cultural significance of the village, which has largely been captured by folklore, dismissed as "superstition," or appropriated by nationalists. While militant anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist critiques have flourished in Southeastern Europe, there has been little attention focused on the political valence of peasant ways of knowing in Yugoslavia outside of the recurrent Romantic invocation of the *zadruga*.[4] This dissertation offers a critical framework through which to understand the tendentious relationship between the Balkan peasant and the decolonial subject. The four pillars of this framework are 1) the study of the peasant; 2) the decolonial turn in Balkan studies; 3) the relationship between colonialism and the "folk" subject; and 4) epistemic violence. Before delving deeper into these four areas, I will first provide a brief geographic and historical overview of the Balkans and the Yugoslav region.

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[4] The zadruga was a patrilocal extended family system in the rural Balkans which declined in use over the nineteenth century. Discussed in more detail below.

A Geographic Snapshot

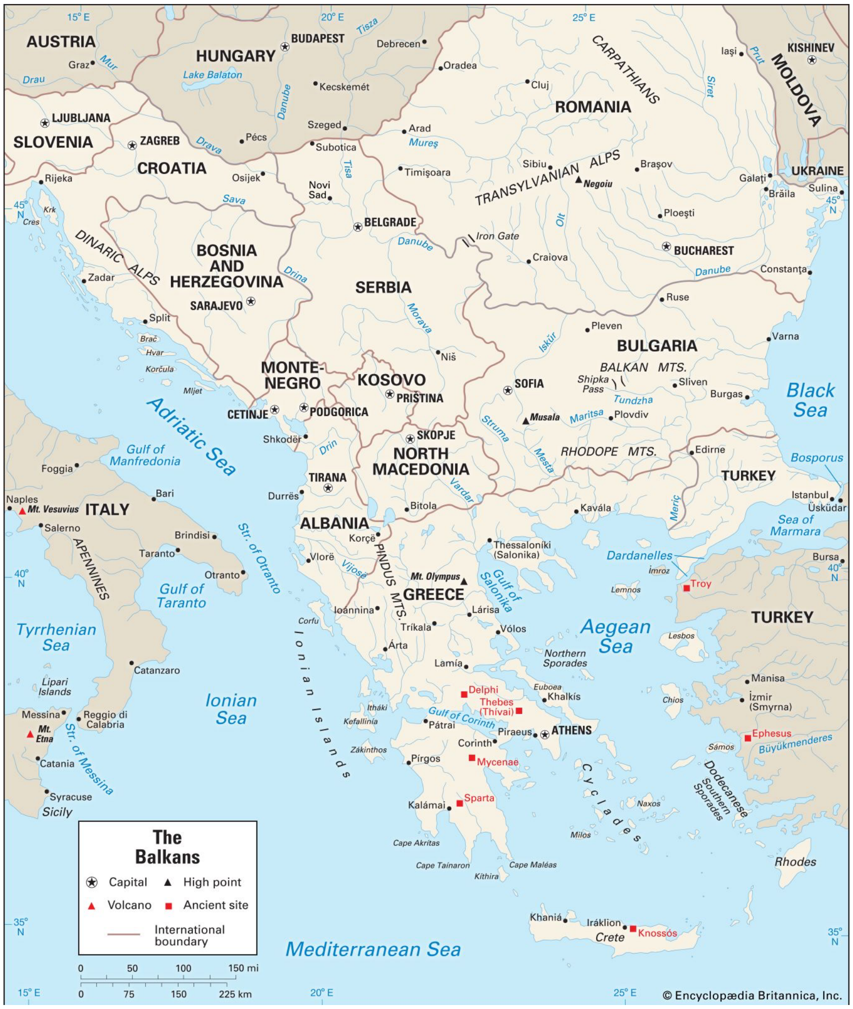
15° E
20° E
25° E
AUSTRIA
Graz
Mur
Drau
HUNGARY
BUDAPEST
Tisza
Debrecen
Oradea
Lake Balaton
Danube
Kecskemét
CARPATHIANS
Iași
Prut
KISHINEV
MOLDOVA
Siret
Cluj
ROMANIA
LJUBLJANA
SLOVENIA
ZAGREB
Drava
Pécs
Szeged
Subotica
Arad
Mureș
CROATIA
Osijek
Tisa
Timișoara
Sibiu
TRANSYLVANIAN ALPS
Negoiu
Brașov
Galați
Brăila
UKRAINE
Sulina
Rijeka
Novi Sad
Sava
Ploiești
45° N
Krk
Cres
DINARIC ALPS
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BELGRADE
Danube
Iron Gate
Olt
Craiova
BUCHAREST
Danube
Constanța
Zadar
Drina
SERBIA
Ruse
SARAJEVO
Split
Morava
Pleven
Brač
Hvar
Iskur
BULGARIA
Varna
Korčula
Niš
MONTE-NEGRO
KOSOVO
BALKAN MTS.
Shipka Pass
Sliven
Mljet
SOFIA
Burgas
Black Sea
PRIŠTINA
Tundzha
Adriatic Sea
CETINJE
PODGORICA
Musala
Maritsa
Plovdiv
Struma
Gulf of Manfredonia
Shkodër
Drin
SKOPJE
NORTH MACEDONIA
Mesta
RHODOPE MTS.
Edirne
Bosporus
Foggia
TIRANA
Vardar
TURKEY
Bari
Durrës
Istanbul
Üsküdar
Naples
Mt. Vesuvius
ITALY
ALBANIA
Bitola
Kavála
Meriç
Sea of Marmara
Salerno
Brindisi
Korçë
Thessaloniki (Salonika)
Dardanelles
Bursa
Str. of Otranto
Taranto
Vlorë
Vijosë
PINDUS MTS.
İmroz
40° N
APENNINES
Otranto
Mt. Olympus
Gulf of Salonika
Lemnos
Troy
Gulf of Taranto
GREECE
Ioannina
Lárisa
Tyrrhenian Sea
Corfu
Tríkala
Vólos
Aegean Sea
TURKEY
Árta
Lesbos
Ionian Islands
Northern Sporades
Catanzaro
Lamía
Lipari Islands
Manisa
Delphi
Euboea
Ionian Sea
Thebes (Thivai)
Khalkís
Chios
İzmir (Smyrna)
Messina
Reggio di Calabria
Itháki
Gulf of Corinth
Mt. Etna
Kefallinía
Pátrai
Piraeus
ATHENS
Str. of Messina
Ephesus
Corinth
Sámos
Büyükmenderes
Zákinthos
Catania
Pírgos
Mycenae
Dodecanese
Southern Sporades
Cyclades
Syracuse
Sparta
Kalámai
Naxos
Sicily
Cape Akritas
Mílos
Cape Tainaron
Cape Maléas
Rhodes
Kíthira
The Balkans
Capital
High point
Volcano
Ancient site
International boundary
Khaniá
Iráklion
Knossós
Crete
35° N
Mediterranean Sea
0 50 100 150 mi
0 75 150 225 km
15° E
20° E
25° E
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Figure 1.1: A map of the Balkans in 2022 (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

The Balkans, known also as the Balkan Peninsula, is one of the names of Europe's southeast corner. This region is made up of the countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. Sometimes Turkey, Hungary, and Slovenia are also included. The region has often been sensationally referred to as the "powder keg of Europe," as "a crossroad of civilizations," and as being plagued by "ancient hatreds."[5] Many of these Eurocentric stereotypes draw from the Balkans' historical position as an imperial frontier, first between the power centers of Rome and Constantinople, whose longstanding conflicts resulted in the East-West schism of the Christian Church.[6] Then, beginning in the thirteenth century, the Balkans became an imperial frontier of the Venetian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Habsburg Empire—an outgrowth of the Holy Roman Empire. In the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire also began encroaching. An imperial borderland several times over, the Balkans today are home to a rich diversity of religions[7] and languages.[8]

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[5] See Bjelić and Savić's edited volume *Balkan as Metaphor* (2002) for a number of key essays addressing the European discursive construction of the Balkan "other."

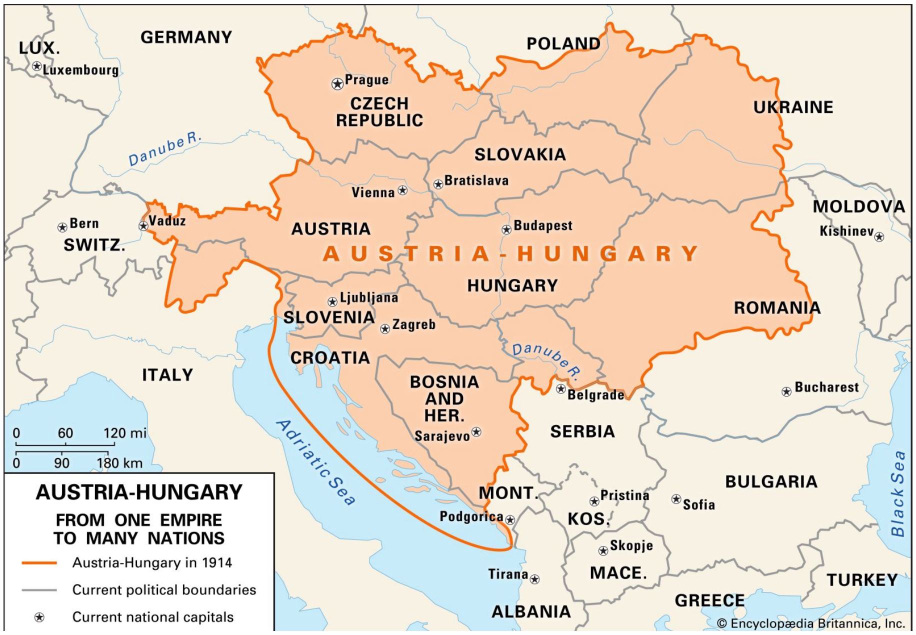
LUX.
Luxembourg
GERMANY
POLAND
Prague
CZECH REPUBLIC
UKRAINE
Danube R.
SLOVAKIA
Bratislava
Vienna
MOLDOVA
Bern
Vaduz
Budapest
Kishinev
SWITZ.
AUSTRIA
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
Ljubljana
SLOVENIA
Zagreb
Danube R.
ITALY
CROATIA
BOSNIA AND HER.
Belgrade
Bucharest
Sarajevo
SERBIA
0 60 120 mi
0 90 180 km
Adriatic Sea
BULGARIA
Black Sea
MONT.
Pristina
Sofia
Podgorica
KOS.
Skopje
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
FROM ONE EMPIRE TO MANY NATIONS
Austria-Hungary in 1914
Current political boundaries
Current national capitals
Tirana
MACE.
TURKEY
ALBANIA
GREECE
© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Figure 1.2: A map of the Austro-Hungarian (Habsburg) Empire in 1914 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.)

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[6] After Constantine moved the seat of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330, a divide increasingly grew between their respective religious officials. Rome saw the increasing concentration of authority in their pope, but this exaggerated authority was not acknowledged by the Eastern church. The two churches decisively broke in 1054, when Pope Leo IX of Rome and patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople excommunicated each other, thus falling out of communion. The subsequent churches became the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

[7] The three major religions in the Balkans are Islam, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Catholicism. The region also has a deep Jewish history. The majority of the Balkan Jewish population were killed by Nazis and Nazi sympathizers during the Second World War.

[8] In addition to national languages, languages spoken in the Balkans also include Romani, Turkish, Aromanian, Italian, Arabic, and Chinese (see Chang and Rucker-Chang 2013).

The two most significant imperial occupations for the present discussion are the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. Habsburg presence in the Balkan region (Croatia-Slavonia, Transylvania, and later Bosnia) extended from the mid-fourteenth through the early-twentieth centuries. Feudal conditions existed for the majority of this time, including heavy taxation rates and compulsory labor.[9] The Empire orchestrated several waves of colonial settlements in the regions of the Vojvodina, Banat, and Bačka—as well as throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The initial settlement phase began after 1718, when "German colonists were lured with free land and three-year tax exemptions" (Lampe and Jackson 1982, 64). The campaign brought in 25,000 Germans from the Rhineland area, however, difficult climate conditions led only 5,000 to survive. Then, in 1740, a larger phase of German colonization began, which resulted in 43,000 settlers by 1770, who had been enticed by free housing, a six-year tax exemption, and free land. Shortly thereafter, reformist Habsburg Emperor Joseph II sponsored another wave of colonization, which brought 40,000 more settlers to the region by 1787 (totaling over 90,000). For comparison, 20,000 Puritans migrated to Massachusetts region between 1630 and 1640.

After a century of relative quiet, another phase of Habsburg colonization began in the 1880s in the newly occupied territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[10] By the 1880s, Austria was "in the forefront of the development of European 'finance capitalism' and 'monopoly capitalism'" (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 264). In 1878 Pater Franz made the first appeal for German peasants to settle in Bosnia: "Now, after the occupation, it is high time to settle the

---

[9] In Croatia-Slavonia by the 1780s, "108 aristocratic families (the 'magnates') controlled about 40 per cent of all fiefs" and an additional forty percent were owned by a larger noble group known as the "bene possessionati," who would in the nineteenth century begin "to refer to themselves as the 'gentry', using either the actual English word or its Magyarized form (*dzsentri*).[9] They began to ape the manners, ideas and life-styles of their English 'cousins'" (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 205).

[10] The history of Bosnian colonization is covered in depth in chapter one.

Vrbas Valley" (Meier 1924, 9-11; cited in Olsson 1996, 889-90).[11] Austrian and Polish peasants received eleven to twelve hectares of free land along with initial tax exemptions as incentives to settle. By 1905, fifty-four colonies had been established. Austrian officials drew analogies to cotemporaneous European emigration to the United States to entice more settlers. Settlements were given provocative names such as "*Franzjosefsfeld* (the fields of Franz Josef, the Austrian Emperor) and *Franzferdinandshöhe* (the hills of archduke Franzferdinand, the successor to the throne)" infuriating the local Bosnian population (Olsson 1996, 891). Colonists owned larger plots of land and more advanced technical equipment than the local population, leading Bosnian peasants to periodically raid their farms (ibid., 890).

The Ottoman Empire oversaw a similar—though distinct—version of feudalism in its Balkan territories. Ottoman occupation of the Balkans began in the late-fourteenth century and continued through the mid-nineteenth century in Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Macedonia formally remained part of the Ottoman Empire until the First World War. Ottoman feudalism was known more for de facto than de jure exploitation, as the Ottoman administration did not explicitly promote or legalize peasant dispossession. Consequently, peasants were commonly exploited through rents, share-cropping, and extortion rather than through evicting peasants and transforming their lands into "directly managed capitalist enterprises" (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 104-5). The Ottoman feudal system was known as the *chiftlik* system, in which peasants had to give the feudal lord their labor several days per week plus a large percent of their harvests. Some peasants fled to the mountains to avoid this exploitation. As some Balkan territories gained independence in the nineteenth century, the chiftlik system began to wane, and even in Macedonia, which remained part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912, peasants began seizing land and exporting their own tobacco (ibid.).

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[11] The Vrbas Valley is a large valley that runs through the center of Bosnia.

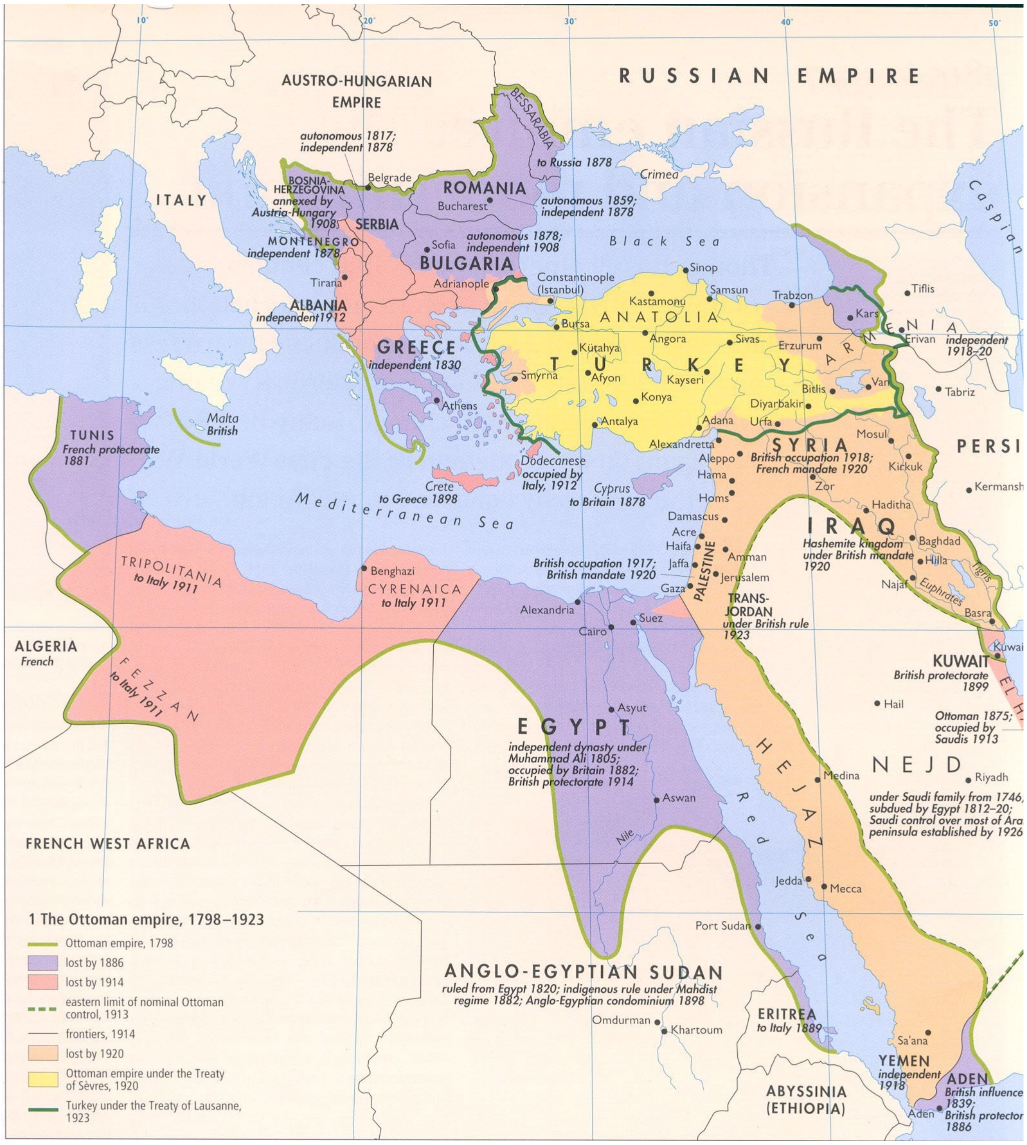
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
autonomous 1817; independent 1878
BESSARABIA
to Russia 1878
Crimea
Caspian
Belgrade
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA annexed by Austria-Hungary 1908
ROMANIA
Bucharest
autonomous 1859; independent 1878
ITALY
SERBIA
MONTENEGRO independent 1878
Sofia
autonomous 1878; independent 1908
BULGARIA
Black Sea
Sinop
Tirana
Adrianople
Constantinople (Istanbul)
Samsun
Trabzon
Tiflis
ALBANIA independent 1912
Kastamonu
Kars
ANATOLIA
Bursa
Angora
Sivas
Erzurum
ARMENIA
Erivan
independent 1918–20
GREECE independent 1830
Kütahya
TURKEY
Smyrna
Afyon
Kayseri
Bitlis
Van
Tabriz
Konya
Athens
Diyarbakir
Malta British
Antalya
Adana
Urfa
Mosul
TUNIS French protectorate 1881
Alexandretta
SYRIA
PERSI
Dodecanese occupied by Italy, 1912
Aleppo
British occupation 1918; French mandate 1920
Kirkuk
Hama
Crete to Greece 1898
Cyprus to Britain 1878
Zor
Kermansh
Homs
Haditha
Mediterranean Sea
Damascus
IRAQ
Acre
Hashemite kingdom under British mandate 1920
Baghdad
Haifa
Jaffa
PALESTINE
Amman
Hilla
Tigris
TRIPOLITANIA to Italy 1911
Benghazi
British occupation 1917; British mandate 1920
Jerusalem
Najaf
Euphrates
CYRENAICA to Italy 1911
Gaza
TRANS-JORDAN under British rule 1923
Basra
Alexandria
Suez
Kuwai
Cairo
KUWAIT British protectorate 1899
ALGERIA French
FEZZAN to Italy 1911
Asyut
Hail
Ottoman 1875; occupied by Saudis 1913
EGYPT
independent dynasty under Muhammad Ali 1805; occupied by Britain 1882; British protectorate 1914
HEJAZ
NEJD
Medina
Riyadh
Aswan
Red Sea
under Saudi family from 1746; subdued by Egypt 1812–20; Saudi control over most of Ara peninsula established by 1926
Nile
FRENCH WEST AFRICA
Jedda
Mecca
1 The Ottoman empire, 1798–1923
Ottoman empire, 1798
lost by 1886
lost by 1914
eastern limit of nominal Ottoman control, 1913
frontiers, 1914
lost by 1920
Ottoman empire under the Treaty of Sèvres, 1920
Turkey under the Treaty of Lausanne, 1923
Port Sudan
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN
ruled from Egypt 1820; indigenous rule under Mahdist regime 1882; Anglo-Egyptian condominium 1898
Omdurman
Khartoum
ERITREA to Italy 1889
Sa'ana
YEMEN independent 1918
ADEN British influence 1839; British protector 1886
ABYSSINIA (ETHIOPIA)
Aden
10°
20°
30°
40°
50°

Figure 1.3 Map of the Ottoman Empire, 1798-1923 (WorldStatesmen.org)

The political and economic insecurity of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century, along with growing commerce between the Balkans and Europe, led to the rising political prominence of Balkan merchants. Despite being small in number, they exerted substantial influence by funding schools and circulating “books in their respective national languages among their compatriots.” They were also invested in bringing Enlightenment ideas into education

(Stoianovich 1960, 306). Merchants sought to support both European market demand and nascent Balkan nationalisms.

As West and Central Europe's capitalist economies developed, their demand grew "for Balkan primary exports of grain, hides, meat, wine, tobacco, vegetable oils, wax, raw silk, raw cotton, wool and timber," this in turn "[raised] commodity prices and [encouraged] production of cash crops for export" at home (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 112). The production of corn and cotton especially grew at this time. The Ottoman Balkans thus transformed into "an exporter of food and raw materials" and an "importer of 'European manufactured, processed, 'colonial' and luxury goods, principally sugar, coffee, textiles, expensive Russian furs and Central European hardware and glassware'" (Stoianovich 1960, 259; Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 113). The consequence of these new trade relations was the "de-industrialization of the Balkans via the stagnation of many traditional craft industries" and the enrichment of the Balkan merchant class, who had gained "control of most of the overland carrying trade, part of the maritime carrying trade and virtually the entire commerce of the Balkan interior" (Stoianovich 1960, 263).

In the late-eighteenth century, Ottoman officials came to regard Balkan merchants as a growing threat to Ottoman political power. Ottoman landlords and other officials attempted to restrain merchants' commercial activities. In opposition to this clamp down, merchants mobilized nationalist narratives to engage the peasantry in struggles for national liberation. These wars were not intended to transform the social position of the peasantry—the vast majority of the population—but rather to appropriate Turkish-owned (and also Balkan Muslim-owned) land and to secure property rights for merchants and landlords (Stoianovich 1960, 312; Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 113).

Merchants' sponsorship of the first generations of Balkan intellectuals to be formally educated in Western Europe largely shaped the nationalist discourse that would motivate independence struggles throughout the region. This experience led the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to be major influences on the articulation of Balkan nationalist narratives. Promoting "the reorganization of society upon a class and national rather than a corporate and imperial basis," nationalist intellectuals "propagated the idea of the national state as a body of individuals with equal rights and obligations before the law and divided into social classes on the basis of economic status and wealth, rather than rigidly segregated into social estates and religious communities prescribed and regulated by a supranational and theocratic imperial order" (Stoianovich 1960, 632; Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 114). Private property became normalized and regulated, liberal values of freedom and equality became entrenched, and capitalist competition was promoted as the basis of modern society (Stoianovich 1963, 312). Between 1804 and 1918, the Balkan region transformed from an imperial frontier into a capitalist peninsula.

While these revolutions were instigated by the merchant class—and benefited them most significantly—large amounts of property were also transferred to the peasantry. However, the quickly growing peasant population soon exceeded the available land, causing land to be divided into smaller and smaller plots. Other consequences of growing population size during the capitalist transition were the massive reduction of forests, decreased availability of animal products and livestock (resulting in a "switch to a more cereal-based diet") and a growing surplus of peasant labor (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 115). The increasing impoverishment of the peasantry caused unrest across the region, including violent revolts and organized peasant political parties.

During the nineteenth century, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia gained independence from the Ottoman Empire. Independence brought many peasants down from the mountains into the lowlands, where they began to cultivate grain on a larger scale. Independence also brought improved access to European markets. However, the increasing penetration of the market economy also brought increasing levels of debt for both the new governments and the peasant populations. Serbia's tariff war with Austria-Hungary, for example, forced Serbia to take on French loans and the state quickly became dependent on Western and Central Europe capital.

The broad effects of this transition period from feudalism to capitalism in rural areas included increasing individualism, high import rates, economic insecurity, increasing ethno-nationalism, and the desire to consume luxury goods on a consistent basis. Purchased commodities started to replace homemade clothes, utensils, and furniture. Some wealthier peasants were able to purchase more advanced farm equipment, but the vast majority retained their older production methods. Without new farming equipment, peasants could not increase their yields. Without increasing their yields they could not pay of their debts in order to then be able to acquire new farming equipment. This economic paradox persisted through the Second World War, yielding poverty, class conflict, and emigration in its wake.

Emblematic of the transformation of the peasantry since the eighteenth century is the gradual dissolution of the zadruga. The zadruga was a communal, patriarchal form of social organization common in the Balkans (except Slovenia) before the nineteenth century. The zadruga took a wide variety of forms depending on geography, imperial governance, economic conditions, and time period. Traditionally, zadrugas were led by a male and female head, either elected or determined by lineage. Male descendants remained in the zadruga, bringing their wives into the household once married, while female descendants would leave to join their husbands' zadruga. Sometimes zadrugas were made up of one extended family, while others included multiple families or adopted members. Large zadrugas had fifty to sixty members, while smaller ones could have ten to twenty-five members. The land was owned collectively, income was pooled, and some larger zadrugas were essentially self-sufficient. The decline of zadrugas and the increasing hegemony of the nuclear family was noticed in the early-nineteenth century, as agriculture transitioned from being primarily pastoral to crop-based. Money and the market economy were the primary contributors to the decline of the zadruga. As debts were increasingly required to be paid in money, people were forced to sell their land, thus disbanding the zadruga.

While the conclusions of this dissertation are applicable to the Balkan region as a whole, I focus my analysis in and around the Yugoslav region. The Yugoslav region is made up of the countries now known as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. The namesakes of the Yugoslav region are the two Yugoslavias: the first Yugoslavia was the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (previously the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes), which lasted from 1918 to 1945; the second Yugoslavia was the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (commonly referred to as SFRY), which lasted from 1945 to 1992.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Yugoslav region was predominantly inhabited by the peasantry. In Serbia alone, approximately eight-five percent of the two-and-a-half million residents lived in rural communities at the turn of the twentieth century (Halpern and Kerewsky-Halpern 1972, 48). In 1931, the rural population remained high at 77% of the total population. By the 1953 census, the percentage of the population of Yugoslavia living in rural areas decreased to 61%. In 1991, Yugoslavia's agricultural population made up about 44% of the country's total population. This level has remained relatively steady to the present day. The most recent census data from 2020 places the rural populations of ex-Yugoslav states ranging from 32.51% in Montenegro to 51% in Bosnia and Herzegovina (World Bank 2020).[12] The cultural and social effects of this transformation were huge. In the span of just a few generations, the maintenance of knowledge went from being the domain of an entire generations of elders to just a few biological grandparents. Individualism took predominance over collectivism. The village and the peasant increasingly became equated with backwardness and the past.

Finally, while there have been many wars in the region, this dissertation most directly addresses three: the First World War (1914-18), the Second World War (1940-45), and the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2000).[13] I will provide a more detailed history of these events in the following chapters, but it is important here to note that the casualties and material destruction of the First and Second World War were massive in Yugoslavia, who lost more of its population than any other country in Europe. The impact of these losses on the population is difficult to overstate. While the memory of these wars is still prominent in the region's political consciousness, the Yugoslav Wars loom largest in everyday life today. Twenty years after the formal conclusion of the war, the conflicts of the 1990s still remain largely unresolved and mass graves continue to be uncovered.[14]

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[12] Compare to 17.34% in the United States in 2020.

[13] The Balkan Wars of 1912-1914 were also quite significant, though not explored in depth in this dissertation. Historian Justin McCarthy has calculated that "27 per cent of 'the Turks and other Muslims of the Ottoman Balkans had died, 35 per cent had become refugees'" during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 (McCarthy 1997, 354; cited in Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 123).

[14] The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) has created an interactive map of mass graves from the wars, which is accessible on the website *The Bitter Land* at massgravesmap.balkaninsight.com. The most recent mass grave was uncovered in Serbia in December 2020, with the remains of up to seventeen people (Reuters 2020). Also see Ognjen Glavonić's documentary film *Dubina dva (Depth Two)* (2016) on the 2001 discovery of a mass grave outside of Belgrade.

Peasant Studies: Marx, Fanon, and Yugoslavia

Peasant studies and its antecedents have significantly transformed our understanding of the peasant and the peasant's relationship to feudalism, capitalism, and revolutionary politics. While peasant studies was not codified as a field until the late 1970s, its intellectual genealogy goes back to Marx and Engels in the mid-nineteenth century, and their study of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The initial phase of scholarship on the peasantry occurred between the publication of Engels' "The Peasant War in Germany" (1850) and the outbreak of the First World War. Both Marx and Engels located the peasantry on the frontline of the violent process of primitive accumulation during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Close friend of Engels and one of Lenin's interlocutors, philosopher Karl Kautsky further defended the significance of the peasantry in his 1899 book *The Agrarian Question*. Two years later, Lenin launched his political career in Russia, publishing "The Agrarian Question and 'Critics of Marx'" followed by his famous pamphlet *What Is To Be Done* (1902).

Between the start of the First World War and the end of the 1920s, the Marxist study of the peasant went global. Sol Plaatje (1916) wrote against white supremacy in (post)colonial South Africa and its effects on African peasants. Ho Chi Minh published his first anti-colonial polemic in 1919 against the French occupation of Vietnam. A year after the start of the Russian Revolution, Soviet revolutionary Yevgeni Preobrazhensky (2014 [1918]) argued for the accelerated industrialization of the peasantry. In 1922, Manabendra Nath Roy (M.N. Roy), founder of the Mexican Communist Party and the Communist Party of India (Tashkent group), published *The Peasant Movement in India*. In 1925, Soviet agronomist Alexander Chayanov critiqued the inefficiency of large peasant communes in his controversial book *The Theory of*

Peasant Economy.[15] The following year in Italy, Gramsci made a novel contribution to the discussion of peasant politics in his prison writing. "Some aspects of the southern question" (1926) addresses at length the exploitation of peasants according to an evolutionist schema in which the Northern population of Italy was seen as more "civilized" than their Southern neighbors, a key example of racial capitalism within Europe. Then in 1927, Mao Tse-Tung published his famous "Report of an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," which analyzed the conditions and tactics of the peasant struggle in China. José Carlos Mariátegui (1928) published the first work of Latin American Marxism: *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*, which emphasized the political coalition of Indigenous peoples and peasants. From the 1850s through the 1920s, the peasant's political subjectivity was permanently etched into the annals of history across the world.

Following this intense period of intellectual production on the peasant question, novel analyses of peasant struggles did not pick up again in earnest until the 1960s.[16] The emphases of these studies are quite diverse. Some analyses focus on evaluating the material efforts of the USSR and PRC to serve agrarian populations.[17] Other authors articulate the significance of the peasant to anticolonial struggles—an approach exemplified by Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*.[18] Significant to Anglophone researchers, the first English translations of Mao, Lenin, Chayanov, and others were also published during this time. As part of the global political milieu of 1960s, new interest arose in analyzing peasant resistance as a social movement.[19] The Vietnam War in particular had a significant impact on peasant studies, with multiple field-changing studies published on peasant struggles in Southeast Asia.[20] After spending a century under the domain of folklore, anthropologists also began to research peasant social structures.[21]

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[15] Original Russian published in 1925. English translation first published in 1966.
[16] With the notable exceptions of R. Palme Dutt's *India Today* (1940), Henri Lefebvre's (2022) 1950s writings on rural sociology, and David Mitrany's *Marx Against the Peasant* (1951).
[17] See, for example Johnson 1962; Jackson 1966; Hinton 1966.
[18] Other key texts include Cabral 1969, 1973;
[19] Hobsbawm 1965; Wolf 1966, 1969; Alavi 1965; Womack 1968; Migdal 1974.

"Peasant Studies" as a codified field coalesced in the late 1970s around the scholars Eric Hobsbawm, Eric Wolf, Teodor Shanin, Terence J. Byres, and others. Byres has written about his "Peasant Seminar" at the University of London, which he conducted from 1972-1989, as the genesis point of peasant studies' central output: the *Journal of Peasant Studies*. Influenced by Chayanov, Byres divided scholarly attention on peasants during the 1960s and 70s into four categories: peasant social structures, peasant agriculture, peasant morality, and peasant politics (1994, 2).

During the 1960s and 70s, the peasant question also gained renewed relevance in newly independent, "underdeveloped" nations across Africa and Asia. Guyanese revolutionary Walter Rodney defines "underdevelopment" in his profound book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (2018 [1972]) as intensified a program of exploitation that enriches the colonizers by starving the colonized. Rodney recognized "the development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped" (2018, 176). Underdevelopment and dependency are allied concepts, which recur in peasant studies. Dependency theory—most notably pioneered by Latin American scholars—analyzes the impoverishment of peripheral states for the continual enriching of the elite core. Peasant studies is heavily indebted to theories of underdevelopment and dependency. Today, the most lively debates examine the renewed significance of the agrarian question in neoliberalism, particularly when analyzing the conditions of the Global South.[22]

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[20] For example, Scott 1976; Popkin 1979;

[21] See Redfield 1989 [1955].

[22] See the work of Sam Moyo, Samir Amin, Arif Dirlik, Utsa Patnaik, A Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Cristóbal Kay and others.

Outside of peasant studies proper, some excellent researchers have contributed to our understanding of the peasant from the fields of cultural studies[23] and area studies. Area studies scholars have significantly contributed to peasant studies by publishing national and regional studies, such as studies of peasants in Eastern Europe.[24] A number of publications have specifically looked at southeastern Europe and the Yugoslav region.[25] Some of these studies focus primarily on economic concerns (Lampe and Jackson 1982; Stipetić 1982; Lyberatos 2011), including evaluations of agrarian economic reforms before and during Yugoslavia (Erić 1958; Gaćeša 1972, 1984; Lekić 2002). Others foreground political change and peasant politics (Milošević 2008; Warriner 1959; Bokovoy 1998; Biondich 2000). In addition to economics and politics, culture has stood as the third pillar of the study of the Yugoslav peasant, most commonly within the disciplines of folklore and ethnology.[26] Most current research on peasants and agrarian issues in the Yugoslav region focuses on the catastrophe of the postsocialist period for rural populations and the environment (Diković 2014; Kušić 2022; Kušić and Lazić 2022).

The peasant has been significantly studied by both Marxists and anticolonial thinkers—often also through a Marxist or Marxian lens. Studies of peasants in postcolonial contexts or from an anticolonial perspective have thoroughly demonstrated the entwinement of the capitalist and colonial expropriation of the peasant. When the peasant is analyzed within Europe, however, this insight is frequently missed. Within European scholarship, the colonial is separated out from the capitalist, leaving only a partial explanation for the trajectory of the peasant—including the transformation of peasant communities, cultures, and knowledges. This dissertation contributes to filling that gap by analyzing the trajectory of peasants in the Yugoslav region in conversation with Marxists, Indigenous studies scholars, and others.

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[23] Including works by E.P. Thompson (1963), Mikhail Bakhtin (1965), and Raymond Williams (1973).

[24] See Daniel Chirot's *Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe* (1991), Jackson 1966; Leonard and Keneff 2002; Marin 2018.

[25] Studies of peasants in the Balkans include Chirot 1976; Stahl 2012; Dorondel 2016; Kligman and Verdery 2011; Bell 1977; Şerban and Dorondel 2014

[26] See, for example, Halpern and Kerewsky-Halpern 1972; Halpern 1963; Trouton 1952; Erlich 2016; Hammel 1969; Isić 1995; Naumović 1995; Pavković 2009; Giordano 2014; Simić 1973

The Decolonial Turn in Balkan Studies

Following the collapse of socialism in the 1990s, scholars began to ask whether postcolonial theory could be brought to bear on the new postsocialist condition of the "former East."[27] The original focus of these critiques was the denigratory representation of Balkan populations—and Eastern Europe more broadly. Engaging Edward Said's theory of orientalism (1978), scholars began to identify a continuity between modes of traditional colonial Eurocentric representation and derogatory representations of the Balkans. Articulating new concepts, such as "nesting orientalisms" and "Balkanism," scholars traced the evolution of negative stereotypes of the Balkans as a way to explain the recurrence of negative stereotypes in the postsocialist period (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1997; see also Wolff 1994).

Beginning in the 2000s, scholars of Eastern Europe also questioned how to relate the "postcolonial" more directly to the category of the "postsocialist" (Chioni 2001; Chari and Verdery 2009). Some early analyses of racialization in Eastern Europe also appeared at this time (Murawska-Muthesius 2004; Veliković 2012). One of the key debates that arose around these bodies of scholarship was the applicability of terms like "colonial," "postcolonial," "race," and "racism" to the Balkans. Some, most notably Maria Todorova, have argued that it is inappropriate to use terms like "colonialism" and "postcolonial," because "no formal Western colonial rule ever took place" (Karkov and Valiavicharska 2018, 788; Todorova 1997, 195,

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[27] Used here rather ironically, the "Former East" emerged as an idea following 1989 as a way to describe the former socialist bloc in Eastern Europe.

2010, 179). While this claim is dubious at best, considering the colonial projects of the Habsburg Empire in the Balkans discussed above, it is true that comparisons between the Balkans and postcolonial contexts have often been shallow.

Some of these efforts have been grouped under the umbrella of "Critical Balkanology" – a critical discourse on the subjugation of the populations of southeast Europe via Western systems of "colonial" representation.[28] Rade Zinaić (2017) has criticized this line of thinking as failing to engage with the question of class and as ultimately reproducing Western imperial politics. Zinaić argues that authors like Tomislav Longinović misunderstand "Serbian politics as a problem of *culture* as opposed to political economy" (24). Zinaić critiques the ways that Longinović perpetuates evolutionist stereotypes of subproletarian groups by attributing anti-liberalism in Serbia to peasants, without discussing the material conditions of rural Serbia (41).

Nikolay Karkov and Zhivka Valiavicharska are also critical of scholarship from this initial period, because of its selective engagement with non-Marxist and non-materialist versions of postcolonialism: "the Balkan variation of 'postcoloniality,' as it took off in the mid-1990s, occluded postcolonial traditions engaged with Marxist and materialist critique, such as the work and influence of the Subaltern Studies collective, Stuart Hall, Kuan-Hsing Chen, and others" (788). Rather than connecting the material conditions of the Balkans with the material conditions of formerly colonized states, the postsocialist postcolonialism of the Balkans primarily focused on de-materialized questions of identity and representation.

To resolve the "the anti-capitalist postcolonial dichotomy in postsocialist studies," Karkov and Valiavicharska propose a "decolonial approach" that locates "the simultaneous origin of capitalism and coloniality at the very start of modernity" (789). Basing their approach in the work of Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, Karkov and Valiavicharska rightly see the Balkans as a space that has been transformed by the dual axes of coloniality and modernity. The decolonial approach, grounded in world-systems theory and the ideas of the Modernity-Coloniality study group, has been notably pursued by Madina Tlostanova (2012, 2018; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012) in the context of Eastern Europe, and by Ovidiu Țichindeleanu (2010, 2013) and Manuela Boatcă (2007; Parvulescu and Boatcă 2020, 2022) in the context of the Balkans.[29]

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[28] Zinaić identifies some exemplars of Critical Balkanology: Allcock 1991; Wolff 1994; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1997; Goldsworthy 1998; Kovačević 2008; Longinović 2011; Živković 2011; and Dauphinée 2013.

Originally, I intended to pursue a similar analysis that foregrounded coloniality rather than colonialism in the Balkans. However, at a certain point in my research, I began to realize that not only were colonialism and racial formations already materially present in the Balkans, but they also had been written about already by intellectuals from the Balkans over a hundred years ago. Contemporary scholars in Western institutions have sparsely acknowledged the existence of a corpus of local criticism on issues of forced dependency, colonial domination, and decolonization. It seems likely, considering the deep imbrication of Western academia with anticommunist hysteria, that much of this work has not received sufficient attention, because those local critics were explicitly driven by either their communist politics or the sheer fact that they lived and worked in a socialist state.

The problem with a postcolonial approach to the Balkans is not just that it is not materialist enough or that scholars insufficiently engage with Marx. Rather, the debate around the applicability of terms like "colonialism" and "racism" too often focuses exclusively on issues of discourse and representation, while ignoring socialism's massive *material* contribution to decolonization movements across the world and the deep, rigorous theoretical analysis of scholars from the region on the relationship of colonialism to capitalism and the relationship of decolonization to communism. For over a century, local theorists have critiqued forced dependency. Critics of the interwar period have explicitly connected the material conditions of post-imperial Europe to Europe's colonial mission abroad. Fantastic recent work by Piro Rexhepi, Ajkuna Tafa, Nikolay Karkov, Ivana Bago, James Robertson, and Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu has brought needed attention to some of these figures.[30]

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[29] Developed by scholars in the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Group, the concept of "modernity-coloniality" asserts that the modern subject was forged during the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth century, and consequently insists that neither modernity nor coloniality can be understood independently of the other. Foundational works in this group were written by Enrique Dussel (1995), Walter Mignolo (2000, 2002), Anibal Quijano (2000), and Sylvia Wynter (2003).

Inspired by recent scholarly interest in Second and Third World internationalisms,[31] this dissertation pushes back against the ways that postsocialist discourse has had its anticolonial pasts erased and the ways that academic decolonization discourses have been purged of their communist legacies. The post-Cold War reclassification of the world from three worlds into two has left communist-decolonial solidarity as collateral damage.[32] This is distressing not only because rich theoretical contributions were generated at this intersection, but also because it makes revolution seem abstract. It is extremely difficult to imagine a total transformation of society if one has no historical examples to draw upon. Tjaša Kancler has described postsocialist amnesia as a process of violence:

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[30] Some exceptional recent work is being done to fill these historical gaps on regional anti-imperialist and anti-colonial thought in the Balkans, including Piro Rexhepi and Ajkuna Tafa on Melika Salihbeg Bosnawi (2017), Nikolay Karkov (2021) on Ivan Hadjiyski, Ivana Bago's resuscitation of "Yugoslav Fanonism" (2020), James Robertson's analysis of the interwar Yugoslav left (2018), and Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu on Veronica Porumbacu (2020).

[31] See Vijay Prashad's *Red Star Over the Third World* (2017) and *The Darker Nations* (2007), Walter Rodney's *The Russian Revolution* (2017), Piro Rexhepi's "Unmapping Islam in Eastern Europe" (2017), Piro Rexhepi and Ajkuna Tafa's "Socialismo e Islam – Reflexiones sobre el Centenario de la Revolución de Octubre" (2018), Rexhepi, Musleh and Mirza's "Bandung Before and After: Islam, the Islamicate and the De/colonial" (2020), Rossen Djagalov's *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism* (2020), Bojana Videkanić's *Nonaligned Modernism* (2020), Łukasz Stanek's *Architecture in Global Socialism* (2020), and the Socialism Goes Global research project.

[32] The obverse side of the denial of decolonial thought within the Balkans is the Eurocentric capture of the socialist project. "Postsocialism" has become an area studies euphemism for Eastern Europe, despite state socialism having characterized over half of the world's governments at some point in history.

> the 'post' of postsocialism, rather than celebrating the embracement of 'democracy' and free-market capitalism, speaks about further processes of colonization which allow 'former' West to fulfill itself by deforming what is being suppressed: the materiality of our history, knowledge and memory. The reconfiguration of formerly socialist states through the deregulation of economy, the privatization of public institutions, and its integration into the global market in an abstract way, erased the whole space, its anti-fascist, anti-colonial and feminist history, practices and theoretical reflections.[33]

Revolutionary momentum depends upon the remembering of histories of struggle. By denying This dissertation contributes to the larger effort to resuscitate those material histories, knowledges, practices, and memories of antifascism, anticolonialism, and feminism and to disturb European neoliberal narratives of postsocialist "transition" as a neutral process.

In the Balkans, colonialism is not a metaphor and racialization is a material process. Despite the protests of scholars who claim that colonialism and race are foreign to the region, the historical record says otherwise. While colonialism in the Balkans is obviously distinct from colonialism in the Americas or in Africa, it is materially linked to those colonialisms. Recalling that Austro-Hungary dubbed the Bačka region "Europe's America," to continue avoiding these material conditions is to succumb to the blinders of area studies. Just as research on the trans-Atlantic slave trade is beginning to more deeply examine the relationship to the wider global slave trade—including slavery in Eastern Europe—it is also necessary to rethink the global history of colonialism in a way that does not hem and haw at the Habsburg Empire's settler colonial project in the Balkans.

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[33] Tjasa Kancler, "Speaking against the Void: Decolonial Transfeminist Relations and Its Radical Potential" (Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues: Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorizing and Practice, Linköping University, Sweden, 2015).

Indigenous Studies and the "Folk"

The above-referenced discussions of colonialism and decolonization in southeast Europe have primarily developed in conversation with the fields of postcolonial studies and settler colonial studies. Recently, there has also been a turn towards theories of decoloniality, which originated in Latin America. All of these fields have made incredibly important contributions to our understanding of colonial dominations and people's resistance efforts. What is missing from this matrix, however, are the massive contributions of Indigenous studies. In this dissertation, I turn to the work of Indigenous studies authors including Glen Coulthard, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Audra Simpson, David Shorter, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang to help me make sense of how Balkan peasants have been progressively marginalized and disenfranchised through both economic and epistemic means, and how we might construct counter-narratives that ensure the epistemic sovereignty of rural Balkan communities.

I began engaging Indigenous studies scholarship in my research on the Balkans after working with my advisor David Shorter, whose expertise includes the coloniality of ethnography, the ontological turn in anthropology, and critiques of how Indigenous people's other-than-human relations are misrepresented as "spirituality." Wanting to see how these conversations related to my chosen region of study—the Yugoslav region—I chose to write my master's thesis on incantation-based healing practices in Macedonia and Serbia, in which I argue that the folklorization of these healers functions as a form of epistemic violence.

The denigrating discourses surrounding vernacular knowledge in the Balkans—and most everywhere else—can be traced to Eurocentric evolutionary models of civilization that were constructed to justify global colonial expansion. In early colonial documents from the Spanish conquest of the Americas, colonizers used the temporal discourse of the "primitive" to justify the kidnapping and enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Indigenous Americans (Wolfe 2006; Rabasa 1994; Dussel 1995). In 1867, Victorian anthropologist E.B. Tylor made the link between colonialism and folklore explicit when he theorized that European vernacular practices were leftovers from Europe's "savage past," which had fully active counterparts in the "ethnographic present" of non-Europeans (Wolfe 1999, 131). Johannes Fabian has defined the production of this strategic temporo-spatial distancing as the "denial of coevalness," which he reveals to be a central feature of colonial anthropology (2014, 31).

By placing the peasant, the colonized subject, and the Indigenous subject in conversation, the intent is not to make these subject positions commensurable. Rather, I seek to demonstrate how shared logics of evolutionism have been deployed across these contexts and how these shared logics have been militantly resisted through the analytic frames of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. I am not describing a relationship of analogy, but rather a network of experiences that connect in time and space in intellectually provocative ways. In the clearest of terms, the Yugoslav peasant is not an Indigenous person and any invocations of such should be denounced considering the recent history of genocide on the basis of constructed claims to "Indigeneity." As abundant scholarship in Indigenous studies has shown, "Indigenous" is not an identity, but rather an analytic that describes a specific relationship to settler colonialism and is thus inaccurate to invoke in the space of the former Yugoslavia (Storfjell 2021; Arvin 2015; TallBear 2015; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Na'puti 2019).

The link between the folklorization of Balkan peasants and colonial epistemology has not yet been explicitly theorized. This is striking considering the esteemed place that commodified versions of Balkan folklore have achieved internationally, dating back to the close connection between German folklorists and Serbian nationalist philologist Vuk Karadžić during the early-nineteenth century. With translations of Karadžić's oral narratives published by Jacob Grimm, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Alexander Pushkin, and others during the nineteenth century, European intellectuals developed an appetite for the folklore of southeast Europe (Wachtel 1998, 32; Ćorović 1938, 673; Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 361; Kropej 2013, 224; Hajdarpašić 2015, 26).

The popularity of Karadžić's anthologies of oral poetry among not only scholars, but also among the intelligentsia and urban bourgeoisie more broadly can be explained by what Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs call folklore's invention of the "Great Divide." The logic of the Great Divide emerged out of the early Romantic nationalist ideas of German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder. A harsh critic of imperialism, Herder first theorized the *"Volk"* ("folk") in the late-eighteenth century (Herder 1966).[34] The "godfather of German Romanticism," Herder argued for the recognition of diverse regional cultures' capacities to self-govern according to their own local traditions (Noyes 2015, 10). Herder characterized the Volk as lower-class peasants who had not yet been "contaminated" by modernity, which would cause them to lose their vernacular language. This sense of modernity as a contaminating force is the essence of the Great Divide. It stands as an insurmountable epistemological border between the folk subject and the modern subject (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 222). Herder developed his ideas on the folk as a way to promote the language, culture, and geography of the people as the essence of independent nations. Later interpretations of Herder's initiative stressed the significance of published folklore as a way to train and refine modern subjectivity amongst city dwellers. The modern subject was encouraged to travel from the metropole to the countryside by reading folklore and travel literature (Pratt 1992; Wolff 1994; Todorova 2009).

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[34] *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Translated as *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*), was published in four volumes between 1784 and 1791. Slavs and Serbs specifically are mentioned in chapter seventeen of the original German text.

As countries gained independence from the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, Herder's Volk served as the theoretical spine of Southeastern Europe's Romantic nationalist movements. Herder's influence within Serbia is well-documented in scholarship on Jernej Kopitar, Dositej Obradović, and Vuk Karadžić (Kropej 2013; Merchiers 2007; Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016). However, what is often missing from discussions of folklore and nationalism is that while "the folk" were being celebrated by intellectuals for their creative genius, peasants' material conditions were also rapidly deteriorating. While the urban bourgeoisie in the late-nineteenth century came to view the cultural production of rural communities as symbolically significant for the nascent national ideology, they simultaneously came to view the rural Balkans as someplace "to be avoided by all means" (Longinović 2011, 106). By transmuting the "folk" into a symbol, the peasant's status as a political agent and a producer of knowledge was delegitimized as "past" or "backward," while her discursive image was given a new utilitarian function in disciplining the modern national subject.

The peasant as a rural "other" is frequently fetishized within the realm of folkloric performances (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a, 57-78). One cannot simply encounter this rural other. Rather, an expert must curate, translate, and re-present the rural performer to a trained audience. Traditional music and dance festivals, which are popular both within Eastern Europe and abroad, primarily feature either urban artists as interpreters of rural tradition or present rural performers who are introduced, and whose work is subsequently explained, by a folklorist or an ethnomusicologist (Rasmussen 2002; Szeman 2009; Hoffman 2011; Čvoro 2014). Artists, scholars, politicians, and urban audiences tend to fetishize rurality either as a signifier of the idyllic past (Williams 1973) or as a signifier of wildness (Taussig 1986; Arnold 1996). To fulfill their desires, they present and represent rural cultural practices as dying remnants of the past in need of saving (Palčok 1959, 6; Nedeljković 1962, 2-3). This urge to preserve is evident in the proliferation of state-wide educational folk radio programs in the former Yugoslavia (Babović 2018, 72-74; Vesić 2003; Dumnić 2013) and continues to be evident in the work of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Under UNESCO's purview, many folklorists and ethnologists are currently preparing and reviewing applications to safeguard intangible cultural heritage practices, such as dance and music.

Folklore's approach to the peasant fits within the paradigm of salvage ethnography, wherein ethnographers collect and represent the residue of historical cultural practices, which they locate on the precipitous cliff of disappearance. Critiques of salvage ethnography sit at the intersection of Indigenous studies and critiques of the entire anthropological discipline, where scholars have called significant attention to anthropology's colonial underpinnings (Clifford 1989; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Trouillot 2003; Bruhac 2005; Simpson 2007; Hochman 2014). Critiques of folklore parallel critiques of salvage ethnography. Recognizing the temporal politics of casting living "folk" as heritage symbols, folklore scholars have drawn attention to the cultural evolutionist ideologies of their own discipline (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a; Naithani 1997, Danforth 1984). The consequences of cultural evolutionism are two pronged: by transmuting the "folk" into a symbol, the subject dies while her icon gains a new life as a political tool.

Because we have still not moved beyond the model of the Romantic nation, state officials depend upon the mythologized "folk" to maintain power. The real "folk," however, are problematic for the state. The target populations of the folklorist's "fetish" are the poor, the marginal, and the disenfranchised. The political protest of the poor, however, threatens state power, which depends on a Romantic vision of the folk. To maintain Romantic state narratives, politicians invoke evolutionist discourses in policies that allow corporations to seize property, reduce health care services to rural areas, deny employment, criminalize culture, and impose heavy taxation (Simpson 2014, 96-7; Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 14-18). The results of these policies include disproportionate rates of poverty, premature death, and loss of homelands among Indigenous people, poor people living in rural areas, and ethnic and religious minority groups (TallBear 2017; Deloria 1998, 182; Hokowhitu et al 2022; Simpson 2017, 41-2; Hernández 2017, 28). When the state marks a population as "primitive," they subject them to intensified exploitation, under the guise of promoting folklore.

Epistemic Violence: A Key Term

The relationship between knowledge, violence, and dispossession is at the heart of the disavowal of the peasantry. In colonial and peasant contexts, this relationship manifests as epistemic violence. In 1921, Walter Benjamin asserted that "knowledge is constitutive of the political foundations and the epistemic prerequisites of violence" (Brunner 2021, 197). Violence always emerges out of specific epistemic frames. Most scholarly discussions of epistemic violence trace back to the work of Gayatri Spivak in postcolonial studies. Spivak herself identifies Michel Foucault as the progenitor of the concept of epistemic violence. However, Spivak argues that while Foucault's model of epistemic violence is quite useful, it is also hampered by Eurocentrism. While Foucault traced modernity's foundational act of epistemic violence back to "the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century," Spivak argues that this foundational act was established during the sixteenth century conquest of the Americas (1988, 280). The relationship between colonialism and epistemic violence has since received sustained attention.

In *The Invention of the Americas*, philosopher Enrique Dussel demonstrates that Foucault's perceptual error is a manifestation of modern European subjectivity, which originally solidified during the Spanish conquest of the Americas. The so-called "discovery" of the Americas transformed the European subject from a peripheral subject in contention with the power of the Muslim world to a discoverer-subject charged with inventing a new world. Re-drawing the world's maps through the violence of colonization, the European colonial subject tried to assume ultimate authority over universal knowledge of the world. The doctrine of discovery served as the material and conceptual foundation upon which the European Enlightenment subject was built. Descartes' *ego cogito* is impossible without the foundational "I-conquistador" (Dussel 1995, 43).

Analyzing Cortés' assumption of the Aztec throne and his genocidal behavior towards Aztec government officials and the general population, Dussel forces us to confront that Cortés was not a maniacal outlier in European history, but rather he forms the basis for the modern subject. Dussel marks the transformation from conquest to colonization not as an ideological pivot away from violence, but rather the replacement of explicit violence with the violent capture of knowledge and attempts to control over native people's everyday lives using sexual violence (1995, 46). Dussel argues that by killing Indigenous men and committing acts of sexual violence against Indigenous women, Spanish colonists sought to create a new lifeworld that sexually represses women, forces Indigenous men to work against their will, and promotes the white European man as the only legitimate producer of knowledge.

One of the key mechanisms of the myth of modernity, as outlined by Dussel, is colonizers' use of "pedagogic violence" to modify Indigenous value systems in agreement with European value systems (1995, 64). In this process of so-called "emancipation," Indigenous populations are made responsible for their own suffering, because they refused to recognize the European colonizers' superior worldview (Dussel 1995, 65-66). Using the example of the dispute between Sepúlveda and Las Casas at Valladolíd, Dussel shows how Sepúlveda read the New Testament phrase "oblige people to enter and fill my house" as a euphemism for righteous violence, which he argues must be used to introduce Indigenous communities to Christ (1995, 67).

Understanding modernity as the emancipatory justification of violent political takeover transforms modernity from a stage in human evolution to a regional strategy of domination, which originated during the Spanish conquest of the Americas and was subsequently exported to the rest of the world through pedagogic violence. The myth of modernity is that pedagogic violence yields personal freedom. Personal freedom was a particularly important idea to Sepúlveda, who equated savagery with a lack of individualism (Dussel 1995, 65). Dussel's recognition of early colonizers' devotion to individualism provides insight into both European colonizers' capacity for unthinkable acts of brutal violence and the continued persecution of communities that value the collective above the individual, which modernity interprets as oppression. To be modern, then, is to use violence to liberate individuals from their collectivities and then to negate one's own culpability in the terror that proceeds.

By locating the foundations of modernity in the mechanisms of invention, discovery, conquest, and colonization, Dussel provides us with an invaluable model with which to analyze epistemic violence. By linking the initial mis-ascription of the Americas as Asia to the subsequent active covering over of Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty through genocidal violence, Dussel forces his reader to see the close connection between representational and physical violence. Dussel sees the epistemic strategies of invention and discovery as crucial to the eruption of colonial violence, in both the context of war and the context of everyday life. The production of knowledge about people directly relates to the survival of those same people. What makes modern epistemic violence so insidious is the modern subject's rhetorical strategy of denying culpability.

By building innocence into the epistemological schema of modernity, we see modernity "covering over" itself. While covering over is required for invention and discovery, this covering over is not limited to covering over Indigenous forms of knowledge, but also extends to a covering over of colonial responsibility. Lacking public responsibility, the mechanism of epistemic violence appears to have no driver. Colonists only become visible after the act of liberation is complete, in accordance with Hegel's progression of world history. Living within a westward-moving evolutionary schema, the emancipation of the "New World" from their state of communal "savagery" becomes a heroic prerogative for European colonists and a self-inflicted syndrome of backwardness on the part of Indigenous communities. Returning to Spivak's critique of Foucault and Deleuze, the I-conquistador subject of colonial modernity becomes the transparent subjectivity of the European intellectual. While the act of redefining sanity in eighteenth-century Europe did enact systemic epistemic violence on the European population, that act was incubated in the Americas during the sixteenth century.

The emphasis on discourse and domination as the primary mechanics of epistemic violence is furthered in the work of scholars like Joana Plaza Pinto. Pinto has theorized epistemic violence as a linguistic force that constructs languages of exclusion, which then mark the bodies of colonized subjects. As elite populations construct their knowledge as the sole valid way of knowing, they produce an ever expanding field of “epistemic outcast[s]” (Pinto 2017, 181). The university plays a significant role in this process. Pinto persuasively argues that the knowledge of epistemic outcasts is “exoticized, devaluated, ignored, or even eliminated altogether with the substantial help of distinguished scholarship” (Brunner 2021, 200). Enique Galván-Álvarez sees the violent process described by Pinto as the most important way that practices of domination are legitimized and “enshrined” (2010, 12).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith has deconstructed the ways that research has disenfranchised Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems. Focusing on the relationship of colonization to research, Tuhiwai Smith demonstrates how the academic production of knowledge *about* Indigenous peoples also reproduced the violent power relations of colonialism. Vanessa Watts (2013), Zoe Todd (2016), and others have demonstrated how different Indigenous ways of knowing precede, exceed, and conflict with the epistemic regime of European colonialism. Suppressed, invalidated, and criminalized knowledges include everything from language to senses of time to knowledge of history to understandings of “being.” In this dissertation, I focus primarily on issues of temporality and history. Ramón Grosfoguel (2013) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos have defined the violent repression of Indigenous knowledge systems as “*epistemicide*, the murder of knowledge.” (Santos 2014, 92). Edgardo Lander has proposed the term “coloniality of knowledge” as the logic by which non-modern or non-colonial epistemologies are antagonized along all of the various tentacles of colonialism.

Where Foucault sees power/knowledge, I see struggles over knowledge as manifestations of class struggle. While the majority of authors writing on the relationship between violence, colonialism, and knowledge focus on discourse, Vandana Shiva has contributed a uniquely materialist understanding of epistemic violence. Shiva argues that epistemic violence is motivated by "the needs of a particular form of economic organization" (1988, 238). Shiva zooms in on the history of science to expose the rational mask donned by epistemic violence within capitalist modernity. Kenneth MacDonald also takes a materialist approach in his study of the marginal status of porters in Pakistan. Arguing that porters have been racialized in conjunction with their economic function, MacDonald identifies an "epistemological boundary which separates elites from those who carry their bags; a boundary which leads to the deployment of institutional practices (such as government regulations or the actions of tour operators) that contribute to hazardous working conditions for porters" (2002, 82). This dissertation takes an allied approach by situating economic conditions in relation to politics of representation and peasant ways of knowing.

Looking Ahead

Focusing on the overlapping realms of art and ethnography, this dissertation unearths how peasant knowledge became a key terrain in the fight between capitalism and revolutionary socialism in the Yugoslav region. This research builds on previous work in folklore, anthropology, and performance studies, which has problematized the colonial investments of anthropology and the racism undergirding white modern artists' infatuation with the visual cultures of colonized peoples. I extend this line of analysis to representations of Yugoslav peasants and their cultural practices (most commonly referred to as "folklore"). I consider how and why peasants in the Yugoslav region came to be widely seen as backwards, superstitious, and obstinate. To understand this process and its significance, I examine ethnographic photography in the late Habsburg Empire, self-taught peasant painting, nationalist folklore, postsocialist performance and video art, and contemporary folk healing practices.

My methodology combines visual and discourse analysis with ethnographic and archival research methods in order to trace the changing representations of peasants' relationships to land in the Yugoslav region from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. I locate discourses on the peasantry at the places where the archive meets the body. Michel Foucault has previously transformed our understanding of the archive from a repository of knowledge into a disciplinary site wherein certain objects are made recognizable and categorizable (1972, 131). Regarding peasants and folklore, the archive is not as a record of how traditional practices and ways of life have transformed over time. Rather, it is a site in which "the folk" have been rendered knowable and categorizable in relation to categories such as the market, the nation, the contemporary, the ancient, and the modern. Within the archive, peasants are constructed and classified as apolitical subjects who are incapable of speaking for themselves or, rather, who have nothing to say. Consequently, their voices and narratives are largely suppressed within the archive. To understand the material and corporeal affects that these taxonomic regimes have upon rural communities, my dissertation examines the dispersed array of media through which discourses on the peasantry manifest themselves (Foucault 1972, 66). Employing distinct methods for each type of media, the following chapters expose the underlying logic that structures the disavowal and dispossession of the Yugoslav peasantry over the last two hundred years.

The first chapter examines ethnographic village photography produced by ethnologists from Serbia and the Habsburg metropole around the First World War. Ethnographic photography and related Romantic discourses on Balkan peasants of this period reveal how imperialists sought to take the peasant out of time in order to exploit their labor. Analyzing archival photographs, ethnographers' notes, and museum exhibitions, I situate Habsburg imperial photography in relation to the colonial photography of Western Europe. Bringing literature from Indigenous studies, settler colonial studies, and ethnic studies to bear on the early-twentieth century rural Balkans reveals an ideological continuity in how exploitation was justified through Romantic representation. Drawing on evidence from ethnographic literature, museum archives, and political texts, this chapter demonstrates how the larger lifeworld of the peasantry (including healing practices, foodways, and senses of time) was disrupted in order to clear ground for escalating capitalist and imperialist extraction.

The second chapter pulls apart the relationship between communist fine artists and peasant artists in interwar Croatia and analyzes the significant role of self-taught peasant artists in Yugoslav socialism. An anti-Romantic contrast to the imperialist ethnography, the communist-peasant-artist alliances of the interwar period through the early days of Yugoslav socialism authoritatively recognize peasants as agents of political transformation. Beginning with the relationship of interwar communist politics to artistic production, I discuss how communist fine artists aligned themselves with peasant artists and cultivated an anticolonial underground movement grounded in the emancipation of the indebted peasantry. Next, I demonstrate how these peasant-communist artistic collaborations during the interwar period shaped the development of Yugoslav socialist modernism for decades to come. I relate the Yugoslav theorization of the relationship of naïve art to contemporary art to the larger debates around cultivating national cultures for revolutionary aims, referencing the work of Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, Glen Coulthard, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.

The third chapter is devoted to the elephant in the room: the mobilization of folklore by Serbian nationalists during the 1990s. References to peasants and folklore became integral components of the reactionary current of Serbian nationalism that ran through Yugoslav politics in the 1980s and 90s. Slobodan Milošević justified his anti-Albanian crusade by appealing to the invented tradition of the Kosovo Myth. Radovan Karadžić, leader of the Bosnian Serbs during the Bosnian War, claimed to be a direct descendent of the "father of Serbian folklore" Vuk Karadžić. He also produced and promoted nationalist folk poetry as the impetus for the genocide of the Bosnian Muslim population. Scholarship on the use of folklore by the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy sheds significant light on the logic of Serbian nationalism in the 1990s. However, I remain critical of how critiques of the fascist and nationalist appropriation of folklore too often also gloss folklore and rural populations altogether as reactionary. I conclude the chapter by offering an alternative reading of the significance of the "folk" within fascist and nationalist folklore.

The fourth chapter addresses the invocation of rural Balkan traditions by performance and video artists in the postsocialist period. The postsocialist period is characterized by contradiction, thus we see the simultaneous use of Balkan traditions as a critique of imposed austerity and the dismantling of social welfare as well as the revival of a Romantic representation of the rural subject as someone outside of time, without a political life or future. Finding themselves in an identity crisis following the violent disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia, post-Yugoslav artists often turned to folklore in an attempt to either create an identity for themselves in the eyes of the Western art market, or to critique the ways that their identity has been chosen for them. I examine the work of a variety of artists including Marina Abramović, Vladimir Nikolić, and traditional singer Svetlana Spajić. Employing a dialectical approach, this chapter teases out the contradictions in these artists' approaches to folklore and the contemporary art market. Postsocialist temporality offers a unique opportunity to reassess the political value of folk cultural practices, if one does not yield the folk to the market.

The final chapter analyzes the experiences of women and men in present-day rural Serbia and North Macedonia, who practice ecologically-engaged forms of traditional medicine while negotiating the precarious material conditions of the village. Drawing from eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork from 2016 through 2019, this chapter demonstrates how traditional healers' anti-essentialist vision of bodies and the natural world provides an enduring Balkan anticapitalist model for revolutionary praxis. Engaging scholarly literature on decoloniality, I demonstrate how we can connect the analysis of Silvia Federici with scholarship on decolonial ways of knowing to open up a space for the discussion of decoloniality within the rural Balkans. This novel cross reading broadens the implications of Federici's thesis by revealing that the violent campaign of the Western European witch craze was not universally successful in wiping out non-essentialist and non-utilitarian views of health and the body. In the post-Ottoman Balkans—which were not subject to witch trials in the early modern period—magical vernacular healing practices persist in offering alternatives to the capitalist modern view of the body as a work machine.

The most glaring conclusion of this dissertation concerns the labeling of peasants as "superstitious." This characterization of peasants is consistent across their representation in imperial ethnography, socialist Yugoslav visual art, nationalist folklore, and postsocialist performance. Extending beyond the Yugoslav context, the conflation of the peasant with superstition is ubiquitous—even the monumental anticolonial thinker Frantz Fanon wrote about Algerian peasants' rituals as hindrances to revolution (2004 [1963], 18-21). By engaging with the work of decolonial Native studies scholars in Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas, a contrasting perspective on superstition emerges. Building on Silvia Federici's argument that the dispossession of female healers ("witches") constituted a foundational act of primitive accumulation, this dissertation re-evaluates the rhetoric of peasant superstition to reveal two centuries of colonially-informed epistemic violence against rural communities, which has disproportionately disenfranchised women and elders. As the Yugoslav region currently witnesses some of the worst air quality in the world, an unresolved waste management crisis, and the damming of the last "wild rivers" in Europe, the enduring contradictions of twentieth-century responses to the peasant question require that we think critically about the peasant's historical trajectory in the region and also find opportunities for actualizing alternative political and ecological horizons. As a monument, this dissertation catalogues the violence that has unfolded over the past two centuries, as well as the constant counter-movements of peasants organizing against exploitation, violence, and oppression. As a protest, this dissertation demands that we stop seeing people's lives and life's work in the geographic periphery as collateral damage.

CHAPTER ONE
Colonial Expeditions in the Balkans: Ethnography as Primitive Accumulation During the First World War

During the First World War, ethnographers and folklorists played a critical role in facilitating the process of primitive accumulation in the Balkans. Ethnographic research expeditions in Habsburg-occupied territories were seen as direct contributions to the war effort. One critical research expedition occurred in 1916, led by Austrian folklorist Arthur Haberlandt, with the support of the Austro-Hungarian government. This expedition followed the army's route through Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia. Following this research trip, Haberlandt produced an evolutionist narrative that linked the Balkans' level of agricultural development with its level of civilization. Haberlandt created a closed feedback loop in which the poor fertility and under-cultivation of the soil are both the cause and result of Balkan primitivity. Ultimately, Haberlandt's research participated in the process of so-called primitive accumulation, by cataloguing the economic potential of the Balkans. This research was disseminated through both publications and photographs. Through his photographs we are able to witness the process of intra-European racialization in action as his photographs link physical characteristics with their capacity for different types of work. This process was not without resistance, however. Some of Haberlandt's photographed subjects resist capture through the practice of refusal.

In light of recent renewed attention to the relationship of primitive accumulation to colonialism, this chapter contextualizes the project of Habsburg imperial ethnography according to the region's histories of colonialism and primitive accumulation.[35] At the turn of the twentieth century, Europe found itself at a crossroads between what Arno Mayer has referred to as the Old Order and the New Order. The dawning age of capitalism was not driven by the mass unopposed takeover of capitalists. Rather, through the First World War, Europe was mostly governed by the Old Order leaders who wanted to preserve their own power. During this time we see elements of feudalism mixed together with elements of capitalism. Meanwhile, a wave of European colonization was underway, and everyone was looking for new colonies. Alongside Queen Victoria's notoriously violent colonial reign, the Berlin Conference divided up Africa to different European powers in the name of development. The period from the 1870s through the First World War is also known as the era of "New Imperialism," or, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm "the age of empire" (1987).

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[35] Recent anchoring publications include the special issue of *City*, "Enclosures and Discontents," edited by Lisa Tilley, Ashkok Kumar, and Thomas Cowan (2017); Coulthard 2014; and See 2017.

Habsburg imperialism left a lasting scar in the Balkans. Following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, Bosnia was given to the Habsburg Empire. This territorial acquisition was made official during Congress of Berlin in 1878, where European powers divided up the Balkan peninsula amongst themselves. W.E.B. Du Bois referred to this congress as the prelude to the 1884 Berlin Conference, which was the crux of the so-called "Scramble for Africa" (1943). Austria-Hungary, however, did not "receive" any African colonies from this conference. From 1878 through the First World War, Austria-Hungary invested its colonial aspirations into Bosnia. "Austria's Africa" (Reynolds-Cordileone 2015, 171), was the only real colony of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not out of strategy, but rather lack of opportunity: "The colonization of South-Eastern Europe was given priority over extra-European colonial endeavours, largely because of a lack of opportunities for the latter, rather than due to any strategic plan." (Marchetti 2007, 166).

The appropriateness of "colony" and "colonialism" to describe the relationship of the Habsburg Empire to Bosnia has been debated at length. Bosnia-Herzegovina's status has been described variously as "quasi-colonial" (Marchetti 2007, 166; Detrez 2002; Okey 2007, 220), an instance of “frontier Orientalism” (Gingrich 2007), a “proximate colony” (Donia 2007), and a “surrogate colony” (Promitzer 2019). While some accuse “colonialism” of being an anachronism, inappropriately applied to the Bosnian case, it was clear during the time of occupation that Austrians and other Europeans viewed Bosnia as a colonial project, albeit one that was geographically much closer than the colonies of the other great powers. In his 1902 article in the *Monthly Review*, Luigi Villari refers to Bosnia and Herzegovina as “Vienna’s ‘first colonial experiment’” (Hajdarpasić 2015, 192; Villari 1902, 85, 87). During a colonial debate, a German parliamentarian argued that “That little slice of Herzegovina could well be worth more than the whole of East Africa” (Reynolds-Cordileone 2015, 171). To deny the coloniality of the Habsburg Balkans is revisionist anachronism, not the other way around.

Age of Exploration

> *“Travelling northern Albania, the photographer meets quite different demands than the photographer in civilized areas or even the explorer in the central African jungle” (Nopcsa 1911, 13)*

At the turn of the century, the Balkans attracted a certain masculinist attention from European scholars and amateur intellectuals. Seen as a nearby “exotic” locale, the perceived wildness of the Balkans was titillating to these men. Through exercising the time-honored tradition of the doctrine of discovery, Europeans’ fragile sense of modernity and civilizational advancement could be fortified. Seen as not only unknown, but also as backwards in time, the Balkans were treated as a stage for West and Central Europeans’ colonial desires.

Eastern Europe was invented in eighteenth-century Enlightened Europe as a foil for the myth of Western civilization. Prior to the eighteenth century, Europe was divided conceptually into Northern Europe and Southern Europe, with the most powerful cities being Rome, Florence, and Venice. As Larry Wolff demonstrates in *Inventing Eastern Europe,* during the eighteenth century, the geo-centers of power shifted to Paris, London, and Amsterdam—the previously "barbaric" part of Europe (1994, 4-5). A new lexicon was needed to conceptually explain the re-distribution of power. The result of the new opposition between Western and Eastern Europe was that the term "civilization" became refined as a developmental model moving from the East (the past) to the West (the present) (Wolff 1994, 12). Within this conceptual reordering of the world, the Slavs in Eastern Europe came to be thought of as mediators of Asian civilization (constructed as archaic) and Western civilization (constructed as modern). Scholars and travelers from Western Europe began to document violence, feudalism, and slavery in Eastern Europe as proof of their lack of civilization (Wolff 1994, 81). This evolutionist epistemology cemented the "primitive" status of Eastern Europe.

Through the construction of a "primitive" Eastern Europe, Western European travel writers and anthropologists negatively constructed Western Europe as "modern." In eighteenth-century travel narratives, writers remark on the "collapsing of chronology" wherein traveling in Eastern Europe feels like one is experiencing the ancient world (Wolff 1994, 285). By collapsing time in this way, the construction of modern Europe becomes a cartographic project of mapping degrees of civilization and contemporaneity.

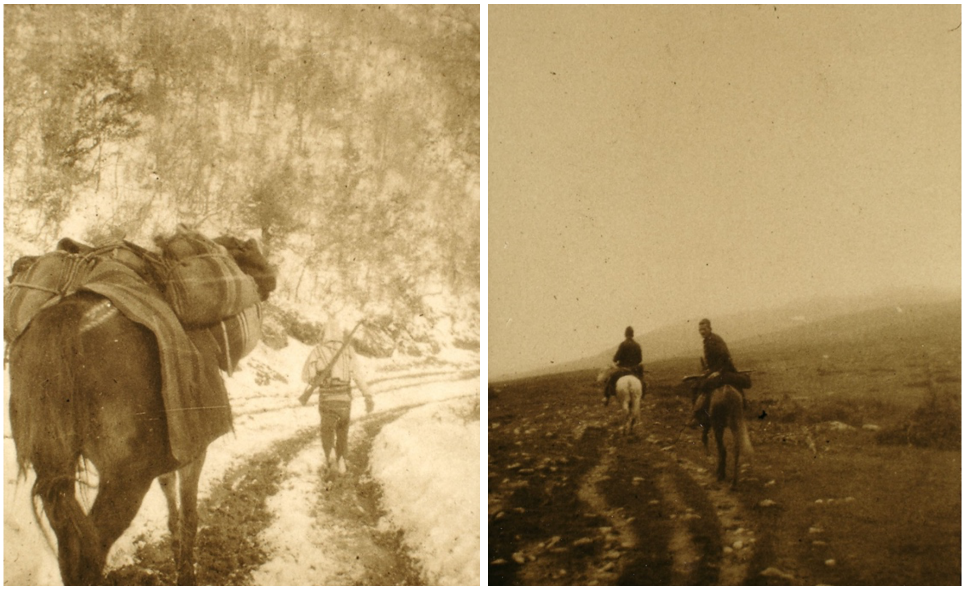
In the Balkans, one of the best examples of a gentleman traveler is Baron Franz Nopcsa (b. 1877, d. 1933). Nopcsa came to the Balkans in the early-twentieth century both to conduct research and to experiment with his own self-fashioning. Nopcsa was born into the Hungarian aristocratic Nopcsa family, who were of Romanian origin. After discovering dinosaur bones on the grounds of the family home, Nopcsa pursued the study of geology and later became a founder of the field of paleobiology.

As a young man, Nopcsa was introduced to Albanian culture through his lover, the Transylvanian Count Louis Drašković. Throughout his time spent in Albania and Montenegro, Nopcsa straddled the line between researcher, actor, and infiltrator. From 1908, Nopcsa worked undercover for the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry by smuggling arms to northern Albanian tribes during the Bosnian Crisis. Nopcsa even had aspirations to become the leader of an independent Albania. As a consequence of Nopcsa's mixed role, his politics are also less than straightforward. As you will see in the following pages, Nopcsa frequently plays with European stereotypes of "wild" Albania. At times he appears to uphold European primitivism, but he also frequently undermines Europeans' disparaging images of Albania.

Nopcsa's memoirs, which cover the period from his earliest travels in 1903 through the beginning of the First World War, are a rich resource for understanding academic European interest in the region. His memoirs take on a sensationalized tone, highlighting the dangers he had to face. Reading like an action novel at times, Nopcsa embodied the classic trope of the explorer, a geologist/paleontologist romping through Albania. He was involved in multiple near-death plots against his life, illegal border crossings, and weapons smuggling. He discusses several near-misses of gunfire in his memoirs. While we do find many primitivist tropes in his memoirs, Nopcsa also critiques Eurocentric tropes of the West's self-appointed civilizational authority over Albanians. Nopcsa's description of his initial meeting with local Albanians could easily be interchanged with most any ethnographic text written by colonial ethnographers during the early-nineteenth century: "The arrival of a foreigner in Jezerca, the part of Kehnendi territory where no European had ever set foot, caused great excitement. They were fascinated at me as a person and at my clothes" (35). Nopcsa's self-identification as "European," however, was often made with irony: "I chose to have a look around the area that had never been visited by a

'European'" (32). Using scare quotes around the word "European," Nopcsa acknowledges its ideological, not merely descriptive, meaning.

In addition to his writing, Nopcsa's photography also contributes to the construction of his explorer persona. Most of Nopcsa's photographs of Albanians prominently feature weapons, as he has often referred to Albanians as the "armed children of Europe" (Marchetti 2007, 178). Matching the adventurous tone of his memoirs, Nopcsa's photographs of his travels place the viewer within the action. Multiple photographs were taken on horseback. Sometimes we see guides in front of us, either on horseback or on foot (Fig. 2.1 and 2.2). Occasionally, the guides even look back at us, giving us the feeling that we are accompanying them on their journey. The perspective of these photographs makes the viewer feel as if they are in Nopcsa's position, following the guides along winding, mysterious trails.



Figures 2.1 and 2.2: Photographs captured by Franz Nopcsa.
L: Kosovo. On the mountain pass between the Plain of Kosovo and the Dukagjini Plateau (Prizren-Gjakova), 1903. R: Somewhere in the mountains, 1903.

In contrast to his colonialist attitudes and evolutionist rhetoric, Nopcsa uses humor to subvert many stereotypes about Albania versus Europe. For example, a lot of mythology circulated in western Europe about the violence perpetrated by particular tribes in Northern Albania, which Nopcsa informs us about. However, once he arrives and meets men from the notorious Nikaj and Shala tribes, he finds that they confound his expectations: "My companions and I first encountered some Nikaj and Shala men, known for their savage ways, on the 1,700 meters high pass Qafa e Nemanjes where we ended up in a hilarious snowball fight, I realized that one could get along with these people splendidly without the help of an interpreter" (16). Later, after meeting other tribes in northern Albania, Nopcsa pokes fun at European stereotypes about Albanians: "We were thus welcomed and entertained for the most part by these modern-day troglodytes, who were neither hostile nor particularly savage" (31).

Nopcsa also uses his experience in Albania to draw criticism to European behaviors. Nopcsa, for example draws out the contradictions between Albanian hospitality and the negative stereotypes about Albanians within Western Europe: "little acts of unassuming kindness in detail are one of the commonly found characteristics of the inhabitants of the northern Albanian mountains, deeds that are, alas, so often lacking in Europe" (29). Not only are these qualities lacking in Europe, but in fact Europe has gotten the equation of civilization backward: "We Europeans are technically advanced barbarians who are both conceited and childish" (85). Technical advancement here has no correlation to humanism and civilization. Nopcsa often places scare quotes around "wild" and "savage," as well as "Europe" and "European," throughout the text, indicating his own ambivalent attitude towards these terms (28, 32, 39).

Following his travels in 1908, Nopcsa reflects negatively upon the changes that have taken place as a consequence of modernization and war. He notes, for example, the disappearance of the native Chamois goat species: "From what I have heard, the chamois have all but disappeared from this part of Albania because of the good rifles the men now have. In a few years' time, they will only be known from legends in the treeless expanses of the Prokletije" (36). Nopcsa had found Albania so alluring, because despite his ironic attitude towards Europe's self-image, it was relatively "unexplored" prior to his arrival. However, as years passed he began to mourn the loss of his idealized image of the noble savage: "In general, I must say that the highlanders of northern Albania have become very demoralized over the last few years. The noble savages I so loved, who clung unswervingly to their code of honor—a code that did not correspond at all to ours—were gone, and in their place, with a very few exceptions, were men who were greedy for money, timid and apprehensive, and thoroughly unreliable" (203-4). The problem of "greed" has been noted before by Nopcsa: "In 1908, as far as I could see, the Curraj and the Merturi were the tribes that were the least touched by outside influence. The worst of them were the money-grubbing Thethi people" (60). Integration into capitalism, then, seems to be the worst offence to Nopcsa, who takes no responsibility for his own role in this process. The closing line of his monograph sums up his romantic view of Albanians: "I doubt if I will ever encounter the noble savages I once loved. Part of my world has vanished" (204).

From his expeditions to his own self-fashioning, Nopcsa performs what Renato Rosaldo terms "imperialist nostalgia" (1989, 2001). Narrating the dangerous circumstances he encountered and the intimidating myths of Albanian "savagery," he situates himself within the Romantic world of northern Albania (Fig. 2.3). Read allegorically (Clifford 1986), it is important to note Nopcsa's political ambitions. First serving as an Austrian spy smuggling arms across the Montenegro-Albania border, then offering up himself as a potential candidate for the king of an independent Albania, Franz Nopcsa participated in the process that he came to mourn. This paradox is defined by Rosaldo as the "seemingly harmless mask," which is invoked to "cover their involvement with processes of domination" (1989, 120).

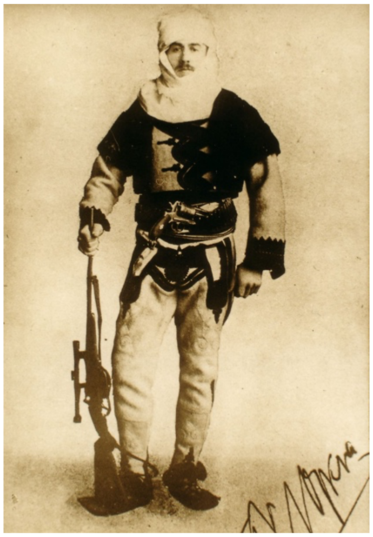


Figure 2.3: Nopcsa dressed in traditional Albanian clothing, 1916 (Elsie, “Nopcsa”).

Now, unlike the ethnographies that are examined by Rosaldo and Clifford, in Nopcsa’s writing he does not attempt to clearly separate himself from imperialists—in fact, he often meets with Austro-Hungarian officials during his travels. He also does not pretend to be an upstanding European citizen. Rather, he adopts a persona akin to the romantic adventurer tropes which are central to the mythology of the American West. In his book *The American Elsewhere*, Jimmy Bryan identifies emotion as central to adventurism. He writes that the imaginary elsewhere of the American frontier “opened worlds for personal abandon that permitted the feeling and expression of sentiments that rational family and neighbors back home would condemn as childish, womanlike, or depraved” (Bryan 2017, 38). Nopcsa saw Albania as a place to play out his fantasies of war, sexuality, and political power.

Hidden within the story of Franz Nopcsa is the auto-ethnographic work of Bayazid Elmaz Doda. Before beginning his expedition, Nopcsa met the Bajazid Elmaz Doda in Bucharest, Romania on November 20, 1906. From the Albanian village of Shtirovica in the Upper Reka region of Macedonia, this eighteen-year-old became Nopcsa’s guide and lover until their deaths. While Nopcsa did not express many of his feelings about Doda in his memoirs, he does mention that since the death of his previous lover, Louis Drašković, Doda "has been the only person who has really loved me and whom I could therefore trust completely in everything without fearing for a moment that he would misuse my confidence" (Nopcsa 2014, 25).

In addition to their personal relationship, Doda also collaborated with Nopcsa, and later produced his own monograph and photographic collective. Doda's collaboration with Nopcsa is briefly mentioned in Nopcsa's memoirs: "The most notable discovery was a piece from the skull of a Struthiosaurus that my secretary, Bajazid Elmaz, had found with a few other skeletal remains near Szentpeterfalva. This piece was especially interesting because it was the first more or less complete skull of an Ancanthopholis dinosaur. Unfortunately, it was only in 1929 that I got around to describing it. The exhibit is preserved at the British Museum" (137-8). Doda also occasionally captured photographs on Nopcsa's behalf. For example, climbing "Mount Veleçik, the Kunora e Keneshdolit and some other mountains in [Nopcsa's] place," where Doda "took the photographs needed for the topographical maps of the northern Albanian Alps. From Veleçik he brought me a Rudist bivalve" (177). We can easily assume that Doda's contribution to Nopcsa's academic work exceeds these few examples, as the two were constant travel companions.

Doda's own monograph was an ethnographic study of his home village, Shtirovica. Doda captured photographs of the village around 1907 and then wrote his manuscript, *Albanisches Bauerleben im oberen Rekatal bei Dibra (Makedonien)*, [Albanian Peasant Life in the Upper Reka Valley near Dibra (Macedonia)] in 1914, however, it was not published until 2007 (Fig. 2.4). The work counters much of the racist and inaccurate reporting of previous scholars about Albanian Muslims in the region. Due to Serbian and subsequent Bulgarian occupation, which in 1916 deported all native Albanian populations, Doda's work stands as a testament to a village under siege. In his preface he writes:

> During the Turkish period, my homeland, the Upper Reka Valley, was isolated from the outside world due to a short-sighted policy aimed at propping up a barbaric regime. As a result of recent events, it has come under Serb rule, and it is now to be feared that the Muslim element in Upper Reka, in view of its traditional isolation, will vanish and leave no trace. The purpose of this book describing the life of the Muslims in the Upper Reka Valley is to counter this trend, to help my fellow Muslim villagers preserve their identity, and to create a lasting monument among the publications dealing with Albania. What Spiridion Gopcevic has to say about Reka in his notorious book on Macedonia (*Makedonien und Alt-Serbien*, 1889) is all tendentious lies, something which has been noted by other travelers before me. (Elsie, "Doda")

Unfortunately, Doda's premonition of the vanishing village came to fruition. The village no longer exists today, save for a few stones.

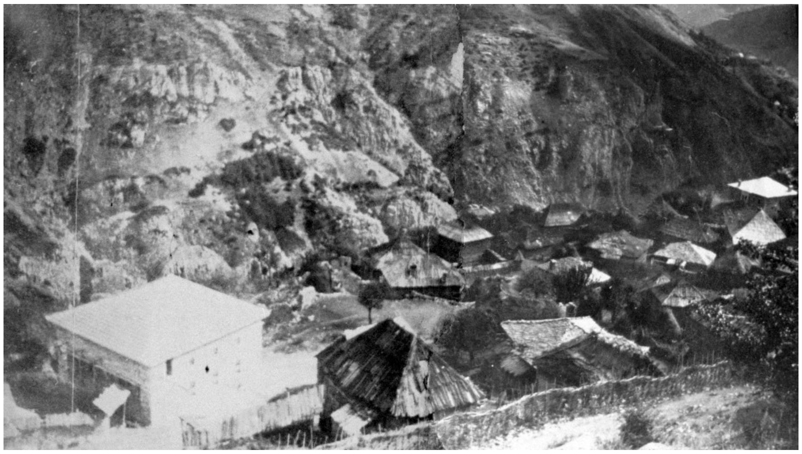


Figure 2.4: View of Doda's village, Shtirovica. Around 1907.

Doda recognized the political significance of producing this monograph, considering the almost-certain annihilation of his community. Doda describes the aims of his project as akin to a monument:

> I did not intend to write an academic treatise on ethnography or some serious dissertation, but simply to describe this part of the world as I experienced it myself on a daily basis. When those who exterminated the Albanians in the region of Nish [Niš] have also wiped out my people, the simplest accurate description of their daily life will suffice to serve both as a permanent monument to their one-time existence and as an indictment to those who annihilated them. (Elsie, "Doda")

Doda’s writing and accompanying photographs capture a dimension of rural Albania that never comes through in the images of foreign researchers. The subjects of his photographs are relaxed, at ease, and often playful (Fig. 2.5). In one particularly striking photograph, a group of men sit together on a hillside in Shtirovica, talking and smoking cigarettes (Fig. 2.6). Their faces are smiling and the viewer feels as though they are included in this intimate social circle. The other photographs also carry this energy. Another photo of a single man smiling at the camera conveys that the smile was not posed, but rather was natural, coming out of the rapport and conversation between him and Doda. In contrast to Nopcsa’s photographs, there is only one photograph in Doda’s collection where a gun can be seen, and the photograph is of a wedding party, where again everyone is smiling and at ease. Doda’s monument is the epitome of aliveness—the opposite of the typical monument, which serves as a dead marker of the past. Its aliveness is its indictment. One cannot see these photographs, or read Doda’s monograph, and continue to accept any narratives that evade responsibility for their displacement. This community did not “die out,” they were eliminated.

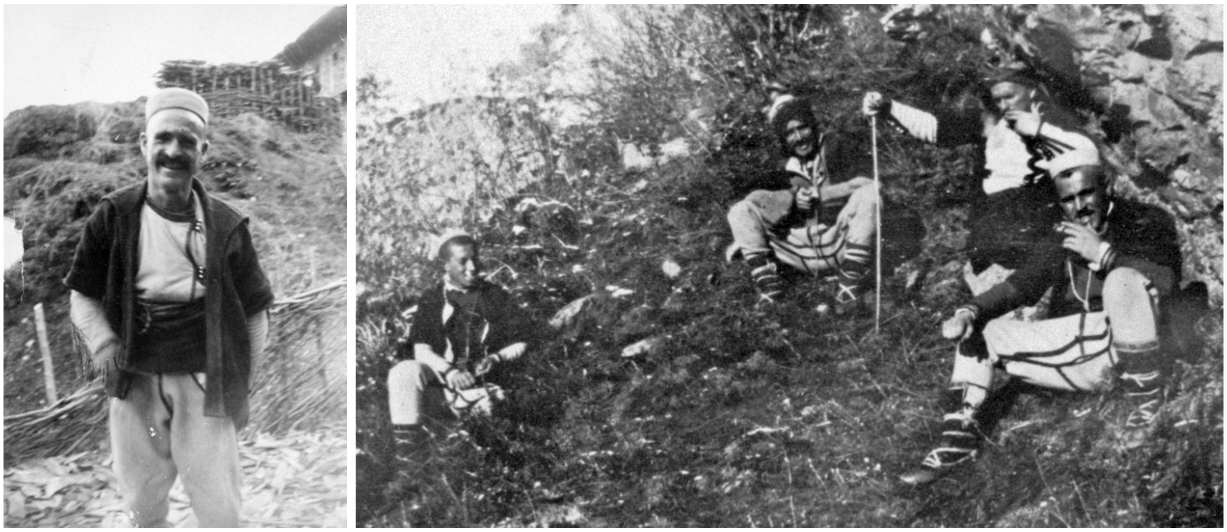


Figure 2.5 and 2.6: Photographs captured by Bayazid Doda of men in Shtirovica. Around 1907.

In 1933, Nopcsa and Doda's stories came to a tragic end. At their home, Nopcsa shot and killed Doda before turning the gun on himself. His suicide note reads:

> The reason for my suicide is my nervous system which is at its end. The fact that I killed my long-term friend and secretary, Mr. Bajazid Elmaz Doda, in his sleep, without him having an inkling as to what was going in, was because I did not want to leave him behind sick, in misery and in poverty because he could have suffered too much. I wish to be cremated (Elsie, "Nopcsa")

The violent end of their relationship uncomfortably mirrors the violent end of Doda's village. Nopcsa never acknowledges the destruction of Doda's village. Nopcsa evades any responsibility in the so-called "negative" consequences of modernization, but in regards to Doda's life, he takes total responsibility for his mortality, as a parent takes responsibility for a child's wellbeing.

Ethnographic Enclosure

As ethnography became more institutionalized, it came to play a significant role in the coloniality of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Around the turn of the century, major inventions like the camera and the phonograph converged with a growing interest in Europe to create national museums (*Landesmuseum*). Ethnographers at the time produced knowledge for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to facilitate imperial rule. They studied the empire's constituent people, paying particular attention to its new territorial acquisition in Southeast Europe. Through ethnographic expeditions and museum exhibitions, ethnographers collaborated with the imperial military to facilitate the primitive accumulation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to express ambitions to extend the imperial domain through Montenegro and Albania.

Ethnographic interest in the Balkans was made official in Vienna in 1884. The Viennese Anthropological Society created an "Ethnographic Commission," with the intention "to effectively stimulate and support the study of the ethnography of the Balkan countries" in addition to the study of Austria-Hungary (Marchetti 2007, 170). In the following decade, this intellectual project would build a home in the Museum for Austrian Folk Life and Folk Art (*Museum für österreichische Volkskunde*) in Vienna. In 1894/5 Indologist Michael Haberlandt and the Semitist Wilhelm Hein established the Association for Austrian Folklore (*Verein für österreichische Volkskunde*), the Journal for Austrian Folklore (*Zeitschrift für österreichische Volkskunde*), and the Museum for Austrian Folk Life and Folk Art (*Museum für österreichische Volkskunde*). Articulating the agenda of the museum, they "[claimed] the Empire as their field of research" (Marchetti 2010, 210).

Michael Haberlandt served as the first director of the museum. Born in Altenburg, Hungary in 1860, Haberlandt began his career studying Hindi, Sanskrit, and Indology (Marchetti 2007). Haberlandt began his career with a study on Indigenous Maldivans (*Die Cultur der Eingeborenen der Malediven*) (1892) and in 1893 he began teaching courses including "Ethnography of West India," "Principles of General Ethnology" and "Malay and African Ethnography" (Bockhorn 1988, 68; cited in Dow and Bockhorn 2017). A student of the Orientalist Friedrich Müller, Haberlandt began his career by studying Europe's colonial subjects abroad. After 1900, however, he refocused his gaze on Europe, Austria, and the constituent people of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Haberlandt developed an agenda for ethnographic research that appealed to the values of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He argued for the necessity of ethnographic research, because the discipline would facilitate the assimilation of "primitive rural culture" into "urban high culture" (Marchetti 2010, 210). Haberlandt did not explicitly understand this as a program of cultural elimination, but rather he demonstrated a paternalistic attitude towards rural culture. He sought to protect rural culture from being wiped out by modern industry by creating a commoditized version of rural culture, which could then be made profitable within the capitalist economy.

By sanitizing, standardizing, and commoditizing rural culture, early Austrian ethnographers greatly contributed to the fetishization of the peasant. In the first issue of the Austrian Journal of Folklore, published in 1895, Michael Haberlandt laid out his underlying philosophy and approach to folklore. He wrote:

> We do not care for nationalities as such, but for their popular (*volksthümliche*), pristine (*urwüchsige*) roots. Ours is the exploration and presentation of the popular lower layer [of culture] alone. We want to identify, interpret and display the proper "*Volk,*" whose primitive economy implies a primitive lifestyle, a pristine state of mind in its natural form.

In his essay, Christian Marchetti assessed Haberlandt's vision of *Volkskunde* (folklore) as "an internal primitivism, available for discovery in the native population of the multiethnic empire" (Marchetti 2007, 174). Albert Doja has highlighted that the Balkans were so intellectually compelling for the Viennese, because the region "[represented] a liminal region between the two approaches of *Völkerkunde* and *Volkskunde*" (Doja 2014, 323). By concentrating on the divide between the folk other and the colonial other, ethnographers sought to execute the empire's cultural mission (*Kulturmission*). The *Kulturmission* was summed up by Crown Prince Rudolf in his 1888 visit to Sarajevo: "Our mission [here] is to bring Western culture to the Orient" (Reynolds-Cordileone 2015, 172).

Following in the footsteps of his father, Michael Haberlandt's son Arthur Haberlandt (b. 1889, d. 1964) became involved in ethnographic research in the Balkans in the 1910s. After studying anthropology, ethnology, and prehistory at the University of Vienna, he completed his doctorate in 1911 and habilitation in 1914 with a thesis "on the drinking water supply of primitive peoples" (Johler 2020). A. Haberlandt would go on to become a research assistant and assistant curator of the Museum for Folk Life and Folk Art in 1918, and then senior curator in 1920. In 1924 A. Haberlandt succeeded his father as director of the museum and secretary general of the *Verein für Volkskunde* (Folklife Society).

Coming of age at the dawn of the First World War, A. Haberlandt escaped military service (at the insistence of his father) by leading an ethnographic expedition into the Balkans. With much of the Balkans previously inaccessible, Austria's occupation extended into the Western Balkans during the war, thus facilitating the travel of not only military personnel, but also scholars, throughout the region. As is clear in A. Haberlandt's own writing from the time, this expedition and affiliated efforts were seen as "ethnographic contributions to the war effort" (Haberlandt 1917, VIII; Marchetti 2007, 185).

The formal name of the expedition was the "Expedition [for the study of] arts, history, ethnography, archaeology, and linguistics in the k.u.k. occupation zones in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Imperial Academy of Sciences."[36] ("*Kunsthistorisch-Archäologisch-Ethnographisch-Linguistische Balkanexpedition in den k.u.k. besetzten Balkangebieten, im Auftrag des k.k. Unterrichtsministeriums und der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*"). In his 1917 book synthesizing the results of the expedition, A. Haberlandt outlines the relevant government figures that made the expedition possible:

> The trip was carried out on behalf of the k. k. Ministry of Education undertook the initiative to implement in the sense of His Excellency the Minister Dr. L. Cwiklinski will give Mr. Hofrat R. v. Karabacek, E. Reich and government councilor M. Haberlandt, but in the end it only came about thanks to the particularly benevolent and understanding approach of the k. u. k. Army high command makes possible, as the most amiable and hospitable reception in the army in the field has always accompanied and promoted us on all our journeys.

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[36] k. u. k. (imperial and royal) refers to the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary from 1867 to 1918. k. k. (imperial-royal) refers to the Habsburg Empire before 1867 and to the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1867–1918.

> The printing of this work was supported by a grant from the k. k. Ministry of Culture and Education, for which the most respectful thanks are expressed. (VIII)[37]

The expedition sent 6 scholars to travel to Montenegro, northern Albania, and Serbia from May 22 to August 12, 1916. The members of the expedition included ethnographer Arthur Haberlandt, Slavist Franz Kidrić, archaeologists Arnold Schober and Camillo Praschniker, linguist Maximillian Lambertz, and art historian Ernst Buschbeck.

The expedition route took the scholars first from the military harbor of Kotor (Cattaro) to the Montenegrin capital of Cetinje.[38] Following the Army's route, the expedition proceeded to Podgorica, from which point the group crossed Shkodra (Skutari) Lake to Albania. The city of Shkodra was the group's primary hub. From this point, the scholars went southward to Kruja, Tirana, Elbasan, and finally to Shkumbin River. The expedition then travelled along the Shkumbi river, eventually proceeding northward back towards Shkodra. After that, the group split up, leaving Haberlandt and Buschbeck to cross the northern Albanian Mountains into Kosovo on foot. Finally they went by train to Belgrade as the last stop on their trip.

In his analysis of the expedition, Arthur Haberlandt forges an evolutionist connection between people's level of agricultural development and level of civilization. Haberlandt finds evidence of the primitivity of the Balkan people in their failure to adequately exploit the soil, failure to meet capitalist standards of productivity, and dependence on the natural landscape. Haberlandt thought that in order to bring Balkan peasants into the capitalist mode of production, it was necessary to intervene in the relationship between the people and the natural world. Haberlandt saw Balkan peasants as having a "close dependency on the natural features of the individual landscapes," which had been inherited from the distant past. He referred to this dependency as the "primitive cultural life" of the Balkans: the failure to demonstrate consistent and predictable productivity. In contrast to the Balkan peasant, Haberlandt saw the Austrian as the exemplar worker, whose "regular, day-to-day work" is seen as the "natural state of existence" for "the civilized Central European" (1917, 167). If one wants to be seen as "natural" today, one must labor in ways that are amenable to the market.

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[37] All translations are the author's unless otherwise stated.

[38] Where necessary, present-day city names have been used in-line, while historical names used by Haberlandt have been included in parentheses.

From the very beginning of his 1917 report on the expedition, Haberlandt connects the status of agriculture in the region to value judgements about the populace as a whole. In his report, Haberlandt immediately highlights the productive potential of the region by praising Montenegro's "lush green alpine meadows" and "abundant rainfall." In stark contrast to this abundant potential, Haberlandt is critical that the soil of the Rijeka and Zeta Valley "by no means has its fertility appropriately exploited (*ausgenützt*)" (1917, 2). He also notes that the Podgorica basin soil "has by no means been exploited in accordance with its fertility, rather large areas lie unused and fallow." In the eyes of the Habsburg imperialist, the Balkan peasant *wastes* their own land. By juxtaposing potential fertility with the failure of the Montenegrin people to exploit the soil, Haberlandt creates a justification for Habsburg occupation. In the eyes of the imperialist, Montenegro cannot be left to squander such a great opportunity.

Haberlandt also sees more morally damning instances of wasted productivity in the karst regions of Montenegro and the highlands of northern Albania. In his discussions of these regions, he identifies the weak link in the development of the Balkans as the unsatisfactory productivity and work ethic of the population: "At the same time as soil poverty, these are also the most passive areas in terms of the economic work performance of the population, and they can even be described as particularly disreputable on this point" (1917, 167). Haberlandt saw this disreputable work performance as an unproductive “lifestyle,” which must be transformed into a capitalist work ethic (1917, 168).

Haberlandt seeks to achieve the transformation of the peasantry into the proletariat through both the heightened exploitation of the landscape as well as the heightened exploitation of labor. This required a disciplining of both the people and the land. Haberlandt, for example, sees great economic potential in turning traditional crafts into competitive cottage industries. Getting in the way of this potentially profitable endeavor was the attitude of Balkan people towards work: “getting the people used to regular work remains the most difficult task of incorporating this nationality into higher European civilization” (Haberlandt 1917, 170). Haberlandt critiques the tendency of Balkan peasants to only work as much as they need, rather than trying to achieve a surplus. Without surplus, there is no profit, and without profit, this whole operation fails.

Haberlandt has an evolutionary explanation for this incongruity of the Balkan peasant with the objectives of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Haberlandt explains that the poor work ethic of the Balkan peasant results from their being historically backwards in time: “If the Montenegrin and Albanian do not work more than they need, this is ultimately the legacy of ancient states of existence, as they were still in the ancestors of almost all European cultural nations north of the Alps during the migration period” (1917, 168). To prove this evolutionist temporal distancing, Haberlandt appeals to the empirical data of the region’s “unfavorable soil conditions,” which have “[bred] the population into narrowly defined forms of life” (1917, 168).

Calling the people “individualistically unproductive,” Haberlandt also offers a psychological interpretation of the unwillingness to work. He defines the Balkan worker’s subjectivity saying that the worker “does not generate any higher work energies, does not think beyond the immediate future, lets time pass by suspiciously waiting for the development of things and meanwhile the sees the best path in following familiar habits and preserving one's own advantage in all ways whenever possible" (Haberlandt 1917, 169). Adolf Vetter, director of the k. k. Trade Promotion Office (*k. k. Gewerbeförderungs-Amtes*), echoes Haberlandt's sentiment in his report on 1910 Bosnia. Vetter identified the evolutionary level of the population as the biggest challenge for Habsburg economic goals: "It is clear to me that the organic development of the down-to-earth, primitive-noble production to more modern forms of production is one of the most difficult tasks that can fall to a commercial administration at all" (1911, 51). One of the key methods that the Empire could offer is through "education and literacy," which Haberlandt thought "would accustom Montenegrins and Albanians to regular labor, integrating them into European civilization" (Marchetti 2010, 227).

Throughout his report, Haberlandt highlights the causes and consequences of underdevelopment and impoverishment in the Balkans. However, rather than offering any legitimacy to local attitudes towards capitalist labor relations, Haberlandt sees these issues with surplus and productivity as necessitating the support of an "external power" (1917, 169). The anti-imperial attitudes of the population were seen as particularly inefficient by the empire. Haberlandt, seeing the obstinance of the Balkan peasantry, concludes that resistance to imperial domination qualifies as a "[prejudice] that naturally [arises] from the traditional instincts" of the people, who are inclined to independence and distrust (1917, 170). Balkan peasants' distrust of armed imperial occupiers, for Haberlandt, signified a deviation from modernity. Compared to the "civilized Central Europeans," Haberlandt saw most of the region as desperately far behind. Except for the cities of Cetinje and Durrës (Durazzo), there was little evidence of "'western' colonization" (Haberlandt 1917, 167).

One mechanism meant to encourage peasants to accept the new economic order was the spread of private home ownership. In his report on Bosnia, Vetter advocated for the widescale construction of private homes, whether architecturally western or "down-to-earth." He saw homeownership as significant for the transformation of the peasant into a waged worker, "Because nothing nourishes the tendency towards a personal relationship that much between the owner or consumer of a commodity and who would be himself and benefits business as much as owning one's own home" (1911, 53). Owning a home was important for nascent capitalism in Vetter's perspective, because "it creates that mental disposition of the citizen more than any other circumstance, which one wants to strengthen through the promotion of the middle class" (1911, 54). To be a homeowner physically invests the peasant in capitalist social relations. Homeownership trains the subjectivity of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

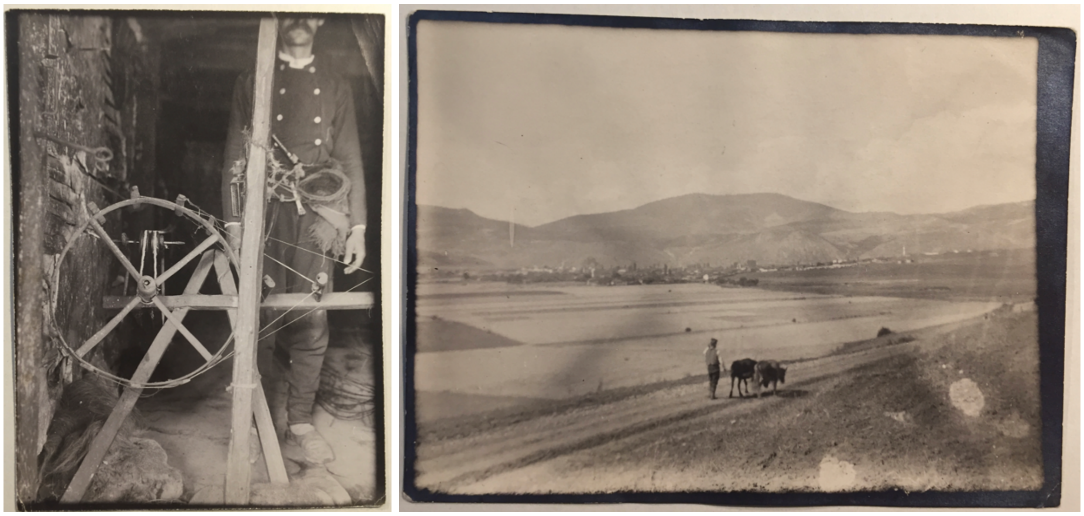
By cataloguing the economic potential of the Balkans, Haberlandt, Vetter and others participate in the process of so-called primitive accumulation. Primitive accumulation, as defined by Marx, is the initial accumulation of raw materials (in both non-human and human form), which enables capitalism to develop. As a social process, primitive accumulation is ultimately a process of separation, wherein workers are severed from the means of production. Through the divorcing of workers from the means of production, workers and their labor-power are turned into objects, while capital takes on a new social life of its own. This separation can also be called "enclosure." Through enclosure, capitalists not only divorce the producer from the means of production, but they also transform "the social means of subsistence and of production into capital" and transform "the immediate producers into wage laborers" (Marx 1967, 714). For peasants in the Balkans during the early-twentieth century, that meant enclosing the agricultural common lands and forcing people to stop producing to satisfy subsistence needs and to start producing for markets—both domestic and international.

Claudia von Werlhof has theorized the process of capitalist enclosure as a redefinition of nature, wherein all that is counted as "nature" is that which the capitalists deem should be free or of low cost – e.g. land, soil, minerals, plants, and laborers: "'nature' is everything that they do not have to, or are not willing to pay for." By reclassifying laborers themselves as "nature," capitalists make their labor "[appear] as a natural resource and their products as akin to a natural deposit" (1988, 97). These nature-workers are initially mostly women, Indigenous people, and enslaved people, but quickly also come to envelop the waged worker as well.

Haberlandt assists in the project of primitive accumulation in the Balkans on behalf of the Austro-Hungarian Empire through his scholarly writing as well as through his photographs. His ethnographic photographs serve as a technology of enclosure, through which subjects are captured and turned into objects: people become workers, traditions become commodities, and land becomes property. During the expedition, Arthur Haberlandt reported to have taken 400 nine by twelve format photographs using a Lerchner Kamera. He also collected objects that were important to his vision of ethnography (Marchetti 2007, 185). He particularly commended household items as being of value for folklore and cultural history (Haberlandt 1917, 8). Regarding the collection of objects, "the expedition's mission was not meant to prey on war spoils in the name of science. The official instructions stipulated that the members must not carry away anything that the native population could regard as valuable, at least not for the moment" (Marchetti 2007, 185). However, despite this directive Haberlandt himself brought back hundreds of objects.

His photographic subjects of interest were first defined by Arthur's father. Inaugurating the museum's photography collection, Michael Haberlandt had two purposes in mind: 1) the preservation of the primitive creations of folklore that were now threatened by modern times and 2) the accumulation of as large a number of evidence as possible for scientific comparison. There were six photographic subjects that M. Haberlandt identified and promoted: pictures of rural inhabitants; old or old-style homes and buildings; traditional costumes; "cult objects;" games, music performance, and drama; and rural work (Marchetti 2013, 315). In addition to these six subjects, Arthur Haberlandt also photographed some urban scenes as well as evidence of modernization in progress (and its future potential).

Examining the body of photographs captured by Arthur Haberlandt, one notices his close attention to objects and processes that could potentially be made profitable. In one photograph, a soldier stands behind a spinning wheel (Fig. 2.7). The soldier's body is facing the camera, but his face is partially out of frame. The object of focus, the spinning wheel, is the center of attention. Watching over this potential industry, the soldier and Haberlandt collaborate on the capture and enclosure of this economic activity.



Figures 2.7 and 2.8: Haberlandt, A. 1916. Photograph. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

In a related vein, Haberlandt captured photographs of olive presses, looms, and more spinning wheels. He also photographed some agricultural scenes, where we can see large expanses of land that are available for cultivation. In one such image there is a somewhat distant farmer and his two cows walking in the foreground, while open fields stretch out behind him (Fig. 2.8). This photograph serves as an invitation extended to the imperial government to privatize, cultivate, and profit.

In her book *The Filipino Primtive*, Sarita Echavez See defines the "imperial archive as a mode of accumulation" (2017, 2). Connecting Marx's concept of primitive accumulation and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's concept of "epistemological possessiveness" (2009), See identifies how colonizers in the Philippines accumulated knowledge as capital through archival materials, museum exhibitions, ethnographic research, and photography. Linda Tuhiwai Smith has demonstrated how this possessiveness facilitates dispossession under the guise of universal rights to knowledge (2012, 64-7, 92-3). As a mode of primitive accumulation, knowledge serves as a guise for the accumulation of resources. Colonial knowledge production wants to *know* the colonized in order to exploit the people as workers and their land as resources.

See breaks down accumulation into two parts: first, the "enclosure of land and resources," and second, the "developmental narrative from the primitive to the civilized that underpins the quest for accrued knowledge" (2017, 3). I find this latter phase to be particularly significant. I interpret this as meaning that the colonial narrative of development justifies the capturing of land and labor as capital by rationalizing it as a process of "modernization" and "civilization." Thus not only people are to be "civilized" through the colonization process, but also objects and land must be "civilized" into commodities. To become civilized is not a matter of efficiency or health or intelligence or any of the other referents, to become civilized is to become alienated.

Alienation, as defined by Marx, is the connection between primitive accumulation and the ongoing accumulation and reproduction of capitalist social relations. Alienation is the process of workers being separated from the means of production. Through this process, "living labour, the 'subjective being' *par excellence,* is turned into a thing among other things, 'it is merely a *value* of a particular use value *alongside* the conditions of its own realization as *values* of another use value'" (De Angelis 2004, 65). Therefore through primitive accumulation, peasants become workers and labor-power becomes "a *thing*" (De Angelis 2004, 65). By seeking out how to best modernize the Balkans, Vetter and Haberlandt are both actively participating in the project to "civilize" the Balkans aka to create a separation between people and the modes of production.

The Salvage Paradigm

The colonial significance of highlighting civilizational difference is exemplified by the paradigm of salvage ethnography. In addition to the more economically oriented research projects of Vetter and Haberlandt, the Slavist Edmund Schneeweis found himself interested in the folk culture and traditions of the Balkans. Born on 31 July 1886 in Rozstání, Moravia, Edmund Schneeweis was a professor of Slavic studies at the Universities of Prague, Rostock, Berlin and Belgrade. In 1912 he became a member of the association of anthropology (*Verein für Volkskunde*) in Vienna**.** That summer, he undertook a study tour to Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria, financed by the imperial-royal (k. k.) Ministry of Culture and Education.

Over the course of his travels he produced over one hundred and twenty ethnographic photographs and acquired an extensive collection of artifacts. Produced during his travels in Bosnia, Schneeweis donated his forty-two photograph collection to the *Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde* (The Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art). This collection represents the final years of Austro-Hungarian rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only two years after Schneeweis' travels in Bosnia, the Austro-Hungarian archduke, Franz Ferdinand would be assassinated in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. The photographs in this collection were primarily taken in the villages surrounding Jajce in eastern Bosnia, including Mile, Vražić, Jezero, and several others. A few additional photographs were taken in the towns of Jajce and Mrkonjić Grad in Bosnia as well as in Mokra Gora, which is in present-day Serbia. Schneeweis' photographs capture with fair accuracy the ethnic and religious diversity of Bosnia in the early-twentieth century, featuring Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Croatian Catholics, and Romani. As a document of the end of empire, Schneeweis' collection holds unique theoretical significance.

Schneeweis' photographs contribute to the project of primitive accumulation through the practice of salvage ethnography. In his collection of photographs taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the occupation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Edmund Schneeweis demonstrates the complicity of Romantic and Picturesque aesthetics in the imperial project of primitive accumulation. Schneeweis photographed the Balkans in 1912 to document the remains of folk culture in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Utilizing the aesthetic grammars of Romanticism and the Picturesque, Schneeweis' photographs reveal the violence of the imperial gaze. Through his application of colonial paradigms of nature and culture, Schneeweis ultimately photographs the Balkan "folk" in an attack on Bosnian sovereignty. By thinking through photography as an ideological tool in relation to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the early-twentieth century, Schneeweis' collection transforms our understanding of history as a political and aesthetic tool within the Balkan region. Schneeweis deploys photography's ontology of death as evidence of civilization difference.

Schneeweis supported the imperial project through his photographic archive of Balkan rural culture. One photograph features a woman facing away from the photographer, flanked by two young girls. The photograph is described in the marginalia as "Serbian girls presenting the backs of their headdress and jackets" (Fig. 9). Standing in front of a wooden structure, the three women and girls display their braids, which have coins woven into them. They are all wearing traditional clothing, including shoes, except for the girl on the left who is barefoot. The girl on the right side of the photograph is obscured by a white splotch—damage which either took place in the taking of the photograph or in the photograph's development.

Schneeweis' intention, as reinforced by the image's description within the archive, is to "present" the hair and clothing of the women and girls. In this act of presentation, the women and girls in the photograph transform into museum objects. As a Slavist, Schneeweis did not take this photograph just as a souvenir, but rather as a representational image of folk culture in Bosnia. The women and girls become equated with their hair and clothing as artifacts of Bosnian-ness. Schneeweis would not have posed the photograph in such a way that draws the spectator's attention solely to the hair and clothing of the women and girls if he did not intend those to be the viewer's focus. The women and girls, then, are no longer subjects in this image, but artifacts.

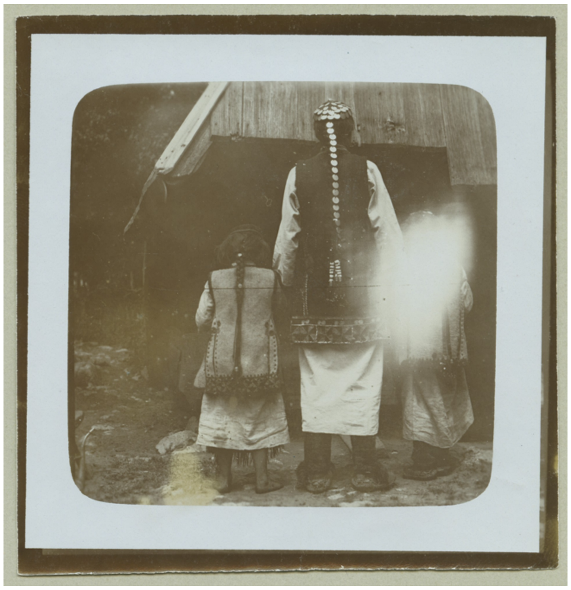


Figure 2.9: Schneeweis, E. Before 1915. Photograph of woman and girls' hair from the back. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

As an ethnographic group portrait, the image epitomizes the objectification of the Other through photography. Neither the woman nor the girls' faces are presented to the camera. Instead, they have been posed by the photographer so that their hair may be scrutinized by the viewer. Unable to see their faces, the viewer does not have to confront the subjects, but rather may consume them as objects. As an ethnographic photograph, this process of objectification is not limited to the subject-object power relation of the imperial photographer to the imperial object—the Serbian peasant, in this case—but rather it extends to the core principles of photography as a medium.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes shows how the logic of photography objectifies the subject. By forcing the subject to take up an unnatural position before the lens, Barthes' deftly recognizes the photographic process as the process by which subject becomes artifact. The subject being photographed, Barthes writes, becomes a "museum object" who is then subject to the surgical scrutiny of the photographer and the subsequent scrutiny of the spectator (1981, 13). This process of museumification is a process of death wherein the subject experiences her own objectification as a micro-death (Barthes 1981, 14). The photograph as an artifact is a dead thing. The death of the subject, however, does not always result in the production of an artifact. The artifact can only become an artifact by being named as such by someone with sufficient representational power. An artifact is always an artifact *of* something.

Not just floating artifacts, their hair and clothing become evidence of difference. As a scholar from Austro-Hungarian Moravia studying South Slavic cultures, Schneeweis performs an imperial function. He gathers artifacts to prove the civilizational difference between Vienna and Bosnia. As an index, Schneeweis rests on the auto-authorization of photography to produce evidence. In this way, the ideological function of the photograph is concealed in the equation of mechanical production with evidence. Within the frame of modernity, evidence is scientific and thus objective, rational, and true. Through these ethnographic group portraits, what we see is not just a documentation of various groups who live in the Bosnian villages that Schneeweis travelled to, but rather an *index* of the perceived difference between Schneeweis and the photographed people. The impulse to photograph is an ideological act.

To better understand Schneeweis' ideological position as a photographer from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, we can relate his use of colonial aesthetics to his use of Picturesque aesthetics. In the image titled *Spinstress,* Schneeweis has photographed a woman spinning wool alongside a cow and a flock of sheep (Fig. 2.10). In the background of the image is a near-endless series of fields that look just like the field that the woman occupies in the foreground. This photograph is an iconic representation of the Picturesque aesthetic: a pastoral scene un-corrupted by modernity's ills.

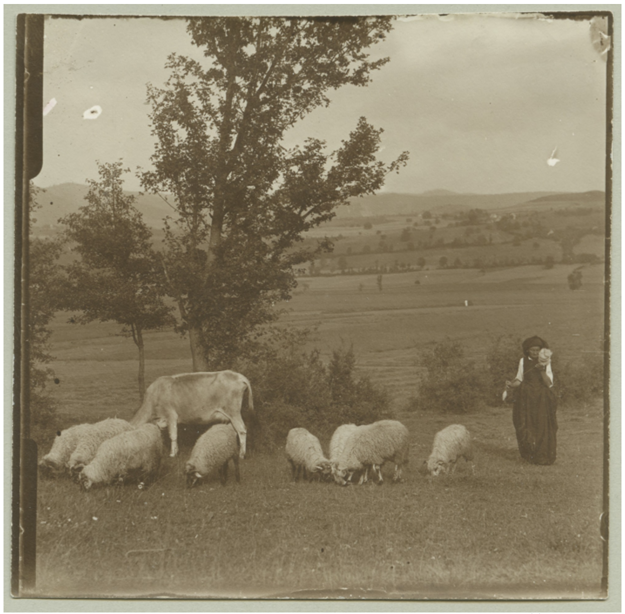


Figure 2.10: Schneeweis, E. Before 1915. Photograph of spinstress in Šipovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

The Picturesque as an aesthetic paradigm is most often credited to William Gilpin's tours of the English countryside. In his essay "William Gilpin and the black-lead mine," Stephen Copley reveals Gilpin's vision of the Picturesque as the reification of nature as a "beautiful object" (1994, 49). This objectification of nature was not restricted to nature devoid of people, but also included pastoral communities "free of commercial exchange" as elements of the landscape (Copley 1994, 54). While the vision of the Picturesque traveler debuted in rural England, the aesthetic would soon be exported as a colonial strategy of seeing. In *The Road to Botany Bay*, Paul Carter discusses the use of the Picturesque aesthetic to designate travel destinations and sites of future settlement in colonial Australia. Using the example of Thomas Walker, Carter demonstrates how the Picturesque functioned as a method of planning for the future. Disappointed at encountering a forest, Walker writes that as he travels he wants to be able to imagine "cultivated fields," "the peasantry," and "smiling villages" populating the scenery because then "imagination...would readily have filled up the picture, so that cheerful and pleasing ideas would have arisen" (Carter 1987, 244). Carter uses this example to demonstrate how Walker and other travelers did not explore Australia to document the country as it was, but rather to imagine how Australia could become a surrogate Europe.

Key to Carter's analysis is that this futuric mode of mapping of what could become of a colonial site means that the landscape can be *read.* Carter demonstrates how the Picturesque landscape served as a text by citing Hannah More's letter, where she writes that a landscape gardener described his work by pointing to the garden and saying, "Now *there...*I make a comma, and there...I make a colon" (1987, 246-7). For David Arnold in *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, this reading of the landscape as a diagram for future use constitutes the "traveling gaze" (30). While the metaphor of "reading" may lead us to believe that the Picturesque traveler synthesized an already-existent reality, Arnold's emphasis on the *gaze* invokes a directionality. Rather than a "learning from," the gaze precedes an act of "possession" (2006, 29). By textualizing the landscape, the Picturesque author constructs "tableaux," "spectacles," and "scenes" through which to invent a new unity of the Other. Whereas in the example of the ethnographic group portrait, the colonial function of evidence and artifact is foregrounded, in the context of the Picturesque, we see an act of invention rather than an act of scrutiny (Arnold 2006, 32).

Returning to the spinstress, we can read Schneeweis' reading of the Bosnian landscape to reveal his own invention of Austro-Hungarian Bosnia. By choosing to photograph a woman in urban Austro-Hungarian dress rather than in traditional Bosnian clothing—as was the case in the ethnographic portrait—Schneeweis marks the spinstress' field as a potential site of Austro-Hungarian cultivation. Abundant with livestock, prepared with some rudimentary craftsmanship, and offering innumerable identical patches of land extending out beyond the spinstress, this pastoral landscape is prime for imperial settlement. The spinstress indicates the promise of agricultural development in this landscape, while the emptiness of the background invites the viewer to imagine dozens more farms populating the frame. Not too “Other” the woman is familiar enough to the Austro-Hungarian viewer so that they can imagine that the Bosnian landscape is the landscape of their own grandparents, waiting patiently for the imperialists to arrive with industry and markets.

Amidst this utopic vision, we are again confronted by photography’s distinct ontological relation to death. If, as Barthes writes, the experience of being photographed is an experience of death, then this pastoral scene bears another, quite dystopic, meaning. In his essay “Photography and Fetish,” Christian Metz writes that the photograph “[cuts] off a piece of space and time” to keep “unchanged while the world around continues to change” (1985, 85). Unlike the change embodied in the movement of film, the photograph’s discrete slice of space and time “embalms time” as part of what Andre Bazin refers to as the “mummy complex” of photography (1960, 4, 8). Significantly, Metz does not restrict his ontology of death to human subjects, but also includes the landscape (1985, 85). The viewer comes to desire the landscape photograph as a fetish, a frozen moment in time in which we can invest our beliefs and fantasies. Unlike film, which allows us to occasionally hear the voices of those beyond the camera lens’ purview, the photograph invites the viewer to invent or “hallucinate” what happens beyond the frame (Metz 1985, 87). Unable to speak back, the dead photograph transforms into a semantic playground.

By exposing landscape photographs as acts of death, Metz transforms our understanding of Schneeweis’ gaze. By photographing this woman, who is the same size as her own livestock, within an endlessly duplicating empty landscape, Schneeweis prescribes her death. For Picturesque authors and photographers, humans, animals, and the landscape all belong to a singular tableau. By producing a landscape photograph that includes Picturesque humans and animals, the photographer expresses a colonial vision of nature. According to the naturalist epistemology, to which Schneeweis belongs, plants and animals are not people (Descola 2013, 172, 257). In the discipline of anthropology and its correlates, scholars study the interface between humans and nature as the production of culture. This opposition, however, fails to recognize its own re-inscription of the nature-culture dichotomy by designating culture as the sole domain of humans (Descola 2013, 78). Consequently, by conflating the spinstress with her cows, sheep, trees, and fields, Schneeweis deprives the spinstress of personhood. This maneuver is doubled through the technology of the photograph, which embalms people as they stand before the photographer. By ripping the spinstress, her animals, and this Bosnian land from their social contexts and suspending them in embalming fluid, these subjects are unable to protest the usurpation of their land by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Not only can they not protest, but their dead signifiers now serve the territorial objectives of the regime. With their death, no obstacles inhibit the Picturesque inhabitation of this pastoral scene. Austro-Hungarian officials are free to take the spinstress' home, take her livestock, and build dozens of additional farms on her land.

Carter and Arnold explain the imperial logic of landscape using Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis." The frontier thesis is an epistemic device that designates the line of imperial conquest. Up to the frontier line everything is designated as belonging to a unified imperial episteme. Beyond the frontier line lies an empty space without "any cultural significance" (Carter 1987, 158). Where Carter designates "cultural" significance, we could also say "civilizational" significance. In *The Problem of Nature*, Arnold argues that colonists understood that "primitive and unchanging societies" sat beyond the line of the frontier (1996, 99). Central to both Carter and Arnold's articulation of the frontier thesis is that human primitivity and an empty ecology were both located beyond the imperial line. By demonstrating that empty landscapes and primitive people are conceptually unified in the episteme of the frontier, Carter and Arnold transform Descola's critique of the nature/culture division upheld by anthropology into an imperial system of elimination. In his pastoral photograph, Schneeweis marks the Bosnian village of Šipovo as an imperial frontier. Schneeweis marks the landscape as empty and in need of population as he denies personhood to the woman, her animals, and the plants that populate the frame. Using photographic technology, Schneeweis enacts the violence of empire and then markets that violence to the intelligentsia as an item of aesthetic consumption.

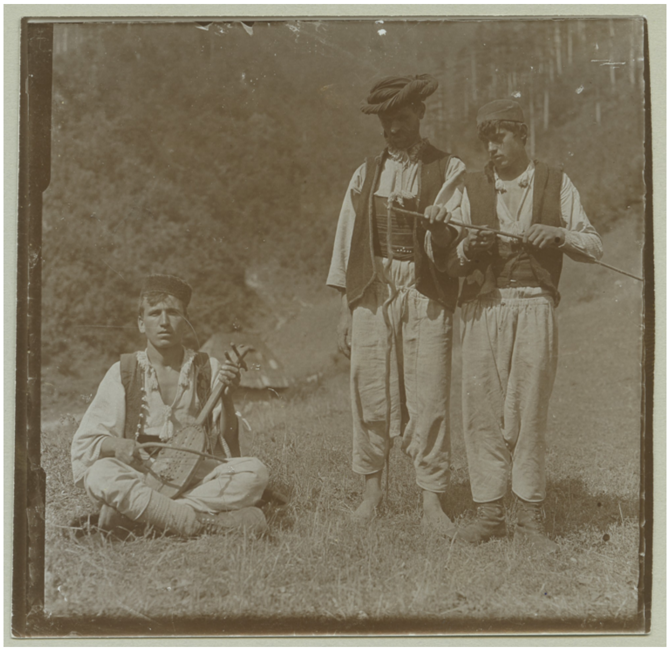


Figure 2.11: Schneeweis, E. Before 1915. Photograph of guslar and two men with a snake. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

We can expand on the role of consumption and violence as integral to Schneeweis' ideological position by turning to a representative photograph of the category of performance and spectacle. Captioned "Guslar and two men with a snake," this photograph features a young *guslar*, an epic poet, seated on the grass on the left side of the image holding a *gusle*, a traditional two-stringed instrument from the Yugoslav region (Fig. 2.11). On the right side of the image, two men have punctured the neck of a snake and hold up its body with a stick. The snake, it appears, is still alive and writhing. While Schneeweis' photographs of performance and spectacle usually fit neatly either into the category of traditional performance or the category of spectacle, these two categories collide in this image. The epic poetry of the South Slavs has been lauded by the European intelligentsia since the time of Goethe, who famously translated traditional Serbian poems into German (Wachtell 1998, 32). Emblematic of the South Slav "folk," the guslar recites the collective struggle of Balkan people who have been under the domination of imperial powers since Roman times. At the same time that Schneeweis was photographing Bosnian peasants, guslars were leading people to take up arms against the Ottoman Empire just a few miles to the east. The guslar is *the* Romantic nationalist icon of the South Slavs.

Schneeweis' juxtaposition of the guslar with two men holding a writhing snake betrays a re-conceptualization of the character of the South Slavs' folk character during the descent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As the Other within Europe, the Balkan folk subject has been valorized by Schneeweis' own academic discipline as a "noble savage" since the birth of Slavistics. In Schneeweis' photograph, the noble savage episteme is clearly represented by the photographer's choice to flank the "noble" guslar with two "savage" snake catchers. Firmly guided by Romantic aesthetics in this image, Schneeweis' treatment of the guslar and the snake catchers (with snake in-hand) yields tremendous insight into the use of Romantic aesthetics by Empire, the evolutionist schema of Romanticism, and the transformation of South Slav "folk" at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *The Romantic Agony* Mario Praz confronts the intersection of Orientalism and Romanticism in literary discourse. Within the Romantic worldview, Praz argues that one sought to consume the Orient as a way to enrich the soul. This enrichment, according to Praz, derives from the belief that witnessing suffering strengthens the soul. In his chapter on Byzantium, Praz demonstrates how this *orient*ation encourages the Romantic subject to consume the Other *within* Europe. To illustrate this Orientalist desire, Praz reveals Russia as “barbaric yet refined” in the Romantic imagination (1978, 397). The Russians’ liminal state provokes nostalgia in the Western European reader who is able to empathize with the Russian subject, while still not fully imbuing them with personhood (1978, 399). As an example of this simultaneous act of empathy and the denial of personhood, Praz discusses the Russian prince who is written as an “invalid ogre, pampered by his mother” (1978, 354). Throughout his broader theorizations of Romanticism, his subsequent address of Orientalism, and his treatment of the other-within, Praz demonstrates that historical Romantics appropriate the world’s Others as symbolic currency to cultivate the spiritual depth of the artist. Praz’ theoretical construction of Romanticism as dependent upon Orientalism transforms Schneeweis’ construction of the Romantic guslar tableau.

The recognition of an object as desirable—as a “fetish,” to use the words of Metz—requires distance. In her text, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag demonstrates that for a photograph, the distance of desire is both the passage of time between the production of a photograph and its viewing *and* “social distance” (1977, 58). Sontag argues that photography was invented to capture the disappearing. In the practices of salvage ethnography, traditional practices are marked as “disappearing” and thus worthy of documentation. Benjamin Stone, an English photographer, undertook this salvaging mission in 1897 when he photographed English traditions that he saw as dying out (Sontag 1977, 56). Abiding by this logic, Schneeweis’ photograph of the guslar and the snake catchers reveals a transformation of the Balkan guslar from a heroic peasant who is primed to helm his own nation to a vanishing folk icon whose death clears the landscape for imperial occupation. In accordance with the Romantic veneration of ruins, Schneeweis documents the guslar as a ruin. Indeed, the practice of epic poetry accompanied by a gusla would cease just a few decades after the capture of this photograph. Sontag characterizes these neo-Romantic ruins as the ruins of modernity (1977, 79). Sontag argues that photographers manufacture “artificial” ruins “to deepen the historical character of a landscape, to make nature suggestive...of the past” (1977, 80). If we look at Schneeweis’ full collection—or even just the previously discussed photograph of the spinstress—the subjects in the guslar photograph could have been dressed in urban clothing, one of the men could be wearing shoes, and certainly, the snake did not need to be displayed. By curating the photograph as a taxonomical representation of the noble savage, Schneeweis “[transforms] history into spectacle” (Sontag 1977, 80).

Collecting artifacts through the production of photography produces a history that abides by a reactionary surrealist aesthetic. Responding to Benjamin’s un-realized project of literary montage, Sontag exposes the inner contradiction of his indictment of technology’s threat to history. As Benjamin sought to produce a history devoid of empathy, informed by a Brechtian rejection of emotional propaganda, he ultimately placed himself within that same colonial worldview that valorizes the photograph as a piece of scientific evidence. As evidence, colonists take photographs of things before they tear them down (Sontag 1977, 76-77). By assembling history as a montage, Sontag argues that Surrealist egalitarianism led to the “de-creation of the past” rather than a recuperation of a buried, authentic past (1977, 77). In this ironic maneuver, Benjamin and the photographer both “[transform] the present into the past and the past into pastness” leaving reality as a ruin (1977, 77, 79).

In the case of Schneeweis’ construction of the Balkan folk as a Romantic ruin, he engages not only in the destruction of this traditional performance form, but also in the destruction of history. The guslar was not just a musician or a poet, but the keeper of history for

Balkan communities. While the guslars are no longer a living presence in Balkan rural communities, their impact continues to structure political reality in the region. During the recent civil wars of the 1990s, as I will discuss in-depth in chapter three, Serbian ethnic nationalists constantly referenced guslars' narrations of the fourteenth-century Battle of Kosovo as a justification for genocide. Whereas for Schneeweis in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and for us today in the American academy, the possible designation of a performance practice as "art" divorces that practice from mainstream political processes—history is written in books, not recited by poets—in the Balkans, one cannot draw that line. The political intricacy of epic poetry was even recognized by Johann Gottfried von Herder who, as a Romantic philosopher, promoted the independent nationhood of the Balkan folk (Herder 1966, 482-4). By representing the guslar as a musician flanked by two men holding a snake, Schneeweis not only prescribes the death of the gusle as a musical instrument, but more importantly, the death of the guslar as a political agent and the narrator of history.

Despite Sontag's recognition of Benjamin's inner contradiction, Benjamin, too, recognized this assault on history as *the* act of the age of mechanical reproduction. Just prior to his most famous passage on "aura," Benjamin writes in "The Work of Art," "Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity [of a thing], the former too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object" (1968, 221). While Benjamin is discussing the reproduction of art objects here, we can easily substitute "object" with "performance." By mummifying political performance through photography, Schneeweis transforms the guslar from the Subject of history into a Romantic ruin. By making the historical Bosnian reality into a ruin, Schneeweis works on behalf of empire to invalidate the

Bosnian people's demands for sovereignty. The political potential of the Balkan folk to self-govern, as identified by Herder in the eighteenth century, is proven false through the Romantic production of the guslar as a noble savage. Rather than a political agent, the guslar is now *only* a poet destined for consumption by the European intelligentsia. Through the act of consuming the guslar as an a-political savage poet, Romanticism reveals its central paradox. A Herderian Romanticism dictates that local communities should govern themselves according to the historical models that their diverse cultural practices have developed. A reactionary Romanticism, on the other hand, seeks the destruction of sovereignty through the transmutation of political performance into an object of aesthetic consumption.

In the epilogue of "The Work of Art," Benjamin reveals the latter reactionary form of Romanticism to be the logic of Fascism. Fascism requires the material support of the proletariat despite fascists' refusal to meet any of their material demands. As a result, Fascism transforms politics into aesthetics. Rather than meeting the material demands of the proletariat, fascists offer the "masses...a chance to express themselves" (Benjamin 1968, 241). The result of this aesthetic politics, for Benjamin, is war. The aestheticization of war is the only means through which to divert the attention of the proletariat away from their material exploitation and subjection to the "traditional property system" and towards the political goals of the state. The photograph, as an ideological tool, constructs these masses. If we return to Herder, we will see that his engagement with the "*Volk*" grew out of the same analytic as Benjamin. In his critique of the Enlightenment, Herder recognized that the meaning of "Volk" was transforming from "the people" to "the masses" (Noyes 2015, 71). Whereas "the people" were synonymous with "the nation," "the masses" were *in service of* the nation. The masses were not equivalent with the nation, but rather were passive bodies to be managed by power.

By photographing traditional performers, agricultural workers, and groups of people in traditional clothing, Schneeweis contributed to the ideological project of divorcing the folk from the nation. The national idea emerging in the Balkans at the time of his photographing stood in direct opposition to the imperial model of power that would legislatively end just a few years after Schneeweis produced these photographs. While Bosnia and Herzegovina would become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes after the First World War (also known as the First Yugoslavia), the violence that Schneeweis and other folklorists and anthropologists inflicted on the Balkans bears a permanent trace. As one of the primary technologies used to catalogue the folk and their performance practices, photography provides a critical link between coloniality as an episteme and colonial aesthetics. In the case of Schneeweis, such an analysis reveals the complex subjectivities that transformed along the imperial frontier at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Anthropometrics

The civilizational distance that Schneeweis attempts to inscribe through his photographs takes on a novel material form in the anthropometric photography of Arthur Haberlandt. Fitting with the paradigm of racist science and eugenics as it had been developing since the turn of the century, Haberlandt took photographs and notes on the physiognomy of people in the Balkans. He would later analyze some of these photographs in the publication “On the Physical Anthropology of Albanians,” co-written by Arthur Haberlandt and Viktor Lebzelter in 1919. This publication was written based on photographs taken of one hundred and forty Albanian soldiers, as well as physical data on height and head measurements.

The anthropometric photographs taken by Arthur Haberlandt contribute to primitive accumulation by presenting these photographs as evidence of Balkan peasants' attitudes towards labor, and synthesizing these conclusions into a racial "type." This racial typology is the foundation of what Cedric Robinson called "racial capitalism" (2020). By producing a racial type of the Albanian peasant man as strong but unruly and sometimes lazy, Haberlandt is not describing but rather *inventing* a new type of laborer via the European practice of racialization.

By the mid-nineteenth century, anthropologists and ethnologists were concerned with making photographs serve as scientific data. This data was first produced to validate the relationship between physical characteristics and behavior. Anthropometric photography was first initiated by Alphonse Bertillon in 1883 as a means to identify criminals recidivists for the Paris prefecture of police. For the first time, the height, weight, and distinguishing visual features of those arrested were assembled into a database that could be referenced during future arrests.

While this practice was first intended to facilitate the identification of individuals, the photographs quickly transformed into evidence for more qualitative claims (Morris-Reich 2016, 37). Following Bertillon, Francis Galton, the founder of modern eugenics, established his method of "composite photography" in 1887. Whereas Bertillon's photographs served as a record of those arrested, Galton sought to establish a link between certain visual "types" and their crimes. Galton separated the photographs "into three groups according to the nature of the crime: murder and manslaughter, felony, and sexual offences" (Morris-Reich 2016, 44). The biologization of crime initiated by Galton quickly became the norm.

The ideological function of anthropometric photography was concealed by the project of presenting photography as objective scientific evidence. Anthropometric photography, as established by Bertillon and Galton, invented physical evidence to explain and ultimately predict behavior. Elizabeth Edwards has defined this process as the invention of the photographic "type." As evidence of a "type," anthropometric photographs sought to make questions of context irrelevant. The human being photographed becomes a "specimen," which is then placed in

> scientific isolation, physically, and metaphorically, the plain background accentuates physical characteristics and denies context. The meaning and 'reality' of the subject can be given only by those who interpret the visual evidence. The appropriation of the subject as a specimen was thus legitimised through science and achieved through the control of another science, photography (Edwards 1990, 241).

Galton's "composite photography" sought to categorize and typologize the photographed subjects according to first criminal types, and later racial types. Galton defines race in 1894 as "a large body of more or less similar and related individuals, who are separated from analogous bodies by the rarity of transitional forms." Galton "employed *race* as a synonym for *variety, genus,* or *species*, and in his later writings, *heredity*" (Morris-Reich 2016, 44). Anthropometric photography created racial types by emphasizing those human qualities that could be quantified, classified, and subsequently labeled as more or less civilized (Edwards 1990, 240).

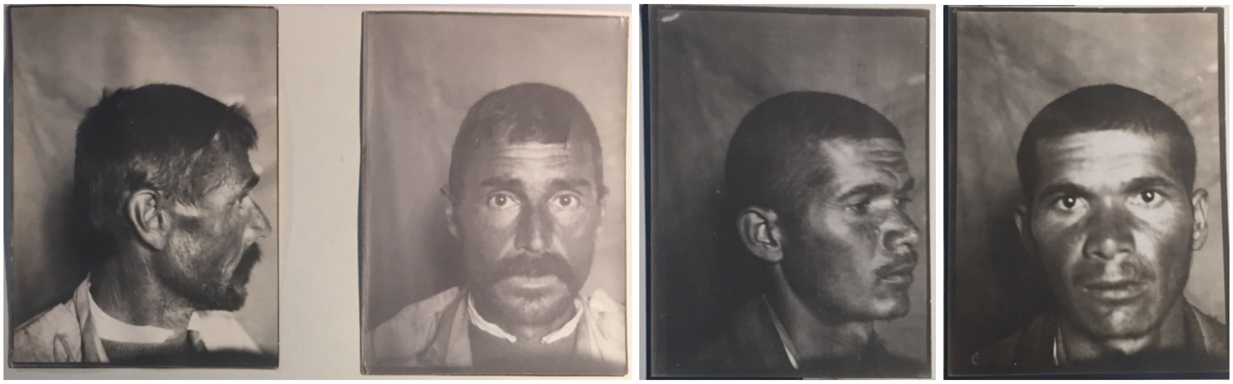
In the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, anthropometric photography earns an esteemed place during the First World War, during which time anthropologists notoriously conducted invasive studies on prisoners of war. Anthropometric photography was an integral part of anthropological research in Austria-Hungary during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In her chapter "Large-Scale Anthropological Surveys in Austria-Hungary, 1871-1918," Margit Berner writes that

> From 1915 to 1918, anthropometric measurements of thousands of POWs interned in Austria-Hungary and Germany were carried out by a team led by Rudolf Pöch and his chief assistant Josef Weninger (1886–1959) that eventually included several students. Briefly, Pöch also made ethnographic recordings of

> songs, even filming dances, but he soon ceded those aspects to the Phonographic Commission of the Academy, preferring to concentrate on his racial researches.

Rudolf Pöch was one of the key Austrian ethnographers of the time period. Pöch's work "inspired a wave of wartime anthropometric studies in the Austro-Hungarian Empire," including studies on Serb, Roma, Sinti, Albanian, and Wolhynian POWs and refugees (Berner 2019, 249).

Rudolf Pöch was also one of Arthur Haberlandt's mentors. Haberlandt used Pöch's anthropometric measurement guides for his research with Albanian soldiers. Only a few copies of anthropometric notes from the expedition still survive. The top of the form states which prisoner of war camp the subject resides in. Then there are blank spaces in which to notate height, hair color, eye color, skin color, head shape, nose shape, shape and size of lips, body hair, body weight, and health, among other physical characteristics. The reverse side of the guide asks for more precise measurements, for example the length of the right leg minus the foot, or the morphological face height, to be measured with calipers. These measurement sheets were originally accompanied by several photographs, featuring frontal, profile and three-quarter profile portrait angles (Fig. 2.12 and 2.13).



Figures 2.12 and 2.13: Haberlandt, A. 1916. Anthropometric photographs of two men. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

In Haberlandt's article "On the Physical Anthropology of Albanians," co-written with Viktor Lebzelter, Haberlandt gives an extensive statistical overview of the anthropometric measurements that he gathered in the POW camps. Complementing this numerical data, he also makes a few hypotheses regarding the physical condition of the soldiers. Haberlandt describes Albanians as having damaged "powers of resistance." This "resistance" is a reference to Galton's intellectual and ideological project of "[constructing] a program of social betterment through breeding" (Sekula 2006, 42). The Albanians lack of "resistance," in Haberlandt's eyes, meant that he saw the negative qualities of the population overwhelming the positive ones, which he attributed to "inbreeding, endless war, and the spread of chronic diseases, unhindered by the primitive way of life" in Albania (1919, 125). Haberlandt connected degeneration in Albania to the "sad conditions reported to us by E. Mattanschek from Bosnia and Herzegovina and P. Miljanić from Montenegro" (1919, 125).[39]

As Alan Sekula has demonstrated, Francis Galton's eugenic program "pivoted on a profound ideological biologization of existing class relations" (2006, 42). Haberlandt makes this biologization of class relations explicit in his assessment of Albanians from the cities of Kruja, Tirana and Elbasan: "Here...we again encounter that dark type of smaller stature with a straight nose, narrow face and dark—sometimes bulging—eyes. It appears particularly frequently among the bazaar workers, tradesmen, etc., which perhaps also sheds light on its origin (?)" (1919, 132). By connecting class, racial 'type,' and physical traits, Haberlandt excellently demonstrates Cedric Robinson's model of racial capitalism. In Robinson's words, racialization is "The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" (Robinson 2020, 26). Haberlandt's anthropometric photographs, in the context of his larger oeuvre of photographs and writings from his expedition, racialize Albanian, Montenegrin,

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[39] Eugenics and racial hygiene discourse were prominent in the interwar Balkans, see the work of Maria Bucur, Marius Turda, Christian Promitzer, Sevasti Trubeta, Rory Yeomans, and others.

Bosnian, Romani, Vlach, Serbian, and other populations of the Balkans. Portraying Balkan peoples as being in need of civilizing—which is a thinly disguised rhetoric veil for capitalism—Haberlandt's photographs point to the bodies of men and women as the labor-power which will enable the establishment of the capitalist relation.

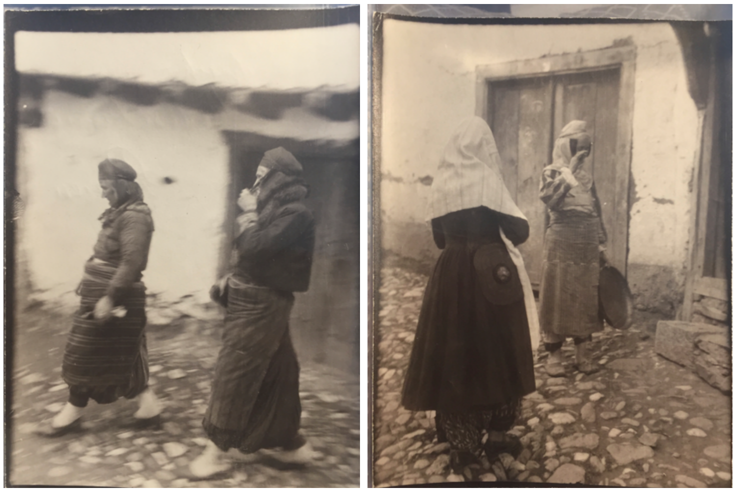
Concurrent with Haberlandt's activities during and after the expedition, the Austrian War Ministry presented the popular "war exhibit" in Vienna. Anthropologists "chose ten plaster casts of heads that were representative of racial 'types' found in the camps, with the eyes and faces of the moulds painted in the correct colors for added effect, as well as twelve life-sized photographs of physical 'types' hung in full view of the spectators." Andrew Evans continues, explaining that these "enormous, life-sized images that Pöch and the [Viennese Anthropological Society] contributed to the war exhibit in 1916 and 1917 were nothing less than racial portraits of Austria-Hungary's European enemies," including Serbs, Russians, Italians, and others (Evans 2010, 184).

James Ryan connects these technologies of racialization to colonial domination: "technologies of measuring and comprehending territories and bodies from a distance and a self-effacing perspective are intertwined in processes of colonial vision. Galton objectified and appropriated the woman's body with what Mary Louise Pratt has termed the 'land-scanning eye' of colonial science" (1997, 145). In his analysis of POW racial science during WWI, Andrew Evans builds on James Ryan's idea of colonial vision, writing that "they treated the European prisoners like 'exotic' colonials and implicitly classified them as racially distinct from Germans" (Evans 2010, 178). Ultimately the technology of photography itself was an invaluable tool in this project of racialization (the biologization of class relations). Alan Sekula has captured this capacity to racialize: "photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other,* to define both the *generalized look*—the typology—and the *contingent instance* of deviance and social pathology" (Sekula 2006, 7).

Ethnographers and anthropologists played a key role in the continuing renewal of racial capitalism, as they provided the scientific justification for class stratification. The use of photography in particular is especially significant, due to its long history as a form of evidence. While Andrew Evans has importantly argued that "under the physiognomic gaze, the body was a legible text that could be read for signs of criminality and immorality" (2010, 159), it is also necessary to understand that through the physiognomic gaze, the body was a legible text to be *written*, before it could be read. Ethnographers and anthropologists were not "reading" the body, but rather inscribing the body. Racialization is a process of inscription. Compounding the violence of inscription is the violence of "a silence that silences," which since the early use of photography in criminology, has served to take away "captured" people's voices, complaints, and refusal (Sekula 2006, 6).

Acts of Refusal

Despite the efforts of Nopcsa, Haberlandt, Schneeweis, and their peers, the project of objectifying Balkan peasants was not without acts of refusal. A striking example of refusal stands out from Arthur Haberlandt's photographic archive. Haberlandt repeatedly attempts to photograph Albanian women in and near Shkodra, with mixed results. While he does capture the faces of a few women, their expressions are disdainful. The rest of the photographs of Albanian women show them with their faces partially or fully obscured, either by holding something up to their faces or by turning their faces away from the camera (Fig. 2.14 and 2.15). It is likely these photographs were captured without the women's consent.



Figures 2.14 and 2.15: Haberlandt, A. 1916. Photographs of Albanian women in Prizren. At: Vienna: Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Fotosammlung.

The attempt to photograph these women is an example of extra-military domination. A conscious contributor to the Austro-Hungarian colonial project, Haberlandt seeks to photograph these women in order to *know* them. This pursuit of knowledge is the pursuit of domination: "Knowing and representing the 'voices' within those places required more than military might, it required the methods and modalities of knowing, in particular: categorisation, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation and ethnography" (Simpson 2007, 67). In the context of racial capitalism, I identify this relentless pursuit of knowledge as part of what Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2009) has called "epistemological possessiveness" and what Sarita Echavez See has called "knowledge accumulation" (2017). The accumulation of knowledge as capital, for See, is a necessary revision to Marx's theory of primitive accumulation.

Reading these photographs as protests against objectification and the invasion of the body's boundaries exemplifies what Ariella Azoulay has referred to as the "civil contract of photography," or the capacity of photographs to call out to us (the viewers) in the present to take just action (2008). By averting their gazes and covering their faces, these women refuse capture by the Austrian ethnographer. While photographs attempt to speak for the people photographed, these women refuse to allow that to happen. Instead of the researcher speaking for the photographed, the photographed speak for the researcher to inform us of the lack of scholarly ethics. The women tell us now that these photographs were captured without consent.

Audra Simpson recognizes the perversity of the politics of recognition in colonial contexts. Early anthropologists in collaboration with the military studied Indigenous peoples in North America and invented an image of them as historical and unchanging. These colonial visions of atemporal, tradition-bound Indigenous peoples “are incompatible with sovereign subjectivity” (Simpson 2007, 71). People of the past are not able to govern themselves within colonial epistemology.

The Albanian women who hide their faces from Haberlandt’s lens retain some limited sovereignty through their acts of refusal. Their faces cannot be looked upon again and again ad infinitum by imperial officials nor in an archival reading room. They are illegible as evidence of civilizational backwardness or as evidence of potential exploitation. For these women, refusing legibility also means refusing accumulation. Arthur Haberlandt can attempt to write in passivity to facilitate the primitive accumulation process, however, Azoulay’s civil contract ruptures this illusion as we are called to witness their act of refusal in the present.

Using the technology of photography, the cultures, geographies, and politics of the Balkan peasantry were biologized by imperial ethnographers in the early-twentieth century. By biologizing difference, ethnographers served imperial goals by constructing a rationalist screen to justify and fuel the exploitation of peasant labor and the accumulation of peasant land. Recognizing this as a process of racialization deepens our understanding of the longue durée history of colonialism and racialization in the Balkans. The commonsensical disavowal of peasant ways of knowing and living is revealed as a violent ideological process, which has sought to dismantle autonomous modes of subsistence living.

CHAPTER TWO
Peasant Artists and Revolutionary Aesthetics, From the Interwar Period to the Early Days of Socialist Yugoslavia

At the foot of the Eiffel Tower in 1957, a small herd of sheep are found grazing. A few sheep lay down to rest beside sprouting orange blossoms, while the others continue to enjoy their crepuscular meal. With no shepherd in sight, we do not know whether someone brought these sheep here or whether they decided on this grandiose grazing spot for themselves. The sheep and surrounding trees encroach on the self-announced enormity of the Tower: a lasting pillar of the 1889 Exposition Universelle where 400 people from across the African continent were exhibited in colonial mock villages. Today, the tower stands as a beacon of industrial modernity and the tolling bell of the arrival of modernist architecture—an iconic symbol of France, of the West, and of capital. The appropriation of the tower by these sheep and the natural landscape, however, provokes the feeling that if the trees leaned in just a little bit closer, the tower might tip over. The dwarfed tower's rusty lace, the color of wood, makes a promising trellis for plants to climb over as they grow towards the sun. The city of Paris is gone, or rather, never was. Trees have replaced the city blocks of the arrondissements as this monument to the "heroic age of technology" has sprouted in the village fields of Croatian peasant artist Ivan Generalić, who titles this painting *My Paris* (Fig. 3.1).

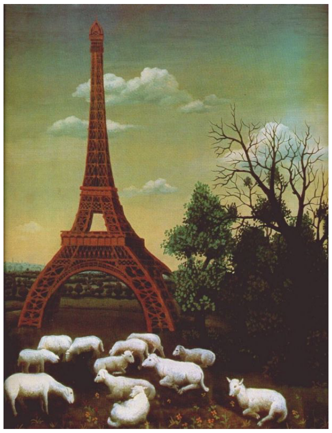


Figure 3.1: Ivan Generalić, *My Paris / Moj Pariz*, 1957, oil on glass. Private collection.

Exhibited at the Salon of Belgrade's Museum of Contemporary Art in 1962, this painting invokes the complex geography of the Yugoslav region, where layers of the rural, urban, industrial, modern, European, Balkan, socialist, bourgeois, traditional, and the Non-Aligned all intersect, fissure, diverge, and are absorbed by one another. Generalić's agrarian aesthetics turns the classic Western representation of the backwards Balkans on its head. It is no longer the Western European that must bring the Balkan peasant out of backwardness, but the Balkan peasant that reveals the banality of Western European aesthetic excesses. Through his painting, Generalić refuses the manufactured colonial dependency imposed on Yugoslavia, and connects the agrarian strategies of peasants to the anticolonial struggles unfolding globally.

Generalić's painting demonstrates the essence of this chapter's argument. Rather than passive recipients of the industrialization and modernization process, peasants' political and artistic activity was integral to the success of Yugoslavia's socialist revolution. When Habsburg imperial occupation ended after the First World War, communist fine artists aligned themselves with peasant artists and cultivated an anticolonial underground movement grounded in the emancipation of the indebted peasantry. This cooperative act led to one of the world's largest peasant revolutions. After the successful defeat of fascism and the founding of socialist Yugoslavia in 1945, peasant-communist artistic collaborations shaped the aesthetic development of Yugoslav socialist modernism for decades to come.

As peasant art and communist art were integrated into official Yugoslav art history, a difficult temporal problem emerged. The peasant artist, then dubbed the "naïve" artist, became increasingly conflated with ideas of nature, history, and childhood. Naïve art came to be seen as a way that the local history of the Yugoslav region persisted into the present. The constructed temporality of the peasant artist ultimately served as a foil to the emergent contemporary artist.

Temporally distancing and infantilizing the peasant artist, however, conflicted with the project of temporal sovereignty, which was critical to the project of Yugoslav socialism. Yugoslav socialism, as well as decolonization movements and numerous other twentieth-century socialisms, conceived of the socialist project as a decisive break from the hegemonic temporality of capitalism. By situating the Yugoslav peasant in relation to the colonized subject, this chapter teases apart the contradiction of Yugoslav socialist temporality vis-à-vis the peasant, and demonstrates the consequences of this contradiction on our understanding of peasants' and colonized peoples' ways of knowing and being.

Agrarian Anticolonialism

An international anticapitalist and anticolonial awakening took place between the two World Wars. Disillusioned populations on the European periphery—having just emerged from centuries of imperial domination—came to the same conclusions as those struggling for sovereignty in the South: The elites of Western Europe have penetrated our psychology, tried to make us try to forget who we are, exploited us, and made us dependent on them—enough! Black laborers and sharecroppers in Alabama founded the state's first communist party; China saw its peasant revolution; Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui articulated his vision of Andean communism; the negritude movement blossomed in Martinique; the Spanish Civil War garnered solidarity from across the world; and of course the Russian Revolution yielded the Soviet Union. The ideas forged in the interwar cauldron formed the basis of Third World anticolonialism as it survives to the present day.

The peasantry and colonized people have a long-shared history. Fanon famously captured the vast political power of the colonized peasantry in his radicalization of the Biblical phrase “the last shall be first” (1963, 2). As the largest and most exploited social class, the peasantry, which Fanon identifies as the lumpenproletariat, have “nothing to lose” (1963, 23). Therein lies their political power. While doctrinaire Marxists (a category to which even Marx himself does not belong) regarded the peasant with suspicion—anticipating their transformation into either a rural capitalist or landless proletarian—the theories and practices of Mao, Amilcar Cabral, and Fanon placed the peasantry firmly into the revolutionary category.

While some have proclaimed the peasant issue to be “dead” (Hobsbawm 1994, 289), it remains the case that over half of the world’s population are considered peasants. The overlap of peasants and Indigenous people is significant, particularly in Latin America where “campesino” is often used interchangeably to refer to peasants, Indigenous people, and Indigenous-peasants. Rural and Indigenous populations overwhelmingly make up the front line of the climate crisis, facing continual dispossession and exploitation. As the late Samir Amin forcefully asserted, the Global North has solved its agrarian question by “creating a gigantic agrarian question in the peripheries, which it cannot solve but through the genocide of half of humankind” (2012, 14).

The connection between peasant struggles and the global struggle against European colonialism becomes glaring during Yugoslavia’s interwar period. The period following the First World War is characterized by a mass-scale disillusionment with the idea of “Europe” due to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives during the war. While the war brought an end to centuries of Habsburg rule, this was not felt as a great relief so much as further incentive to expose Europe’s manufacturing of dependency and galvanize revolutionary movements at home. The founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) was no substitute for proletarian revolution and the peasant’s intensified exploitation under nascent capitalism was impossible to ignore. Peasant debts soared in the wake of the global financial crisis of 1929-1939. People's livestock were repossessed; prices for agricultural products plummeted; and people went hungry. Police cracked down on unrest and enforced payments beyond the line of subsistence.

In Croatia, the political landscape of the interwar village was defined by the presence of the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, or HSS), which had been established by Antun and Stjepan Radić in 1904. The party's political practice was rooted in village ethnography. The Radić brothers traveled extensively throughout the Croatian countryside, documenting peasant disenfranchisement, and developing a political agenda. In constant communication with peasants on the ground, the HSS sought to achieve "economic security, political participation, and, in general, respect in society from other social groups" for the Croatian peasantry (Biondich 2000, 67). While Antun Radić had initially rejected revolutionary methods, after World War I the peasantry became too radicalized to proceed down a more gradual path (Biondich 2000, 120). Contesting Belgrade's Greater Serbia ideology eventually led to Radić's imprisonment and later death in the early 1920s. While the party's influence in the village continued after Radić's death, from 1925 onwards the HSS became much more oriented towards electoral politics rather than maintaining its direct relationship with the peasantry. The party's legacy is mixed, with both Ustashe and Partisans having made claims to its lineage.[40]

The communist upsurge in Croatia and the encompassing Kingdom of Yugoslavia following the First World War took place largely underground to avoid censure by the state. A rare outlet that allowed for the further development of communist politics in both theory and practice was the field of aesthetics. Beginning with the publication of Miroslav Krleža's "Croatian Literary Lie" in 1919, an anticolonial critique in the Croatian literary and art scene was established. In his text, Krleža condemns how Croatian culture was forcibly underdeveloped due to its imperial subjugation: "To feel oneself disappear beneath the foot of the Black-Yellow Emperor, that is what it means to be a Croat" (Krleža 1919, 34).[41] James Robertson writes that for Krleža, "It was not that the Habsburgs had wiped out an earlier, more 'authentic,' more dignified Croatian culture, but that Croatian culture itself had been forged under the boots of imperial rule and from this history it could not be parsed" (2018, 305). The result of this colonized culture was that Croatian cultural elites at the turn of the twentieth century were essentially "Austrian generals in white dolamas and Hungarian aristocrats in Illyrian tunics" (Krleža 1919, 32).[42] Robertson argues that the folk spectacle described by Krleža embodies his "anticolonial critique of Croatian literature, which, he felt, even as it attempted to lay claim to some kind of authentic Croatian tradition, did so using the literary forms and cultural models of its masters" (Robertson 2018, 305). For Krleža, and other artists who would soon pick up his anticolonial critique, merely centering local or anticolonial content in one's work was insufficient. Autochthonous artforms and techniques themselves must be developed outside of the imperial metropole.

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[40] In 1943, the Partisans had a brigade named after Antun and Stjepan Radić.

Krleža's baton of anticolonial critique is picked up by the art group *Zemlja* ("Earth"), which puts anticolonial critique into practice.[43] Formed in 1929, Zemlja and its tendentious allies on the literary left sketched out a theory of dependency, which critiqued how Croatia had been forced into a dependent relationship on first the Ottoman Empire, then the Habsburg Empire, and now on western Europe. In his well-known essay, "On Our Painting" (1933a), founding member Krsto Hegedušić foregrounds Zagreb's post-imperial condition, citing Zagreb as an "Austro-

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[41] The flag of the Habsburg monarchy featured a black double headed eagle on a yellow background.

[42] A *dolama* is an outer coat, usually made of wool with gold and red embroidery, which is part of the traditional dress of the Balkans and Ottoman Empire.

[43] "*Zemlja*" translates to land, earth, and country.

Hungarian antemurale" (45). As a result of imperial occupation, he writes, "Our bourgeoisie was underdeveloped, and economically, politically and culturally connected and dependent on the cities of Central Europe" (45).[44] Following independence from Habsburg occupation, there was no decolonial blossoming of authentic local art. Rather, Hegedušić diagnoses the post-war art scene as dominated by confusion. Painters became "lost in the ape-like imitation of various Parisian art courses," which were imported without any critical reflection (46). Zemlja was established by Hegedušić and fellow artist Leo Junek in reaction to earlier attempts to achieve a nationally independent and progressive art movement, which were exemplified by Ljubo Babić and the Group of Three. This group, among others, had taken the local milieu as their subject, but retained an aesthetic dependency on Western Europe. Hegedušić's objection to this "smuggling" of Western high-art aesthetics is echoed decades later by Frantz Fanon in his critique of the colonized intellectual, who "at the very moment when he undertakes a work of art, fails to realize he is using techniques and a language borrowed from the occupier" (Hegedušić 1933a, 47; Fanon 1963, 160). Cultural decolonization demands the dethroning of colonial aesthetic authority, not its reproduction in local dress.

Rather than adapting Western aesthetics to the local milieu, Zemlja's goal was to produce "art that would serve social progress, which could become a public good, and not the private property of individuals." The task at hand was the "objectification of our reality." In order to represent the true reality of post-war and post-imperial Croatia, they had to forego any direct continuity with the stars of Croatian art and instead "agree with the Pannonian mud"—that is, the peasants (Hegedušić 1933a, 47). Recounting the founding of Zemlja, Hegedušić wrote that in Paris he and Leo Junek

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[44] All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

> agreed to form a revolutionary group of young artists to fight against our lack of independence and epigony in painting. I developed a theory that workers and peasants should be introduced into our painting as a subject, about the painting that would bring our climate, be an expression of our temperament. About the need to look for elements of some of our artistic expression, and at the same time use a modern art dictionary
> (Letter from Krsto Hegedušić to Oto Bihalji Merin).

Seeing the work of talented peasant artists in the village where he grew up, Hegedušić sought direct "cooperation with the collective, through discussions, criticism, engagement with the proletariat." Hegedušić identified peasant aesthetics as authentically local, decolonial, and something that "could not be poisoned by anything imported" (1933a, 47). The strength of peasant aesthetics would protect the art of the collective from further degradation by imperial domination.

While Zemlja began as a group of academically trained fine artists, the group's crowning achievement was its collaboration with peasant artists from the village of Hlebine, where Hegedušić had grown up. Undeniably shaped by the HSS's heavy presence in the Croatian countryside during the interwar period, Zemlja's privileging of the peasantry was not only theoretical, but also practical (Prelog 2019). In 1929, Hegedušić approached fifteen-year-old peasant artist Ivan Generalić after seeing his work displayed in the village. That year, the "Hlebine School" was established. This "experiment," in Hegedušić's words, involved exposing Generalić (and later Franjo Mraz and Mirko Virius, two other peasant artists), to classics of Western art to get their interpretations, as well as teaching drawing, watercolor, and painting on glass.[45] The value of the peasant artists, for Hegedušić, lay in both their intimate experience of exploitation and their access to a set of aesthetics that could effectively communicate with the peasant public (then over eighty percent of the population). While studying art in Paris,

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[45] From the notes of Zemlja group, dated 1 June 1931. From the Depolo Archive, Hrvatski muzej naivne umjetnosti, Zagreb, cited in Sumpor 2019, 55.

Hegedušić's experience taking workers to the Louvre had revealed to him the irrelevance of much contemporary and classical art to the proletariat. In his famous essay "The Problems of Art of the Collective," published in 1932, Hegedušić outlines the peasant's aesthetic schema. Analyzing his experience working with Generalić and Mraz, he wrote that their paintings are generally flat and two-dimensional, without "intellectual construction of perspective," color is used as a means of expression, proportions are not "logical" but rather "characteristic of the object," and represented figures are not individuals, but rather representatives of different social types. And, finally, the "plot is never invented, but rather always experienced" (1932, 81). This aesthetic schema provided a roadmap for the artists of Zemlja to create work that was as broadly accessible and politically effective as possible.

Hegedušić identifies these as not just qualities of collective art, but also of folk art more generally (*pučka umjetnost*). Hegedušić wrote that folk art's "strength and value lies in the fact that it is understandable to the masses in the broadest sense" (1932, 81). Hegedušić saw folk art as facilitating a line of direct communication from the artist to the people, which explains the political potential of folk aesthetics. However, Hegedušić cautions that a peasant artist who lacks class consciousness can be assumed to be "a peasant poisoned by mysticism" and someone who believes in magic. Consequently, the content of their paintings "will have a negative effect on his environment," because "the content of his paintings will correspond to his belief and view of the world, and with innate formal clarity, his art will have a deafening effect on his surroundings." Hegedušić sees peasant "mysticism" as a reactionary force, definitively proclaiming that this magical perspective in art "will not contribute to progress" nor anything useful for the peasant's class struggle (1932, 81-82).

The role, thus, of the intellectual painter to the peasant painter is one of mutual cooperation. The academic artist is formally re-educated, while the peasant artist is ideologically re-educated. In 1932, artist and critic Grgo Gamulin wrote about the success of Zemlja's collaboration with peasant artists:

> This first attempt at direct contact between the artist and the people for the purpose of collaboration in the field of fine arts led to mutual influences that were equally useful for both teachers and students. For while the artist-intellectual acts on the peasant and proletarian with his knowledge and his ready-made formulations, awakening him and awakening his unawakened class consciousness, that intellectual himself learns from his students about those art forms which are so precious to him and so necessary for creating an art close to the people. (72)

The academically trained artists of Zemlja turned to the peasants as experts in the aesthetics that speak most directly to peasant struggles, while peasant artists turned to the *Zemljaši* to learn more about class analysis and how to best communicate their own struggles through their art.[46]

As art historian Svjetlana Sumpor has recently highlighted, Zemlja's engagement with peasant and worker artists was significant not only in an aesthetic sense, but also in the very concrete political sense that Zemlja provided a platform (and international recognition) to peasant and worker artists in a way that was hitherto unheard of. Peasant painters were first presented in Zemlja's 1931 exhibition, and while Mraz would only exhibit in this third exhibition (out of seven total), Generalić would continue to exhibit his work in all Zemlja exhibitions until the group was officially banned in 1935. Additionally, the group's fifth through seventh exhibitions included the contributions of peasant-worker artist Petar Smajić and worker artists Nikola Kostić, Aleksandar Mikloš, and Danilo Raušević.[47] Generalić, however, would remain the most significant artist out of this group, only exceeded in number of exhibited works by Hegedušić.[48]

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[46] *Zemljaši* translates roughly to a member of Zemlja

[47] Smajić's work developed independently. A sculptor, his participation in Zemlja exhibitions was facilitated by Drago Ibler. The remaining three worker artists made work through their participation in the painting circle that Hegedušić founded as part of the Union of Construction Workers in 1932.

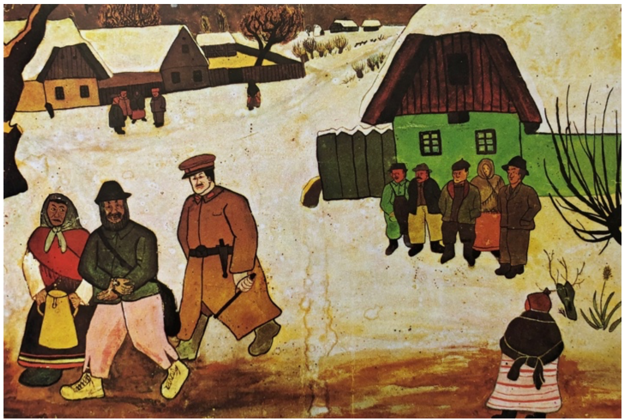

Figure 3.2: Generalić, Ivan. *Chicken Thief / Kokošar*, 1934, watercolor. Šid, The Museum of Naive Art "Ilijanum."

A peasant from Hlebine, the same village that Hegedušić had grown up in, Ivan Generalić painted and drew when not working on his family's farm. Generalić witnessed firsthand the violence of the state as people's livestock were repossessed for mounting debts that they had been coerced into taking on between the two World Wars. After Hegedušić took him under his wing, Generalić began to synthesize his critique of state violence and exploitation through his painting. Describing his watercolor *Chicken Thief* (1934, Fig. 3.2), Generalić says "I painted the injustices the peasants had to put up with. The police came often in those days, and since no one was ready to give up his animals or his last sack of grain, many were beaten up or even arrested. The police always came with bayonets, and I painted many pictures like this one because I couldn't stand the injustices" (Tomašević 1976, 121). Reflecting on the motivation for his watercolor *Requisition* (1934) he says

> Before the war it happened many times that the peasants couldn't pay their taxes and had to sell everything they owned. The police came and took everything away. I once saw a desperate man go after a policeman with an axe and hit him from behind, even though there were others with rifles and bayonets. But maybe

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[48] In his analysis of the group's dynamics, Petar Prelog has previously concluded that Hegedušić, Drago Ibler, and Generalić were the "most important actors in Zemlja's social network" (2016, 34).

> he couldn’t stand it anymore and had rebelled, putting his own life and his family’s in danger (Tomašević 1976, 122)

Generalić’s anticapitalist politics formed in response to witnessing the violence of capitalist accumulation in his own community.

Notably, the collaboration between Generalić and the Zemlja artists did not develop out of a shared political identity, but rather out of a shared diagnosis of the exploitation and abuse of the peasantry and the proletariat. Generalić demonstrated communist politics before he even encountered the official discourse. In an interview, Generalić explains the genesis of his socially-engaged art practice: “I could never get used to the idea that there should be people so poor that they had to sell everything—land, livestock, and bedding—and so as to be able to pay a tax. These social injustices made me angry as a young man, and that’s why I painted the public auctions, the police taking away cows, [Roma,] and other everyday scenes” (Tomašević 1976, 56). As a consequence of his political artistic activity, Generalić was arrested multiple times during the interwar period, and was later imprisoned during World War II.

> They arrested me as a communist and took me to the police station, and from there in chains to a place called Drnje. There I was beaten, and my nose started bleeding; with my cap I tried to stop the blood from dripping on the floor, but one of them told me to go on painting with that communist blood! And yet at the time I didn’t even know who Marx and Lenin were, all I knew was that I felt like doing everything that was forbidden [...] To complain to the District Office in Koprivnica about what went on in the police station only made things worse: I tried and all I got were more beatings. For having painted pictures that showed everyday happenings in the lives of the peasants, I was beaten up for a whole night, tied to a chair, with the veins in my arms swelling (Tomašević 1976, 56)

Generalić did not need to be schooled in Marxist thought to understand the violence of the capitalist state. His witnessing of the brutal reality of the interwar period was sufficient to galvanize him into political action. The police’s violence towards Generalić, under the presumption of his communist politics, only cemented his political commitments.

Other peasant artists in the Hlebine School also became politically engaged during the interwar period. Approached by Hegedušić at the same time as Generalić, peasant artist Franjo Mraz was born in Hlebine in 1910. Vladimir Crnković writes of Mraz that “During the war and immediately after it, he drew the factually accurate bare truth: the wounded, the refugees, orphans, scenes from markets in the liberated areas, the displaced” (2005, 75). In addition to paintings of peasant labor, such as *The Village Takes Ice to the Town* (1936) and *Ploughing* (1936), Mraz also created woodblock prints of socially-engaged themes, including posters for the resistance such as *Not a Grain of Grain to the Occupiers* (Fig. 3.3). During the Second World War, Mraz was imprisoned for his communist politics, but he was able to escape while being transported to a concentration camp. In 1942 he joined the Partisans as a key member of the resistance movement.

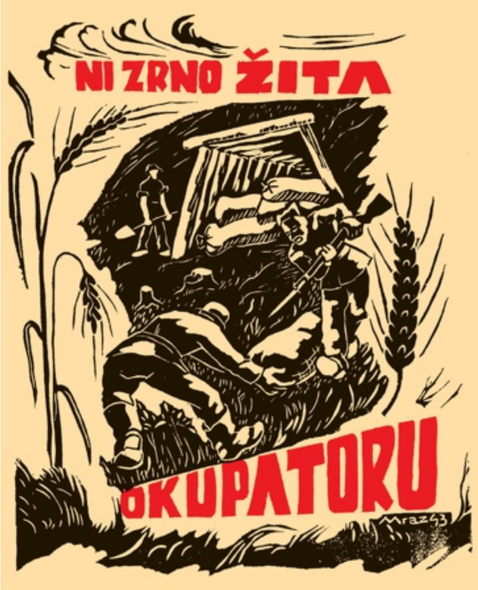

Figure 3.3: Virius, Mirko. *Not One Grain of Grain to the Occupiers / Ni zrno žita okupatoru*, 1943, poster reprint.

The final core member of the Hlebine School, and the oldest of the group, Mirko Virius, became involved with the Hlebine School in 1936 through the introduction of Croatian peasant writer Mihovil Pavlek Miškina. Like Generalić and Mraz, Virius’ watercolors and paintings dealt with the harsh material conditions of the interwar village. Crnković writes that by "showing the impoverished quotidian," Virius "fought for bread, justice and dignity for the common man, the peasant, and the day-labourer" (2005, 85). Arrested for his communist politics, he was killed by fascists in the Zemun concentration camp in 1943. Generalić memorialized his death in his famous 1959 painting *The Death of Virius* (Fig. 3.4).

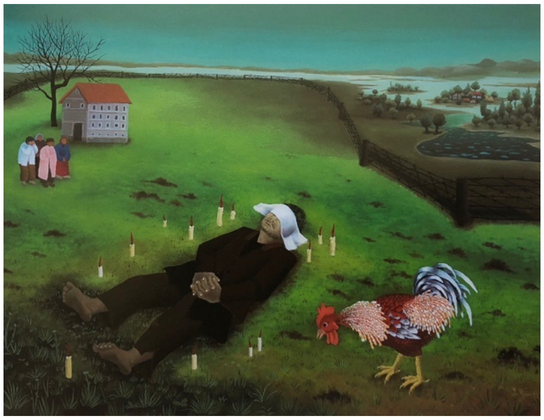

Figure 3.4: Generalić, Ivan, *Death of Virius / Smrt Viriusa*, 1959, oil on glass. Zagreb, Croatian Museum of Naïve Art.

Some of Generalić's most significant paintings from the interwar period include *Requisition* (1934), which critically depicts the seizure of peasants' cattle and crops by the state, and *The Đelekovec Rebellion* (1936), which portrays an example successful peasant resistance again the systematic requisitions of peasant crops and livestock by the police during this period. We see the peasants rise up against the police and priests alike, with a priest tripping over his cassock as he runs away with the disgraced police officers. While Sumpor argues that Generalić's use of humor "significantly diminishes his social criticism" in comparison with the "serious and sharp criticism that permeates the works of Krsto Hegedušić," I see Generalić's use of humor as demonstrating the specific relationship peasants have to the banalized violations of the state (2019, 56).[49] In an interview, Generalić reflects on his painting *The Đelekovec Rebellion* (Fig. 3.5):

> Here in Đelekovec too there was a rebellion against the authorities. The police had come as usual to carry away the peasants' belongings and had taken everything that could be sold. But the exasperated people attacked them with hoes and sticks and anything else they could get their hands on—and chased them away. Even the priest had to escape with the police, and while he was running he kept tripping over his cassock and got a good beating besides. When they told me about it, I had a good laugh at the priest (Tomašević 1976, 123)

Calling to mind Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "carnivalesque," folk laughter is "not an individual reaction," but rather "the laughter of all the people" (1965, 11). By humorously rendering the priest tripping over his cassock, Generalić engages the viewer to assume the socially "correct" stance by inviting them to laugh at the priest, who has allied himself with the police. Generalić's use of humor deepens, rather than diminishes, his political critique as he identifies the police and the church as both perpetuating the exploitation of the peasant.

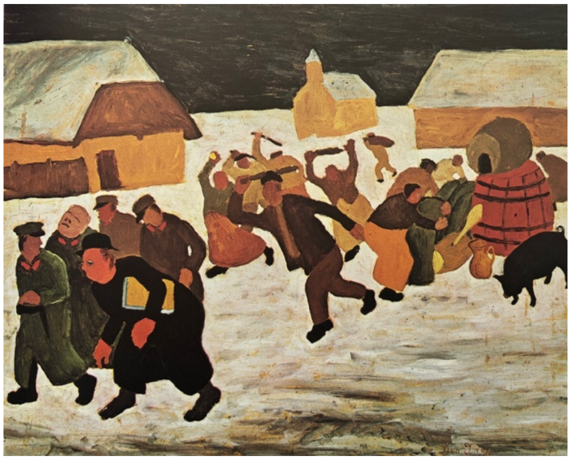

Figure 3.5 Generalić, Ivan. *The Đelekovec Rebellion / Đelekovečka buna*, 1936, oil on cardboard. Bönnigheim, Zander Collection.

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[49] While critics such as Vladimir Crnković have argued that Generalić's social critique only extends to these early works due to the influence of Hegedušić, Sumpor has argued that it is inaccurate to assume that Generalić social critique only came out of imitation of Hegedušić, as we can see a clearly unique critique given by Generalić in his works *Requisition* and *The Đelekovec Rebellion* (2019, 65). And, indeed, we see evidence of his uniquely critical perspective recur in later works such as *My Paris* (1957).

In line with a Rabelaisian view of the world, the debut of socially-engaged peasant art is accompanied by the transformation of aesthetics amongst the academically trained artists of Zemlja. Hegedušić's own transformation is articulated in the seminal prologue to Hegedušić's *Podravina Motifs* (1933b) by Miroslav Krleža (1933). This publication was a catalyst for the infamous "conflict on the literary left," immortalized by Stanko Lasić (1970). The publication also provoked significant backlash from members of the Croatian Peasant Party, who objected to Hegedušić's grotesque representation of peasants, which Krleža described as having "doltish, lumpy pumpkin-heads, swollen, sensual lips, engorged arms and deformed movements" (2003, 189) (Fig. 3.6). Comparing Croatia's domination by the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires to the Spanish mercenaries who tyrannized the peasants of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's paintings, Krleža's foreword offers a searing critique that presages the work of dependency theory. He writes that the Podravina peasant in the interwar period is subjected to a prolonged feudal condition, "where baroque fiefs, estate taxes, tithes, excises, road and bridge tolls molded these serf-like and agrarian conditions around sties, around military barracks and churches, and on the physiognomies and souls of the people" (2003, 188). The attention to how intentional underdevelopment wreaks havoc not only on the material locale, but also on the bodies of the people themselves is key to Krleža's interpretation of Hegedušić's grotesque aesthetics.

> Hegedušić's artistic refutation of everything that is undignified, negative, backward, stunted, and deformed, his vocal hatred of everything ugly, trampled, rejected, wretched, and spat-upon, his relentless and obstinate tendency towards everything uprooted, congealed, degenerate, wilted—everything that has been trampled by the harsh, raw, bloody, somber, sorrowful, and hopeless reality—precisely this adventurous flickering and entwining of the repulsive and cannibalistic elements with the sickly and deathly ones, this contempt for our archaic, idiotic, unenlightened, medieval backwardness, this daring yearning for a way out – for the amelioration and liquidation of these motifs—this is the subjective construction of Hegedušić's artistic rebellion (2003, 188)

The world being grotesquely depicted here is the world ravaged by capitalists. Krleža writes, "commercial profits rule over machines, human destinies, fine arts, politics, and churches. That profit is the only contemporary measure of human dignity; that man acts only as an employer towards other men, and in that respect he is more beastly than a beast" (2003, 185). The violence of class war and capitalist exploitation is made explicit through Hegedušić's illustration of the bodies of the peasants themselves. Colonial rule's attack on culture, sovereignty and autonomy is not abstract, but physical. The psychological is itself material. Here the stereotype of Balkan barbarism is not valorized, but rather exposed as a state of underdevelopment. The unromantic peasant is, for Hegedušić and Krleža, a revolutionary figure. Its backwardness is made material through the "grotesque body" of Rabelais, which Bakhtin sees as "a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (1965, 317). By representing the backwardness of the Podravina peasant as a grotesque body, Hegedušić leaves the body open for transformation—for decolonization.

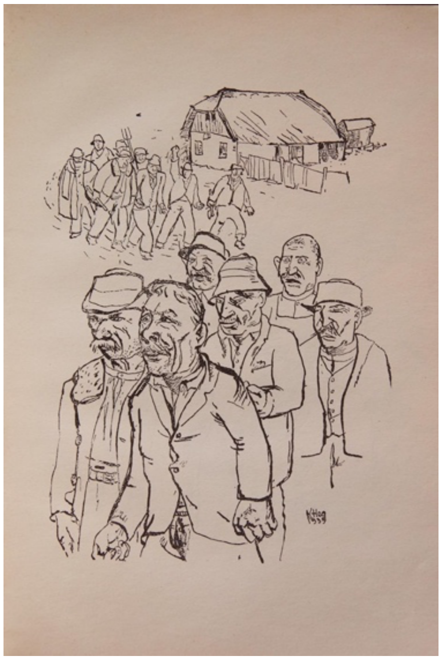

Figure 3.6: Hegedušić, Krsto. Drawing from *Podravina Motifs / Podvravski motivi*, 1933. Zagreb, Izdanje Minerve.

The radical vision of Zemlja and Krleža was not readily accepted within the HSS-dominated Podravina landscape. HSS members Pero Lukanec (1934) and A.H. Žarković (1933) critique inaccuracies of dress, customs and wildlife in Hegedušić's "failed drawings" (1934, 33). Lukanec viscerally objects to the paintings and Krleža's preface, writing "I would christen Krsto's painting as artistic perversion" (1934, 35). In a more nuanced critique, Žarković applauds the aesthetic achievements of Zemlja, but faults them for "their imported metropolitan Marxist spirit and ideology" (1933, 317). This critique is reminiscent of Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means' 1980 speech where he famously asserts that "Marxism is as alien to my culture as capitalism." However, while Means goes on to describe the ways that Indigenous communities preceded Marx's articulation of communism, Žarković rejects Zemlja's engagement with Marx and the aesthetics of George Grosz on the grounds that their foreignness implies an ignorance of "the creative power of the peasant spirit" (320). Hegedušić's grotesque aesthetics are taken at face value when Žarković writes that "to portray the village and the peasant as embodied stupidity and backwardness is a fatal mistake, because it is simply not true, it is not the reality of our village" (320). This condemnation is later racialized when he writes that Hegedušić's art "is not a depiction of a village, it is a distortion (caricature) of a village! A peasant understood and portrayed as a gypsy!" (322). While both Žarković and Lukanec condemn the material impoverishment and exploitation of peasants, they fail to offer any coherent analysis of peasants' own resistance to this exploitation, if indeed, they felt similarly to Means that Marxism was not necessary for the emancipation of the village. If they had paid closer attention to the contributions of peasant artists in collaboration with Zemlja, they would have found abundant acknowledgement of peasants' creative power. To deny that peasants are authors of their own communist aesthetics is to perpetuate the "perversion" that Žarković and Lukanec accuse Hegedušić of committing. The finger has been pointed in the wrong direction.

The Temporal Problem of Peasant Art

In 1941, Prince Paul Karađorđević —the effective dictator of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia—signed Hitler's Tripartite Agreement to join the Axis alliance. Made official in March 1941, the public was outraged and massive protests occurred in Belgrade. Embarrassed by this display of defiance, "German radio began to enunciate a new, pre-invasion propaganda line—viz., the Serbs were a Slavic people and therefore subhuman" (Johnson 1962, 160). On April 6, the Germans began bombing the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade, which was quickly followed by the invasion of thirty-three German, Hungarian, and Italian fascist divisions. Yugoslavia was split up amongst these three nations, while Croatia and Serbia became "independent" states led by collaborationists Ante Pavelić and Milan Nedić, respectively. Concentration camps were established throughout the Yugoslav region, where millions of Jews, Roma, and communists were imprisoned, and hundreds of thousands killed. In addition, Chetniks and Ustashe targeted Croats and Serbs, respectively, for imprisonment and death.

During the Second World War, Yugoslavia lost nearly eleven percent of its population along with most of the country's infrastructure, industry, and agriculture (Bokovoy 1998, 34). While their losses were great, the Yugoslav communists—the Partisans—prevailed. With the support of 800,000 fighters, the vast majority of whom were peasants, the Partisans defeated fascist occupation (Johnson 1962, 173). The Partisans were led by Josip Broz Tito and Milovan Đilas who were based in Belgrade, where they built their movement base of university students. The majority of these students came from peasant families, and they had intimate knowledge of the regions of their youth—both in terms of landscape and in terms of the inhabitants' political leanings. Trained by those with military experience, largely from their participation in the Spanish Civil War, peasants participated in political education and took up arms against the occupiers and their allies. Yugoslavia was officially liberated from fascist occupation in 1945, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established, with Tito as president.

Confronting the dire post-war situation, the young leaders of the second Yugoslavia proposed their Five Year Plan. The primary goal of the post-war Soviet and Yugoslav states was to rapidly industrialize according to the socialist model. Materially, this meant nationalizing industry, nationalizing banks, and regulating prices (Jakovljević 2016, 41). In Yugoslavia, this project also included re-distributing agricultural land in Vojvodina, Croatia, and Slavonia to landless peasants (Trouton 1952, 212-3; Bokovoy 1998, 35). To eliminate "economic and technological backwardness," agricultural co-operatives were to be hubs of industrialization in the new Yugoslavia (Zakon 1947, 6; cited in Jakovljević 2016, 42). In these co-ops, agricultural workers learned to use new machinery, select seeds, breed cattle, and use artificial manures (Trouton 1952, 216). The goal of industrialization was to shift production rates towards heavy industry, such as railroads, and away from consumer goods. During this time, we see the increase of cultivated land, an increase of small rural properties, and huge yield increases for corn and wheat (Halpern and Kerewsky-Halpern 1972, 49). An explosion of rural exodus accompanied this industrial arc. In their study of the Orašac village in Serbia, Joel Halpern and Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern note that from 1949 to 1960 2,162,000 people emigrated from Yugoslav villages. This staggering number represents one ninth of the Yugoslav population (ibid., 67). In the context of Orašac, forty-six percent of those who remained in the village worked additional jobs outside of agriculture, most commonly in the mine (ibid., 69). In the final leg of the industrializing process, we see the transformation of public lands as parts of Skadar Lake were drained and developed, large forests shrank in size, and new forests were cultivated (Trouton 1952, 236). By the 1970s, a new Yugoslavia had been terraformed out of the rubble of war.

As has been significantly argued by anthropologist Andrei Simić, this transformation was not just felt as the modernization of the village or its depopulation, but also as "the peasantization of the city" (1973, 217). As the rural came to feel increasingly closer to the urban, the urban began to increasingly be marked by the rural. Reactions to the simultaneous urbanization of the village and peasantization of the city were mixed. For example, the urban planners of New Belgrade in 1950 saw the intrusion of "peasant" behaviors in the city, such as having livestock in common green spaces or hanging laundry on the balcony, as "inappropriate" (Le Normand 2014, 78). [50] In 1961, Aleksandar Djordjević took a more overtly antagonistic position towards the peasant when he predicted the "social deformations" that would accompany settlements of self-builders, including "lack of education, primitivism, and criminality" (Le Normand 2014, 165). By stereotyping peasants and targeting their associated behaviors, Djordjević, Vladislav Ribnikar, and others, however, did not include the peasantry in their vision of socialist modernity. However, while socialist urban planners were antagonistic towards peasants, it would be a vast oversimplification to argue that socialist Yugoslavia as a whole was antagonistic towards the peasant. On the contrary, a lot of pride was taken in the fact that the Yugoslav revolution had been a peasant revolution, and the overwhelming majority of urban residents had close family still living in the countryside (Simić 1973). Peasants were also recognized as integral to Yugoslavia's cultural identity, and their representation was important to the cultivation of a new national Yugoslav identity, which encompassed all of its constituent peoples.[51]

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[50] New Belgrade was a settlement created across the Danube river from the old city. New Belgrade was planned according to the precepts laid out by Le Corbusier in order to formulate an ideal spatial arrangement of housing, recreation, and work.

The emergent fields of naïve art and contemporary art in Yugoslavia demonstrate this negotiation of the peasant's meaning for the new socialist state. In the newly created socialist Yugoslav state, peasant art and self-taught art became institutionalized under the banner of "naïve art." In 1952, the first institution dedicated to peasant art was founded in Zagreb under the name Peasant Art Gallery. This institution would be later renamed the Gallery of Primitive Art in 1956, and finally the Croatian Museum of Naïve Art in 1994. The second institution dedicated to self-taught art was established in Jagodina, Serbia in 1960: The Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art. This museum was dedicated not only to collecting and presenting Yugoslav self-taught artists, but also self-taught artists from around the world.

The founding of these museums and the popularization of naïve art in the Yugoslav art sphere largely results from the work of Oto Bihalji-Merin. Bihalji-Merin was the foremost critic and curator of naïve art and the person responsible for Yugoslav naïve art's international reputation, and the establishment of naïve art as an international mode of artistic production. A radical thinker and member of the Yugoslav communist party since 1924, Bihalji-Merin developed his ideas about art and aesthetics through his engagement in aesthetic debates in the Soviet Union as a participant in the 1930 Congress of Revolutionary Writers in Congress; as a witness to the rise of Nazism in Germany as an art student (and a staunch defender of German expressionism, criminalized by the Nazi government as "degenerate art"); as a fighter in the international brigades during the Spanish Civil War; and as a Jewish man imprisoned in a concentration camp from 1941-1945, which he miraculously survived.

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[51] Yugoslavia was made up of six constituent states and two autonomous units: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Slovenia. Within these states, national minorities (e.g. Hungarian, Albanian, German, etc) and ethnicities (e.g. Romani) were also recognized.

Bihalji-Merin's first major international contribution to the exhibition of self-taught art comes in 1958, when he served as a member of the organizing committee of the exhibition "Fifty Years of Modern Art" as part of the Brussels World Fair. In this exhibition, Bihalji-Merin contributed the works of select academic artists from Yugoslavia, as well as the works of Ivan Generalić. The same year, Bihalji-Merin also organized the first international exhibition of naïve art in Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium. Then, in 1959, Bihalji-Merin published two volumes that have become cornerstone texts in the field of naïve art, and which have been translated into numerous languages: *Naïve Art in Yugoslavia* and *Modern Primitives: Masters of Naïve Painting*. These publications are followed by further books including *Primitive Artists of Yugoslavia* (1964), *Masters of Naïve Art: A History and Worldwide Survey* (1970), and *World Encyclopedia of Naïve Art* (1984).

In addition to these works focusing exclusively on naïve art, Bihalji-Merin also wrote on the work of Krsto Hegedušić and on the field of modern art more broadly. In his 1966 book *Adventure of Modern Art*, Bihalji-Merin proposes a dialectical relationship between naïve art and modern art. Rather than an extractivist perspective of naïve art as the "raw material" for modern art—akin to the work of French cubists, for example—Bihalji-Merin argues that dialogue across time and place (ancient to present, rural to urban) is the substance of aesthetic innovation and the expression of truth in art. This perspective, informed by the work of Miroslav Krleža, became foundational to the unique Yugoslav interpretation of modernism in art.

In her book *Non-Aligned Modernism*, Bojana Videkanić demonstrates how Yugoslavia's unique articulation of socialist modernism is undergirded by internationalism. As Yugoslavia's initial alignment with Soviet-style socialist realism gave way to a “non-aligned modernism,” artists combined and reformulated elements of Western modernism and socialist realism through an internationalist anticolonial lens. Reading Videkanić’s work, I am led to think that the peasant aesthetic, which came into the conscious purview of socially-engaged artists in the interwar period, stood as a formative influence for Yugoslavia’s “third way” of understanding the relationship between aesthetics and the revolutionary futurial project of global communism. The significance of peasants’ aesthetics to the conception of socialist art in Yugoslavia is demonstrated both by the centrality of figures like Krleža and Hegedušić to the formal cultural departments of the Yugoslav government, and also by art historical discourses which connected “naïve artists” to Yugoslav modernist artists during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

We can observe the shifting dialectical relationship of peasant art to contemporary in the discourse surrounding the establishment of Belgrade’s Museum of Contemporary Art. The absence of an institution dedicated to the collection and exhibition of modern art in Belgrade was a sore spot for the city’s artists and intellectuals in the nation’s early years. While discussions about founding such an institution began immediately in 1945, the decision to establish a new institution solely dedicated to the presentation of modern art did not become official until 1954 with the establishment of the committee of what was then named the Modern Gallery. Made up of a prominent group of critics and artists, including Miodrag B. Protić, Oto Bihalji-Merin, Milo Milunović, Đorđe Andrejević-Kun, and Dobrica Ćosić, the committee was charged with deciding on a location for the museum, determining the parameters of the museum’s collection, and deciding on a name.

As the leader of the committee (and as the future director of the museum), Protić’s vision for the proposed museum was strongly informed by his admiration for New York’s Museum of

Modern Art, which he visited in 1962 to meet with founding director Alfred Barr and then-director Rene d'Harnoncourt to discuss implementing the MoMA's museological model in Belgrade. Even before this meeting took place, Protić had already introduced one of MoMA's biggest art historical conventions to the committee. In 1934, Barr defined modern art as "a relative, elastic term that serves conveniently to designate painting, sculpture, architecture and the other visual arts, original and progressive in character, produced especially within the last three decades but also including pioneer ancestors of the nineteenth century" (Lorente 2016, 4, n.5). This emphasis on the specifically "current" chronology of art as the defining character of the museum's aesthetic limits would inform a debate in the committee about whether to name the new museum the "Modern Gallery" or the "Museum of Contemporary Art."

In a document of "questions for discussion", compiled in June 1955 in preparation for a committee meeting, we see that the debate over "the term 'modern,' or 'contemporary' shouldn't signify a qualitative marker in an aesthetic sense, but rather a temporal marker" for the art presented (MSU Documentation, "*Pitanja*"). When the committee's discussion took place a week later, they specified that the museum's purpose should be to present "our contemporary art" from "its origins to today," particularly emphasizing its "current aspects." The report details that Yugoslav contemporary art should not be marked as modernist nor realist art, but rather—from a scientific, truthful, and objective basis—the task of the gallery is to present the best known movements and artists. (1955 MSU Documentation, "*Izveštaj*").

In the process of delineating the purview of the contemporary art museum, the committee came into conflict with the National Museum in Belgrade, which at the time was retrofitting a new floor to be dedicated exclusively to the presentation of modern art. Voicing doubt over the National Museum's capacity to present modern art, the committee argued that at least two decades is needed to determine the historical significance of a work of art, and that unlike the long lag time of a historical institution such as the National Museum, the "Modern Gallery," with contemporary art as its sole focus, would be versatile and adaptive and consequently better suited for the presentation of contemporary art. Additionally, the committee also argued that a contemporary art museum would avoid the "danger of comparisons between the artistic expression of the past and the present" or of contemporary art being "in the shadow of the past."[52] The committee's concern over the suffocating presence of past artistic movements—crucial to the distinct character of contemporary art—is not indicative of a more general rejection of history in favor of presentism, which is at this point a pretty rote critique of contemporary art. Rather, looking at both committee activities and the museum's early exhibitions, what emerges as the distinct character of the "contemporary" in contemporary art is the construction, by both the artist and the critic, of a new relationship between the present and the past via the historicity of the artist.

Petar Lubarda, one of the artists whose work the committee was most concerned about collecting, exemplifies this peculiar fashioning of the contemporary artist's relationship to time. Known for his use of vivid colors, grotesque figurativism, and his interest in historico-mythic subject matter, a retrospective of Lubarda's painting was presented at the museum in 1967. The exhibition catalogue opens with a quote from Lubarda himself, relating the wooden combs of ancient Egypt that he viewed at the Louvre as a young man to the combs of his peasant grandmother. He comments on how one can conceive of the comb and the invention of airplane as existing side by side. He then continues by saying that: "the experiences and the spirit of these incongruities in the concept of time: of the archaic and the ultramodern," serve as the source of his “strength and my food” (Protić 1967). This temporal confusion, this not knowing if he belongs to the age of the wooden comb or the age of the airplane, becomes the sustenance for Lubarda’s aesthetics and the sustenance for his own self-mythologization.

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[52] From a sheet of notes that's missing the first three pages. Held in MSU's Documentation department. Most likely written in 1954 or 55.

At first, Lubarda’s aesthetics seems to be a radical departure from progressivist models of time. He thrives off the interplay of the archaic and the ultramodern, the ancient past and the industrial Yugoslav present. In the catalogue, relating Lubarda to pre-Columbian history, ghosts, and the “centuries-old struggles with the Asiatic empire,” Protić writes that in the artist’s oeuvre “there is no longer any difference between the past and the present, because ‘at the core of life, time cannot be measured’” (1967). But if we look from a different angle, we find Lubarda’s work and Protić’s critique to be less about an alternative temporality where the past and present are in dialogue, and more about the ventriloquizing or curation of a muted past for the cultivation of a new type of contemporaneity. As Lubarda consumes the tension between the archaic and the ultramodern as “food,” he consumes the myth of modernity. The wooden comb signifies the archaic lifeworld to which both the ancient Egyptian and the artist’s peasant grandmother belong, while the plane signifies the ultramodern, the normative evolutionary aspiration for the world’s modernizing populations.

The close relationship of contemporary art to a peculiar reconfiguration of history and historicity is not restricted to the Yugoslav context, but rather is intimately tied to the trajectory of “contemporary art” as a discourse in Western Europe and North America. In his genealogy of the historicity of contemporary art, Jean-Philippe Antoine traces the genre’s curious temporality back to the late-eighteenth century writing of Friedrich Schiller, who “[reinvented] antiquity as a ghost among the living” (2013, 28). Beginning with Schiller and the neoclassicists, Antoine sees how the contemporary began to be defined via the cultivation of “connections to historical periods, picked out of a generic, a-historical past," particularly in regard to their ability to "[provide] valued vehicles for resisting absorption into the pure present of nascent industrial societies." The appropriation of colonial objects by modern artists, Antoine argues, are iterations of the same logic as the neoclassicists who sought to "[retrieve] specific moments in a large and indefinite past" (2013, 29).

This last point about the use of colonial objects as a means of invoking useful moments from a "large and indefinite past" is particularly significant. In Anibal Quijano's cornerstone essay "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," he writes that the defining feature of colonial historiography is the "[relocation of] the colonized population, along with their respective histories and cultures in the past of a historical trajectory whose culmination was Europe" (2000, 541, emphasis in original). What makes this transformation so significant is not only this massive act of epistemic violence committed against colonized people, but also the transformation of history into the domain of human action, "as something that can be designed" (Quijano 2000, 547).[53]

The use of history and colonial relations in art, beginning with neoclassicism, reveals the contemporary as a pastiche, which does not so much communicate with the past, as it collages images of the past for consumption (Antoine 2013, 32). This "past" consists not only of historical events, but also the relocation of living people who have been rendered a-historical and anachronistic into the past, according to the logic of what Bauman and Briggs refer to as the "Great Divide," so that they can be consumed as nourishment for modern subjectivity (2003, 222). Neither Lubarda nor Protić, for example, seem to care that the peasant subjects that

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[53] Colonial temporal epistemic violence is exemplified by Hegel's notorious schematization of the world's historical progression from East to West, omitting Africa and the Americas from the category of "history" altogether.

Lubarda paints in the same stroke as historical battles from 500 years ago are still very much alive, still in struggle, and still building their own futures. Read from this perspective, Lubarda does not eschew progressivist temporality so much as he affirms it via a consumptive gaze that regards the village as a site of the past.

The presentation of self-taught artists in the founding years of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade further nuances the temporal politics of Yugoslav contemporary art. By the time that the museum opened in 1965, Yugoslavia was already internationally renowned for the rich traditions of self-taught artists that took off in Hlebine and Oparić, Serbia in the 1930s. Ivan Generalić himself received a solo exhibition at the museum's salon in Old Belgrade just three years before the new museum's opening. The Generalić painting with which I began this chapter was exhibited in this exhibition.

In the catalogue for this exhibition, art critic Mića Bašićević compares Generalić's subjectivity as an artist to the mythic figures of Pallas Athena and Antaeus, writing that with the creation of his first painting Generalić was born, impossibly, as a perfectly formed artist. Because Generalić emerged miraculously as an already-complete artist, Bašićević argues that Generalić's art never "develops." Even when his techniques change—for example when he began to paint on glass—Bašićević writes that "this...does not seriously indicate development, actual development" (1962). Whereas he compares the typical artist to Sisyphus, constantly struggling to reach artistic perfection, Bašićević compares Generalić—and self-taught artists more generally—to Antaeus, the giant son of Poseidon and Gaia, as "one who draws his marvelous power from the earth itself," without suffering (1962).

Mythologizing Generalić as a perfect specimen of a self-taught artist, Bašićević fails to engage with Generalić as a fully agentive artist whose oeuvre develops over time in response to his life experiences, changing technique, and perception of the world. Rather, utilizing either mythic allusion or the infantilizing description of Generalić as an "ex-boy from Hlebine," Bašićević sees the artist as fixed within a "naïve picture of the world" (1962). The struggle that Bašićević experiences in trying to explain the emergence of the self-taught artist is the struggle to incorporate divergent temporalities into the temporality of contemporary art. For Generalić to become a modern artist without any academic training should be impossible according to the epistemic precepts of modern historiography. One of the central inadequacies of the singular, hegemonic temporality of modernity, is that it either assimilates historical ruptures into the dominant historical narrative or "[transforms] them into deviations" (Tomba 2019, 7). Understanding Generalić as rupturing the temporality of contemporary art, Bašićević severs Generalić from the modern world as a "naïve" deviation, switching between mythic and childlike metaphors to prevent him from threatening the larger ontological constitution of contemporary art.

The peculiar temporal relationship between history and folklore in Yugoslav art drew the attention of artists and scholars internationally. In 1956 Polish artist Andrzej Wróblewski visited Yugoslavia as part of a cultural exchange in the context of the thawing relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Speaking about his interest in visiting Yugoslavia, Wróblewski commented "I am personally interested in the relationship between modern painters and folklore" (Dimitrijević 2014, 6). In his article analyzing the visit, Branislav Dimitrijević links Wróblewski's interest in the relationship between Yugoslav folklore and contemporary art to the earlier visit of Le Corbusier in 1911. During this visit, Le Corbusier was disgusted by the botched attempt at modernity that he found in the region's cities, but he was enchanted by the folklore that he found in Belgrade's Ethnographic Museum, which "indicated for him the resistance to 'the invading and dirty Europeanization'" (Dimitrijević 2014, 6).[54]

Unlike Le Corbusier, however, Wróblewski had a more nuanced perspective of Yugoslavia, perhaps because of certain historical and cultural affinities between Poland and Yugoslavia. He was particularly moved by the work of Lazar Vujaklija, with whom he spent time with in Belgrade. Vujaklija was the only self-taught artist of the December Group, a prominent group of artists founded in Belgrade in 1955. He was heavily influenced by "Medieval painting and particularly the Bosnian medieval tombstones, *stećci*" (Dimitrijević 2014, 9, n31). While Vujaklija was the only self-taught artist in the group, the artistic movement to which he belonged featured several other artists who also "turned to the distant past in trying to find some "authentic" or "archetypal" local paradigms of pictorial organization and symbolical meanings relevant for modern painting and specifically for the creation of a national school within a universal visual language prompted by international modernism" (Dimitrijević 2014, 11). This turn to the past, particularly to medieval tombstones, can be credited to the work of Miroslav Krleža and his formative role in the establishing of a Yugoslav socialist modernist directive in art, which abided by neither Soviet socialist realism nor decadent Western abstraction, but rather articulated an "autochthonous visual civilization [...] based on antagonism, on resisting to yield to any imposed alphabet, language, sculpture, image, church or politics" (Krleža 1958; cited in Dimitrijević 2014, 13).

Bojana Videkanić convincingly demonstrates that the "antagonism" to which Krleža refers is the antagonism that characterizes Yugoslavia's peripheral status as a postcolonial nation on the margins of Europe. Postwar Yugoslav artists struggled with the imposed choice between either imitating Soviet socialist realism or imitating Western modernism. Krleža recognized that it was impossible to represent the authentic voice of the Yugoslav people through imposed aesthetics from abroad. She cites the work of Stanko Lasić who connects Krleža's position to that of Frantz Fanon:

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[54] See more details on this visit in Ljiljana Blagojević's *Modernism in Serbia* (2003).

> [Krleža's] response is similar to that of Frantz Fanon: if we stop being an object and become a subject, if we stop being a periphery and become centre, if we come back to ourselves without regard for gods that have created us. That complete negation of Europe and its modern fetishes is in actuality a complete affirmation of the SUBJUGATED and the REJECTED: in the coming to oneself the DISPOSSESSED has to LIVE THROUGH and EXPERIENCE total rejection of the Other which has relegated him to a subhuman. That is the first moment of such dialectic. If the subjugated culture does not live through such dialectic it will never be able to constitute itself as a subject. It will forever stay an imitation. (2020, 57, emphasis in original)

By embracing all the facets of the Yugoslav experience that have been denigrated in European history, artists could contribute to the important political project of inventing themselves as real, autonomous subjects. Videkanić summarizes Krleža's (via Lasić) position: "There can be no political, social, or cultural transformation unless those who have been colonized and relegated to the margins, first, reject those who have subjugated them, and second, engage in a process of acquiring an identity. Political sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and social equality are Krleža's conditions for praxis-based art, which can then be a part of the revolutionary transformation" (Videkanić 2020, 58).

In one way, it *is* a radical move to bring self-taught artists into the contemporary art museum, and to recognize the individual authorship of their work (rather than as anonymous folk artists). This is especially the case in examples like the solo-exhibition of Lazar Vujaklija a few years later, when a curator frames his oeuvre as a critique of the Western modern artist's appropriation of colonial objects and cultures. To a certain extent this can be also said of Lubarda's engagement with the history of the Yugoslav region and representations of Yugoslav peasants. Even if we return to MoMA and the New York art context, Alfred Barr was actually fired for his controversial exhibitions of self-taught artists, while his primitivist shows went on without incident.

The framing of Generalić and other self-taught artists as historical anomalies, however, prevents a deeper critical engagement with their political and artistic work. Bašićević, for example, fails to ever mention Generalić's relationship to Hegedušić and Zemlja in his solo exhibition catalogue. The connection between Generalić and Zemlja is not only significant because of their shared history, but also because Zemlja was strongly opposed to art for art's sake, neoclassicism, and impressionism, as well as integral components of "contemporary art" as its trajectory has been defined in the West. If Bašićević had engaged with Generalić's lived engagement with the art world, his emergence as a "perfectly formed" artist would become significantly less baffling (and less true).

Returning to *My Paris*, the painting radically reverses the chronopolitical move to which Bašićević sought to subject Generalić, by subjecting colonial modernity to the temporality of the village. Generalić has made Parisian modernism a facet of the village field. Paris' most iconic architectural feature now sits amongst sheep and trees. Paris, for Ivan Generalić, is the village. And the village is not static, is not dying, is not emblematic of the past, but rather is a locus of development and innovation, where things are constantly transforming and yielding new life. The food of the artist here is not Lubarda's vision of the village as ancient Egypt, but rather the cheese made from the milk of the sheep grazing at the foot of the Eiffel Tower.

Since the publication of Johannes Fabian's foundational text, *Time and the Other*, anthropologists and many others have attempted to resolve the issue of how the myth of modernity is reproduced in studies of colonized peoples and people living in rural areas through the "denial of coevalness" – that is, the temporal segregation of the researcher (recognized as being of the present) from the research subject (constructed as being of the past) (2014, 31). The most basic solution to this problem has been to make explicit as often as possible that the researcher and the researcher belong to a shared present. To insist, in other words, that despite their differences, they are all contemporary. However, as we can see in the museum's presentation of Ivan Generalić, simply being acknowledged as "contemporary" does not fix the problem of the dehumanization of difference in a global context defined by coloniality.

In his book, *Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, Mark Rifkin argues that "In seeming to grant temporal equality or recognition...the sense of shared time can efface collective forms of becoming and ways of being-in-time that arise out of Indigenous histories, territorialities, and ordinary experiences of peoplehood" (2017, 16). For Rifkin, the forcible assimilation of Indigenous people into colonial ways of experiencing time constitutes an attack on temporal sovereignty. In this way, the temporalities of colonial powers makes themselves into "a given, [...] an atemporal container for the occurrences, movements, conjunctures, periodicities, and pulsations of history, providing the background against which the movement of time can be registered" (Rifkin 2017, 1). By applying a decolonial critique to the history of Yugoslav contemporary art, the underlying colonial investments of this chrono-aesthetic start to bleed through the cracks. What Walter Benjamin critiques as the homogenous empty time of capitalism begins to appear not just as a critique of progressivism, but as a critique of the ways in which that empty time serves as the modern mask for the epistemic and territorial domination of global colonialism and coloniality.

Raising Consciousness in Communism and Decolonization

The struggle for temporal sovereignty intimately relates to both communist and decolonial praxis. For communists, claiming temporal sovereignty allowed them to break away from what Moishe Postone has called the "domination of people by time in capitalism" (2009, 78). In the context of state socialism, leaders understood the socialist project as breaking away from the hegemonic temporality of capitalism. This has only been further confirmed in the present, as people living in postsocialist states have been asked to forget their socialist pasts and recover their pre-socialist capitalist trajectories (Groys 2008, 155). For people struggling against colonialism, temporal sovereignty is a necessary corrective to the "denial of coevalness," which has proliferated among colonists and their successors since the late fifteenth century (Fabian 2014, 31). Appellations of "backwards," "traditional," "developing," and "primitive" all serve to invalidate worldviews and ways of being that deviate from the hegemonic narrative of capitalist progress.

To resist temporal domination, revolutionary struggles in both communist and decolonizing contexts seek to identify elements of the past, which can inspire direct action in the present. Additionally, revolutionaries seek practices in the present—generally practices that are maintained by *the people*—which support their political and ideological vision. The combination of these past and present cultural elements facilitates the development of class or national consciousness in both the masses and the colonized bourgeoisie. In practice, however, the renewed appreciation of cultural relics and contemporary local or Indigenous practices often leads to conceptual slippage. The more that cultural elements of the past and present are joined for utilitarian purposes, the more that the present becomes absorbed by the past and vice-versa. In the case of the former, many activist discourses end up replicating the temporal epistemic violence to which they were originally subjected. Generally, this doubled violence takes the (colonized) peasantry as its object. Once this happens, epistemologies and ways of being that diverge from capitalist modernity are demonized as reactionary or regressive: the people themselves become an impediment to true liberation. In order to understand the persistent problem of temporal epistemic violence against agrarian communities and colonized people, it is beneficial to reconstruct the debate on the utility of culture for communist and anticolonial revolution.

The changing perspective of Marx on the function of the Russian commune provides a fruitful starting point for this debate. In the late-nineteenth century, the survival of peasant communes was “discovered” by members of the Russian intelligentsia, which led to an intense debate over “its nature and historiography” (Shanin 1981, 114). While its critics saw the commune as a tsarist creation and an example of underdevelopment, Narodniks and their allies saw the commune as evidence of prefigurative communism. In his draft letters to Vera Zasulich in 1881, Marx came to see the commune as a potential “vehicle of social regeneration” and an “immediate point of departure for the socialist economic mode.” Though he saw the commune as limited by “material ‘poverty,’ its parochiality and its weakness against external exploitative forces,” he argued that we must “stop fearing the word ‘archaic,’ for the new system to which modern society is moving will be a revival in a superior form of an archaic social type” (Marx 1881; cited in Shanin 1981, 116). This relationship between peasant history and future communism has proved to be a significant and enduring model particularly for the anticolonial dimension of communist praxis. Marx's re-evaluation of the "archaic" commune creates an imperative to look to those unique local manifestations of communalism.[55]

Krleža utilizes Marx's methodology by tracing the lineage of contemporary collectivist artists back to the history of the Bogomils. At the end of "Croatian Literary Lie" (1919) Krleža proposes the Bogomils as a possible "Yugoslav cultural line," which "continued through the fifteenth-century pan-Slavic missionary Juraj Križanić and the nineteenth-century nationalist poet Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević." Robertson has analyzed this invocation of Bogomil lineage as "Krleža's anticolonial, pan-Balkan vision," wherein the Bogomils were "not only a radical political movement that practiced social egalitarianism and destroyed religious hierarchy, but also an early expression of a regional political impulse that rejected foreign domination." Identifying a trajectory from the Bogomil past, through the early modern period up to "the revolutionary present," yielded communism as "a project for the cultural independence of Croatia within a wider Balkan space" (Robertson 2018, 306).

This turn to the past is built upon by Oto Bihalji-Merin. Echoing Krleža's captivation by the Bogomils, Bihalji-Merin writes

> The naïve artists in Yugoslavia can still—albeit unconsciously—draw on the underground streams of old and ebbing folk art. The past is not completely broken off, the forms of Bogomilian sarcophagi, Serbian farmyard gravestones, carved shepherd's sticks, embroidered and woven peasant robes and votive paintings behind glass live on into our time. (1959b, 141; cited in Zimmerman 2018, 193)

Bihalji-Merin then connects the peasant artist to the contemporary Yugoslav artist, who "has its backing and background in peasant-archaic tradition and in the Slavonic-Byzantine visual world of medieval frescoes" (Bihalji-Merin 1959c, 201; Zimmerman 2018, 193). Bihalji-Merin and Krleža see the temporality of the peasant as a remain from the past, who persists in the present.

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[55] This represents an integral dimension of Marx's romanticism (see Löwy 1987; Löwy and Sayre 2002).

The peasant's relationship to the past is valued, because they think the peasant *knows* and *acts* according to pre-capitalist precepts, similar to Marx's position. By possessing an uninterrupted relationship to a reality without private property, peasant culture comes to validate the authenticity of Yugoslav communism.

The significance of the peasant for revolutionary aesthetics extends beyond Yugoslavia. In his writing, Bihalji-Merin relates the work of peasant artists and the work of Hegedušić to the work of Diego Rivera who aesthetically forged a link between "the highly civilized elements of cubism with the archaically primitive sources of the Aztec-Toltecan past" (1959a, 1). The connection between self-taught art and Mexican muralism was also made by Soviet art critic A. Al'f in 1929 who, comparing the work of the Georgian self-taught artist Pirosmani to Rivera, claimed that "if [Pirosmani] were still alive, would certainly depict the new communist reality" (Zimmerman 2020, 177).[56] Hegedušić explicitly claimed Pirosmani as an influence of his own work, as well as French self-taught painter Henri Rousseau and Croatian peasant writer Miškina. While the turn to naïve art by white French cubists and primitivists has been justifiably critiqued at length for the colonial relationship between the white French avant-garde, self-taught artists, and artists and cultural producers in France's colonies,[57] interest in naïve art as an authentic expression of local aesthetics—beyond the colonizing purview of Western academic art trends—exploded across the globe during the interwar period, from Russia to Martinique.

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[56] Georgian self-taught painter Niko Pirosmanashvili (Pirosmani) was recognized in 1912 by the neoprimitivist artists Ilya and Kyrill Zdanevich, who attributed his talent to his "Eastern spirit and attachment to the Georgian soil. [...] In 1929, the Soviet art critic A. Al'f praised his attachment to the things of everyday life and the voluminosity of his figures, which oppose impressionist and avant-garde dissolution. He even compared Pirosmani to the revolutionary Mexican painter Diego Rivera and expressed the opinion that the Georgian painter, if he were still alive, would certainly depict the new communist reality." (Zimmerman 2020, 177)

[57] It is impossible to list all of the relevant works here, but see especially Torgovnick 1990; Appiah 1991; Harrison et al 1993; and Flam et al 2003.

The collapsing of empires during the First World War made the national question one of urgent significance, and culture played an integral role in this debate. Likely the first articulation of the relationship between the national question and naïve art comes from Ukrainian painter Aleksandr Shevchenko's 1913 pamphlet "Neo-Primitivism: Its Theory, Its Potentials, Its Achievements":

> We take as the starting-point of our art the *lubok*, primitive art, and the icon, for there we find a more precise, more direct perception of life and one which is, furthermore, purely pictorial. Just like the primitivists and the painters of the East, we consider that the most valuable and productive work is that which is guided by direct perception. This opens up greater possibilities to the artist to reveal his own conception of the world, and does not distract attention with unnecessary details, which too often happens when one works from nature.

In this essay Shevchenko critiques the cultural hegemony of Western Europe by claiming pride in the "Easternness" of Russia. Turning away from Western aesthetics, Shevchenko finds the *lubok*—a popular Russian woodcut print usually depicting folktales and religious stories, whose production dates to the early-eighteenth century—and other forms of art beyond the academy as the germs for a local, non-Western, Russian aesthetic. Shevchenko's attention to these artists' "direct perception of life" presages the attention that Hegedušić will pay to the direct aesthetics of the peasant, the plot of whose paintings "is never invented, but is always experienced" (Hegedušić 1932, 81).

Frantz Fanon reached similar conclusions to Shevchenko as he assessed the relevance of culture to decolonization. Fanon's analysis of the relationship between culture, history, and revolutionary consciousness first developed through his analysis of the Negritude movement in Martinique. Reflecting on the work of Aimé Césaire and the Negritude movement, as well as his own experience growing up in Martinique, Fanon wrote that beginning in 1939 with the Vichy occupation of France and Martinique, Black Martinicans began to recognize their own Blackness

(2008 [1952], 21). In this process of self-discovery, Césaire had argued for Black Martinicans to reject the assimilationist advances of France and Western Europe, and instead to reclaim their place in African culture. In a 1967 interview with Haitian communist poet René Depestre at the Cultural Congress of Havana, Césaire said, “it’s true that superficially we are French, we bear the marks of French customs; we have been branded by Cartesian philosophy, by French rhetoric; but if we break with all that, if we plumb the depths, then what we will find is fundamentally black” (Kelley 2002, 169-70). Suzanne Césaire, another foundational figure of Negritude wrote in 1943:

> Freed from a long benumbing slumber, the most disinherited of all peoples will rise up from plains of ashes... Our surrealism will enable us to finally transcend the sordid antinomies of the present: whites/Blacks, Europeans/Africans, civilized/savages—at last rediscovering the magic power of the mahoulis, drawn directly from living sources. Colonial idiocy will be purified in the welder’s blue flame (Kelley 2002, 171)

Culture, specifically those parts of culture that have been slandered in colonial discourses, become the nourishment for Negritude’s radical reclamation of Blackness and the transcendence of Fanon’s Manichean colonialism.

In “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” Fanon recounts his experience discovering Negritude, quoting extensively from Césaire’s *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. He expresses the profound feeling of recognizing his own experience in Césaire’s revolutionary transformation of Blackness. Motivated by this sense of reclamation, Fanon recalls how he “excavated black antiquity,” which once “dug up, displayed, and exposed to the elements, it allowed me to regain a valid historic category” (1952, 109). In his essay “Racism and Culture,” Fanon declares that “the plunge into the chasm of the past is the condition and the source of freedom” (1988, 43). The reclamation of the culture of the colonized is a powerful force for galvanizing anticolonial resistance.

While Fanon recognizes the value of cultural reclamation in raising anticolonial consciousness, he is critical that the culture being reclaimed may no longer have a genuine connection to people's contemporary situation.

> This falling back on archaic positions having no relation to technical development is paradoxical [...] The culture put into capsules, which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorized. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted. And this headlong, unstructured, verbal revalorization conceals paradoxical attitudes (1988, 42).

Understanding cultural reclamation as an orientation towards the past, Fanon sees a limit to culture's ability to forge a new path of revolutionary action. A revolutionary culture alone will not yield revolution: "Colonialism will never be put to shame by exhibiting unknown cultural treasures under its nose" (Fanon 1963, 159). Following the critique of Sartre, Fanon saw the act of cultural reclamation as a temporary, but necessary, process that would ultimately give way to a new postcolonial culture following armed conflict.[58]

Recent work by Indigenous studies scholars pushes back against this instrumentalist view of culture. In his book *Red Skins, White Masks*, Dene scholar Glen Coulthard takes issue with Fanon's view of cultural reclamation as a "transitional," rather than permanent, "category of identification" (2014, 153). Coulthard rejects Fanon's assessment of culture on the grounds that Fanon fails to recognize how Indigenous cultural practices prefigure the decolonial future. Rather than transitional, these cultural practices are "*permanent* features of our decolonial politics projects" (Coulthard 2014, 23). Fanon sees culture as a tool with which to raise consciousness and then to subsequently discard. In Coulthard's view, Fanon fails to recognize the politics intrinsic to cultural practices themselves. Coulthard is not suggesting a "decolonize the mind" approach or a privileging of the cultural over the material, but rather insisting that "insofar as Indigenous cultural claims always involve demands for a more equitable distribution of land, political power, and economic resources, the left-materialist claim regarding the displacement of economic concerns by cultural ones is misplaced when applied to settler-colonial contexts" (19).

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[58] Fanon cites Sartre's Orphée Noir: "Negritude appears as the weak stage of a dialectical progression: the theoretical and practical affirmation of white supremacy is the thesis; the position of Negritude as antithetical value is the moment of negativity [...] Negritude is dedicated to its own destruction, it is transition and not result, a means and not the ultimate goal" (Fanon 2004 [1963], 112).

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson further develops this idea of politico-cultural practice as a both the means and the ends in her book *As We Have Always Done*. In this text, building on the work of Anishinaabe scholar Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2000), Simpson offers that "Biiskabiyang—the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have left behind, a reemergence, an unfolding from the inside out—is a concept, an individual and collective process of decolonization and resurgence" (2017, 17). That Biiskabiyang is both a concept and a process is significant for Simpson and Coulthard's analysis of Fanon. As a process of reengagement, as "a returning, in the present, to myself," the act of cultural reclamation is revolutionary not only because it cultivates revolutionary consciousness, but because it actualizes ways of being, knowing, and relating. Reflecting on this process, Simpson writes

> It became clear to me that *how* we live, *how* we organize, *how* we engage in the world—the process—not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation. *How* molds and then gives birth to the present. The *how* changes us. *How* is the theoretical intervention. Engaging in deep and reciprocal Indigeneity is a transformative act because it fundamentally changes modes of production of our lives. It changes the relationships that house our bodies and our thinking. It changes how we conceptualize nationhood (2017, 19)

When Coulthard makes the claim that Indigenous resurgence practices are permanent rather than transitional, he embodies Simpson's theory of return. Indigenous practices are not just means to cultivating Indigenous consciousness so that people can fight against colonial authority, the practices themselves demonstrate non-colonial modes of acting and producing in the world.

Returning to the context of the Yugoslav village, the question becomes: how do we discern which modes of production are actualized through different cultural practices? While socially-engaged artists and scholars devote significant attention to the value of the peasant's perspective due to their class position, insufficient critical attention is paid to the larger worldview of the peasant, particularly when it comes to issues of epistemology and ontology. The village is seen as symbolically significant to the constitution of a new, syncretic Yugoslav socialist modernist culture, but peasants' knowledge is not considered revolutionary. While anticolonial critics called out the violence of Western Europe's hegemonic grasp on knowledge production, their critique only extended to recognizing the validity of Yugoslav academic artists' and scholars' knowledge. Peasant and self-taught art is seen as raw material for intellectual production, rather than as a mode of knowledge production. The exchange between the peasant artist and the academic artist pioneered by Zemlja failed to be truly dialectical, because while the academic artist's ideological critique is transmitted to the peasant artist and the peasant artist's aesthetic technique is transmitted to the academic artist, the inverse is not performed.

To raise this critique is not to condemn the collaboration between peasant artists and academic artists as a failure. Giving a platform to peasant and other self-taught artists is a radical act, which was unprecedented at the time and remains very uncommon to this day. Peasant artists like Generalić and his successors and self-taught artists like Vujaklija transformed the material conditions of peasants and workers and transformed the Yugoslav art scene. Their art influenced the work of generations of other artists in Yugoslavia and abroad, and unlike in the case of Western modernist artists' relationship to folklore, these artists were credited and paid for their work. To ask how this project could have gone further is an expression of support and an expectation of rigor.

The material conditions of the village were massively improved throughout the tenure of socialist Yugoslavia. Debts were forgiven, salaries were guaranteed, and housing and social services were provided. If Yugoslavia had not been rotted by ethnonationalism and exploded into war, we do not know how the village would look today. However, looking at demographic trends throughout the socialist modernization process, we see that as urbanization increased, the rural population got older and more predominantly female. Consequently, a disproportionate amount of agricultural labor had to be taken on by elders and by women. As I will discuss in chapter four, this aging and predominantly female population is the same population that continues to be stigmatized for being irrational and superstitious. This group of "superstitious" women and elders are also the people who continue to maintain traditional ecological and environmental knowledge of the region.

Knowing that the world's agrarian populations sit at the apex of the environmental crisis and the question of food security, I am critical of the implications for Hegedušić's dismissal of "peasant mysticism" (1932, 81-82). Hegedušić, Krleža, and Fanon have all discounted "superstition" and magic as reactionary. Hegedušić warned of the destructive effects of peasant art made by those who possess and transmit a magical worldview through their art. Krleža saw one emblem of backwardness as the peasant who "*still* believes in the Evil One, in werewolves, in the church, and in witches" (2003, 189). Fanon sees ritual and magic as a drain of the colonized subject's energy and as a fantasy which placates the people. Belief in non-human beings with supernatural powers means, for Fanon, that the colonized subject no longer feels the need to fight the colonizers, because "mythical structures contain far more terrifying adversaries" (1963, 19). In all of these cases, the supernatural, magic, and superstition are understood as impediments to revolutionary practice. While politically opposite, the drive to purge village culture of its superstitious elements calls to mind Victorian English anthropologist Edward Tylor's theory of survivals, through which he sought to purify European culture from practices such as spiritualism and astrology, which he saw as anti-rational and anti-capitalist behaviors (Wolfe 1999, 146-7, 134). As I will discuss in chapter five, if decolonization "sets out to change the order of the world" and if the peasant is "the truth in their very being," the presence of a Victorian conception of superstition threatens to undermine this radical project (Fanon 1963, 2, 13).

CHAPTER THREE
Nationalism, Genocide, and Folklore:
Framing the Yugoslav Wars

Folklore and nationalism have had an intimate relationship across the twentieth century. From Nazi Germany to the Yugoslav Wars, politicians have mobilized folklore from the right in order to authenticate claims to power and legitimize violence. Socialist and nationalist anti-colonial movements from the left have also instrumentalized folklore as a way to build support amongst working people and promote more collectivist values. Socialist Yugoslavia saw the full spectrum of these uses of the "folk." While nationalism was explicitly condemned by the state, Serbian nationalists continued to promote their agenda in less overt ways. From the 1970s to the 1980s, however, Serbian nationalism ballooned amongst state officials in Serbia, who took advantage of financial turmoil to scapegoat first Albanians, and later Bosnian Muslims, as threats to Serbian national integrity.

While folklore has been justifiably critiqued for its weaponization by fascists and nationalists, I am suspicious of the ways that folklore has been effectively written off as reactionary as a consequence of its instrumentalization by the right. To concede folklore to fascism or ultra-nationalism is to concede the subversive cultural history of the region's peasants to the right. While folklore has played a significant role in the development of nationalism in the Yugoslav region for the past two hundred years, what is often missing from this discussion is that much of the folklore that became central to the nationalist project was itself invented by folklorists in the nineteenth century. The crown jewel of Serbian nationalist folklore, epic poetry representing the "Myth of Kosovo," did not derive from popular oral poems, but rather originated in a single poem from a single guild of singers attached to an Orthodox monastery in northern Serbia. Since its discovery by Vuk Karadžić in the early-nineteenth century, the Myth of Kosovo has been rebranded as an authentic popular tradition amongst the Serbs. This misrepresentation of the oral poetry of the Balkans as nationalist myth obscures the multifaceted *gusle* tradition. By writing off gusle as effectively tainted by the scourge of violent Serbian nationalism, we miss out on the opportunity to encounter the practice as it was understood by its practitioners.

This chapter traces the relationship between Serbian nationalism, the curation of the Kosovo Myth, and the instrumentalization of folklore by (neo-)fascists. I begin by laying out the history of nationalism in socialist Yugoslavia, beginning with its unequivocal condemnation and concluding with its re-eruption during the 1980s financial crisis. I then discuss the idea of "retraditionalization" as it has been applied to Serbian nationalism and the period of the 1990s. The Kosovo Myth is at the core of the retraditionalization project, which reaches its fullest expression in Slobodan Milošević Gazimestan speech in 1989. I describe in detail the outbreak of war before zooming in on the Siege of Sarajevo in 1992. During the siege, Polish filmmaker Pawel Pawlikowski filmed an intimate view of the Bosnian Serb army, which highlights the central significance of folklore to their genocidal project. Radovan Karadžić, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, frequently mirrors the perspectives of past fascist leaders like Hitler and Mussolini in his approach to politics and folklore. Finally, I conclude the chapter with possibilities for counter-research on gusle and Balkan folklore that evade nationalist capture.

The Development of Nationalism in Socialist Yugoslavia

Nationalism has been a driving political force in the Yugoslav region since the mid-nineteenth century. Following the Second World War, socialist Yugoslavia sought to inhibit the nationalist feelings and ideas of the population, as nationalism had been used by fascist occupiers and reactionary forces as a means of inciting violence and hatred. Nationalism was explicitly opposed by Party leaders, most notably by President Tito. In his 1948 speech to the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences, Tito outlined Yugoslavia's anti-nationalist directive: "The role of the Communist Party today lies in the necessity for keeping a sharp lookout to see that national chauvinism does not appear and develop among any of the nationalities. The Communist Party must always endeavor, and does endeavor, to ensure that all the negative phenomena of nationalism disappear and that people are educated in the spirit of internationalism." Nationalism—particularly national egoism and national-chauvinism—was recognized by Tito as a cause of foreign conquest, the subjugation and oppression of other nations, economic exploitation, and colonial enslavement.

Of course, things are more clear in theory than in practice. While it is true that nationalism was explicitly antagonized by the Yugoslav leadership and constitution, it is also true that for some in the country—including people in top leadership roles—ethno-nationalism remained important. Some have attributed the persistence of nationalism in socialist Yugoslavia to the failure to establish a truth and reconciliation process for the population following the Second World War. No official means were provided for the population to work through the trauma of those who suffered from Četnik, Ustaša, German, or Italian violence. These ongoing resentments, mixed with conflicting economic aspirations amongst the republics, meant that nationalism remained present, though muzzled, throughout the history of socialist Yugoslavia.[59]

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[59] It would occasionally bubble to the surface, for example in the anti-Albanian and anti-Muslim policies of Aleksandar Ranković that led to his ousting in 1966, as well as in the so-called Croatian Spring, which lasted from 1967-1971. At the 10th Party Congress in 1974, Tito "repudiated much of the course followed in the preceding two decades, and attacked 'liberalism' and nationalism in the name of Marx and Lenin and proletarian dictatorship." (Magaš 1993, 81).

Yugoslavia faced mounting economic crisis during the 1970s. The 1976 Oil Crisis was followed by shortages of consumer goods beginning in 1979. By 1981, Yugoslavia owed a foreign debt of over $21 billion. The confluence of this economic crisis and the death of the charismatic President Tito in 1980 created massive political instability in the country. Facing a power vacuum at home and the pressure of foreign loan repayments, Yugoslav socialism was redefined in cooperation with the IMF at the expense of workers. The debate over how to proceed in this crisis ultimately became a much larger debate over "what is a socialist economy" and what is "the nature of socialism." On one side stood those in favor of further market integration and acceptance of the IMF terms, and on the other side stood those "in favour of a 'socially agreed' response and greater self-reliance" (Magaš 1993, 99).

Against this backdrop was mounting criticism by Serbian leadership that the move towards decentralization that had begun after the Ranković era "had brought greater autonomy for the other republics within Yugoslavia, while Serbia was increasingly losing control of its own republic" (Pichler et al 2021, 175). Serbian leadership saw the heightened autonomy granted to the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina after 1966 as a threat, particularly in the case of Kosovo, the mythic heartland of the Serbian nation. As the 1970s saw changes to the Kosovo administration, including increased use of Albanian language in schools and in the public sphere, some of the Serbs in Kosovo began to feel threatened (Magaš 1993, 64).

Despite the feeling of some Serbs that Kosovo Albanians were quickly acquiring too many rights and too much autonomy, the historical record demonstrates institutionalized discrimination against Albanians. For example, in the 1980s Albanians comprised only eight percent of Yugoslavia's population, but they made up over seventy-five percent of the country's political prisoners. Shortly following the death of Tito, Albanian students in Prishtina in 1981 protested the relative poverty of Kosovo compared to the rest of Yugoslavia, as well as inadequate educational institutions and discrimination against Albanians in employment. These protests were interpreted by pro-Serb members of Yugoslav party leadership as evidence of bourgeois nationalism, and the protests were violently crushed by police, resulting in eleven deaths, 250 injuries, and 4,200 arrests. Following the protests, Kosovo went on to face escalating levels of repression through the end of Yugoslavia. Repression at this time was also increasing inside of Serbia, exemplified in the "spring of 1984 with the arrest of six Belgrade intellectuals and the mysterious death of a young worker" (Magaš 1993, 77).

Following the protests, some Serbs in Kosovo left, citing pressure from Albanians. News reports were produced about Serb women being raped, "cemeteries demolished and monasteries set on fire" (Stevanović 2004, 29). However, there is no reliable evidence for these claims.[60] Citing these and claims of "the physical, political, legal and cultural genocide against the Serbian people," two hundred of the most notable intellectuals in Belgrade signed in 1986 a draft memorandum to prevent "genocide" of Serbs in Kosovo. The SANU Memorandum made numerous racist, anti-Albanian statements and was drafted by a range of intellectuals in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, including prominent Marxist humanist Mihailo Marković. The memorandum was condemned as bourgeois nationalism by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, including Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić, the soon-to-be executors of genocide and other atrocities on the basis of Serbian ultra-nationalism. However, the condemnation was one of form, not substance, as Milošević, Karadžić and others largely agreed with the contents of the document in private.

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[60] There was only one murder of a Serb by an Albanian in Kosovo between 1987 and 1992, the perpetrator was quickly executed. Despite the attention called to mass rapes of Serbs, there was actually a lower rate of rape in Kosovo than in Serbia (minus Kosovo and Vojvodina). There was emigration of Serbs from Kosovo, but not exclusively or primarily because of intimidation. Mostly due to loss of privileged minority status of Serbs as more Albanians are employed in positions of power, more Albanian language in official use, etc.

Over the next few years, a deep rift emerged between the working class, on the one hand, and the intelligentsia and party leadership on the other. The late 1980s witnessed numerous mobilizations of the working class. In 1987, coalminers in Croatia staged a two-month long strike—the longest strike in Yugoslavia's history. That summer, Serbian and Albanian workers in Kosovo went on strike together to expose the lies of "daily propaganda in the Belgrade press about the supposedly unbridgeable ethnic tensions in the province." Shortly afterwards, a protest in Vevčani, Macedonia erupted against the diversion of villagers' water for the newly constructed houses of Party officials. "The authorities responded by sending in a squad of specially trained riot police: armed with dogs and electric prods, they attacked the inhabitants, including small children in their mothers' arms. Several ended up in hospital" (Magaš 1993, 107). Despite these acts of increasing repression, the intelligentsia failed to recognize themselves as also being threatened by the repression of the working class.

The gap between the party and the working class was increasingly filled by nationalist radical elements. Concurrently with these protests, we witness the rise of Slobodan Milošević and nationalism's grip over Serbian communists. On April 24, 1987, Milošević goes to Kosovo for the first time to meet with Serbs and to hear their "grievances" about Albanians. A speech he gave that day ominously concludes: "Yugoslavia doesn't exist without Kosovo! Yugoslavia would disintegrate without Kosovo! Yugoslavia and Serbia will never give up Kosovo!"

By the end of 1987, Milošević's seizure of power was nearly complete. In September 1987, Milošević's previous mentor, Ivan Stambolić, was fired as leader of the Belgrade Communist Party after speaking out about the threat of Serbian nationalism and the complicity of the media. The media outlets on Milošević's side (the various papers of *Politika*) were hiring disgraced former policemen from the Ranković era to write about instances of Albanian nationalism. "The media were doctoring facts, inciting to revenge, publishing with approval pictures of raised fists and of Serbs arming themselves in Kosovo 'for defence of their homes'" (Magaš 1993, 202). Following the dismissal of Stambolić, anti-Albanian prejudice became the norm in Serbian media:

> "the [Serbian] media referred to the Albanian population less and less frequently as Albanians, and increasingly as 'Šiptars' (Shqiptars), 'the Šiptar people,' 'Arnauts' or 'Arbanasi,' which are all historically derogatory names, and they were qualified as 'animalistic,' 'bestial,' or 'monstrous.' In articles on Kosovo, there was an increased use of phrases such as 'guarding the home fire,' 'centurial hearth,' and 'the cradle of Serbianhood'" (Vučetić 2021, 227)

The media employed evocative metaphors and images, such as the cradle and the hearth, to forge an emotional connection between the ordinary viewer and the Serbian nationalist political agenda. Kosovo Albanians' demands for equity are transformed into a primordial battle over the homeland, which must be defended. Demands for justice are repackaged as aggression, and sold as fodder to the consumer-citizen.

These media tactics were quite successful. In 1988, protests incited by Milošević erupted across Serbia and Macedonia. While having the guise of worker-led strikes, these protests ultimately served to overthrow the existing party leadership and to replace them with pro-Milošević allies. For example, on October 8th factory and steelworkers led the largest demonstration in Montenegro's postwar history. These protests started out decrying labor issues and food shortages, but by the evening the messages became increasingly nationalist and pro-Milošević. The steelworkers' council's terms ended up including not just labor issues, but also the suppression of "counter-revolution" in Kosovo.

As Milošević and his allies sought to revoke Kosovo's autonomy and bring it back under the total control of Serbia, Albanians resisted en masse. Organized resistance began with the miners' strike in the village of Stantërg, near Trepça, Kosovo. Trepça was particularly significant, because of its history as a working-class center and as home to some of the earliest members of the Communist Party, including miners who joined the anti-fascist resistance in the Second World War. The 1989 miners' strike quickly spread from Trepça to Prishtina, "where around 7000 Albanian students staged a protest in support of Vllasi and Albanian leadership, and against the proposed constitutional changes" to revoke Kosovo's autonomy. In response, the Serbian government placed Kosovo in a state of emergency and "used tear gas and automatic weapons to quell demonstrations that now erupted throughout Kosovo. According to official figures, 'only' twenty-four deaths ensued" (Magaš 1993, 161). In defiance of the Albanian people, on 28 March 1989, the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina were largely revoked.

So-called Retraditionalization

In the 1980s and 90s, Serbian nationalists staged a takeover of popular culture. As anthropologist Slobodan Naumović has recognized, "Spontaneous popular forms of political communication were fully exploited in rapidly developing 'organized efforts of the institutions of the system'" (2004, 202). This period in Serbian history has also been defined as a period of "retraditionalization," due to the revival of many traditional rituals and festivals, increased participation in church traditions, and increased circulation of traditional symbols. Folklore, invigorated by Serbian nationalists, became the connective tissue of the political body. While retraditionalization reached a new peak in the 80s and 90s, its history extends back much further.

Naumović identifies the instrumentalization of tradition in service of the nation as a project that extends back much further than the late 80s and 90s:

> we are facing a historical process of long duration, in the course of which from some key sources and through constant re-telling and re-singing, writing down, forgetting, judging, discarding, inventing, re-inventing, and using by various social classes, an entity that we could perhaps designate as the corpus of Serbian tradition has been constituted (2004, 181).

We could also call this the "invention of tradition," which Hobsbawm describes not as the continuation of old practices, but "the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for novel purposes" (2012, 6). These new traditions validate their significance by borrowing from the distant past to give an emotional and often sacred meaning to these new rituals. Rather than originating amongst the people, this invented folklore is primarily produced by elites as an emotional appeal to the masses.

As representatives of tradition and folklore, peasants are instrumentalized by political elites in service of their own goals. The instrumentalization of tradition that took place during the 1980s and 90s united all four components of the Serbian national tradition. While a significant amount of attention has been paid to the historical, religious, and cultural dimensions of this invented tradition, less has been paid to peasants and popular tradition. Peasants and peasant culture have been consistent symbols in Serbian politics since at least the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century. Karl Kaser and Joel Halpern have identified the Serbian peasantry as "the mediator in the process of the usage of the historical myth to enact political folklore in contemporary Serbian society" (1998, 106). Slobodan Naumović (2004) offers five reasons why the symbolism of the peasant is so significant for Serbian politics. These reasons include Serbia's predominantly agrarian population through the middle of the twentieth century, the centrality of the peasant to the national economy, the peasantry having "never been politically rewarded for their efforts and accomplishments," and a heroic peasant symbology—a convenient way to pacify and control the rural majority.

Dobrica Ćosić, poet and former president of the new Yugoslav Republic—who supported both Milošević and Karadžić—analyzed the significance of the peasant to his own political consciousness:

> Deep down in my soul it came to a big split: The truth belonged to the village and the peasants, the untruth to the town and its inhabitants... To be more precise: I became a communist because of the rural poverty and because the poverty of the peasant women ... There was no female martyr which was like a peasant woman. There was no social humiliation, which was like the humiliation of the peasant women: emotional and related to work and nature. It was because of these female martyrs that I joined the revolution, about which I thought it would have changed their lives. Thus it was not the working class and the expropriation that inflamed me for the movement. (Cited in Kaser and Halpern 1998, 105)

For Ćosić the emotional impact of the suffering peasant woman was enough to galvanize his political awareness. Importantly, as Ćosić himself points out, his resultant politics valorized the peasant without seeking an end to expropriation. The peasant woman is an idea worth fighting for, not a person in need of material change.

The instrumentalization of the peasantry has historical precedent in Serbia. During the Second World War, all of Yugoslavia was annexed by the Axis Powers. Leader of the Nazi collaborationist government of Serbia, Milan Nedić turned to the village as "social foothold and guardian of 'national' and 'racial authenticity'" (Ristović 2008, 182). Nedić saw the village as what Milan Risotvić dubs the "rural anti-utopia": a "nationalist, ultraconservative romantic image of the patriarchal village," which was intimately related "to the tendencies toward 'racial' and 'spiritual restoration'" (2008, 183). Unable to find sympathy in urban elites and intellectuals, Nedić maligned cities as the source of all evil and corruption, both socially and racially. He contrasted the piety of the countryside against "urban perverted materialism, communism and negation of God" (Ristović 2008, 183). Nedić attended to folklore only to find examples that would support his fascist interpretation of a patriarchal "traditional" village.

As throughout most of Europe, peasants were incredibly symbolically significant to both fascist Italy and Germany. On various occasions Hitler referred to peasants as the "'cornerstone of the whole nation' who had preserved the primary culture, namely, a loyal racial folklore at its very best." In 1933 he affirmed the centrality of folklore to his political vision: "The question concerning the preservation of our folkdom can only be answered if we have found a solution to the question of how to preserve the peasantry [...] We know from history that our *Volk* can exist without cities, yet it is impossible that it could survive without the peasant." Separately he stated "The Third Reich will be a peasant Reich, or it will not be at all" (Kamenetsky 1972, 228). Despite Hitler's valorization of the peasant, nothing was done to improve the situation of the peasants. Peasant schools were built, but they focused more on folklore than practical skills. Ironically these folklore schools were built at the same time that the Reich complained of low peasant productivity as a result of low technical skill level. The truth is that by the time Hitler came to power, peasants were no longer needed as sources of political support, because they no longer constituted the majority of the population. Consequently, the peasant was much more significant ideologically than materially to fascists.

To craft a folk subject amenable to fascism, folklorists edited folktales in accordance with the regime's values and made them into evidence for racist ideology. Folklore was the primary science of fascism, in both Italy and Germany. Folklorists in Nazi Germany were responsible for building "the new 'folk Reich'" (Kamenetsky 1972, 221). For both Italian and German fascists, folklore was seen as a quest for unity. In pursuit of unity, fascists sought to put folklore through a process of purification: "Strobel thought that it was the folklorist's first responsibility 'to weed out' all alien elements that had crept into the Nordic-Germanic myths, customs, and rituals, and to select and propagate that folklore which was as purely as possible related to 'the ancestors'" (Kamenetsky 1972, 226). Folklorists applied eugenic ideas to folklore, seeking to transform them into fascist narratives of white racial superiority. This was recognized as the function of folklore at the time, with folklore publications listed "under the same category as those concerned with racial theory, demography, and 'the science of defense'" (Kamenetsky 1972, 230).

Gazimestan and the Myth of Kosovo

Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić's nationalist mobilization of folklore in service of genocide fits within the larger trajectory of both national and fascist folklores. Milošević's grand vision of Serbian nationalism and neo-fascism came into clear view on June 28, 1989. On the 600 year anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Milošević gave a much-mythologized speech—known as the Gazimestan speech—which reinvigorated the Kosovo Myth as the basis for extreme Serb nationalism. The Kosovo Myth has been at the center of Serbian nationalism since the early nineteenth-century, though its history goes back to the fourteenth century. The event referenced by the myth is a battle that took place on Vidovdan (St. Vitus' Day) in 1389 in which it is remembered that the Serbian Prince Lazar was defeated in battle by the Ottomans, who then became the rulers of Serbian lands for centuries. This history has been interpreted in literary tradition as well as in oral poetry in two primary ways. In the first interpretation, the prince's brother-in-law, Vuk Branković, committed treason by abandoning Lazar on the battlefield. In the second interpretation, Lazar makes a conscious choice to accept death and to choose the kingdom of heaven instead of the kingdom of earth. He and his soldiers, despite being hugely outnumbered, chose to die as “heroes” rather than be subjected to Ottoman rule. This latter interpretation is often understood as Lazar and his army having fought for a place for the Serbs in the heavenly kingdom (Pavlović 2009, 84).

The historical accuracy of the myth is not without scholarly debate. We know for a fact that both Prince Lazar and the Ottoman Sultan Murad I were killed. However, the Battle of Kosovo was not as definitive event in the Ottoman rule of the Balkans as iterations of myth imply. Historians argue that “the battle had less fatal consequences for Serbian history.” Prior to the Battle of Kosovo, the Battle of the Maritza in 1371 had already confirmed Ottoman control of the Balkans. Following both wars, Serbia remained a vassal state until being finally conquered by the Ottomans in 1459 (Pavlović 2009, 84n3).

The Kosovo Myth transformed a historical defeat into a modern crusade: “martyrdom and became a symbol of Christian resistance to Moslem Turkish oppression and the salvation of a people” (Kaser and Halpern 1998, 101). Revising the oral tradition in accordance with nationalist-racist ideas about Europe and Islam, Milošević frames the significance of the Battle of Kosovo for a Christian Europe:

> “Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself in the field of Kosovo, but it also defended Europe. Serbia was at that time the bastion that defended the European culture, religion, and European society in general. Therefore today it appears not only unjust but even unhistorical and completely absurd to talk about Serbia's belonging to Europe. Serbia has been a part of Europe incessantly, now just as much as it was in the past, of course, in its own way, but in a way that in the historical sense never deprived it of dignity.”

After justifying the significance of Serbia for Europe, Milošević frames the present historical moment as part of this ongoing battle for Europe: “Six centuries later, we are now once again being engaged in battles, and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot yet be ruled out” (Slobodan Milošević’s St. Vitus Day Speech, 28 June 1989). In this statement, Milošević brings the myth into the present political reality, alluding to the violence that was coming: “In his speech Milosevic left little doubt that he saws himself as a kind of secular Messiah who will preserve the holy Serbian land for its people in that year and in that place. The land was lost 600 years before because of discord and betrayal. He remarked that Serbia's socialist leaders had betrayed their people” (Kaser and Halpern 1998, 92).

By activating the Kosovo Myth through the performance at Kosovo Polje in 1989, Slobodan Milošević sought to create a political body that would enact the violence represented in the myth. Milošević’s performance of history is what performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider calls a reconfiguring of bodily knowledge in the present. “In such practices—coded (like the body) primitive, popular, folk, naïve—performance does remain, does leave residue. Indeed, the place of residue is arguably flesh in a network of body-to-body transmission of affect and enactment—evidence, across generations, of impact” (2011, 100). While this theory is often applied to performance or oral tradition as a means of recognizing these as ways of knowing—often in Indigenous and peasant communities—the theory unfortunately also applies to instances of political performance, such as the Gazimestan speech. The appeal to the folk through the invocation of the Kosovo Myth carries with it “folk’s emphasis on corporeality as a knowledge resource” (Giersdorf 2013, 27). The performance of folklore—whether through singing, dancing, or listening—has a corporeal effect.

The widespread salience of the myth was demonstrated during Milošević’s Gazimestan speech, when one and a half million Serbs attended from the diaspora. The scale of the event was enormous. A thousand accredited journalists, six thousand buses, and forty thousand cars were present. On the eve of the anniversary, there was not a single sphere of culture that did not resound with the Kosovo Myth. The Belgrade National Theatre produced the play *Knez*

Lazar (Prince Lazar), the opera *Kosovska vrlet* (The Kosovo Crag) and the ballet *Kosovka devojka* (The Kosovo Maiden), while the Yugoslav Drama Theatre gave performances of *Kosovski boj* (The Battle of Kosovo) by Ljubomir Simović" (Vučetić 2021). The folk song "Vidovdan" (1989) skyrocketed in popularity and became known as the "second Serbian anthem." Despite presenting itself as a folk song, however, Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church was the one who commissioned this and nine other songs for the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo.

The Kosovo Myth was, and continues to be, taken as one of the most fundamental components of the Serbian identity. However, sparing scholarly attention has been paid to the origin of this invented tradition. Throughout the 1980s and 90s Serbian nationalists used the oral tradition as a mask for the fact that written versions of the Kosovo Myth—not those circulated orally—form the basis for Serbian nationalist mythology. The first written collection of Kosovo Battle epic poetry was published in the early 18th century under the title "Stories About the Battle of Kosovo." This collection became very popular, however, it was not until Vuk Karadžić began collecting oral poetry in the early-nineteenth century that the myth gained its esteemed status. Scholars Pavlović and Atanasovski argue that Karadžić spearheaded transforming the Kosovo Battle epic song into an invented tradition. The authors support their claim by demonstrating that Karadžić afforded a much larger focus on Kosovo myth in his oeuvre than the actual proportion on the ground. "Responding in 1833 to a comment about his exclusiveness in publishing the songs, he explained his views: 'I believe it to be foolish not to choose, if one can, [and I believe] that our folk songs would not get such praise and glory if I had published them all, and without any order'" (Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 363).

Folklorists of the past were selective in only choosing to preserve and transmit folklore that demonstrated desirable national virtues. Ethnologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin argues that one way to disrupt this nationalist instrumentalization of folklore is to stage "a historical confrontation of those values with the actual living conditions and everyday procedures." This confrontation between the idealized practice and real people, Rihtman-Auguštin argues, "would not only demonstrate the common discrepancy, but also offer more trustworthy information on folk life, we might even say on folk ethics" (1989, 17). For example, Rihtman-Auguštin draws our attention to contradictions in the creation of national folklore, which often depicts peasants dressed not in their work clothes, but in elaborate urban dress. For example, the frontispiece of Vuk Karadžić's *Little Slavo-Serbian Song Book of the Common People*, features two people in urban bourgeois dress, not peasant attire (Fig. 4.1).

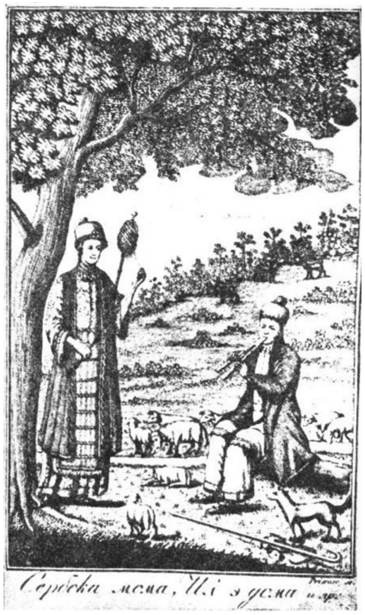
Сербска мома, Ш.і у сена и пр.

Figure 4.1: The frontispiece of Vuk Karadžić's *Little Slavo-Serbian Song Book of the Common People* (*Mala prostonarodna slaveno-serbska pjesnarica*), published in 1814.

Rihtman-Auguštin builds on the work of previous authors who have exposed the hidden criteria that undergirds Karadžić's collection of oral poetry. Karadžić frequently edited poems to fit into the "existing model of folk songs at the time" (Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 358). Auguštin-

Rihtman does not take issue with Vuk Karadžić's selections or stylizations of folk songs. Rather, the problem is that the criteria according to which he evaluates songs are not made explicit: "Karadžić's criteria were not only literary and aesthetic but also openly national and political" (Rihtman-Auguštin 1989, 18). By focusing almost exclusively on the first two, the national and political work of the folklore and the folklorist is obscured. Without a rigorous analysis of the political content of folklore, it is extremely difficult to judge which invocations of the folk can be historically supported. At the time of Rihtman-Auguštin's article's publication in 1989, this type of analysis was needed more than ever: "Vuk's patterns containing ideology of the 19th century folk culture are today revived anew in the framework of the nationalist movement in Serbia" (Rihtman-Auguštin 1989, 92).

Karadžić was invested in developing nationalist mythology in the early-nineteenth century as a way to support independence from Ottoman rule and as a means of uniting Serbs in their new "modern" nation. He was not interested in local events or newer heroes, just old ones that he deemed to possess national character. In their archaeology of the myth, Pavlović and Atanasovski trace the Kosovo epic not back to a mass peasant tradition, but to the region of Fruška Gora, which contains a large number of Orthodox monasteries. It is in this region where the Lazar cult was maintained, and blind singers were trained to sing about the Battle of Kosovo on the day of Lazar's death.

> In oral poetry, however, it is found in only one epic song, collected from a blind woman who was a professional epic singer and lived near the center of Lazar's cult. More particularly, the song was documented among other Kosovo songs on a narrow territory increasingly influenced by the written Kosovo tradition, in which the Serbian Orthodox church and the local community supported a particular form of the oral epic tradition, and among singers who were often associated with the church and depended on it. In other words, this motif was certainly not a constituent portion of the epic tradition as a whole but a historically conditioned response of a narrow circle of blind singers. (Pavlović 2009, 95)

Similar to other folklorists of the time, Karadžić positioned himself as getting the poetry directly from the people, but he did not meet his own requirements. Rather than actively circulating through performances in villages, the Kosovo myth had been interpreted and kept alive by the Serbian Orthodox church, both through writing and through the Irig School of blind singers near Fruška Gora in northern Serbia: “Not only was it apparently not so popular ‘on the high mountains and in the small villages,’ but it had been sung by a professional guild of blind singers located around Fruška Gora” known as the Irig School (Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 367).

The Kosovo Myth became incredibly popular not just because Serbs resonated with it and transmitted the story, but because it was an incredibly politically useful myth. The myth was used to compel peasants to fight in wars and to justify territorial expansion during the nineteenth century. Owing to its conflation of anti-Ottoman and anti-Muslim sentiment, by the time of the Balkan wars, the myth had acquired “racial overtones” (Magaš 1993, 195). The myth conflated the Ottoman Turks with the Albanian population of Kosovo, demonizing them as foreign invaders. This mythology then connected with Islamophobic ideas about Bosnian Muslims being “traitors” as Slavs who converted to Islam.

The Break

The massive takeover of the Serbian government by Serbian nationalists was not uncontested. In March 1991, massive demonstrations took place against the hardline regime in Serbia. These demonstrators were then swiftly “met with the full array of instruments of riot control: water cannon, tear gas, mounted police, dogs, rubber bullets and finally live ammunition. By the end of the day, two people had been killed and Army tanks made their appearance on Belgrade’s streets. The following day, tens of thousands of young people demonstrated in Serbia's key towns, leading to a four-day occupation of the main square in Belgrade" (Magaš 1993, 281). Then, "In April 1991, 700,000 Serbian workers struck for two days — and promised to do so again. Tens of thousands of workers in other parts of the country have been striking on and off during the past few months. More than half of the Yugoslav workforce does not receive wages with any regularity, while the other half lives on or below the minimum guaranteed wage" (Magas 1993, 289). At this decisive time, the state used swift force and quickly met demands in order to preserve Serb unity.

In the fall of 1990, Milošević became a mentor to Radovan Karadžić. While trained as a psychiatrist, Radovan Karadžić had also grown up with an interest in folklore. As a young adult in the 1970s, Karadžić became interested in synthesizing group psychology and Serbian folk politics. He pursued this research in 1974-5 at Columbia University, having won a fellowship to "study psychological interpretations of American poetry," Which Robert Donia has interpreted as "another manifestation of his quest to synthesize psychology and folk motifs" (2015, 106). Donia goes on to argue that this configuration of psychology and folklore is what undergirded Karadžić's entire genocidal project in Bosnia.

While in 1990 Karadžić did not seem to have his genocidal vision of Bosniak extermination formulated, as he claimed then that "Bosnia is not brimming with Islamic fundamentalists," by May 1991 he "regularly labeled Izetbegović an Islamic fundamentalist and described him as a crafty politician quietly playing the Islamic card to gain support from the Arab world" (Donia 2015, 241). In 1991 War preparations were being made in Bosnia, helmed by Karadžić with the (sometimes implicit) permission of Milošević. Milošević and Karadžić had related, but separate, aims. While Karadžić wanted to create a "Greater Serbia" by incorporating Serb populated areas of neighboring republics, most notably Bosnia, Milošević sought Serbia's concentration of power in the hands of ethnic Serbs. Karadžić began systematically replacing the cadres of the Yugoslav armies with loyal Serbs and stationing them around the country as it began to break down. He also facilitated the formation and arming of paramilitary groups within Bosnia. As an elected official, he provoked and facilitated violence against Muslims in Sarajevo, and soon, the rest of Bosnia. Karadžić was able to manufacture support from Bosnian Serbs thanks to propaganda spread throughout the region "where Serb nationalist popularizers and journalists sensationalized a few interethnic incidents in Kosovo to portray that land as filled with dangers for Serbs." Repurposing the Kosovo struggle for Bosnia, propaganda promoted demographic panic as Serbs felt marginalized by the growth of the Bosniak population, compared to both Serbs and Croats.

Bosnia first voted to leave Yugoslavia on October 15, 1991. This decision was boycotted by the Serb Democratic Party, who left the multi-ethnic Bosnian parliament to found the Assembly of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina on October 24, 1991. "We ourselves are more dangerous to us than all our enemies," he declared at the party's founding assembly. "By destroying our own national and cultural identity, we continued the genocide our enemies had exerted against us. For a false peace in the house, we sacrificed our greatest values, abandoned the traditions of folk culture, neglected our ruined Church and ... divided ourselves into reds and blacks, city dwellers and peasants" (Donia 2015, 163). Committing treason, the Serb delegation proceeded to establish what would become known as Republika Srpska. There would continue to be sporadic violence through April 6, 1992, when the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina received international recognition. On this day, Serb forces began shelling Sarajevo and by mid-April the entire country was at war. The Siege of Sarajevo lasted for three years, ten months, three weeks and three days. 5,434 civilians were killed, along with 6,137 members of the Bosnian army. This was the longest siege of a capital city in modern military history. The Siege of Sarajevo was the center of the larger Bosnian War. During the war, around 100,000 people were killed, over two million people were displaced, and between 12,000-50,000 (mostly Bosniak) women were raped, primarily by Bosnian Serbs. Several years later, the Kosovo War broke out as a consequence of the same Serbian nationalist ideology. During this war, 8,676 Kosovar Albanian civilians were killed or went missing. 20,000 Kosovo Albanian women were raped by Serbian forces. Ninety-percent of Kosovo's Albanian population were forced to flee during the war.[61]

Guslars and Snipers

Appeals to folklore served as the backbone of Serbian nationalism during the Yugoslav Wars. During the war, appellations of the Myth of Kosovo could be found in newspapers, on TV, on the radio, and on stage. While each of these media deserves analysis and scrutiny in its own right, I turn my attention now to the content of a short documentary film that was produced during the early days of the war. Rather than an analysis of the film itself, I am interested in the rare close portrait that the film provides of the personal mythology of Radovan Karadžić.

During the Siege of Sarajevo in 1992, Polish filmmaker Pawel Pawlikowski focused his camera on the Army of Republika Srpska as they bombarded the city from the surrounding hills. In his documentary film *Serbian Epics* (1992), Pawlikowski reveals the self-fashioning of war criminal and leader of the Bosnian Serb military Radovan Karadžić and its basis in appeals to the "folk." Recounting the original impetus of the film, Pawlikowski recalls being told about Serbian gusle players—or guslars—who were singing about the Battle of Kosovo in Sarajevo. The gusle is a traditional one-stringed instrument that is played to accompany epic poetry. Pawlikowski recalls that when he went to Sarajevo,

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[61] Yugoslav War casualty statistics have been corroborated by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia report prepared for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tabeau 2009), as well as other contributions to the ICTY archive (Ball, Tabeau, and Verwimp 2007). For Kosovo casualties see the Cooperative Report by the Central and East European Law Initiative of the American Bar Association and the Science and Human Rights Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science on "Political Killings in Kosova/Kosovo, March-June 1999" (2000). For further discussion of death estimates and methodology see Tabeau and Bijak 2005 and Tabeau and Zwierzchowski 2013.

> there were these gusle players who were retelling the battle of Kosovo over again against the Turks. A lot of the songs were about fighting the Ottomans and being in the hills and looking down on the cities where the Ottomans and their clients – in other words, converted Serbs, or Slavs converted to Islam – were doing their business. (Roberts 2002)

Serbian nationalists deride Albanians and Bosnian Muslims for having taken the side of the Ottoman Empire. Regurgitating Christian European narratives about the threat of Islam, nationalists came to think of their former Ottoman oppressor and their Muslim neighbor as one in the same.

Pawlikowski juxtaposes the constant invocation of the folk by Bosnian Serb paramilitaries with the nonchalant violence that they commit against the civilians of Sarajevo. The Bosnian Serbs drew upon the invented tradition of the Battle of Kosovo, as have Četniks, royalists, and nationalists before them, as justification for their political interventions. Performances of epic songs, as well as examples of Serb militarism, run throughout the film. The performance of the Kosovo Myth by the guild of blind singers in Fruška Gora and by a soldier-guslar featured in Pawlikowski's film are both examples of corporeal memory. It is not only a memory of the actual battle, however—it is also a memory of interpretation.

A title card reads "Bosnia 1992." Pawlikowski cuts to a close shot of the barrel of a sniper rifle against an out of focus background. After a few moments, the background comes into focus: the city of Sarajevo sits exposed in the valley below the gunman. A man in fatigues sticks the flag of Republika Srpska into the earth. A soldier is playing the gusla. While playing, he sings:

> Hey gusle, beloved music maker
> You have always accompanied the Serbian tribe
> Ever since the Slavs came to the Balkans
> the gusle has been the Serb's best friend
> Since I took you, gusle, in my hand
> how often have I had to wipe tears from my eyes
> remembering the wounds of my great tribe

The song reinforces the esteemed place of the gusle tradition within Serbian nationalist folklore. The guslar is singing for a small group of soldiers who sit around him in the grass. There is a woman in plain clothes on a horse standing behind him. She is led away on the horse by one of the soldiers, while she laughs flirtatiously. While the guslar's song continues, Pawlikowski cuts to a young boy in fatigues, holding a gun nearly as large as his body. He walks to join the guslar, who is now reaping wheat with a large scythe. Pawlikowski then cuts to three Roma men. We watch them rake and carry straw while three horses walk in a circle, tied to a wooden post. The guslar's song comes to an end: "I call upon you to join the battle of Kosovo / to defend the good name of Serbia / The Turks are waiting on the Field of Blackbirds." Bosnian Serbs aestheticize the Siege of Sarajevo as a poem.

Throughout the film, we see middle-aged men in fatigues playing gusle and singing oral poems about the Battle of Kosovo. These shots are punctuated by shots of a sheep's throat being cut, a soldier untangling a small lamb from a barbed wire fence, plumes of smoke rising above Sarajevo, and people dancing *kolo* to nationalist songs. Folk music and oral poetry provide the momentum for the film. As we watch footage of soldiers ripping civilians out of their cars at gun point, popular folk music blares in the background. Folk music is used as the connective tissue that links Serb nationalists together. Group identity is constructed and maintained through the performance of nationalist folklore, including kolo and gusle.

Later in the film, a second guslar joins the group of soldiers. The men sing together: "Oh beautiful Turkish daughter our monks will soon baptize you." Amidst the singing, Pawlikowski cuts to the slaughtered sheep, which has been skinned and is now rotating on a spit above a fire. The guslars' song continues: "Sarajevo in the valley. The Serbs have encircled you." The music stops and Pawlikowski cuts to Sarajevo in the valley, as smoke billows up from shelled buildings. Later, the epic poem gets a contemporary revision: "Hey, Radovan, You man of steel, the greatest leader since Karadjordje. Defend our freedom and our faith on the shores of Lake Geneva."[62] Linking the historic Battle of Kosovo with Radovan Karadžić demonstrates how folklore inscribes the body with memory—and not just memory, but with a particular interpretation. The inscription is significant for the Bosnian Serb nationalists, because it justifies their actions as heroic through conflating Bosniaks and Ottoman Turks. We are compelled to think that the past has been reanimated and that Prince Lazar wants revenge.

Fascist Aesthetics

In fascism, aesthetics and politics are one. Walter Benjamin critiqued this conflation as ultimately culminating in war. Fascists conceived of war "as potentially regenerative and also expressing the virility of the country" (Falasca-Zamponi 2008, 7). War gave the people a purpose and distracted from the dismantling of the traditional property system. As demonstrated in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, the goal of fascism is both war and the expropriation of the people: "The Third Reich lowered over the entire public sphere an aesthetic, pseudosocialistic veil behind which the capitalist-imperialist laws and interests asserted themselves unchecked: the intensification of work, the driving of the petite bourgeoisie into the proletariat, the profit reaping of armament, the sinking of the general standard of living, which accelerated with the war, etc" (Stollmann 1978, 52).[63] In pursuit of this goal, art and politics become one. "Where free art should be, politics reigns, namely terror, proscription, repression. Where emancipatory politics should be, pseudo-art reigns, namely the illusions of beauty, harmony, sensual joy and sublimity" (Stollmann 1978, 51). In 1914, Mussolini announced "It is blood that moves history's wheel" (33). It is this "belief in the important role of violence as the engine of history" that forms the basis of fascism's aestheticized politics (Stollmann 1978, 29). Largely indebted to Georges Sorel's *Reflexions sur la violence* (1906) and serving as a convenient rationalization of the massive loss of life suffered in the First World War, Mussolini made "sacrifice, blood, and regeneration" into key aesthetic symbols of his political project (Stollmann 1978, 35).

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[62] Karađorđe, also spelled Karadjordje, led the First Serbian Uprising of 1804–1813 against the Ottoman Empire.

The symbology of violence as regeneration enabled fascist leaders to commit mass atrocities, because "the masses" were considered to be "raw material." Without any theory of universal rights, Falasca-Zamponi argues that fascists saw themselves as entitled to "smash the 'masses,' hit them, mold them: there would be no pain, no scream, no protest, for there were no senses involved" (2008, 13). The totalitarian leader, recognized as the "creator," "eliminates the existence of autonomous social spheres" in order to produce a "unitary whole." Because to maintain a whole, you can sacrifice its parts. Hence the extreme reaction against the increased autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina in the socialist republic of Serbia during the 1980s. In fascism there can be no dissent or conflict, because any difference is “denied in the name of a state of harmony that appears to constitute the core of the totalitarian idea of a beautiful society” (Falasca-Zamponi 2008, 13).

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[63] This is also the case in late socialist/postsocialist Serbia. By the late 1980s, labor demonstrations were only continuing to grow and inflation was continuing to rise. However, once Milošević initiated his nationalist agenda, the myths of nationalism became seductive enough to distract from the economic disaster that had come to socialist Yugoslavia.

Pawlikowski is very attuned to the ways that Karadžić and those around him have produced a self-image as artists, poets, or otherwise creative people. In the film, we see Radovan Karadžić try to fashion himself as a poet, as an intellectual, and as an artist. As he is introduced in the film, Pawlikowski provides the title card: “Dr. Radovan Karadjić: Poet and psychiatrist” followed by “Leader of the Bosnian Serbs.”[64] Karadžić takes Pawlikowski to the house of linguist and philologist Vuk Karadžić, whose collections of oral poetry in the early-nineteenth century feature prominently in the history of Serbian nationalism. In the house, he lights a candle in front of an icon of the archangel Michael, and then crosses himself. Speaking in English, Radovan Karadžić introduces himself as being a descendent of Vuk Karadžić. There is no evidence that supports Radovan Karadžić’s claim that he belongs to the same family as Vuk Karadžić. Radovan Karadžić uses this autobiographical claim to validate his authority as a producer of folk media—in this case, oral poetry. Karadžić tells us that archangel Michael is the Karadžić family saint. He then points to his chin saying that he, his son, and Vuk Karadžić, all have the same dimple. No notable similarity is visible to the viewer. Prepared with a gusle in hand, Karadžić then performs a song for the camera demonstrating the continuity between his body and the nationalist folk idiom.

In one of the most disturbing moments of the film, Radovan Karadžić recites a poem to the camera with the burning city of Sarajevo behind him. Looking down at the city under siege—under *his* siege—Karadžić recites a poem about a Sarajevo that burns like incense, which he wrote over twenty years prior. Pawlikowski recounts the scene in an interview as "a completely apocalyptic vision." Pawlikowski explains that he framed the shot and asked Karadžić to recite this particular poem. After reciting the poem, Pawlikowski remembers Karadžić turning to one of his colleagues and saying "Listen! I wrote this twenty years ago. It's very prophetic – it almost scares me" (Roberts 2002, 92). Karadžić does not acknowledge any irony in the situation. Karadžić has used poetry to create a self-fulfilling prophesy of the annihilation of Sarajevo and the Muslims of Yugoslavia.

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[64] The title card includes the typo in Karadžić’s name.

This apocalyptic fantasy is inscribed into the body through singing, listening, and dancing. The film concludes with a very large outdoor gathering of soldiers and civilians. People hold hands dancing kolo together amidst tanks, as grating turbofolk songs celebrate Serbian military strength. One song recalls the 1914 Bulgarian invasion of Serbia and Serbia's 1918 victory. Pawlikowski matches the frenetic rhythm of the music with cuts to the hands of the keyboard player, the dancing feet of soldiers and women, and soldiers' holstered guns. As the song speeds up, so do the edits. This produces an unsettling feeling of excitement in the viewer. In the last moments of the film, we see a group of children playing on a tank followed by archival video footage of a guslar, footage of explosions, and trench warfare. The sequence repeats and speeds up until it ends with a shot of a bombed building's outer wall cleaving away from the remaining ruins.

Retrieving the Folk

Folklore plays a central role in all "imagined communities" (Anderson). For example, by hollowing out the ideological content of the practice, many folkways and folk narratives have been repurposed on behalf of the state and on behalf of nationalism. In John Lent's "Grassroots

Renaissance: The Increasing Importance of Folk Media in Third World Nations," the author demonstrates how state officials co-opted forms of rural knowledge transmission to communicate the ideals of modernity. Looking at contexts in India, Malaysia, Nigeria, and other countries situated as the "Third World," Lent analyzes the two-pronged state approach to folk media. The first avenue pursued by the state is to encode "modern" messages in traditional forms. The second approach to folk media is the re-production of "folk" forms through state media. In each of these *uses* of the "folk," the folk become the constitutive material of the modern state.

Folk performance was understood by modernizing states as both a tool and a material with which to build new "modern" nations out of traditional culture. Lent identifies a surge in states' use of folk media at the beginning of the 1970s, when industrializing states increasingly recognized the failures of the "uni-directional" mass media definitively critiqued by Adorno and Horkheimer. State officials throughout the twentieth century and earlier identified traditional media as potent strategies of knowledge dissemination, because traditional media were seen as having a closer relationship to their target: the masses (Lent 1980, 146). The authority of folk communication can be seen in Franz Fanon's discussion of "Arab telephone," where Fanon argues that "information transmitted over such interpersonal nets was unchallengeable" (Lent 1980, 157). Decolonizing states, socialist states, fascist states, and postsocialist states have all imagined traditional culture as the foundational material with which to build a modern state. In some cases, like in fascism, this raw material includes the bodies of the folk themselves.

In his text *The Body of the People: East German Dance since 1945,* Jens Richard Giersdorf reframes "folk" discourse as a "vehicle for manufacturing community identification," rather than an essential "preservationist or traditional" label (2013, 27). Giersdorf understands folk culture as both linked to a community and related to corporeal archival practices. While recognizing the ways that Nazi Germany used folk culture to promote the fascist state, Giersdorf refuses to engage with folk representation in monolithic terms. Any discussion of the folk is neither always-fascist nor always-socialist, despite both ideologies' heavy signification of the folk (Giersdorf 2013, 29). In GDR, folk culture was used to validate territorial and local cultural claims by signifying an "unspoiled distant German past." This historical folk conjures agrarian and labor connotations (Giersdorf 2013, 30). Following the Soviet model, which argued for the "political capacity of folk dance" to train the socialist body in "discipline, collective spirit, self control, and endurance," folk dance in GDR became a "living archive of socialist values" (Giersdorf 2013, 31-2).

Situating Pawlikowski's film within a longer timeline of folklore's instrumentalization offers an opportunity to contest the capture of the gusle by nationalist militants. If one were to write a history of the gusle or the guslar, the past few decades—as exemplified in *Serbian Epics*—would cast it in a sinister light. But remember: despite forming a large portion of Vuk Karadžić's published selection of epic poem, the Kosovo Myth rarely appeared in gusle tradition at large. While we do not know what the majority of epic poems were about, we have clues. For example, Vuk Karadžić left testimony that some of the singers he encountered knew many more songs about contemporary or local heroes than about medieval heroes. Despite this, he would choose to transcribe only the one or two that dealt with themes that were compatible with his nationalist vision. As demonstrated by Auguštin-Rihtman, Pavlović, and Atanasovski, Vuk Karadžić's ideas about which songs were relevant and interesting have completely shaped the contemporary picture of the tradition.

The gusle has a long, rich, and deep tradition. While it has been instrumentalized by Serbian nationalists, that does not imply that the practice itself should be written off as intrinsically nationalist. Much remains to be learned from the guslars, who were the primary transmitters of historical knowledge up to the turn of the twentieth century. To rescue gusle from nationalist capture, it is valuable to turn to some archives, such as the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature. This collection features Parry's recordings of oral poetry from Yugoslavia in the early 1930s and Albert Lord's collection of recordings from Albania in the late 1930s and Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 60s. The collection includes recordings of over 12,500 individual songs, the majority of which do not deal with the Battle of Kosovo or medieval rulers. The availability of this huge untapped resource presents an opportunity to adapt Ariella Azoulay's "civil contract of photography" for the context of Balkan folklore. Listening to the archive provides an alternative to the fatalism represented by the ethno-nationalist appropriation of the guslar. The 1930s guslar calls out to the listener to contest the practice's—and practitioners'—capture. While archives are often justifiably critiqued for their complicity with erasure and forgetting, in this case the archive also has the potential to redefine the politics of epic poetry in the region.

Post-script

After the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, Radovan Karadžić went into hiding as he was sought by the Hague for crimes against humanity. Unable to stay out of the spotlight for too long, he took on a second identity as a New Age healer in Belgrade beginning around 2006. Known as "Dragan Dabić," Robert Donia has theorized that the occult and New Age scenes in Belgrade provided a venue "to resume his quest of two decades earlier to integrate folk poetry and group psychology [...] Radovan Karadžić, architect of genocide, became "Dragan Dabić," guru and master bioenergy healer" (2015, 756). Karadžić came to offer over fourteen different treatments including "Psycho and quantum-energetic support in health and in illness, ... sexual disorders, fertility disorders, renewal of vitality,... depression, fears, tension, neurosis, psychosis, autism, epilepsy," and "harmonization of people's vital energy, energetic harmonization of the aura" (Donia 2015, 762). Eventually, he began to publish on issues of faith, healing, and meditation, while also continuing to find avenues for his nationalism by promoting that spiritual progress had to come from within one's own culture.

Karadžić was arrested in Belgrade on July 21, 2008. Once extradited to the Netherlands, he was charged with eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On March 24, 2016 he was found guilty of genocide in Srebrenica, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. He is currently serving a life sentence in the UK.

Post-post-script

On March 15, 2019 an Aljazeera news report announced that the rightwing extremist who killed fifty people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand had played a Balkan folk song glorifying Radovan Karadžić in the car before the attack. This was neither the first nor last white nationalist to commit a massacre inspired by Serbian nationalist propaganda. Prior examples include a massacre in Norway in 2011. The relationship between Serbian nationalists and the Western far-right has increasingly come to light in recent years (Kiper 2021). The Kosovo Myth, for example, has become integral to the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, which motivated the killing of ten people in a Black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York on May 14, 2022 by a self-proclaimed white supremacist (Mujanović 2021). Dunja Auguštin-Rihtman's exhortation to analyze the politics underlying any invocation of the folk remains urgent.

CHAPTER FOUR
Can the Peasant Speak?
Problems of Recognition in Postsocialist Art

Following the wars of the 1990s, people in the former Yugoslavia found themselves within an international postsocialist landscape. Entwined with the neoliberal project that instantiated itself in 1973 Chile, the post-transition reality is chiefly characterized by neoliberal capitalism (Gržinić 2011) and a debt economy (Živković 2015). This has included the mass liquidation of public assets during the 1990s and 2000s, the dismantling of social welfare, and the precaritization of work. These macro-level transformations in the economy of Yugoslavia's successor states also manifested in the spheres of art and culture. Dubbed a democratization of culture by Western critics, the individual entrepreneurial artist was seen as an agent of cultural "freedom" in the post-1990s cultural scene (Grlja and Vesić 2007). As "contemporary art" emerges as the epitome of art-making, however, critics also recognize that "contemporary art" is primarily code for Euro-American art-making aesthetics (Vujanović 2012).[65] Euro-American aesthetics are bound up in the inextricable relation between contemporary art and the art market. Now in a position where the art market the one of the only means by which to live as a full-time artist, the aesthetic repertoire of post-Yugoslav artists is becoming increasingly coextensive with the aesthetic repertoire of the art market.[66] Whereas in Yugoslavia, many art-making practices reflected the ideology of self-management, the post-socialist individual artist-as-entrepreneur reflects the newly imposed ideology of neoliberal capitalism.

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[65] While in the U.S. "contemporary art" most frequently refers to visual art (and performance artists' who locate the origins of the form in visual art), in the Balkans "contemporary art" more broadly includes a particular style of visual. art, dance, theatre, and performance art.

[66] Just as in the case with "contemporary art", the "art market" here refers not only to the market for selling visual art, but also to the market that funds theatre, dance, and performance art festivals and companies in the Balkan region. These funds are not being provided by local organizations, but rather by corporations, individuals, NGOs, and philanthropic organizations primarily in the European Union.

While I agree with the postsocialist critique of the art world's exclusion of artists from the "former East," I am also critical of the ways that this interrogation of Western hegemony is still built upon a Eurocentric hierarchy of cultural production. While postsocialist artists and art critics argue for the inclusion of postsocialist and Eastern European artists, they do not include artists and cultural practitioners labeled as "traditional," "folk," and "ethno" in their demands. Ironically, many Balkan artists in the early postsocialist period employed traditional, folk, and "ethno" artists in their work. These folk subjects were chosen consciously by the artists as an intervention into the demands of the Western art market. Critics at the time were only interested in Balkan artists if they could perform the exotic, hence artists found ways to work within that paradigm—either as a means of critique or acquiescence. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the use of the folk in contemporary art too often advocates for the value of contemporary artistic practices at the expense of traditional artists by accepting the definition of "art" set by the Euro-American art market.

By analyzing a series of performance and video-based artworks that involve peasants or their stand-ins, this chapter exposes the deep imbrication of the marginalization of the postsocialist artist and the marginalization of the folk artist/performer. I begin by discussing the dismantling of artists' labor rights in socialist Yugoslavia. After this process became complete with the collapse of socialism, Balkan artists have had to navigate European curators demands for the "exotic" in the postsocialist period. Many of these artworks include the use of a folk performer as a "readymade," in the Surrealist sense. The consequence of turning a live performer into a readymade, however, is that often a useful practice gets turned into a useless one—and usually without any equitable compensation. Artists have frequently outsourced the performance of the "exotic" to folk and traditional performers. While these videos and performance works often fail to realize the allied struggle of the traditional artist and the contemporary artist, they can still offer value as forms of archival knowledge. Increasingly, there are also examples of more equitable collaborations between folk artists and contemporary artists, which take into account material conditions and divergent temporalities.

The “Emancipation” of the Artist

Amidst the financial turmoil of the 1980s, artists’ labor rights in Yugoslavia were eroded under the guise of promoting the “freedom” and “independence” of the art worker (Praznik 2021). However, rather than becoming more free, artists—now without the security of social welfare and collectively negotiated wages—suddenly were forced to figure out how to become ”entrepreneurs of the self” in order to sustain themselves (Foucault 2008, 226). Looking back at this history today, we can recognize this auto-entrepreneur as one of the Four Horsemen of Neoliberalism. Following the brutal wars and collapse of Yugoslav socialism in the 1990s, the rest of the workforce soon found themselves casualized and forced into the same entrepreneurial schema as the artist. Whereas in the 1980s artists could still receive some government funding for their work, in the postsocialist period artists found themselves unable to rely on any state support. Participation in foreign exhibitions and private grants (for which there are few opportunities for those states outside of the European Union) became the only means of self-reproduction.

The participation of postsocialist artists, particularly Balkan postsocialist artists, in the global art market hinged upon their acquiescence to the desiring Western subject. During and after socialism, the art of eastern Europe has been regarded by Western curators as “boring,” “kitsch,” and “old-fashioned” (Kunst 2004; Piotrowski 2012; Čvoro 2015; Ditchev 2016;

Bryzgel 2017, 298-337). Provocatively broad in their claims, Bojana Kunst and Boris Groys' have theorized that the distinction between capitalist and socialist aesthetics can be understood as the opposition of a skeptical critique of representation versus a critical affirmation of the socialist project. In the capitalist West, Kunst argues, the performance event is immediately suspicious of the authority of the artist. In the socialist East, there is faith that the performer's political ideology translates into the immediate material reality. Kunst identifies this "authentic gesture" as the moment of alienation experienced by socialist artists' Western audiences. Performances in actually-existing socialism speak to a world beyond the world of art, while in Western Europe and the Anglosphere, the political questions of the artwork most often center around the work of art itself. The art-for-art's sake ideology underpinning capitalist art production causes the Western spectator to consider the socialist artist as naïve, "banal...and already-seen" (Kunst 2004). To be postmodern, according to Kunst, is to be cynical of the possibility for art to produce politics.

The reaction of boredom or the presumption of kitsch provides affective data on the perceived relationship of politics to art. In the U.S., art often employs political aesthetics, but generally fails to *do* political work beyond the politics of representation. This depoliticization of art has less to do with artists themselves and much more to do with the imperial/state apparatus. To be bored by the premise that one has ideological faith in the capacity of the state to move towards a just world is an obvious example of the immobilizing pessimism that Mark Fisher (2009) dubbed "capitalist realism."

As curators seek to avoid boredom, the only "European" interest in Balkan postsocialist art has manifested in what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls the "savage slot" (1991).[67] In Trouillot's analysis of the postmodernist critique of anthropology, he identifies the savage slot as one of the pillars of Western thought. Building on Edouard Glissant's notion of "the West" as "a project, not a place" (1989, 2), Trouillot traces the idea of the epistemic regime of the West to the Renaissance creation of Europe and its Other. The "savage" only exists insofar as it is the second face of the utopian West—a way to re-affirm the utopia of the West by either pointing to the other as an anti-utopian foe or by identifying the other as a symbol of the internal utopian progress of the West via the logic of universalism. In both cases, anthropologists transform "savagery into sameness by way of utopia as positive or negative reference," while concealing "the construction of otherness upon which anthropology is premised" (Trouillot 1991, 29). The savage slot is nourishment for the myth of the West.

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[67] "European" in the sense that Franz Nopcsa pokes fun at in chapter one.

Providing historical examples of the savage slot, performance artist and theorist Coco Fusco's 1994 essay "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" traces the history of "Performance Art in the West" not to Dadaism, but to the colonial practice of human exhibition. Her first example takes place in 1493 when Columbus took an Arawak man to be put on display in the Spanish Court until his death two years later (146). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has written about these colonial human exhibitions as "rehearsals" of elimination (1998b, 176). The last event that Fusco includes in her timeline of human exhibitions (which she also calls intercultural performance) takes place in 1992, only two years prior to publication.

Fusco argues that the logic of the colonial human exhibition recurs in contemporary "avantgarde" performance art (1994, 150). In these contemporary works, she sees artists analogizing the status of the colonized subject vis-à-vis the colonist with the status of the artist vis-à-vis the critic. This analogy abides by the logic of Trouillot's Janus-faced West wherein "What may be 'liberating' and 'transgressive' identification for Europeans and Euro-Americans is already a symbol of entrapment within an imposed stereotype for Others" (Fusco 1994, 151). This entrapment is what José Esteban Muñoz (2009) has called the "burden of liveness." The burden of liveness compels the minoritarian subject to perform for the elite, as well as those strategically hailed by the elite (182). Often, these performances are produced under duress and/or without consent: "Minoritarian subjects do not always dance because they are happy; sometimes they dance because their feet are being shot at" (Muñoz 2009, 189).

The bullets of the Yugoslav Wars forced the Balkan subject to dance for the West. During the 1990s, anglophone journalists described Balkan people as "strange," "feral," "irrational," and "savage" (Goldsworthy 1998). The causes of the war were attributed non-stop in Western media to "ancient ethnic hatreds." In Simon Winchester's *The Fracture Zone: A Return to the Balkans*, he describes Balkan people as inhuman, writing: "One might say that anyone who inhabited such a place for a long period would probably evolve into something that varied substantially, for good or for ill, from whatever is the human norm" (26). The Balkan subject became interesting to the European curator insofar as they perform the role of the "barbarian."[68]

In the early 2000s a series of international art exhibitions began to re-conceptualize the Balkans as an exotic—thus desirable—cultural space, in accordance with the criteria laid out by Trouillot and Fusco. Three of the most well-known exhibitions include "In Search of Balkania" (2002), "Blood and Honey: The Future's in the Balkans!" (2003), and "In the Gorges of the Balkans: A Report" (2003). Respectively shown in Graz, Vienna, and Kassel, these exhibitions were curated by prominent curators from West and Central Europe. Roger Conover, Eda Cufer, and Peter Weibel, the curators of "In Search of Balkania," describe the mission of their exhibition as lifting "a long overdue ban on the Balkans as a site of intellectual endeavor and cultural desire." The executors of this "ban" are left unnamed, hidden from view. In each of these exhibitions curators sought to transform the Balkans from a site of disgust in relation to the Yugoslav Wars to a site of pleasurable alterity.

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[68] The Balkans have been represented as barbaric and plagued by "ancient hatreds" since the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, avant-garde art group "Zenit" critiqued this regime of representation through their appropriation and invention of "Barbarogenius" (Glisić and Vujanović 2016).

This newfound desire for the Balkans, while offering an important public platform, also restricted the range of accepted artistic expression. The curators of these exhibitions were not so much interested in the art of the Balkans as they were interested in the taboo symbol of the Balkan subject. Vladimir Nikolić's video *Death Anniversary* (2004) takes curators' expectations as a point of departure:

> They (art catalogue text writers, curators, journalists, etc.) always read my work in the geopolitical context of the country I represent. So no matter what my work was about – it was seen only in the light of this Balkan communism- post-communism, war-post-war, anti-modern tradition, weird local habits, and described in terms of cultural, social and political references related to the place I come from. (Nikolić 2007, 1)

These expectations form what Nikolić calls his "geopolitical burden," the "heavy load of your origin" that you are forced to bear if you want to be recognized on the international art scene (2007, 1-2). Through provincialization, Nikolić argues that Balkan and other peripheral or marginalized identities prevent artists from being recognized as artists. Rather, they are understood "as cultural phenomena from a certain part of the world—an exotic and peripheral part at that" (Nikolić 2007, 2).

Nikolić seeks answers to this problem in his performance video *Death Anniversary*, which features a shepherdess from a mountain village in Montenegro singing a dirge over the grave of Marcel Duchamp in Paris, with Nikolić standing as a witness. In his own words, Nikolić describes the piece as a conscious endeavor to intervene in his geopolitical burden of liveness:

"'Death Anniversary' lies somewhere between the western image of contemporary art in The Balkans, and the idea of a readymade from The Balkans as a way climbing onto the international art scene" (2007, 3). Nikolić sets out to make himself and his work into the object of Western curators' desires as an expression of both frustration and reflexive critique.

In preparation for the video, Nikolić spent many months convincing Milica Milošević to leave her village for the first time to participate in his project, as well as many months convincing the European visa regime to provide himself and Milica with passports and visas. In his documentation of the process of creating *Death Anniversary*, Nikolić includes his initial letter to Milica:

> I am writing to you because I would like to engage your services in the ceremony of marking the death anniversary of a great artist who died on 1968 and was buried in Rouan, near Paris in France. His name is Marcel Duchamp, and he is considered to be one of the most prominent and most influential artists of the twentieth century. My idea is to honor him and pay my respect to him, in my role as a Serbian artist, by marking his death anniversary at his grave site in our traditional way, and with your help and participation. You and I would travel to Paris and then to the cemetery in Rouan, and would mark this anniversary with a dirge at his grave site. (2007, 6)

Milica was intrigued by Nikolić's letter, and so they arranged a meeting in her village. At the meeting, Nikolić sought to explain to Milica who Duchamp was and what his significance is to art history. In the case of a traditional dirge, the family of the dead provides some details about the deceased life to the dirge singer. The singer will then spontaneously improvise her dirge at the grave site, singing "about the tragedy of his death, about his heroic life, celebrating his achievements, yet pitying his destiny." In order to abide by the logic of the dirge, Nikolić "had to provide her with information about Duchamp in the way that she could manipulate it in the dirge song" (2007, 8).

Nikolić represents the process of convincing Milica to participate in his artwork as being much easier than the bureaucratic process of trying to obtain passports and visas for Milica and himself. It was nearly impossible for Milica to get a visa to go to France, because she did not meet any normative criteria. She was "unemployed, single, no children, without any kind of property and social security, with a brand new and blank passport" (Nikolić 2007, 10). Travelling anywhere when one has a passport from any of the Balkan countries that are not part of the European Union is a bureaucratic nightmare. For citizens of Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, and Kosovo, visas are needed to virtually every country in West and Central Europe, as well as the United States, Canada, and Australia. These visas are expensive and difficult to acquire, as Nikolić demonstrates when he reveals that in order to get Milica to Paris, he had to find a company willing to produce a "false contract showing that Milica is their employee with an annual salary big enough for the French embassy standards" (2007, 10-11). Eventually through a stroke of luck, Nikolić acquires visas for he and Milica to go to Paris. However, due to the scarcity of arts funding, Nikolić only managed to secure enough to "buy the tickets, pay the visas, stay 3 days in France paying hotel only for Milica, eating the street food and paying Milica for her job" – the artist and the videographer couch surfed (2007, 19, n4).

Arriving in France, Nikolić notes Milica's mounting confusion over his art project. Nikolić writes that "it was hard for her to understand who Marcel Duchamp is and why I am commemorating the death anniversary of a person who is not my relative or a friend. Those were not known parameters in her system. I asked her to use her tool and knowledge in a way that she had never used it before" (2007, 14). On the day of filming once they arrived at Duchamp's grave, Nikolić recalls noticing

> ...something was wrong with Milica. She was not in the right mood. This was the moment when she finally realized that no one was there except the two of us and Dani, who was documenting the performance. Of course, she expected the local ‘village’ to show up. She always performs in front of the community. In Montenegro, funerals and commemorations are highly rated social events. It was clear that all the time she thought someone was waiting for us at our final destination. She found disappointment...

After conducting a soundcheck, during which Milica had sung a lament. After the soundcheck, Nikolić was dismayed to realize that Milica had considered *that* to be the official lament. Because the lament is a spontaneous creation, it could not be repeated: “Milica refused to repeat it. She said that was it. No more. She was done...” (2007, 22).

After a few cigarettes and discussion, Nikolić managed to convince Milica to perform a new lament for Duchamp, which would be recorded and presented as a work of art. In her lament, she sings

> Evil fate is at its harshest
> When it takes away the dearest,
> Like a dragon, it rides out
> Gulping victims down its mouth,
> Among them you are found,
> And the sun is darkened by the clouds,
> For your deeds it lacks regard,
> So the art alone remained
> Thick darkness grabbed your fame,
> Desperate in its murky gloom,
> As an adornment took your name
> for the mortals final tomb.

Milica’s lament included two references to art, as Nikolić requested. Nikolić does not comment on Milica’s own reaction to her performance, or her interpretation of Nikolić’s artwork. What becomes evident in his retelling of the filming is that Milica’s practice as a traditional lament singer is nearly incompatible with Nikolić’s contemporary art practice. Exposing this incompatibility, however, is the not the primary intention of the artwork.

For *Death Anniversary*, Nikolić intended to effect several reversals. He sought to reverse the "perspective between ethno and international" and to reverse ethno art and contemporary art ("ethno art, miss-presented as contemporary art") (2007, 7). He also saw the performance as an example of "subversion" by "taking a true Balkan artist (Milica) to the wrong place – to the ultimate point of art universality" (2007, 24). In this case Nikolić is the international artist, while Milica is the true Balkan/provincial artist. Nikolić brings her as a readymade to the site of the grave of the author of the universal readymade: Marcel Duchamp.

The readymade assumes central significance for Nikolić's intervention into the marginalization of Balkan contemporary artists. In his book *The Intangibilities of Form*, historian John Roberts analyzes the readymade as an effort to dissolve "the division between intellectual labour and manual labour," which would then serve "as the basis for the future dissolution of art into social praxis" (2007, 2). Instantiated by Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, first presented in 1917, the readymade was a landscape-altering event in early-twentieth century artistic production in Europe. Walter Benjamin saw the readymade as "constitutive of the interrelationship between art and technology" (Roberts 2007, 23). Roberts sees the readymade as a fundamentally progressive art practice, because he sees the readymade as exposing commodity logic. The "metamorphic function" of the commodity, Roberts argues, is "made transparent by the act of artistic transmutation which occurs" (2007, 33).

The readymade powerfully exposes the means by which objects acquire their unique "auras," in the sense of Benjamin. The urinal of Duchamp becomes a priceless object just by being signed and re-presented in a museum space. The absurdity of an inexpensive urinal being transformed into a priceless commodity, without any manual labor on the part of the artist, is laid bare in this case. What is particularly radical about readymades for Roberts is that they make productive labor visible, which the paradigm of artistic labor usually conceals. Traditionally, while the alienated commodities of wood, paint, etc are transformed into the novel commodity of the work of art, the aura of the artwork obscures its origins. The readymade makes it impossible to ignore that the original alienated commodity (the urinal) has now been transformed into the new commodity of the work of art (*The Fountain*).

In his analysis, Roberts assumes that the readymade is a non-living, non-human object. *Death Anniversary*, however, features a living folk singer. For Nikolić, Milica is primarily a symbol, despite the time that they spend together. She is a readymade in the eyes of the Western ethnographer—recalling both colonial exhibitions and the photographs of Arthur Haberlandt and Edmund Schneeweis—but is she a readymade in the eyes of Nikolić? Nikolić situates *Death Anniversary* as "somewhere between the western image of contemporary art in The Balkans, and the idea of a readymade from The Balkans as a way of climbing onto the international art scene." Nikolić identifies Milica as the symbol that the European curator is searching for amongst the contemporary Balkan artists, but the significance of her status as an artist or cultural producer is left out of focus.

Contemporary Art is Useless

The object of a significant critique of artistic labor in 2011, Marina Abramović's gala event "An Artist's Life Manifesto" at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) exposes the epistemic risks involved in presenting a live folk performer as a readymade. The MOCA gala gained notoriety in November 2011 when two letters were leaked the day prior to the event: the first, a complaint from an auditioning performer, Sara Wookey (2019), sent to Yvonne Rainer; the second, Rainer's subsequent complaint letter to MOCA's then-director Jeffrey Deitch (Rainer

2019). These letters complained that Abramović was underpaying and exploiting performance artists and dancers to serve as human centerpieces for the wealthy patrons of the gala. While this critique of Abramović and MOCA's labor politics sheds valuable light on the artist's place in the precariat class, it misses an opportunity to articulate this social critique with a critique of Abramović's aesthetic decisions.

When Rainer critiques the endurance requirements for the evening and Abramović's choice to have some of the performers be nude, she fails to name these as typical requirements of performance art. While some of the participant dancers may not be accustomed to that way of working, most performance artists would not be surprised by the requirement of nudity nor endurance-based tasks. Rather than focusing on the lack of equivalence between two art-making modalities, I want to examine how Abramović utilizes different types of performers in the gala event. Whereas in the case of the human centerpieces Abramović gives a human face to useless decoration, when later that evening the artist presents Svetlana Spajić, a traditional Serbian singer, Abramović transforms a use*ful* traditional performance practice into a use*less* piece of contemporary art. This latter transformation also follows a Surrealist genealogy of de-contextualizing and aestheticizing ethnographic objects, a process which alienates producers from their labor.

The effect of contemporary art—as the outgrowth of the early-twentieth century avant-garde, surrealism, and conceptual art—is the illusion of temporary relief from alienation. Here, I refer to a Marxist conception of alienation as the objectification of labor power and the subsequent divorce of laborers from the products of their labor. To achieve the illusion of overcoming alienation, artists mark themselves and their practices as either outside of the market altogether or at least in excess of the market. Artists present this marginal relation to the market as that "unique" quality of art that allows for the audience to experience transcendence. The actions of painting, singing, dancing, carving, and photographing transform from a diverse set of material actions into portals of transcendence once the artist or the curator re-contextualizes them as art.

Another way to read this transformation is as the elimination of "use." By aestheticizing ordinary objects and activities contemporary artists eliminate the "use" of those objects and practices. The classical example of this phenomenon is the aforementioned readymade, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917). Through the signature "R. Mutt" and the title of "Fountain," Duchamp transforms a useful commodity, the urinal, into a useless piece of art. This semiotic maneuver is the qualification for what Susan Sontag calls the reactionary politics of Surrealism. Whereas Roberts saw the ready-made's potential in its exposure of the "secret" of the commodity, Sontag sees Surrealists as reactionary, because they refuse to engage in the act of political imagination, instead choosing to amplify and reproduce the alienation of the current political reality (1977, 75-82).

Abramović, of course, is not a Surrealist, but rather a performance artist who emerged out of Belgrade's New Art Practice (*Nova umetnička praksa*) scene during the 1970s. Similarly to the Surrealists, alienation became a significant problematic for Yugoslav artists working in student cultural centers across the country.[69] A key figure in this discourse is Goran Djordjević, who in 1979 proposed an International Artists Strike to protest the growing alienation of conceptual artists from "the results of [their] practice" citing specifically the negative influence of art institutions. While this strike ultimately failed, Djordjević's critique of art and alienation in the late 1970s provides a vocabulary with which to assess the relation of contemporary art to neoliberal speculation. Rather than an affliction to overcome, art historian Sotirios Bahtsetzis proposes in his essay "Eikonomia" that art as freedom from alienation serves a critical function for both the capitalist economy and the genre of the "contemporary." Drawing on Peter Osborne's "Imaginary Radicalisms," Bahtsetzis argues that by producing the illusion of autonomy, artists conceal "not only the exchange value of the product, but, most significantly, the generic fetish character of commodities or capital in general." By concealing the standard process through which human labor power is bought and sold, artists produce what Bahtsetzis coins the "intensified fetish." This intensified fetish is of great value to neoliberal capitalism. First, because the work of art becomes an extremely flexible and speculative site of illiquid investment. The second reason brings us back to Surrealism. The Surrealist artist takes a commodity (already a fetish that has concealed the relationship between use-value and exchange-value, such as a toilet) and transforms that commodity into an "intensified fetish" or an aesthetic art object. As the artist marks the urinal as a piece of autonomous art, the alienated urinal conceals not only the art object's status as a commodity fetish, but also conceals the human labor that preceded the transformation of the toilet's use value into the toilet's exchange value as a utilitarian commodity. This doubled covering over of use-value powerfully channels "art as critique" in service of the capitalist project.

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[69] Student cultural centers were the key sites of New Art Practice in Yugoslavia. For more, see Marko Ilić (2021).

One can see the power of this illusion in Abramović's use of performers as human centerpieces. Despite the financial function of the event being explicit—the goal of the gala is to raise money for the museum—individual performers' experience of power-reversal through the practice of gazing made the experience valuable for the performers. Both Abramović's stated goals for the gala performance and the comments of some of the participating performers reveal their assumption that art is autonomous and that this autonomy enables the temporary transcendence of alienation. In her initial response to Rainer's letter, Abramović writes that the objective of the gala was to "bring...dignity, serenity, and concentration" to the event through the practice of stillness and performers' use of the gaze. Responding to Rainer's critique, one participating performer wrote that they felt the performance was a "gift" and another wrote that the event was a "rare and beautiful moment" when "the power dynamics that have existed for hundreds of years between artists and the wealthy had been reversed" (Finkel 2011; Hill 2011; cited in Levine 2013). Abramović's statement and the responses of some of her performers bely the assumption that art operates as an autonomous zone of critique. In this autonomous zone, the individual can transcend her or his material conditions of being paid a nominal fee to kneel on a lazy Susan for a three-hour gala dinner to reveal a more authentic reality to themselves and their audiences. Rather than an actual disturbance to the power relations between elite donors and artists, this assertion that the performance allowed or invited the exchange of power is a powerful instance of neoliberal speculation. By making the performance valuable to the performers, who were not themselves valued above a wage of $150 for fifteen working hours, Abramović and MOCA demonstrate the critical function of art in producing willing, alienated laborers.

In the gala performance, the human centerpieces are useless. They serve no function except to decorate the tables, which Rainer correctly observed. Whereas commodities are supposed to progress from use value to exchange value, in the example of the human centerpieces we are stuck with a doubled lack of use. The original human activity that Abramović aestheticizes is the useless decoration of tables with centerpieces. By aestheticizing useless centerpieces as human persons, Abramović successfully exposes the human cost of decoration. However, the promise of this potential act of de-alienation never materializes. The social critique launched by Wookey and Rainer was apt: Abramović purchased the laboring power of the eighty performers for $150 each to generate an exponential volume of capital from elite attendees. While Abramović shows us the human labor of useless decoration, she does not move her critique towards challenging the useless status of contemporary art nor the utility of contemporary art for the elite who were present at the event.

Whereas in the case of the centerpieces Abramović highlights the human cost of useless luxury objects and the uselessness of performance art, in the case of Svetlana Spajić, a traditional Serbian singer, Abramović converts a *useful* practice into a useless one. During our interviews, Spajić has distinguished her practice as a traditional singer from the practice of contemporary artists like Marina Abramović on the basis of autonomy. Unlike contemporary artists, Spajić does not think of her practice as "autonomous," illusory or otherwise. As a traditional singer, Spajić's practice is not the abstracted act of singing, but the maintenance of deep relationships with village elders—both as singers and as a community—and the making of history. When she discusses the distance between traditional performance and other modes of performing, Spajić emphasizes that the successful performance of traditional music requires the entrance into another worldview that prioritizes familial obligation, memory, and orality.[70]

Rather than challenging the institutional definition of art to include practices like traditional singing, Abramović abstracts those elements of Spajić's practice that conform to a hegemonic vision of contemporary art, as informed by the logic of the ethnographic artifact and the colonial exhibition. In Abramović's piece, Spajić performs a lament. The lament, as we saw in *Death Anniversary*, is a clear example of a useful singing style, which performs a service both for the dead and the living. This act of public remembrance opens a channel between the living and the dead so that the dead can move on. In the context of the performance, which was taken from her collaboration with Robert Wilson, Spajić created this lament for Abramović's mother, Danica. While Abramović and Spajić can both understand the lament, the majority of the audience (save possibly for a few Serbian-speakers) do not understand what Spajić is singing. As a consequence of this non-understanding, the audience focuses on Spajić's "haunting" voice (Brennan 2011; Yablonsky 2011), "ululation" (Nestruck 2013), and "melancholy folk songs" (Thurman 2010), while making analogies to other un-related traditional singing practices (Guy Trebay called her a "throat singer" in his New York Times article on the gala). In Abramović's frame Spajić becomes a living museum of the "folk," providing an elite audience a glimpse into what Abramović has described as the "ancient epic world" of the Balkans. Ancient and untranslatable, Abramović invites the audience to project meaning onto Spajić thereby assimilating Spajić's practice into the extant paradigm for viewing contemporary art. As Spajić's lament is de-contextualized and re-presented in the context of the gala performance for MOCA, Abramović converts Spajić's singing into an intensified fetish.

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[70] Interview with the author, 5 April 2018.

The convergence of ethnographic logic and contemporary art are not new; rather, ethnographic logic is foundational to the genre of contemporary art. In her essay "Confusing Pleasures," Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses how in his curation of the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, Peter Sellars converted the ethnographic gaze into the gaze of the avant-garde by prioritizing the authenticity of the aesthetic moment rather than ethnographic framing or entertainment value (1998c, 203). Rather than a novel transformation, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett demonstrates how this re-contextualizing of the ethnographic object was characteristic of the project of the early-twentieth century avant-garde. In a classic example, Antonin Artaud co-opted elements of Balinese dance after seeing a performance at the World's Fair, while feeling no obligation to accurately understand the practice nor the practitioners. Artaud does not want to understand Balinese dance as *Balinese*, but rather as “inspiration.” If we articulate Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s argument with Bahtsetzis, we can understand this appeal to universalism as the production of the intensified fetish. By defining art as a universal category, contemporary artists (through their lineage in Surrealism, the Avant-Garde, and conceptual art) strip the cultural “Other” of their use. The new use that they propose instead of indigenous taxonomies for cultural production is the masking of capitalist social relations.

By reframing Wookey and Rainer’s critique as an artistic-social critique of Abramović’s economic exploitation of precarious artists, joined with the aesthetic stripping of use, one can see that the gala bolsters alienation through low pay, intensified exploitation, and the separation of producers from that which they produce. Even Abramović’s most successful attempt at unsettling alienation—giving a human face to useless table decoration—fails on the basis of the low wages paid to her performers in the face of extreme wealth. By putting forward an artistic-social critique of “An Artist’s Life Manifesto,” we see that by stripping the use of traditional performance, Abramović generates value for the contemporary art museum and for herself as a contemporary artist by amending and advancing a vision of what Sontag critiqued as the reactionary Surrealist project of the early-twentieth century.[71] Rather than an incommensurable debate between the transcendent potential of art and the fight for fair wages, an artistic-social critique of Abramović’s use of traditional performers and performance artists reveals the aesthetics of wage labor and the illusion of autonomy as a social production.

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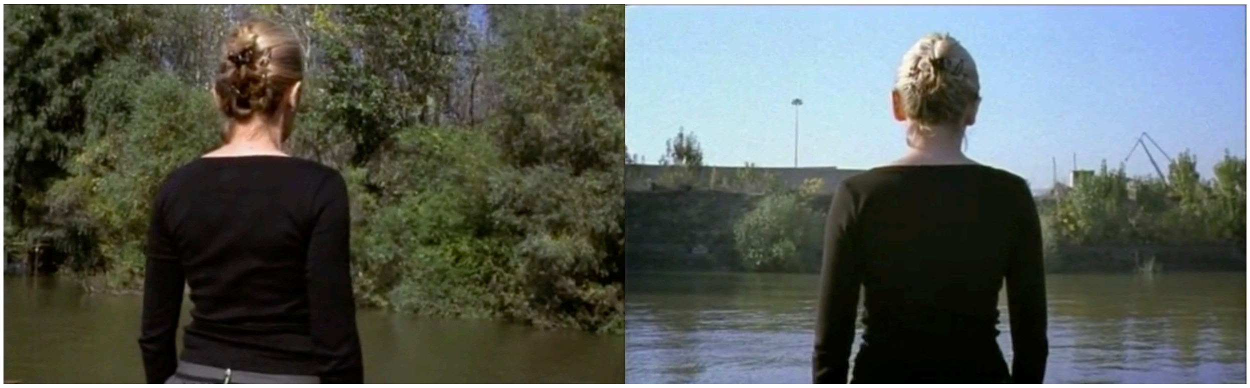
[71] Despite Sontag’s assessment, Surrealism is not always reactionary. It was liberatory for the Negritude movement and decolonizing Egypt in 1930s and 40s. However, Surrealists have also extensively exploited the material culture of peasants and colonized people.

Theatricalized Authenticity

Some artists, including Abramović and Nikolić, have tried to confront the contemporary-traditional dialectic through what art historian Claire Bishop (2012) has termed "delegated performance." These artists hire traditional or folk artists to perform themselves as signifiers of authenticity within the artwork. In these performances, the singular artist outsources performative labor, while maintaining full authorship of the work. In her article "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity," Claire Bishop devises a tripartite typology of delegated performance: 1) artists' use of people to perform their own class position, 2) artists who hire amateur performers to perform their own practices, and 3) artists who construct scenarios for non-artists to enact their own subjectivities. In presenting these three modalities of delegated performance, Bishop troubles blanket critiques of exploitation that are applied to these artistic works. From an economic perspective, Bishop is interested in body art's entry into the art market and the emergent conflict between established economic systems of performance (such as theatre and dance) and performance art, which fetishizes the individual author, in accordance with its visual art genealogy (2012, 105). The nature of collaboration then becomes a primary point of contention in delegated performances, which continue to reify the individual artist while involving the labor of other performers, who are compensated with less money and less cultural capital. Bishop relates the increase in "outsourcing authenticity"—and thereby outsourcing liveness (Muñoz 2009)—to the explosion of "offshore outsourcing" in the 1990s, which coincided with both the normalization of the performance artist and the strong art market of the 2000s (2012, 104). Bishop does not condemn these performances as exploitation, however, because she argues that the point of these works is often to draw attention to the power imbalance between the author-artist and the performer-delegates (2012, 112).

I agree that delegated performances can be used to draw attention to inequality between artists recognized as artist-authors and artists or other subjects who are not recognized as author-producers. However, in the Balkan context, delegate-performers are usually not hired to disturb these power relations. Abramović's gala provided a cogent example of this. Another example is Breda Beban's video piece *Walk of Three Chairs* (2003), in which the artist hired the Romani band "Jova" to accompany her devised performance of a ritual action on a raft floating down the Danube in Serbia. This video performance piece begins by showing the group of musicians on the raft flanked by the verdant side of the Danube. We then see Beban with the lush green, uncultivated landscape in the background (Fig. 5.1). The camera then switches angles to show the audience the industrial side of the Danube behind Beban (Fig 5.2). This setting is identified in the project description as "believed by some to be the point at which the Balkans end and Europe begins."



Figures 5.1 and 5.2: stills from Breda Beban's *Walk of Three Chairs* (2003).

During the rest of the video, the band plays the song "*Zašto su ti kose pobelele druže*" ("Why has your hair turned white"). Beban sings the refrain at first, mirroring the lead singer of the band*:* "who doesn't know how to suffer doesn't know how to love."[72] She is hesitant at first, but her voice grows stronger as she continues to go back and forth with the other singer. Beban then starts the ritual. She walks across three chairs which are continuously moved around by members of the band. Beban explains the walk of three chairs as a "traditional Balkan pagan ritual," which she remembers her "grandfather performing after winning at gambling." As she walks and sings, Beban also starts to dance. The video concludes with pans of the verdant side of the Danube followed by pans of the industrial side of the river.

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[72] "*Ko ne zna da pati, taj ne zna da voli"*

Beban uses the contrasting shots of the riverbanks to represent the border of the Balkans and Europe—one wild, the other "domesticated," i.e. industrialized. Locating herself within the border itself, Beban offers another response to the problem of Nikolić's geographic burden. Significantly, however, instead of hiring peasants as the delegate performers in her work, she hires a Romani band. In the video, members of the band either perform their expected role as musicians or perform the labor of moving chairs for Beban, an ex-Yugoslav artist who lived in London since the early nineties until her death in 2012. Rather than troubling the naturalized status of Beban as an author-artist and Roma musicians as anonymous musicians-for-hire, Beban seems to generally uphold this economic division.

Beban uses the Romani band to construct her own post-Yugoslav subjectivity. The icon of the Rom has been appropriated widely since the Bohemian movement in early-nineteenth century France, which Mike Sell argues silenced the Rom subject through acts of "theatricalized authenticity" (2007, 45). By hiring a Romani band to perform music, Beban uses these artists to theatricalize her own authenticity as an "other." This act of auto-exoticism is seen in numerous appropriations of Romani cultural practices by non-Roma artists, most prominently in the world music and "Global Beat" scenes (Szeman 2009). In the video, this appropriation is perhaps most evident by the choice of song. While referenced in all publicity materials as a "traditional song" or "well-known folk song," the song was in fact originated by Muharem Serbezovski, a Muslim

Roma singer born in the Topaana neighborhood of Skopje, Macedonia. Serbezovski was an extremely popular singer in Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 80s. He is also known for his activism on behalf of Roma, and for later serving as a member of the Bosnian parliament in the 2000s. In a global context wherein Romani artists are constantly denied ownership of their own music, the omission of the song's history has material effects (Szeman 2009, 112).

Her performance of the ritual is completely dependent upon racialized labor. The Roma musicians have to move the chairs under her in order for her to complete the ritual. Only Roma labor makes it possible for her to continue "progressing." The use of the "Other" as the raw material of performance art is representative of the classical European colonial conversion of subjects into space as a means of denying them sovereignty. In Achille Mbembe's influential essay on necropolitics, he argues that territorialization takes space as "the raw material" of a sovereignty predicated on occupation. Colonial subjects are spatialized in the "third zone between subjecthood and objecthood" wherein the state decides whose life is valuable or productive (Mbembe 2003, 26). In the post-socialist and post-colonial context, the Rom subject, the rural subject, the folk performer, and the traditional artist are all spatialized and subsequently utilized to make territorial claims. In the wake of the Yugoslav state, ethnic-majority rural subjects are spatialized as validation of the ethnic-majority government's claims to territory. Roma subjects, on the other hand, are used from *without* to articulate Balkan non-Roma subjects' marginality within the European context.

These two uses of the Other can be understood as instances of nesting orientalisms (Bakić-Hayden 1995). In his application of Bishop's theory of delegated performances to the use of turbo-folk in the work of contemporary Balkan artists, Uroš Čvoro argues that both turbo-folk artists and the contemporary artists who use their work participate in self-exoticization and selforientalization to refuse incorporation into Western homogeneity. Čvoro argues that Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, and Serbian turbo-folk producers recognize that the exotic is valued within the neoliberal market, and that consequently, producers sample Turkish, Roma, and Arab music to make themselves more valuable within a global power schema that excludes Southeastern Europe. This strategic use of the exotic follows Bakić-Hayden's model of nesting orientalisms, wherein individual Balkan subjects negotiate their own Western-ness or Eastern-ness on increasingly smaller scales.

In *Walk of Three Chairs,* Beban uses Roma musicians to make claims about her own non-Western subject position to gain value within an international art market that ignores Balkan artists. In delegated performances such as Beban's, artist-authors uphold the social hierarchies of their home countries while attempting to contest the social hierarchies of the Euro-American art market. While institutionalized social hierarchies existed within Yugoslavia, artists' *use* of intra-national Others as "readymade[s]" to articulate their lack of international cultural capital has only become possible in the post-socialist transition period (Čvoro 2014, 105). With the Western declaration that "Eastern Europe no longer exists," the Balkan artist has no relevance to the international art market. Since the international art market exists within the Euro-American colonial context, one has to participate in colonial aesthetics to gain entry. The Balkan artist who uses intra-Balkan Others to perform otherness in their works constructs a doubled colonial subject. In Beban's piece, she constructs herself both as a subject who has been victim to European colonialism and its effects, and as a subject who is perpetuating the marginalization of the Rom subject. To make herself relevant to the art market, Beban has submitted a colonial microcosm of the Balkan world.

Redistribution vs. Recognition

Macedonian artist Gjorgje Jovanovik's video work *They All Wait for Me to Pay* (2013) seeks to balance the politics of representation with the politics of redistribution. Made during an artist residency in Tirana, Albania, Jovanovik frames his video as an "attempt to connect the past and the present." The video shows live performances by the Iso-Polyphonic group Ansambli Polifonik Demir Zyko, which is a folk singing group located in Tirana, which is dedicated to the very old Iso-Polyphonic singing tradition.[73] In the traditional style, the group of seven singers sing a text written by the young Albanian poet Rubin Beqo. In addition to the video, there was also a second component to the artistic project, which was a participatory performance practice for finding solutions to social and political problems.

Jovanovik identifies the Iso-Polyphonic singing with the past and Beqo's poetry with the present. While it would be easy to analyze this as an example of the denial of coevalness, it is relevant to note that in the Labëria region in southwest Albania, one of the names for this type of singing is "*pleqërishte,"* which translates to both "of old men"—because it is performed by old men—and "of the old time." In Gjirokastër, these songs are also called "*lashtërishte"* ("of the ancient time") (Ahmedaja 2008, 218). Using both the local sense of the singing style as ancient as well as the modern interpretation of the folk as past, Jovanovik considered his project as "an attempt to think about the current conditions and the recent past, the turbulent times of changing systems, the loss or lack of communication and understanding in the neoliberal context."

While the style of singing in the video is traditional, the lyrics are contemporary, and translated into English for an international viewer. The sung text concentrates heavily on the struggles of living under capitalism. The violence of the postsocialist transition, also known as "shock therapy" (Buyandelgeriyn 2008), cannot be understated. In Beqo's text for *They All Wait for Me to Pay*, he connects this violence to the violence of ethnonationalism: "Under the stress of capitalism / We have shown the face of barbarism / as in the times of Stalinism / We feel again prey of populism." As the stress of capitalist exploitation has fed populism and repression and war, the West has only been capable of recognizing the Balkans as barbaric. Eventually, having washed their hands clean of the socialist problem, Europe moves on to fetishizing the "barbarous" subject in the postwar era.

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[73] Polyphony is a type of music that contains two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody (as opposed to monophony or harmophony). The term "iso" is related to the ison of Byzantine church music and refers to the drone accompanying polyphonic singing. Albanian folk iso-polyphony was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

To survive in the postsocialist neoliberal order, one has to sell a lot of oneself. The entrepreneur of the self does not refer to the much mythologized "entrepreneurial spirit." Rather, by becoming an entrepreneur of the self, one is forced to abandon the collective—the locus of the folk. As Margaret Thatcher, "empress of neoliberalism," once announced: "In the new world of 'developed society,' individuals must no longer regard themselves as workers, but as enterprises that sell a service to the market" (Praznik 2021, 143). As an entrepreneur of the self, one becomes a proletarian twice over. Workers must, as summed up by Sergio Bologna, live "at their own expense" (Praznik 2021, 113). Beqo captures the struggle against the neoliberal labor regime in his poetry:

> Wherever I go they look at my hands
> They all wait for me to pay
> I speak the language of the other in order to work
> My language to sing
> I get drunk to forget, because the strength
> To be transformed I feel it is already exhausted

The transition, the transformation, is exhausting. It has exhausted itself. It has nothing left to promise. Now, you just have to submit. You have to speak the language of the European Union, and you have to pay back the IMF. With the postsocialist and neoliberal transition as the background, booze, music and culture keep part of you alive.

Beqo echoes American philosopher Nancy Fraser's critique of the postsocialist left by connecting material conditions to the rise of populist identity politics. In her well-known essay "From Redistribution to Recognition?" Nancy Fraser argues that one of the central features of the postsocialist West is the false opposition of the politics of recognition and politics of redistribution. In essence, the socialist project—as related to, but not totally coextensive with state socialism—was about the redistribution of resources and an end to exploitation. Rising in the 1980s and continuing through the 2000s, we witness both the collapse of European state socialism and the rise of the politics of recognition. The politics of recognition want to "defend their 'identities,' end 'cultural domination,' and win 'recognition'" (1997, 2). In the transition of a politics of redistribution to a politics of representation/recognition, class analysis and class-based organizing were often lost.

The significance of recognition for a neoliberalizing world is understandable. As discussed above, in neoliberalism everyone is forced to become an entrepreneur of the self. Our identities—our brands—are how we circulate through the market. While the leaders and much of the general population of the former Yugoslavia turned to the identity politics of ethno-nationalism during the 1990s, the artists discussed thus far sought to transform these reactionary identity politics into a "Balkan-ness" that could be easily consumed by a Western art audience. Balkan artists, like all other artists who carry the burden of liveness, are ostensibly coerced into performing for the West's desire for the Other.

Spectacle as Archive

Whereas the previously discussed works all center around folk music, there are also examples of contemporary artists invoking more practical aspects of folk culture. Presented either as a multi-channel installation or as a single-channel video piece, Marina Abramović's *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005) stages dramatizations of different Balkan traditions and peasant rituals that involve the sexual body. Abramović frames the project as an exploration of her Serbian heritage as well as a new way of relating to sexual organs. By demonstrating the many possible uses of the body and of sexual organs, Abramović's approach in *Balkan Erotic Epic* is markedly different from the use-stripping that was presented in the 2011 MOCA Gala.

In the artwork, Abramović initially presents herself to us as a figure of authority, which she titles "the Professor." The Professor, wearing what appear to be lab goggles, announces to the audience: "In Balkan culture, since ancient times, the male and female organs like phallus, vagina, breasts, have been used as tools against sickness, evil forces of nature, etc." She proceeds to then introduce a number of remedies, which are dramatized either through animation or live action recordings. Featured remedies include men masturbating into the earth to make crops grow and women protecting crops from too much rain by lifting their skirts and showing "their vaginas in a way to scare the evil, to stop the rain." Reflecting on filming the latter ritual, Abramović says the women used their vaginas "as a tool, as a weapon in a way. During the filming it was such a strong thing to see, the rain, the women, the desperation."[74] This novel use for sexual organs is a repeated theme in the work.

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[74] All interview quotes are taken from Abramović's artist book *Balkan Epic* (2006).

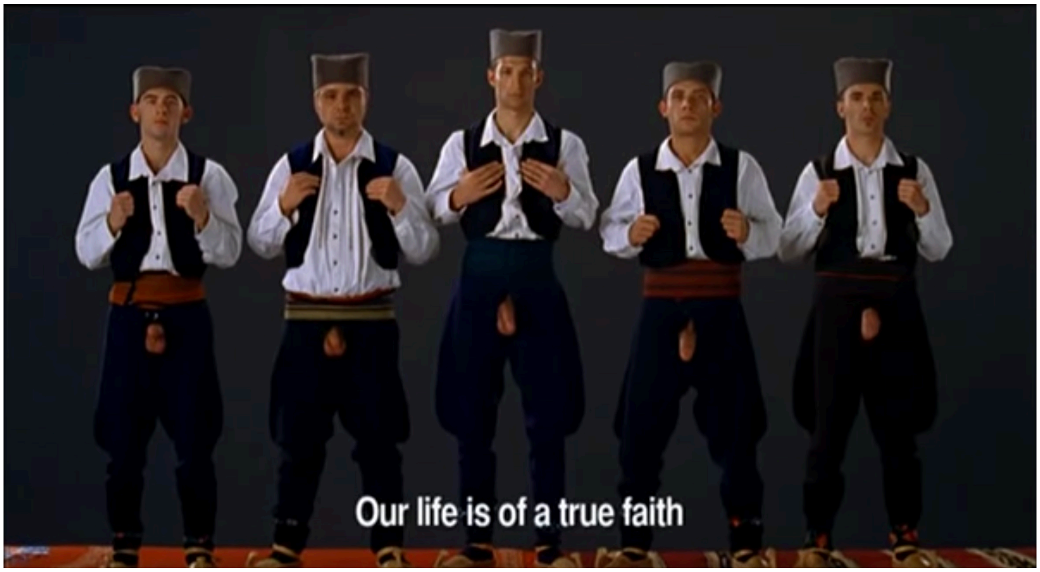
Our life is of a true faith

Figure 5.3: Still from Marina Abramović's *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005)

Some components of the work are not dramatizations of folk remedies. For example, four videos produced for the installation feature a line of men standing towards the camera wearing easily recognizable national dress (Fig. 5.3). An invocation of a new type of "national hero," the videos feature these men standing with their penises visible, either erect or flaccid. The men all stand still for the duration of the video, therefore leaving the viewer to concentrate on the minute movements of their genitals. Discussing these videos in an interview, Abramović recalls her surprise at the nuanced type of eroticism that the videos evoked:

> The one thing I was very surprised at, that at least I was not expecting: the image was not erotic at all. It was actually that you're dealing with something so erotic, like sexual organs, and you see them in this kind of static position, you reflect on everything else but not on the eroticism that I was thinking would be there. [...] And usually when you have male genital organs, there's always something happening: either they're making love, or they are making strip-tease or some kind of action. Here, just by making them static, and absolutely not moving them, you completely go somewhere else in this image. It became somehow an image of new Balkan heroes.

By restaging these folk rituals, and inventing new ones, Abramović wants to rewire how we perceive the erotic. The work is outwardly erotic in the sense that there are sexual organs and sexual gestures on display. However, the work is not outwardly pornographic. Through her strategic use of repetition and stillness, Abramović cultivates a quiet curiosity in the viewer. She invites the viewer to expand their sense of the erotic to include not only pornographic, heterosexual, and private, but also practical, community-oriented, public, homosexual, and even medicinal expressions of eroticism.

Abramović's stance towards the pornographic in *Balkan Erotic Epic* is nuanced by the fact that all of the performers, minus Abramović, Spajić, and Olivera Katarina, are adult performers. The initial impetus for the project arose when Abramović began working on the artistic platform and film project *Destricted* (2006) with Larry Clark, Gaspar Noé, and four others. The project was a series of seven short films which sought to deconstruct the boundaries between pornography and art. For the project, all of the artists were invited to work with porn actors. *Destricted* was controversial upon its release; it won numerous awards at festivals, but also received scathing coverage by the press.[75] Due to the explicit content of the film, and difficulty attaining the required paperwork, the U.S. release of the film was delayed by four years. By hiring sex workers to play the roles of Balkan peasants, Abramović stretches Claire Bishop's concept of "outsourcing authenticity." Abramović hires sex workers to outsource her authenticity as a desirable Balkan other.

More than outsourcing authenticity, Abramović seems to be transforming herself into a corporation, in both the contemporary sense of the word and in its original meaning--"persons united in a body for some purpose" (Harper). Without even considering her later work, in which she brands herself as "The Artist," we can see how Abramović constructs her desired self-image through the combination of her own performance in the video, the performance of professional singers, and the performances of the porn actors. All of the performers are credited by name, although Abramović retains sole authorship. She does not include her own name amongst the cast credits, nor as a producer or director. Within the film installation, Abramović aligns herself with the porn actors playing erotic peasants as she massages her breasts with her face pointed towards the sky. She stands alone in this shot, with clouds passing dramatically behind her.

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[75] *Destricted* won awards at Cannes, Sundance, Edinburgh, Amsterdam and Locarno. For press, see Amy Taubin's piece for *Artforum,* Tom Morton in *Frieze* and Scott Foundas in *Variety*.

Filmed six years before the MOCA gala, *Balkan Erotic Epic* is also the first collaboration between Marina Abramović and Svetlana Spajić. One might consider Spajić potentially as a delegate performer, however, she too fails the test of "authenticity." Spajić does not live in a village, she grew up in Belgrade and travels the world with her traditional singing performances. She also occasionally sings with rock and experimental music groups. Abramović became interested in working with Spajić, because in addition to being a powerful singer, Spajić is also a kind of archivist. She has preserved many old and rare folk songs from Serbia and the surrounding region, recording old people in villages, and later performing the songs herself.

In Abramović's installation, Spajić is featured in a video of a staged ritual. Dressed in typical peasant clothes, the video opens with Spajić standing silently in the center of the frame, with six women on either side of her (Fig. 5.4). All of the women except Spajić have their hands on their bare breasts and their faces pointed at the sky. Spajić looks at the viewer. After about thirty seconds of quiet stillness, Spajić begins to sing a traditional tragic love song and the other women begin to massage their breasts. The song tells the story of a young woman whose lover dies. Out of despair, the young woman comes to her lover's grave to join him. From his perspective, Spajić sings: "I can't take your pillows, I can't take them dear / My white arms are rotten, young I'm lying here / Go home, my dear maiden, put them on your bed / Kiss the cross and remember me." Throughout the song, Spajić has her arms around the two oldest performers, as they massage their breasts and point their faces at the sky, along with the rest of the group. After the conclusion of the song, the other women continue to massage their breasts in silence.

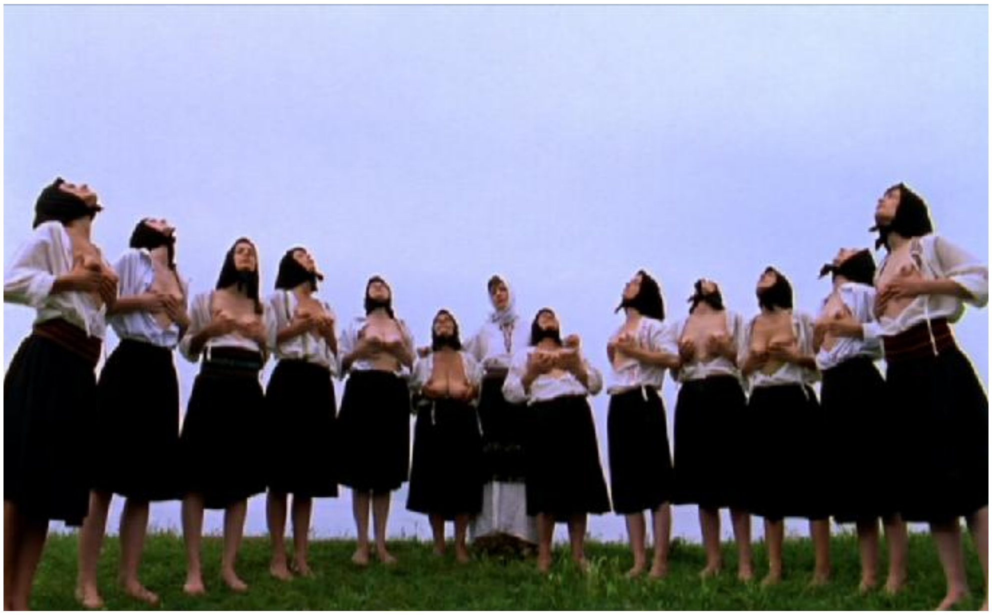

Figure 5.4: Still from Marina Abramović's *Balkan Erotic Epic* (2005), featuring Svetlana Spajić standing in the center.

In stark contrast to the uselessness on display in Abramović's gala performance, *Balkan Erotic Epic* seeks to reveal the usefulness of our bodies. She articulated the guiding inquiry for the project in an interview: "What about this idea of how the genitals can be used in different ways, as I said, as a tool for the healing, as a tool for the fertilizing of the earth, as a kind of connection with the cosmic energies, the idea of marriage between the human and the divine" (2006, 69). In the framing of the project, she writes that

> Obscene objects and male and female genitals have a very important function in the fertility and agricultural rites of Balkan peasants. They were used very explicitly for a variety of purposes. Women would show in the rituals openly their vaginas, bottoms, breasts and menstrual blood. Men would show openly in the rituals their bottoms and penises in acts of masturbation and ejaculation.

In addition to being a work of art, *Balkan Erotic Epic* serves as a performative archive of peasant knowledge. The majority of the videos making up both the triptych and the solo video are representations of rituals and remedies that Abramović found through her archival research in

Serbia. These rituals have been largely forgotten about and are no longer commonly practiced. By reviving a Balkan folk perspective of eroticism for the artwork, Abramović is also facilitating the transmission of this knowledge to new generations as well as potentially igniting a desire to re-evaluate the epistemic status of sexuality and eroticism.[76] Describing the project in an interview, Abramović says, "I see these works, the video installation and the film, as a kind of lecture, really educational. I propose to go a little back to the past and see how everything is connected to the roots of our culture" (2006, 69). In queer communities in the Balkans, it is common to discuss the queerness of earlier generations, including numerous homosexual practices that used to be accepted. As these discussions are based on oral transmission and not archival research, however, they are generally excluded from the academy. Abramović's work stands as a potential bridge between community knowledge, the archive, and the university.

Can the Peasant Speak?

After spending a considerable amount of time discussing the actions and justifications of contemporary Balkan artists, it is time to address the elephant in the room. Following the lead of Gayatri Spivak, I want to know: can the peasant speak? All of the discussed artists present viewers with the "live" peasant in their work. Some of these peasants are actually peasants (E.g. Nikolić) and most of them are not (E.g. Beban, Abramović, Spajić, etc). All pieces share one dimension: the peasants never speak for themselves. In Nikolić's *Death Anniversary* we hear more about Milica's perspective than in any of the other artists' work, but her voice is still totally mediated, framed, and qualified by Nikolić.

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[76] This complement work being done on Balkan sexual and gender formations, such as the Albanian *burrnesha* tradition, see Luboteni (2020).

Spivak's argument in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is this: by failing to account for imperialism and the contingent material conditions of the European intellectual, Western scholars mask the violence that made them into the official mouthpieces of oppressed people. By failing to address imperialism in their discussions of power and desire, Foucault and Deleuze simultaneously constructed the "Other" as the underside of the European subject while refusing to name themselves as the European subjects who have been appointed to write "knowledge" about the Other. The ultimate irony for Spivak is Foucault and Deleuze's continued insistence that the oppressed subject is able to speak. Foucault and Deleuze argue that it is self-evident that the oppressed providing the most incisive political critiques of any subject position. As they glorify the subject position of the oppressed, however, they fail to recognize any implications of the fact that white, French male petite-bourgeois scholars are the only people authorized to write and publish the knowledge of the oppressed. Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot speak, precisely because of the epistemic violence that naturalizes the European intellectual as the only valid producer of knowledge.

Unlike Foucault and Deleuze, some of the discussed artists do reflect on their own material conditions. The artists all critique the exclusion and marginalization of Balkan and postsocialist artists from the international art scene. Nikolić explicitly critiques the impoverishment and precarity of the Balkan artist. In Jovanovik's work, we hear about postsocialist material conditions in Albania from the folk singers, though we do not get to hear them in their own words. Beban's piece teases out the tension between industry and nature, which has significant implications for the exponential rates of exploitation following the collapse of state socialism.

Considering the attention paid to material conditions in these works, in addition to the artists' critique of the art market's exclusionary politics and Eurocentrism, it is contradictory that the artists never think to invite the peasant to become more than a symbol in their work. The entire postsocialist critique of the Western art world seems to start coming undone once we question the status of the peasant as a knower. The postsocialist epistemic problem has been most notably theorized by Madina Tlostanova. Her article "Can the Post-Soviet Think?" applies decolonial theory to the condition of the postsocialist subject to denounce both the invisibility of the post-Soviet and the conflation of the post-Soviet with the postcolonial, which she attributes to the coloniality of knowledge. What is missing from this critique, however, is that both the post-Soviet and Balkan subjects have been denied as legitimate knowledge producers on the same epistemic basis upon which post-Soviet and Balkan subjects deny the legitimacy of rural and folk knowledge.

There are some rare examples of traditional-contemporary collaborative projects that do not seem to unquestioningly reproduce this Eurocentric logic. In these collaborations, traditional and folk performers are not hired to perform themselves within a scenario solely authored by a contemporary artist. Rather, the traditional and contemporary artist share authorship in the creation of new work. Whereas delegated performances use (usually subaltern) subjects as universal signifiers of social or class position, collaborative performances create a third space wherein the traditional artist and the contemporary artist can exchange knowledge.

The possibility of collaboration is itself embedded in material conditions. The subjectivity of the contemporary artist is heavily invested in the market, while the traditional artist brings with her some extra-capitalist strategies, which have been necessarily developed as a result of the traditional subject's marginality to the capitalist project. One can observe this discontinuity in the disparate uses of time by the contemporary and traditional artist. The "contemporary art" temporal worldview was forged by avant-garde artists, who prioritized continuous revision and the production of novelty. As discussed in chapter two, to be contemporary requires investment in the capitalist schema of time. In this schema, the past is primarily useful in its potential as a raw material for present innovation; the contemporary subject should not have any obligations to the past. Implicated in this ignorance of the past, is rapidity. The contemporary artist must constantly produce new work, and thus also never be "lazy."[77] The speed and a-historicity of the contemporary artist renders them as an individual, rather than a dividual.[78] As a closed individual producer, the contemporary artist cannot be traditional.

Folk and traditional performers have been excluded from coeval temporality precisely because of their relationship to the past and their delineation of work from non-work. Remembering the genealogy of the "folk" discussed in the introductory chapter, traditional and folk cultures have been separated from modernity since seventeenth century England. The discipline of distinguishing—or rather, of purifying—the contemporary from "the past" has followed along the global path of industrialization. To become modern requires the identification and elimination of that which is not modern, or rather, that which is undesirable within a modernist worldview. The strategies of this methodology of elimination have remained relatively stable over the past 250 years.

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[77] In her article "Art and Labour: On Consumption, Laziness and Less Work," Bojana Kunst cites Mladen Stilinović's 1993 *The Praise of Laziness*, which distinguishes the Western (Euro-American) artist from the Eastern (Eastern European) artist on the use of laziness. Stilinović argued that "art cannot exist...any more in the West," because "Artists in the West are not lazy" (Stilinović 2005; cited by Kunst 2012, 121). The contemporary artist, however, cannot be lazy. The contemporary artist as a capitalist subject must transform all dimensions of her life into labor.

[78] In Nurit Bird-David's "'Animism' Revisited," the author uses Marilyn Strathern's 1988 definition of the dividual as "a person constitutive of relationships" to argue that Nayaka "dividuate" *devaru* (other than human persons) through performance (S68). "Dividual" and "to dividuate" both establish the relatedness between beings.

Identifying duration is the key strategy with which tradition is distinguished from the contemporary. Whereas the contemporary is new and untethered to the past, tradition is structured by its ongoing relationship to the past. This relationship to the past does not easily square with a valorization of the individual author-artist. While there are individual traditional artists who are well known, most traditional cultural practices cannot be easily captured by the market, because there is no way to create a monetarily-exclusive structure through which to acquire these products. Knowledge of traditional practices is not qualified by a paywall; originality depends on history, rather than vanguardism; and living spontaneity in social settings is valued above the archive. This is not to say that traditional artists are not abused by record labels or museums, but rather that those abuses actually exemplify the conflict between the paradigms of the traditional and the contemporary.[79] Svetlana Spajić's work stands out most distinctly as taking on this problem.

By drawing attention to the oppositional economic paradigms of contemporary art-making and traditional art-making, artists have the opportunity to consciously move between these two ways of working. In 2017, German new music collective zeitkratzer released *Serbian War Songs* in collaboration with traditional Serbian singers Svetlana Spajić, Dragana Tomić, and Obrad Milić. The album features a series of twelve traditional songs about the First World War, which have been collaboratively re-interpreted. The songs were selected by Svetlana Spajić and Reinhold Friedl of zeitkratzer. Announcing the performance of the collaboration, zeitkratzer writes on their website “Serbian microtonal folk songs are contemporary music!” This exclamation sums up half of the work that was put in to create this album: the recognition that traditional music is innovative and contemporary (as in, temporally coeval). The other half of the work was that zeitkratzer had to understand their own new music practice as traditional. Much of this labor was put in by Spajić, who regularly collaborates with contemporary artists (such as Marina Abramović and Robert Wilson) as well as with traditional artists (such as Bokan Stanković, Yanka Rupkina, and Domna Samiou). To recognize one’s own contemporary art practice as traditional requires, in this context, that artists recognize that their musical practice has been structured by history and that their compositions have always been made in collaboration with a local music community to whom they are beholden.

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[79] One of the most famous thefts of music made by Romani artists is Goran Bregović's theft of Boban Marković and Šaban Bajramović's music during the production of one of Emir Kustarica's films (Silverman 2012, 276-282).

While tradition is usually glossed as collective, and consequently authorless, traditional artists privilege the genealogy of their repertoire. Rather than an impersonal progression of “borrowing,” traditional artists cite the sources of their knowledge and acknowledge the expertise of their peers. A cogent example of the erroneous association of tradition with anonymity can be seen in state-sponsored folklore ensembles in 1970s Bulgaria. After the state chose to recuperate rural traditions, which it had previously banned in an effort to transform the rural peasant into an urban proletariat, urban musicians arranged traditional music for radio programs and orchestras. Arrangers and neo-traditional performers were labeled as “artists” and given copyright to the material that they arranged, despite having learned the songs from traditional artists. In Bulgaria, folklore was defined as “anonymous art,” however, in his interviews with traditional Bulgarian performers, Timothy Rice notes that the artists always discussed the sources of their songs and the names of other prominent performers from their communities (Rice 1994, 213-214). The conflation of folklore with anonymity is a misattribution, according to Rice, because tradition actually demands that one credit the sources of one's knowledge.

The recognition of authorship in *Serbian War Songs* sets this work apart from the other discussed artworks. While zeitkratzer is afforded primary authorship for *Serbian War Songs*, Spajić, Tomić, and Milić are all also recognized as authors of the album both on the album cover and in all press materials. In the album description, the names of the three artists are not given as a mass, but are rather individually qualified in the context of their separate histories and careers. Spajić is recognized as "probably the most acknowledged expert for traditional songs in Serbia," Tomić is recognized for her work with Robert Wilson, and Milić is recognized as the son of Bogdan Milić, "a famous gusla player at the beginning of the 20th century," who taught him "Assassination In Sarajevo," which he performs on the album. By co-authoring this album, Spajić, Tomić, Milić, and the zeitkratzer ensemble share in traditional pedagogy. The album both recognizes the contribution of the individual artists who came together to produce this musical collaboration *and* recognizes the contribution of the artists' teachers, such as Bogdan Milić.

Conclusion

Much of today's discourse on the marginalization of artists from Southeastern Europe comes at the expense of those artists who scholars and curators qualify as "traditional," "folk," "rural," and "ethnic." While visual and performing artists from the "former East" have been making themselves relevant to the global art market, they have also increasingly bought into that same temporal value schema that has denied them entry into contemporaneity.[80] By maintaining, or rather adopting, the border between the genres of “traditional” and “contemporary” art, critics and artists reinforce the marginal status of the non-Western artist.

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[80] Since the collapse of socialism, Eastern European artists are often referred to as hailing from the "former East." Scholarly experiments with the idea of the former East and former West are gathered in the 2016 volume *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989.*

In the process of becoming “the former East,” Eastern European artists have largely accepted the economic paradigm of contemporary art, which reifies the individual author-producer. By accepting contemporary art as a universal category of artistic production, contemporary artists in Southeastern Europe have underscored the marginal position of the traditional artist. When the contemporary artist chooses to recognize the traditional artist, they most often create delegated performances, wherein the contemporary artist enacts nesting colonialisms by appropriating the social positions of intra-regional “others” to articulate the alterity of the author. Less frequently, collaborations push past this author-canvas labor division. In examples such as zeitkratzer, Spajić, Tomić, and Milić’s *Serbian War Songs*, artists find ways to exchange knowledge between traditional and contemporary aesthetic schema. The success of these collaborations demonstrates the necessity t forge solidarity between the struggle of the contemporary Eastern European artist and the struggle of the traditional artist. By recognizing that in the former Yugoslavia the contemporary artist and the traditional artist are marginalized by the same “former West,” the contact points of tradition and contemporaneity become sites in which to contest global capitalist and (neo)-colonial domination.

CHAPTER FIVE
Palpating Time:
Magical Healing and Revolutionary Care in Rural Serbia and Macedonia [81]

> Above all, magic seemed a form of refusal of work, of insubordination, and an instrument of grassroots resistance to power.[82]
>
> Comradeship creates a shield against the witch hunters who will try to catch us one by one, but who will never destroy the whole set of alliances that make up the Great Sorcery International.[83]

The death knell of tradition has been ringing for a very long time. Antiquarianism is often traced back to the Renaissance in Europe, but an orientation towards the past imbued with a sense of loss dates back at least to the writings of Varro and Pliny the Elder in ancient Rome. Over the twentieth century in the Yugoslav region, scholars became increasingly concerned over the loss of the authentic *gusle* tradition. For these scholars, "authenticity" was demonstrated by the *guslar* having learned his repertoire orally. As the majority of the region's population did not become literate until after the Second World War, orality became a signifier of authenticity and of the apparent "loss" of tradition.[84] Today, gusle is most frequently performed in ethnographic contexts, such as in folklore festivals and programs sponsored by national or regional ethnographic museums. Most living guslars learned their practices through a combination of mentorship and the memorization of published songs. Gusle's transformation from a strictly oral practice into a hybrid one has commonly been interpreted as a loss of authenticity. However, gusle practices like that of Obrad Milić discussed in the previous chapter unsettle those claims. Milić's father, a well-known guslar, orally transmitted the gusle practice to him. Despite his practice's basis in orality, Milić also participates in the textual and digital circulation of gusle songs.

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[81] The majority of this chapter has previously been published in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* as "Palpating History: Magical Healing and Revolutionary Care in Rural Serbia and Macedonia" (2022).

[82] Sylvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*

[83] Oxana Timofeeva, "What Lenin Teaches Us About Witchcraft"

[84] The question of literacy is one of the key foci of scholarship on oral tradition. See Lord 1960, 28; Peabody 1975, 216; Ong 1982, 59-67; Foley 1991, 46.

Rather than literacy, the greatest impact on the vitality of the guslar has been the commodification and mythologization of gusle tradition. Gusle is no longer a common feature of the village. Rather, it now serves as a robust nationalist symbol in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia, and Albania.[85] In 2018, the gusle was recognized by UNESCO as part of Serbia's intangible cultural heritage, much to the irritation of the other aforementioned countries. As discussed in chapter three, the nationalist capture of gusle during the Yugoslav Wars has had a reflexive effect on the practice, making it increasingly difficult to locate living carriers of the tradition that have not aligned themselves with the nationalist invented tradition.

Despite the disappearance of guslar from the village, other traditional oral genres have persisted, though with comparatively minimal scholarly interest. Among these "minor" oral genres is the practice of incantations. Known variously as *bajanje, vračanje, čaranje, gatanje,* and *baenje*, incantation-based healing practices remain common throughout the Yugoslav region. While there is a whole repertoire of terms for magical and incantation-based healing in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) and Macedonian, I use the term "bajanje" in this chapter to encompass all incantation-based healing practices in the region, including certain actions that may not be incantation-based, but which healers view as contiguous with their incantation-based work.[86] This chapter seeks to expose how both epistemic and material disenfranchisement manifest in the lives of incantation-based healers and their larger rural communities.

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[85] In Albanian the gusle is known as *lahuta*.

[86] "Baenje" is the Macedonian word for bajanje, though I do not use it in this chapter, because the healer I work with in Macedonia is from Bosnia, and thus she employs the word "bajanje" to refer to her practice.

The bajanje healer recognizes a basic truth: the body's inclination to be among other bodies renders us all vulnerable. This vulnerability, however, is constituted in degrees and the gulf between degrees of vulnerability constitutes a significant mortal boundary. While we can all transmit and contract diseases, the mortality of disease is dictated by what Judith Butler has called the body's vulnerability "to economics and to history" (2015, 148). The social construction of immunity and health is not just theorized, but starkly felt. While our bare bodies may be equally vulnerable to novel viruses, the bare body exists only as an abstraction. Real bodies have organs, varying access to capital, and are subject to varying degrees of exploitation.

The sociality of illness and health is not news to much of the world. Knowledge systems around the world recognize disease as not merely pathogens discovered in labs, but also as the betrayal of social bonds. In this chapter, I take up the issue of the political life of health and sickness by looking at the practice of vernacular, incantation-based forms of healing in rural villages in Serbia and Macedonia. Across the entire Balkan region, one can find women and men—usually elderly—who use incantations to heal people. In Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia, healers treat problems ranging from evil eye to skin infections to difficulty finding a lover. In addition to performing incantations, healers also offer services including lead melting, bathing rituals, plant medicines, seeing into the future, and communicating with the dead. Bajanje healers practice according to healing frameworks they either inherited from a grandmother or mother-in-law, or which they received through dreams. In addition to these basic parameters, the only other stable element of bajanje is that there is no fixed price for services. Each guest that comes to receive healing gives however much money they want or are able to give. Beyond this, each healer's practice is unique. Some healers are well-known and earn a good living by practicing bajanje, while others may only perform bajanje informally for family members and neighbors.

People have been practicing these forms of healing as far back as the written record goes. Since the turn of the twentieth century, however, these healing practices have been publicly written off as superstition. Using the term "bajanje" to refer to a repertoire of practices that are usually taxonomized separately into divination, incantations, and magic, I seek to build an analysis of what Macarena Gómez-Barris calls "submerged perspectives," which lie beneath the capitalist modern worldview (2017, 1). Pushing back against the gendered stereotyping of vernacular cultural practices as "superstition," I demonstrate how bajanje practitioners negotiate narratives of erasure and irrelevance. I specifically examine how healers resuscitate the historicized folk healer in order to carve out new modes of relatedness through a technique that I refer to as "palpating time." In discussing the practices of these healers, I recognize bajanje as a revolutionary practice of care, which maintains communities' relationships to local plants and animals, strengthens social bonds amongst members of the community—including ancestors and future generations—and validates women and elders in rural communities as expert keepers and producers of knowledge.

Producing and Consuming the Folk

As an object of study, bajanje has traditionally belonged to the discipline of folklore. We can trace this disciplinary genealogy back to one of the first published references to bajanje*,* which was made by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in the early-nineteenth century.[87] Known popularly as the "father of the study of Serbian folklore," Karadžić came of age during Serbia's struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire and he has since stood as a central figure in Serbian nationalist mythology. His earliest references to bajanje are in his *Srpski rječnik* (*Serbian Dictionary*), published in 1818. In this dictionary, which was part of Karadžić's project to create a standardized Serbian orthography, we find entries for "bajanje" as well as associated terminology ("*bajalica*," meaning conjurer, "*vračanje*," meaning divination, "*vračar*," a term for a diviner, "*gatanje,*" listed as a synonym of vračanje, etc.). In the entry for "bajalica," Karadžić defines the term in German (*die Zauberin*) and in Latin (*incantrix*) and then provides an example of a bajanje ritual for weddings, which involves cabbage, bacon, and an accompanying incantation (1818, 17). Karadžić treats bajanje as a very minor folklore tradition within his oeuvre, which includes ten volumes of folk poetry, two volumes of short stories, an anthology of proverbs, among many other linguistic and ethnological publications. His most sustained attention to incantations is in his posthumously published *Život i običaji naroda srpskoga* (Customs of the Serbian People), where he devotes the final chapter to "*djevojačka vračanje"* (girls' divination) in the Srijem (Syrmia) region (Karadžić, 1867). In this chapter, Karadžić documents the nine step process of using magic to find one's soul mate, including prayers and ritual actions that must be performed on certain days of the week at certain times of day and in accord with certain phases of the moon. While Karadžić was much more interested in epic poetry than in healers and their incantations, his inclusion of bajanje reveals the compatibility of bajanje-as-folklore with the early Serbian nationalist movement.

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[87] While references to incantation-based healing in the Balkans can be traced back to the writings of Plutarch, Karadžić's text is the oldest reference to bajanje-as-bajanje.

Karadžić's nationalist folklore project was heavily influenced by German Romantic thought. In accordance with the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder a half-century earlier and in dialogue with his contemporary Jacob Grimm in Germany, Karadžić promoted the peasant as the ultimate symbol of the nation. His dictionaries and poetry anthologies became extremely popular both within Serbia as part of the budding nationalist mythology (now a hegemonic narrative) and abroad. With translations of Karadžić's oral narratives published by Grimm, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Alexander Pushkin, and others during the nineteenth century, European intellectuals developed an appetite for the folklore of the Balkans (Wachtel 1998, 32; Ćorović 1938, 673; Pavlović and Atanasovski 2016, 361; Kropej 2013, 224). As this oral literature stimulated the palates of the European literati, Karadžić's work also earned the study of Serbian folklore a special place within European and American universities. The twentieth-century cornerstone of Karadžić's influence is Albert Bates Lord's Oral Formulaic Hypothesis (1960), which he based on Milman Parry's view of the Balkan guslar as the last living descendent of the Homeric epic poet (Foley 1988, 1990). Their theory of oral composition has been formative for not only the study of Balkan oral poetry, but also the study of bajanje incantations by U.S. scholars (Kerewsky-Halpern 1983, 1985, 1989; Foley and Kerewsky-Halpern 1976; Kerewsky-Halpern and Foley 1978; Foley 1992, 1995, 2002) and the study of oral charms on an international scale.[88] The darling of the Serbian nationalist imagination and the Euro-American study of oral composition, Karadžić initiated two centuries of scholarship on the oral traditions of the Balkans.

The popularity of Karadžić's anthologies of oral poetry among not only scholars, but also among the intelligentsia and urban bourgeoisie more broadly can be explained by what Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs call folklore's invention of the "Great Divide." Dating back to the work of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the Great Divide designates an insurmountable epistemological border between the folk subject and the modern subject (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 222). In the training and refinement of modern subjectivity, the modern subject was encouraged to travel from the metropole to the countryside by reading folklore and travel literature (Pratt 1992; Wolff 1994; Todorova 2009). We see this logic at work in Karadžić's anthologies, which circulated throughout Europe as folk poetry, and we later see this same logic governing the publication of bajanje anthologies throughout the last century.

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[88] The work of the Committee for Charms, Charmers and Charming as part of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research and their journal *Incantatio* are representative examples of the linguistic study of incantations today.

The turn of the twentieth century witnesses the first sustained wave of scholarship on bajanje. Starting in the 1880s, the Bulgarian journal *Folklore and Ethnography Collection* (*Sbornik za narodni umotvorenija nauka i književnina*, or *SbNU*) begins to regularly publish scholarship on bajanje practices in Macedonia. Articles published in this journal in the 1880s and 90s include transcriptions of incantations as well as herbal and magical remedies for both humans and animals. A number of articles were also published in the journal *Zbornik za narodna život i običaje južnih slavena* in Croatia (Horvat 1896; Zorić 1896; Strohal 1910), *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja* in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Marković 1892; Grðić-Bjelokosić 1896), and *Bosanska vila* (Trifković 1886, 1897). Shortly thereafter, monographs on bajanje began to be published by scholars across the region including Stanoje Milatović (1909), Josip Matasović (1918), and Tihomir Đorðević (1938). Rather than analyses of the practices, these monographs and articles primarily document and taxonomize folk sicknesses, remedies, and incantations as they were observed in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia at the time.

This documentarian approach would persist into the next century of scholarship on bajanje and its correlate practices, but with increased attention given to symbolic and linguistic analysis. Ljubinko Radenković, the most well-known contemporary Serbian scholar of bajanje, has transcribed thousands of incantations in his anthologies (1973, 1982, 1983), which, while serving as fascinating oeuvres, too-often omit information about bajanje's performative and humanist elements, and alienate bajanje's linguistic content from the lives and bodies of bajanje practitioners. Radenković's work paved the way for sustained collections of bajanje incantations and catalogues of folk beliefs throughout the 1980s, 90s, and early 2000s, which utilize linguistic and symbolic analysis to explain bajanje's significance (for example, Zlatanović 1982; Gacović 1986, 2002; Durlić 1987; Stanimirović 1993; Radovanović 1997).

Epistemic Violence and the Status of the Witch

The linguistic study of bajanje situates incantations alongside the genre of oral epic poetry, offering an esteemed, if provisional, status to the practice of bajanje. However, the linguistic focus of most bajanje scholarship has also resulted in the practice's objectification and fetishization. In her article on vernacular lead pouring in post-socialist Bosnia, Larisa Jašarević critiques scholars' excessive "[concern] with signification," because it occludes bajanje's practical medical—not only magical—function (2012, 915). By textualizing incantations and cleaving them away from the people who continue to facilitate and participate in the practice, the folkloric treatment of bajanje becomes about consuming bajanje as a text. As publishers promote bajanje anthologies as an exotic folk fetish to the urban intelligentsia, they deny the contemporaneity and vitality of the folk worldview and further cement the epistemological gulf between the village and the metropole (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 222).

Johannes Fabian has defined this epistemological gulf as the "denial of coevalness" (2014, 31). As the village is affirmed as the geographic periphery of Balkan metropoles, that periphery is also represented as the space of the past. We see this temporal distancing in analyses of bajanje that employ phrases such as "ancient" (Lilek 1894), "ageless and timeless" (Kerewsky-Halpern and Foley 1978, 312), "archaic" (Risteski 2005, 141; Petreska 2008, 40), and with some surprisingly "'modern' elements" (Vivod 2009, 241). By the 1890s, scholars were already classifying bajanje, gatanje, vračanje, and čaranje as "ancient beliefs" (Lilek 1894). All of these temporal signifiers are intimately connected to claims about bajanje's value and veracity. In his book on Macedonian folklore and myth, Kiril Penushliski has written that the power of bajanje is only recognized "in the eyes of the ignorant, superstitious man" (1996, 137). In scholarship on bajanje, "superstition" serves as the foremost mechanism for denying coevalness to bajanje practitioners and participants.

The dismissal of bajanje as superstition privileges the subject position of the scholar above the position of the healer, thereby invalidating the healer as a producer of knowledge. While bajanje can be recognized for its aesthetic contributions to oral tradition, it cannot be accepted on its own terms. By defining bajanje as simultaneously ignorant, primitive, timeless, and sometimes surprisingly modern, these scholars execute a chronopolitical maneuver which denies epistemic sovereignty to vernacular healers. I do not highlight these examples to invite their condemnation, but rather to demonstrate that this type of temporal and evaluative language is ubiquitous. Though some recent scholarship departs from this temporal framing or from the folkloric paradigms of decoding incantations' and healing actions' symbolic meanings,[89] one could open practically any book or article written on bajanje over the last one hundred and fifty years and find this type of Great Divide rhetoric with varying degrees of evolutionist qualification.

The figure of the woman healer and the figure of the witch have intimately intertwined—and sometimes indistinguishable—histories. The bajanje healer occupies a middle zone between these two categories, with her plant medicines typifying the "healer" and her incantations and rituals typifying the "witch." In her book *Caliban and the Witch,* Marxist feminist Silvia Federici has sought to explain the logic behind the progressive disqualification of the knowledge of traditional healers and witches in Europe since the early-modern period. Her foremost conclusion is that the dispossession of women healers under the guise of the witch trials constitutes a major example of primitive accumulation during the transition to capitalism. The plundering of the natural world and the violent exploitation of workers is irreconcilable with the healer's more grounded worldview. Thus, Federici argues that the conflict between these two worldviews resulted in the violent campaigns waged against women in Europe known as the "witch craze," which she argues also informed the genocidal violence committed against Indigenous people and enslaved African people during the conquest of the Americas. While Federici's argument has been critiqued for using inaccurate casualty figures from the witch craze,[90] there remains a significant historical correlation between the wide effort to invalidate women's healing and magical knowledge in Europe and the campaigns of epistemic violence in the Americas (later culminating on a global scale), as demonstrated by the arguments of Patrick Wolfe, Johannes Fabian, and others.[91]

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[89] The most outstanding recent examples are Jašarević's (2012, 2014, 2017) work on salivanje strave in the Bosnian context.

In the Yugoslav region, witch trials formally began in Croatia in 1360. The witch hunts in this region were known as being particularly brutal. Accused women were regularly tortured and burnt at the stake (Vukanović 1989, 9). Article Ten of the 1609 Croatian Assembly "empowered all citizens of Croatia to search for witches and to hand them over [...] for punishment." Those accused of witchcraft were charged with making pacts with the devil, provoking weather events, causing "sickness and deaths in human beings and in animals," and magically stealing milk from other people's cows. A woman could even be accused of witchcraft for cursing at thieves who stole from her, if they later became ill (Vukanović 1989, 10). Despite the brutality of these witch hunts, magical healing practices can still be found in Slovenia and Croatia, as illustrated by the excellent ethnographic scholarship of Mirjam Mencej. On the other side of the Habsburg imperial boundary, the Ottoman Balkans did not participate in the European witch craze. Perhaps because of this, the practice of bajanje remains somewhat more common in rural villages in the region, though witchcraft, divination, herbalism, and associated healing practices still came to be invalidated as superstition and treated as curiosities by folklorists in universities and museums.

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[90] The debate over the number of casualties of the European witch hunt is ongoing. There are multiple critiques of the ways that the witch craze has been mobilized in first and second-wave feminist texts (for a summary see Rowlands 2013). Explicit critiques of Federici are mostly found in blog posts (Kindo 2017; Kindo and Darmangeat 2019; Kay 2011). There is still a need for historians of the European witch craze to directly address Federici's claims. There is a discrepancy between Federici's claim of "hundreds of thousands" of deaths, based on Anne Barstow's (1994), and the more unanimously agreed upon estimates of 30,000 to 50,000 deaths (Levack 2015, 21; Briggs 1996, 260; Thurston 2007, 147-52).

[91] See the introduction chapter, p. 26, 29.

Recently, bajanje and related magico-healing practices have come under increased scrutiny by the state. In 2016, Serbia passed a law banning "superstitious" practices. Anyone found to be dealing with "vračanje (divination), fortune-telling, dream interpretation and similar deceptions" is subject to fines from 10,000 to 50,000 dinars or penalties of up to 120 hours of community service (*Radio Television Serbia* 2016). No doubt, this law was passed primarily to criminalize Roma women. Roma women have long been subjected to negative stereotypes about magic and witchcraft (Pop-Curşeu 2014).[92] While this dissertation has not directly addressed the relationship of Romani disenfranchisement to the disenfranchisement of rural communities, the association of these populations with magic has long marked them for elimination.[93]

The normalization of "superstition" as a descriptor of magical practice denies epistemic sovereignty to those people who have practiced these forms of healing and divination for centuries. Federici argues that women healers were targeted for eradication during the transition to capitalism, because the irrationality of magical practice conflicted with the rationality of waged labor. Having close, non-extractive relations to natural elements, access to power that could not be acquired by will or force, and the ability to be in multiple places and times at once all interfere with processes of primitive accumulation and the rationalization of the work process. Oxana Timofeeva describes the criminalization of traditional healing knowledge as an attack on epistemic sovereignty, which "chased out magic, queer, female, and animistic lifestyles, just as, in Foucault's analysis, it excluded madness" (2019). In their practices, healers in Serbia and Macedonia transform the violent temporality of modernity/coloniality and conceptions of nature in order to maintain knowledge of bajanje's social model of sickness and healers' intimate relations to plants, minerals, and ancestors.

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[92] In Romania, laws passed in 2011 defined witchcraft as taxable work and established a penalty for fraud. Alexandra Coțofană has dubbed these laws "the witch tax," which specifically target Roma women (2017, 70)

[93] In her article on the Roma Futurist artist Mihaela Dragan, Ioanida Costache writes that one objective of Roma Futurism is "'to reclaim the figure of the Roma witch," as a response to the stigmatization of Romani witchcraft" (2021).

Pouring the Fear

For a total of eighteen months from 2016 to the end of 2019, I conducted interviews and participant-observation research with bajanje healers in Macedonia and Eastern Serbia.[94] Research participants' ages range from twenty years old to nearly ninety, though the majority are at least fifty years old. These healers come from Vlach, Macedonian, and Bosniak ethnic backgrounds, from both Orthodox Christian and Muslim religious backgrounds, and they all live in rural villages. Each healer's practice incorporates incantations in some way, though they each have a different repertoire of remedies that they perform and prescribe.

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[94] The chapter is based on seven formal longform interviews, which were conducted with five healers, in addition to participant observation of healing sessions and over twenty informal interviews with these healers and other community members.

To understand how bajanje healers cultivate relationships with natural elements, such as lead, water, coals, and plants, I will first share a healing practice from Macedonia. Selma[95] is a Bosniak healer originally from a city in northern Bosnia who moved to a village in the Petrovec municipality of Macedonia when she married her husband in the early 1980s. A fourth-generation healer, Selma has practiced bajanje since she was twenty years old. Today, she sees around twenty people per day and up to seventy people on weekends, some of whom travel from other countries to visit her. Selma sees bajanje as the principal tradition for all of former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia and Croatia "who are more modern" ("*ko su modernije"*).[96]

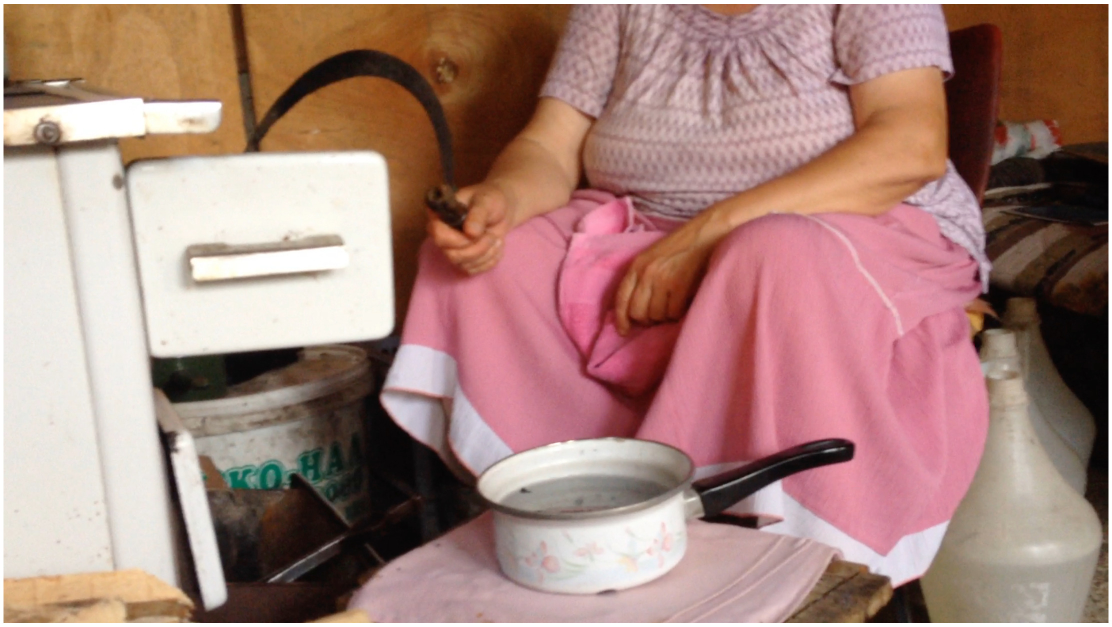

Figure 6.1: Selma uses a sickle to cut up molten lead in the stove. Photograph by the author.

Selma specializes in the practice of *salivanje strave*—literally translating to "melting the fear"—a lead melting divination practice known across the Balkan region from Bosnia to Turkey. In her practice, Selma melts lead in a small outdoor stove. As the lead begins to melt,

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[95] All personal names and some place names have been changed to preserve healers' anonymity. Regional, ethnic, and religious markers have been kept consistent to the extent possible.

[96] From an interview on May 28, 2019.

Selma cuts through it with a hand sickle. She says she has to use this sickle, because it can cut through everything bad (Fig. 6.1). She then places a sheet over the guest's body and pours the molten lead into a pot of cold water in front of them, where it freezes into a solid form. She removes the sheet and then proceeds to read the figures in the lead similarly to how one would read coffee grounds or tea leaves. Chaotic, protruding shapes in the lead indicate the presence of *strah*, or fear, while flat, compressed images indicate the presence of *uroci*, or evil eye.[97] She repeats the process until a piece of lead breaks off in the water.

Selma wraps up this piece of lead—the guest's "heart" ("*srce"*)—in newspaper and gives it to her guest to keep near them, either in their purse or under their pillow. She then pours some of the water from the pot into a an empty soda bottle. Selma says that every morning and night the guest must bathe themselves with this water. They must wash their hair three times, their face three times, their chest three times, and their legs three times. They should not let any of the water touch the ground. When the bottle of water is empty, the guest must throw their "heart" into a moving body of water.

Salivanje strave healing is a critical example of the body's "irrational" relation to natural elements within the bajanje worldview. As Selma melts the leads, freezes it, and ultimately watches a piece break off, the unpredictable nature of the process is what yields its insights. Selma never forces the lead to melt in a particular way nor does she break pieces off of the lead manually. Rather, she observes, listens to, and speaks with the lead. Before beginning the melting process, Selma first asks her guest to blow on the metal, because she says breath allows her to "feels what you have inside."[98] By relating to lead, Selma is able to establish social relations with both the lead and her guests. These social relations extend also to the coals and water. Before Selma says which problems afflict her guest, she drops some burning embers into a pot of water. Watching the way that the embers fall in the water and the quality of the steam produced, Selma engages with the raw knowledge that she received through her guest's breath. She refers to this phase as "learning" (2017).[99] None of the words that Selma uses to describe her salivanje strave practice ever suggest relations of extraction, commodification, or enclosure. Rather, by using the language of "feeling" and "learning," Selma demonstrates a mutable and contingent relationship between her and the natural materials that she uses to heal.

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[97] It is interesting to note that strah is analogous to "*susto"* in the context of Mexican healing traditions. See *Susto* (1984) by Arthur J. Rubel, Carl W. O'Nell, and Rolando Collado-Ardon.
[98] From interview on August 6, 2016

During a salivanje strave session in 2016, Selma reads lead for a young person and tells her guest that they are suffering from uroci (evil eyes) and strah. The uroci, Selma says, cause headaches and problems with the legs, while the strah is causing uneasiness, nervousness, and stomach problems. Selma tells her guest that they have a good soul. She tells them that they think of everyone else first and put their own needs last; they give a lot to people and do not receive enough in return. She tells them that they need to put themselves first. She attributes strah to stress. Selma lights some paper on fire and puts the burning paper inside the stove. She tells the guest that they have a lot of luck in life, because the moment she placed the paper in the stove a huge fire erupted.

By giving physical and emotional problems a name, Selma validates the body as a complex social site. She tells her guests what she learns about them through their breath, the lead, and the embers. Significantly, Selma articulates the continuum of bodily pain, emotional pain, and social imbalance. The lead transforms as the body does, reaching culmination as the body is enveloped in fabric while the lead is frozen into its new form—that new form being a part of you: your heart. Her knowledge is not restricted to the naming of physical and emotional pains, but also extends to social pain. Selma recognizes and the imbalance of generosity as a site of social pain. By telling her guest that they give people more than they receive in return, she names the lack of reciprocity as a contributor to ill health. To heal the social self, she tells her guest to prioritize their own needs. By placing self-preservation within the paradigm of social reciprocity, Selma enables the guest to shift from viewing self-care as selfish to viewing self-care as contributing to personal health, and by extension the health of the community.[100]

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[99] From interview on July 26, 2017.

The Politics of Strah

While folklorists have tended to abstract bajanje from its material conditions, material conditions remain at the forefront of Selma's mind. She explains that while for children, strah arises from fear of things like animals and bugs, "when they grow up, strah comes from stress. And today comes mainly stressful times, difficult life." Selma challenges ideas about "strah" being a force outside of time, something eternal or mystical. Rather, in our conversations, Selma connects the increase of strah with the devastating material conditions that have resulted from the Yugoslav Wars, the collapse of Yugoslav socialism, and the imposition of harsh neoliberal reforms on the region.

> We all have more strah now, especially adults, because a very difficult life has come. Now we are afraid of life, because our existence isn't secure. Many people are without work—they have no work—no real life, no anything...there are many families in Macedonia who are so poor they seriously have nothing. They cannot survive, and thus strah is created—restlessness, nervousness, never-ending thoughts. You think about how you will survive, how you will get your family out. [...] you immediately worry about how you're going to eat, how you're going to survive, you know? The organism cannot bear it, my dear. And that's how it is.

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[100] Self-care in the sense of adrienne maree brown's *Pleasure Activism* (2019), not in the sense of the wellness industry (see Purser 2019 and the *Conspirituality* podcast).

> Because most people's strah hits their psyche...their psyche is disturbed when someone has a lot of strah.[101]

Selma recognizes that with the loss of the social protection of the state, which formerly provided health care, employment, environmental protections, and controlled prices, postsocialist populations have been transformed into bare life. The concept of "bare life" has most significantly been theorized by Giorgio Agamben (1998). Exemplified by the concentration camp, "bare life" refers to biological life without political existence—a state of disposability in which people are subject to violence without impunity. In saying that "the organism cannot bear it," Selma enters into conversation with not only Agamben's "bare life," but also Achille Mbembe's "living dead" (2003), Orlando Patterson's "social death" (1982), and what Henry Giroux has called the "politics of disposability" (2006). The insecurity that the Macedonian rural population has been subjected to is incompatible with life. The living organism cannot bear this much death.

To constantly remain in survival mode produces strah. Not being able to feel secure in knowing that one can reproduce one's own existence creates strah. These conditions emerged in the early 1990s with the Yugoslav wars and the so-called postsocialist "transition." According to Selma, the postsocialist period in Macedonia has been a "catastrophe": "The last 25 years, a lot of fear appeared. Everywhere difficult life has come. People are afraid of life itself, my dear (*Narod od samog života se plaši*). And that's why the *strah* is created. Can't feed your family, that's it, my dear.[...] In Macedonia especially."[102] As one of the poorest countries of the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia has been subject to some of the harshest economic disenfranchisement since the collapse of socialism.

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[101] From an interview on May 28, 2019

[102] From an interview on May 28, 2019.

I asked Selma whether strah could be compared to depression. She identifies depression as a potential outcome of strah, but the terms are not interchangeable: "Strah makes you retreat into yourself, to fall in a depression, to retreat into yourself, to not want to communicate, to sit, to listen....you have restlessness, nervousness, insomnia, you have negative thoughts, bad dreams. From fear, the heart breaks and the stomach hurts and everything." Depression is related to, but not coextensive with, strah. By singling out depression, Selma sees people mainly turning to medication—to anti-depressants. According to Selma, however, this is in vain. For strah, she says, "there is neither doctor nor pill" ("*nema ni doktor ni tableta*"). Her resistance to treat strah with antidepressants does not result from an overt anti-science or anti-medicine position on her part. Selma was educated as a nurse before she got married and started to practice bajanje. These medical options may not offer the solution, she reminds me, "But bajanje helps."[103]

Selma's opinion about antidepressant medication is informed by the over-prescription and over-consumption of psychiatric medication in the former Yugoslavia since the 1990s. The populations of post-war former Yugoslavia have the highest consumption rates of antidepressants in Europe. Fearing stigma, people often find antidepressants more appealing than therapy. Many medications are also obtained without genuine prescriptions, further preserving anonymity. A 2004 study on pharmaceutical use in Serbia by Divac et al. has demonstrated that while there was a slow increase in use and prescribing of benzodiazepines during the 1980s, it was not until 1994 that "Diazepam appeared for the first time on the list of the ten most frequently prescribed drugs in Serbia."[104] By 1996, "diazepam was the most frequently prescribed drug in Serbia" (2004, 316). Diazepam consumption skyrocketed and reached its peak in 1999 during the NATO bombing of Serbia.[105] Concurrent to the rising use of diazepam was a large reduction in visits to psychiatrists. Divac et al. theorize that this reduction is the result of increased tolerance to psychological distress due to a prolonged period of high stress, cultural stigma against mental illness, and the tendency to be prescribed medication during patients' initial visits (2004, 321). Additionally, private pharmacies that opened after 1990 did not require a prescription to purchase benzodiazepines.

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[103] From an interview on May 28, 2019.

[104] Benzodiazepines are psychoactive drugs that slow down the nervous system, producing a sedative effect. The drug is used to treat insomnia, anxiety, and seizures.

High consumption rates of benzodiazepines are strongly correlated with economic instability. The populations of Croatia and Serbia consume five to six times the amount of benzodiazepines, respectively, as neighboring country Slovenia—the wealthiest country in the former Yugoslavia. In a recent study, authors found a significant negative correlation between level of economic development and rates of benzodiazepine consumption (Marković et al. 2019). This finding contributes to previous studies that have demonstrated the positive correlation of socioeconomic instability and the incidence of anxiety disorders (Avcin et al. 2011; Sargent et al. 2011; Evans-Lacko et al. 2013).[106]

Recognizing the close relationship between mental health and economic security, the late cultural critic Mark Fisher has argued for the need to politicize common mental health disorders. In *Capitalist Realism*, Fisher argues that depression, anxiety, and attention deficit disorder need to be politicized in the same way that Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and others have politicized more severe mental illnesses like schizophrenia.[107] Citing Oliver James' *The Selfish Capitalist*, which persuasively correlates "rising rates of mental distress and the neoliberal mode of capitalism," Fisher argues that the "privatization of stress" over the last thirty years has made individuals feel responsible for solving "their own psychological distress" (2009, 19). Fisher has seen the effects of this trend in his students, who feel increasingly immobilized and hopeless about life. The sense of hopelessness and immobility that Fisher describes also forms one of the core schemata of depression. Fisher suggests the accelerating rate of mental health disorders in the capitalist world must be understood as foremost a systemic, rather than individual, problem. While the medical model primarily attributes mental disorders to chemical imbalances in the brain, trauma, and one's family background, a politicized view of mental health begs us to question how capitalism's dysfunction drives the "mental health plague" of the present (Fisher 2009, 21, 19). The trends in the consumption of psychiatric medications, incidence of anxiety, and rates of economic development in the former Yugoslavia exemplify Fisher's argument.

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[105] In 1999, benzodiazepine consumption reached its highest point, 133 DDD/1000 inhabitants/day. Compare to average of 25 DDD/1000 inhabitants/day during 1990-1998. This is over a fivefold increase.

[106] Marković et al. propose three causes of the correlation between economic development, anxiety, and benzodiazepine consumption. First, high unemployment in Serbia and Croatia due to economic instability produces high levels of work anxiety, leading to the prescription of benzodiazepines (Karanikolos et al. 2013). Second, lacking the resources of Slovenia, benzodiazepine are over-prescribed in Croatia and Serbia, because they are the cheapest, most accessible psychiatric medication on the market (Strech et al. 2009). People also self-medicate with benzodiazepines for this reason. Third, Slovenia's wealth enables them to manage a macrolevel policy for the development of healthcare, thereby ensuring that patients and doctors receive current, evidence-based drugs and training (Eccles and Mason 2001).

Resonant with Fisher's assessment, Selma specifically identifies stress, not brain chemistry or depression, as the cause of strah in adults: "For every strah, there is a reason. And now in this time, stress contributes the most. Stress contributes the most to strah. Twenty-five years ago it wasn't like it is now." The American Psychological Association (APA) defines stress as "the physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress involves changes affecting nearly every system of the body, influencing how people feel and behave." While manifestations of ordinary stress are relatively short lived, chronic stress can cause a number of physical and psychological effects. Explanations for strah and chronic stress are incredibly similar. Both strah and stress can lead people to develop anxiety disorders, depression, body aches, insomnia, exhaustion, headaches, high blood pressure, muscle tension, digestive issues, difficulty having sex, and a weakened immune system (Cleveland Clinic).

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[107] See, for example, Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* and *The Birth of the Clinic*, and Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Erich Fromm (1941, 55), Frantz Fanon (1988, 2004, 2008, 2020), and David Smail (2018 [1993]) are also integral to the social critique of psychology and psychiatry.

Selma notes that the large increase in strah began after the war in Bosnia, because the war made what it made ("*napravio što je napravio*"). The wars of the 1990s were traumatic for the people of the former Yugoslavia. War trauma is already known as the source of a wide range of negative health outcomes. The effect of the war was then compounded by the rapid deterioration of the economy. The majority of the former Yugoslavia remains in a state of economic insecurity up to the present day, with rural, elderly, and racialized populations affected most deeply. By politicizing strah and stress, bajanje healers can help to de-naturalize the devastating consequences of war and economic disenfranchisement.

Prior to the war, Selma remembers strah being much less of a problem. Recalling the time of socialist Yugoslavia and President Tito she tells me, "You weren't born in the years when Tito was alive, some people criticize me when I say this, but that was the most beautiful time of life in former Yugoslavia. In general, while Tito was there, there was peace in the whole world and everything was good, because he established peace for everyone." She sums up her positive regard for Tito, saying that "while God and Tito were walking the earth, everything was good" ("*dok je išao bog i Tito po zemlji sve (je) bilo dobro*").[108]

Practical Aesthetics

I encountered a related social and corporeal approach to healing and care in the practice of the Vlach healer Jovan. Jovan lives at the bottom of a treacherously steep dirt road in the village of Luka in eastern Serbia. Blind and almost ninety years old, he lives alone and works as a cowherd. Still out with the cows when a friend and I arrive, we wait in the shade of some oak trees for half an hour before Jovan emerges from the woods, following one cow and leading another, cursing at them. After putting the animals away, Jovan invites us into his home. A young woman asks him for help with her love life, explaining that since her last breakup she has been unable to develop romantic interest in anyone. Jovan tells us to go gather water from three sources and then to return to his house. We walk up the hill to some neighbors' houses to retrieve water from their wells.

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[108] From an interview on May 28, 2019.

When we return, Jovan asks us to combine the three waters in a single bottle, which my companion does before handing the bottle to Jovan. Jovan opens the bottle, dips a dried basil flower inside and holds it at the top of the bottle. Then, he begins his incantation. Speaking in a low voice at a quick pace, Jovan produces a verbal rhythm in tune with dipping the basil. Periodically, he pauses to lock and unlock an ordinary padlock several times before resuming his focus on the basil. About halfway through the incantation, his cell phone rings. He answers the phone—a local woman is calling who wants to visit him, because her child is several years old and still unable to speak. Jovan gives the woman vague directions to his house, tells her to visit him tomorrow, and then hangs up the phone. Without any recognition of the interruption, Jovan resumes the incantation and the repetitive pattern of speaking, dipping, locking, and unlocking.

As he concludes his incantation, Jovan performs a final manipulation of the padlock and then tells the woman that she needs to take the water with the basil to finish the healing process. He instructs her to go somewhere secluded, remove her clothes, and wash herself with the water. Jovan tells the woman that she will need to take a sip of the water and then brush her chest, abdomen, and back with the soaked basil blossom. After performing this choreography three times, she must dump the rest of the bottle's contents into a moving body of water. At this point she will be free from what binds her against love. Jovan tells the woman that her future lover will not be able to sleep or eat again until they find her, and that she will not be able to sleep or eat again until she finds them.

Jovan does not categorically distinguish this love healing from the healings he performs to treat cancer. In the bajanje context, sickness encompasses both what is typically labeled as disease and what is commonly identified as misfortune. I utilize "sickness", rather than "illness" or "disease," to separate the conditions addressed in bajanje from clinical definitions of disease as an organ or system abnormality. Bajanje healers such as Jovan broaden our conceptions of sickness and health by insisting upon the sociality of sickness. Speaking with a colleague that summer, we discussed how the most common reasons that people visit bajanje healers are problems with love, disease, money, death, and having children. Each of these problems—whether biomedical or not—impedes the successful engagement of a person with their broader social environment. In my field notes, I note my colleague saying "These are everyday problems, and bajanje is the appropriate everyday answer. It's not an existential crisis" (August 5, 2017). The biomedical model defines disease as primarily a biological or physical abnormality. In bajanje, however, the physical body is indivisible from the social, the psychological, and the emotional body.

Jovan produces corporeal knowledge during the healing ritual by facilitating what I refer to as an "aesthetic encounter." David MacDougall's theory of aesthetics as a "culturally patterned sensory experience" transforms "aesthetics" from pertaining to the valuation of beauty to functioning as a material sense through which to distinguish the known from the unknown (2005, 98).[109] MacDougall presents social aesthetics as a physical and external manifestation of

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[109] Kant defined aesthetics as the valuation of beauty.

Bourdieu's *habitus*. By lending materiality to our sensory experiences, MacDougall's redefinition of aesthetics allows us to discuss the material exchange of extra-lingusitic knowledge. My sense of the "encounter" comes from Martin Buber, who uses this word to describe a subjectifying rather than objectifying relation. The subjectifying relation (named the I-You relation) rests outside of language and sits firmly within the body – this encounter is the space where you and another subject become one porous entity, forming a transient union.

Jovan uses aesthetics in his *vračanje* practice to inaugurate an aesthetic encounter with his guests. During the incantation, Jovan uses his voice less as a medium of verbal communication and more as a modality of touch. When undergoing a treatment with Jovan myself, I recall the feeling of a shared interiorization of voice through our aural sense. It felt as though Jovan had connected his larynx to my eardrums. The individual words and their meanings carried less weight than the affect his voice had upon me—I felt the tone of his voice more than I constructed a narrative of what the words of his incantation imply. The deep rhythmic pattern of his voice envelopes my body as I sit next to him, my sense of time begins to distend, and despite being in a deep state of concentration I frequently lose my sense of self—I have difficulty remembering where I am and why I am there. His voice acquires a texture which reaches out and touches me. By using his voice as a material, Jovan demonstrates Trinh T. Minh-ha's proposal of a voice that is "seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched" (1989, 121). His aesthetics reveal the nature of my imbalances—he senses apprehension, the tightening of my neck, the alternating clenching and relaxing of my fists, and my eventual stillness.

Jovan locates his healing practice within the realm of everyday life. In the aforementioned treatment with the young woman, Jovan's seemingly typical "ritual" is disrupted when he answers his cell phone mid-incantation. Rupturing the trance, when Jovan answers his phone we re-enter a mundane social space. After hanging up the phone, he does not acknowledge his conversation as an intrusion nor as a transgression of the healing space. This abrupt interaction with the outside world and Jovan's juxtaposition of mundane phone calls with bajanje healing sessions reveal's bajanje's position within the everyday. In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart defines the ordinary as a "shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges" (2007, 1). Within the ordinary, practices and knowledges unfold as a flow punctured *by* events, but not ontologically *about* events. The ordinary appears as the bleeding together of the intimate and the public (Stewart 2007, 39). Both Jovan's cell phone and his incantation sit within the same shifting field of the ordinary. Jovan's phone call breaks any valuation of the healing as an event. Instead, bajanje is foregrounded as an enduring ordinary practice within a field of other ordinary activities—such as scheduling future healing sessions. At the moment that Jovan's phone rings, the public enters the intimate space of bajanje and lets the air out of its supernatural mystique. Romantic visions of bajanje as the casting of magical spells are confounded to reveal bajanje as an ordinary way to negotiate with sickness.

Jovan produces an aesthetic encounter that weaves together ritual and the everyday. In addition to the phone call, Jovan's aesthetics come into view when he transforms an ordinary padlock into a ritual tool for healing. Jovan manipulates sound, activity, and touch through his repetitive locking and unlocking movements. The lock works to undermine scholars' representations of bajanje as archaic, while also highlighting the extraordinary dimension of the ordinary. The lock, here, is both ordinary and more than ordinary. While locking and unlocking the padlock, Jovan's incantation dictates his guest's release from their sickness. I interiorize the "click" of the lock just as I had interiorized the low hum of Jovan's voice. When the lock clicks shut or open I feel tension and pressure accumulating and dispersing. By creating this juxtaposition of the ordinary and the ritual, Jovan moves healing into the zone where we perform everyday life. Bajanje cannot be written off as "just" magic, because we recognize that bajanje is as ordinary as the padlock that keeps our bike attached to a parking meter. Understanding the interconnection of Jovan's voice, his cellphone, and his padlock in relation to healing, we witness an aesthetic encounter emerging which values the facile oscillation in and out of the ordinary.

By recognizing Jovan as an aesthetic laborer, I am also refusing to grant the "art world" sole authority over aesthetics. Aesthetics are integral to our lives. I recognize Jovan as an aesthetic laborer to foreground the inventive and productive nature of bajanje. Jovan constantly invents new material techniques with which to draw together the everyday and the extraordinary. While scholars of oral poetry and bajanje have been consistently invested in demonstrating the age and archaism of the practice, Jovan's practice confounds their dedication to mystification. Jovan heals members of his community through the invention of an aesthetic encounter that sits between their body and his.

Sitting with the Dead

Where Jovan's practice foregrounds the body, another nearby healer foregrounds the voice. Not too far from Jovan's house is the home of Maja, a Vlach healer in her mid-eighties who lives in the nearby village of Tanda. I visit her on a hot day in the middle of summer. She lives in a single room within a larger house that used to belong to her husband. Twice widowed, Maja's late-husband's children took possession of the house after he died and left her with one small room to live in. She cooks on a fire outside, which is smoldering when I arrive. Lacking a dining room or a living room, we sit on logs in the garden adjacent to the smoldering fire. The smoke periodically whips up in our faces while we sit in heat.

In anticipation of my arrival, Maja has baked some *plašinte*, a pancake made with egg and cheese, and bought some cookies and juices. She repeatedly tells me to eat more, and I am happy to oblige. I ask Maja about her relationship with her village. She responds saying that she gets along with everyone and that everyone comes to her for healing. Part of a social landscape where people are constantly concerned about black magic and the possibility of being cursed by other people, Maja says that people often visit her to either tell her that they hate someone or that someone else hates them. In response, she warns them that people who hate throw rocks. Instead of throwing rocks, you need to give the object of your hate some bread. Maja enjoys healing people in her village with her bajanje work and she says that she gets great satisfaction out of being able to help.

Maja learned to practice bajanje through a series of dreams that came to both her and her grandmother. When Maja was four or five years old, her grandmother fell into a trance where three young women came to her and told her to leave her alcoholic husband in order to gain healing powers. Her grandmother did not leave her husband, and subsequently Maja gained healing powers in a dream. During this dream, two young women took her with them to sit in between them on the middle of a rotating cross in the sky. When Maja woke up from her dream, she knew how to heal.

Maja's story of how she began to practice bajanje is both spectacular and discreet. When the two women in the dream give Maja bajanje knowledge, Maja deflates the power imbued in this moment by pointing out that her healing repertoire was originally intended for someone else. Maja obscures the agent of the power transmission and instead highlights her own individual actions as a healer. When Maja tells the story of how she received bajanje knowledge, she does not clarify whether the women in her grandmother's dream were the same women that were present in her own dream. Maja refuses to give a fixed narrative of how she learned bajanje and instead prefers to discuss how she continues to use that knowledge in the present moment.

Soon after arriving at Maja's home, Paun, the son of a healer from a nearby village, joins us. He begins humming the melody of a Vlach song that is used to bring the dead back down to earth. After first saying that she has forgotten the song, Maja also begins to sing. Our attention fixates on her and the song makes all the hairs on my arms stand on end. Maja's voice is piercing and rough. The song is emotional. She is singing to invite her dead husband and his brother to sit with us. She invites them to spend some time with us, eating, drinking, and smoking. During her singing, which lasts for five to ten minutes, the wind furiously picks up at moments, flinging leaves across the area where we are sitting. At the end of the song everyone says "*bog da prosti*," meaning "may God forgive [us]."

Maja shows us a photo of both of her deceased husbands. She tells us that she paid someone to Photoshop a photograph of her standing between her two late husbands. In this photograph, Maja and her late husbands are immortalized in their mid-twenties in black and white. Marija invented a new history for herself. She tells us that she learned in a dream many years ago that she would be old, alone, and crying. While she says that while it is true that she lost both of her husbands and now lives a very difficult life, this photo brings her joy.

Maja has an intimate relationship with death. In her song to call the dead, Maja recognizes a permeable separation of the living and the dead. While she does not make her dead relatives materialize before our eyes, Maja appears to slice through time in order to open up another real space in which the dead and the living maintain ongoing relations—a space where the dead still like to drink and smoke cigarettes. In this space of the dead, Maja also deals with those who are perched on the border of the two worlds. She is known for her ability to treat living vampires, people who have lost consciousness and are suspended between life and death. Most commonly afflicting people who are very old, but also those who fall into comas at any age, when people stop eating and lose consciousness for a prolonged period of time, they need bajanje. The indecision of people who are close to death presents a threat to the community, because while they are in this vampire state, they will eat their neighbors' sheep and other livestock through their dreams in order to stay alive. The healer must encourage the dying person to choose either death or life.

After discussing work, bajanje, and Maja's performance, we begin to talk about Jovan. Both Jovan and Maja visit each other for help when they cannot heal themselves. Maja tells us that someone visited Jovan a few months ago, claiming that they needed healing, and then stole 6000 dinars from him. Around fifty Euros, this is a significant amount of money for older people in this part of Serbia. Maja then tells us that someone also stole fifty liters of gasoline from her car. She visited Jovan for help finding whoever took the gasoline and he told her that the person who stole her gasoline would come to her and that that thief would end up having an "accident." A few weeks later, Maja's bull impaled the woman who stole her gas, and the thief ended up in the hospital.

In Maja and Jovan's relationship, we witness the exchange of practice. Through her stories, Maja assigns significant power to Jovan. She comments on the things that Jovan can do that she cannot, such as see into the future. She also shows the literal transformation of the body through bajanje when she describes the culmination of Jovan's vision of reciprocity. While Jovan did not necessarily curse the woman who stole gas from Maja, he sees what will happen to the thief and sees the material transformation of the woman's body. Maja uses this story as an example of Jovan's strength, tying the efficacy of bajanje to the lasting transformation of the body. She mentions, gleefully, that the woman who stole her gas had to spend a long time in the hospital as a result of the bull's attack. Both the story of the wounding and the physical wound endure.

As we talk about Jovan's power as a healer, we also indirectly talk about how powerful Maja is. Maja tells us that when she was very young and married to her first husband, her in-laws' cow fell ill. While her mother-in-law did not believe in bajanje, her father-in-law did, and so he asked for her help. Maja mixed some plant medicines together with frankincense, gave the mixture to the bull, and recited an incantation. After this, the bull stood up and was healthy again. While telling this story, Maja starts laughing as she recalls how easily she healed this bull. Rebuffing any spectacular representation of her own healing practice, Maja concludes her story by saying that the bull just got up and acted normal once her healing was finished. We all start laughing. Maja's commonsensical attitude toward the efficacy of bajanje pokes fun at her skeptics, while simultaneously refusing to orient her perspective according those skeptics.

The Issue of Belief: Transforming Superstition Through History

In her narratives, Maja regularly introduces the muted presence of suspicion against bajanje. Throughout my conversations with Maja, she obliquely addresses people's distrust in magical healing. In the story recounted above with the sick bull, Maja deflates negative attitudes towards bajanje by making her mother-in-law's disbelief appear ridiculous and, in fact, irrational. By recounting past narratives of confounded skepticism, Maja both asserts the successful application of her knowledge in the past and creates a vivid present for bajanje today.

When Maja tells us about how she healed the bull, she transforms her relationship to that past event of disbelief while also sharing with us the mixture of plants and incense which brought about the animal's healing. In doing so, Maja transmits knowledge about plant medicine, while also underscoring the important relationship between the bajanje worldview and these specific remedies.

Through the practice of palpating time, healers like Maja evade commonplace narratives of bajanje's past temporality. Bajanje healers embed the contemporaneity and endurance of the practice into daily conversation and the bodies of the people who practice and receive bajanje. Selma, for example, demonstrates an enduring vision of bajanje when she affirms that knowledge and interest in these practices are increasing amongst the younger generation. Referring to the treatment of colic, she says:

> [Young people] believe more and more…Before, only the old people believed in bajanje, but now most young people believe…when one person comes and brings her baby for bajanje, and they see I helped, she will tell others. And the others, you know…they have confidence in me that I will help them too if they come to visit me. And when they come, they usually say, "that person visited you and she sent us, because you made that for their baby, so you can do the same for ours." And you know, confidence [in bajanje] grows when I help you. You will tell the others that it helped you, and that's it. Now there are more and more young people who believe in bajanje.[110]

Selma's practice supports growing confidence in bajanje by requiring her guests to catalyze their healing in two secondary sites. Similarly, Selma and Jovan prepare guests for healing during their initial meeting, but the transformation of the sick body can only culminate when guests materially invest in their own healing. When I underwent salivanje strave with Selma, I had to spend four weeks working on my own body before the culmination of the ritual. During these four weeks, I inscribed a new relationship not only with my body, but also with bajanje as a healing practice equipped to heal my sicknesses. Twice a day, every day, for four weeks, I had to think about bajanje as I bathed myself. For Selma, the future of bajanje will not be built solely by a community of healers, but also through healers' collaborations with communities of young people who choose to seek out bajanje.

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[110] Interview on July 26, 2017

A final aspect of bajanje that resists characterization as archaic, endangered, or dying off is healers' use of everyday objects. Rather than requiring an arsenal of antique talismans and esoteric texts, bajanje uses oral transmission and ordinary objects that can be found outdoors or in a typical kiosk or grocery store. During his incantation to heal love sickness, Jovan uses an ordinary padlock to accompany his voice. His rhythmic locking and unlocking provides his guest with a way to visually and aurally invest their concentration in his performance. In Selma's salivanje strave practice, she uses lead that her guests bring from local shops, junkyards, and industrial sites. Empty soda and water bottles are common vessels in all of these healers' practices, sometimes with some soda still remaining in them (Jašarević 2012, 934). Talking about how bajanje fits into her daily life, Selma situates her practice among the rest of her housework. Usually performed at kitchen tables or adjacent to agricultural supplies, bajanje healers do not attempt to create a lavish ritual atmosphere for their guests, but rather demonstrate how bajanje sits on a continuum with their everyday lives.

The body, as the locus of our vulnerability, is the site where life and death are negotiated. Bajanje healers are intimately familiar with this truth. As careworkers, they recognize sickness and health not as a relationship between a disease and an afflicted body, but as a more expansive analytic that connects the physical body to social, discursive, historical, and political bodies. By recognizing the subject's material embeddedness, bajanje healers do not confine themselves to fixing the ailments of the physical body (leg pain, nervousness, impotency, etc.). Rather, those physical ailments form part of a larger sensible network, in which the healing of physical and mental pain depend upon the healing of historical and epistemic violences.

By revealing the false distinction between the social body, the physical body, and the mind, bajanje healers demonstrate a vision of the related body. In settler discussions of Indigenous ways of knowing, “spiritual,” “superstitious,” and “belief” often arise as qualifiers that gloss the close relationship between humans and other-than-human persons, including plants, animals, and minerals. Indigenous studies scholars have critiqued the ways that these descriptors reproduce stereotypes of the “noble savage” (Aldred 2000). In response to the over-spiritualization of Indigenous religion and ways of knowing, David Shorter has proposed “related” as a more accurate term than “spiritual” for describing practices of maintaining types of social bonds that exceed the narrow confines of human-human social relations (2016). Though distinct, the stereotyped “spiritual” Native person and the “superstitious” Balkan grandmother are allied in the struggle against Euro-American epistemic violence. When applied to the context of bajanje, Shorter’s theorization of relatedness makes space for epistemic difference and provides a nuanced alternative to rote characterizations of bajanje as archaic superstition.

The related body requires that we recognize the body as not only a sack of organs, but also a historical subject embedded in a specific set of material relations and a specific ecology. Health is constituted not only by the absence of disease, but also by the maintenance of intersubjective relations with the natural world and an ongoing obligation to act ethically towards the dead, towards one’s neighbors, and towards future generations. Ultimately, considering subjectivity as embedded within this relational web reveals a type of sociality that Fred Moten, drawing on the words of Edouard Glissant, refers to as the “consent not to be a single being” (2010).

The bajanje healer palpates time as they eschew the epistemic regime of capitalist modernity. The healer contests the historicization of bajanje and recounts a disassembled and re-membered history of survival by other means. The bajanje healer is a marginal subject of history, infrequently represented in its annals. Whenever the bajanje healer is represented, it is as a dead subject or a historical relic. The first palpation of time is therefore a resuscitation, a firm rhythmic pressure applied to the chest of the taxidermied healer (Rony 1996). Now resuscitated, the bajanje healer remembers her/his relations to a type of nature and a type of time that do not abide by modern/colonial epistemology. This is the second palpation, a palpation of nature where the healer melts lead, burns coals, and splashes water and a palpation of time where the healer carves a heterotopia through which to reach the dead and the future. Palpating time through performance allows the bajanje healer to see a guest, someone afflicted with fear and evil eye, as someone who is not only sad and in pain, but as someone whose sadness and pain is also inextricable from their being written out of non-modern relatedness. Healers define the success of their strategies themselves. Talking to Selma about the vitality of bajanje as a tradition, she confidently comments that even biomedical doctors come to her for healing, "because they can't heal it all. For fear and evil eye there is no doctor for that, my dear. Only bajanje" (2017).

A Postsocialist Intervention

The significance of bajanje healers' engagement with history and modernity gains new significance in the postsocialist period, when subjects across Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Western and Central Asia have been asked to forget their socialist pasts and to recover their pre-socialist capitalist trajectories (Groys 2008, 155). While a rural exodus took place throughout the socialist era, social protections scaffolded rural populations against a crude transformation into bare life—against becoming a completely disposable workforce. Since the collapse of socialism in the 1990s, global finance has rapidly dismantled socialist welfare infrastructure and rural populations have been left without guarantees of housing, healthcare, and basic human necessities. As socialist projects were conceived of as decisive breaks from capitalist history, postsocialist neoliberalism has sought to invalidate those projects as failed experiments and to force civilians and political leaders to "catch up" to the hegemonic timeline of capitalism. This rhetoric of "catching up" is pervasive in discourses on subjects ranging from the economy to contemporary art (Kunst 2012; Čvoro 2016; Ditchev 2016; Bryzgel 2017, 298–337).

For people from the former Yugoslavia, we are told there is not only the need to catch up to Western capitalist time, but also to "civilized" time. During the 1990s war, Western media latched onto the Balkanist narrative of "ancient ethnic hatreds" as a way to distance themselves from the ethno-nationalist violence of the "primitive" Balkans (Todorova 2009). Milica Bakić-Hayden has critiqued this narrative as "a rhetorical screen that obscures the inherent modernity of conflict based on contested notions of state, nation, national identity and sovereignty" (1992, 929). Narrating the Balkans as embroiled in a primordial ethnic struggle for power occludes how ethno-nationalisms are actually foundational to the modern category of the "nation." In the West, where Sylvia Wynter's "ethno-class of Man" maintains absolute power, ethnic struggle and racial violence is individualized and occluded as incidental violence, rather than as part of the structure of the modern nation (2003). Denying the modernity of "turbo-fascism" during the Yugoslav Wars is a particularly hysterical example of modernity as a "hegemonic narrative of Western civilization," which is predicated upon the overrepresentation of the white modern man's innocence (Papić 2002; Mignolo 2011). Serbia's turbo-fascism is written off by pundits as an element foreign to Europe, a consequence of the Balkans having not achieved sufficient modernity, despite the fact that the modern nation as an ethnically homogenous political body is a Romantic European invention of the eighteenth century. If anything, the wars firmly establish the Yugoslav region's modern inheritance.

The postsocialist as a middle zone, as a transitional time, provides an opportunity to change direction. Out of the "transition," whose devastating external consequences have been aptly defined as "shock therapy," a fortuitous encounter with Foucault's heterotopia emerges (Buyandelgeriyn 2008, 237–38). In the bleak present context, where political leaders of postsocialist post-war states fail to take responsibility for war crimes, fail to make cooperative transnational agreements, fail to care for their own citizens' basic needs, and actively infringe on the human rights of anyone outside the narrow definition of the normative ethno-national subject, theorizing the practices of bajanje healers and their larger rural or "folk" contexts gives us the opportunity to re-evaluate what Susan Buck-Morss calls the "inadequacies" of modernity, including a re-evaluation of time and history altogether (2006, 498). Through palpating history, bajanje healers seize the opportunity to forge a different mode of time-keeping and history-making, which does not write off embodied practices like bajanje as archaic, anachronistic, or dying out.

Looking at the abundance of bajanje healers in the Balkan region, we know that premonitions of cultural death did not come to fruition. Global capitalism and explicit criminalization failed to replace and destroy all non-modern forms of cultural practice and social relating. While vernacular practices such as bajanje of course entered into relation with socialist modernity, and then neoliberal capitalism, these practices did not completely change form to solely serve the social reproduction of the male worker, as autonomist feminists like Leopoldina Fortunati (1995) and Mariarosa dalla Costa and Selma James (1973) have theorized in regards to the subject positions of the sex worker and the house worker. Rather, bajanje exists in compounded relation to capitalist re/production, supporting the reproduction of the waged worker (both men and women), while also continuing to refuse a strictly capitalist axiology by stigmatizing wealth hoarding, envy, and limitless desire and pointing to those antisocial behaviors as sources of sickness (see, for example, the wounding of Maja's gasoline thief).

Selma has stressed the need to reconnect with the healing practices of the folk. When talking about the increased prevalence of strah today, Selma promotes the reinvigoration of traditional healing knowledge: "It is necessary, my dear, to find how we in old times healed with *hekimi*,[111] [...] with plants, with tea. They didn't have medicine like today." Recalling the centrality of magic and witchcraft to peasant-artist Ivan Generalić's worldview in the twentieth century, I understand Selma's directive as exemplifying what Leanne Betasamosake Simpson calls "a returning, in the present, to myself" (2017, 19).[112] The "submerged perspective" of bajanje healers transforms our understandings of time, death, exploitation, and the body (Gomez-Barris 2017). In his analysis of colonial domination, Cape Verdean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral understood culture and domination as completely entwined, as evidenced by European colonizers' anxiety over not just military domination, but cultural domination as well. Similar to Fanon's recognition of the importance of culture in igniting the political consciousness of the colonized subject, Cabral identifies cultural decolonization as "the first phase of the liberation movement" (1973, 47). I situate Selma's instruction to revitalize traditional healing practices within Cabral's project of cultural decolonization. Rather than a transitional phase, as Fanon had argued, cultural decolonization sets the tone for the entire liberation process: "it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of *culture*" (1973, 43). That which has been suppressed is also that which will bring self-determination. By arguing for national liberation as an act of culture, Cabral makes a radical contribution to the discourse on culture and decolonization. Cabral emphasizes that culture enables the colonized subject to regain their own historical subjectivity. Bajanje healers, like peasants more generally, have been maligned by scholars and urban populations since the turn of the twentieth century. Their knowledge continues to be denied on grounds of "superstition." Bajanje has been taken out of time, fixed, commoditized, anthologized, catalogued, and recorded. In spite of all of this, healers continue to practice bajanje. They maintain and transmit a huge repertoire of healing knowledge, from plant medicines to incantations. By advocating that we continue our search for older, suppressed, and marginalized healing practices, Selma advances a project of bajanje as liberation.

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[111] A term for traditional healers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who treat internal diseases. From the Ottoman Turkish "*hekîm*," meaning "sage, wise man, doctor, and herbalist." An Arabic loanword.
[112] See discussion in chapter two.

In an article offering notes towards a political theory of witchcraft, Oxana Timofeeva writes that the potency of the magician lies in their ability to see injustices and imbalances and to intervene:

> A personal who becomes a magician has learned that something is fundamentally wrong—the world is unjust, and this order of things can, in fact, be changed miraculously. A magician challenges the order of things dictated by God and nature. if the essential injustice of this reality—the domination of the rich over the poor, the strong over the weak, the living over the dead—is a law, she wants to transgress this law and impose her own will in its place. (2019)

Timofeeva relates the inherent transgression of the witch to Lenin's (1921) theorization that "revolution is a miracle." Drawing on Ronald Boer's *Lenin, Religion, and Theology*, Timofeeva relates "political magic" to the dialectical opposition of organization and spontaneity, whose synthesis “appears miraculous.” It is this sense of the political and the miraculous that I witness in the vernacular practice of bajanje, as well as other magico-healing practices.

Bajanje is miraculous in that it provides a window into an alternate way of relating to the body, to time, to the dead, and to nature. Refusing to accept a vision of time and history that regards bajanje as archaic, the dead as foreign, and the village as the site of the past, the healing practices discussed in this chapter can provide a critical agenda for revolutionary planning. They allow us to admit the taboo truth that our worth extends beyond our status as workers. Vernacular healing practices reveal people’s power to transform their place in the world, and healers demonstrate that once one becomes aware of this power, there is an obligation to share that with others. Returning to the chapter’s epigraphs, we may enter the bajanje relation as healer and guest, but we can leave as comrades. As comrades, we share a secret in common: to heal each other is to practice revolution.

CONCLUSION

The trope of the empty village has become ubiquitous in the former Yugoslavia. While during socialist Yugoslavia, villages were important sources of "population renewal," rural exodus has rapidly accelerated since the collapse of socialism (Mickovic et al 2020, 2).[113] Villages in the Yugoslav region have become increasingly seen as empty in the postsocialist era, as they face "intensive depopulation, low activity on the labor market, slow process of farm restructuring, and a high share of small and semi-subsistent farms with mixed income" (Zora et al 2021, 344). While the rural populations of most of the Western Balkans still make up 40-50% of the total population, agriculture and rural infrastructure have been totally neglected by the state over the last twenty years (Zora et al 2021, 345).

It is no longer possible to make a living solely by working on a family farm. Small farms continue to have low productivity rates while also, paradoxically, having surplus product. Because they have been excluded from the commercial agri-food chain, there is no market for their products, and thus no way to make an adequate living. Farmers work to meet subsistence needs, while the products of small farms are generally sold by family members in roadside stands or informal markets. As a consequence of the economic unviability of the countryside, agricultural workers have been forced to find secondary employment in the nearest city or town (Mickovic et al 2020, 11). Those households that are solely employed in agricultural activities have become incredibly economically precarious. In their study of the Konjic agricultural co-op, which is the largest co-op in Bosnia, Gava et al found that agricultural workers' incomes have become dangerously volatile in the face of climate change. In 2017, workers' incomes

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[113] "Until the second half of the 20th century, the countryside in Montenegro had a healthy population pyramid; it was a source of population renewal, had a young labour force of considerable size, and had great potential in terms of population reconstruction and strengthening of the urban settlements"

"decreased by 70–100%, due to the dramatic drop in berry production" as a consequence of the devastating floods that year. Berry production is the "most important source of income for over two thirds of Coop members" (Gava et al 2021, 335). As rural areas become "unsuitable for living and work," villages are being abandoned and "depopulated" (Zora et al 2021, 345).

The villages are alive in a biological and organic sense, but dead economically. The villages and farms being abandoned are not infertile, desolate swaths of land. While they can suffer from poor soil fertility, the communities themselves continue to recognize the richness of the region's plant life. In their study of rural depopulation in Nikšić, Montenegro, for example, Mickovic et al found that "young people are aware about the picturesque villages." A big part of the picturesque quality of these villages is that they produce food "of exceptional quality" and that "the region is rich with medicinal herbs (teas, various medicinal herbs, forest fruits, blueberries, mushrooms, rosehip, and the like)" (2020, 12). Again, paradoxically, young people see villages as lush, productive, and alive while at the same time "pointing out that the villages are empty as far as they are concerned" (ibid). In their study of rural abandonment in Serbia, Zora et al conducted extensive interviews with people in the village of Slavkovica. The Head of the Local Community of Slavkovica stated told the researchers that "The local community has no authority, no income, not even a bank account—and nothing can be done without funds" (356). In surveys that the researchers conducted, they also found most farmers and agricultural workers agreed that "being a 'peasant' was the least respected occupation" (350).

The contrast between the fertile village and its dead economy has been presented as a natural fact. While soil fertility is brought up repeatedly as an issue that leads to low productivity, it remains the fact that "More than half of the respondents claimed that they could produce more than they could sell (mean 4.14), despite the poor quality (in terms of size, terrain, soil fertility) of farmland, the lack of modern farming machinery and, primarily, the lack of workforce" (Zora et al 2021, 351). Despite the difficulties of rural populations to sustain themselves, commercial agriculture remains an incredibly valuable industry to post-Yugoslav states. It contributes substantially to GDP and around 40% of employed people work in agriculture and related industries. Supplementing their incomes, people also farm to meet their families' subsistence needs. But meeting one's own needs outside of the market's purview is regarded as a stubborn obstacle to development, and thus discouraged by the World Bank, the IMF, and other international financial institutions. As 80% of the world's poor live in rural areas, where land could sustain people outside of the market, the contradictions of the capitalist economic system become so acute that it is almost comical.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the increased incidence of poverty, emigration, and economic precarity in the rural Balkans, scholars continue to blame the death of tradition on a lack of individual willpower. In videos submitted in support of the nomination of traditional singing practices to UNESCO's List for Urgent Safeguarding, folklorists explain that young people are not interested in learning these traditions from their elders.[114] These applications are typically prepared by folklorists or anthropologists employed by a university, research institution, or museum. In their applications, they seek financial support for folklore groups as the solution to the loss of tradition.[115] Watching short clips of these folklore groups as presented in the videos, one immediately notices that the context of the performance has changed from people's backyards and kitchen tables to official performance venues. In addition to the spatial re-contextualization of the performance, the musical aesthetics have also been modified to sound less discordant and more melodic. Harmony as the cornerstone of Western classical music hangs over traditional Balkan singing practices, asserting itself as the zenith of musical structure. The practices are being "saved" by being abstracted from their original contexts, transformed into "types," and covering over the living practitioners who continue to live in the countryside.

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[114] *Ojkanje* and *glasoechko* are traditional singing styles from Croatia and Macedonia, respectively.

[115] These folklore groups are known as KUDs. "KUD" stands for *Kulturno umetničko društvo*, which literally translates as a cultural-artistic society. When many scholars write about doing fieldwork on traditional performance in the former Yugoslavia, they are actually referring to these KUDs, not to performance in the context of everyday life.

In the videos prepared for UNESCO, we never hear traditional singers articulating their own narratives. None of the men or women featured in the videos ever tell the viewer why these singing styles require urgent safeguarding. This omission strikes me as particularly deceptive because over the course of my own fieldwork the people I have interviewed have always been eager to discuss the apparent loss of folklore and other traditional forms of performance. Rather than attributing this loss to the lack of their children's and grandchildren's desire to learn, however, singers and healers emphasize that the cause for the loss of traditional forms of performance is the economic precarity of the countryside. If one cannot survive in a village by working in agriculture, then one cannot stay in that village to learn traditional performance practices from elders. Often, the heirs to traditional styles are the same people whose parents and grandparents depend on them to move either to wealthier cities or even to wealthier countries to provide an income for their families. While politicians continue to extoll the heroic national character of the peasant by promoting staged performances of folk dances or televised exhibitions of heritage, an organized pattern of elimination is underway.

In this dissertation, I have traced this pattern of elimination back to ethnographic practices around the turn of the century. In collaboration with the imperial military, ethnologists from the Austro-Hungarian Empire became keenly interested in the peasant populations of the Balkans. During their expeditions, they sought to both assess the current state of the peasant economy, and to create a racial profile of the Balkan peasant that connected their physiognomy to their potentially exploitable skills as a laborer. These assessments were made according to an evolutionist schema wherein Balkan peasants' limited exploitation of the land served as evidence of their "primitivity." To become civilized is to become integrated in the capitalist system. In their ethnographic reports and photographs, Habsburg-affiliated ethnologists took classic tropes of colonial ethnography, including the noble savage, the warrior, terra nullius, the explorer, and the doctrine of discovery, and applied them to the rural Balkan context. Baron Franz Nopcsa took these tropes the furthest as he fashioned himself in line with the myth of the American West. Performing what Renato Rosaldo has named "imperialist nostalgia," Nopcsa's romantic vision of Albania conceals his role as an arms smuggler on behalf of the Austro-Hungarian Army, and his political ambition to become the first leader of an independent Albanian state. While many scholars have equivocated on the status of the Habsburg Empire as a colonial power, evidence from the early-twentieth century demonstrates that the Empire formally regarded Bosnia and Herzegovina as a colony, albeit a nearby colony. Bosnia and Herzegovina's status as a colony was legitimized further by journalists and foreign politicians who commended Austria-Hungary on their investment, saying that it may turn out to be more profitable than colonies far from the metropole.

In stark contrast to stereotypes of rural passivity and laziness, peasants fiercely resisted their integration into the capitalist system. During the interwar period, most peasants in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were forced into predatory debt as economic crisis plagued the world. The earliest examples of police brutality in Croatia were captured in the paintings of peasant-artists, including Ivan Generalić, Franjo Mraz, and Mirko Virius. Rather than the passive subjects they are presented as in folklore, peasants' participation in culture and politics during the interwar period played a central role to the pending success of Yugoslavia's socialist revolution. Following the revolution, peasant art was incorporated into Yugoslavia's national art history. During this incorporation, the temporal tropes of the backwards passive peasant re-emerge. Re-named as "naïve artists," peasant-artists became instrumentalized as a symbol of natural harmony, childhood, and the pristine past. The paintings of naïve artists came to function as a reminder of our peasant ancestors. But peasants cannot be our ancestors if they are still living. The problematic temporal distancing of the peasant is common across both socialist and decolonial approaches to culture. Both seek to resist their own temporal domination by identifying aspects of historical culture and peasant culture that can propel political action in the present. This act of cultural reclamation facilitates the development of class and/or national consciousness, but also runs the risk of ultimately displacing temporal domination onto the peasantry.

Folklore and the peasantry feature prominently in most national political projects of the twentieth century. In state socialism, the peasant exemplified the collectivist ideal. In fascism, the peasant was presented as the embodiment of blood and soil ideology. Decolonizing efforts in Africa and Asia in the mid-twentieth century mobilized the peasant as the ultimate symbol of the people. Indigenous and anti-capitalist movement in South and Latin America have also foregrounded the peasant worker, or *campesino/a*, as their political compass. During the Yugoslav Wars, Serbian and Bosnian Serb nationalists mobilized the figure of the peasant as a means of legitimizing their violent acts. Ethnic nationalisms that had been made illegal in socialist Yugoslavia continued to fester in corners of the leadership. Amidst the massive financial crisis of the 1980s, nationalists seized power and convinced large portions of the population to join their causes. The most effective aspects of this campaign were those related to folklore. By tying their political careers to the Myth of Kosovo, both Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić made themselves into modern day nationalist messiahs of the Serbian people.

This alleged crucible of the Serbian nation, however, has been misleadingly represented as a popular tradition. Rather, oral poetry narrating the Kosovo Myth was restricted to a small group of church-affiliated professional singers in Fruška Gora. While the songs comprising the Kosovo Myth were not popular in rural villages, many other subjects were dealt with by oral poets, including local heroes and histories. By neglecting these popular traditions and fixating on the Kosovo Cycle, folklorists have contributed to the deep affective power of this nationalist myth. While it is true that folklore continues to be weaponized by nationalists, it is important to distinguish between the construction of a nationalist folklore oeuvre and the actual practices of people who passed down their poems for generations. It is time now to rescue the *guslar* from nationalist capture.

Following the war and the collapse of socialism, the peasant returned to the public sphere through their display by contemporary artists. Seeking to break into the international art market, post-Yugoslav artists discovered that their status as postsocialist subjects made them uninteresting to the predominantly western curators and audiences. Their socialism-inflected aesthetics were interpreted as boring, retro, and even naïve. In articulating their critique of their exclusion from the international art market, postsocialist artists often unwittingly reinforced its terms of admission. By demanding recognition by the market as a "contemporary artist," postsocialist artists contribute to the reification of contemporary art. Critics call out the ways that Eurocentric temporality has located the Eastern European or postsocialist artist as slightly behind the west, but they do not make this critique in order to dismantle Eurocentric temporality. The consequences of this distinction become glaring in the video and performance projects of artists who employ peasants or their surrogates in their work. Recognizing the western curator's desire for the "exotic," some Balkan artists began to comply by employing traditional, folk, and "ethno" artists in their work. Usually dressed in traditional clothes and performing traditional music, peasants and their surrogates came to satisfy those desires. Sometimes, artists included these performers in order to draw attention to the fact that their work is only being shown because it has been exoticized by a folk performer. Other times, artists appear to use the folk performer as a way to articulate their own feelings of alterity. The latter approach is more common for artists who have left the region and now find themselves as perpetual outsiders in their new countries. Artists' emphasis on recognition is understandable, but also insufficient, for dealing with the epistemic problem that distances both the postsocialist artist and the folk artist backwards in time, away from the western curator. Collaborations between traditional artists and contemporary artists, when authorship is shared more equally, have proved the most transgressive in creating a coeval temporal plane. The work of zeitkratzer and Svetlana Spajić exemplifies a unified attack on the denial of coevalness from the allied perspectives of the contemporary artist and the traditional singer.

In villages today in the former Yugoslavia, folk practices continue to be seen as the living dead, despite their ongoing popularity. The practitioners of incantation-based healing see a constant stream of guests, while young people are increasingly participating in the practice. Gendered stereotypes continue to classify *bajanje* as "superstition," however, practitioners have develop a host of strategies to negotiate the suspicion that results from these negative stereotypes. Bajanje healers negotiate narratives of erasure and obsolescence by laughing at skeptics and freely demonstrating their practical knowledge. Tracing back to the witch trials in early modern Europe, the epistemic disenfranchisement of the peasant healer has sought to alienate the vast majority of the population from understanding how to heal people using local plants, language, and other non-empirical methods. The massive intellectual project of naming and resisting Eurocentrism has often overlooked the significance of epistemic violence within Europe's rural and racialized populations. As Silvia Federici's important work has shown, a continuum was forged between epistemic violence against peasant women in early modern Europe and epistemic violence during the conquest and colonization of the Americas. Today, bajanje's significance is amplified by practitioners who see the collective proliferation of *strah* (fear) as a consequence of the neoliberal hack job known as the postsocialist "transition." Bajanje healers refuse an axiology that promotes exploitation, alienation, accumulation, and death by providing their communities with "submerged" understandings of time, ways of relating, and ways of knowing.

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that traditional performance and folklore are completely bound up in this expropriation of the peasant. While a substantial volume of discourse has been generated on the "death of tradition," very rarely do these analyses connect the death of tradition to material conditions. Instead, the death of tradition is blamed on abstractions like people's desire to be "modern," globalization, urbanization, technology, and a seemingly incomprehensible disconnect between the elders who maintain these traditions and the "disinterested" youth. To be sure, globalization and urbanization are related to material conditions, however they are manifestations of those conditions, not the conditions themselves. Focusing on these secondary factors, scholars often either place the blame for the "death of tradition" on the individual (e.g., young people are not interested) or on nobody (e.g., abstractions like ideology or modernity), neither of which are that useful or accurate.

Traditions die when its practitioners die, and we know that people do not only die of natural causes. The maintenance of tradition is impossible, because the village as a socio-economic unit is incompatible with today's capitalist economy. Anyone who has conducted fieldwork in rural areas in the Balkans will be familiar with the art of the complaint. Many of the discussions that take place around the kitchen table revolve around high unemployment rates for young and older people, the state's neglect of rural economies, anxiety about money, and general feelings of hopelessness for the future. The disappearance of traditional artistic forms cannot be divorced from discussions of the broader economic order in which traditional culture is situated.

This necropolitical maneuver is striking in the post-socialist context, where disaster capitalists scramble for the rights to exploit natural resources in the Balkans. As long as discussions of culture steer clear of issues of political economy, traditional art is deemed "safe" to be paraded around and appropriated for nationalist purposes. The more these traditions (and by traditions, what we really mean is the practitioners of those traditions) die, the more freely these cultural forms can be adapted and deployed to motivate nationalist sentiment in the population. The speaking voices of autonomous rural subjects are a thorn in the side of disaster capitalists and nationalists alike. The voice of the peasant cries out against the plundering of the rural landscape. Those same voices—if given an ear—confound reductive nationalist messages that are encoded into fascist and nationalist symbols of violent peasant patriarchs.

In a recent personal essay, the historian Ana Sekulić (2022) recounts her parents' relationship to their ancestral home in a Dalmatian village. The village's entire population, including Sekulić's parents, abandoned the village in the early 1990s. Fleeing for their lives as the Yugoslav Wars began to rage, the houses in the village were subsequently vandalized and looted by paramilitaries and other allied groups. Once it was safe to return, Sekulić's parents would regularly visit the old house, cleaning up messes and tending to the trees. The house continued to be periodically ransacked after the war, until almost nothing remained. Her parents continued to take care of the land and the house, despite its apparent emptiness. Over two decades after the conclusion of the war, people have still not returned to many of these abandoned villages. The impossibility of sustaining oneself in the countryside has forced the hand of many who would have preferred to remain in their villages for generations. Capitalists and nationalists have colluded to expropriate the peasant.

Cold War amnesia has caused us to forget the extensive interrelated histories of peasant emancipation and anticolonial revolution. By reconnecting these histories, this dissertation has tried to escape the narrow confines of area studies and to instead engage in internationalist scholarship. The problems confronting peasants and Indigenous people today are interlinked, as they have been for centuries. The role of magic and healing practices in these struggles is one among many, but it deserves sustained attention today because European colonial divisions of the rational/irrational continue to remain unquestioned in this sphere. The consequences of the tacit agreement with the Spanish colonial division of the world into people of reason (*gente de razón*) and people without reason (*gente sin razón*) include not only forfeiting vital ecological practices, but also complicity in the long history of racist oppression and exploitation, which has been justified using this evolutionist schema of rationality. In the Balkans, we know that those most identified with magic and healing practices are the elderly, Romani communities, and other marginalized rural communities (e.g., Vlach communities in Eastern Serbia). The political imperative here is not only for recuperating past knowledges and practices, but for valuing the lives of those most subjected to violence on the basis of those knowledges' invalidation.

The revised Peasant Question proposed by this dissertation reveals the centrality of epistemic issues to political economy. The classical responses to the Peasant Question have sought to chart out an economic trajectory for the peasant, which concludes with the peasant's incorporation into a capitalist economy. Economists have paid little attention to the epistemic ramifications of their claims. Unlike anthropology, economics has not undergone a thorough investigation of its participation in colonial and capitalist violence. In their assessments of Yugoslavia and its successor states, economists continue to make appeals to objectivity, rationality, progress, and universalism. As the Balkan economy was deemed backward, so were its people. By treating economic backwardness as a natural fact, scholars, politicians, and others effectively concealed the social construction of the capitalist economy. The transition to capitalism in the Balkans was marked not only by the introduction of larger markets and credit, but by the invalidation of peasant knowledge. In the eyes of Arthur Haberlandt, the peasant is incompatible with the modern capitalist economy, because they fail to demonstrate the "correct" relationship to the land. Exploiting neither land nor labor to its limit is interpreted as evidence of primitivity, thus peasant knowledge of alternative ways of relating to land and forces of production was invalidated, stigmatized, suppressed, and criminalized. In the eleventh hour of postsocialism, it is imperative to push back against the normalization of epistemic violence. We must question the commonsense emptying of the village. We must confront what the peasant knows.

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